No Business in the Closet:
Investigating the Strategies and Experiences of Gender and Sexual Minority
Entrepreneurs

by

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ABSTRACT

L(esbian), G(ay), B(isexual), T(ransgender), Q(ueer), I(ntersexual), 2(-spirited), and + (other gender and sexual minorities) (LGBTQI2+) are a group seldom researched in the sociology of business, business/management studies, or entrepreneurship literature. Initially envisaged and set up as a study of gay male entrepreneurs, this thesis is a study of how LGTBQI2+ people both attempt to interact with and also respond to interactions from formal business networks and institutions. This study utilizes a combination of push/pull theories of entrepreneurship, network theory, masculinity gender theory, and Bourdieu's theory of *social capital* to provide a theoretical lens to begin reassessing the motivations, experiences, and practices of LGBTQI2+ entrepreneurs. Using targeted, snowball, and convenience sampling methods fourteen semi-structured interviews were conducted. Verbatim transcriptions were coded against themes extracted from the existing academic literature. Findings indicate that while there are some unique obstacles faced by LGBTQI2+ entrepreneurs, these obstacles were framed by the entrepreneurs as being less important than being treated equally as 'mainstream' entrepreneurs. The analysis concludes by examining the importance of informal support networks in supporting the development of LGBTQI2+ entrepreneurs.

DEDICATION

For Momma. I learn more about kindness, caring, and compassion from you every day.

For Pops. We never really understood each other, but I'll be damned if I didn't try.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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List of Symbols, Nomenclature or Abbreviations

LGBTQ2I+ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, 2-Spirited, Intersex, and

other gender and sexual minorities

GSM = Gender and Sexual Minorities

SME = Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

IC = Industry Canada

1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This thesis originally set out to study the experiences of gay men when embarking upon becoming entrepreneurs. The focus was upon how they navigate the difficulties of establishing a business enterprise, with particular attention being paid to the differences these difficulties may take when compared to heterosexual entrepreneurs. During the course of the study, the scope necessarily widened to include other LGTBQI2+ entrepreneurs due to issues of participant recruitment. These "gender and sexual minority" (GSM) entrepreneurs, as the study terms them, provided detailed information on their experiences both when starting out as entrepreneurs and then when maintaining their business ventures.

What emerged as the most important aspect of their experiences was the prominence of their informal networks. These networks constituted a core component of the resources that the GSM entrepreneurs utilized in support of their ventures. While this may not be totally unusual for entrepreneurs when starting up their businesses, it does appear that the participants of this study relied very heavily on these resources compared to what appeared to be the average discussed in the academic literature. Similarly, the forms of 'social capital' that GSM entrepreneurs may hold is similarly important as this appeared to amplify the impact of informal networks.

1.1 Structure of the thesis

This thesis, beginning with chapter two, will entail a review of the literature on gender and masculinity; focusing first on distinguishing gender from sex, then on key insights to

the social construction of gender through *performativity* and *dramaturgy*; this is followed by the hierarchical nature of masculinity and the assumed connections between conventional masculinity and entrepreneurship. The section on entrepreneurship (2.2-2.2.3) addresses the problem of definition in entrepreneurship literature, moving on to a discussion of *capital* and the role it plays in the generation of entrepreneurs, followed by Push and Pull theories on entrepreneurship; which are historically consistent frameworks in the scholarship for understanding entrepreneurial motivations. A review of network theory follows entrepreneurship, bringing technical and conceptual insight to how networks take shape and serve functions—before each of the research elements are brought together and synthesized to create a conceptual framework for the proceeding study.

Chapter three will introduce the methodology employed to conduct this study, where sampling strategies, qualitative interviews, and the protection of participants is detailed.

Chapter four begins with a sociodemographic summary of the participants followed by observations on the prominence of informal networks in the interviews.

Chapter five unpacks these observations with key insights from the reviewed literature, and the discussion will follow the resulting interactions and phenomena.

Chapter six concludes the thesis with a summary and account of research limitations.

2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This literature review engages with, before then integrating, three key areas that form the crux of this research project's focus: sex and gender, entrepreneurship, and networks. This chapter reviews these three concepts and then combines them via a concluding discussion that extracts the elements of one that are most important for each of the other two. In this way, the three encapsulate the three main aspects identified as being important to being a gay entrepreneur: i.e. one's (c)overt homosexuality as a factor in establishing and then maintaining a viable and supportive business network of business contacts – or at the very least generate a network of similar composition and effect to that which would be expected from a heterosexual male entrepreneur.

Section 2.1 reviews the academic debates on sex/gender including their conclusion that the construction of heterosexuality – and specifically hetero-masculinity – should be understood to be hegemonic in form and operation. While this does not 'force' all men (heterosexual or homosexual) to conform to one single a specific construction of masculinity, there are different types of masculinity and, of those types, there is one dominant form of masculinity against which other forms are judged. The question that this raises is: if gay entrepreneurs do not fit the dominant form(s) of masculinity (or one of the acceptable subordinate forms), then do the masculinities exhibited/enacted by gay entrepreneurs pose an *impediment* to those entrepreneurs developing a suitable business support network?

Section 2.2 reviews the literature on entrepreneurship. Early academic literature is shown to define entrepreneurship closely around versions of 'disrupting' the business status quo or as psychological 'outsiders'. More recent literature is shown to move beyond this, but it still too readily defines an entrepreneur as someone explicitly engaging with purely market and business activities (which excludes, for instance, not-for-profits). The literature also utilizes Gary Becker's and Pierre Bourdieu's two different types of capital: human (Becker) and cultural (Bourdieu). However, this alters in the most recent scholarly works to focus upon entrepreneurs 'investing' their time and energies into 'possible outcomes'. But Becker and Bourdieu have a focus on the individuality of entrepreneurs; while this is an important factor, attention has also been paid to the external factors affecting the choices of entrepreneurs, the so called "push/pull" factors. These are the circumstances that either draw or drive a person away from regular employment practices. Of direct relevance to the work of this study are the factors motivating gay entrepreneurs to disregard regular employment forms. Is it the case that gay entrepreneurs leave workplaces due to discrimination? Have they invested their earlier time in developing 'possible outcomes'? In short, this study seeks to examine the circumstances in which a marginalized group comes to enter the world of business.

Section 2.3 reviews networks and discusses the vibrant, multidisciplinary field of network analysis. The literature is multidisciplinary as networks occur in so many forms across so many different areas of the human world. Consequently, while the volume of network analysis literature is relatively small (compared, say, to sex and gender research), what does exist is diverse and refreshingly engaging in its form. 'Nodes' and 'ties' form the main basis for network examination, as well as concern over the closed or

open nature of the system which gives some indication of the reliability and the

predictability of a system. In terms of social relations, network analysis can be used not

only to examine what exists as part of a network, but also what is present-but-excluded

from a network. This is one aspect of the research here: what networks exist but which do

not include (potentially through (un)witting exclusionary practices) gay entrepreneurs?

The section concludes with a brief discussion of Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and *field*

and how they may impact upon network analysis.

2.1 Sex Contra Gender

Sex and gender are two theoretically discrete concepts, a notion which has received much

treatment in academic literature. This initially stemmed from works such as Simone de

Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), in which she produced much of the preliminary work

that separated sex and gender as concepts. From there, the literature has broadened,

become less explicitly philosophical with more empirical arguments being employed in

explaining the differences between sex and gender.

Kramer (2011) defines *sex* as the categories which most societies define as

physically based, namely 'male' and 'female' physiology and anatomy (p. 2). However,

progression in the research of the human body has destabilised notions of a binary sex

differentiation through research highlighting the much higher incidences of chromosomal

arrangements other than XY & XX (ibid., p. 2). In effect, there are a much higher number

of *physically* non-binary chromosomal individuals than was assumed before.

Gender, on the other hand, is the act of 'existing' as a man or a woman (as

defined with reference to relevant social and cultural elements). As such, gender is

socially constructed (ibid., p. 3). At any given time, the performance of gender can reflect the "totality of meanings that are attached to sexes within a particular social system" (ibid, p. 2). Because these meanings are linked to means of social sanction and differ according to a particular gender, gender plays a key role in the way which social practices are ordered (Connell, 2005, p. 71). This 'ordering effect' along gendered lines is reflected in contemporary academic literature more broadly (Aboim, 2010, p. 14; Coleman & Lohan, 2009, p. 213; Galloway, 2011, p. 291; Harrison, Leitch, & McAdam, 2015, p. 698; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009, p. 278; Bowman, 2007, p. 386; Mueller, 2004, p. 200; Liu, Cutcher, & Grant, 2015, p. 239; Goktan & Gupta, 2015, p. 96; Hamilton, 2014, p. 703). In particular, masculinity—the processes and relationships that are practiced and embodied by men (Connell, 2005, p. 71)—is a part of the social ordering process that will be studied as a part of this research.

2.1.1 Theorizing Gender as a Social Construct: Placing Gender in Dramaturgy and Performativity

Contemporary accounts of gender understand gender to be a 'drama,' a 'performance,' or an 'act.' This explanation is based upon the early sociological work of Erving Goffman and his "dramaturgical model." This frames social interaction as a series of performances undertaken by the various actors involved and which contains both conscious and unconscious actions (Huey & Berndt, 2008, p. 181). People are understood as being 'actors', playing out their interactions/performances as a means through which they convey information and meaning, as well as collecting information as 'audience'

members (Goffman, 1959, p. 1). The differing social roles undertaken by actors across their in daily life are all enacted strategically in an attempt to give certain impressions to the audience; the ultimate goal being a favorable assessment of the actor (Huey & Berndt, 2008, p. 181). This is achieved through the use of scripts, props, masks, and costumes (ibid.). Actors assume that their performance is taken seriously (Goffman, 1959, p. 10) and audiences assume that actors are performing in good faith—that they are being truthful in their expression (ibid. p. 2). In order for this performance to be credible, it must both "incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of society" (Goffman, as cited in Huey & Berndt, 2008, p. 181). Relating this explicitly to gender, individuals act their gender according to scripts determined by the society they inhabit and using different artefacts similarly determined by that society. The goal of a successful performance in this context is successfully being identified by your audience as the gender one identifies with themselves.

Judith Butler adopts a similar view on performativity with regards to gender. Maintaining the break with essentialist stances on gender (Butler, 1999, p. 3), Huey & Berndt (2008, p. 181) argue that Butler should be understood as focusing on understanding performance-as-the-construction-of-gender by examining the continuously contested, reimagined, and reconstructed sets of 'social norms'. As gender is not a coherent construct (i.e. there are inconsistencies and inaccuracies contained within it), nor is it a consistent theoretical object across historical contexts (Butler, 1999, p. 3), it is therefore inaccurate to assume that a common identity could be drawn from the *label* of 'man' or 'woman' in any given period (ibid.). In this sense, the cultural construction of gender (i.e. the generation of the labels man and woman) are rooted in the feedback

mechanisms between social actors accessing sub-sets of current cultural gender expectations and then performing those expectations in front of other social actors. In this way, the concepts of gender (whatever they may be at a given historical moment) *necessarily pre-exist* the social performance of sexed-bodies becoming gendered-bodies; yet that performance may partially alter the original concept through various instances of 'social conversation' and renegotiation taking place between different social actors (ibid., p. 6). Eventually repeated performances of gender becomes one's primary gender identity (Huey & Berndt, 2008, p. 181-2). Connell builds off the works of both authors, with an express focus on masculinity.

As per a version of the argument outlined above, Connell (2005, p. 67) posits that masculinity is not a coherent object which stands by itself; rather it is enmeshed in larger social structures. For example, workplace masculinity takes some of its form and content from conventional masculine notions of 'manhood' such as leadership, logical and rational thinking, stoicism, and the unquestioned assumption and expectation of heterosexuality. Yet workplace masculinity also has features derived specifically from the workplace: elements such as competition between workers, or the notion of being 'time macho' (that one should always be "working harder, staying later, pulling more all-nighters, and bill the extra hours that the international date line affords you…" (Slaughter, 2012 p. 94).[1] It is because of this enmeshed nature of masculinity that Connell posits that *masculinity should always be understood in the context in which it is being examined* (Connell, 2005, pp. 71-3, 76). Coleman and Lohan (2009) affirm that

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[1] These observations are supported by many other authors in the scholarship (see Bowman, 2007, p. 386).

masculinities draw from the systems which they are situated—and that those systems can both local and regional (p. 220). In effect, gender and masculinity are iterative, continuously being used to shape and redefine each other in a given society (Connell, 2005, p. 71). From this iterative process, particular themes and notions of masculinity can become replicated through a given society and, if taken up across many different social contexts, may become "hegemonic".

2.1.2 Theorizing Gender as a Social Construct: *Hegemonic Masculinity*

Hegemonic masculinity is defined by Coleman & Lohan (2009) as an "exalted arrangement of particular idealizations of masculinity" (p. 213). Importantly, and as the name suggests, this conceptualization of masculine gender practices delineates a particular configuration of masculine traits that exists in a hierarchical relation to both other gender practices *and* other (lesser) forms of masculinity (Coleman & Lohan, 2009, p. 213). As a result, non-hegemonic masculinities appear less legitimate and, indeed, less desirable (Coleman & Lohan, 2009, p. 212-213). Aboim (2010) notes that masculinities should be understood as "fluid differences rather than as a static identity" (p. 13), and these differences are "subject to other sub-categories of gender" (p. 14). To put this in other words, there is a dominant archetype of masculinity in any one time period, but this archetype does not account for the full variance of masculinity nor eclipse other conceptualizations of masculinity. For instance, there is great variation across ethno-cultural interpretations of masculinity, but also the oscillation and transition found in the variance between public and private social interactions. Coleman & Lohan (2009) note

that depending on either the *context* or the *scale* of particular social scientific analyses, hegemonic masculinity will be shown to possess different arrangements of idealized masculine traits (p. 213-4); that is, the components of hegemonic masculinity hold differing levels of adherence depending upon the social level which is being investigated (e.g. the difference between the advertising construct of the Marlborough Man and an individual man in the privacy of his own home). Additionally, Waite & Denier (2016) note that there is a *temporal* factor in understanding social arrangements and their institutions change over time (p. 153). All of this means that, in short, individual agents feel the weight of hegemonic masculinity as compelling them to embody a multitude of traits (Aboim, 2010, p. 41) in public interactions, with only the possibility of respite in private life. Indeed, other authors have noted that hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily pleasant for the actors undertaking the performance (Bowman, 2007, pp. 386, 397). But these hegemonic impositions on actors fluctuate depending on the context, scale, and era. In this way, hegemonic masculinity becomes a kind of 'ethereal constant' by which other, non-hegemonic, forms of masculinity, as well as femininity, are continually triangulated (Coleman & Lohan, 2009, p. 213).

Coleman and Lohan (2009, p. 213) attribute the development of the theory of "hegemonic masculinity" as stemming from Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Conventionally this theory has been used to study how dominant worldviews are formulated, imposed, and exercised via social class relations. In his original theory of hegemony, Gramsci (1972) argues that the ideology of a ruling class becomes installed into a society's lower classes (who necessarily have their own, different, worldviews) through the various political and economic activities and institutions. Boothman (2008)

posits that the most important insights of this theory are the dynamics of different interested parties on an "ideological terrain" (p. 202). In short, Boothman argues, hegemony is not a rigid structure of mental domination, but instead as a process where more desirable aspects—as identified by the dominant stakeholders in that ideological terrain—of an ideology is maintained and proliferated, while less desirable aspects are marginalised and ultimately discarded. Importantly, Boothman's critique implies that actors within a social system express agency in what does and does not become hegemonic.

Coleman and Lohan (2009, p. 213) discuss hegemonic masculinity as being at the heart of much critical discussion and debate in contemporary research on men's experiences, masculinity, and the notion of 'manhood'. Coleman & Lohan argue that there are five important criticisms regarding hegemonic masculinity that should be kept in mind when using the concept. These criticisms are that: (i) the character of men is effectively 'essentialized' through the all-encompassing prism of hegemonic masculinity; (ii) hegemonic masculinity is unable to hold one, strict definition of masculinity when moving between macro-, meso-, and micro-scales of analysis; (iii) it is further 'moralized' where any level of adherence becomes problematized as active support for the hegemonic order; (iv) the agency of individuals to negotiate (parts of) their own identities in the face of larger systems is not fully accounted for; and (v) how do marginalized masculine identities (ever) reconcile with hegemonic masculinity?

To this end, Connell's argument that there are, in fact, multiple masculinities in a society at any one time can help to resolve many of these problems—especially the problem of individual agency in the face of hegemonic masculinity. If a dominant form

of masculinity ('hegemonic' masculinity) can be identified, then others can also be identified as well. Connell terms them *subordinate*, *marginal*, or *complicit* to/with hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005, pp. 78-81). They all represent a type of 'negotiation' that takes place vis-à-vis hegemonic masculinity. These negotiations are most easily understood using an intersectional and geo-temporal analysis: i.e. expectations and embodiments of masculinity are different for different people, in different locales, at different times. In this way, a hierarchy between varying masculinities can be approximated depending upon its specific context.

The first are *subordinate masculinities.* These masculinities are suppressed to lower levels of the/a masculine hierarchy. Examples might be the masculinity of homosexual men, or of young boys—they are 'expelled from the circle of [hegemonic] legitimacy' (Connell, 2005, p. 79), and so are seen as incomplete, tainted, and otherwise undesirable.

Marginal masculinities belong to members of oppressed groups or racialized minorities. These masculinities may present traits of the hegemonic ideal, such as a successful black athlete, but are seen as wanting in relation to a superior (in this instance, white) masculinity. The masculinity of the individual, however exemplarily they may be, remains individual and does not 'trickle down' to other members of the marginalised group (Connell, 2005, p. 85).

