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**UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYMENT TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP
TRANSITIONS AMONG WOMEN WORKING
IN THE TECH INDUSTRY**

**A Research Project
Presented to the Faculty of
The George L. Graziadio
School of Business and Management
Pepperdine University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
in
Organizational Development**

**by
Elizabeth A. Xiao**

April 2017

This research project, completed by

ELIZABETH A. XIAO

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Date:

Faculty Committee

Committee Chair, Julie A. Chesley, Ph.D.

Committee Member,

Linda Livingstone, Ph.D., Dean
The George L. Graziadio
School of Business and Management

UMI Number:

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Abstract

This study explored experiences of women who left tech companies and started their own businesses or became self-employed. The study identified trends in their experiences working for tech companies, factors influencing the decision to leave, and factors influencing the decision to pursue entrepreneurship or self-employment. Fifteen women were interviewed. Working for tech companies, women enjoyed opportunities to advance but experienced limitations to that advancement. They liked their co-workers and felt proud of the work being done, but were impacted by poor leadership, being one of few women, and not having potential recognized. Women quit for primarily individual reasons. Organization dysfunction, unfair events, and the presence of better alternatives impacted the decision as well. Women chose entrepreneurship for primarily personal reasons including entrepreneurial drive and a desire for autonomy. Financial security was found to be an influence for many women in the decision to take the risk of pursuing their venture.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Gender diversity is vital for businesses to reach their full potential. Badal (2014) noted that gender-diverse business units have better financial outcomes than less-diverse units. Balanced gender diversity can also have a notable impact on a company's overall performance. Gender-diverse teams benefit from "different viewpoints, ideas, and market insights, which enables better problem solving . . . [and] superior performance" (Badal, 2014, para. 3). In recent years, the technology industry in particular has come under increasing scrutiny for its lack of gender diversity and the inability to retain female employees. According to Lien (2015), "Qualified women are leaving the tech industry in droves" (para. 8), as technology companies are not succeeding at this task.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2015), women make up 57% of the U.S. labor force. However, in major U.S. technology companies, only about 30% of the employees are women, and that number drops to approximately 22% in positions of leadership (Cheng, 2015). Women are not equally represented in the technology industry or in positions of leadership in technology companies. Hiring more women is not the solution, as attracting and retaining women has been difficult for many technology companies as well.

The problem of women leaving technology companies at a high rate is well documented in the popular press, but has not been explored extensively within academic research. Researchers at the Center for Talent Innovation found that "U.S. women working in science, engineering and technology (SET) fields are 45% more likely than their male peers to leave the industry within the year" (Hewlett, 2014, p. 1). Hewlett et al.

(2008) noted that hostile macho cultures, isolation, lack of a clear career path, the systems of risk and reward, and extreme work pressures contribute to women's decisions to leave SET organizations. They also found that a critical juncture for many women occurs in their mid to late 30s, which is when many women in technology leave the industry.

Lack of career advancement opportunity has been cited by multiple sources as a reason women leave their jobs in technical fields (Guglielmo, 2015; Hewlett et al., 2008; St. Fleur, 2014). Additionally, gender bias, bias in performance evaluations and assessment of management potential have been cited by women working in SET as reasons they feel stalled in their careers (Hewlett, 2014). Related, a discriminatory work environment is often identified as a primary factor in women's decisions to leave tech, in some cases the discrimination includes age, race, and sexuality in addition to gender or motherhood (Snyder, 2014). Being demographically different in a homogenous environment has contributed to some women's discomfort at work and desire to leave (Snyder, 2014). A culture that promotes a work ethic suited to those without family responsibilities coupled with a lack of family-promoting policies have also been cited as reasons women leave the field (Guglielmo, 2015; Hewlett, 2014).

Motherhood is often thought to have an impact on women's decisions to leave their jobs, however one study found that for many women working in tech, motherhood was more of an "amplifier" that made existing problems (lack of flexible work arrangements, unsupportive work environment, inadequate salary for childcare, no maternity leave policy) finally intolerable (Snyder, 2014). For a variety of reasons, women are leaving tech. This is a problem not only because of the loss of diverse

perspectives, and body of talent provided by female employees, but because of the general high cost of turnover as well.

Depending on the level, complexity and education or technical skill required for a position, the cost of turnover can range from 16-30% of the annual salary for a position (Boushey & Glynn, 2012). These costs are generated by assessing the costs of activities like recruitment, selection, temporary staff and training (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008). Additional costs of turnover which are harder to quantify monetarily include loss of productivity, safety issues, and decreased employee morale (O'Connell & Kung, 2007). Therefore, tech companies with female turnover problems are not just losing an employee, but are losing time, money, productivity and morale. Additionally, the overall female labor pool shrinks when women choose to become entrepreneurs or self-employed. Companies who want to attract and retain talented women must also compete with the alternative of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship and self-employment are becoming more common among female workers in the US, and are now attractive and attainable alternatives to wage or salary work for women.

Female entrepreneurship in the US is on the rise. "Between 1997 and 2013, the number of women-owned firms [grew at a rate] 1½ times the national average." (Womenable, 2013, p. 1) Women are increasingly choosing self-employment and entrepreneurship over wage-salary work or other alternatives. If women leaving tech companies choose self-employment or entrepreneurship, this could pose a potential "brain-drain" in the labor pool for these companies. It also increases competition in the industry if these women start their own tech companies or take ideas rejected by their firm and capitalize on them elsewhere.

Women have been found to choose entrepreneurship for reasons that include desires for independence, self-achievement, challenge, balanced family and work life and because of blocks to career advancement (Buttner & Moore 1997; Hisrich, Brush, Good, & De Souza, 1996). And while there is a large body of research on motivations for women entering into entrepreneurship, there is little industry-specific research on the transition from working for tech companies to entrepreneurship or self-employment. This study seeks to add to the body of research as it relates to this phenomenon.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the factors that influence a woman's decision to leave her job at a tech company and become self-employed or an entrepreneur. Specifically to answer the following questions:

1. How do female entrepreneurs previously employed at tech companies describe their experience at the company, motivations for leaving the company, and motivations for choosing to become an entrepreneur?
2. What factors influenced their decision to leave?
3. What factors influenced their decision to become an entrepreneur?

For the purposes of this research, "self-employed or entrepreneur" will be defined as taking financial risk in starting the endeavor or being financially dependent on its success, and includes women working independently or employing others. Additionally "job at a tech company" includes both technical and non-technical roles.

By better understanding the experiences of women working in the tech industry who leave their jobs for self-employment and entrepreneurship, tech companies may be able to better attract, engage and retain female employees in the future.

Study Overview

This chapter gave an overview of the problem and the reasons and purpose for this study. Chapter 2 provides a review of existing literature on the topics of turnover among men and women, motivations for female entrepreneurship, and characteristics of female entrepreneurs. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology used in this study and includes the research purpose, design, sample and setting, interview questions, and procedures for data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the results of the data collection and analysis performed by the researcher. Chapter 5 outlines the researcher's conclusions based on the results. Implications, recommendations, and limitations are discussed, and suggestions for future research are provided.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

This research project explored factors that influenced women's decision to leave a tech employer and enter into self-employment or entrepreneurship. A review of existing research that supports this question was conducted. This chapter presents a review of existing research in two major categories and several sub-categories; Retention and turnover (models, structural, individual, individual-context interaction), and Entrepreneurship and self-employment (models, motivations, characteristics). Gaps exist in relating the decision to leave with the decision to start an independent venture instead of seeking alternate employment.

Employee Turnover

Employee turnover has been studied extensively since the late 1950s (March & Simon, 1958), when organizations recognized the high costs of turnover – financial, employee morale, productivity, etc. Many models have been created and factors identified that influence turnover intentions and behaviors. This section will explore some of the models and findings from this field of research.

Turnover models. Many different models have been developed to explain voluntary turnover. The format of these models is primarily a path analysis where researchers examine the factors that directly precede the decision to leave, and over time identify a series of events or factors that lead to acting on the decision to leave. Earlier work identifies attitudes like job satisfaction, and ease of changing jobs as the primary drivers for turnover (March & Simon, 1958; Mobley, 1977). Factors like turnover intention, organizational experiences, job expectations and job performance were added

to subsequent models (Steers & Mowday, 1981). More recent research suggests that additional factors from the environment and employee psychology influence turnover to a higher degree (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995).

Lee and Mitchell (1994) provide an exemplar from the recent research. Their unfolding model of voluntary turnover includes shocks, scripts, image violations, job satisfaction and job search. According to their model, employees follow one of a variety of linear decision paths to reach the ultimate decision to leave or stay. Donnelly and Quirin (2006) expand on Lee and Mitchell's model by including employees who decided to stay, the role of economic consequences in the decision process and, causes for gendered differences in turnover rates and decision paths. Donnelly and Quirin found that economic consequences are an important influencer for those who considered leaving and decided to stay. They also found that shock events are likely to start the turnover decision process (supporting the Lee and Mitchell model), and that women are more likely to experience these shock events, which can be explained by pregnancy and child birth.

In their 2008 review of turnover and retention research, Holtom, et. al created a model of turnover incorporating findings from 1958 – 2008. Figure 1 shows a modified version of this model. This thesis will explore factors identified in the first half of the model including factors influencing the decision to leave up to the point of “withdrawal cognitions” and “alternatives” but not beyond.

In this literature review, factors influencing the decision to leave are presented in simplified categories – individual factors, structural factors, person-context interface, and alternatives. The turnover research included here refers to both men and women; however female-specific findings will be presented when available. Many of the individual factors

are studied in relation to one another and a great body of research exists on mediating and moderating influences. This review will include examples of both studies on the direct impact of a factor on turnover, as well as factors with mediating relationships that affect turnover.

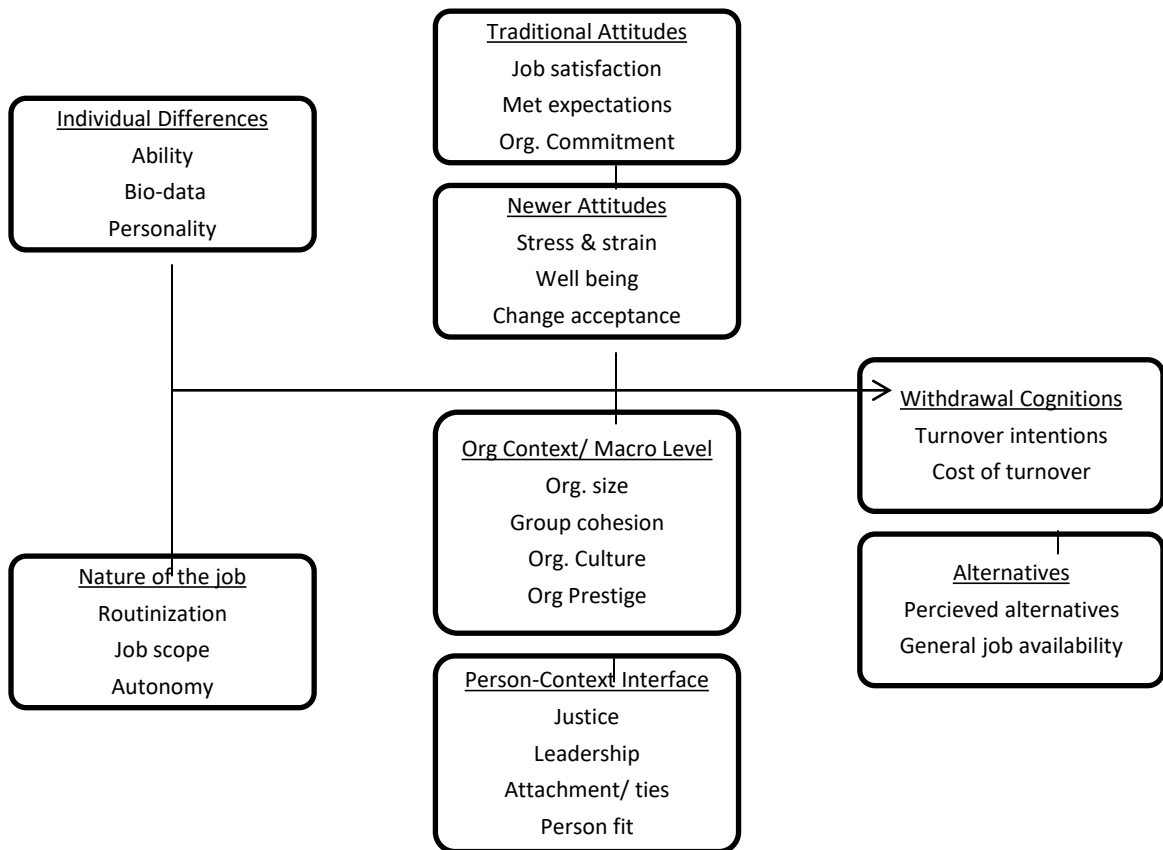


Figure 1

Chart of Factors Influencing Turnover Behaviors. Adapted From Holtom et al., 2008.

