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# A qualitative investigation of the identity, attitudes, and motivations of action sport retail business owners

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A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE IDENTITY, ATTITUDES, AND
MOTIVATIONS OF ACTION SPORT RETAIL BUSINESS OWNERS

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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Finally, to surfing, skateboarding, snowboarding, and the action sports industry. Thank you for always being a source of support and guidance, for inspiring me, and for contributing so much joy to my life.

**ABSTRACT**

An individual's occupation is often a salient component to ones life. Numerous traditional career developmental theories have been employed in the hopes of understanding the motivations and attitudes individuals have toward particular types of careers. Research indicates that entrepreneurs are primarily motivated by monetary gain, desires to be their own boss, and career independence. The present study utilized qualitative interviews as a means to gain a greater understanding of action sports retail business owners experiences and how their identity as a surfer/skater/snowboarder influenced their career decisions and their motivations to own an action retail business. The data were analyzed using Consensual Qualitative Research methodology (Hill, 2012). Results indicate that the business owners primarily identify as surfers/skaters/snowboarders, opposed to businessmen, and that they were primarily motivated to open their own action sport retail businesses due to their passion for the action sports and interest in remaining apart of the action sport lifestyle. These findings partly contrast previous research regarding the motivations of entrepreneurs' primary motivation being monetary gain.

*Keywords:* career, entrepreneur, motivation, action sports, business

**PUBLIC ABSTRACT**

An individual's occupation is often a salient component to ones life. Numerous traditional career developmental theories have been employed in the hopes of understanding the motivations and attitudes individuals have toward particular types of careers. Research indicates that entrepreneurs are primarily motivated by monetary gain, desires to be their own boss, and career independence. The present study utilized qualitative interviews as a means to gain a greater understanding of action sports retail business owners experiences and how their identity as a surfer/skater/snowboarder influenced their career decisions and their motivations to own an action retail business. The data were analyzed using Consensual Qualitative Research methodology (Hill, 2012). Results indicate that the business owners primarily identify as surfers/skaters/snowboarders, opposed to businessmen, and that they were primarily motivated to open their own action sport retail businesses due to their passion for the action sports and interest in remaining apart of the action sport lifestyle. These findings partly contrast previous research regarding the motivations of entrepreneurs' primary motivation being monetary gain.

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

Is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Volcom Inc. (a large action sport clothing manufacturer) like the CEO of the banking giant Wells Fargo?  Without having intimate knowledge of the two, I would assume that their original career trajectories, motivations, and attitudes were probably drastically different from one another simply based upon the career sector they decided to enter.  I wonder what the motivating factors were for each when they decided to enter into business.

Vocational choice and career development is a component of nearly everyone's life at onetime or another.  Career psychologists have researched why and how people decide to enter certain careers and numerous theories have been developed in order to better understand the complex and continually changing career development process.  In order to better assist individuals navigating the career development process, it is important that career psychologists understand the potential motivators and factors that influence a particular individual to enter a specific career.  Due to the many different types of careers, not every possible career has been researched.

**Overview**

This research aimed to add to the literature by qualitatively examining the career motivations and development of entrepreneurs in the action sport industry.  The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of action sport retail business owners specific to their motivations, attitudes, and interests in owning and operating an action sport retail business, as well as how their personal involvement in action sports contributed to their career trajectory.

In this chapter, current literature specific to traditional career development is presented, as is a brief description of the protean career orientation, the traditional entrepreneurial

development process is explored, and a general overview of common values and attitudes action sport participants may hold is also presented.  Finally, definitions for some of the commonly used terminology are presented later in this section.

In Chapter 2 an overview of the research literature examining traditional career development theories is presented.  This is followed by a brief description of protean career attitudes, traditional entrepreneurial development, as well as an overview of salient characteristics of action sport participant values and attitudes.  Next a brief introduction into the importance of examining the motivations and attitudes of action sport retail business owners is provided.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the qualitative methodology of the current study, including details specific to the procedures, participant enrollment, data collection and analyses, and development of the primary research team.  Chapter 4 details the results of the present study, including descriptive quotes highlighting salient aspects of each business owner's experience.  Finally, Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the major themes that emerged from the results.  Limitations to the present study and suggestions for future research will also be addressed.

**Traditional Career Development**

A career is often a major component of ones life and a significant contributor to ones sense of identity (Meijers, 1998).  Research specific to traditional career development is ever present and varies in regard to context and culture.  Frank Parsons, the credited founder of vocational development, originally identified self-knowledge, knowledge of the world of work, and the understanding of the relationship between the two as the three elements of career selection (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

Historically, major traditional career theories have been rooted in positivist or postmodern theoretical underpinnings (Brown, 2012). The majority of traditional career theories specific to career choice consist of trait-factor theories, life-span developmental models, person-environment theories, and social cognitive approaches. Holland's (1997) theory of vocational choice is one of the most popular trait-factor career developmental approaches. Holland believed that career, or occupational choice, is an expression of ones personality and does not occur randomly (Holland, 1997).