Finally, *complicit masculinity* is constructed by men who do not wish to adhere to all the rigors that hegemonic masculinity entails, but still wish to collect on the privilege that hegemonic masculinity affords (Connell, 2005, p. 77). Complicit masculinities are navigated in such a way that they maintain the status quo and receive the benefits

contained therein, without the 'risks' associated with manifesting the strongest forms of the hegemonic traits (e.g. extreme leadership and domination, devotion to a muscular body, worldly success, or the feeling of being 'driven') (Connell, 2005, p. 78).

There is a persistent call from various gender studies scholars to further explore the varied forms of masculinities and their relation to hegemonic masculinity (Farrimond, 2011; Coleman & Lohan, 2009; O'Brien, Hunt & Hart, 2005). This section explored the construction and meanings of gender; namely that gender is not necessarily rooted in biology, but is instead a performance that draws inspiration from social time and social space. These performances change according to precluding historical notions of gender belonging to the actor, the audience, and the society to which they belong. Masculinity, then, has never taken a static form—it is a fluid concept, and one which can take many forms, namely when individualities of masculinity are examined versus hegemonic understandings of masculinity. In a similar fashion, the literature on entrepreneurship will be reviewed in the next section to explore how entrepreneurs are defined and experience SME ownership.

2.2 Defining Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship

The literature on *entrepreneurship* is quite varied, reflecting, as it does, the broad range of academic interests and disciplines that cover the topic (Willsdon, 2005, p. 108). There are several approaches pertaining to what an entrepreneur *does* and, indeed, *how* they do it. The earliest examples (Dorin & Alexandru, 2014, p. 446-448) include: Shumpeter's theory of entrepreneurship, which posits that entrepreneurs act as agents of change within different economies; Friedriech von Hayek's theory which defines entrepreneurs

as having a deficit of practical knowledge as their primary characteristic; and Peter

Drucker's theory of entrepreneurship which understands entrepreneurs not as facilitators

of change, but rather as exploiters of the mechanisms of change. Other early accounts

define entrepreneurship less structurally, by emphasising personalities and proclivities

(Hao, Seibert, & Lumpkin, 2010). These elements include: being less risk-adverse, more

conscientious, emotionally stable, and having an openness to different experiences (p.

382).

This divide in how entrepreneurship should be defined has been observed by

different authors with their own varied approaches to the study of entrepreneurship

(Bowman, 2005, p. 386; Zhao, Seibert, & Lumpkin, 2010, p. 382). While these various

authors all call for a more streamlined definition of an entrepreneur, over-simplification

can be problematic. Hartog, Praag & Van den Sluis (2010) note that the conventional

definition of entrepreneurship is restricted to 'self-employment in the labour-market' and

owning/directing an incorporated business (p. 959). This straight-forward definition is

mirrored by other authors and research organizations (e.g. Dorin & Alexandru, 2014, p.

445; Industry Canada, 2013, pp. 3, 5; Zhao, Siebert & Lumpkin, 2010, p. 383).

However, even the conventional definition in this serviceable format is problematic

itself as it does not capture other forms of conduct and activities that can also be seen to

be entrepreneurial, e.g. farming (Hartog et al., p. 959). Also excluded are 'social

entrepreneurs' (i.e. those who start their own charity or not-for-profit organizations), 'co-

operatives' (a farm, business, or other organization which is owned and run jointly by its

members), and 'freelancers' (who undertake contract work based on their own

arrangements of skillsets and expertise). Entrepreneurship in public organizations is also

understudied (Liddle, 2016, p. xiii).[2] If farmers, freelancers, and social entrepreneurs are excluded from the definition, this indicates a problematically narrow definition of "entrepreneurship" as these three examples clearly appear to meet the criteria for what an entrepreneur 'is' and 'does'.

Some authors use less conventional definitions to draw out fuller, more contemporary definitions of entrepreneurship. Dina Bowman (2007) states that entrepreneurship is 'innovation, fast growth, and risk' (p. 386). Yet definitions along these lines, particularly with a focus on an exemplary form of high-profile entrepreneurship (Bowman, 2007, p. 385), excludes entrepreneurs of less grand-scale ventures. Hao, Siebert, and Lumpkin (2010) note that successful entrepreneurial performances are underlined by a disposition toward new or unconventional ideas, values, and actions (p. 396). Other similarly unconventional definitions include 'entrepreneurs-as-deviants' (Kets de Vries, 1977, p. 35; Willsdon, 2005, p. 111). This is an attempt to frame the essence of an entrepreneur, including motivations for a person's entrepreneurial activity—in the case of Kets de Vries, entrepreneurs actually come to be outlined as the outcasts, or downtrodden of society. Yet, as Zhao, Siebert, and Lumpkin (2010, p. 382) note, that there is no consistent relationship between the different metrics of personality and entrepreneurship. Similarly, there is also no consistency in the relationships between entrepreneurs and their conduct 'as' entrepreneurs either.

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[2] Although there is a growing recognition of the state's role in facilitating, stimulating, and organizing entrepreneurship through processes such as tax laws for entrepreneurs, and match making individuals to larger groups in the form of contracting (Liddle, 2016, p. xiii).

For the purposes of this research project, the following definition (which synthesizes elements of these differing accounts) will be utilized from this point forward. Expressly, an entrepreneur is:

an innovative or otherwise non-conventional person, regardless of motivations or circumstance, who undertakes operational control (and likely majority ownership) of an organization in the business, not-for-profit, or community sectors, regardless of its size, *modus operandi,* or goods traded/produced by that organization.

2.2.1 Entrepreneurship and the Economy

Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in the contemporary economies of which the global economy consists (Zhao, Seibert & Lumpkin, 2010, p. 399). The early literature on entrepreneurs contained notions that entrepreneurs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are 'quiet underachievers'—and even to the point where they were sometimes even 'not really entrepreneurial' at all (Bowman, 2007, p. 389)! Based upon well-constructed economic data, it is incontrovertible the importance of such small and medium-sized enterprises to any (post-)industrial economy. Industry Canada lists small and medium-sized enterprises as having between 1-99 paid employees and these SMEs accounted for 85.3% of the net employment growth across Canada between the years of 2013 and 2017 (IC, 2019, p. 3), and employed 89.6% of Canada's private industry workforce (IC, 2017, pp. 11-12). These figures coalesce to a total of 15% (2.9 million) of the Canadian workforce being self-employed in 2018 (Statistics Canada, 2019, p. 1).

These high numbers are hardly surprising given that previous research in the 1970s demonstrated that 60% of people who were unemployed eventually found employment in such SMEs (Willsdon, 2007, p. 107).

Yet these numbers are not consistent across all sectors of industry, as different occupational categories can be quite varied with regards to levels of self-employment (Waite & Denier, 2016, p. 146).[3] For example, self-employment clusters in high-paid white collar occupations such as law and medicine as well as blue collar jobs such as construction-related fields (ibid., Waite & Denier, 2016, p. 146). Statistics Canada provides a more comprehensive view into Canada's levels of self-employment in 2007 with the Labour Force Survey. Of particular interest is that the agricultural industry has the highest percentage of self-employment by a wide margin at just about 60 percent. The next highest field is the professional, scientific, and technical services field at just above 30 percent. These figures are measured against the backdrop of the Canadian national average for self-employment: 15.5 percent (Statistics Canada, 2007, p. 48). It follows that the variance in self-employment across different sectors lends to incentives and other motivations for entrepreneurs also being varied across those same sectors.

The contributions of entrepreneurs to the economy are not confined solely to the commercial/private sector. Public employers from all over the world are increasingly searching for more innovative approaches to addressing some of the most pressing societal pressures (Liddle, 2016, p. xii). According to Liddle (2016, p. xiv), the defining

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[3] The discussion here in this literature review notes that 'self-employment' is not synonymous with 'entrepreneur;' yet it is the closest indicator to 'entrepreneurship' that exists in standard official reports.

characteristic of public sector entrepreneurs is that they are tasked with providing high quality services with diminishing resources. Over time, the incorporation of private-model entrepreneurship into public institutions is making changes to the fundamental culture of those institutions (ibid., p. xv). In this sense, inter-relationships between the state, market, and civic institutions has become a focal point for co-production and co-responsibility of public service delivery and production of public value (ibid., p. xi). (Although this thesis would like to note here that 'managing declining public-sector budgets' and 'entrepreneurship' are not necessarily co-terminus with each other. While innovative and entrepreneurial approaches *can* lead to greater public-sector efficiencies, there are also times when 'new techniques' are euphemisms for merely cutting the budgets of public services and managing the resulting fallout.)

2.2.2 Theories on the Generation of Entrepreneurship

2.2.2.1 Human Capital / Social Capital

Many authors in entrepreneurship scholarship use either Gary Becker's human capital theory (1962, pp. 10-30) or Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (1986, pp. 17-21) to develop how training, experience, and variations in taste and habit play out in the institution of work—i.e. how the conditions are created for entrepreneurs to manifest. Martin, McNally, and Kay (2013, p. 212) use Becker's theory to define human capital as the measure of education, work experience, and upbringing in a given individual. These measures, in Becker's original theory, have predictive power in that higher achievements in skill and knowledge will achieve greater outcomes (ibid., p. 211). However,

scholarship on human capital has edged away from prescriptive definitions—Martin *et al* (2013, p. 212) note that human capital is better understood in terms of *investments* in potential outcomes. In this sense, these 'investments' into different skills and experiences may have a direct, unambiguous payoff in career outcomes; or they could have no traceable payoff at all; or yet again they may have only ambiguous outcomes. For many scholars, the factors generating entrepreneurship are better understood from within Bourdieu's theories on human capital.

Bourdieu's theory on human capital has three component parts: economic capital (what a person is able to access through expenditure of financial/economic resources); cultural capital (the skills, abilities, education, and 'personality' of an individual); and finally social capital (which is the social networks that are able to be accessed by an individual) (1986). Both cultural and social capital are seen to be hugely important for an entrepreneur. George and Chaze (2009, p. 395; see also Sato, 2013, p. 1) argue that social capital is best understood as the "net benefit gained from varying relations between people"—i.e. a formless phenomenon that exists between actors, more as a tacit function rather than a direct attribute in the same fashion as in Becker's human capital.

Dina Bowman (2007) provides a succinct and thorough breakdown of Bourdieu's theories regarding capital, habitus, and fields (p. 387-389). In particular, and as part of her utilisation of Bourdieu, Bowman extends Becker's concept of human capital through Bourdieu's multiple types of capital: social capital, economic capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital (ibid., p. 387). These four concepts of capital encompass such things as employment experience, level of educational achievement, and familial upbringing and, for Bowman, are able to stand as objects for analysis in their own right

(rather than as mere 'accumulations' as they largely appear in Becker's work). Echoing this point, Sato (2013) points out that contemporary specialists in social capital tend towards focusing on education as a stand-alone topic for study within the social capital discourse (p. 4).

In an intriguing line of argument in her study, Bowman (2007) additionally introduces Bourdieu's concepts of capital to *intersectional* analysis (p. 387). Educational attainment, upbringing, and employment experience (amongst other measures) are accessed and embodied in different ways depending on gender, ethnicity, class, age, and sexuality. And at the core of each definition, theory, and apparatus of analysis with social capital, is the social network: the social network can be thought of as the common and centrally organizing concept for work being conducted in this field (Sato, 2013, p. 1) as it fits the various criteria for describing and defining social capital—namely, that it exists between actors as an immaterial object, and definitions, such as "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (Puttnam, 1993, p. 167) are always formulated to describe precisely the features of a social network.

Whereas the notion of capital is illustrative for understanding the background of an individual as a 'unit' of analysis, to understand the capabilities that individuals manifest in their social interactions, the concepts of fields and habitus are useful for analysing the social arena of work as well as the culture(s) and ideology(s) that interplay with individual actors. *Fields*, in Bowman's (2007) treatment of Bourdieu's theory, are the social spaces within which individuals compete with each other for resources (e.g. jobs, clients/customers, market share, business development, etc.) and are contain within them

institutions as well as other individuals. Fields are a site where the forms of capital (manifesting through individuals), 'narratives' or 'ideologies' held within the field, as well as regulatory and coercive discourses coalesce together (p. 387). This is, in part, because an actor has an "interest and understanding of the game" (Bowman, 2007, p. 197); actors engage with fields—in this case the 'game' of business—sorting, maneuvering, and facilitating these different forces into coherent processes. These processes may be less or more streamlined for actors, as fields also contain their own requirements, expectations, and rules regarding the conduct of individuals and institutions. These are informed by both internal and external 'political struggles' (i.e. the ability of dominant groups to 'shape' the field—to an extent—in ways complementary to their own values) as well as a field's proximity to other fields. For example, if a businessman becomes a government official, parts of that government office may be reorganized to reflect the running of a business as opposed to government that reflects democratic governmental leg of bureaucracy.

Habitus is defined (Bowman, 2007, p. 387) as a system of embodied dispositions held by an individual, inclusive of beliefs, tastes, and personality quirks. Habitus is formed in part through individual as well as collective histories and experiences (including part inheritance through the normal processes of familial socialization). In this sense, habitus is deeply related to cultural capital in that individuals very often inherit the meanings and attitudes related to occupying certain social spaces (ibid.).

When both habitus and field 'fit' one another, power relations are perceived as 'normal and unremarkable' (ibid., p. 388).[4] However, where there is a lower correspondence there are resulting social tensions. These are the product of the social environment which the field generates, situating individuals, organizations, and institutions in relations of tension to one another. McNay (as cited in Bowman 2007, p. 388) posits that the 'uneven and non-synchronous' nature of change is best explained by the lack of fit between various social actors vis-à-vis other actions and the customs and expectations inherent in a particular field. A particular example is the growing acknowledgement and enforcement of minority rights (e.g. ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc.) in fields and how this gradually forces a reordering of patterns of existing relations in a given field. As an individual's habitus is not coterminous with a field (i.e. the two are *not* linked in some form of symbiosis), it takes time for an individual's habitus to incorporate the new relations of the field. And as actors may well have various types of investment (cultural, legal, financial, skilled, etc.) in the previous ordering of relations they may attempt to resist the change or even to retrogress it entirely—even as legislation requires immediacy.

2.2.3 Push/Pull Theories

So far, explanation for the entrepreneurial activity of individuals has primarily centered around "push/pull" factors. *Push* factors are typically personal or external forces which

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4 The fit/lack of fit for gay entrepreneurs between habitus and field is discussed below when bringing the three theoretical approaches together.

have a negative connotation—people are 'pushed' out of the conventional workplace. *Pull* factors draw or entice people into entrepreneurship and are often positive in their charge (Kirkwood, 2009, p. 346). Before moving to specifying existing push and pull factors as found in the literature, it is worth noting that these factors have continued to change employment practices quite significantly in terms of the economic landscape of institutions and businesses being shaped further and further by the disruptive changes brought about by the increasing importance of the online world (Kirkwood, 2009, p. 346-7; Rainie & Wellman, 2012, p. 173, 177). The push/pull literature remains largely unaltered since their incorporation into theories in the 1980s (Kirkwood, 2009, p. 346).[5]

Push factors are numerous and include forces such as job dissatisfaction, receiving no help by an employer for professional development or otherwise being mentored, the aforementioned changing landscape of the institutions and practices of work, and different constraining forces and the particular needs of family life (such as flexibility in scheduling) (Kirkwood, 2009, p. 354). Other authors add to push factors with attention being paid to issues such as labour discrimination, frustration with wage gaps, and glass ceilings/sticky floors (Zgheib, 2018, pp. 770-71). Interestingly, the push to entrepreneurship as a method of bypassing workplace discrimination (through the freedom provided by working for one's self) is explored frequently in the literature (e.g. Williams & Horodnic, 2015, p. 225; Willsdon, 2005, p. 111). Push factors are argued to

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5 While some newer push/pull factors will be partially covered in Section 5.1.3 later in the thesis, there is not room in this study to engage in a full update and development of all contemporary push/pull accounts.

be experienced differently in terms of gender (Kirkwood, 2009, pp. 354-5), ethnicity (Zgheib, 2018, p. 771), and sexual orientation (Willsdon, 2005, p. 111).

Pull factors are more prevalent in the literature, as entrepreneurs who experienced pull factors are often more financially successful and hence more visible and readily available to study (Bowman, 2007, p. 346; Kirkwood, 2009, p. 346). These pull factors can include forces such as independence, the attraction of wealth and money, desire for a challenge/need for achievement, seeing an opportunity, and lifestyle (such as 'ecopreneuers'—environmentally-conscious entrepreneurs who wish to conduct business in a way that mirrors their approach to green production and consumption practices) (Kirkwood, 2009, pp. 352-4). Overwhelmingly, "the freedom to:…" be one's own boss or to make one's own financial decisions are the strongest attractors drawing people towards entrepreneurship (Abbey, 2002, p. 70; Chowdhury, Terjesen & Audretsch, 2015, pp. 128-9; Dorin & Alexandru, 2014, p. 447; Kuckertz, Berger & Mpeqa, 2015, p. 2; Perrone, Vickers & Jackson, 2015, p. 197; Wright, 2015, p. 36). Although it is worth remembering Hartog *et al.'s* (2010) note that while financial reward is important to a vast number of entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial activity *per se* is not driven by income maximization to the exclusion of all other factors (p. 950).

It is possible, as Zgheib (2018, p. 769) has demonstrated, to categorize push/pull factors and organize them into a framework of micro-, meso-, and macro-level factors. *Micro-level* approaches include such things as measurements of an entrepreneur's persona. *Meso-level* analysis is formed by amalgamating the micro-level factors to centre around the immediate environment of the proto-entrepreneur/individual in a particular business setting. *Macro-level* factors are informed by analyses of the wider environment

in which the enterprise itself is situated. This includes, for example, different population groups contained in a society, society itself, the macro-level economy, wider culture(s), and the legal framework(s) which shape daily business operations from the top-down (ibid.).