Factors related to the individual. Extensive research has been done on individual decision-making processes with respect to turnover, and select findings will be presented here related to individual states or attitudes, and traits.

States or attitudes. Job satisfaction and commitment are two of the most studied predictors of turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995). Low job satisfaction and low organizational commitment are found to be related to increased turnover behavior (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Tett & Meyer, 1993). In a 2009 study involving correctional facility staff, Lambert and Hogan found that the higher the level of satisfaction and commitment, the lower the turnover intent. Gendered differences in job satisfaction have been found by researchers studying IT workers in India. The female group had significantly lower job satisfaction and significantly higher turnover intent compared to the male group (Kanwar, Singh, & Kodwani, 2012).

Met expectations was identified as the primary driving factor influencing turnover decisions by Porter and Steers (1973). Employees whose expectations for their role in the organization were perceived as being unmet were more likely to leave. Since then a narrower concept related to employee expectations and turnover has emerged. Realistic job previews upon hire have been found to affect employees' perception of the organization's concern for them (Hom, Griffeth, Palich, & Bracker, 1999) and perceived organizational honesty (Earnest, Allen, & Landis, 2012) which both had a negative impact on turnover.

Exhaustion and stress began to appear more frequently in research related to turnover between 1985 and 1995 (Holtom et al., 2008). There are conflicting findings on relationship between job stress and turnover. Some studies have found a positive relationship between job stress and turnover intentions, (Arshadi & Damiri, 2013; Chen & Kao, 2011; Elci, Sener, Aksoy, & Alpan, 2012; Jou, Kuo, & Tang, 2013) and others have found no relationship (Yang, Ju, & Lee, 2016). Yang et al. (2016) found that work

stress did not have a direct impact on turnover, however it was related to decreased job satisfaction, and low job satisfaction has been linked to turnover intentions. Women working in IT fields trying to attain a balance between work and family responsibilities identified the demand for constant training and skill renewal in their field as a cause of additional work stress (Armstrong, Riemenschneider, Allen, & Reid, 2007).

Change can be more or less prevalent in an organization depending on the size, structure and industry. An individual's attitude towards change has been found to influence turnover behaviors. Wanberg and Banas (2000) found that "change acceptance was found to be positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to work irritation and turnover intentions, which in turn predict actual turnover" (p. 246). Individuals who were better able to accept change were more satisfied in their jobs and less likely to leave.

There is also a relationship between how employees perceive change and their turnover behaviors (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). Rafferty and Griffin (2006) found that the planning of change was indirectly positively related to job satisfaction and indirectly negatively related to turnover intent, mediated by psychological uncertainty. This means employees who perceived change as planned benefited from increased feelings of certainty, leading to increased job satisfaction, and lower turnover intentions. Rafferty and Griffin (2006) also found that frequency of change was negatively related to satisfaction and positively related to turnover through feelings of uncertainty. The higher the frequency of change, the more uncertain the employee feels, leading to lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intent. Finally they found that transformational change, which refers to an individual's perception of the extent to which core systems of an

organization have been changed in the course of the change event, had a direct positive relationship with turnover intentions (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006, p. 1155). If employees feel that change has resulted in modifications to the core systems of the organization, this can lead to higher turnover intentions. The amount of change an organization initiates or experiences can vary by industry. Industries or organizations prone to frequent change may be more prone to feel these effects, than those that are less dynamic.

Traits. Qualities of an individual that are not related to their perceptions or their opinions, but rather their inherent traits have also been found to impact turnover behaviors. For example, aspects of an individual's personality have been found to impact turnover behaviors. Barrick and Zimmerman (2005) found that higher self-confidence and decisiveness combined with biodata were negatively related to turnover. Bauer, Erdogan, Liden, and Wayne (2006) found that executives with low leader-member exchange and who are low in extraversion are more likely to leave their organizations. It has also been found that emotional stability leads to less intention to quit, and conscientiousness and agreeableness lead to lower actual turnover decisions (Zimmerman, 2008). Zimmerman also suggests that employees with low emotional stability may leave for reasons other than job performance and dissatisfaction.

This section focused on factors related to individuals' attributes. In addition to these personal drivers of turnover, factors related to the structure and social context in which the employee operates have also been found to affect turnover behaviors. The following section will explore these structural factors in greater depth.

Factors related to structure. Structural factors found to impact turnover are those related to the organization and the nature of the job, i.e. its design or qualities.

Organization. Prior research has identified many organizational factors that contribute to voluntary turnover including organization culture, social integration, managerial quality, mentorship programs, and organization prestige. Each of these is addressed below.

Factors related to organizational culture have been found to have an impact on turnover. The concept of a “learning culture” has emerged in recent research. An organization with a learning culture is able to integrate its people and its processes for learning to produce continuous learning and change within the organization (Egan, Yang, & Bartlett, 2004; Watkins & Marsick, 1993, 2003). It has been found that a perceived organizational learning culture positively impacts organizational commitment which negatively affects employees’ turnover intentions (Joo, 2010). When employees experience the culture as a learning culture, they are less likely to leave. This has been found to be true in the IT field as well. A learning culture was found to positively influence job satisfaction which negatively influenced turnover among IT employees in the United States (Egan et al., 2004). A recent study highlighted the impacts of an error management culture on turnover. An error management culture is one that involves organizational practices related to detecting, communicating about, and resolving errors. The study found that an error management culture increases group cohesion, lowers stress, and lowers turnover intentions (Guchait, 2016). An organization’s ability to communicate effectively about errors and error correction can have a considerable impact on employees and their intentions to leave.

Social integration is the degree to which an individual is psychologically linked to others in a group, and indicators of integration include individual members’ satisfaction

with other members and motivation to sustain those relationships (C. A. O'Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989). Related terms include group cohesion and cohesiveness (Shaw, 1981). It has been found that group-level social integration lowers turnover rates of individuals, and demographic homogeneity decreases individual turnover moderated by social integration (C. A. O'Reilly et al., 1989). In this same study, C. A. O'Reilly et al. found that employees in age-heterogeneous groups had higher rates of turnover, as did those distant in age from an otherwise homogeneous group. Relationships and differences among employees in an organization have an influence on turnover behaviors. This study signals a relationship between being different from an otherwise demographically homogeneous group and turnover behaviors. This finding is supported for race as well. Minority employees with a very small representation experienced a decrease in turnover intentions with an increase in the presence of their own race (Zatzick, Elvira, & Cohen, 2003). A decrease in turnover intentions also occurred with an increase in the proportion of employees of their own race in the job level above theirs (Zatzick et al., 2003).

Relationships with managers are a major component of many employees' work lives. Managerial quality was found to have an impact on turnover behaviors among Texas teachers in a 2013 study. Johansen (2013) found that regardless of the size of the organization, "organizations with high-quality middle managers experience lower turnover than organizations with lower middle management quality" (p. 872). They also found that the quality of upper level managers did not have a significant impact on turnover. This indicates that the quality of the manager to whom employees report directly can have an impact on employee turnover. Several studies of nurse retention in hospital systems have found that mentorship programs with thoughtfully created mentor-

mentee pairings can significantly reduce turnover behaviors and in many cases increase overall job satisfaction (Fox, 2010; Lee, Tzeng, Lin, & Yeh, 2009). The mentor role included professionally developing their protégé, and providing an additional layer of support within the hospital's staff structure (Fox, 2010).

Organizational prestige has been found to positively impact employee's job satisfaction, attachment, and commitment to their organization (Fuller, Hester, Barnett, & Relyea, 2006; Herrbach, Mignonac, & Gatignon, 2004). Employees with positive perceptions of their organization's external prestige were less likely to leave as well (Herrbach et al, 2004). "Both pride and job satisfaction mediate the relationship between perceived external reputation and turnover intentions. Hence, a favourable reputation matters in managing turnover intentions and is closely related to employee pride and satisfaction" (Helm, 2013, p. 542). Helm did not find a direct relationship between the perceived external reputation and turnover intentions. Instead she found that pride in their membership with the organization and their job satisfaction mediated the relationship between the two. Pride in membership and job satisfaction had a direct negative impact on turnover intentions in her study (Helm, 2013).

This section has reviewed organization-level factors impacting turnover. The following section will focus on another structural component of turnover, job design and qualities.

Job design and qualities. Factors that impact turnover related to job design and qualities include opportunities for advancement, job embeddedness, and network centrality. Many female employees, including those in management positions, want a career path and an opportunity to advance in their organizations with the support of their

employers. In their longitudinal study of male and female managers, Stroh et al. (1996) found that female managers left their organizations at a significantly higher rate than men, and that women's turnover intentions were predicted by their perceptions of lack of career opportunity in their current organization, job dissatisfaction and disloyalty to their company. A failure to support women's advancement has been identified by many researchers as a contributing factor in female turnover (Goodman, Fields, & Blum, 2003; Indivik, 2001; Jawahar & Hemmasi, 2006). When women feel that the opportunity to advance is not available to them, they are more likely to leave the organization, and in some cases start their own entrepreneurial ventures (Kephart & Schumacher, 2005).

Job complexity and autonomy are sometimes studied as complementary job characteristics. Independently, autonomy has been found to have a negative effect on turnover intention (Chung-Yan, 2010; Kim & Stoner, 2008; Spector, 1986), and job complexity has been found to negatively predict intentions to quit (Grebner et al., 2003). Chung-Yan (2010) found that there is a threshold where the increasing complexity of a job will decrease job satisfaction and increase turnover intentions unless it is matched with an increasing level of autonomy. This means that while complexity can be a positive feature of a job, as that complexity increases, the amount of autonomy must increase for the experience of complexity to remain positive, and job satisfaction to remain high and turnover intentions low. Job complexity and autonomy impact turnover "depending on whether they provide challenges and opportunities for personal growth or whether they present obstacles to personal growth and task accomplishment" (Chung-Yan, 2010, p. 246).

Job embeddedness is “the totality of forces that constrain people from leaving their current employment” and is a job quality that has been found to increase retention (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erz, 2001, p. 1115). These “forces” are categorized as *links* to other people or activities in the organization, *fit* between the job and life, and *sacrifice* – how easily the links can be broken, or what would be given up by leaving (Mitchell et al., 2001). The degree of job embeddedness is determined by assessing each of these areas. A higher number of links, high degree of fit, and high difficulty breaking the links or feeling that one would be giving up a lot, would lead to a higher degree of job embeddedness. Mitchell et al. (2001) found that less embedded employees were more likely to leave. The research is at odds over whether on the job or off the job embeddedness has the greater negative relationship to turnover (Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton, & Holtom, 2004; Mallol, Holtom, & Lee, 2007).

Several studies have found that job embeddedness is more negatively related to turnover for women than men (Jiang, Liu, McKay, Lee, & Mitchell, 2012; Lyness & Judiesch, 2001). This suggests that women could be more susceptible to the influence of social connections or relationships in relation to turnover decisions. They may be more sensitive to work-life fit, or assess higher costs associated with leaving than their male counterparts.

This previous sections reviewed factors related to individuals and those related to the structure or work environment that impact turnover. The next section will explore the relationship between the two, or person-context interface.

Factors related to person-context interface. Many factors influencing turnover emerge from the interaction between the individual and their context or environment. For

example network centrality, employee fit, interpersonal relations, position history, and perceived organizational justice all impact turnover.

Related to the concept of links from organizational embeddedness, network centrality refers to the positioning of an individual in the organization's social network. Lee et al. (2004) found that the more centrally located someone is in this network, the more embedded they are. Network centrality has been found to mitigate turnover behaviors after turnover intentions are present, "high degrees of connectedness decrease the likelihood that employees actually follow through on intentions to leave" (Vardaman, Taylor, Allen, Gondo, & Amis, 2015, p. 1189). Based on their findings, they suggest that "fostering supportive workplace relationships will improve retention efforts, particularly among those employees most 'at risk' of leaving" (Vardaman et al., 2015, p. 1189).

Person-job fit is defined by Netemeyer, Boles, McKee, and McMurrian (1997) as "congruence of the personality traits, beliefs and values of individual persons with the culture, strategic needs, norms and values of organizations" (p. 88). Person-organization fit is also used to describe the relationship between an employee's values and the values of the organization (C. W. O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). Using the Organizational Culture Profile, C. W. O'Reilly et al. (1991) found that new employees whose values profile was close to the organization's were less likely to leave. Those whose profiles did not match with the organization's values were found to be more likely to leave after 20 months of employment. Higher degrees of both types of fit are associated with lower levels of turnover (O'Connell & Kung, 2007).