Another prominent career development theory is Super's (1980) life-span developmental model. Super's theory argues that career choice is developmental nature and is a result of life circumstances and continually changing social contexts. Somewhat similar to Super, Gottfredson's (1996) theory of circumscription and comprise also believed that career choice was influenced by environmental cues (social context) and genetic characteristics. However, Gottfredson also theorized that individuals are active agents in their career development and are capable of making choices based upon their beliefs.

Unlike Gottfredson, Dawis's theory of work adjustment (2002; 2005) characterized career development by the fit and interaction between the person and the environment. Another prominent theory of career development that has increased in popularity recently is Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002). SCCT posits that self-efficacy, personal outcome expectations, and personal goals regulate career-related behavior.

Although traditional career development theories are still utilized, there is a limit to the degree to which individual interests and passions are taken into consideration and valued regarding career development. Researchers have begun to explore how personal values and

prominent life interests may influence and contribute to the career development process. One such theory is Hall's (1976; 1996; 2002) protean career orientation.

**Protean Career Orientation**

A protean career is self-directed and maintains a values-driven approach with career success being defined by personal success opposed to organizational achievement (Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2008; Hall, 2002). Protean careerists are driven by personal accomplishment and the desire to achieve meaningful self-set goals that are congruent with their personal and life-goals. Protean careerists often value self-expression, challenge, freedom, personal responsibility, and job mobility (Briscoe & Hall, 2006) opposed to traditional careerists who often value organizational achievement and job security.

Individuals who maintain a protean career orientation have been considered to have a *Career with A Heart* (Svejenova, 2005) due to the tendency to have a strong passion for their career as well as experience numerous positive emotions as a result of engaging in something that is personally meaningful. Although not every type of career is suitable for an individual who adheres to a protean career orientation, entrepreneurs have been found to share many of the same attitudes toward career development as protean careerists (Carter, Gartner, Shaver, & Gatewood, 2003; Obschonka, Silbereisen, & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2010).

**Entrepreneurial Attitudes and Motivations**

Entrepreneurs create goods, services, and or organizations as a component of their career (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Research indicates that entrepreneurs value career independence, strive for innovation, and seek personal recognition (Carter et al., 2003). Similar to protean careerists, entrepreneurs also value pursuing self-directed goals, are driven by personal success, and often pursue endeavors that are creative, personally engaging, and

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personally important (Carter et al., 2003). Many entrepreneurs also value autonomy within their personal life as well as within their career (Kolvereid, 1996).

Although there is a growing body of research investigating entrepreneurial attitudes and motivations, there is a lack of research that investigates the motivations and influences of individuals who hold careers within the action sport industry. Due to the possible similarities between the attitudes of protean careerists, entrepreneurs, and action sport participants, it would be valuable to understand if a connection exists. Understanding this connection could allow career psychologists to be better suited when working with individuals who may have an interest in owing and operating a small business.

**Action Sport Participants**

Action sports are inherently risky and individuals who engage in such sports often do so simply for their own personal fulfillment and to have an outlet for personal expression (Heino, 2000). Action sport participants are often extremely passionate about their sport of choice and base their identity off of their participation. There is often a particular culture associated with action sports due to the common identity that is shared by many action sport participants. An old surf saying is that 'only a surfer knows the feeling.' Action sport participants often share many of the same attitudes protean careerists and entrepreneurs do, including independence, self-direction, and creativity.

**Definitions**

Definitions for some of the commonly used terminology are presented in this section for the reader.

**Action Sports.** Action sports are "a relatively new form of sport" or "a combination of extraordinary individual achievement and unmatched personal enjoyment" (Rinehart & Sydnor, 2003, p. 3). They are "activities that either ideologically or practically provide alternatives to mainstream sports and mainstream sport values" (Rinehart, 2000, p. 506). Action sports are primarily individual sports that have risk, danger or unconventional rules or techniques which differ from dominant team sports (Bennett, Henson & Zhang, 2002; Ko, Park, & Claussen, 2008). For the purposes of the current study, action sports include skateboarding, surfing, and snowboarding.

**Career.** For the purposes of this study a career is defined as "the course of events which constitutes a life; the sequence of occupations and other life roles which combine to express one's commitment to work in his or her total pattern of self-development" (Super, 1976, p. 4). A career is personally constructed and an amalgamation of an individual's lifelong work experience.