Micro-scale	Meso-scale	Macro-scale	
Entrepreneur's characteristics	Organizational processes	*Formal*	
Motivation	Policies and practices	Legal concepts	
Personality traits	Credibility and legitimacy	Public intervention	
Self-perception	Gender relations	Demographics	
Experience, education	Employment opportunities	Economic growth	
Opportunity, recognition	Social performance	Technology	
Individual agency			
Subjective interpretation			
Features of Firm		*Informal*	
Management		Normative structures	
Size, goal		Societal stratification	**Table I.**
Profit performance		National tradition	Multi-level integrative
		Cultural values	framework of
			entrepreneurship
Sources: Jamali (2009), Syed and Ozbilgin (2009), North (1990)			

Table 1 (from Zgheib, 2018, p. 769): Integrating the different conceptual approaches.

Zgheib's (ibid.) approach to sorting these micro-, meso-, and macro-level constraints places push factors as related to business downsizing and changing employment practices (p. 771) and, as such, push factors are largely represented at the macro-level. Pull factors, conversely, are mostly centered around individual autonomy and expanding enterprise culture, which are present at the micro- and meso-levels (ibid.). All taken together, Zgheib's (2018, p. 772) integrative framework for organizing push pull factors by their level of analysis is instructive. Yet importantly, even within Zgheib's framework, gender is *still* overlooked as a variable for worthy of study within its own

right (Kirkwood, 2009, p. 346). This absence of gender as an identifiable factor impedes

analysis of the differences between men and women becoming entrepreneurs. Of critical

importance to this study, it also impedes analysis of gender-variant peoples, such as

transgender, nonbinary, lesbian, and gay. It is to this topic that the discussion now turns.

2.3 Networks

The literature on networks has benefited from input of scholars from multiple

disciplinary backgrounds. Their research has analyzed how networks form, how they

change, and how they are utilized. Literature surrounding networks in sociology largely

focuses on the importance of *social structures* (Ryle, 2012, p. 48). While some scholars

focus more on networks as collections of "persons, groups, or organizations" (Scott &

Davis, 2007, p. 278), other scholars expanded the scope of network theory to include

non-human actors such as concepts and objects (ibid, p. 280; Grint & Nixon, 2016, p.

124). Network theory has conventionally been unconcerned with particular attributes of

an individual (such as gender, ethnicity, and so on) as *relationships* are primarily seen as

the meaningful unit of measurement (Ryle, 2012, p. 48). This framing of analysis

persists at all of the micro-/meso-/macro-levels of network analysis. For the purposes of

this study, the smallest node would be a single person, whereas the largest would be a

single corporate entity (as largely experienced from the 'outside'; internally, of course, a

corporation is a dense thicket of connections between its various employees and

associated members).

Expressly, the definition of networks by Scott and Davis (2007) as "nodes and

ties" (p. 278) will be the theoretical reference point for this study. Though, this straight-

forward definition is situated among two types of networks; one being more 'informal'

while the other is more 'formal'. An 'informal network' is a term used for the purposes

of clarity but should be understood as drawing from the definition of "personal

communities"—networks which are socially connected, but not bound strictly to

physical locations (Scott & Carrington, 2011, p. 2). This approach to networks helps to

highlight individual ties between differing nodes in a network to a particular node of

interest (ibid., p. 101), which can be *sparsely knit*—where members in a network are not

necessarily directly tied to each other most of the time (ibid., p. 108). *Nodes* in these

networks are taken to be persons, groups, or organizations; *ties* are the different ways

nodes relate to each other (ibid, p. 278; Scott, 2013, p. 3). Commonly, ties represent a

relationship stemming from interactions between nodes, whether those interactions are

positive, negative, or neutral. A mapping of nodes and ties can reveal behaviors and

trends in the network. The literature has a wealth of terms to help describe these

behaviors and trends. Easley and Kleinberg (2010) describe *homophily* as nodes which

share similar characteristics, and thus likely to share ties (pp. 77-78). When a network of

nodes share similar characteristics in this way, the network can be described as

homophilous (Ryle, 2012, p. 49). Said differently, a 'node' consisting of a white,

straight, cisgender man will be much more likely to have ties to other men of the same

characteristics. Likewise a gay, white man would be more likely to be tied to other gay,

white men. Importantly, *brokers* are particular nodes which are positioned in such as

way as to broker interactions between other—otherwise unconnected—nodes the

network; these nodes may only be described as brokers when ties between otherwise

unconnected nodes could not simply be created by those nodes at will (Scott &

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Carrington, 2011, p. 45) When describing thedistance a node has to other nodes in the networks, *degree centrality* is used (Scott & Carrington, 2011, p. 34);

All networks that contain humans exist as 'open systems' (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, p. 38; Easley & Kleinberg, 2010, p. 5; Scott & Davis, 2007, p. 31)—because humans are not isolatable from the external world, which means that the network is situated within multiple fluid and dynamic social forces which have little absolute form. This means the networks are subject to influence from environmental and social factors, such as changes in communication technologies which impact communication within a network (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, pp. 172-3). Furthermore, the networks themselves are not static arrangements, as new nodes may appear or existing nodes may disappear within already established networks (Barabási, 2002, pp. 81-2).

This understanding of networks is important for this study as it places emphasis upon how certain nodes (i.e. gay entrepreneurs, business establishments, and professional organizations such as Chambers of Commerce) relate and interact with each other (i.e. create ties) to potentially form (semi-)enduring networks. One potential approach for examining a network is an *ego network*. Scott and Davies (2007) describe this ego network approach as examining nodes which branch from single node (p. 281). That singular node is an *ego*, and the data collected about the resulting branching connections is *egocentric* (Scott & Carrington, 2011, p. 20). After determining shape of an ego network, the focus of a study can become an analysis of those connections to other people in the network (alters) to the single ego node instead of the entire network of simultaneous ties (Ryle, 2012, p. 48). Ego networks are useful for describing a high concentration of ties of one individual node's connectedness with other nodes in a

network. Within an organization setting, if ego-networks are mapped together it can give an alternative map of that organization—one that is likely highly different from the 'official' structure of that organization.

In network theory, 'density' is a term that describes the many potential connections which may exist between nodes to other nodes in a network, and is generally used to indicate how connected a network is (Department of the Army, 2014, p. 4-20) . These nodes can be also described in terms of *centrality*, which, among other things, can measure the influence of particular person(s) in a network.Similarly, network 'diversity' describes large numbers of different nodes in a network having broad connections to other nodes and across multiple spheres of activity(which also means that they are increasingly dissimilar from each other) (Ryle, 2012, p. 49). Said differently, ties between nodes can cluster or sprawl; these ties can be in relation to particular nodes in a network, or describing the interconnectedness of the network more broadly. Rainie and Wellman (2012 p. 177) note that, conventionally, the densest networks were often found in a defined physical space, such as an office building. Contemporary network analyses have been expanded in their scope by the rise of innovations such as the internet, social media platforms, and cellular phones (ibid., p. 173). Social networks, note several authors, range in scale from interpersonal networks to interorganizational networks and beyond (Easley & Kleinberg, 2010, p. 1; Rainie & Wellman, 2012, p. 177; Scott & Davis, 2007, p. 286). In short, networks have moved away from being largely *geographically* dense interconnections of nodes (Scott & Carrington, 2011, p. 2). 'Disruptive' technological advances has implications for how networks operate in the contemporary social and business environments.

Networks, note several authors, range in scale from interpersonal to interorganizational and beyond (Easley & Kleinberg, 2010, p. 1; Hofmann, 2015, p. 715; Rainie & Wellman, 2012, p. 177; Scott & Davis, 2007, p. 286). Grint and Nixon (2016) make an important note that managerial networks are not solely about directing staff in a bureaucratic structure—they are also about resources and distribution of those resources, interactions with legal systems, and information exchanges with governmental regulatory bodies (p. 125). Furthermore, networks do not necessarily need to have nodes that mirror each other in scale—some nodes may be an individual actor, while others may represent an entire team of employees, and other nodes still may be entire governmental bodies or departments. In a supply chain, workers at every level rely on co-workers, managers, and customers to produce goods and services (McDonald, Gaddis, Trimble & Hamm, 2013, p. 13).

As such, networks of nodes and ties can often be invisible, note Rainie and Wellman (2012, p. 38), yet our place in those networks shape our decision-making as individual actors. A person may be placed on a corporate board of executives, and while their individual merit may certainly justify doing so, more precious are the contacts that the person possesses (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, p. 39). It is in this sense that networks and Bourdieu's concept of fields are complimentary in some measure.[6] As Bourdieu notes, a field allows charting of (contested) relations; or at least, a charting of relations only made visible through interactions (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 29). Furthermore, Bourdieu posits that each position in the field is subjectively defined by the other positions in that

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[6] Bourdieu's discussion of fields is in Section 2.2.2.1 in this chapter.

field and by the system in which they are all situated—amongst other things (Bottero & Crossley 2011, p. 100; Bourdieu, 1993, p. 30). The researcher is tasked with finding and locating each agent or institution in its relationships with all others in the field (Bourdieu, as quoted by Bottero & Crossley, 2011, p. 101). This framework is complimentary to the mapping of a network, especially an ego network (as detailed above). Fields, then, can be a useful conceptual means and measure for analysing in more qualitative terms the mapping of a network(s), which usually receives quantitative analysis.

It is also possible to use network analysis to examine processes of marginalization. Possibly as a result of a social characteristic, or as a result of unfavorable interactions in the workplace, marginalized individuals have a much more difficult time, for instance, advancing their careers (McDonald, Gaddis, Trimble & Hamm, 2013, p. 13). The argument traces with Bourdieu's theory of social capital and fields (both discussed in this chapter), as the position being defined in a subjective system (ibid., p. 29) could just as easily have negative connotations as positive. In this fashion, the relations between nodes (or the relations made visible though interactions, as per Bourdieu) will likely be expressed as both positive and negative demonstrating the dynamic nature of fields. (It also raises the possibility of nodes having 'rejective' properties, whereby the node rejects connections from new nodes based upon some property of the new node the original node finds disagreeable—e.g. a homophobe learning that a new business contact is a gay man). In short, the institution of work and the networks that populate it can facilitate the rewarding of nodes which have more centrality; that is, that they connect other nodes in the network to each other. These

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nodes are well-positioned to mobilize social capital, and see actualized their investments in favorable outcomes—personally, professionally, or otherwise. Nodes which are less central—dissimilar to other nodes in the network, and thus are less connected—have fewer opportunities to similarly mobilize social capital investments. . However, these processes may not necessarily be uniform in their application by the nodes in a network—or the players in a field.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is also relevant in the literature on networks. For example, Bourdieu (1985, p. 730) notes that if actors are close in social space (if they occupy a similar stratum within a field), the habitus of those actors is similarly close; in effect, actors are drawn to form concrete relations. Similarly, Bottero and Crossley (2011) write that 'actors are more likely to form and sustain social contracts with those socially similar to themselves' (p. 102). In this way, the treatment of habitus by both Bourdieu, and Bottero and Crossley is similar to the concept of homophily discussed previously. Bottero and Crossley further note that while these affinities between socially similar actors exist (approximating the same habitus), the ways by which capital is i) distributed by to actors in a field, and ii) the means by which those actors mobilize distributed capital varies despite social similarities (ibid., p. 103).

Authors in the scholarship have noted concerns with Bourdieu's concept of fields as it has been developed in network theory. Bottero and Crossley (2011) posit that Bourdieu's framework is inconsistent as it rejects the emphasis of empirical ties in a field and instead relies heavily on the tacit notion of interconnectedness in field theory (p. 100). How these two concepts—ties and interconnectedness—are discrete phenomenon has not fully been addressed by Bourdieu (Bottero and Crossley, 2011, p. 99-101). It

should be stated that while an integrated framework which marries these two different concepts would be entirely appropriate for a study of this nature, it is not the primary focus of this research study and, as such, the concepts will be utilized as complimentary without placing an emphasis on reconciling them.

2.4 Integrating and Developing the Conceptual Framework

The literature contained so far in each section of this literature review chapter—entrepreneurship, gender, and networks—each contained partial elements for addressing the question of how gay men conduct business activities while navigating masculine identities as entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurship literature was shown to have *some* attention paid to how certain minority groups (including gay men) conduct themselves as entrepreneurs. Yet this was sparse at best (Galloway, 2011). Even in more contemporary studies of sexual minority entrepreneurs, the focus was either not on gay men expressly (Pijpers & Maas, 2013) or was focused more on entrepreneurial *motivations* (Waite & Denier, 2016) rather than *experiences* as entrepreneurs. Bourdieu's *fields* and *habitus* may provide a more keen insight to whether an 'unfit' between these concepts provides a more full explanation for gender and sexual minority (GSM) entrepreneurs starting their own firms. In all such cases, the literature would benefit by the addition of a contemporary study of gay men entrepreneurs.

The literature in the gender section provided robust, foundational frameworks for understanding the differences between sex and gender; for linking gender and masculinity; and establishing parallels between elements of masculinity and entrepreneurship. For the purpose of this study, the literature gathered for review was

focused along three avenues: dramaturgy/ performativity (Butler, 1999; Goffman, 1959), hegemony (Boothman, 2008; Connell, 2005), and the fragmented forms of masculinity (Aboim, 2010; Connell, 2005). By using these themes, this research aims to engage the notions that: (i) gender is a performance of larger cultural scripts; (ii) performances at the individual, micro-level cascade upward into meso-level, and then macro-level understandings of what a 'good' performance is; and (iii) these performances are not always evaluated at the macro-level, nor performed at the micro-level in the same ways by different actors.

The chapter on Networks details the technical terms and mechanisms for network theory, focusing on the describable features and relations of networks. Literature is gathered from prominent authors in the field (Easley & Kleinberg, 2010; Grint and Nixon, 2016; Hofmann, 2015, p. 715; Rainie & Wellman, 2012; Scott & Davis, 2007) to additionally explore networks in a more abstracted sense. In this abstraction, Bourdieu's (1993) concepts of fields and habitus are brought in to bridge and make meaningful simultaneously the gaps between abstraction of networks into theoretical constructions for analysis as well as the generalizability of those analysis into other empirical instances of networks (Bottero & Crossley 2011).

2.4.1 Gender and Sexual Minority Men, Entrepreneurship, and Networking

For gay men wishing to be entrepreneurs, Bell & Binnie (2004), Galloway (2011), Pijpers & Maas (2013), Shepherd & Patzelt (2015), and Willsdon (2005) detailed numerous barriers to entry and participation in entrepreneurial activities. Examples

included: locating and shoring space for queer storefront where much of the available real estate has been developed around business and services catered to heterosexual peoples expressly (Bell & Binnie, 2004, p. 1810); this risks of being either too flamboyant or, conversely, not fitting into heterosexual expectations of what a gay man 'should be' like (Galloway, 2011, p. 892). Indeed, this may make potential customers more adverse to continued custom of a business and raises the stakes higher for failure due to harsher and more pathologized evaluations of success and failure because the entrepreneur is a sexual minority (Shepard & Patzelt, 2015, p. 259). Importantly, there are several 'performances' by gay entrepreneurs that this study will consider: (i) out gay men who perform as gay in all or most of their networks; (ii) out gay men who yet perform as straight in most or all of their networks; and (iii) closeted gay men who perform as straight in most or all of their networks.

Another barrier identified in the literature is exclusion from 'formal' business support networks such as business associations and banks (Dhaliwal, 2008, p. 232; Farr-Wharton & Brunetto, 2009, p. 190; Phillipson *et al*, 2006, p. 41; Robinson & Stubberud, 2009, p. 85; Tilcsik, 2011, p. 620). Specifically gay men often face discrimination for not embodying an "ideal masculinity" (Connell, 2005, p. 83), an ideal which strongly correlates aspects of entrepreneurialism with specific assumptions of masculinity—namely compulsory heterosexuality (Coleman & Lohan, 2009, p. 213) and accordingly facing sanctions from those individuals, organizations, and institutions when gay men do not conform to these expectations. Although gay entrepreneurs are more likely—by up to 80%—to be openly homosexual, i.e. 'out' (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2015, p. 259), this does not alleviate them completely of having to develop techniques to reconcile a

subordinated (Connell, 2005, p. 83) masculine identity with expectations of what an

entrepreneur 'should be'. These expectations, furthermore, become more specific for

GSMs in the institution of work: those who are out are expected to be "normal gay"

(Galloway, 2011, p. 892), that is, they are expected to act within a certain set of 'normal'

parameters that fall under heteronormative criteria; in short, there is to be no 'gaying up'

of the workplace. As such, many homosexual men and women will conceal their

homosexuality completely from their employers; this is prominent in the corporate world

and the institution of work more broadly as "the deepest of closets is the corporate

closet" (Jefferson, 1991, as cited by Willsdon, 2005, p. 110). These tensions are

reflected, in part, by research performed by Galloway (2011) which describes significant

numbers of gay entrepreneurs who are not yet "out", and experience entrepreneurship as

a constant threat of being "outed"—and fear their businesses and personal lives will

suffer as a result (p. 900). Each type of performance detailed above has corresponding

scripts, which can be contentious for both the actor as well as the audience should

performances not be evaluated favorably (i.e. to be discriminated against).

These barriers—fear and discrimination—are outlined by Pijpers & Mass (2013),

who show gay men rely more on support and resources from *informal* networks, such as

friends and family, than they do from formal networks. While these informal networks

are indeed valuable (Bowman, 2007; Pijipers & Maas 2013) in that they provide support

and resources not typically available from formal networks, informal networks seldom

provide the wider social capital largely seen as necessary for success as an entrepreneur.

In particular, an actor's performance as an entrepreneur is more positively evaluated

when informal networking is downplayed or erased completely (Bowman, 2007). This behavior is reflected in both straight men and gay men who perform as straight (ibid.).