How employees perceive fairness through a justice lens in an organization also has an impact on turnover. Organizational justice has been defined in four categories:

Distributive procedural, interactional/ interpersonal, and informational. Distributive justice is the fair and consistent distribution of resources in relation to one's contribution (Deutsch, 1975; Leventhal, 1976). Procedural justice has several main components: (a) the feeling that one can speak up in the process and the ability to influence outcomes (Thibaut & Walker, 1975), (b) consistency across people and time, (c) decision makers are neutral, (d) procedures are based on accurate information, (e) appeal procedures exist, (f) everyone affected by the decision gets representation, (g) personal standards and ethics are upheld in the process (Leventhal, Karuza, & Fry, 1980). Interactional or interpersonal justice refers to expectations of interpersonal treatment and being shown respect (Bies & Moag, 1986; Greenberg, 1993), and informational justice refers to receiving sufficient information and justification for decision outcomes (Bies & Moag, 1986).

Perceived distributive and procedural justice was found to positively affect commitment, and distributive justice was found to have a significant negative effect on turnover intentions (Olcer, 2015). In a study of local government employees in Australia, Jepsen and Rodwell (2012) found that distributive and informational justice increased commitment and reduced turnover intentions among women indicating that women were less likely to quit if they had increased information on allocation decisions.

This section reviewed factors impacting turnover that relate to how an individual interacts with her or his environment. In the following section, factors relating to the availability of alternatives will be discussed.

Factors related to alternatives. The perception of available employment alternatives and general job availability are factors from the external environment that

have also been shown to influence turnover decisions and behaviors. In their overview of turnover research, Holtom et al. (2008, p.256) found that the process of quitting was more complex than the idea that “dissatisfied employees with viable alternatives are more likely to quit.” The perception of alternatives has been found to be influenced by overall perceptions of justice, commitment and job satisfaction over time, success in job search, job market cognitions, and the potency of a shock event that precedes the decision to leave (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Bretz, Boudreau, & Judge, 1994; Griffeth, Steel, Allen, & Bryan, 2005; Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Glomb, & Ahlburg, 2005; Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

Lee and Mitchell (1994) describe the search for alternatives as one step in the five-step process of deciding to quit an organization. They describe the process as a search that “includes those activities involved with looking for alternatives and the evaluation of those alternatives” (p. 247). They identify four potential paths a person may take after a shock event causes them to begin thinking about quitting.

In Paths 1 and 2, a person may quit without considering alternatives first. In Path 1, a shock causes the enactment of a previously made plan, so there is no need to consider alternatives. For example, a woman knows she will quit if she does not receive the promotion she has applied for. If she doesn’t get the promotion, she has already decided that she will quit. In Path 2, a person reconsiders their attachment to the organization due to an image violation, and this is the basis for the decision, not alternatives. In Path 3, the person will compare their current job to various alternatives. In Paths 4a and b job dissatisfaction, not a shock, is the primary driver and a person may (4a) or may not (4b)

search for alternatives before leaving. Evaluation of alternatives is not always a part of the leaving process, and can be influenced by the type of shock that occurs.

More recent research has identified perceived ease of movement – which results from job search activities – as a factor in turnover behaviors (Steel & Lounsbury, 2009). Indicators of ease of movement include perceived job alternatives and a strong economy (Hom & Kinicki, 2001). The perception of how easy or difficult it is to secure alternative employment elsewhere can have an influence on turnover intentions. Drenzo and Greenhaus (2011) proposed a cybernetic model of turnover behavior that diverges from previous models in its incorporation of a feedback loop. The quitting process in their model is non-linear and can repeat multiple times. After unsuccessful job searches, individuals perceive their own un-employability. As a result, they engage in career strategies in their current roles that increase their employability and perceptions of mobility. As their perceptions of mobility increase, they are likely to re-engage in the process of job search. This model accounts for the experience of those with high dissatisfaction who do not immediately quit or passively remain as a result of an unsuccessful job search. Activities related to exploring alternatives including job search may occur multiple times before the actual leaving.

Consideration of and perception of alternatives as they compare to the current role are important factors in the decision making process of an individual considering quitting. Given the goal of this thesis is to examine the factors influencing both a woman's decision to leave wage/ salary work in the tech industry, and her decision to become an entrepreneur, the next sections explore models for women's entry into

entrepreneurship, their motivations for choosing entrepreneurship, and characteristics of self-employed women.

Entrepreneurship/Self-Employment

Female entrepreneurship was first studied by Eleanor Schwartz in 1976. Since then the female entrepreneurial experience has been studied independently, in relation to the male experience, and in relation to their female wage/ salary counterparts. This research will include some of each, and will focus on the motivation for female entry into entrepreneurship and characteristics of female entrepreneurs.

Terminology

According to Faggio and Silva (2014), “Academic research on entrepreneurship is partly impaired by fundamental issues surrounding the definition of entrepreneur and the identification of entrepreneurial individuals in available data” (p. 68). There is not a consistently used definition of either entrepreneur or self-employed in academic research. They provide a definition of entrepreneurship based on Knight and Schumpeter (1921), “entrepreneurs are individuals who bring innovations to the market in a process of creative destruction and bear the risk of the uncertainty surrounding entrepreneurial success” (Faggio & Silva, 2014, p. 68). They also cite Santrelli and Vivarelli’s 2007 findings that bouts of self-employment can be explained by a lack of employment opportunities, implying that self-employment can be temporary in nature or a hold-over to more permanent employment. Based on these definitions, entrepreneurship in this study may be defined as a venture bearing a greater long-term commitment that includes owning the risk of the uncertainty of success. Self-employment may be working for one’s

self without a considerable personal financial investment or as high a risk as entrepreneurship. Self-employment in this study also includes freelance or contract work.

The intention of this study is to learn more about the experience of choosing to work independently after leaving a tech firm instead of returning to work for another employer. For this reason, self-identified “entrepreneurs” and the “self-employed” are included. The following literature review reflects a lack of consistent distinction between the two terms and will include research on female entrepreneurship, as well as factors that influence entry into self-employment.

Female Entrepreneurial Motivation

The push-pull model is commonly used to explain female entrepreneurial motivations, and in their 2015 review of female entrepreneurship research, Poggesi, Mari, and De (2015) identified push/pull as the main theoretical framework for studying this topic. Referring to Ducheneaut’s 1997 definition, Orhan and Scott (2001) summarize push and pull factors as follows:

Push factors are elements of necessity such as insufficient family income, dissatisfaction with a salaried job, difficulty in finding work and a need for a flexible work schedule because of family responsibilities. *Pull factors* relate to independence, self-fulfillment, entrepreneurial drive and desire for wealth, social status and power.

In other words, push factors thrust the individual into entrepreneurship by necessity, while pull factors entice them through the attractive qualities inherent to the work situation. Additional push factors include frustration, divorce, and boredom at previous jobs, while additional pull factors include autonomy, education and family security (Buttner & Moore, 1997; Hisrich & Brush, 1984; Sexton & Vesper, 1982; Shapero & Sokol, 1982). In a 2001 study of French female entrepreneurs, Orhan and Scott identified additional push pull motivations that include “dynastic compliance,” “no

other choice,” and “entrepreneurship by chance.” There is no consensus in the research on which factors exert the greatest influence on entrepreneurial decisions (Poggesi et al., 2015).

While not every researcher frames the factors they study within the push-pull model, there have been many studies of female motivations for entrepreneurship that focus on some of the previously identified factors, as well as additional factors that either drive or attract women into entrepreneurship.

Motivation for independence and the need for self-achievement were cited by both male and female entrepreneurs as their top reasons for choosing entrepreneurship (Hisrich et al., 1996). Buttner and Moore (1997) found self-determination and desire for challenge as well as balancing family and work responsibilities to be women’s top motivators. They also found that women cited blocks to career advancement, including discrimination and organizational dynamics as being important in the decision. The desire for occupational flexibility, was identified by Ducheneaut and Orhan (2000), and family responsibilities were identified again as push factors for women by McGowan, Redeker, Cooper, and Greenan (2012).

Related specifically to leaving wage/ salary work for entrepreneurship, Guerra and Patuelli (2014, p. 558) found that “[Men and women] who chose self-employment over a paid job tend to do so in reaction to low levels of pecuniary satisfaction” even when their non-pecuniary satisfaction is higher than those who choose to stay. This expands on the push factor of job satisfaction by zeroing in on the finding that people who are dissatisfied with their pay, but are otherwise satisfied, are at risk of leaving the labor pool completely to pursue self-employment. A summary of push and pull factors

identified in the literature sorted into categories by the researcher can be found in Table

1.

Table 1

Push and Pull Factors Identified by the Literature

Push factors	Pull factors
Life circumstances Insufficient family income Need for flexible work schedule Family responsibilities Divorce Alternatives Difficulty finding work No other choice Dynastic compliance Entrepreneurship by chance Job dissatisfaction Blocks to career advancement Boredom at previous job Discrimination Dissatisfaction with pay Frustration	Life circumstances Family-work balance Family security Personal motivations Autonomy Education Self-determination Desire for challenge Independence Self-fulfillment Entrepreneurial drive Desire for wealth, social status, power

Characteristics of Female Entrepreneurs

This section reviews qualities of female entrepreneurs or the self-employed that are not a product of personality or attitude. Prior research has found relationships between female self-employment and traits like age, race, marital status/ presence of a spouse, work experience, education level, and the presence of children. This section primarily reviews the results of two studies, Devine 1994, and Taniguchi 2002. Devine found common characteristics of women who were self-employed, and Taniguchi looked at factors that increase the rate of entry into self-employment. While Taniguchi studied

determinants of self-employment, the two studies are grouped here together because they include many of the same traits.

Self-employed women tend to be older than their wage/ salary counterparts (Devine, 1994). They are more likely to be married with a spouse present, be covered by someone else's health insurance, and have a self-employed spouse, than wage/ salary counterparts (Devine, 1994). This finding is supported by Taniguchi (2002), as she found that work experience and the presence of a spouse encourages women to become self-employed. Devine (1994) focused on race and found that self-employed women were less likely to be black and Taniguchi found that being black slows down the transition into self-employment.

Self-employed women are also more likely to have come from a managerial or administrative occupation (Devine, 1994). Taniguchi found that having a professional background increases the rates of entry into self-employment by about 50% for white women. Additionally, she found that cumulative work experience increases the rate of entry regardless of race.

The impact of education on becoming self-employed has become less clear over time. Devine (1994) found that self-employed women were more likely to have four or more years of college, but Taniguchi (2002) did not find a significant relationship between education level and the rate of entry.

While balancing time for work and family is commonly cited as a reason women enter into self-employment, the presence of children has not been found to have a significant relationship to self-employment. Devine (1994) found that self-employed women were equally as likely to have children as their wage/ salary counterparts.

Taniguchi (2002) found that the presence of young children had no significant effect on entry, while the presence of older children increased entry into self-employment at the same rate that it increased entry into wage/ salary work.

This section reviewed the motivations as well as the personal traits and characteristics of women who enter entrepreneurship and self-employment.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 provided a review of the literature that relates to the distinct stages of this study. First it reviewed the findings on turnover and the many factors that influence the decision to quit an organization. This included evaluation of alternatives before quitting. The second element of this study is the decision to enter into entrepreneurship. Research related to reasons women choose entrepreneurship, as well as characteristics of female entrepreneurs was reviewed. In chapter 3, the methodology for this study will be outlined and the reasons for the design will be explained.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study examined the phenomenon of women employed by tech companies leaving the company and starting their own businesses. Three research questions were defined:

1. How do female entrepreneurs previously employed at tech companies describe their experience at the company, motivations for leaving the company, and motivations for choosing to become an entrepreneur?
2. What factors influenced their decision to leave?
3. What factors influenced their decision to become an entrepreneur?

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this study. It includes the, research design, research sample and setting, and data collection and analysis methodology.

Research Design

A qualitative research method was chosen for this study. Qualitative research is used to explore the meaning of an event or occurrence as it is described and interpreted by individuals, and it is appropriate when the researcher wants to draw out individual meaning and the complexities of a situation (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of this study is to understand how women describe the experience of leaving a tech company and starting their own business. Because the data being collected consists of individual accounts of a shared experience, a phenomenological approach was used.

Phenomenological research consists of identifying and analyzing significant statements, using coding or another method to generate meaning, and describing the

essence of the experience (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). This approach is appropriate for this study because previous research identified a wide range of factors that influence turnover, as well as varied reasons women choose to start their own businesses or become self-employed. This study bridges these bodies of research in a single lived experience. This produces the potential for previously unidentified themes to emerge. Phenomenological research allows for questions to be “broadly stated without specific reference to the existing literature or a typology of questions” creating the space needed to explore a new facet of a less-researched phenomenon (Creswell, 2014, p. 140). The less structured phenomenological approach provides an opportunity for higher internal validity and contextual understanding as well (Maxwell, 2013).