**Entrepreneur.** For the purpose of this study, Bygrave and Hofer's (1991) definition was used: "An entrepreneur is someone who perceives an opportunity and creates an organization to pursue it" (p. 14).

**Protean Career.** A protean career is "a career that is driven by the person, not the organization, and that will be reinvented by the person from time to time, as the person and the environment change" (Hall, 1996, p. 8). The term protean is derived from the Greek god Proteus, who could change his shape at will.

## Conclusion

A brief overview of traditional career theories, the protean career orientation, entrepreneurial attitudes and motivations, as well as possible motivations for action sport

participants has been provided. There is very limited information specific to the career

motivations and attitudes of action sport retail business owners. More research is needed in this

particular area due to the important implications and information it can provide vocational

psychologists when working with individuals who are interested in non-traditional careers and/or

entrepreneurship. A detailed review of traditional career development theories, protean careerist

attitudes and motivations, as well as specific entrepreneurial values and action sport participant

ideologies will be explored, and the methodology and results of the current study, which

examined the motivations, influences, and interests of action sport retail business owners is

presented.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of important literature relevant to this study. This chapter begins with an examination of definitions specific to career and entrepreneurship. The review continues by presenting an overview of prominent career development theories that have been widely researched and featured in the career literature. This is followed by an examination of protean career orientation and its applicability to entrepreneurs. The focus then turns to an analysis of how protean career attitudes relate to many of the core components of action sports and individuals who participate in action sports. Finally, the review will conclude with a summary of the importance of the current study in light of the limited literature currently available.

**Defining Career**

It is common in the career literature to see the terms work, job, and career used to refer to the same concept. Although the terms work, job, and career are often used interchangeably, they each have very distinct definitions. Work has been defined as "purposeful, mental, physical, or combined mental-physical activity that produces something of economic value such as a service to others as well as a material product" (Peterson & Gonzalez, 2005, p.3). Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, and Schwartz (1997) propose that work and a job differ due to the fact that "people who have jobs are only interested in the material benefits from work and do not seek or receive any other type of reward from it" (p. 22). A job is considered to be a necessary way for one to acquire the resources needed to enjoy their time of leisure away from the time spent fulfilling the duties of their job. Finally, career has been defined by Super (1976) as "the course of events which constitutes a life; the sequence of occupations and other life roles which combine to express one's commitment to work in his or her total pattern of self-development" (p.

4).  One of the important distinctions between a job and a career is that a career places emphasis on the "unfolding sequence of a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur, 2006, p. 178).

A career is often more than merely a task that someone chooses to engage in, but rather it can become a basis for individual identity that may determine life direction (Meijers, 1998).  The development of an individual's career identity is thought to be a learning process brought on by actual experiences.  Meijers (1998) posited that career identity is not simply the sum of an individuals experiences, but instead "the assimilation of the experiences into meaningful or useful structures" (p. 200).  A career is also believed to be more personally fulfilling and rewarding than a job; "it is the sum of all of a person's jobs over that person's life span" (Kopelman, Feldman, McDaniel, & Hall, 2012, p. 164).

Traditionally career success has been conceptualized as an outcome of a person's career experiences (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005).  Career success is defined as "the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur et al., 2005, p. 179).  There are two distinct types of career success one can achieve: subjective career success and objective career success.  Subjective career success can be defined as the individual's internal apprehension and valuation of his/her career, across any dimension that is important to the individual (Enache, Sallan, Simo, & Fernandez, 2011; Van Maanen, 1977).  Meanwhile, objective career success is an external perspective that defines or measures an individual's career situation.  The objective career is publicly accessible and often involves external perspectives of the organization, family situation, income level, and/or career status level (Arthur et al., 2005).  The evaluation of career success may vary depending upon the type and/or status of career an individual has.

**Traditional Career Development Theory**

There are a number of traditional career development theories that are currently utilized within the career-counseling field.  The majority of career development theories over the past 75 years can be put into two main theoretical categories: positivist and postmodern.  According to Brown (2012), the trait-and-factor theories, developmental theories, and theories rooted in learning are based upon positivist philosophical thinking and assume that "human behavior can be measured objectively if reliable, valid instruments are utilized and that human behavior can be studied outside the context in which it occurs" (p. 29).  Meanwhile, newer postmodern theories, or constructivist theories, assume that "human behavior is nonlinear and thus cannot be studied objectively, cause and effect relationships cannot be determined, and individuals cannot be studied outside the context in which they function" (Brown, 2012, p. 29).

Of the many traditional career theories that have been used to explain career development, the five that have received considerable attention and are applicable to entrepreneurship are Holland's (1997) theory of vocational choice; Super's (1990) life-span, life-space theory; Gottfredson's (2002) theory of circumscription, compromise, and self-creation; Dawis's (1996, 2005) theory of work adjustment (TWA); and Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (2002) social cognitive career theory (SCCT).

**Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice.**  Holland's (1997) theory of vocational choice is a positivist trait-and-factor theory that describes how individual and environmental characteristics coupled with how individuals interact with their environment result in vocational choice and adjustment (Spokane & Cruza-Guet, 2005).  According to Brown (2012) there are a number of primary assumptions associated with Holland's theory: an individual's personality is the primary factor in vocational choice; the clarity of an individual's personal identity, goals, and

personal characteristics as associated with more focused vocational choices; and it is necessary to choose an occupation that is congruent with one's personality in order to be successful and satisfied in one's career.

Holland posits that when most people reach adolescence the "interaction of inherited characteristics, the activities to which the individual is exposed, and the interests and competencies that grow out of the activities" (Brown, 2012, p. 30) manifest in some combination of six vocational/interest types: Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E), or Conventional (C) in six identical work environments.  Even though Holland (1997) noted that all six types are representative of personality, he theorized that the three most prominent for any one individual are the most telling factors and are what make up an individual's *Holland code*.  An individual's Holland code is used to inform the person of the types of vocational areas/occupations they may best be suited for based upon their most prominent individual personality characteristics.

Holland stated that individuals will attempt to enter work environments that are congruent with their Holland code and that will allow them to "exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, and take on agreeable problems and roles" (Holland, 1997, p.4; Spokane & Cruz-Guet, 2005).  According to this theory, many entrepreneurs may have Enterprising (E) personality characteristics as a part of their Holland code.

Scanlan (1980) conducted a study investigating the differences between two groups of self-employed men.  The Holland codes for 64 business owners who were either classified as Craft-type entrepreneurs (C-E) or Opportunistic-type (O-E) were compared for similarities and differences.  C-E's are small-scale business owners who are more interested in being self-employed rather than working for others and their primary focus is on producing an excellent

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quality product and/or service.  On the other hand, O-E's are business owners who are also interested in self-employment, but are primarily concerned with increasing growth and expanding their business operations.  Results revealed that C-E's most often had a Holland code of Enterprising, Realistic, and Artistic (ERA), while O-E' obtained a Enterprising, Realistic, and Investigative (EAI) Holland code.  There was a significant difference between the two groups due to the C-E's focus primarily being on developing a well designed and manufactured product and/or service, which is more artistic in nature, and the O-E's focus on expanding their operations, which was more investigative.

Holland's theory of vocational choice places value upon an individual's personality characteristics in relation to how satisfied and/or successful they will be in a particular vocational environment.  Although Holland's theory has been widely utilized and applied in the career development literature, his theory is not the only viable explanation of the career development process.

**Super's Life-Span, Life-Space Theory.**  Super's (1980) theory of life-span and life-space is developmental in nature and built upon the notion that career decisions are based on life circumstances and social context (life-space) that continually change over the lifespan.  Super (1990) believed that an individual's self-concept contributed significantly to their career choice and career development.  Super defined self-concept as "a product of complex interactions among a number of factors, including physical and mental growth, personal experiences, and environmental characteristics and stimulation" (Leung, 2008, p. 120).  In other words, self-concept is considered to be a subjective sense of purpose that continues to evolve as a person encounters new experiences and enters new developmental stages (Leung, 2008).  Along with

self-concept, Super recognized that individuals move through a series of life stages that are often related to a number of particular life-spaces or roles.

Super (1980) stated that people play a variety of roles as they mature and progress through the life stages described earlier.  Super (1980) identified nine major life roles that people enter in chronological order during the course of a lifetime: child, student, leisure, citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker, parent, and pensioner.  Super acknowledged that not everyone plays every role and that the sequence of the initiation and abandoning of each role may differ, just as there may be other roles people can assume (Super, 1980).  The importance of different life roles changes as an individual progresses through the life-stages (Leung, 2008).  Super (1980) theorized that each role is typically carried out in one of four places or 'theaters,' which are: the home, the community, the school, and the workplace.  Each theater is thought to bring out unique characteristics of a specific role.

Super's life-span, life-space theory emphasizes the continual process of implementing the evolving self-concept through changing life-stages and life-space (roles; Leung, 2008).  The theory allows for changes in vocational preferences and shifts in choice based upon changing environmental factors but does not emphasize the influence of personal interests and/or values.

**Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise.**  Gottfredson's (1996, 2002) theory of circumscription and compromise asserts that career development is influenced by genetic characteristics and environmental cues.  Genetic characteristics heavily influence an individual's personal characteristics, including interests, skills, and values, however the expression of these characteristics is influenced by the environment that one is exposed to (Leung, 2008).  Gottfredson believed that individuals are active in their own development and can thus influence their own environment (Leung, 2008).  There are four basic assumptions of

the theory: "the career development process begins in childhood; career aspirations are attempts to implement one's self-concept; career satisfaction depends on the degree to which the career is congruent with self-perceptions; and people develop occupational stereotypes that guide them in the career selection process" (Brown, 2012, pp. 49).

Along with circumscription, Gottfredson believed that the process of compromise contributes to the career development process. According to Gottfredson (2005), compromise is the process by which an individual relinquishes their most preferred alternatives for less compatible but more accessible ones. The compromising process is ongoing and rooted in the belief that individuals are capable of making choices.

**Dawis's Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA).** Dawis's (2002; 2005) theory of work adjustment (TWA) is apart of a family of theories known as the P-E theories (Dawis, 2000), which focus on the fit and interaction between the person (P) and an environment (E; Dawis, 2005). Career choice and development is viewed "as a continual process of adjustment and accommodation in which: (a) the person (P) looks for work organizations and environments (E) that would match his/her "requirements" in terms of needs and (b) E in turn looks for individuals who have the capabilities of meeting the "requirements" of the organization" (Leung, 2008, p. 116). An individual's longevity in a particular career is based upon the degree of P's satisfaction and E's satisfactoriness as a whole (Leung, 2008). The theory is idiosyncratic in nature and emphasizes the importance of fit between P and E, rather than placing value on particular personality characteristics (Brown, 2012).

**Lent, Brown, and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT).** Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002) is rooted in Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1997), which states that the relationship between an individual and their

environment is an influencing factor in career choice and career development (Leung, 2008). Although components of the person and environment are valued in this theory, as are aspects of the developmental process, the emphasis of SCCT is specific to how three personal variables- self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals- regulate career-related behavior among individuals (Lent, 2005).

There are three core models of SCCT- interest, choice, and performance (Lent, 2005). The interest model identifies that individuals often develop specific interests in activities and roles that they associate with positive outcomes and feel efficacious about. The choice model specifies that the outcome of the interaction among self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and interest is the development of career goals and choices (Leung, 2008). The performance model asserts that one's achievement, aptitude, and past performance influence self-efficacy and outcome expectations. In turn, a high degree of self-efficacy is thought to promote skill utilization and further development (Leung, 2008).

Although the traditional career development theories explored above are all prominent in the vocational literature, none of them specially emphasize the influence of personal interests and values on career development. It may be important to take personal values, interests, and passions into consideration when exploring the career development process. There is an emerging area in the field focused on how personal values, individual identity, and self-directedness contributes to career development (Hall, 1996).

**Protean Career Orientation**

Unlike many of the career development theories that were reviewed above, protean career orientation (Hall, 1976; 2002) is considered to be more of a whole-life perspective, rather than merely a theory of construction (Briscoe, Hall, & DeMuth, 2006). The protean career orientation

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focuses on achieving subjective career success through self-directed vocational behavior (Briscoe, Hall, & DeMuth, 2006), rather than organizational achievement. From a protean perspective, the ultimate goal of a career is psychological success, the feeling of pride and personal accomplishment that is derived from achieving meaningful self-set goals in life, and inner peace (Briscoe, Hall, & DeMuth, 2006; Briscoe & Hall, 2002; Hall, 1996).

According to a protean careerist, a career cannot be effectively measured by developmental life stages and/or chronological age; rather a career can be thought of as a series of short learning stages that continually build upon one another (Hall, 1996; Hall & Chandler, 2004). Career growth is considered to be a process of continuous learning through a combination of individual experiences, work challenges, and relationships (Hall, 1996). Although formal training and retraining programs are useful in given situations, individuals with a protean orientation place greater emphasis on the career knowledge that is gained through various formal and informal connections with others in the work environment that ultimately build a strong relationship network (Hall, 1996). Briscoe and Finkelstein (2009) explored the career attitudes of 212 part-time MBA students and concluded that individuals who had protean career attitudes were interested in establishing committed career relationships and would not leave their career at the first available opportunity, regardless of financial gain.

Individuals with a traditional career orientation are often concerned with job security, while protean careerists tend to focus on their degree of employability and have a 'learn-how' attitude when it comes to taking on new career tasks opposed to a 'know-how' attitude (Hall, 1996). One large difference between traditional careers and a protean career orientation is the value protean careerists place on integrating their whole selves, including their personal and professional lives, into their career (Hall, 1996). As a result, personal values and passions are a

mainstay in the workplace, which often fosters greater creativity, energy, and productivity (Briscoe & Hall, 2002; Hall, 1996).