The literature on gender presents an interesting bridge between the other two literatures reviewed here. Entrepreneurs, in many ways, reflect the hegemonic ideals of masculinity (Coleman & Lohan, 2009, p. 21; Connell, pg. 83). The way that entrepreneurs network is further a reflection of these ideals: increased engagement with formal networks and less open reliance on informal networks arguably signals masculine-entrepreneurial-straight performances. The literature on the varied forms of masculinity provides nuance to these performances, enabling explanation to be more than a binary between 'hegemonic or nothing' comparisons. Furthermore these variations on masculinity off the possibility for triangulation between the masculinities identified above.

Though there is notable research into deviance (i.e. racialized as well as gender and sexual minorities) and entrepreneurship over the decades (Bowman, 2005; Pijpers & Maas, 2013; Waite & Denier, 2016; Willsdon, 2005) as a percentage of the literature these studies are scarce indeed. Consequently much more research needs to be undertaken for these phenomena to be properly studied in more detail. Furthermore, few of these studies have been authored in the last decade or more (i.e. 2008-2019). Given the overall absence of studies which expressly investigate the accounts of gay entrepreneurs and given the lack of consensus in accounts of internal and external forces that influence and inform business-related decision by gay men (both those 'out' and those 'closeted'), it lends much weight to the importance and necessity in studying this population further. It is to meet this lacuna in the literature that this study is aimed.

The review and synthesis of these different areas of literature has lent itself to the formation of five research questions. These questions are each a reflection of how the literature helped to guide and shape the conceptual framework employed during the collection and analysis of the interview data, as well as the drafting of the thesis document. These questions will additionally be revisited during the findings section. Refined from the gender and masculinity literature:

i)   Coleman & Lohan (2009, p. 213) wrote about individual actors who embody exalted patterns of masculinity but are still subject to a hierarchical ordering due to their differing masculine identities. What has been the experience of gay entrepreneurs from individuals performing conventional notions of masculinity when they find out that the entrepreneur is gay?

Refined from the entrepreneurship literature:

ii)   Shepard & Patzelt (2015, p. 259) detail that minority business owners often face harsher evaluations of their performance as entrepreneurs if they fail. How do gay entrepreneurs' perceptions of the local populations attitudes to homosexuality affect their decision to engage with particular networks?

iii)   Bell & Binnie (2004, p. 1810), Galloway (2011, p. 892), and Shepard & Patzelt (2015, p. 259) all detailed barriers gay men face when endeavoring to become entrepreneurs. To what extent has being a gay man positively or negatively impacted a given entrepreneur's experience of owning and/or operating a commercial business?

Refined from the networking literature:

iv)   Rainie and Wellman (2012, p. 38) note that once networks are established they in part shape the decisions and actions (i.e. constraining or enabling different abilities) of the actors that occupy those networks. How closely do the networks accessed by sexual and gender minority entrepreneurs resemble the networks identified in academic literature as existing for heterosexual entrepreneurs; and if there is an identifiable difference what effects does it appear to create?

v)   McDonald, Gaddis, Trimble & Hamm (2013, p. 13) observed that people with a minority status may face difficulty in their career trajectories due to dissimilarity to other nodes in a network. How and in what ways do gay entrepreneurs experience their sexual minority status in the networks they utilize?

3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate the experiences of GSM men (i.e. aged 18+) in setting up and running businesses as entrepreneurs and what support (what 'networks') they utilised in doing so. In exploring those experiences, the study utilised both semi-structured interviews and short surveys to extract the participants' experiences navigating the socio-economic world as a gay entrepreneur. Purposefully, the study attempted to extract the good, the bad, and the indifferent in terms of gay entrepreneurs' experiences. In recruiting from a population that is difficult to access, the study used a combination of purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling methods. These methods were judged the most appropriate for both collecting said narratives, as well as understanding the weight that both formal and informal networks have in doing business as a gay cisgender man, who is also an entrepreneur aged eighteen and older.

3.1 Snowball, Purposive, & Non-probabilistic Sampling

This study employed fourteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews with gender and sexual minority SME entrepreneurs (and of which one of whom was an agent of a formal business support institution). At the time of the interview, participants were asked if they would complete a short-survey that gave additional contextual information about the background and the activities of the participant. The interview and survey data was complimented with secondary source data from Statistics Canada and provincial governments from Canadian Atlantic Provinces. The interviews took place at three

different locations in the Atlantic Provinces: Fredericton, New Brunswick; Halifax, Nova Scotia; and Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. (St. John's, Newfoundland was also considered as a site for interviews, but no initial participants could be recruited there. Due to the prohibitive cost associated with visiting in an attempt at 'chance recruitment' through direct canvassing of businesses, it was removed as a research site.)

As this study initially targeted the experiences of cisgender, gay men—sampling was purposive in that informants were recruited based upon shared traits or characteristics of the phenomenon being studied (Mays & Pope, 1995, p. 110): namely being a sexual or gender minority male. The convenience sampling method involved recruiting informants for the study who are already known to the investigator(s) (Lewis-Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liao 2004, p. 1044-5; Low, 2012, p. 90); whereas the snowball sampling method involved asking one informant to suggest other informants to contact (Low, 2012, p. 90).

Informant recruitment was achieved through a combination purposive, snowball, and convenience sampling. Initially, the purposive sampling entailed the identifying and then contacting local formal business associations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, Provincial and City Business Support Bureaus), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning, two-spirited, and intersex (LGBTQ2I+) information networks (such as Fredericton Gender & Sexual Minorities Group, PFLAG, SPECTRUM, and Qmunity). Both types of organisation were mailed letters (where an address was listed) and then supported by three series of emails to named individuals (either gleaned from information web pages or gained through calling the contact numbers of the organisation) to attempt to generate a response. These organisations were supplemented by contacting faculty

members in the Business Departments/Faculties of universities in the proposed cities as well as inquiring with local contacts—such as friends & acquaintances—known to the researcher, where they were present.

Once identified and contact had been made, a snowball sampling method was engaged and respondents were asked for the contact details of anyone or any other organization that they knew of who might also be of interest to the study. (They were also asked to pass on information to any individuals/ organizations who they thought might be interested but who might not wish to be initially formally contacted by the study.) After completion of the interviews, participants were asked again for the details of other people/organizations whom they thought might be interested in taking part in the study.

In total, 14 interviews were conducted using the purposive and snowball sampling methods. Taken together, the purposive sampling method was supported by the convenience and snowball sampling methods because 'gayness' is still stigmatized in different ways and 'visible' gay entrepreneurs are small in number to easily identify and recruit. These research methods were appropriate for attempting to access, engage, and recruit respondent from a niche population of stigmatized people who are a non-visible minority.

3.2 Interviews and Thematic Analysis

In McCracken's *The Long Interview* (1988, p. 10) extended interviews—i.e. interviews at one hour plus in length—are argued to enable researchers to use detailed coding techniques map out complicated themes and ideas and determine how those themes or ideas are situated in a participant's particular worldview. Long interviews help

researchers take 'messy' data and, through the use of different coding and analytical

techniques, arrange this data into a narrative (ibid., p. 19). This is a powerful research

technique which allowed for a larger breadth of experiences to become emergent to the

study, which then in turn helps to draw lines to theories and concepts used to generate the

interviews themselves (Mays & Pope, 1995, p. 111; McCracken, 1988, p. 19).

Analysing social research data in the form of interviews takes place in two ways.

One is an *a priori* framework generated by the areas under study and which informed the

questions (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 88). The second method the generation of answers

generated *inductively*, here themes emerge from the data both during coding itself (i.e.

identifying recurrent patterns of language/content/etc.) as well as during analysis of the

coding itself (ibid.). The study was, therefore, able to assess expected *a priori* themes

(i.e. were they, or were they not, present?) as well as respond inductively to new themes

as they emerged (ibid., p. 86-7). The *a priori* approach connected previously established

concepts from the literature to possible themes which reflected the values, theoretical

orientations, and personal experiences of the study (ibid., p. 88). Both approaches were

deemed appropriate for the analysis technique and, having been made explicit, provide a

level of *rigour* to this qualitative research—i.e. the researcher did not just 'make up' their

findings (Silverman, 1998, pp. 110-11; Barbour, 2001, p. 1116; Kirk and Miller, 1994, p.

54; Stige, Malterud, & Midtgarden, 2009, pp. 1504-5).

The resulting thematized data was measured against the previously established

literature, as well as statistical data from Statistics Canada. Taken together, the generation

of thematized data enabled the research questions formulated from the literature to be

used to interrogate the thematic data clusters. By using this process, the study has

generated data on both seldom-explored intersections of topics, as well as strengthening

already established works with more breadth and context. All participants provided

informed consent for the collection and the use of their data. Anonymity and privacy was

maintained throughout the processes of interviewing, coding, drafting, and submitting

(see appendix C).

3.3 Protection and Confidentially of Research Participants

Precautions for the confidentiality of participants were replete throughout all processes of

the study and the future dissemination of results. These precautions were in compliance

with all Tri-Council requirements (TCPS2, 2014, p. 6-11). This included (a) respect for

persons through the recognition of autonomy and the process of free, informed, ongoing

consent; (b) concern for welfare through the provision of relevant information to

participants, as well as minimizing any risks associated with participating in the study;

and (c) justice through fair and equitable treatment, up to and including the assurance that

the data provided from their participation will not be arbitrarily or otherwise

unreasonably excluded from analysis.

3.3.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is noted among different scholars as particularly important in qualitative

research (Altheide & Williams, 1998, pp. 492-4, Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002, p. 384;

Creswell, 2007, pp. 180-2; Stige, Malterud, & Midtgarden, 2009, pp. 1504-5). An active

and, importantly, *reflexive* engagement was used to help make clear and to convey the

author's own interpretive framework (Creswell, 2007, pp. 182). This also creates opportunities for readers and evaluators to critique methodological choices made by the study's author (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, pp. 85-6). Following accepted reflexive practice, the author noted one characteristic that did produce an interesting direction for exploration while researching.

Specifically, this characteristic was the "insider status" on the part of the author which generated an assumption prior to the research that participants would fall into one of two camps regarding their 'political' experience of being in a sexual minority. The first was that there would be 'assimilationists', who do not see their minority status as particularly important and prefer that different LGBT2QI+ groups 'fold' into mainstream as soon as possible (if indeed they are not already as such). The second were 'segregationists', who are mostly strongly aligned with political activism and continue to explore different ways in which LGBT2QI+ minorities are repressed, protections which need to be instituted, and cultural distinctness which needs to be maintained. Though this distinction holds little weight in academic literature, it was tacitly present after an adult lifetime spent as an activist navigating these sentiments held by fellow activist travelers.

It was through chronicling this bias, challenging it, and seeing emergent themes as a result that the code of 'natural / organic' came to be. This code represented sentiments of the participants which fell in line with not wanting to be constricted by outside forces, either in their business or as an individual. Those participants, for whom the code emerged, often expressed wanting things to be more 'organic,'—i.e. they had an aversion to structured approaches and interactions. So, without having challenged the assumption of assimilationist/segregationist, the study may have misinterpreted an aversion to formal

business networks as solely a precautionary measure for minimizing discrimination. Instead, the theme of 'natural / organic' helped to further explain the nuances of the previously detailed aversion to formal business networks: participants were simply weary of the tedium and constraints that sometimes accompany interactions with formal networks. This reflexive process, in turn, lead the study to literature in theme with aversion said constraints of formal networks with entrepreneurs, and the study benefitted as a whole from a niche article (See Jammaers & Zanoni, 2018) which may have otherwise not been reviewed.

4: Findings

4.0 Introduction

This chapter will present the data generated by the research study before situating those findings in relation to the established literature in the related fields and the theoretical framework generated from the literature review. This chapter will be divided into four sections. First, a sociodemographic description of the research participants as well as a snapshot of their experiences. Second, a discussion of the prominence of informal networks among participants and the different shapes those networks take. Third, the role these informal networks played in experiential outcomes for participants when in start-up stages of opening a business, and dealing with formal business networks and institutions; and finally, the discussions of themes emergent from the interplay of informal networks with formal business networks and institutions.

4.1 A socio-demographic of the participants

In total 14 research participants were recruited following several attempts at initial recruitment and then following, in part, the snowballing methodology outlined in the preceding chapter. The participants interviewed for this research varied greatly in age (the youngest being 18 years old to the oldest being 68 years old). They also varied considerably in their placement in the socioeconomic strata (from lower strata to higher strata, as evidenced by the StatsCan Table 11-10-0193-01 on upper income limit, income share and average of adjusted market, total and after-tax income by income decile). Two participants were in the lowest decile, four participants were in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th decile,

three participants were in the 7th and 8th decile, two were in the 9th decile, and no

participants were in the 10th decile of income distribution. Taken together these responses

resemble a normal distribution. They also differed greatly in their stage in, what may be

called, the 'entrepreneurial life cycle' (i.e. from pre-revenue on their first venture, to

having their third company established). Of all the 14 participants, only two reported

significant business failures (with one who had failed at all his entrepreneurial ventures[7]),

the remaining 12 participants all had at least one business success (which I take to mean

to a business that operated for at least 1 year before either folding, being sold, or being

passed on to other owners).

Initially this study was set-up to examine the experiences of gay men

entrepreneurs. However, the difficulty in reaching those specific participants was

somewhat compensated by an unexpected broadening of the entrepreneurs responding to

the study's initial contact requests. Consequently, and to offset the lack of gay men

respondents, the participants taking part in the study was widened to include sexual and

gender minority men and women, as well as transgender people who identified as gay,

straight, bisexual, or other. This led to a very diverse pool of participants which in turn,

lead to diverse accounts of starting a business. Interestingly, even among the diversity,

the responses were still largely unambiguous, with commonalities present that point to a

largely uniform—yet underreported in the existing literature—experience in being an

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[7] Participant 2 reported a significant failure in his firm. This firm was still in operation at the time of interview, but between low revenue and significant debt, he was not optimistic about the experience as a whole.

entrepreneur from a sexual/gender minority. It is these commonalties which inform the discussion in this following chapter.

Alongside undertaking interviews, participants were asked to complete a short survey. Only two participants opted not to complete the survey; and there were only a very few surveys which had a small number of answers left blank (n=22). As such, due to lower than hoped for respondent numbers, the two refusals, and to the questions left blank, meaningful quantitative statistical analysis cannot be performed to compliment the qualitative analysis. However, the survey data that was collected helped to inform a more complete profile of the participants—namely which ones enjoyed more success and which had employed the services of the start-up community and social media. Two participants were in high socioeconomic strata ($75,001-100,000 p.a. income) while only one made less than $18,000. The rest fell between $18,000 and 50,000. With the exception of the two forms opted for non-completion, participants uniformly identified as white / Caucasian. All identified as "out", either expressly on the survey or by way of their answers to the interview schedule. Nearly all of the participants had a form of post-secondary education, be it college, university, or trades certification. Three of the 12 survey respondents lived farther away than 5 kilometers from their place of business, while the rest resided within 5 kilometers. All participants who opted to disclose informed they used social media for their companies, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter—and although not every participant used every social media outlet, they all used Facebook.

Figure 1: Summary Table of Participants

Selected Characteristics	Age	Ethnicity	Religious affiliation	Education	Income
Participant 1	31	Caucasian	n.a	University	75,001-100,000
Participant 2	37	White	n.a	Grade 10	18,001-25,000
Participant 3	41	n.a	n.a	High School Diploma	50,001-75,000
Participant 4	55	White	Multi-denominational	College/university degree	50,001-75,000
Participant 5	30	White	Atheist	Finished Graduate	50,001-75,000
Participant 6	25	White	n.a	College/university degree	under 18,000
Participant 7	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
Participant 8	25	White	n.a	College/university degree	18,001-25,000
Participant 9	41	White	Christian	College/university degree	75,000-100,000
Participant 10	18	White	n.a	High school Diploma	under 18,000
Participant 11	37	White	Unitarian Universalist	College/university degree	n.a
Participant 12	35	White	n.a	Some college/university	25,001-50,000
Participant 13	68	White	Protestant	Trade certificate	25,001-50,000
Participant 14	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data

Below is an outline of the data generated by the empirical research. After the responses to the main question areas has been laid out, the discussion will move on to analysing that content for other significant aspects highlighted (or not) by the theoretical framework developed earlier in the thesis.

4.2 Informal networks: prominence, place, and shape

One of the most significant early aspects is the importance the informal networks of participants provided as keystones for them to understand their experiences. This took two important forms: (i) starting a business, and (ii) interacting with formal networks and institutions during the start-up phases of those businesses as well as ongoing interactions as a matter of daily operations. *Informal support networks* were largely coded from the

interview data—these networks included friends, family, romantic partners, business

partners, and different non-business-oriented communities to which participants

belonged. These informal networks can otherwise understood as personal communities—

networks of social connections which are not necessarily anchored to the notion of

geographic neighborhoods. *Formal networks* took the form of structured business support

entities or institutions, such as incubators, accelerators, accounting firms, lawyer's

offices, and governmental departments geared towards business owners.

Most participants (n=9) identified as having robust informal networks. Nearly all

participants (n=12) had largely positive experiences with their informal networks. These

networks formed crucial support during the critical start-up stages of most participant's

companies. But they also framed the ways in which participants interacted with formal

business networks such as Chambers of Commerce, provincial and municipal agencies

aiming to help entrepreneurs, and the institutions and their agents which entrepreneurs

routinely interact with as a matter of start-up and daily business such as banks, lawyers,

real estate agencies, and accounting agencies.

Informal networks mainly took the form of friends, family, and romantic partners.

These informal networks were sometimes inherited by participants, such as participant 1:

> My parents were entrepreneurs… so, they went into business they own a
> commercial and residential cleaning company. My mom took care of the
> admin and office side, the numbers sort of thing, and my dad took care of the
> work. The elbow grease. I woke up every morning, my bedroom was in the
> basement, and so was the office… So, I would wake up and walk out my door
> on the way to the shower and there's maids everywhere getting ready; folding
> towels and getting ready for the day.