The study was conducted in accordance with the Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board guidelines. The researcher also completed Pepperdine’s Human Subjects Training. Participant confidentiality was maintained according to the above-mentioned guidelines.

Interviews were conducted with women who met the criteria for the study between September and December 2016. The following sections describe the research sample and setting, and data analysis.

Research Sample and Setting

The following criteria were used to select participants in this study:

- Participant is a female who was last employed at a tech company
- She undertook some financial risk to make this transition
- She is currently self-employed or has started a business
- It is not a requirement that she own an incorporated business entity or that she employ others.

Financial risk was defined as 1) investing a substantial amount of personal capital in the start of their business, or 2) being dependent on the income generated from self-employment or their business. The women did not need to work in a technical role (i.e. developer, engineer, etc.) at the tech company. A tech company is defined by the researcher as a company whose product is technology, or whose goods or services are primarily dependent on the technology they utilize. The researcher allowed participants to determine whether their previous employer would be categorized as a tech company.

Convenience sampling was used in this study (Creswell, 2014). The researcher contacted individuals by email who fit the criteria and who were known by the researcher or referred to the researcher by others. She also posted to several tech-related female Facebook groups to recruit participants. Non-probability snowball sampling (Creswell, 2014) was then used to find additional participants. The researcher asked participants to recommend another candidate or candidates for participation in this study. Interviews were conducted in person, by phone, and via Skype. Additional information on the interview content is covered in the following section.

Interview

The interview questions were generated in relation to the study's research questions and literature review. The format of the interview was semi-structured starting with a base set of questions and including additional probing questions as needed (Creswell, 2014). Interview protocol used by the researcher can be found in Appendix A.

Interview question topic flow: (For the full interview script, see Appendix B)

1. Basic information about current business
2. Basic information about the tech company, and what it was like to work there
3. Factors influencing the decision to leave, identify a shock event
4. Factors influencing the decision to start own business/ become self-employed

5. Expectations for entrepreneurship
6. Why was entrepreneurship the best alternative?
7. Were you pushed or pulled into entrepreneurship?
8. Why do women generally leave tech for entrepreneurship?
9. Would you make the same decisions again?

Data Collection and Analysis

The data consisted of audio recordings of the interviews which were transcribed into text documents, as well as the researcher's observations during the interview. After each interview, audio files were transferred from a SPR 7, password protected recording app, to a password protected Google Drive folder. The researcher was the only person to have access to these files. Audio files were deleted after transcription and the participant's name was removed from the transcription. Data associated with the interviewee was associated with a pseudonym post-transcription.

As data was collected, it was organized and prepared for analysis. The researcher re-listened and read through each interview paying attention to the general ideas, tone, and impressions of depth, credibility and usability of the information (Creswell, 2014). Next, data from the interviews was coded by themes; a term was assigned to comments that fell into theme or category. The assigned codes depended on both emergent categories, as well as those identified in previous research (Creswell, 2014). These codes were used when reading subsequent interviews, and if new patterns emerged, the researcher reviewed previous interviews in light of the new findings and re-assessed the codes as needed (Creswell, 2014). This process repeated until the data was organized into categories and no subsequent categories or sub-categories were identified. When data fit multiple categories, it was cross-indexed (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003).

The researcher then identified patterns within and between the coded categories. The relative importance of themes was identified based on how often they were mentioned, and relationships between the themes were identified (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). Finally, the analyzed data was interpreted in light of “lessons learned” by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interpretations of the data included those that were in-line with previous research, as well as those that diverged from it (Creswell, 2014).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 reviewed the rationale for the design of the study, the process for implementing the study, and the procedures for collecting and analyzing the data in order to draw meaningful conclusions about this phenomenon. Chapter 4 will present the findings from the study as well as themes in the data identified by the researcher.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of women who worked for tech companies, quit, and started their own business or became self-employed. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do female entrepreneurs previously employed at tech companies describe their experience at the company, motivations for leaving the company, and motivations for choosing to become an entrepreneur?
2. What factors influenced their decision to leave?
3. What factors influenced their decision to become an entrepreneur?

This chapter presents the results of 15 interviews with female entrepreneurs. Two interviews were conducted in person and 13 were conducted by phone or video call. Eight women had the title of founder, six were co-founders, and one was a freelancer. Additional titles used by the women included CEO, COO, Managing Partner, and Chief Inspiration Officer. The majority, eleven, had businesses in the tech industry including B2b solutions, teaching coding skills, data analysis algorithms, gaming, hardware and software, diversity training, and online professional services. Four of the women started non-tech ventures in coaching, marketing, training, and subscription services. Participants were located in the Bay Area, Southern California, the Northeast, Mid-west, and Quebec, Canada. The structure of the interview was such that it generated data that follows the outline shown in Figure 2.

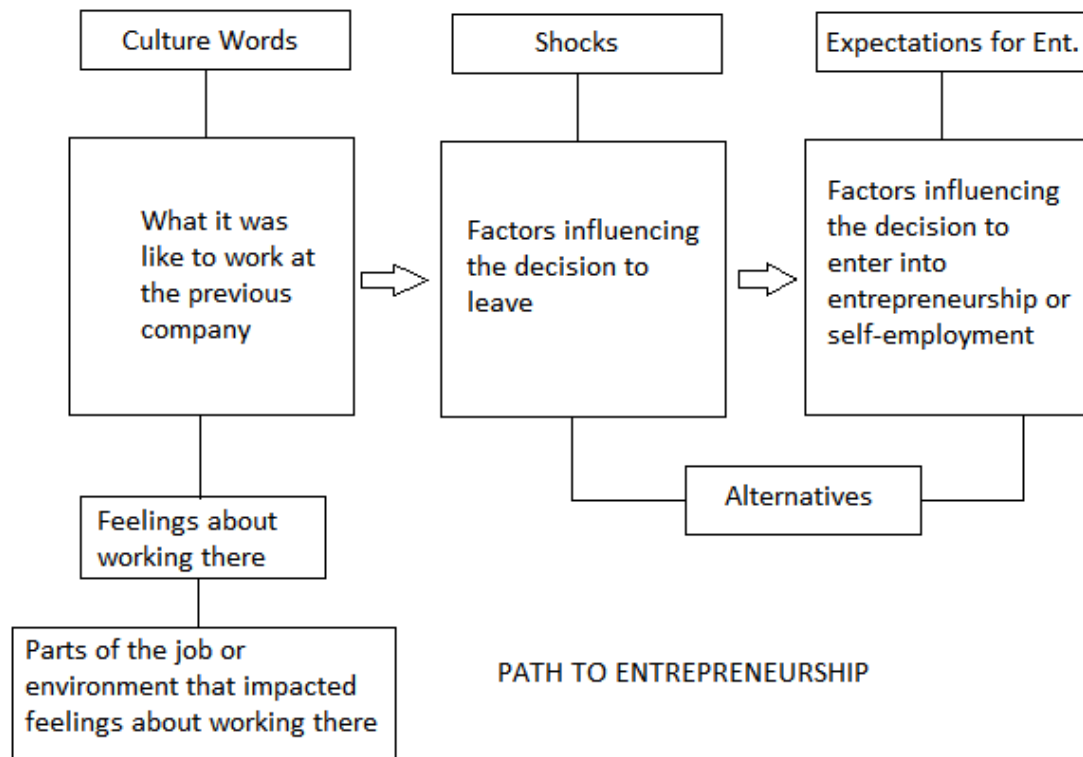


Figure 2

Concept Map for This Study

This chapter will follow the same flow in reporting data from each of these points in the participants' experiences – what it was like at the tech company, shock events that caused them to start thinking about quitting, reasons for leaving, reasons for choosing entrepreneurship, and references to alternatives as they are relevant. The researcher will identify themes in the data at each point, and together these themes will create a picture of the path to entrepreneurship for these women who previously worked for tech companies.

What It Was Like to Work at a Tech Company

Participants were asked several questions that related to what it was like to work at their previous company. There were both positive and negative aspects to the companies where these women were previously employed, and over half talked about having mixed feelings about where they worked. On the whole, there were more significant (five or more out of 15) negative experiences at these companies than positive. Most of the shared negative experiences related to the organization – how it was run and the culture. Most of the shared positive experiences were at the job level.

Participants were also asked to identify three words that best describe the culture. The words were categorized by the researcher into positive, negative and neutral words, and then further categorized by themes. Table 2 shows the overview of culture words used by participants to describe the culture at their previous organization. Of the 45 words given, 56% were negative, 36% were positive, and 9% were neutral. All but one participant used at least one negative word to describe the culture. And 10 participants used at least one positive word to describe the culture, indicating that most participants identified both positive and negative aspects of the culture. There were no themes in the neutral words used so they will not be included in this section. The specific culture words used will be shared in their respective sections that follow.

Table 2

Overview of Negative, Positive, and Neutral Culture Words

	No. of words	% of all culture words	N (unique participants)	% of total participants
Negative	25	56	14	93
Positive	16	36	10	67
Neutral	4	9	2	13
Total	45	100	n/a	n/a

The following is an overview of the positive and negative aspects of participants' experiences with their former employers.

Positive qualities of the company.

Organization level. There were no significant themes in positive experiences at the organization level. Less than five participants did experience their work environment as fun and employee-focused, so there was not a complete absence of positive organization-related experiences. However, since there were no significant trends with five or more participants sharing that experience, there are no positive traits listed for this level.

Job level. The job level had the highest numbers of shared positive experiences. The most significant positive shared experience was of having opportunities to advance in the company. This did not mean unlimited opportunities to advance; as it will be seen in the next section that limitations on the opportunities to advance was a shared negative experience. But 10 women described career-advancing opportunities at their former company, for example, "I started out manning our customer service into actually hiring and building a team to run that entire function." Eight participants talked about opportunities for professional development and having a good manager, and six talked about being paid very well. Positive themes at the job level are found in Table 3.

Table 3***Positive Themes—Job Level***

Theme	N	%	Sample comments
Opportunities to advance	10	67	Not only did I feel like I accomplished a lot, but it sort of grew into a role that is quite high, so that was nice
			I started out manning our customer service into actually hiring and building a team to run that entire function.
			I was the only female in that particular group until I was promoted to manager and started hiring
			I started there as an engineer as a computer engineer, and then I ended as a sales director.
Opportunities for professional development	8	53	So it was an opportunity to basically learn how to code on the company's expense
			It was an incredible experience just learning how to create a product that people love and how to launch it and grow a business
			It was a career-making experience for me. It was my first time being a member of an executive management team
			Great opportunity for being in my early 30s, and then take that forward and apply that in my own company.
Good manager	8	53	I had a manager who was really good to me and was better than any manager I've ever had
			I had a great manager who inspired me and that's why I was there for 3 years
			He sort of had a plan and he knew what happens if things go south, so he was like a true leader
			As a woman of color who came in at the director level, you know my boss was great, he saw me as someone who could do the job and that's all that mattered
Good pay	6	40	I was more than happy with how much I was making there I was definitely making over market
			I had a pretty vicious commute, they also paid a pretty high salary so I didn't mind it
			I was getting paid well
			I made a lot of money too that's the other side, everybody made a lot of money.

Person-context level. Nine participants had positive experiences with their co-workers, “I loved working there, I felt like I had relationships all across the company.”

Six participants believed in the product the company was selling and that contributed to a

positive view of the organization. Positive themes at the person-context level are found in Table 4.

Table 4

Positive Themes—Person-Context Level

Theme	N	%	Sample comments
Liked colleagues	9	60	It felt like family. Generally speaking everyone was awesome and that's why I loved it so much.
			I was very grateful for my team-mates, they were very good. One of them actually became my co-founder.
			I still keep in touch with almost everyone from my own old team now.
Believed in the product	6	40	We were all mission-driven. We were building the product for a cause.
			It was really making a real difference in the lives of people.
			I loved the products, I loved the whole philosophy
			And I still believe that this technology can help those who are trying to enrich their lives by connecting with others.

Individual level. At the individual level, nine of these women experienced feelings of pride in either the work they were doing, “I was really proud of the team that I built there,” or in being a part of the organization, “Everyone thinks it’s really cool, ‘Oh you work at that place?’ and I was proud at having been involved.” Five women described feeling trusted as demonstrated by being given autonomy or having their skills recognized, “And I had folks who trusted my judgment, my vision in my strategy for the group.” Positive themes at the individual level are found in Table 5.

Table 5***Positive Themes—Individual Level***

Theme	N	%	Sample comments
Felt proud	9	60	I got to tell people that, "I'm an engineering director at this company and I built this thing," and I was just really proud of that
			It felt really good being able to support myself, and to have a job in a really well respected field.
			... so very proud I was able to work for this premier company.
Felt trusted	5	33	I had some opportunities to work on exciting things, create new processes that made the company more data-driven.
			I started as an account manager and then I had a team and then I had teams plural. I just had a lot to offer in that area.

