

## **Men and Women Entrepreneurs in Northeastern Ontario: A Comparative Study**

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*This paper studies how successful women and men entrepreneurs compare in their approach to starting their businesses and in their motivations for entering business in northeastern Ontario, Canada. We use the Deliberate/Evolutionary approach to business start-ups and push/pull motivational factors as analytical frameworks. A case study method with an open-ended questionnaire was used to collect data. In their approach to starting businesses, the gap between men and women in our study group is much less than postulated. While men are more likely to be pulled towards business, the motivations of women were found to be a complex mix of both pull and push factors. These results must be viewed with caution in view of the smallness of the study group. This study is valuable in being the first study of its kind in northeastern Ontario. It contributes to an understanding of entrepreneurs operating in a peripheral region away from large metropolitan urban centers.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Traditionally, the image of an entrepreneur has been that of men taking on risks and challenges to strike out on their own and start their own businesses. This image needs drastic change as more and more women are starting their own business ventures. In Canada, a governmental taskforce (The Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs, 2003) revealed some telling statistics on women-owned businesses. Between 1996 and 2001, the number of women entrepreneurs grew by 8 percent compared with 0.6 percent increase for men. Between 1981 and 2001, the number of women entrepreneurs grew by 208 percent compared with a 38 percent growth rate for men. Women entrepreneurs owned 45 percent of all small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)<sup>1</sup> by 2000. Similar pattern of rising women's participation in

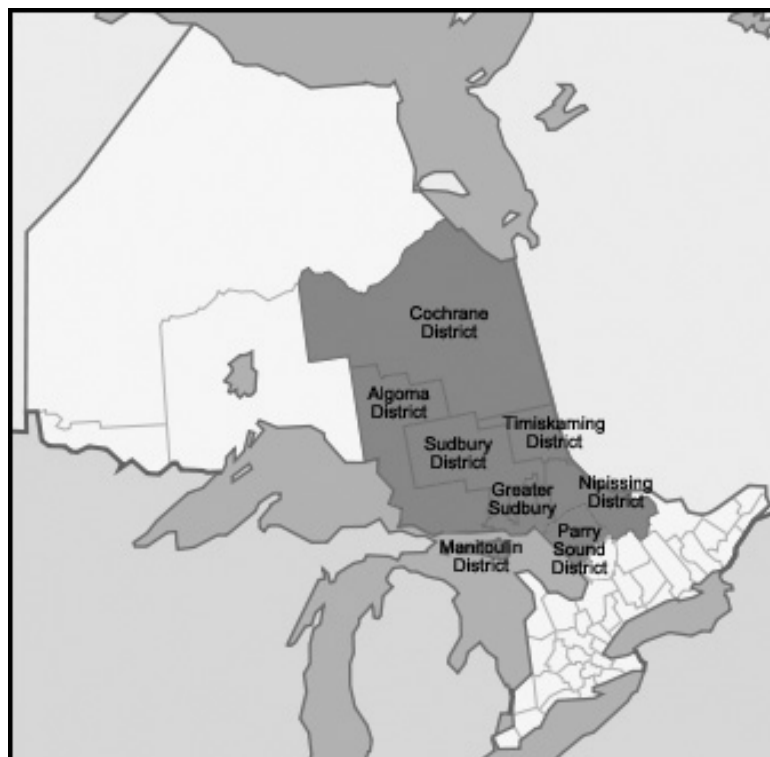
business ownership is emerging in the U.S. and many European countries (OECD, 1998; Brush, 2002; Carter and Shaw, 2006).

While women are becoming a growing segment of the business world, academic research on women entrepreneurship is of relatively recent origin. For a long time, it was assumed that the male model of entrepreneurship was equally applicable to females. Hence, no special studies of women entrepreneurs were undertaken. In recent years, however, several research studies focusing on women entrepreneurs have been published. According to Green (Green et al., 2003), this research extends to about 25 years, starting with the path-breaking work of Schwartz (Schwartz, 1976). Schwartz's work, based on interviews with 20 women entrepreneurs, found that men and women entrepreneurs differed little in terms of personal attributes and motives for starting business ventures. This, however, did not mean that there were no differences between women and men entrepreneurs. Other researchers have noted that the educational background, the types of business, the size and growth objectives and the criteria for success and management philosophy differ for men and women (Brush, 1992; Brush, 2006; Kepler and Shane, 2007).