It is through these kinds of networks that participants collected mentors, colleagues, and

social capital which would influence how they would eventually approach

entrepreneurship. In the case of participant 1, he would recognize the hard work needed,

as well as identify the need for certain skillsets before starting a business. After high

school, he obtained a business degree and mentored with different bosses and industry

professionals before taking a lean start-up approach to starting a business.

> It was kind of a convoluted path to come about starting a barbershop
> specifically because not only do I need to have the business skills, but the
> technical skills of actually cutting hair so I did a business degree… I became
> kind of caught up in learning a craft… So, I put the business knowledge aside,
> and then I focused on a skill. Once I considered myself to be strong in both
> aspects, that's when I started writing a business plan, and it was a pretty
> casual thing at the beginning.

Participant 10 also grew up in a household with entrepreneur parents. His mother owned

a store in the town he grew up in, which would later prove to be an asset during his tenor

with Junior Achievers, a long-established organization which teaches youth and building

and running a business:

> My own mother, for example, has a consignment store… and she'd take in
> cases or however many of whatever product it was that we were making this
> year, she would of course take in boxes and put them on display at the store…
> because that's really the only way that people would get the opportunity to
> buy them…

Not all participants were so directly immersed in entrepreneurial processes as youths.

Participant 3's informal network was less robust, but still he benefited from informal ties

which carried forward into his adulthood. He reminisces:

> Where I grew up it was very much a surfy town, everyone surfed, and I never
> surfed. I was the arty one, the crafty one… Grandmother did pottery and
> that's where I got my creative side. Just kind of fell in to customer service,
> and that kind of lead into marketing, and got stuck in marketing…

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This informal mentorship would nurture a creative energy in participant 3, who worked as a marketing manager before eventually starting a successful curio business when later approaching middling age.

This experience was mirrored partially by participant 11, who would start a company with her wife, both into their mid-thirties. Participant 11's parents were also entrepreneurs, though they did not start their own business until more recently—"There's a… Tourism Association that my parents run. They started it, I don't know how long, like five years ago or something…". Though perhaps not as immersed in the processes of business ownership as the brick-and-mortar business as participant 1's childhood, participant 11 still had the informal network that facilitated the casual collection of social capital that would help shape her interactions and attitudes about starting a business. Both her, and participant 12 further reflected:

> 12: When we first moved here, we were introduced to a lot of people and…
> her [participant 11's] parents, are … it surprised me, in fact, about how
> naturally they made that introduction for us when they were like this is ___
> and her wife ___ and they're here to join our business.

> 11: Most of the time the reaction or the response was like: "Oh, your parents
> have been talking about you coming forever!" And like just like "You're
> finally here! Thank god! They'll stop talking about it."

For both participant 11 and participant 12, having informal networks through family helped to establish them in those networks before they had moved to start the business. Some of those networks would later become more formalized business networks as friends and family were also potential clients for the consulting agency that participants 11 and 12 were starting.

Participant 6 likewise had blended points in his informal networks which played out in different ways as he graduated high school, went to art school, and eventually

looked into starting his own antique shop. His mother is a high-achiever who was very

involved in getting women into engineering:

> …My mom is an engineer, and she is super into trying to get more women
> into engineering because they're just not told is that is a possibility, that…not
> that you have to be, but you can be a woman engineer… Maybe there needs to
> be someone being like "you can be queer, and you can own a business, and be
> open and be okay with that"

Though not strictly an entrepreneurial presence, participant 6 grew up in similar

circumstances as other participants who had entrepreneur parents. After art school, he

would decide to begin researching starting his own business, in which his grandmother

would take it upon herself to nurture that interest; his father would also offer support:

> With my antique idea, my grandmother is like as soon as I told her about it
> she was like "OH MY GOD!" we can do this, and we could do that, and she's
> like buying me things for my antique shop and I was like "whoa"... And she's
> buying me these books about things… but she likes to do it and it's super cool
> to have that relationship with her… It's nice to have family support you in
> that, and my parents have been pretty good. I think mostly my dad has been
> like as long you're being smart about it and not wasting money and
> whatever… Like why settle for something that you don't really love when
> you can try and make a business, and if that doesn't work out, you can just do
> something else.

Taken on the whole, the support of friends and family helped to inform participant 6 in

the decision to begin a business, as well as build confidence in that decision.

However, not all participants were privy to such networks from a young age. For

many it would not be until they approached adulthood, or when they were relocating for

their business opportunity, that informal networks would begin to grow. Participant 2

began to grow these networks upon moving across the country:

> I'm fairly well known in the gay community, so in that sense people know
> I'm gay and I own a rafting company… I have a good network of friends that
> kind of keep me grounded and keep me on track…

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While participant 2 did indeed have an informal network of friends which provided him with emotional support during his venture, he would have to grow and establish these networks when moving to the Maritimes.

Participant 12 did benefit from the informal networks her wife, participant 11, was ingrained into—but the overall net lack of support from her own familial network is an interesting exception to most other participant's experiences. However, there were friends who helped to fill in the gap of support otherwise left by her family:

> 12: But family, family is always going to be like that. Friends are a whole other thing. We have a lot of … professional friends, I guess, and so they offered a lot of advice for us…
>
> 11: Yeah, that's true. But many of them from the queer community. Yeah, but that's back in Toronto.
>
> 12: Yeah, no one [physically] here [from the aforementioned queer community], but a lot of support [from that community back home].

Similarly to participant 2, moving left participants 11 and 12 without an informal friend network in their landing area; however this gap in support was filled by the presence of participant 11's parents, and the network that participant 11's parents was establishing in advance of their arrival.

Participant 8 likewise had to establish networks both formal and informal upon moving to the Maritimes. While the college she was attending was a good site to grow these networks, her parents were an important source for support; "My parents did give me a loan of $500... I use canvas, which is an online program—so that was what I paid for with my parents' loan".

Participant 8 sought out mentorship and comradery from online communities, an informal

network which is unique within the participants interviewed for this study:

> I am part of an artist collective on Facebook... [the facilitator]'s pretty great.
> He's kind of like a life coach / mentor to me I guess. He invited me to this
> group on Facebook to interact with other creatives and see how they got their
> businesses started and stuff like that... It's contract work… and I don't really
> have any guidelines to work off of so using that online network of Facebook
> groups to kind of hash out "what should I be doing", "how do I do invoices"
> stuff like this. It's really great.

This informal network proved to be a rich site for consulting colleagues and mentors in

lieu of formal business support networks at the beginning of her freelance work.

Participant 8 would later join an incubator (which will be discussed in further detail in the

discussion section to follow).

Participants 4, 7, 9, 13, and 14 also received a wealth of support from their

informal networks. Participant 4 saw significant benefit from sharing a partner's informal

network:

> I had a partner at the time who was well-connected, and he helped a lot by
> introducing me to a lot of people… People were like "we trust you… We're
> going to trust Participant 4… That he's going to do the kind of work that he
> says he is." So, I haven't done a lot—in fact I don't think I've done any cold-
> calling at all in my life...I think all of my business development via the
> cocktail parties…

Participant 4 would then become integrated into different informal networks which he

would continue to benefit from even after separating with the partner that brought him in

to those networks. It is in those networks that participant 4 would be mentored by

different people and obtain different competencies that would shape how he sees doing

business as a freelancer:

> You'd walk into the office with the invoice in hand and say "Hey, look I have to talk to Mark about this invoice"… if you have an invoice in your hand… you can wander around and stop at the water cooler and say "Hey, Kevin you got any projects coming up? July? Okay I'll give you a call mid-June." And then you wander over to the photocopier and see Fred and you do the same thing with Fred, and then you finally after two hours make your way to Mark and say "Mark what projects you got coming up?" It was an amazing way to do business…

"Phase time", so-dubbed by Participant 4, details the practice above; it was a novel approach to informal navigation through formal business networks. However, phase time was not a common practice—perhaps it is that freelance work was more conducive to this approach; agents of institutions do not necessarily have the same freedom to wander around an office space they are not strictly employees of. Otherwise, this practice might have met sanctions if not performed with some finesse:

> This is after the project is over, and you have no right to be in the office, right? So, this is…we were consultants, we were going into other people's offices to do work and you can't just wander around in someone's office…

This unorthodox way of maneuvering within formal business networks and institutions highlights that informal networks will take a variety of forms, and those interactions may follow vastly differing scripts.

Participant 9, at the time of interview, was on his third successful business venture. As a youth, this participant was involved in the queer community a little more directly than most other participants, as he was working at a gay bar. Although he became less directly tied to the queer community as his career developed and he matured, these networks would come to be instrumental in his third venture:

> As far as support from family and friends, I've had great support there. A little bit about my business, it's a farming business... I actually had 60 family and friends come and help me plant at my orchard back 4 years ago. So that was an amazing support from family and friends. It's only continued as the years go on.

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For participant 9, drawing on a vast informal network meant that thousands, if not tens of thousands, of dollars was saved from the costs of start-up, as well as cleanly circumventing the need to go through temp agencies, procure large start-up capital, do payroll, and other logistical work involved with the agricultural industry. Participant 9 additionally found mentors within the network of his traditional workplace:

> It's someone that I know through an organization… I didn't follow a program if that's what you mean. It's someone that I thought would be valuable and reached out to her and asked if she would be my mentor. I do… in contact with her because I hadn't talked to her in a few years. There's an organization… as an individual in the entrepreneurship ecosystem… I'm a friend of that organization. She's actually the mother of one of their co-op students from years of past.

Though strictly speaking participant 9 worked within the start-up community, his way to finding a mentor was through an informal route (i.e. he was not match-made to a mentor by the formal network he works in).

Participant 7 was well-ingrained into the queer community as a prominent member of their local drag scene. Running an expressly gay-orientated business likely saw benefits from those connections, but it was family which helped keep the business operating smoothly, even during leaner times in an industry with notoriously thin profit margins:

> Other family helped out too, when I needed to buy supplies. Such as my late aunt who a lot of the gay community got to know because she would come to all the drag shows. She came to the drag shows to see me in drag. I did it [i.e. kept the business viable] for a while… but she helped out [in the lean times].

Familial networks were instrumental in helping participant 7 staff the store, keep business afloat, and socialize in the queer community. Participant 7, then, appears as a densely

connected node among several networks which reached from local community to

citywide levels, as well as city-to-city. Participant 7 recalled:

> I used to travel to go visit other places… like… Toronto; not bookstores
> necessarily, but the suppliers that I used… But there was only one place that
> would refuse to deal with me, and that was the… bookshop in Toronto,
> because I was cutting into his business from Atlantic Canada. I wanted to
> work out a deal with him, but he refused because there was nothing there…
> [He] was over three-thousand miles away, in downtown Toronto in the heart
> of Young Street. I was [in the Atlantic Provinces].

While not all nodes in participant 7's informal networks were beneficial, a vast network

was needed for the type of business they were running. Similar to participant 2's

experiences, there was overlapping between informal networks and formal networks at

different points as friends and supports were also sometimes fellow businesspeople.

Participant 13 began being mentored by a neighbor who lived close by, shortly

after finishing high school. He recalled the relationship with a great fondness:

> I'd never met her before… and she had an old dog, so I went over and started
> petting the dog and made her acquaintance and we became the best of friends.
> I ended looking after her, cleaning her house, and painting her walls, and
> shoveling her snow, and cutting her lawn and then when she moved away she
> left me a lot of furniture and a lot of things like that. So… I wrote a thing one
> time on my most memorable character for the newspaper, and it basically said
> how she started me on my business.

Participant 13 would be mentored by this elderly woman, and later bequeathed some

property in-line with the antiques and upholstery businesses he would later come to

manage, and then start-up one himself. The informal network participant 13 established

became important when more formalized routes for upholstery trade certification were

less enticing:

> … So I of course called the Ontario government and they do have
> apprenticeship programs and there was one for upholstery, it was a three year
> course and I did go into… where they have this… School of Upholstering and
> they said "yes" they would teach me. When I asked if I could have a look at

> where I would be learning and the shops and stuff, they were not interested in showing me, not until I paid my money. I really didn't like that sort of idea— why are they hiding something?

Instead of going through trade school, participant 13 merely drove through town until he saw the first upholstery shop he could find—and was immediately taken as an apprentice:

> So… the first place I stopped and talked to was a place called Barrie upholstery… he was a young fellow, and he said "sure I'll teach you"… By the end of the third year I was doing stuff on my own already, and taking stuff up to [him] and so he'd go away on holidays and leave me to run the business.

At the time of the interview, participant 14 was on her second venture (the first being a farm that she helped her wife start). It was when her aunt decided to sell a family-run restaurant that she decided to seize the opportunity to work for herself. Her informal networks, both in her family and in her community were essential during this process:

> My parents were a huge help to the initial setting up and getting things underway and getting things prepared to open. Once they opened, well my partner and I were both working full time, so it was kind of the two of us. I hired all the same staff who had already worked there, so they were definitely instrumental, but the biggest thing was support from the community. It's just been unreal that people never stopped coming, they've constantly been supportive. We're in a really small town in PEI and to be able to be open year-round instead and not just be a seasonal business is pretty crazy.

4.2.3 Negative informal networks

Informal networks like the examples provided above more often than not represented a net positive to the experiences of participants as entrepreneurs. However, for four of the participants, informal networks were not as supportive and indeed represented barriers for establishing business. Markedly, participant 5 experiences the harshest effects of this phenomena:

So, within the company I had a co-founder and there were three mentor/advisors who were also investors… So, my co-founder and those three… knew each other through church… And then I did a little bit of research and I knew which church one of them belong to, and there was a story in the news about this church kicking out a gay person who was a volunteer at the church…

Though Participant 5 was one of the few participants who was match-made to a mentor via formal processes at the incubator he was enrolled in, he was in a situation in which blending of those formal networks with his informal networks was off the table as a possibility. This caused a great deal of distress for Participant 5, and he recognized how this same situation might play out for others:

There was definitely some pressure from that side of it. Because they want everybody to succeed because it was the first year for a new program… At times that was a bit stressful to have a lot riding on your shoulders, kind of thing. With only three people in the program, and they want that to be your life… They were so focused on success and I don't think they considered the human, emotional impact. My opinion is that [this aspect] can be overlooked in a lot of entrepreneurship-type situations.

Participant 5's negative experience was not unique, as other participants also experienced a lack of support along their informal networks and formal networks both. Participant 12, who is married to participant 11, notes a decided lack of support from her family on her decision to move and start a business with her wife:

12: …I can say that when we made the decision to move here, my family were definitely the naysayers of the crowd. I guess they're super old school… Blue collar types, you know, like, what's [important is] the union job? What are you, you know.

11: They had no clue what we were doing.

12: Yeah, maybe... That's just their way. They're very … I wouldn't call them positive people outside of… when it comes to business…They just didn't understand, they were, like, "Why are you doing that?" And there was a— almost as though they just kind of wrote us off… they were like, "Ok we'll see you in a couple of years." You know, like, they weren't really supportive in the sense…

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Of all the participants of the study, Participant 13 was the only one who, through the course of the interview, informed of being singled out for harassment; though most of these instances were crank calls from local teenagers, there were a few instances of extreme danger:

> I've had quite an interesting life since I moved here, I've been held at knife point for 7 hours, I've been stalked, I've had my house broken into. A guy galled at 2:30am one morning… and said he's coming out … About an hour later the dogs were growling and he was trying to get in.

Participant 13 disclosed this individual was a gay man, looking to force himself into the house and onto Participant 13. Fortunately, Participant 13 was quick thinking and called both the neighbors and police—the assailant being arrested shortly after successfully breaking in. Although physically unharmed, he was for a brief time held at knifepoint before the police arrived. This story of directed violence is unique of all participants, and it should be noted that the violence did not originate from straight people in the community.

4.3 Informal networks: interaction with formal networks and institutions

Informal networks have taken many forms for participants. All participants had family and/or friend networks, and while most found emotive/ financial/ agentic support from these networks, not all did. Regarding mentors, the vast majority of participants found mentorship along informal routes, with only two participants or the 14 being match-made to a mentor via formal networks. Mentors were almost entirely family members, friends of family members, or community members of participants. There was no uniformity, however, to where mentors first appeared in participant's lives: some known since

childhood, while others appeared much later when the participants were adults. Though

mentors for the participants of this study were often relaying business-related

information—as well as skills such as book-keeping, people skills, and craft-specific

skills—mentors very importantly also possessed their *own* informal networks, to which

the participants were often privy and connected into. Though these interconnected

informal networks did not always guarantee favorable outcomes for participants, most

participants benefitted considerably from these denser connections.

Most participants had a favorable, or at least neutral, experience starting their own

company. Included in those experiences were again, mostly favorable or neutral

exchanges with formal business networks and differing institutions. Of all the participants

interviewed none had experienced direct, unambiguous discrimination by nature of their

gender or sexual identity from those formal networks and institutions. Although it is

worth noting that some participants set up their business in a way that minimized contact

with those organizations—and this minimization was attributable to both intentional and

unintentional behaviour.

Many participants received funding through friends or family members.

Participant 1 secured start-up funding from his brother, and with the "lean" start-up

model in mind (Frederiksen & Brem, 2016) he kept contact with formal networks and

institutions to a minimum, while reducing potential wasted efforts, resources, and time

(pp. 170-172):

> Fortunately, there wasn't [for] a while [a] lot of formal outlets, really. My
> business loan came from a family member, other than the standard making
> sure that you go through the proper channels to register your business name
> and all that kind of stuff, I didn't really…I mean, that was my interaction with
> the Chamber of Commerce, but it was just a really formal application….
> pretty minimal contact. But I went into it with such a mentality of low start-up

> costs, that I knew that…after I crunched my numbers enough, I knew that I didn't need that big of a loan.