Positive aspects of the culture. Ten participants used positive words to describe the culture, and 36% of all words used were positive. The researcher categorized the words into the themes of fun, and employee-oriented (see Table 6).

Table 6***Positive Culture Words***

Themes	Fun (<i>n</i> = 4)	Employee oriented (<i>n</i> = 6)
Words describing the culture of the previous company	Fun	Informal
	Fast-paced	Casual
	Exciting	Friendly
	Energizing	Supportive
	Disciplined	Communicative
		Mission-driven
		Friendly
		Employee-focused
		Supportive
		Trying hard (to create culture)

In addition to the positive qualities of the organization, participants also identified negative qualities of the previous company.

Organization level. The majority of shared negative experiences were related to the organization level which was divided into categories of how the company was run

and the culture. In terms of how the company was run, twelve participants reported incidences and experiences of poor leadership at their previous employer. These included experiences of disorganization, lack of focus, and lack of agreement on responsibilities. One participant described frustration with a lack of validation in decision making among leadership, “The company had a great idea, however the vision and the product we're always hacked together and there wasn't much validation for the ideas for the future.”

Seven participants cited the company’s lack of direction as having a negative impact on their perception of the company. This included conflicting agendas, and as one participant explained, a lack of clarity around the product being offered, “The problem with being a product manager at a company that doesn't know what its product is that you can never feel like you're being successful at your job.” Related to the lack of direction was a perception that the company was failing or struggling. Six participants had experiences that caused them to lose confidence in the potential success of the organization, “I just didn't see the company going anywhere... the way that the management team just kept turning. I wasn't hopeful about the future of the company.” Additionally, a feeling of volatility, often related to turnover was experienced by five participants.

The culture was also described in negative terms by participants. Eight women described behaviors that contributed to a toxic environment. One participant felt taken advantage of because she was expected to feel grateful to have gotten a position that was in high demand, “It’s sort of considered in this industry that if you manage to get a job you should be wringing your hands and be really happy to be in that position, and that means it gets abused by management.”

Seven described experiences of discrimination against women. One participant experienced it in relation to being the only senior-level single-mother in a group of men with wives,

I really just did not feel heard in my own company, and I'd worked hard to get to a level where I felt that I had earned the right to have a voice and even if they couldn't relate [to her family responsibilities] to say "well if this is what you need, then this is what we're going to make happen."

Six experienced the culture as stagnant, fixed and inflexible. Some of the impacts described were missed business opportunities, outdated mindsets, and an inability to attract new talent. Five women noted that there were few women in positions of leadership at the company. One participant from the gaming industry noted, "There are no creative directors almost no narrative directors who are women unless they go out and start their own company." Table 7 shows the organization level comments from participants.

Table 7

Negative Themes—Organization Level

Theme	N	%	Sample comments
How the company was run			
Poor leadership	12	80	I literally had a three-headed boss; I was responsible to 1 but I had to work with all 3. And they didn't get along nor did they agree on the strategy so that was a bit of a nightmare.
			Even though the product was amazing and was doing well, the customers loved it, but the management was a sh**show.
			It was a bit unfocused and chaotic. They're figuring out their business model, they were trying to do a lot of things, they had a lot of cooks in the kitchen.
Company lacked direction	7	47	By the time I left there were seven different agendas in the executive team
			The lack of direction was just astounding, that's what bothered me the most
			There wasn't sort of a clear direction. You didn't always know what was going on

Table 7 (Continued)

Table 7 (Continued)

Theme	N	%	Sample comments
Business was failing or struggling	6	40	We were spending more money acquiring customers and customers were leaving us, and it was not profitable.
			That last year the company was really struggling, and to me and to other people who were at that director level or above, it was feeling like it was going to be pretty bad.
Volatile	5	33	One of the big things for us is that we had quite a bit of volatility and our senior management team... which as you can imagine can be pretty disruptive.
			The company changed so much during the time I was there, there was a lot of turnover.
Culture			
Gender discrimination	7	47	There was the young coder who didn't take meetings or respect seriously and he would always interrupt [our female boss] and that was very hard for me to see that.
			I guess I was so sick of having my voice belittled because I was young and a woman.
			There were only 1-2 designers who were women and I wanted to get into that. I had the support of the [male] designers but I couldn't get the support of HR and that was the most shocking thing to me.
Toxic environment	8	53	It's just one of those things that if you treat people so horribly, why would you stick around?
			Some of the [company] trips were really fun but they were grotesque in the misogyny, I mean they were just awful.
			Well there was bullying involved
			[The other managers] had a sort of macho culture of stepping on toes, interfering in my projects and that was sort of my greatest source of annoyance or discomfort
Stagnant/ fixed culture	6	40	While they said they wanted my help with the company building they were already set in their ideas of what they wanted.
			I think to their detriment they didn't understand that the industry was changing and that in order to attract the talent, you have to be able to treat your employees better.
			Because the company is so old and set in its ways that it doesn't even realize that like people are just bullsh***ing. There's just this culture of talk.
Few women in positions of leadership	5	33	There was never a time when I wasn't conscious of it and then, as I tried to move up in the company, we had one VP who is female
			When most of your leaders or managers are male, you're just always expected to be a man.

Job level. At the job level, over half of the participants described experiences with bad managers. For some, like this participant, the impact eventually impacted their decision to leave, “There was a complete disconnect between us that I could never figure out how to bridge, and it was ultimately the reason I left this company.” The other theme at this level was with limited opportunities for advancement. Many women described either blocks to advancement, or reaching the end of their perceived advancement within the company. One participant had advanced to the senior management level and did not see anywhere else to go, “And also that I had kind of reach the peak of what I could do within that company given that I was part of the executive management team, so there wasn't a lot more room for me to grow.” Table 8 shows the themes in negative comments related to the job level.

Table 8

Negative Themes—Job Level

Theme	N	%	Sample comments
Bad manager	8	53	He was a terrible manager, they were all terrible managers. The company didn't train people to be leaders.
			My new manager was not equipped to lead someone like me of my caliber and the area of expertise
			My boss blamed the team when stuff went wrong rather than accepting responsibility
			It seemed like she didn't know where she was going, what she was doing.
Limited opportunity for advancement	6	40	What was lacking, however, was the opportunity for advancement
			I officially quit because it's like “I've hit the proverbial glass ceiling” at that company
			For me [not getting promoted] meant that there was not future for me anymore and I needed to find a way to get out
			Not being able to proceed with moving my career forward, that was hard that was frustrating

Person-context level. At the person-context level, themes included being one of only a few women in the company or department, experiencing unfair treatment of self or others (not necessarily related to being female), and feeling unable to influence decisions. Nine women related the experience of being one of a few women there. One participant had the same experience at several companies, “So when I got there I was the only woman there and they actually said to me, and it wasn't the first time, by then I was used to it, that I was replacing the woman before who left.” One participant talked about the divide in roles typically held by men and women in tech companies,

I was the only woman, not only on the dev side but also working on the product. Everyone else was sales or the receptionist. And for a startup to have a receptionist was also pretty cool, I had been working on such lean bootstrapped companies that having a receptionist seemed great, but it totally perpetuated the stereotype or at least the organizational behavior of where women stand in tech.

Unfair treatment was cited by eight women and included getting bad reviews after working remotely to care for a sick child, being blamed for someone else’s mistake, the company cutting salaries and changing everyone’s roles to try to buoy a sinking company, and being underpaid. Five participants felt unable to influence decisions being made at the company. After attempting to implement a money-saving idea, one participant was met with resistance from her manager,

And this should be very easy to fix let's just fix it. And then I went to my manager, and she [said no]. I think there was hypocrisy in the entire culture around, "We want all of your innovation," versus the practical on-the-ground which was like, "Don't bother."

Table 9 shows the themes in negative comments related to the person-context level.

Table 9

Negative Themes—Person-Context Level

Theme	N	%	Sample comments
One of a few women there	9	60	Being unmarried and surrounded by men who had wives, it was difficult to make them understand, “No, I really need to leave to go pick up my child from day care”.
			I was the only woman not only on the dev side, but also working on the product. Everyone else was sales or the receptionist.
			In fact the group I was in for my expat assignment I was the only woman there.
			There weren't a lot of women at the company.
Unfair treatment	8	53	... a few months later my boss put the blame for all of that - the mistake [another person] made on me, and I was like "This sucks."
			I was being censured for doing exactly what I had been asked to do
			The COO at some point he said, "I think we're getting you at a deal," basically said that I was being underpaid.
Unable to influence decisions	5	33	I didn't feel like I was in any kind of position to challenge the status quo.
			The ability to come in and bring fresh ideas was stymied.
			I didn't have a voice into the strategy so they would come down with, "This is what we're going to do."

Individual level. At the individual level, ten women felt that their potential went unrecognized or that their skills were undervalued. For one participant, this hit home when she announced her departure for a better opportunity, “When I told people that I was leaving for this opportunity they were like, ‘Wow, I didn't even know that you were this capable of doing things like this,’ and I said, ‘Yes, I am.’” Another woman who lacked a particular credential was excluded from a meeting, but was still contacted for input only she could provide, “I had been deemed not educated enough to be in a meeting where I was obviously needed.”

Seven women had the experiences of needing to prove themselves, and of feeling insecure. Five described feeling very stressed while working at the company. For one participant, being a working-mother at the company caused her to feel all three,

So there was a lot of pressure on me because I felt like I had to over-deliver. I felt that I was constantly apologizing for things that should be normal. It shouldn't be something that I would have to justify as a woman and a mother to go off and do things to take care of my family.

Table 10 shows the themes in negative comments related to the individual level.

Table 10

Negative Themes—Individual Level

Theme	N	%	Sample comments
Potential not recognized-skills undervalued	10	67	It was like I was a good person to have on their roster because it looks good to have somebody smart like me, but I wasn't utilizing any of my smarts.
			It was very frustrating to be sort of dragged around and not feeling like I could contribute what I had to offer.
			I have things of value to say and do and I am sick and tired of feeling that I don't.
Had to prove myself	7	47	So the fact that I had a technical first degree, I had to continually prove myself
			I mean it was female head of HR that told me that they expect women to work harder than men.
Felt insecure	7	47	I think I really sold myself short and I didn't have the confidence to be able to demand what I deserved.
			Working there felt stressful, never being able to do good enough. I was very insecure about everything.
			It really made me question my own capacities and my own motivations
Felt stressed out	5	33	It was a stressful job trying to manage a product that's actually like 40 products.
			Working there was very very stressful.
			I was always tired and stressed

Negative aspects of the culture. Fourteen respondents used negative words to describe the culture and 56% of the words given were negative. Twenty percent more negative words than positive words were given in response to this question. The words

were divided into themes of toxic, chaotic, and inflexible. Clarification has been provided for words that were categorized based on the context given for choosing it. Table 11 shows the negative culture words given by the respondents.

Table 11
Negative Culture Words

Themes	Toxic ($N = 6$)	Chaotic ($N = 4$)	Inflexible ($N = 4$)
Words describing the culture of the previous company	Abusive Competitive Cheap (unfair) Combative Toxic Exclusive Toxic Grotesque	Rudderless Inconsistent Unfocused Unstructured Spontaneous Chaotic Nontransparent	Ingrained Rigid Risk-adverse Static Stodgy Data-driven (stifles risk-taking) Boring

Not all participants felt completely positively or negatively about the organization. For some, they were very aware of the presence of mixed feelings.

Mixed feelings about the previous company. As previously mentioned, many participants described both positive and negative aspects of their experience at their previous employer. Eight respondents talked about having mixed feelings. One participant describes her thinking,

So... this split brain thing that happens where on one hand I feel really proud for being there and you're making all this money, and on the other hand you're thinking, "What an idiot, why are you putting up with this?"

Six talked about things starting well, and then devolving over time. Details can be found in Table 12.

Table 12***Mixed Feelings Themes***

Theme	<i>N</i>	%	Sample comments
Have mixed feelings about the company	8	53	I have mixed feelings, you know how you can love and hate somebody at the same time?
			While I was there I felt proud about the things the team and I accomplished, I also felt under-appreciated by my manager and overworked big time.
Things started well then took a negative turn	6	40	Over time, things changed, the culture internally was such that it pretty much turned a dream job into a nightmare.
			In the beginning there was lots to learn and people were helpful but I found as I moved into a position of leadership everything became quite adversarial.

This section presented findings related to participants' experiences working at their previous companies. They expressed a mix of positive, negative and mixed feelings about their experiences. Most common shared experiences related to negative aspects of the organization – how it was run and the culture. And most common shared experiences related to positive aspects of the job. After talking about the organization, participants were asked to describe the decision-making process around leaving. Results from this portion of the interview will be explored in the next section.