The objective of this paper is to study how women and men entrepreneurs compare in terms of their approach and motivations to starting a business in the peripheral region of Northeastern Ontario. Specifically, we consider the Deliberate/Evolutionary approach to business and Push/Pull motivational factors and evaluate their applicability to business owners included in this study.

This study adds to our knowledge and understanding of the business start-ups in that we are studying a specific segment of small business owners, namely, successful female and male entrepreneurs. In terms of location, these entrepreneurs also form a special segment in that they operate in Northeastern Ontario, far from the main economic activities of Ontario in the so-called "Golden Horseshoe" (GH) region of southern Ontario which includes the Niagara region, Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo and many other cities, towns and municipalities. With a population of 8.1 million people, GH is an industrialised urban corridor centered around the west end of Lake Ontario. The northeastern Ontario region, on the other hand, is a vast, sparsely populated area that lies north and east of Lakes Superior and Huron. It comprises the City of Greater Sudbury and the districts of Algoma, Sudbury, Cochrane, Timiskaming Shores, Nipissing, Parry Sound and Manitoulin. The region's population is about 510,000. In Figure 1, we present the northeastern Ontario region.

**FIGURE 1**



Map of Northeastern Ontario

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Approach to start-up**

Several authors have studied the process of business start-ups (Hisrich and Brush, 1983; Watkins and Watkins, 1983). Do women and men differ in terms of their approach to business start-ups? If so, how do they differ? To help understand the start-up phase, Brush (Brush, 1990) proposed a two-fold classification typology, the Deliberate Approach and the Evolutionary Approach.

A business started using the Deliberate Approach can be described as a carefully chosen line of business activity with systematic and formal planning, using external funding, with goals of rapid growth and quantifiable financial outcomes and run as a hierarchical organization. The business is run on a full-time basis with extensive external support and network.

In contrast, a business started using the Evolutionary Approach can be described as an extension of the entrepreneur's skills and interests or as an attempt to fill a niche with sporadic planning, using personal resources with the goals of maintaining personal control and small size. The organizational structure is horizontal and flexible, with shared responsibilities. The business is run on a part-time basis, at least in the initial stages. The entrepreneur uses his/her own intuition and knowledge with limited external support and network.

These identifiable characteristics are depicted as eight dimensions in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE DELIBERATE AND**  
**EVOLUTIONARY APPROACHES**

NUMBER	CHARACTERISTICS	DELIBERATE	EVOLUTIONARY
1.	Beginning	Acquisition or deliberate start-up	Creation as extension of entrepreneur skills or to fill a niche
2.	Planning	Systematic and rigorous	Sporadic, informal or loose
4.	Goal	Rapid growth; emphasis on measurable outcomes	Personal control; qualitative factors
5.	Performance evaluation	Quantifiable financial measures: earning, return on equity	Social measures, customer satisfaction, repeat customers, customer approval
6.	Structure	Formal, hierarchical	Horizontal (flat); sharing of authority, flexibility
7.	Commitment	Full-time	Part-time, at least in initial stage
8.	Support	Several public and private sources; wide-spread network	Limited support; own intuition and knowledge

Source: Authors, based on (Brush, 1990)

### **Motivations for Starting a Business**

The motives behind the decision to start businesses are widely studied and reported (Brophy, 1989; Hisrich and O'Brien, 1982; Brush, 1990; Hughes, 2006). For both men and women entrepreneurs, the main motives tend to be a new idea, desire for independence, desire to put a skill to work, economic necessity and desire to be one's own boss (Cromie, 1987; Brush, 1992). Women with domestic responsibilities may desire an economic activity that gives them flexible hours (Stevenson, 1986; Kaplan, 1988; Lee-Gosslin and Grise, 1990; Arai, 2000; Hughes, 2006). Running their own business can be the right solution for these women.

These motivators have been classified as 'push' and 'pull' factors (Stevenson, 1986; Orhan and Scott, 2001; Schjoedt and Shaver, 2007). 'Push' factors are those which create a situation which makes entrepreneurship the most desirable path. For example, sudden lay-off with limited opportunities for re-employment may lead a person to consider opening one's own business. The so-called 'glass ceiling' effect is shown to be a motivating factor for many women to enter entrepreneurial career path (Kephart and Schumacher, 2005; Weyer, 2007). 'Pull' factors are

those that draw a person towards entrepreneurship. For example, a market opportunity can present itself to someone with an entrepreneurial bent.