He opened his business in the back of a popular community hub, where he had grown his informal network through the local skateboarding/ snowboarding community. This allowed him to avoid interactions, by and large, with different institutions like real estate for securing a place to do business, as well as banks, accounting firms, and lawyers for the funding side of opening a business. Participant 4 also emphasised the importance of lean start-up while discussing a book[8] which was instrumental to shaping the way he does business:

> Don't ever get a loan for starting it up… if you have to get a loan, get a small loan. Don't get the huge multimillion-dollar loan. Unless of course it's a loan from the provincial, federal government, it's forgivable in which case fill your boots.

These participants expressed, implicitly or subtly, an aversion to interacting with formal institutions surrounding funding. Participant 13 also avoided dealings with financial institutions for start-up funding:

> With the banks, having a business account there and parents gave me a couple of thousand dollars to help get started, sort of things. People that held the mortgage, there were relatives, so they helped that way. If it was a particularly bad or something, and if I didn't have it quite on time, money, they knew it was going to come I wasn't going to walk away from it. Friends were supporting me, giving me jobs to do, word of mouth…

Having family members help with both start-up capital for the business as well as the mortgage for his home where he ran his business, participant 13 notions towards a flexibility afforded when dealing with informal networks instead of formal networks. For

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[8] Philip Coggan, (1986). The Money Machine. [This is not referenced in the bibliography as it not a text read as part of this thesis.]

participant 13 specifically, friends and family were also highlighted as helping grow the

business through paid jobs and providing leads. Participant 7 also received direct support

from their family in a similar fashion:

> … Such as my late aunt… she helped out. There were some months when
> things were a little bit tight, and then I'd just give her back the money once I
> got the product… I had my straight sister working there, who ended up falling
> madly in love with one of the guys who would come to the store, and in fact
> both of my sisters came in and helped out… one was for a while, until I
> couldn't afford it. She said, 'I'm still gonna stay'. She liked it. She liked
> working there…

Having family support in this fashion—especially unpaid labour—meant that participant

7 did not have to incur extra debt from financial institutions during leaner times running

the business.

The business model for participant 6 did not 'fit' the conventional formula for

formal networks:

> I've recently signed up with the Chamber of Commerce to get their emails
> and stuff like that. One thing… they always have their meetings during the
> day on like Thursdays… I can't go to those! I work a job 8-5, and it's
> interesting to me where they have these things where you're supposed to be
> learning about business, and they're during business hours… I've replied to a
> few of these emails kind of asking is it worth it for me as an artist or an
> antique shop person to go to some of these workshops and most answers I've
> gotten back are kind of like, saying not "no", but saying it's mostly for like
> not-art businesses…

The experience of this participant shows that in some cases, conventional formal support

networks aren't always able to provide assistance to entrepreneurs who have businesses

which fall outside certain parameters (e.g. being able to leave during standard work

hours). Participant 4 recounts a similar experience by a colleague:

> We have a Chamber of Commerce story here… We have this bar owner…
> who [here] and said "okay let's do this, okay Chamber of Commerce, I'm
> opening up a gay business, you're going to register me as the gay business
> and this thing" and they were like "Ahhhhh wouldn't it be really great if there

were a special gay Chamber of Commerce [here]? You could do your own business directory, would be your own special thing" and he's like "no…no I don't think that would be a good idea at all"… And eventually they capitulated… and got his businesses in the Chamber…of course this was in the whenever, a decade ago…and they didn't want the "G" [gay] word, or the "L" [lesbian] word, and the "T" [trans] word didn't exist in their book. They got over it! Because someone pushed.

Participant 4's recollection of his colleague's experience accounted for one of the only instances, of the participants interviewed, where a LGBT2QI+ person experienced discrimination from a formal business network. Participant 8, in a follow-up email post-interview, confirmed that she also felt "underwhelmed" at a key young business professional mixer—where they were invited to play beer-pong with solo cups filled with water.

Other participants maneuvered though formal networks and institutions, taking advantage of resources available to entrepreneurs, assessing grants and workshops, among other resources—and did so unproblematically:

> From 8: … the only people I've collaborated with is [an incubator]... it's like a collaborative space… It's a place where you can come and work and there's a lot of small businesses, like start-up businesses that work out of [the incubator]. They have office hours which is where they get people from firms, like they get people from RBC to come in and talk to you about finances and they get people from other businesses that talk to you about how to market or how to do IT or stuff like that.

> From 9: … I worked with a credit union locally, and [an agricultural organization] locally, and I went through a… provincial program… So, working with all those programs was great... But then the organizations like [municipal organization], and at the time CYBF (Futurepreneur) funded us at the early stages so that's who we got our support from…

> From 11: … we're actually on a program, a government program… which is a self-employment program. So, it has allowed us, so [12] and I are on EI… and because we are, we're able to access this program which for the year will support us in building this company. So, we had to write our first business plan.

> From 14: I did actually deal with my local credit union to open up some accounts and get a few things set up for the business side of it. I also at the same time as I opened the restaurant my partner had a farming business, and

so she went through a program… where I took advantage of some of the money they were allowing to train in accounting... the French Chamber of Commerce in the area and became a member of them and [I] participated in a number of their workshops and things they offered.

From 10: This one time… there was a meeting between the [large local companies]. Us, as JA execs, were actually invited there and we took place in the conferences and we sat down and had lunch with the people and met them and it was really surprising to me how much they wanted to reach out, rather than how much we had to reach out.

Participant 2 had overall negative experiences with formal networks and institutions, making him unique among participants as having overall a net-negative experience as an entrepreneur both in the start-up phases, as well as in the daily operations:

I had a situation where a contractor took a bunch of money from us and didn't return to finish the building, so we almost didn't open in time and we had reservations so it was intense for a while… I didn't have any luck getting any loans from banks due to being a [particular kind of] company—there's a lot for [those] companies. But [a subsidiary of the Community Business Development Corporations]… funded me for $130,000 and it's 11 percent interest though, so it's kind of a trap… at 11% it's kind of killing me and it's going to be the end of me if I don't actually get it paid off soon… I've made a few mistakes in that sense with book-keepers that didn't work out so well…

The difficulty of participant 5 is detailed in the preceding section. He experienced a distinct gap of support from informal networks and informal networks—through the lens of being in the beginning stages of self-realization, subsequently being in the closet and hiding those self-realizations from others, and then finally in coming out. Though this created an unfavorable situation for him, but he still conveyed that he believed formal business networks (and in this case in particular—the individual agents of those networks) would be more concerned with the business rather than the individual:

But sure, it definitely still impacted me and then I later found out that they lawyer was super religious with these people… he was never anything but nice to me, but he didn't know otherwise and I'm sure he would keep a disconnect between his personal feelings and (I would hope) his business. I was like okay… that probably wouldn't have been my first choice, but I didn't pick the lawyers. One of the mentors—it was his lawyer, so I just kinda

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went with the flow. So as much as it never had a direct impact, it was sort of always something there in my mind.

Participant 5 expressed a sentiment that was uniform among the respondents: namely that 'business is business'. In other words participants often separated their gay identity from that of their identity as entrepreneurs. This sentiment will be discussed further in the discussion section to follow.

4.4 Conclusion

The discussion above regarding the findings has shown that there appears to be a remarkably high level of correspondence between the experiences of vast majority of the GSM entrepreneurs. While individual differences are, of course, present it would appear that many of the research study participants have charted the same course through similar circumstances. From the participants' immediate accounts, almost none appeared to define (or experience) their sexual minority status as having an immediate impediment upon their actions as entrepreneurs. There were a small number of exceptions to this, but for the vast majority it appears not to have been an issue when they engaged in entrepreneurial activities. The importance of informal networks appears to have been almost universally an essential component of their successes in their business ventures. What might appear striking is the *under* reporting of tiesin formal networks; this is even greater if the small number of contacts with business incubator initiatives are taken out of the consideration.

A detailed discussion of the experiences of the GSM entrepreneurs is undertaken in the next chapter. What the findings have shown so far is the importance of informal

networks. But conceptually this draws important questions regarding the links between entrepreneurs and their backgrounds (i.e. cultural capital).

5: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

At the forefront of this study was the intention to investigate how, if at all, being a gay man might alter, hinder, or possibly even promote the activities of being an entrepreneur. Of special interest were the range of interactions between gay male entrepreneurs and the formal business networks and institutions that are replete in the entrepreneurship ecosystem. However, and as we discussed above, during the data collection stage it became apparent that the emphasis upon gay male entrepreneurs would have to be widened in order to accommodate either an unexpectedly small group within the entrepreneurial 'community' *per se* or as a result of low recruitment. Consequently, data was collected from a range of participants who spanned almost all areas of gay, lesbian, and trans communities. In the findings section above, a description of the wider identifiable trends of networking took place. This following discussion section will contextualize those findings within the wider literature utilised as part of this research, as well as detailing themes emerging from the interviews and surveys.

This section will take as its cue the broader research questions that underpinned this study's research. Linked to the reviewed academic literature, the questions relate to the following key points:

Refined from the gender and masculinity literature:

i) Coleman & Lohan (2009, p. 213) wrote about individual actors who embody exalted patterns of masculinity but are still subject to a hierarchical ordering

due to their differing masculine identities. What has been the experience of gay entrepreneurs from individuals performing conventional notions of masculinity when they find out that the entrepreneur is gay?

Refined from the entrepreneurship literature:

ii)   Shepard & Patzelt (2015, p. 259) detail that minority business owners often face harsher evaluations of their performance as entrepreneurs if they fail. How do gay entrepreneurs' perceptions of the local populations attitudes to homosexuality affect their decision to engage with particular networks?

iii)   Bell & Binnie (2004, p. 1810), Galloway (2011, p. 892), and Shepard & Patzelt (2015, p. 259) all detailed barriers gay men face when endeavoring to become entrepreneurs. To what extent has being a gay man positively or negatively impacted a given entrepreneur's experience of owning and/or operating a commercial business?

Refined from the networking literature:

iv)   Rainie and Wellman (2012, p. 38) note that once networks are established they in part shape the decisions and actions (i.e. constraining or enabling different abilities) of the actors that occupy those networks. How closely do the networks accessed by sexual and gender minority entrepreneurs resemble the networks identified in academic literature as existing for heterosexual entrepreneurs; and if there is an identifiable difference what effects does it appear to create?

v)   McDonald, Gaddis, Trimble & Hamm (2013, p. 13) observed that people

with a minority status may face difficulty in their career trajectories due to

dissimilarity to other nodes in a network. How and in what ways do gay

entrepreneurs experience their sexual minority status in the networks they

utilize?

Alongside these research questions three additional themes emerged from the research:

vi)   Informal networks will be revisited and examined using a lens of Bourdieu's

social and cultural capital as a way for understanding the role informal

networks play in experiential outcomes for gender and sexual minority

entrepreneurs, and if those outcomes differ from their cisgender, heterosexual

counterparts;

vii)   In what ways economic and non-economic motivations for entrepreneurship

are either similar or dissimilar between GSM entrepreneurs and their

counterparts; and

viii) The phenomenon of 'selective disclosure' and how it shapes interactions

between gender and sexual minority entrepreneurs, the formal business

networks and institutions they dealt with, and with fellow LGBTQ2I+

community members.

The discussion below engages with these 8 questions (arising from the post-research

interviews and unanalyzed findings) by re-articulating the core issues of informal

networks, GSM marginalization, and entrepreneurial 'spirit' and acumen.

5.1 Informal networks and social capital

Bourdieu's (1986, pp. 17-21) theory of social capital was a concept identified earlier in the literature review as relevant for this study. Using social capital to analyse the informal networks of GSM entrepreneurs means some assessment can be made with regard to the importance and prominence of the informal networks as stated by the participant interviews. These differing measurements of social capital, in accordance with Dina Bowman (2007), each benefit from discrete analysis strengthened by an intersectional lens as "gender, class and ethnicity frame the value and use of various forms of capital" (p. 387).

While identifying the multiple forms of social capital was not the primary focus of this research, the study did identify (via the surveys and interviews) three types of social capital as discussed by the participants: (i) informal networks (social capital) (Bourdieu 1986, p. 7); (ii) educational attainment (embodied and institutional capital) (ibid., p. 3,6); and (iii) 'business-informal' relations with other entrepreneurs, mentors, and resources directly resulting from entrepreneurship (social capital) (ibid., p. 7). While 'type (i)' informal networks were by far the most important and will receive the bulk of discussion in this section, cultural capital types (ii) and business informal types(iii) will be discussed at the end of this section.

5.1.1 The importance of the social capital of family and friends

The surveys revealed that most participants (n=12) had *some form* of post-secondary education. Of the participants, only one stood out among their cohort as not having completed at least a high school diploma or equivalency. This participant was the same participant who overall, had a net-negative experience of opening and operating a business. While authors in the scholarship have noted that cultural capital should not be understood as causal (Martin, McNally, and Kay, 2013, p. 212), literature suggests that informal networks are made more robust through the processes of secondary and post-secondary education (Bryan, Farmer-Hinton, Rawls & Woods, 2017, p. 96); and that more time spent in these institutions typically leads to larger and more densely connected networks (Jensen & Jetten, 2015, p. 1-2). While no significant conclusions can be drawn from such a small pool of respondents (n=14), this would anecdotally appear to give *prima facie* support to this argument.

Though most of the other participants did have some form of post-secondary education, there was no mention of the friends and associates made during these periods spent in educational institutions. However, it appears that the friendships made in high school (and sometimes earlier) have continued across the participants lifetimes; and it stands out that many of the friends spoken about in the interviews where the same ones the participants made in school. This also implies an important element of the *locality* of the participants in their business and their home cities—i.e. for many of them (n=9), they are entrepreneurs in the cities in which they grew up, or close to where they grew up (n=2). Three participants started their businesses far from their home cities, with a few (n=2) having moved from several provinces away, and one having international origins.

(While friendship networks were important, nearly all participants emphasized much more heavily the familial informal networks in the interviews. Those connections will be discussed more thoroughly below.)

The notion of *embodied* and *objectified* cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986, p. 48-51) emerged during the process of coding. A large number of participants had one or more of the following: raised by entrepreneur parents; mentored in a craft; or were recipients of experiences that directly aided their later entrepreneurial activities. Having said this, of the two most commercially successful participants one was raised by entrepreneur parents, while the other had no contact with entrepreneurial activity at all before endeavoring to start his first business. The participants with mid-level commercial success all benefited from either/both of being raised in a household where entrepreneurship was present or had a mentor within the family, teaching them skills conducive to entrepreneurship. These relationships will discussed at length in the following section.

5.1.2 The effects of informal networks on formal networks

Informal networks had a large effect in how participants dealt with formal networks and institutions. These informal networks provided financial support through start-up and overhead costs (Participants 1, 7, 8, 13, and 14); emotive support through encouragement and stress management (all Participants); and agentic support through word of mouth advertising and things such as helping renovate spaces (Participants 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14). Where present, these different types of support all but eliminated the

need for those research participants to interact with formal business networks outside of a legal context (Participants 1, 4, 9, and 13), while others used this informal support to enable a strategic and careful engagement with formal networks for use of specific resources (Participants 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 14).

Some of the literature on social capital sees it more explicitly as *investments* in outcomes (Martin, McNally & Kay, 2013, p. 212). The participants of this study often experienced a return on their 'investments' when their informal networks were more robust. There is a problem with this account as for many of the participants their informal networks were *pre-formed* through their pre-entrepreneurial activities, so the analogy of "investment" doesn't accurately apply. However, if the economic term "value chain analysis", typically reserved for in-depth analysis the efficacy and productivity between departments in a single firm for the purpose of optimization (Caludine & Fearne, 2011, p. 6), is instead used instead to describe informal networks of an entrepreneur, then for many of the participants with robust informal networks, they were able to access a large amount of support, goodwill, product consumers, and sometimes economic capital. Examples of robust networks are: strong immediate and extended families (Participants 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, and 13), members of geographic local communities (Participants 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 13), and members of gender and sexual minority communities (Participants 1, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, and 13). Of the participants with less robust informal networks, outcomes were less ideal for their experiences of owning a business and dealing with formal networks. For these participants (2 and 5), their heavier reliance upon formal networks meant that they were more heavily restricted in their future actions and decision

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making, were more likely to fall prey to unexpected circumstances (Participants 2 and 5), and had much higher start-up costs—exemplified by Participant 2.

These accumulations of social capital, as well as the resulting investments in outcomes, has been explored in the entrepreneurship scholarship. With express relation to this study's first research question "How closely do the networks accessed by gay entrepreneurs resemble the networks identified in academic literature as existing for heterosexual entrepreneurs?", the data generated from the research participants points directly to two iterations of the social capital concept: *community social capital* (Kwon, Heflin & Reuf, 2018, p. 981) and *family capital* (Dyer, Neneque & Hill, 2014, p. 266).

Community social capital is predicated heavily on trust (Kwon at al., 2018, p. 980). Trust within a network encourages the free flow of information and resources both between nodes in a network and between networks themselves (ibid., p. 983). One such result of this process is the reduction of transaction costs associated with creating and maintaining contracts (ibid.). The experiences of a large majority of the participants detailed above validates this notion of trust: participants often found start-up and overhead capital among family members, with whom a level of trust was implicit in those familial relations.

Kwon et al. (ibid., p. 984) additionally posit that understanding these connections requires examining the *organizations* in which the connections are embedded, and that relations with effective *"brokers"* (of resources, information, people, etc.) and that, where present, one or both can afford distinct advantages to individuals able to access them. As stated above, participants in the study often had robust informal networks but the shape of them was quite diverse. Some were tighter-knit families which had little

disclosed exposure to entrepreneurship, while others were steeped in entrepreneurial experience which were already connected to other networks which contained resources for entrepreneurs. Kwon et al. (ibid., p. 981) observe that the effects of multiple, interrelated informal networks as a whole can be a magnitude higher than when examining the individual-level interactions between an entrepreneur and the nodes in their network. In effect, what this means is that a robust informal network operates in a manner that allows for multiple reformulations of requests and support by the entrepreneur that enable them to build upon nodes supporting one another, even with those nodes not necessarily knowing they are working in relation/in support to another node. However, there is a tangible net benefit to those networks as a whole also, as the entrepreneur acts as a focal point for transferring knowledge between network(s) nodes. This is different to formal networks where the parameters of engagement and support are largely intractable and are much more inflexible. Interestingly, this phenomenon is salient in the concept of *family capital* too (Dyer, Neneque & Hill, 2014).