Factors That Influenced the Decision to Leave

Participants were asked several questions related to their decision to leave the organization. These questions included identifying shock events which caused them to start thinking about quitting, identifying factors that influenced their decision to quit, and ranking those factors into a top 3. The answers they gave fell into several categories identified by the researcher and based on the literature review. The following section will present the themes in shock events, and factors that influenced the decision to leave the company.

Shock Events

According to Lee and Mitchell's 1994 model, shocks are events that cause people to start thinking about quitting, even if that doesn't lead to quitting. Participants were asked whether or not they could identify a shock event in their story. A summary of their responses can be found in Table 13. Some participants gave more than one shock event, so *N* does not add up to 15 in this table.

Table 13

Shock Events

Category theme and shock events	<i>N</i>	%
Re-evaluating personal priorities	6	40
Unhappy, realized could be happy in other circumstances (<i>n</i> = 3)		
Had a child, wanted to spend her time differently		
Wanted to do more, gradually worked out how to leave (<i>n</i> = 2)		
Disruptive changes within the company	5	33
High turnover		
Company making imprudent decisions		
Changes to org structure due to failing business		
Changes to org structure, ended up with no boss		
Re-org, timing was right to leave		
Increased pressure from business failing		
Unfair event	4	27
Unqualified people being promoted		
Bad review due to sick child		
Offered choice between unwanted position or lay-off		
Boss didn't see problem with overwork to the point of danger		
Passed over for promotion	3	20
Didn't get a promotion she thought she deserved (<i>n</i> = 2)		
Made multiple attempts to move up, was not successful		
Good manager left	2	13
Went from a supportive to and unsupportive manager		

Forty percent of the shock events related to re-evaluating personal priorities. This included feelings of unhappiness and a desire to make changes in order to be happier with their life, wanting to spend more time with a new baby, and the gradual realization that

they wanted to do something more. One respondent explained the gradual process that led to her leaving,

And it wasn't even that dramatic of a thing. I started thinking about, "What do I really want to do next?" and I spent a lot of time at it. Most nights I would write, "What does it look like?" and I just kept doing that for a long time. So was a little bit more gradual for me I think.

Five participants experienced disruptive changes to the organization as shock events that caused them to think about leaving. These changes included high turnover, several big re-orgs, the business failing, and the company making imprudent decisions. According to one participant, the shock occurred when her company started outsourcing which led to "hiring aggressively without really knowing what functions he or she will fill." Other shocks fell into the themes of unfair events, being passed over for a promotion, and having a good manager leave.

Before they identified a shock event, participants were asked to identify three factors that were most influential in their decision to leave the company, and then rank them. Themes from their responses will be presented in the next section.

Factors in the decision to leave. A wide variety of reasons were given for leaving across all participants. The reasons were grouped into the following categories according to individual, person-context, job, and organization factors, and factors related to alternatives. Themes were identified within each category. A summary can be found in Table 14.

Table 14***Themes and Trends—Factors in the Decision to Leave***

	<i>N</i>	% of participants	Responses	% of total responses
Themes				
Individual	14	93	19	37
Alternatives	8	53	9	18
Organization	7	47	9	18
Job	7	47	8	16
Person-context	5	33	6	12
Trends within the themes				
Organization dysfunction	6	40	7	14
Better alternatives existed	5	33	5	10
Justice - unfair treatment	4	27	5	10

Individual factors. Factors that relate to the individual - her feelings, personal qualities and life circumstances were most frequently cited by the most respondents. Fourteen participants cited at least one personal factor in the decision to leave the organization, and 37% of the total factors identified were related to the individual. A more detailed breakdown of the individual category can be found in Table 15.

Table 15***Factors in the Decision to Leave—Individuals***

Factors in the decision to leave - Individual	<i>N</i>
Wanted to change cities	3
Financially secure	3
Unhappy	3
Work-life balance	2
Family responsibilities	2
Felt unheard	1
Wanted to use unused ability	1
More autonomy	1
Create something new	1
Learn new things	1
Do meaningful work	1

Even though nearly every participant identified a personal reason for leaving, there were no significant shared experiences in the responses. Factors ranged from wanting to change cities to unhappiness, “a huge one was just my happiness. I don't want to live a life where my happiness isn't my priority,” to wanting to create something new elsewhere.

Factors related to alternatives. Eight participants identified reasons related to alternatives that influenced their decision to leave, and alternatives made up 18% of the total responses. For five participants, the knowledge that better alternatives were available influenced their decision to leave. One Bay Area participant describes her thinking,

I knew there was better stuff out there, you know, it's the Bay Area we're lucky to live here. This is an amazing job market, you're always getting hit up by recruiters, you have the opportunities to start your own company, I mean, why not? Why delay?

Additional factors can be found in Table 16. One factor in Table 16 received similar answers from five or more participants.

Table 16

Factors in the Decision to Leave—Alternatives

Factors related to alternatives	<i>N</i>
Better alternatives available	5
Consulting, clients read to follow, tech fellowship	
Look for a job, grad school	
No new opportunities at job	1
Expected to find the same issues elsewhere	1
Take time to explore options	1
Wanted to start a business	1

Organization factors. Seven participants identified factors related to the organization that influenced their decision to leave and 18% of responses were related to

organizational factors. Organization dysfunction in some form was identified by six participants as having an impact on their decision. For one participant, the instability at the company drove her to leave,

I would say the first being the fact that anything could happen at any time. The instability could impact anyone and it seeped into my actual function. I didn't feel like I had the room to provide the service that I thought was important.

Table 17 outlines additional responses related to the organization. One factor in Table 17 received similar answers from five or more participants.

Table 17

Factors in the Decision to Leave—Organization

Factors related to the organization	<i>N</i>
Dysfunction	7
Major change poorly done, instability,	
No direction x2, no growth, failing,	
Depressing environment	
Good manager left	2

Job factors. Seven participants identified factors related to their job that influenced their decision to leave and 16% of responses were related to job factors. Seven respondents cited factors related to their job, however there were not any significant themes in shared experiences. Factors related to the job included a lack of advancement opportunities, pay, boredom and an unwanted function change – see Table 18. For one participant, the difficulty in moving up within the company wore on her over time, “I mean I did move a little, and moved up a couple levels to the director, but there was no way it was going to go any farther. And even that was painful, I mean it was pretty rough.”

Table 18***Factors in the Decision to Leave—Job***

Factors related to the job	<i>N</i>
No advancement opportunities	4
Pay	2
Boring	1
Unwanted function change	1

Person-context factors. Person-context had the lowest number of overall responses with 12% falling into this category; however five participants identified factors in this category. Ten percent of factors were related to justice and unfair events, however only four participants identified justice as a factor in their decision, so this may not be a significant theme. One participant suspected her gender had to do with an unwanted job task shift, “I felt that as a woman, I was moved into a softer function where I was a speaker and being sent out to numerous events rather than focusing on development.” Additional factors included bad job fit, see Table 19. One factor in Table 19 received similar answers from five or more participants.

Table 19***Factors in the Decision to Leave—Person-Context***

Factors related to person-context	<i>N</i>
Justice—unfair events	5
Unfair review, sexism, blocked from	
Advancing, unqualified people promoted,	
Role change because female	
Bad job fit	1

Ranking. Participants were asked to rank the factors they identified from most to least influential on their decision to leave. Some participants identified more than three factors so some ranked theirs from one to four or five. Those ranked fourth or fifth were

counted with the third+ ranking. See Table 20. There were 51 factors identified between the 15 participants. Individual factors were named in the top-three 19 times. These factors were predominant in the top-three reasons for leaving and stood out compared to the other factors. While individual factors were identified by all but one participant as having an impact on their decision to leave, they were more likely to be ranked second or third in terms of influence on the decision.

Table 20

Factors Influencing the Decision to Leave—Ranking by Theme

Theme	<i>N</i>	#1	#2	#3+	Top 3	Top 2
Individual	14	4	8	7	19	12
Alternatives	8	2	4	3	9	6
Organization	7	3	1	5	9	4
Job	7	4	2	2	8	6
Person-context	5	2	4	3	9	6

Of the nine organization-related factors identified, five were ranked third. These were the only notable trends in the ranking of factors. Each rank contained factors from every category, and there were no other distinguishable patterns in how these women ranked the factors.

Changes that would have caused her to stay. When asked “What change or changes, if any, would have caused you to stay? That could include changes made by the company, changes made by you, or changes to the broader circumstances,” one third of participants said that nothing would have made them stay. For some, they were fed up with the circumstances at the organization,

Even if things had changed and I was all of a sudden welcomed to the table, and told that I would have a stronger voice and shape policy to make things better for women, i don’t think that would have been enough to stay.

And for one participant, it was more a desire for change that made leaving inevitable,

In Silicon Valley, 5 years with any startup is almost an eternity. It probably would have been hard to stay much longer even if the situation had changed drastically just because I would be looking for something different.

Almost every answer related to changes to the organization and its culture including getting a clearer business model and direction, more transparency, and a more solid management team. Additional factors can be found in Table 21. This is interesting given that 14 women cited individual factors and eight cited factors related to alternatives in their top three, but neither of these types of factors was mentioned in response to what would have caused them to stay.

Table 21
Changes That Would Have Caused Her to Stay

Response	# of times mentioned	Theme
Nothing	5	
If the company figured out its business model	2	Organization
More transparency	2	Organization
More support for learning and development	1	Organization
More support for senior leaders	1	Organization
If they had a solid management team	1	Organization
Better manager	1	Organization
If others hadn't been allowed to deny her opportunities	1	Organization
More trust in the employees	1	Organization
Better job fit	1	Job
If I could feel comfortable bringing my whole self to work	1	Person-context

This section presented the findings on factors related to the decision to leave the previous employer. After describing the decision to leave, participants were asked to describe the decision to start her own business or become self-employed. Results from this portion of the interview are presented in the following section.

Factors That Influenced the Decision to Become an Entrepreneur

Participants were asked a series of questions related to starting their own business. They were asked to name the three most influential factors on their decision to start their own business and then to rank them. They were also asked whether they felt more pushed or pulled into entrepreneurship, based on the Ducheneaut (1997) and Orhan and Scott (2001) definition of the push-pull model for entry into entrepreneurship. Results of this inquiry will be discussed in this section.

Factors influencing entry into entrepreneurship. The factors identified by participants as influencing their decision to enter into entrepreneurship were categorized as follows: Life circumstances, Alternatives, and Personal motivations. A summary of the findings can be found in Table 22. Some women gave more than three factors, so the total number of responses is 51.

Table 22

Themes and Trends—Factors Influencing Entry Into Entrepreneurship

Themes	<i>N</i>	% of participants	Responses	% of total responses
Personal motivations	12	80	23	45
Life circumstances	10	67	17	33
Alternatives	8	53	11	22
Trends within the themes				
Entrepreneurial drive	8	53	8	16
Financially secure	8	53	8	16
Desire for autonomy	5	33	5	10

Participants were then asked to rank the factors from most to least influential on the decision. Since some participants gave more than three factors, those listed beyond third were grouped into the #3+ category. Table 23 shows the distribution of each theme by rank.

Table 23***Factors Influencing Entry Into Entrepreneurship—Ranking by Theme***

Theme	#1	#2	#3+	Top 3	Top 2
Personal motivations	9	7	7	23	16
Life circumstances	3	4	10	17	7
Alternatives	3	4	2	9	7

Factors related to life circumstances. Ten participants described factors relating to life circumstances which motivated their entry into entrepreneurship, and 33% of the total responses fit into this category. For eight participants, being financially secure was a top-three factor in this decision; however 12 participants during the course of the interview said that they were able to choose this path because of financial security, even if it wasn't in their top ranked influences. For seven of these women it was due to a spouse working, and for five it was other security such as a seed funding or the sale of a home. One participant explains, "I have a spouse who works, so that makes a big difference, to have a little buffer there." Additionally, life circumstances were more likely to be ranked second, third, or lower, with only three people naming a life circumstance as a number one ranked factor. Other factors related to life circumstances can be found in Table 24. One factors in Table 24 received similar answers from five or more participants.

Table 24***Factors Influencing Entry Into Entrepreneurship—Life Circumstances***

Factors related to life circumstances	<i>N</i>
Financially secure	8
Spouse working x4, other means x4	
Presence of support network	4
Identified a cofounder	3
Need flexible schedule—kids	1
Right time to take a risk—no kids, young	1

Factors related to personal motivations. Twelve participants described personal motivations for entry, and they made up 20% of overall responses. Eight participants named factors related to entrepreneurial drive in their top-three; these factors included having an idea, seeing a demand for her skill or idea, having a business plan, and having always wanted to be an entrepreneur. One participant describes her experience, “Finally I had an idea that I was interested in pursuing and I wanted to see how far I could take it.” Another always knew this would be her path, “I'd always known I would be an entrepreneur at some point in my career. . . . I just said there's no time like now.”