In terms of gender, several authors have noted that while the 'pull' factors are likely to be associated with men, both 'pull' and 'push' factors may influence women's decisions (Hisrich and Brush, 1984; Scott, 1986).

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN APPROACH TO START-UP AND MOTIVATIONS**

Is there a relationship between the Deliberate and the Evolutionary Approaches to starting businesses and the 'push' and 'pull' factors? We expect the Deliberate Approach to be associated with 'pull' factors and the Evolutionary Approach to be associated with 'push' factors. This expectation is based on the characteristics of those who follow these approaches. For example, those who are 'pulled' into starting a business by an opportunity that presents itself are likely to methodically plan their entry. This characteristic will put them in the Deliberate Approach category. Those who respond to both 'pull' and 'push' factors may follow either approach, depending on the strength of the 'push' or 'pull' factors. The reasoning is based on the nature of these 'push' and 'pull' factors.

Those who respond to 'push' factors are attempting to leave the *status quo* and try something new. Oftentimes, they have to follow this approach out of necessity (Orhan and Scott, 2001). They are likely to put skills they already possess to use. These entrepreneurs are likely to pursue an idea and develop a niche market using their own resources at the start. They would tend to follow the Evolutionary Approach. (Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio, 2004; Morris, Miyasaki, Watters and Coombs, 2006).

Those who respond to the 'pull' factors are starting their businesses under very different circumstances. They are attracted towards a business opportunity (Orhan and Scott, 2001). Since they are likely to be responding to such an opportunity, they set about in a planned and systematic way. They would tend to follow the Deliberate Approach. (Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio, 2004; Morris, Miyasaki, Watters and Coombs, 2006).

For those who respond to a combination of push and pull factors, the choice of a start-up approach would depend upon the relative strength of the 'push' and 'pull' factors.

In Table 2, we present the links between the start-up approaches and the motivations for becoming entrepreneurs.

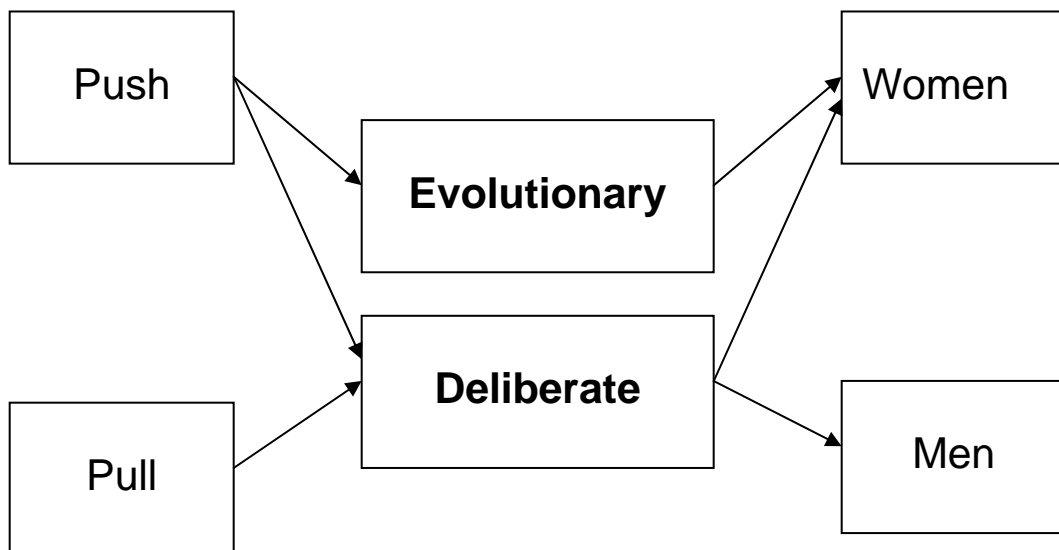
**TABLE 2**  
**START-UP APPROACHES AND MOTIVATIONS**

MEN AND WOMEN	MEN
<b>PUSH</b>	<b>PULL</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LAY-OFFS</li> <li>• UNEMPLOYMENT</li> <li>• GLASS CEILING</li> <li>• ECONOMIC NECESSITY</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">⇩</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>EVOLUTIONARY</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEW IDEA</li> <li>• NEW OPPORTUNITY</li> <li>• DESIRE FOR INDEPENDENCE</li> <li>• DESIRE TO BE ONE’S OWN BOSS</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">⇩</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>DELIBERATE</b></p>

**RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS TO BE EXAMINED**

Our conceptual framework based on the literature review is presented in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2**  
**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN START-UP APPROACHES AND MOTIVATIONS**



The following research propositions are based on Figure 2.