Family capital is the resources and connections made available to people by familial networks (Dyer, Neneque & Hill, 2014, p. 266). Historically, the role that family capital has played has been overlooked in the scholarship (ibid., p. 267); however, this form of capital in informal networks is present in the experiences of many of this study's participants. In short, family members are able to pass, directly or indirectly, knowledge on entrepreneurship or "the mechanics and art associated with entrepreneurship" (ibid., p. 267). This passing of knowledge is prominent with several of the participants, detailed above in the findings section. Though the 'art' of entrepreneurship, described by Dyer et al., may refer more to a romantic notion of creating a business, for some participants the

'art' was literal: skills such as pottery were passed down from family members. Family capital also presents a unique advantage when studied beside the concept of community social capital; informal networks can be nurtured across generations (ibid., p. 268). Participant 11, in particular, was able to 'inherit' a nurtured network upon her move to a new city; her parents had grown these informal networks for several years, and had begun situating both participant 11 and her wife into those networks well in advance of their arrival. Participant 12 reminisced "most of the time the reaction or the response was like 'ohh your parents have been talking about you coming forever'. And like just 'like you're finally here! Thank god! They'll stop talking about it!'".

5.1.3 Non-typical routes to and through entrepreneurship

These two types of capital, combined with the notion emerging from the data of 'what's organic/ natural', help to engage with and explain the second research question. McDonald, Gaddis, Trimble & Hamm (2013, p. 13) observed that people with a minority status may face difficulty in their career trajectories due to dissimilarity to other nodes in a network. So, how and in what ways do gay entrepreneurs utilize those networks? None of the research participants disclosed experiences of either discrimination or pressure to leave conventional work places stemming from their gender or sexual minority status; while this is heartening news to discover, this is contra to the reviewed literature (see McDonald, Gaddis, Trimble & Hamm, 2013).

However, a difference between nodes became emergent during analysis of the research data. The coding 'what's natural / what's organic' was used whenever a

participant: (a) expressed that they had an aversion to regulation of their time-space; (b)

whenever they mentioned that their understanding and approach to entrepreneurship

'came naturally' to them; or (c) whenever participants expressed wanting to express their

vision of who they are as a person (e.g. mischaracterization, a workplace which doesn't

suit them, or overbearing expectations of achievements). It is from this research data that

the second research question resolves itself in an unexpected fashion. Participants did not

leave workplaces because they were experiencing discrimination: rather, they became

entrepreneurs through the more conventional understandings of push/pull theory.

Specifically, they wanted to be able to express themselves, they wanted freedom to be

their own boss, and they wanted to follow their passions (see Chowdhury, Terjesen, &

Audretsch, pp. 128-9; Kuckertz, Berger & Mpeqa, 2015, p. 2; Perrone, Vickers &

Jackson 2015, p. 197; Wright 2015, p. 36). In short—and this comment is made with the

n=14 recruitment number firmly in mind—dissimilarity from other nodes in a network

(in terms of being a member of a gender and/or sexuality minority, for example) relates

much more closely to push/pull motivations for entrepreneurship, and is *not* rooted in

direct discrimination suffered by the participants of this study.

The theme that gender and sexual minority entrepreneurs are similar in both

motivations and experiences to their heterosexual, cisgender counterparts, traces

throughout the interview data. At times, participants expressed frustration at the notion of

being considered 'gay entrepreneurs' rather than just entrepreneurs; these participants

echoed the sentiment that 'business is business'. These same participants would explore

this sentiment in the scheduled interview question "what types of services could be

catered to gay entrepreneurs specifically?". While nearly all participants were aware of

the stigma of being LGBTQ2I+ community members, and indeed reflected on how that could lead to complications while running a business, most held fast that 'business is business' and their personal lives should not play a role. It is at this intersection that a peculiar paradox arises.

Many participants expressed the sentiment that "you are your business". This is to say, and in-line with established literature on entrepreneurship both scholarly (Abimbola & Kocak, 2007, pp. 416-18) and non-scholarly (Hewitt, 2009, p. 11; Hofman, 2001, pp. 75-84), that an entrepreneur "is" the walking, talking, breathing brand of the business. The way they conduct themselves, the involvement in different community functions, and indeed the life story of the entrepreneur all become facets of the business itself. Interestingly, even though all participants were 'out' and many expressed that being gay was 'just part of who they are' and so didn't need any special treatment, that part of their lives (and therefore their 'brand') was often *consciously* omitted from their narrative of business ownership. This phenomenon is explored further in the discussion of 'selective disclosure'.

Two participants specifically put a fine point on the process of selective disclosure. Participant 10 phrased it as "…obviously it's not the business of Joe Schmoe walking down the street that I'm gay. But if… my business would benefit from him knowing that, then I'll tell him that. Because if I know that he's a supporter, then…why not". Similarly, Participant 3, upon being asked about being out 'across the board', reflected:

No, we're not involved in the scene or anything at all here... So, you know, we don't really get involved in that side of it… Our suppliers know our story—that we're gay and we have two kids—but it's not common knowledge. I think people in the industry would know, but customers and stuff wouldn't know. We don't put that out there.

Selective disclosure was an important tool for participants to minimise risk associated with being a minority status holder. While all participants indeed disclosed that they were 'out', being out did not necessarily mean they would continuously come out to each new contact they made in formal or informal networks. It is only after a certain level of rapport had been established, or the disclosure of such would be a benefit, that some participants would disclose. Selective disclosure is a unique phenomenon in this instance: not all minority status holders have the ability to choose when and how to disclose. Succinctly, participant 9 noted "Unlike any of the other minorities… [my minority status]… you can't see. Obviously if I… [were a black] African, you'd be able to tell that by looking at me… Not that I do, but I can choose to hide my minority." Participant 6 mirrored this sentiment of non-visibility. Said he "…I'm very out as trans, I think, but my queer identity…is very lacking, I feel. … it's not that I want it to be lacking, but it's harder for people to see".

For Participant 2, the selective disclosure takes a slightly different form. While he does not necessarily hide his sexuality, he handles situations where gayness is being discussed in the pejorative:

Yeah, it's not something that I like, tell people, but if it comes up in the conversation or if there's any kind of negative aspect being thrown around then I'll definitely mention something. It's not that I enjoy the shock value of it or anything. But I like to be able to be like "well actually, I'm gay so whatever".

Similarly, Participant 1 opted for selective disclosure when tensions were rising in his firm:

> I don't advertise my sexuality… If there has been instance where I've had to tell customers who start rifling off about women or whatever or a sexy girl walks through the door or a comment is made, and I have to then figure how to let somebody know that actually I'm gay… All of a sudden, the customer feels... I learned to casually drop the gay card while not making anybody in the room or in the chair feel uncomfortable about having mentioned something.]

Selective disclosure, then, was observed being employed by participants in different ways. While Participants 1 was more subtle, Participant 2 was more firm in disclosing when the situation called.

Participants 11 and 12 reflected on moving to their small community, which Participant 12 initially had anxiety about:

> 12: It's a small [place]… that was my biggest fear coming out here… like I was physically trying to hide myself. I grew my hair out, to be like more digestible.
>
> 11: To fit in
>
> 12: Yes, as a queer person to try to fit in little bit better right? If I stood out
>
> 11: Those were your preconceived notions you had…
>
> 12: Absolutely, absolutely my own preconceived notions. But at the same time…that fear came from somewhere, right? Like it was my own experience being out in the world so…

In the case of Participant 12, growing her hair out, opposed to her usually shaved head or contemporary buzz-cuts, would help to make her appear more straight-passing; the shorted styles, she implied, would signal her status as a GSM.

The importance, then, of being a member of a largely *non-visible* minority group means that there is usually the possibility for selective disclosure of one's minority membership. There exists the possibility to maintain a 'starching' of one's life and business engagements. While personal life should be no-one's business but the individual's concerned, being a member of a sexual minority member does appear to allow some freedom of movement in choosing the time and place (including *not* disclosing) one's sexuality.

5.2 GSM entrepreneurs and the non-GSM community

Expressly, the third research question "How does a gay entrepreneur's perception of the local populations attitudes to homosexuality affect their decision to engage with particular networks?" is resolved by means of these processes of selective disclosure. Participants would not always disclose their minority status in different networks. This allowed them to 'test the waters' and make informed decisions about whom to disclose to, and when. As explored above, the entrepreneur *is* the business—the walking embodiment of the brand. Selective disclosure was used to facilitate good public relations when deemed useful; but business relationships were kept strictly professional when nodes in a network were an unknown (but balancing that with the possibility that disclosing minority status to nodes could possibly lead to a net benefit for the firm).

Academic literature has touched upon this phenomenon before, though in quite radically different contexts. Jammaers and Zanoni (2018, p. 2) note that ethnic minorities feel pressure to undergo processes of westernization to have their firms seen as more credible. In a similar 'management of minority status' vein, older tech-entrepreneurs (i.e. 30+ years old) would avoid conferences in Silicon Valley to avoid being seen as 'job buyers' who purchase smaller firms as a way to keep their income stable (ibid., p. 2). Another example is migrant women suppressing or concealing their femininity when doing business in general, but allowing themselves to express their femininity for certain business interactions which required more warmth and friendliness (ibid.). Entrepreneurs with a minority status, then, may have similar experiences, which this study is calling selective disclosure, in choosing to make their minority status known. Certainty, minority status entrepreneurs feel external pressure to conform to the hegemonic notions of entrepreneurship—namely those same notions which detail hegemonic masculinity (i.e. stoicism, capability, competitiveness, and certainly in the context of Canada: being white). Yet, at least for a number of the respondents to this study, there exists a choice whether or not to disclose their minority status. Whether this is to create an assumption of being a member of the dominant hegemonic masculinity sect, a member of one of the lesser forms of masculinity (see Connell earlier), or being accepted as an entrepreneur-who-is-not-masculine (e.g. a woman, who also happens to be lesbian), there appears to exist an opportunity for sexual minority entrepreneurs to choose if and when they might disclose their minority status.

These processes of 'selective disclosure'—as outlined from participants responses generated by this research study, as well as the instances detailed by Jammaers and

Zanoni—fall in line with the reviewed literature of Goffman's (1959) *dramaturgy* (p. 10) and Butler's (1999) *performativity* (p. 3) (as discussed earlier in the literature review). Applying Goffman and Butler directly to the responses of the participants, it would appear that the actors in all of the above instances are looking to construct and perform a credible performance of entrepreneurship. The actors tailor their performances 'as entrepreneurs' to different audiences.

Using the conceptual framework developed in this study, informal and formal networks represent different collections of audiences. Performances of entrepreneurship are carefully enacted in such a way that the wrong audience is presented with information that spoils the credibility of the entrepreneur. To put this in other words, the minority group entrepreneur must be careful to not disclose their minority status to either: (a) an audience which may be hostile or discriminatory towards that status; or (b) an audience which may be neutral or indeed supportive of the minority status but have an unfavorable reaction to bringing that performance 'to the workplace'. The sanctions for such a breach, as with participant 13, can be dire; participant 13 was the sole participant in the study who experienced firsthand discrimination, and indeed faced danger for being gay.

Participant 13 was unique among participants with regards to being explicitly out. He was a prominent member of the queer community during formative years of the sexual revolution in his town. He has been interviewed by gay and mainstream media both, has had articles written about him and his businesses, and as such stands out as a particularly well-known gay man within the broader Canadian gay community—and has been so for several decades. It is in this instance that selective disclosure was not a viable option for participant 13; his reputation often preceded him and precluded the ability to

selectively disclose his minority status. Participant 13, unfortunately, was subject to different targeted harassments from his community over the years he's lived there, as detailed above.

5.3 Summary

Gender and sexual minorities are faced with different challenges than are their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts when planning, opening, and operating their own business. However, there are more similarities than are there differences. Of particular note in these similarities is the importance of informal networks, how these informal networks build and broaden cultural and social capital, and how these processes inform interactions good, bad, or indifferent with formal business support networks and institutions. Both groups find significant advantages to accumulating social capital from informal networks. This capital can include community social capital, the passive and active benefits from intricate relations of networks and the compounding effects of such on outcomes; as well as family capital, in which budding entrepreneurs can learn skills or crafts, inherit knowledge on how business is done, be made privy to established networks or resources, and mobilize start-up and overhead funding without the need to enter structured, formalized agreements with institutions. It is by these means that all entrepreneurs may in-fact reduce interactions with formal networks and institutions to a very bare minimum and interestingly may be more likely to enjoy commercial success as a result.

Differences and similarities accounted for, both disclosed by participants and observed by the researcher, participants of this study *were* different with regards to holding minority status. But in the end, participants nearly uniformly stated that they do

not wish to be treated differently, they merely want the same access to the same resources and for everyone to have a fair shot at success as entrepreneurs. This sentiment has yet to be reconciled with the ways in which participants must alter and be hyper-vigilant of their interactions to interact with the informal and formal networks in which they are embedded.

6: Conclusion

6.0 Summarizing the above discussion

This research study began with the question of studying gay male entrepreneurs and their experiences navigating the complexities of entrepreneurship and in constructing viable and supportive (in)formal business networks. This was an under-examined academic area and there was a corresponding gap in both scholarly and lay knowledge. By generating findings to this question, it was hoped that a potentially marginalized group in entrepreneurial activities might be better understood and support (from both business and community sources) might constructively brought to bear.

The academic literature review (in Chapter 2) covered three main areas. The first was sex and gender where important distinctions were drawn between sex and gender. The social construction of gender was theorized and placed into a schema to understand said constructs against hegemonic notions of gender. The second chapter was on entrepreneurialism where problems of definition risen by authors of the literature were addressed before moving on to the role entrepreneurship plays in the Canadian economy. A review of the theories of *capital* followed before concluding the chapter with conventional understandings of entrepreneurial motivations via push and pull theories. … The third was networks, where technical and descriptive theories of networks were reviewed before situating them in a framework which utilized Bourdieu's *fields* and *habitus*. These research elements were brought together and a conceptual framework for understanding the research question was synthesized before moving on to Chapter 3.

The methodology (in Chapter 3) was developed to access and elicit (suitably and fully consented) detailed information from a socially excluded and (presumed) marginal group about their entrepreneurial activities. It incorporated core approaches for qualitative research (i.e. in-depth interviews with open ended questions) but also attempted a fully closed-question aspect that, it was hoped at the time, would generate enough data to enable a quantitative analysis given a suitably high enough respondent rate. As it transpired—and despite multiple attempts to recruit research participants across four capital cities in the Atlantic Canadian provinces—it was only possible to recruit 14 research participants. While this number is acceptable for the qualitative analysis, it was below the necessary level to allow for any detailed statistical analysis.

When detailing the findings (in Chapter 4) from the research process, it became clear that the research participants had experienced very similar approaches (even if the specific events they encountered were different) in establishing their businesses. The importance of ties in *informal* social networks appeared to be key; as was the possession of some level of 'entrepreneurial social capital'—at least this was the case for the most successful GSM entrepreneurs—gained from family background or from other encounters with entrepreneurial/business activities prior to them embarking as entrepreneurs. Somewhat surprisingly (although, it must be said, this is a positive finding) there was very little reporting of overt hostility or outright discrimination against the participants *as* GSM entrepreneurs. However, there were several reported instances where latent attitudes, or attitudes strongly assumed to be present, caused some GSM entrepreneurs to avoid or to reduce engagement with formal business support networks. Ultimately, it was the presence of large informal support networks that enabled a range of

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GSM entrepreneurs to make the most successful (i.e. a continuing, profitable business activity) long term engagements.

When the findings were integrated with the academic literature (in Chapter 5), the resulting analysis made clear that several factors combine to increase the likelihood of generating a robust informal network. The main findings were that becoming an entrepreneur in proximity to one's childhood hometown enables a stronger informal support network. While this may not appear too revelatory—for hometowns usually contain family member and childhood friends—it also presents a possible impediment where the GSM entrepreneur has to 'come out' to a local population that knew them before they were 'out'. However, this was tempered by the experiences where it appeared GSM entrepreneurs usually had a *choice* in whether to be 'out' in and to their business contacts. For many, being known to be from a GSM community did not really factor into their business/entrepreneurial activities. The apparent choice to disclose GSM status or not fed into much of the reporting that "business is business" and one's home life was assumed to be separate from this. This is almost exactly the sentiment reported for non-GSM entrepreneurs when undertaking their business activities. While this was a heartening development—i.e. that GSM entrepreneurial activity is usually able to take place *without* pressure to 'out' oneself—it is tempered by experiences and assumptions of the attitudes of wider society and the local community to the entrepreneur being a GSM community member 'in general'. In other words, while business networks are do not appear to be specifically pro-/anti-GSM, they are populated by members of the wider community who will very likely hold general beliefs and attitudes towards GSM community members (whatever those attitudes may be). The final important element is in

the construction and maintenance of the informal networks. It appeared that the most successful GSM entrepreneurs were the ones who were able to create/develop and then maintain a robust informal network of family, friends, and business acquaintances who were able to be worked as a group to support the GSM entrepreneur. It is important to note that this did not appear to be a malicious exploitation of good will; it appeared more as the informal network was able to be mobilized when the GSM entrepreneur needed the most help or aid. Once the business venture was stronger, then the informal network existed as a patchwork of interrelated clusters that had a strong central broker in the form of the GSM entrepreneur.