Five participants placed a desire for autonomy in their top three; however twelve talked about the desire for autonomy or to be her own boss as a motivation for choosing entrepreneurship during the course of the interview. Being able to control ones destiny came up several times, as with this participant, “If I was going to work for myself I'd be able to control my own destiny.” Other personal motivations included self-determination which included a strong belief that she could do it and be successful, a desire to put a new skill to use, preservation of her mental and creative health, and a desire to be doing work that aligned with her personal values as seen in Table 25. Two factors in Table 25 received responses from five or more participants.

Factors related to alternatives. Factors relating to alternatives were also identified by eight women and they made up 22% of all responses. Responses included citing a lack of appealing alternatives, the environment was supportive of starting a business at the time, and for some women, their first choice alternative did not work out. Interestingly, while there were no trends related to alternatives among the ranked factors, eleven women described having a lack of appealing alternatives when asked why

entrepreneurship was the best option for them at the time. See Table 26. One participant explains what was unappealing about the available alternatives, “I could not find another shop to jump to where I wasn’t going to run into that same sort of hierarchy. I was really hoping to find a woman-led business.”

Table 25

Factors Influencing Entry Into Entrepreneurship—Personal Motivations

Factors related to personal motivations	<i>N</i>
Entrepreneurial drive	8
Had an idea/ business model, saw a demand she could fill, passion for idea, always wanted to start a business	
Desire for autonomy	5
Control own destiny, do things her way, wanted to call the shots, be her own boss	
Desire to make an impact	4
Make meaningful change, improve situation for women	
Self-determination	2
Confidence in her abilities, could hustle	
Desire for challenge	1
Ability—wanted to apply a new skill	1
Self-preservation—mental and creative health	1
Values—wanted work and values to align	1

Table 26

Factors Influencing Entry Into Entrepreneurship – Alternatives

Factors related to alternatives	<i>N</i>
Lack of appealing	4
No jobs of interest available, didn't want more of the same (<i>n</i> = 3)	
Environment supported starting a business	3
Political climate, Silicon Valley, had clients ready to follow	
Lack of alternatives	3
Rejected from grad school, couldn't find a job (<i>n</i> = 2)	
Wanted time to explore possibilities	1

Pushed or pulled into entrepreneurship. When asked whether they felt more pushed or pulled into entrepreneurship, nine respondents said pulled, three said pushed,

and three said it was a combination. The explanations for choosing pulled were overwhelmingly related to personal motivations including entrepreneurial drive, with only a few references to alternatives or life circumstances. One participant was pulled by a desire to inspire other aspiring female entrepreneurs, “Everything you said, the innovation of it the independence. Also it's almost like wanting to prove that it's possible as a woman in tech, as a role model to other women.”

Even though life circumstances were cited in respondents’ top-three factors influencing the move into entrepreneurship, only one person cited a life circumstance as a pull factor. This mirrors the overall rankings in which life circumstances were most likely to be ranked 3rd or lower in terms of influence on the decision, as shown in Figure 22.

This section presented findings related to factors that influenced participants’ entry into entrepreneurship. Themes included factors related to personal motivations, life circumstances, and alternatives. Trends included twelve participants naming personal motivations and ten participants naming life circumstance factors in their top-three. Additionally, twelve participants cited financial security and autonomy and eleven cited lack of appealing alternatives as influencing the decision to enter into entrepreneurship, even if these were not in their top-three. Among the top-three, trends included personal motivations being named in the number one spot by nine women, while alternatives and life circumstances were number one for three women each. Additionally, life circumstance factors were more likely to be ranked 3rd or lower.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented the themes and findings from the data as it related to the experience at the previous tech company, the decision to leave, and the decision to enter

into entrepreneurship. Chapter 5 will present the researchers conclusions on the meaning of this data.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to explore the phenomenon of women leaving tech companies and starting their own businesses or becoming self-employed. It also aimed to identify leading factors in the decisions to quit and to start a business or choose self-employment. Three questions guided the inquiry into this topic:

1. How do female entrepreneurs previously employed at tech companies describe their experience at the company, motivations for leaving the company, and motivations for choosing to become an entrepreneur?
2. What factors influenced their decision to leave?
3. What factors influenced their decision to become an entrepreneur?

This chapter will discuss conclusions drawn based on the findings from the previous chapter, as well as implications for the field of OD, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Many findings from this study were consistent with those of previous research, particularly as they relate to tech-culture described in the media and turnover, however there were some interesting expansions in the findings related to female entrepreneurship.

Working for a tech company appears to be a mixed experience for many women, with a predominantly strong negative experience of the organization and its culture. Poor leadership, a lack of direction, gender bias, limited advancement opportunities and a toxic environment were common experiences. This supports previous findings that women in SET fields experience hostile cultures, lack of a clear career path or advancement opportunity, and gender bias (Hewlett, 2014; Hewlett et al., 2008; Snyder, 2014).

Surprisingly, opportunities for advancement and professional development were common positive experiences, as were liking one's colleagues and feeling proud of the work being done. It seems that for many women, "lack of opportunities to advance" does not completely capture their experience. The idea of a "glass-ceiling" seems more fitting because many women advance, they just reach a point where they cannot go any further. This is supported by the fact that women saw few or no women in positions of leadership above them, but it would be an oversimplification to say that this was the universal experience in limitations to advancement. Some women wanted to advance in their careers but the available upper-level positions within the company were simply not appealing. This challenges the idea that women are not in upper-level positions only because they are being blocked from advancing, there is also an element of choice in this situation for some.

In terms of the decision to quit, previous research was supported by many of the factors identified by participants in this study. Factors related to individuals which were supported by this study included attitudes toward change and the perception of change as planned or transformational, and job satisfaction (Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). Many women perceived these organizations as lacking a clear direction, or that major changes were not handled well and these perceptions impacted their decisions to quit. A notable new finding was that women felt that their potential was not recognized or that their skills were undervalued and that they had to prove themselves. This may be a unique experience for women working in tech, particularly for those in engineering or development which tend to be male-dominated roles.

Factors related to the organization that were supported by this study include the impact of organizational culture, managerial quality, demographic homogeneity, and social integration (Johansen, 2013; C. A. O'Reilly et al., 1989; Watkins & Marsick, 1993, 2003). Factors related to job design supported by this study include lack of career opportunities, a failure to support women's advancement, and job embeddedness including links and fit (Goodman et al., 2003; Indivik, 2001; Jawahar 2006; Mitchell et al., 2001; Stroh, Brett, & Reilly, 1996). Factors related to person-context supported by this study include person-job fit and organizational justice (Deutsch, 1975; Leventhal, 1976; Netemeyer et al, 1997). Events perceived to be unfair were shock events for several women and eventually led to their quitting. Lee and Mitchell's (1994) turnover paths in which consideration of alternatives impacted quitting behaviors were also supported given that nine women cited factors related to alternatives as having a significant impact on the decision to leave.

One new conclusion is that personal factors had an impact for most women despite the fact that their main negative experiences were related to the organization culture and how the organization was led. Even though these personal factors are prevalent, the fact that they were more likely to be ranked second or third means that the other factors may still carry more weight in women's minds. Women are leaving primarily for personal reasons, however when asked what would cause them to stay, most of the answers again related to the organization. This may imply that the organization, job, alternative and person-context factors may be have more influence on the decision. Women want to learn new things, be happy at their job, do meaningful work, use their skills to the fullest extent, and have a healthy work-life balance.

Another conclusion regarding the decision to become an entrepreneur is that women are becoming entrepreneurs because they want to, not because they have to. Women are choosing this path out of primarily personal motivations, especially pure entrepreneurial drive, but unlike the decision to quit, personal motivations appear almost equally across the rankings. These motivations are driving the decision, not coming second to other considerations. Women are being pulled into entrepreneurship and are pursuing things they want like autonomy and the ability to be their own boss, innovation, fulfillment, growth, challenge, and to prove themselves or serve as an inspiration for other women in business. Women were also pulled by simply wanting to start a business, a desire that in previous research is not as predominantly influential as it appears to be in this study.

There were also women who experienced a push from things like job dissatisfaction, a fear of finding the same issues at another company, not being able to find another job, and having their alternatives limited by a lack of credentials such as an MBA. Previous research supports both of these conclusions; however this study supports the idea that for women today, personal motivations and pull factors may be significantly stronger than previously identified push factors or reasons of necessity for choosing entrepreneurship.

Additionally, as recently as 2012, McGowan found that family responsibilities were identified as a push factor for women entering entrepreneurship, but in this study, only one person talked about family responsibilities impacting their decision and no one mentioned it as a push factor when asked specifically about being pushed or pulled into entrepreneurship. Several women talked about family responsibilities or work-life

balance impacting the decision to quit, but not in the decision to choose entrepreneurship over other alternatives. This could be explained by changing child care roles in families, changing perceptions of work-life balance, the age at which women choose to have children, or the ages and life stages of the participants in the study.

Another primary conclusion is that financial security is a significant factor in the decision to quit full-time employment to start a business. While not always ranked in the top-three, financial security was named by twelve participants as impacting the decision to take the risk of starting a business. Taniguchi (2002) found that the presence of a spouse encouraged women to become self-employed. For seven of the twelve women, the presence of a working spouse did provide them the financial security to take this risk, however a new finding is that five of these women had financial security from other sources not including a spouse. Financial security not related to the presence of a spouse was not mentioned in previous research on female entrepreneurs. There are women who are drawn to entrepreneurship and can financially support the opportunity without the presence of a spouse or second income. In some cases it was living rent-free with family members, winning seed funding at a business case competition, or having personal savings. In these cases, women knew how long they could go without steady income when they started their ventures, and held finding another job as a back-up plan. Several women talked about the fact that they could “always find another job” since their skills were in high demand, they just preferred not to seek alternate employment because they didn’t want more of the same someplace else. This demonstrates the strategic decision-making that goes into choosing entrepreneurship for many women in addition to their willingness to take a calculated financial risk.

Implications of this Research

This study has implications for technology companies who are seeking to attract and retain high-potential female employees. Given that women are entering into entrepreneurship at an increasing rate, competition for female employees will not only be occurring between tech companies but between tech companies and better alternatives. Companies who wish to understand the female experience in tech and their reasons for leaving, as well as what attracts women to entrepreneurship can benefit from the findings of this study. OD practitioners supporting tech companies who struggle with retaining women or diversity issues can also benefit from this research study.

Recommendations for Tech Companies and the Practice of Organization

Development

The following recommendations are made based on the conclusions from this study.

1. Perceptions of organization dysfunction can have a negative impact on female employees. Changes perceived as disruptive or negatively impacting employee's individual roles can become the shock events that cause female employees to start considering quitting. Given the dynamic nature of many technology companies, especially startups, perception is everything. Communicating openly and clearly about major changes in the company's direction or turnover in leadership roles, as well as involving employees in the changes will be important for maintaining female employees' morale and for positively influencing their perceptions which can decrease turnover intentions.

2. Women notice when there are no or few women in positions of leadership and it impacts their feelings about their advancement prospects within the organization.

Women also reported feeling like an untapped resource. Many talked about feeling undervalued or that their potential was not recognized. This represents potential not being used by these organizations. Understanding and utilizing the skills and strengths of all employees can have an impact on the organization's overall effectiveness while also increasing engagement for the employees and reducing turnover behaviors. If a company is in this position, it is recommended that programs be implemented that teach diversity and inclusions skills, especially for those responsible for hiring and managing teams.

3. Women have an increasing number of employment options. Women who are dissatisfied with their jobs or employers may be considering alternatives such as further education, starting their own businesses, consulting, and employment at other companies. Women reported feeling somewhat limited in their choices by the expectation that they will find the same issues at another company, so if a tech company wants to attract the best female talent, they may want to distinguish themselves as unique from other tech firms. This may require an evaluation of the culture with attention paid to voices of minority staff, not just the present majority. Finding ways to create genuine connections and relationships between employees is one way to increase feelings of embeddedness in the organization and decrease turnover intentions.

4. Tech companies should build on their strengths which include women's pride in the work they and the company are doing, the goodwill generated by trusting their employees, the positive relationships between colleagues, the belief in the product and its positive impact in the world, good managers, and competitive salaries. There are a lot of

attractive elements of tech companies that cause women to want to work there.

Leveraging these strengths can be one way to attract and retain female employees. Many women had an opportunity to advance, but reached a point where they could not advance any further. Creating clear career pathways could be another way to create commitment to the organization, especially if women see other women moving up into positions of management or leadership.