*Proposition 1:*

Male entrepreneurs tend to follow the Deliberate Approach whereas females tend to follow an Evolutionary Approach;

*Proposition 2:*

When starting their business, females are more likely to respond to 'push' factors and males to 'pull' factors;

*Proposition 3:*

Entrepreneurs who follow the Deliberate Approach are likely to be responding to 'pull' factors and those who are following the Evolutionary Approach are likely to be responding to 'push' factors. Those who follow the mixed approach are likely to be responding to a combination of both 'push' and 'pull' factors, depending on the relative strength of these factors.

These propositions imply that the Deliberate Approach and 'pull' factors are expected to be closely related. Similarly, the Evolutionary Approach and 'push' factors are expected to be closely related.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study subjects were drawn with the assistance of the local Chambers of Commerce and other business groupings in northeastern Ontario. These bodies were asked to provide a list of outstanding business owners from their membership. A business owner was considered outstanding if the business venture had made or was making a significant contribution to the community or he/she had shown distinction in some manner. In an attempt to maintain diversity, the subjects were chosen to represent different types of businesses and different locales in Northeastern Ontario. Interviews with 40 women and 27 men entrepreneurs were conducted.

The research protocol was approved by the university's research ethics panel. A case study approach with an open-ended questionnaire was adopted in order to allow respondents to define entrepreneurship in terms of their own experiences. Data were collected through telephone interviews of approximately 60 minutes in duration. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees. Each respondent reviewed and approved the interview transcript prior to its inclusion for analysis.

## **RESULTS**

### **Sample Description**

Table 3 provides a description of our respondents and a male/female comparison.

**TABLE 3**  
**DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE OF 40 FEMALES AND 27 MALES SMALL**  
**BUSINESS OWNERS**

	Females	Males	Significance
<b>Marital status:</b>			
married	66.7%	92.6%	$\chi^2=6.11$ p = .013
alone	33.3%	7.4%	
Average age, years	44.8	42.1	n.s. t (test)
Average number of children	1.9	2	n.s. t (test)
<b>Education:</b>			
high school or less	17.5%	37%	n.s. ( $\chi^2$ )
post secondary - business	27.5%	18.5%	
post sec. - non business	55%	44.4%	
<b>Entrepreneurial training:</b>			
yes	47.5%	22.2%	$\chi^2=4.40$ p = .036
no	52.5%	77.8%	

Consistent with the findings of Stevenson (Stevenson, 1986), significantly more women than men were either single, divorced or widowed (living alone). Consistent with many other study findings, the education level of women respondents was high and tended to be higher than the education level of men respondents. However, the difference was not statistically significant. Both men and women in our sample were not particularly qualified in business-oriented subjects. However, significantly more women than men had entrepreneurial training<sup>2</sup>.

### **Profile of Businesses**

A profile of the businesses is shown in Table 4.

As noted in several international studies (Fischer, Reuber and Dyke, 1993; McGraw, 1998; Carter, Anderson and Shaw, 2001, p. 24; Menzies, Brenner and Filion, 2006), most of the women in this study own retail or service businesses. However, some women in our group are in manufacturing, in such fields as ventilation equipment, filtration products for the mining industry which is predominant in this area and food products. A greater percentage of men are in manufacturing. Many men are also involved in the tourism industry.

Although women and men respondents in our study have been in business for approximately the same number of years, the female business owners have significantly fewer employees than men business owners. This finding is also consistent with several other studies (McGraw, 1998; The Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs, 2003; Lowrey, 2006).