6.1 Contributions to academic literature

While this thesis is for a Master of Arts and therefore not required to produce original content, the case can be made that several elements from the conclusions in this research project are contributions to the existing academic literature. Stated very briefly (as they have all been discussed at length above), they are:

- That GSM entrepreneurs appear to have the same motivations as non-GSM entrepreneurs for wanting to move into running their own enterprises. This is important as it means that, at least in Atlantic Canada, there appears to be little explicit workplace harassment that 'pushes' the GSM employee away and out of an existing company. (Although general community attitudes held by employees are, of course, still present in any company.)

- That proximity to large and established informal networks would appear to greatly increase the chances of a successful entrepreneurial venture. While there was some indication that an informal network accessed at a distance was also helpful, the element of geographic proximity appeared to hold significant weight.

- That GSM entrepreneurs *appear* rely on informal networks more heavily than what would be assumed to be the more 'formal' business networks. However, it is inconclusive whether this is the experience for *all* entrepreneurs or specifically for GSM entrepreneurs. (It is not beyond reasonable argument that the more 'formal' business networks are more supportive of established enterprises—with their continuous cash flows, larger levels of asset ownership, etc.)—than a small start-up enterprise. While this would mean that all entrepreneurs rely upon their informal networks, the socially marginalised status of GSM entrepreneurs means that they could be reliant to an additional degree upon the robustness of their informal networks.)

6.2 Limitations and potential future research

The research findings are necessarily limited because of the small scale of this research project (i.e. there was very little funding available for undertaking travel for interviews) and the limited time in which it was possible to undertake the research project (i.e. within the timeframe of the second year of a Masters degree). A better funded project, with more researchers, and over a longer timeframe would very likely provide larger amounts of data that not only added deeper (and broader than Atlantic Canada respondents) but also a higher number of respondents meaning statistical analysis would likely be possible.

The potential for future research would be for a wider project that spanned each of the provinces and territories of Canada. Especially of interest would be the three largest cities (currently: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver) to see where differences might lie in the possibilities presenting themselves for GSM entrepreneurs in such expansive markets and socially diverse communities/cities. There might also be an interesting element in specifically examining GSM entrepreneurs with *online* businesses and investigating whether the same things are important (especially the aspect of geographic locality of informal networks: if every business element is either online or the main content is transferable via the internet, is there the same need for similar informal support networks?).

However, these possible future projects will have to wait until funding and time enables them to become viable.

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Appendix A: Project Recruitment Letter

Mr. Jim Willar, MA Candidate
Department of Sociology
University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, NB, E3B 5A3

Dear

My name is Jim Willar and I am a master's student of sociology at the University of New Brunswick. I am conducting research into the ways that gay entrepreneurs engage with different formal and informal business networks. Towards this end, I am interested in talking with gay men who are trying to set up their own small or medium sized business, who currently own their own small or medium sized business, or have owned them in the past. I am looking to recruit participants for this study from the cities of Fredericton or Saint John, New Brunswick; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; or St. John's, Newfoundland.

Participation in this research would take the form of completing a small questionnaire and one or two face-to-face and/or telephone interviews of approximately 30 minutes to one hour in duration. The interview(s) would occur in a time and location of your convenience. Participation in this research project would remain strictly confidential (please see the attached information sheet and consent form for more information on the consent procedure and for how participants anonymity in this research would be ensured).

Participants would be able to refrain from answering any questions during the course of the interview(s), and would be able to withdraw from the study at any time prior to completion of the research project. If a participant did withdraw, any interview materials pertaining to them would be deleted/destroyed.

If you are interested in participating, or you think you know of someone whom you think might be interested in participating, or if you would like more information about the project, please contact me via email (jim.willar@unb.ca) or leave a message with the Sociology Department so that I can call you back (506 453 4849). You may also contact Dr. Nick Hardy, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of New Brunswick and my project supervisor, via email at nhardy@unb.ca, or by phone at 506 458 7444. Alternatively, Dr. Lucia Tramonte, Chair of the Sociology Department, may be contacted via lucia@unb.ca or at 506 458 7257.

This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board of the University of New Brunswick and is on file as REB #_____.

Yours sincerely,
Jim Willar, Master's Student, University of New Brunswick

Appendix B: Research Information Sheet

This research is being carried out by Jim Willar for completion of a Master's Thesis in Sociology at the University New Brunswick, Fredericton. If you have any questions about this study, you can contact Jim Willar by email at jim.willar@unb.ca or by leaving a message with the Sociology Department Administrators at 506 453 4849. Jim Willar's thesis supervisor is Dr. Nick Hardy and he can be contacted via email at nhardy@unb.ca or by phone at 506 458 7444. Alternatively, Dr. Lucia Tramonte, Chair of the Sociology Department, may also be contacted by email at lucia@unb.ca or by phone at 506 458 7257.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about how gay men use formal and informal business network resources (such as incubators, accelerators, chambers of commerce, banks, as well as friends, family, etc.). The goal of this study is to discover whether gay men use these network resources differently than do their heterosexual counterparts.

The project is interested in talking to gay men who either currently or have previously owned their own business(es). The project is looking to recruit respondents from Fredericton and Saint John, New Brunswick; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; and St. John's, Newfoundland.

If you take part, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire and to undertake an interview lasting between 30 minutes to one hour in length. You may also be asked to undertake a follow up interview, of between 15 to 30 minutes long.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. All participants will have their responses with all identifying information removed and any and all identifying characteristics/specifics removed from any discussion outside that of the research team (which is comprised of Jim Willar and his MA supervisory committee). At any time prior to completion of the study you may withdraw your consent and all information you have given would be deleted/destroyed.

Data collected (with all identifying information removed) will be retained for future studies by this researcher. Participants who do not wish to have their data retained for said studies may request that their contributions to any datasets, as well as transcriptions of their interviews destroyed upon completion of the study.

A summary of the findings from this research will be provided to participants who request it and a copy of the thesis will be available for viewing in the Department of Sociology on UNB campus. Findings from the research may also be included (with all identifying information removed) in future academic publications.

This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board of the University of New Brunswick and is on file as REB # _____.
Jim Willar (jim.willar@unb.ca)

Appendix C: Consent Form

As per the research information sheet, a copy of which I have been given to keep for my own records:

(1) I agree to participate in a study on homosexuality and entrepreneurial networking behaviors as described in the research information sheet. I will be asked to complete a small questionnaire and to undertake an interview with the project researcher, Jim Willar; I also understand that I may be asked to undertake a follow-up interview. Each initial interview will last approximately one hour (a follow-up, should it be needed, would last no longer than half an hour) and will be arranged for a time and place of my choice.

(2) I also agree to allow this interview to be audio-recorded for purposes of accuracy. I have been informed that all information that I provide will be treated with the utmost confidence with all identifying information removed before being used. I have been informed that the information collected from this project will be used for university research purposes only and that all hard copies of recordings and transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and password protected computer in a locked office on UNB campus.

(3) I also agree that my responses (with all identifying information removed) may be used by Jim Willar as part of future university-related research projects that focus on comparable topics to this research.

A summary of the findings from this research will be provided to participants and a copy of the thesis will be available for viewing in the Department of Sociology on UNB campus. This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board of the University of New Brunswick and is on file as REB # _____.

I understand that I may refrain from answering any questions asked in the interview and that I may fully withdraw from the study at any time before the final report is produced. In the event that I withdraw from the study, I understand that any notes or recordings pertaining to my interview will be destroyed.

I have read the accompanying research information sheet and agree to participate in the following sections of this research.

(1) Survey/Interview YES NO (2) Audio-recording YES NO (3) Data used for future studies YES NO

Signature: _____   Date: _____.

Print Name: _____

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1) How would you describe the experience of starting your own business?

2) Can you name some of the different "<u>formal</u>" parts of your business support network or networks that you used when starting your business? I am thinking here of such things as your local Chamber of Commerce, accelerators & incubators, bank officials, lawyers, that kind of thing.

   a. Reflecting on those interactions, were there any which you can remember as being particularly pleasant or accommodating? Likewise, were there any which were difficult to deal with? In what ways?

3) Can you name some of the different "<u>informal</u>" parts of your business support network or networks that you used when starting your own business? I am thinking here of such things as friends or family, any support groups, other business owners, that kind of thing.

   a. Reflecting on those interactions, were there any which you can remember as being particularly pleasant or accommodating? Likewise, were there any which were difficult to deal with? In what ways?

4) While running your business, would you consider yourself as 'out'? (i.e. openly gay to family and friends, business partners, your business associates, and maybe even to customers/ clientele?).

   a. YES: is there anyone or any other group that I didn't include that you feel is important?

   b. NO: can you speak about your reasons for not being 'out' while doing business?

5) Do you think that your 'out' (or 'in') status affected the way you were able to deal with the various business support networks during the time you started your own business?

6) Are there any ways in which you felt operating your business was either easier or more difficult because of your sexuality?

7) Thinking back from the start of your business to the present day, are there any ways you feel services from business support networks can be improved for gay entrepreneurs today?

8) Is there anything else you think that I've missed and that you would like to add?

Appendix E: Survey

In accordance with the process of ongoing consent, detailed in the project overview form, you may opt out of answering one or all the questions in this survey questionnaire. Please be assured that all identifying information will be removed and handled with rigorous protection. Data collected will be aggregated and used for statistical analysis in conjunction with collected interview data.

1) Please state your year of birth.
2) Please indicate your relationship status (Single; Partnership; Married; Widower; Other; Prefer not to disclose)
   a) If in a relationship, for how many years?
3) Please state your ethnicity (please note: to avoid potential identification of individual respondents, answers are limited to the categories listed below). White; Afro-Caribbean; Indo-Pakistani; Asian; First Nation/Indigenous; Other; Self-define; Prefer not to answer)
4) Please indicate your citizenship status (Canadian citizen, permanent resident, other / non-resident, prefer to not disclose)
5) Please indicate any religious affiliations (no options, opting for a self-disclosure in their own words)
6) Please indicate your education level (Some high school, high school diploma/GED, some college /university, finished college / university degree, some graduate school, finished graduate, some professional school, finished professional degree, prefer to not disclose)
7) Please estimate your personal average yearly gross income (under 18,000, 18,001-25,000, 25,001-50,000, 50,001-75,000, 75,001-100,000, 100,001+, prefer to not disclose)
8) Do you consider yourself 'out'?
9) Is your home within 0-5km, 5-10km, 10-15km, 15km+ of your business?
10) Do you use online networking sites for your business activities? If so, which ones?:
   a. Facebook, LinkedIn, Reddit, etc.
   b. How many friends, contacts, etc would you say you have for each one?
11) Is this your first (or second, or third, etc.) business as an entrepreneur?
12) Have you ever participated in business incubator? (yes, no, I don't know, I don't know what a business incubator is, I prefer not to disclose)
13) Have you ever participated in a business accelerator? (yes, no, I don't know, I don't know what a business accelerator is, I prefer not to disclose)

Jim Willar

University Degrees

- UNB Fredericton - Bachelor of Arts (3.8 GPA)   05/2015

- UNB Fredericton – Master of Arts (4.0 GPA)   05/2020

Publications

- No publications made at this time.

Conference Presentations

- Human Rights Conference (STU)   04/2017

Resume

Professional Experience

Statistics Canada – Telephone Interviewer   03/2019 – 06/2019

While at the Halifax Regional Office, worked with a team to ensure that data was rigorously collected in accordance with Statistics Canada Standards for data collection. Received consistently perfect or near-perfect scores from multiple monitoring sessions with different Senior Interviewers.

Adult Learners, Part-time Student Union (ALPS) – Coordinator   09/2016 - 04/2018

Responsible for the daily operations as well as payroll. In conjunction with Grant Thornton, prepared documents for t4 tax forms for all executives and employees, as well as audited financial statements for the UNB board of directors.

Student Union Building, UNB Fredericton – Supervisor   09/2013 - 04/2018

Worked directly under the director of operations. Duties included coordinating staff, scheduling shifts, working with payroll, supervising & staffing large-scale projects (such as conventions) in cooperation with other departments in the campus and with the community.

Lakeview Inns & Suites – Front Desk / Night Auditor   09/2005 - 09/2013

Worked in a fast-paced & high-stress environment. Duties included checking in guests either individually or in groups, balancing the cash after each shift, and high demands of customer service excellence. As an auditor, I additionally performed payroll duties,

balanced ledgers, collected data metrics for head office, and audited data entry for the entire front desk staff.

Entrepreneurial Experience

Trispectra Innovation Incorporated Cofounder and COO   08/2014-12/2017
Cofounded a start-up company in the energy sector focusing on disruptive technologies. Ultimately, this company created a sensor module for utility lines which forms a smart grid for power distribution. As Director of Operations, I planned and executed research at all stages of the company's lifespan, participated in the hiring and firing of employees, and performing non-financial record-keeping. In addition I oversaw all media releases and social media platforms for the company.

Education

UNB Fredericton – Master of Arts (4.0 GPA)   09/2015 - Present
Department of Sociology. Courses include the following:

Research Design (6203) – Introduction to designing research from qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches at the graduate/professional level.

Multivariate Sociological Statistics (6303) – Advanced statistical analysis for social sciences, which included significant work on a 'science explaining' module for conveying research to community stakeholder who may not understand academic jargon.

Qualitative Methods (6323) – Advanced study of research based on interviews, ethnography, participatory action research (PAR), and other non-statistically based approaches for study.

UNB Fredericton - Bachelor of Arts (3.8 GPA)   09/2011 - 05/2015
Department of Sociology. Courses included the following:

Research Strategies (3100) – Introduction to designing research, the methodological approaches to doing so, and the place of the researcher in the research they conduct.

Social Stratification (3523) – Introduction to identifying social problems, framing them, and using research to address them with data provided by Statistics Canada.

Statistics in Sociology (3123) – Introduction to statistics for the social sciences.

Contemporary Canadian Issues (2407) – Introduction to various Canadian social problems and the researchers that are attempting to understand and solve those problems.

Research Experience

Master's Thesis*   09/2015 - 08/2019
Under the supervision of Dr. Nick Hardy, I designed and conducted qualitative-focused research on the experiences of gay men who are entrepreneurs. *During this thesis I took an extended leave of absence from 01/04/2018-31/12/2018

Brunswick News Research Project, Dr. Susan O'Donnell   02/2018 - 05/2018
Together in a group of three, headed by Dr. Susan O'Donnell, I helped to design and populate a database, as well as performed thematic analysis on several key terms from the archives of three major newspapers in New Brunswick.

Entrepreneurship Education and Evaluation, Dr. Jeff McNally   05/2016 - 07/2017
Administered the project website, performed a literature review for pedagogical approaches to teaching entrepreneurship in post-secondary institutions, collaborated with other researchers for research leads on entrepreneurship.

Undergraduate Honors Thesis (A-)   09/2014 - 05/2015
Joint-honors thesis in Sociology, and Women & Gender Studies. Under the supervision of Dr. Jacqueline Lowe, I designed, conducted, and analysed research on the relationships between men, problem addictions, and masculinity. The results of my research have been used by a counsellor in the Fredericton area to better understand and support their clientele.

Teaching Experience

Dr. Gary Bowden (UNB) – two terms   09/2015 - 05/2016
Sociology of Photographs/ Social Movements. Taught a total of 8 lectures during the academic year. Performed light research and graded papers for both courses.

Dr. Ryan Higgitt (UNB) – two terms   09/2017 - 04/2018
Sociology of Gender. Worked closely with Dr. Higgitt to mark hundreds of tests, papers, and exams. Designed and delivered review classes for exams.

Human Rights Conference (STU)   27/04/2017
Delivered three lectures on 'Modern Crises of Masculinity' which described how people use masculinity to shape their identity. The resulting crises of masculinity is the result of older messages of gender being incompatible with modern, rapidly developing messages of masculinity.

Volunteer Experience

Evaluating & Assessing

Loran Scholars Foundation   08/18/2018 - Present
Together with one other teammate, assessed scholarship applications for over fifty youths. This included extensive and critical vetting of credentials listed by applicants, using a holistic approach rather than a summative approach to evaluation.

Union of Graduate Student Workers (UGSW)   10/17/2017-04/27/2018
Chief Shop Steward. Collaborated with a team of executives to rebuild bylaws and constitution, as well as helped maintain the general health of the membership dues databases.

Adult Learners, Part-time Students (ALPS)   09/2012-09/2016
As President, worked with a revolving team of executives to plan events, attend conferences and   committees. Provided feedback on various projects both within ALPS and in the UNB community more broadly.

Community Work

Margaret House (Feeding Others of Dartmouth)   11/26/2018 - Present
Prepare meals for clientele at the Margaret House soup kitchen. This entails close collaboration with supervisors and the director of the facility to ensure food waste is minimalized while providing nutritious, balanced meals to the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Canadian Cancer Society   09/2013 - 09/2015

Sold daffodils at different locations during the annual fundraising efforts; recruited and coordinated volunteers from campus to the Canadian Cancer Society.

UNB Sexuality Center   09/2011 - 05/2015

Volunteered hours at the center, keeping the doors open and acting as an information center to people with questions about sexual health. Received training to instruct youth on sexual health practices.

AIDS New Brunswick   09/2012 - 05/2014

Received front-line training for working at the needle exchange. Volunteered at   various functions relating to campus life such as 'dump the dorms`—answering questions and supplying sexual health supplies as well as chaperoning a youth retreat for young community leaders.

UNB Women's Center   09/2012 - 05/2014

Volunteered hours at the center, as well as staffing tables at special events such as sexual health awareness week.

Certifications and Awards

Canadian Mental Health Association   Mental Health First Aid certification level 1

Attended a two-day workshop to develop skills in assisting people who are suffering from mental-health related distress in different severities.

Talking to Administration certification (PSAC)   2017

Union certification in which attendees learned civil grievance and escalation protocols when engaging with employers.

UNB Bachelor of Arts Joint Honours, First-Class in Sociology & Women's Studies 2015

UNB Bachelor of Arts   Dean's list 2013 & 2015

Work References

Available upon request.