Briscoe and Hall (2002) consider protean career orientation as being centered around a values-driven attitude and a self-directed attitude toward career management. Individuals who prescribe to a protean career orientation are focused on their own personal values, rather than organizational values, guide their career ("values-driven") and strive to independently manage their vocational behavior ("self-directed;" Briscoe, Hall, DeMuth, 2006; Sargent & Domberger, 2007). Segers, Inceoglu, Vloeberghs, Bartram, and Henderickx (2008) noted that individuals who are value-driven use their values as an 'internal compass' specific to career development, opposed to acting upon extrinsic factors such as money, outside job offers, and promotions/status. Also, individuals who have a protean career orientation are thought to seek out work challenges and learn on a continuous basis due to their self-directed attitude (Hall, 1996; Segers et al., 2008). This notion of engaging in a career based upon ones values is similar to Super's Life-Span, Life-Space Theory, which indicates an individual's self-concept contributed significantly to their career choice and career development (Super, 1990).

A protean careerist assumes responsibility for their own career and routinely shifts in response to demands of their career and/or their own self-directed, value-driven desires (Bridgstock, 2007). Emphasis is placed on embarking upon a career that is seen more as a 'calling' (Hall & Chandler, 2005) as opposed to simply a job. Careers from a protean prospective are often seen as a form of self-expression and as a way personal growth can be achieved in a personally meaningful way. This is similar to aspects of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002), which posits self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals- regulate career-related behavior among individuals. A protean

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careerist has a strong sense of purpose for their career and their personal identity is often very closely aligned with their chosen career (Baker & Aldrich, 1996). Valcour and Ladge (2008) investigated the characteristics specific to women's career success and concluded that subjective career success was positively related to career identity in women with a protean career orientation.

As outlined in Table 1, there are numerous main attributes of protean careers that differ from a traditional career (Hall, 2002). A protean careerist is in control of their career journey and assumes the control to make choices regarding their future. This is quite different from traditional careers, where people often feel that the organization they work for is in control and ultimately in the power position to make choices regarding their career process/progression. The core values of a protean career are freedom and the longing for personal growth, as well as work satisfaction and commitment to meaningful professional development (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Sargent & Domberger, 2007). These values often contribute to the passion and effort that individuals put into developing and maintaining their career. Traditional career values are normally built around organizational advancement and do not incorporate components of personal interest, passion, and/or commitment (Hall, 1996).

Protean careerists are motivated by personal/career autonomy, personal values, and psychological success, rather than increases in salary, higher power within an organizational hierarchy, and chances for promotion as is common in traditional careers (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). King (2004) posits that assuming responsibility for managing one's career development can deliver positive psychological outcomes such as increased individual well-being, life satisfaction, and a sense of self-efficacy. Enache et al. (2011) found that individuals' perceptions of the success accomplished in their careers was significantly and positively impacted when they held

attitudes of self-direction specific to managing their own career and seeking vocational

development.  Also, individuals with a protean career orientation take personal responsibility for

the career choices they make and do not rely upon the organization they work for to dictate their

future career plans and/or goals.

Table 1.  Main Attributes of Traditional vs. Protean Careers

| Attribute | Traditional Career | Protean Career |
|---|---|---|
| Who's in Charge | Organization | Person |
| Core Values | Organizational Advancement | Freedom and Growth<br><br>Work Satisfaction and Professional Commitment |
| Career Motivation and Measure of Success | Hierarchical Position and Salary Level | Subjective Psychological Motivations and Measures of Success |
| Mobility/Security | Low Mobility, High Job Security | High Mobility, Lower Job Security |
| | Firm-Specific Skills | Transferable Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities |
| Responsibility for Career Development | Responsibility of Organization | Personal Responsibility for Career Development |
| | Personal and Professional Networks Not As Important | Personal and Professional Networks Very Important |

A protean career orientation is thought to be developed through numerous different

avenues.  In a study conducted by Loughlin and Barling (2001), it was concluded that parents are

highly influential in their children's vocational development.  Sargent and Domberger (2007)

interviewed 19 recent college graduates in order to investigate the development process of

individuals with protean career orientations.  Results revealed that participants who had protean

career attitudes felt in charge of their future career path and had developed self-directed career goals. Nearly all of the participants indicated that they chose careers that were consistent with their values and personal interests. Finally, participants who had a protean career orientation were able to deliberate and make judgment regarding careers they were interested in and were not interested in; this process required the individual to be mindful of the views and opinions of friends, parents, colleagues, and spouses.