**TABLE 4**  
**PROFILE OF THE BUSINESSES**

	Females	Males	Significance
<b>Type of business:</b>			
manufacturing	10%	25.9%	n.a. <sup>a</sup> ( $\chi^2$ )
restaurant/hotel/tourism	20%	7.4%	
retail	50%	44.4%	
health related	5%	0%	
professional service	12.5%	14.8%	
financial/management	2.5%	7.4%	
<b>Number of employees:</b>			
less than 10	62.5%	25.9%	$\chi^2 = 8.64$ p = .003
10 or more	37.5%	74.1%	
<b>Number of years in business</b>			
less than 10	60%	56%	n.s. ( $\chi^2$ )
10 or more years	40%	44%	

<sup>a</sup> Too many cells with a low frequency

### Approach to Start-up

The interview transcript information was used to classify the entrepreneurs in terms of their approach to start-ups. The classification was based on a coding sheet listing the eight characteristics of the start-up approaches shown in Table 1 and the 'push' and 'pull' factors noted in Table 2.

**TABLE 5**  
**DELIBERATE VERSUS EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO START-UP**

	Total	Females	Males	Significance
<b>Score:</b>				
mean	3.66	3.81	3.44	F = 3.83
standard deviation	.80	.83	.72	p=.026 (1-tail)
<b>Respondents scoring 3 or less:</b>				
Deliberate approach	22%	17.5%	30%	
<b>Respondents scoring 5 or more:</b>				
Evolutionary approach	6%	7.5%	4%	
<b>Respondents scoring above 3, below 5:</b>				
mixed approach	72%	75%	66%	

The start-up approach characteristics were evaluated for each respondent on a 7-point Likert scale, with characteristics of the Deliberate Approach receiving a score at the low end and the characteristics of the Evolutionary Approach receiving a score at the high end. The narrative by the interviewees as recorded in the transcripts was carefully analyzed for assigning their places on the scale. The mean of the eight characteristics for each respondent was calculated. Table 5 presents the summary of these mean scores.

Table 5 shows that Proposition 1 is partly supported: females, with a higher mean, are more inclined to follow the Evolutionary Approach whereas males are disposed more toward the Deliberate Approach. Although the difference is significant, the magnitude is not large. Looking at the distribution of cases, it is clear that most entrepreneurs follow an approach which has characteristics of both Deliberate and Evolutionary approaches. More males than females do score at the Deliberate Approach end of the scale. Very few follow the Evolutionary Approach.

Businesses run by females and classified in the Deliberate Approach were in manufacturing and businesses run by males classified as following the Evolutionary Approach were in the retail sector. These results suggest that the choice of start-up approach may be related more to the type of business than the gender of the entrepreneur.

Listed below are some synopses of the approaches taken by some of the entrepreneurs in our study group:

*Females/Deliberate:*

We make filtration products for the mining and pulp and paper industry. A consultant was hired to do a feasibility study to determine if there was a local need for filtration products and it was determined that there was. I have a physics degree and it has been very useful in understanding the filtration process and working very closely with the engineers.

*Males/Evolutionary:*

I am in the retail clothing business. I started this business by coming up with an idea which fell into my lap one day. It was something of a small idea that you can either put on a shelf or you can do something with it and I did something with it. I had attitude, confidence and commitment. These three things allowed me to overcome anything that was thrown at me. I had no business experience and learned as I went along. I invested my personal savings and ploughed back my profits. I focus on the customers. I manage my employees in a laid-back fashion. We pay a little bit above average and expect a lot from them. I like to create a family atmosphere.

*Females/Mixed:*

My business is providing human resources consulting services and staffing services throughout the Sudbury region. I was a middle manager with the Federal government. I had probably reached the limit in terms of advancement and had probably a five-year waiting period before I could move up the ladder. I had to decide whether to wait or try a new opportunity. This franchise was advertised in the paper and I moved. I did a whole bunch of research on my own in terms of marketing and business plan. I also worked through Sudbury Regional Development Corporation and Small Business Consulting Service. I used my personal savings and a small loan to launch my business. My management style is participative. I am a people-oriented person and that is always the primary focus. I will carry that only so far. After that, I will set the objectives and ask my employees to develop a plan to meet them. So, I am participative in the sense of getting things done together. I measure my success by client satisfaction, repeat business from

our clients and the number of field staff who refer clients, employee satisfaction and our profit margins.

*Males/Mixed:*

I am in retail sales of business machines and office supplies. Before this, I was a general contractor, restaurant owner and a Radio Shack franchisee. I did not do any research for this business, but brought four years of retail selling experience. My business goal now is to survive and pay off what has been set up. I have fifteen employees and they all have specific tasks. I make the business decisions by myself. I am very compassionate in my dealings with my employees. If you treat people like people, they will produce for you. I measure the success of my business financially, by the number of years in the business and by the size. Right now, I have no plans to expand. I feel that I have expanded and diversified enough. In addition to office supplies, we sell janitorial supplies, cellular phones and computers. We also repair computers and any kind of office machines.