In smaller organizations, or those with limited opportunities for advancement, pitching lower-level positions as opportunities for rich professional development may help manage the expectations of the employees and provide job satisfaction in ways other than moving up within the organization. In these cases, the organizations may have to assume an expected amount of turnover because of the limit to advancement, and be prepared with a diverse pipeline and solid onboarding program to keep those positions filled. Many women talked about the career-making experiences they had at their previous companies because of the skills they acquired on the job and through opportunities given to them including but not limited to advancing in seniority. An advancement pathway is important, but not the only way to encourage talented women to stay.

5. Women who choose entrepreneurship are doing so in large part because they have a great idea, and want more autonomy and freedom to work the way they want to, and to make an impact with their work. It is possible that regardless of the company, organization design, or job design these women would pursue entrepreneurship. It is also possible that giving these women an opportunity to pitch and run with their ideas is another way to keep them around. These are women who have high confidence in their

abilities and who want an opportunity to put their skills to full use. Additionally, finding ways for these women to connect with the impact and meaning of the work they are doing is another way to engage them. This could be a question of job or group design that engages entrepreneurially-minded women in a way that their needs for autonomy and ability to make an impact are satisfied.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

One of the limitations of this study is the small sample size, 15 participants. Another is that the study looks at the experiences of women working for tech companies, but it is difficult to draw conclusions on gender-unique experiences without comparing their experience to their male counterparts. A third limitation is that race and age are not accounted for as additional variables; participants were not asked to provide demographic information in the interview. In some cases, women described experiences of bias or discrimination, and it is not clear whether it was because of race, gender, age or some combination of these factors.

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, the researcher has several recommendations for future research. To more clearly distinguish how the experiences working at tech companies are similar or different between men and women, expand the study to include men who worked in tech and left to become entrepreneurs. Experiences like being promoted to a point and not progressing further may be a more universal experience given the hierarchical structure of organizations and limited positions of leadership, or it may be attributed to the proverbial “glass ceiling” for women. It also may be a shared experience, but disproportionately happening to women, as many women described a lack of female leadership present in their previous organizations.

An interesting finding is the dominance of personal factors in the decision to quit for these women. Again, expanding the study to include men would provide a further exploration into the similarities and differences in the reasons men and women quit. Would men be as likely to name a desire to live in a new place, or general unhappiness in their top-three reasons for quitting?

Overall, the researcher had trouble finding literature that was specific to the technology industry. Given the industry's rapid growth and influence on how companies are designed, staffed, and scaled, further research into patterns of retention and turnover as well as differences in experiences between men, women, people of color, and sexual minorities could provide a wealth of information on how similar or different the tech industry really is from other industries.

Lastly, as one potential participant pointed out, this study only included female entrepreneurs who were financially secure enough to not need additional income while running their business or venture. This excluded many women who are working full or part-time while they get their businesses off the ground. Further research into the experience of pursuing entrepreneurship without financial security would highlight another side of the entrepreneurial experience for both men and women with aspirations to leave full-time employment to start their own businesses.

Conclusion

This study suggests that women are having mixed experiences at tech companies; learning new skills, feeling trusted, and advancing, but getting frustrated by limitations to that advancement, being underutilized, or being one of few women present. Women are leaving tech companies for a variety of reasons, many of them related to the individual,

however organization dysfunction and unfair treatment are having an impact on the decision as well. Entrepreneurship and self-employment are becoming attractive and attainable alternatives for many women, and they are finding ways to fund their ventures in addition to having a partner with a second income. Women are now choosing entrepreneurship because they want to more often than because they feel they have no other choice, so tech companies will likely have to compete not only with other tech companies for these women's talents, but with attractive alternatives such as these in the future.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

PROTOCOL

- 1) Face to face interviews will be conducted whenever possible.
- 2) If face-to-face is not possible, interviews will be conducted by phone or video call.
- 3) Potential participants will receive an email requesting their participation and explaining the study. If they agree to participate, they will be sent a consent form prior to the interview.
- 4) Interview audio scripts will be transcribed and original audio files will be destroyed. Transcriptions will be kept on the researcher's password protected computer. Participants will be made aware of this.
- 5) After the interview, the researcher will send each participant an email thanking them for their participation.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

- Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Your interview will be part of a study to understand the experiences of women who have worked for tech companies and who left to become entrepreneurs or become self-employed.
- Our interview should last about 45min – 1hr.
- I'll be recording our interview so that I can review it later.
- As a reminder, information from your interview will be used in aggregate with other interviews. So, your name and any identifying information will be removed from any data or quotes I draw from our interview.
 - To that end, I won't be asking you for your name while we're recording, or the names of your former employer or your current company.
- During the interview I'll be asking you to describe your experience at your last employer, how you decided to leave, and about the transition into entrepreneurship.
- Any questions before we get started?
- I'm going to start the recording now.
 - And for protocol purposes, I need to ask you verbally if you consent to participate in this study?
- Thank you, let's begin.

1) We'll start with some basic questions about your current business.

- a. When did you start it and what does your business do?
- b. Where is it located, and how many people work with you?
- c. What is your role in your current business?

2) Now I'd like to understand a little about where you were employed before you started working independently.

- a. What did your previous company do and about how long did you work there?
- b. How big was the company? How many employees did they have?
- c. What was your role there?
- d. Can you describe what it was like for you to work there?
 - i. What 2 or 3 words best describe the culture there?
 1. Tell me more.
 - ii. How did you feel while you were working there? And how did you feel *about* working there?
 - iii. What parts of the job or environment had the most impact on you and how you felt about your job or the company?

- iv. Were there any specific experiences that had a big impact on how you felt about working there?
 - v. Do you think your experience as an employee there was unique?
- 3) Tell me about that process of deciding to leave the organization, and deciding to start your own business. What did that look like for you?
- a. Can you tell me three factors or considerations that were most influential in your decision to leave the company? These may be related to the job, to you personally, or your broader life circumstances.
 - i. If you had to rank the factors you mentioned (recap them if needed), what order would you put them in from most influential to least?
 - ii. What change or changes, if any, would have caused you to stay? That could include changes made by the company, changes made by you, or changes to the broader circumstances.
 - iii. Previous research has found that for some people who quit, they experience a “shock” that precedes the decision to quit. A shock is a distinguishable event that causes them to re-evaluate their current employment (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Shock events can be positive or negative and could include things like having a baby, having a spouse or partner get a big raise and not needing the income, having a good manager leave, or getting passed over for a promotion.
 - 1. Do you identify a “shock” event in your story, or some event that caused you to start thinking about quitting?
 - b. And regarding the decision to start your own business/ become self-employed can you tell me three factors or considerations were the most influential in making that decision? Again, these could be related to aspects of the work, to you personally, or broader life circumstances.
 - i. And again, if you had to rank the factors you mentioned, what order would you put them in from most influential to least?

- c. How did you imagine being an entrepreneur/ self-employed would be different from the role you were in at the time?
 - i. What did you expect it would look and feel like?
 - ii. What did you expect entrepreneurship would provide for you?
 - d. Of all of the alternatives you considered, what made entrepreneurship the best option for you at that time in your life? (as opposed to finding another job elsewhere, or another work alternative)
- 4) Is there anything else not yet mentioned that you thought about when making this transition?
- 5) One way previous researchers have explained why women enter into entrepreneurship is with a “Push/ Pull” model. Push factors are those that drive a woman to choose self-employment out of necessity. For example: job dissatisfaction, difficulty finding work, or family responsibilities. Pull factors are those that relate to self-fulfillment or attract women to self-employment (for example, feelings of independence, innovation, wanting leadership role, and entrepreneurial drive)
- a. Do you feel that in your situation you were more pushed or pulled into entrepreneurship?
 - b. Which factors had that effect you?
- 6) As you reflect on your peers who have made similar decisions, why do you think women leave tech companies to start their own businesses?
- 7) Looking back at the whole experience, from departing your previous organization to starting your own business/ becoming self-employed, would you make the same decisions again?
- 8) Who else would you recommend I speak to about leaving a tech company to start her own business?

Appendix C: Proof of Human Subjects Training

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS REPORT*

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** liz pankey (ID: 4814941)
- **Email:** epankey@pepperdine.edu
- **Institution Affiliation:** Pepperdine University (ID: 1729)
- **Institution Unit:** MSOD

- **Curriculum Group:** MSOD Human Subjects Training
- **Course Learner Group:** Same as Curriculum Group
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course

- **Report ID:** 15946714
- **Completion Date:** 05/05/2015
- **Expiration Date:** 05/04/2018
- **Minimum Passing:** 80
- **Reported Score*:** 100

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction (ID:1127)	05/05/15	3/3 (100%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID:490)	05/05/15	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID:491)	05/05/15	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID:504)	05/05/15	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID:505)	05/05/15	5/5 (100%)
Internet-Based Research - SBE (ID:510)	05/05/15	5/5 (100%)

Appendix D: E-mail to Potential Participants and Informed Consent Form

Dear Entrepreneur,

I'm Liz, a student at Pepperdine working towards a master's degree in Organizational Development. For my thesis, I am conducting a study to understand the factors that have influenced women to leave their jobs at tech companies and start their own businesses or become self-employed. I chose to focus on the tech industry because it is becoming notorious for its inability to attract and retain talented women, and there is little attention paid to the phenomenon of many women choosing to work independently over other alternatives. I will conduct interviews with female entrepreneurs over the next few weeks to learn more about this phenomenon. The results will be made available upon completion of the report – Spring 2017. Participation is voluntary, and you may decide not to answer every question or not to participate at any time. Criteria for participation includes:

- You are currently an entrepreneur or self-employed. You are not required to have employees or be formally incorporated to qualify for participation.
- Your last job before starting your business/ becoming self-employed was at a tech company. (technical role not a requirement)
- You incurred some financial risk in starting your venture, i.e. investment of personal funds, or being financially dependent on its success. This is self-assessed by you, I will not be asking for any information or proof on this point.

All responses gathered in this study will be kept confidential. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. You will not be asked for your name or your former or current companies' names. Any identifying information will be removed from the transcript, and all responses will be used in aggregate with other participant responses. All files will be kept in a secure location and will be accessible only to me. (see *Informed Consent Form* below for more details)

If you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact me at any time. You may also contact my research supervisor, Dr. Julie Chesley (jchesley@pepperdine.edu).

I appreciate your consideration, and look forward to working with you soon.

Thank you,

Liz Pankey-Xiao

epankey@pepperdine.edu

443.564.3172

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Understanding Employment to Entrepreneurship Transitions Among Women Working for Tech Companies

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Liz Pankey-Xiao under the supervision of Dr. Julie Chesley, Director, Master of Science in Organizational Development (MSOD) and Associate Professor of Organizational Theory at Pepperdine University, because you are a woman previously employed in the tech industry who has left and pursued entrepreneurship or self-employment. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to understand factors that influence a woman's decision to leave employment at a tech company to start her own business. This study seeks to better understand women's experiences working for tech companies and what personal, professional, and/ or life factors most impacted their decisions to leave and pursue entrepreneurship or self-employment over other alternatives.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to

- Provide verbal informed consent to participate
- Participate in an interview lasting approximately 1 hour.
 - This interview will be conducted in person, by phone, or by video conference.
 - This interview will be audio recorded and transcribed.
 - You will be asked to answer a series of questions about your experience transitioning from working for your former employer to starting your own business or becoming self-employed.
 - You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer, and may opt out at any time.
 - Your name will be removed from your responses and used in aggregate with other participant responses.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are minimal potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study. The interview includes questions about past experiences that, for some participants, may be emotionally charged. Recounting these experiences may cause potential discomfort for some. Participants may skip any questions they wish not to answer, and may end their participation in the study at any time.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Anticipated benefits to society and participants include:

- This data from the lived experiences of female employees could positively influence tech companies wishing to improve their strategies to hire and retain talented women.
- Expanding the body of research on why women choose entrepreneurship rather than remaining in the labor pool, shedding light on a potential trend in female employment.
- Women working for tech companies or those who have left may feel solidarity and validation of their own similar experiences.
- An opportunity for guided reflection upon the participant's career and life path

CONFIDENTIALITY

I, the principal investigator, will keep your records for this study confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Contact information, audio recordings, transcripts and any additional data will be stored on a password protected computer in the researcher's office. After transcription the audio files will be destroyed. Data will be stored for a minimum of three years after completion of the study and then destroyed. Your responses will be coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately. A key will be kept by the researcher in a separate password-protected file.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or completing only the items with which you feel comfortable.

EMERGENCY CARE AND COMPENSATION FOR INJURY If you are injured as a direct result of research procedures you will receive medical treatment; however, you or your insurance will be responsible for the cost. Pepperdine University does not provide any monetary compensation for injury

INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Liz Pankey-Xiao (epankey@pepperdine.edu) or Julie Chesley PhD (jchesley@pepperdine.edu) if I have any other questions or concerns about this research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500, Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or gpsirb@pepperdine.edu.