In one of the most comprehensive studies specific to the protean career orientation, Segers et al. (2008) investigated the link between motivators in the work place and the values-driven and self-directed dimensions of the protean career orientation. A total of 13,655 men and women from Europe working primarily in major corporations, public sector organizations, and small- and medium-sized business from a wide variety of industries completed the Motivation Questionnaire (MQ), which assess extrinsic motivators, intrinsic motivators, and values/growth motivators (personal principles, achievement, and personal growth). Results revealed that men scored higher on achievement motivation and women on personal growth factors, although no significant gender differences were found. Previous research indicates that men who adhered to a more traditional career orientation were more driven by money, status, and job promotion; opposed to women who were less driven by objective career success (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Results also show that individuals living in a low masculine culture were more motivated by elements linked to being values-driven and psychologically mobile. Findings indicated that as individuals' age they become more motivated to follow their own values, this is consist with the findings of Briscoe et al. (2006). Specific to managerial experience and level of education, it was concluded that having a higher education and/or management experience was positively related to motivators linked to physical mobility, psychological mobility, and desire to manage

one's own career.  Findings from this study support the value of holding protean career attitudes

and that nearly any person is capable of having attitudes that are congruent to the protean career

orientation.

Individuals with a protean career orientation are considered to be the owners and agents

of their own career trajectories, and with this sense of personal responsibility, the career contract

is an agreement with one's self and one's work instead of a pact or contract with an organization

(Hall & Mirvis, 1995; Hall, 1996; Svejenova, 2005).  This notion has been referred to in the

literature as having a *Career with A Heart* (Kopelman et al., 2012; Svejenova, 2005).  This is

also consistent with Tiedeman's early postmodern perspective, which notes individuals are

responsible for the choices they make and have a sense of agency to engage in a personally

meaningful career (Harren, 1979).  Individuals that have a career with a heart have a strong

passion for what they do and experience many positive emotions as a result of the intrinsic

enjoyment received from engaging in daily career activities (Kopelman et al., 2012).  Kopelman

et al. (2012) insists that a career with a heart is comprised of three key dimensions: the career

must be self-directed and congruent with an individual's own values, the career must elicit strong

positive emotions for the person, and the career must align well with the person's broader life

and sense of identity, beyond work.  Research indicates that individuals with a strong career

identity often devote more resources to their careers, which in turn increases their chances of

establishing career success (Valcour & Ladge, 2008).  Important components of maintaining a

career with a heart are individual identity and authenticity (Svejenova, 2005).

Personal identity is considered to be the organization and substance of an individual's

self-concept.  In other words, it is the composition of various meanings that are attached to the

self (Svejenova, 2005).  Individual identity can be comprised of the private self, public self, and

even the performed self (Svejenova, 2005). Personal identity can be created and manifested through language, actions, and/or situations (Svejenova, 2005). Protean careerists often intertwine their identity and their career in order to achieve personal success (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). In the protean career orientation it is important to note that the identity of an individual is considered to be authentic in nature (Svejenova, 2005).

Authenticity is a salient component of the protean career orientation due to the value that is placed upon self-directed choice. Svejenova (2005) noted that "an authenticity-seeking individual is willing to take initiative and responsibility for his or her career and able to achieve congruence between past and future, as well as between the private and the public domains of one's self" (p. 951). Often individuals can maintain a sense of authenticity when engaging in personally meaningful interests or activities that they are passionate about, which is similar to many entrepreneurs.

**Overview of Traditional Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship is essential in our current global economy and is responsible for driving innovation, technical change, and consumer interest (Shane, Locke, & Collins, 2003). Entrepreneurship has been defined as the process by which "opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated, and exploited" (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000, p. 218). Entrepreneurs do not necessarily have to be the founders of a new organization or the developer of a new product, an entrepreneur can be a salesmen or even an emerging chemist. One key element of entrepreneurship is the emphasis that is placed upon the creative process as a whole (Shane et al., 2003). In order to develop a new product, new way of manufacturing, and/or arrange resources in a new way, entrepreneurs must engage in a unique creative quest (Shane et al., 2003).

In order to be an entrepreneur, one must first be a human, have personal agency, and some propensity for risk. The entrepreneurial process involves human agency and exists as we know it today because people are willing to pursue opportunities and take risks that others are not willing to (Shane et al., 2003). One large difference between traditional careers and entrepreneurship is that entrepreneurs can pursue opportunities in nearly any industry and at any time, and for any reason, which is not often possible when employed in a traditional career (Shane et al., 2003). Research indicates that entrepreneurs' are motivated to pursue a particular venture for a variety of reasons.