Our results suggest that the men and women entrepreneurs who were included in our study do not fit neatly into the Deliberate/Evolutionary dichotomy. Given the sizeable number of persons in our group of respondents scoring in the middle range, it appears that both males and females are pragmatic, picking and choosing the approaches which work for them.

*Motives Behind Start-ups: The 'Push' and 'Pull' Factors*

In order to probe the reasons behind starting a business, each participant was asked about their motivations for starting their business. The question was open-ended and some gave more than one answer. Table 5 displays the responses, classified in terms of 'push' and 'pull' factors.

**TABLE 6**  
**MOTIVATIONS FOR STARTING THE BUSINESS**

<b>Push factors</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Pull factors</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>
	%	%	%		%	%	%
Lack of job	18	23	11	Self actualization	12	13	11
Family reasons	3	5	0	Control over my life	25	30	19
Dissatisfaction	21	25	15	Saw opportunity	48	48	48
				Money	4	5	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>82</b>

Note: Respondents were able to indicate multiple responses.

These findings indicate that although many of the respondents view themselves as being forced into entrepreneurship, the positive 'pull' factors are stronger than the negative 'push' factors. Noteworthy among the 'push' factors is lack of a job or dissatisfaction with a job. One respondent found her job relocated, and she did not want to move. Another saw the "cutbacks

coming" and decided to launch her own venture. A respondent realized that she was at a dead-end in her position and decided to start her own business. Contrary to other findings (Holmquist and Sudin, 1990), family reasons were not important for our group of respondents. It was only mentioned twice by females in our sample.

The most important 'pull' factor, for both males and females, was the identification of an opportunity, but having control over one's life was also very strong. However, money is a very weak 'pull' factor, mentioned only by three respondents. Going into business was not seen by our group of entrepreneurs as the easy way to make money.

The "stories" behind these motivators were varied and quite fascinating. For one female, starting her business was a fulfillment of a "girl's dream." Another purchased a franchise because she needed freedom to take chances and follow her own ideas. Another female went by chance to a local restaurant to book space for her club dinner. She found the setting beautiful, but the owners were too old to continue operating. She said to herself: "This place needs me." She proceeded to purchase the property, renovate it and establish herself as a successful restaurateur. A male, fitness equipment franchise owner, had a professorial mentor with whom he wanted to do a Ph.D. Instead, he followed the professor's exhortation: "You should go out there and find the key to unlock the compliance door to fitness." He got into the business of promoting fitness by selling equipment. Another male reported that he "went to help his dad out because someone had suddenly quit". He never left. A trading post owner responded to a "feeling in his gut" and also wanted to emulate his forefathers in Newfoundland who were entrepreneurs. An owner of a grocery store started as an employee in one when he was young. He then became manager of a store and ultimately bought the franchise.

Taking into consideration the classification of the responses above, each respondent was assigned to a group. Table 7 shows the percentage of business owners in each group based on (i) the first response to the question of motivation and (ii) the multiple responses to the question. Seventeen entrepreneurs, 12 females and 5 males, gave more than one answer to the motivation question, and these answers reflected both 'push' and 'pull' motivations.

**TABLE 7**  
**CLASSIFICATION BY MOTIVATORS FOR STARTING THE BUSINESS**

		<b>Total</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Significance (1- tail)</b>
<b>First response</b>	push	39%	47.5%	26%	$\chi^2=3.16$ p = .036
	pull	61%	52.5%	74%	
<b>Multiple responses:</b>					
	push	30%	37.5%	18.5%	$\chi^2 = 6.12$ p = .024
	pull	45%	32.5%	63%	
	both	25%	30%	18.5%	

The results provide some support for proposition 2. As expected, males are pulled strongly into starting a business. Females, on the other hand, respond to either 'push', 'pull' or a combination and not mainly to 'push' factors. Thus, males and females have significantly different motivators for starting their business, with females indicating a more complex set of motivators.

The Relationship between 'Push'/'Pull Factors and the Deliberate/Evolutionary Approaches Proposition 3 states that entrepreneurs who follow a Deliberate Approach are likely to be responding to 'pull' factors and those who follow the Evolutionary Approach are likely to be responding to 'push' factors. Those who follow a Mixed Approach are likely to be responding to a combination of both 'push' and 'pull' factors. Table 8 shows the results of an analysis of variance for the whole sample and for the males and females sub-samples based on the composite scores for the criteria shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 8**  
**EFFECT OF MOTIVATION ON SCORE ON THE DELIBERATE/  
EVOLUTIONARY SCALE**

<b>Motivator</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>
<b>Push</b>			
mean	3.87	4.06	3.30
std. dev.	.70	.70	.28
<b>Pull</b>			
mean	3.64	3.59	3.68
std. dev	.80	.93	.71
<b>Both</b>			
mean	3.46	3.77	2.73
std. dev	.91	.86	.55
<b>Anova</b>			
F ratio	1.197	1.159	4.55
prob.	.309	.325	.021

Note: Tests for homogeneity of variance show no significant differences.

There is no significant evidence that responding to 'push' or 'pull' factors has any impact on the approach followed to start-up for the group as a whole or for the female sub-group. However, the mean for the different groups is in the predicted direction. It is worth noting, however, that for the male sub-group the means for the 'push' and 'pull' groups are not in the hypothesized direction. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that the males responding to both 'push' and 'pull' factors are significantly more likely to follow the Deliberate Approach compared to the males in the other two groups.

## **DISCUSSION**

Viewed as a whole, these results suggest that for our group of entrepreneurs, the process of going into business was a complex one, both in terms of approaches and motivations. Although we found that males are more likely to follow the Deliberate Approach, the Deliberate/Evolutionary dichotomy did not fit a large majority of entrepreneurs in our group. Our results suggest that these entrepreneurs tend to choose an approach that works for them, for the type of business they operate and for the environment within which they have to operate.

These findings which show the complexity of the process of start-ups are, in many ways, quite encouraging for the future of entrepreneurship in general and women entrepreneurship in particular for the region of Northeastern Ontario. They point to the pragmatism of the entrepreneurs in our study group. Most entrepreneurs in our study group did not act in a stereotypical way implying that the odds of continued entrepreneurial success are high. Similar stereotype-breaking behavior among men and women small business owners is reported by Cliff et al. (Cliff, Langton and Aldrich, 2003). Other studies, as noted by de Bruin et al. (de Bruin, Brush and Welter, 2007), have shown that gender differences are much less pronounced and even disappear once proper controls are introduced. They cite studies by Du Reitz and Henrekson (Du Reitz and Henrekson, 2000) and Rosa et al. (Rosa, Carter and Hamilton, 1996) which show that when controlled for industry and size, gender-specific differences in survival and growth rates disappeared. Another cited study (Thornton, 1999) showed that performance was more attributable to environmental influences than the gender of the entrepreneur.

The findings of this study make a contribution to the literature by suggesting that the perceived gender differences in the process of start-ups are not as sharp as postulated. However, they must be interpreted with caution. Our group operated in the peripheral region of Northeastern Ontario. The sample size was relatively small, especially the male entrepreneurs group. Hence, these results cannot be generalized to a larger group representing the entire province; however, they may be applicable to other peripheral regions which encounter similar economic and social characteristics.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study focused on the approaches and motivations of successful men and women entrepreneurs in Northeastern Ontario. We investigated the relevance of the Deliberate and Evolutionary Approaches to business start-ups by men and women. We also sought to understand the role of 'push' and 'pull' factors in motivating entrepreneurs. Our results show that, while there is a tendency for men to follow the Deliberate Approach and for women to follow the Evolutionary Approach, a majority of entrepreneurs in our group chose to adopt an approach which worked for them. Thus, a Mixed Approach emerged as the norm. Likewise, motivations for starting business ventures are also complex and do not lend themselves to stereotypical classifications. While there are differences between men and women entrepreneurs, the gap is not large. These findings contribute to our understanding of the early stages of successful business ventures launched by men and women entrepreneurs operating in a peripheral region of Ontario.

## ENDNOTES

1. SMEs are hard to define. In Canada, it is defined by Statistics Canada, the federal data collection agency, as any business establishment with 0 to 499 employees and less than \$50 million in gross revenues.
2. Entrepreneurship training includes any type of formal attendance at a course or workshop organized by a college or business development organization.

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