In addition to traditional entrepreneurial theories, a prominent theory of business management, The Push-Pull Theory of entrepreneurship, provides a framework for conceptualizing the motivations of entrepreneurs or small business owners. The push-pull theory posits individuals decide to engage in entrepreneurial activity due to different motivational factors that can be considered positive factors that "pull" and negative situational factors that "push" people into entrepreneurship (Shapero and Sokol, 1982; Gilad and Levine, 1986). Gilad and Levine (1986) argued that the extent one will be motivated to seek entrepreneurship depends on both push and pull factors. Push factors are considered negative aspects of a persons situation or external factors (i.e., relational stressors, underemployment). For example, significant life changes or the inability to earn a wage that is commensurate with the demands of the job are factors that could "push" people into entrepreneurship. Contrastingly, pull factors are those that draw people towards starting businesses. For instance, the promise of financial reward or the opportunity for independence can "pull" people into entrepreneurial activities.

**Entrepreneurs and Protean Career Values**

Entrepreneurship is a unique career path and research indicates that entrepreneurs often hold many of the same attitudes that are salient in the protean career orientation (Carter et al., 2003; Obschonka et al., 2010). Previous research has identified six categories of reasons that entrepreneurs have for starting businesses: (1) Innovation- described an individual's motivation to accomplish something new; (2) Independence- involved an individual's desire for freedom, control, and flexibility corning their career and the use of one's time; (3) Recognition- outlined an individual's intention to have status, approval, and recognition from important others within an individual's family and/or community; (4) Roles- involved reasons that describe an individual's desire to family in their families traditions and/or emulate the example of someone that is important; (5) Financial Success- described the intention to earn more money and achieve financial security; and (6) Self-Realization- described reasons involved with pursuing self-directed goals (Carter et al., 2003, p. 14).

Of the six categories that entrepreneurs have identified as reasons for starting a business, two align well with protean career attitudes (self-realization and independence). Carter et al. (2003) found that entrepreneurs were motivated to start their own business in hopes of gaining self-realization, more personal independence, and experiencing more self-actualization than others. The researchers also concluded that entrepreneurs were less influenced by external validation from others and more interested in gaining a personal development than were nonentrepreneurs, which is also in line with protean career attitudes. Gatewood. Shaver, and Gartner (1995) interviewed 142 preventure businessmen/women from a small business development center in order to understand their reasons for starting a business. Results revealed

that over 18% of the sample identified a desire for autonomy and independence as their primary reasons for starting a business.

Entrepreneurs also share the value of autonomy with protean careerists. Kolvereid (1996) investigated the reasons for engaging in self-employment versus traditional organizational employment using a group of 372 Norwegian business-school graduates. He concluded that individuals who were self-employed valued the ability to participate in the entire job process, choose economic opportunity, autonomy, challenge, and self-realization, compared to individuals choosing organizational employment. Similarly, Kellett and Russell (2009) noted action sport business owners in Australia are partly motivated to form business in order to attain financial autonomy.

As presented above, entrepreneurs value independence, autonomy, and personal agency specific to career development. Research indicates that many entrepreneurs value career opportunities that promote personal growth and development (Carsrud, Brannback, Elfving, & Brandt, 2009). Not only does it appear that entrepreneurs hold salient protean career attitudes, but individuals who participate in action sports and who identify with the action sport lifestyle may also share these very same attitudes.

**Attitudes of Action Sport Participants and Entrepreneurial Values**

Engaging in physical activity and sports requires a major commitment in an individual's life. Not only do sports become a personal interest to people, but they also often contribute to the development of an individuals personal identity (Wright, MacDonald, & Groom, 2003). The identity that is developed due to engagement in a specific sport allows for a person to develop a sense of being in relation to their sport of interest and the world as a whole (Wright et al., 2003). Specific cultural values, norms, and expectations are also developed as a result of being

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immersed in a particular sport. In no other sport culture may this idea ring true than in the action sports community.

Action sport participation has rapidly increased in the past 20 years, it is estimated that over 150 million people participate in action sports worldwide (Salmon, 2004). There is three core sports that comprise the action sport category: skateboarding, surfing, and snowboarding. Each of these sports shares the elements of risk, obscurity, independence, self-direction, and creativity. Similar to the entrepreneurial value of seeking independence and participating in something in order to gain independence, many action sport participants are driven to participate for their own personal fulfillment and to have an outlet for personal expression (Heino, 2000). The value of independence and self-direction that is desired by entrepreneurs and action sport participants is also held in high regard by protean careerists.

Action sport participants often consider their sport of choice to be more of a lifestyle than merely a leisure activity (Beal, 1995; Pittsinger, Liu, & Rassmusen, 2012). Pittsinger et al. (2012) qualitatively investigated the motivations of avid surfers and concluded that every surfer in the sample considered surfing to be a salient component of their life and that they considered the sport to be a component of their identity. Participants also explained that surfing was a passion and not just a sport that they could occasionally participate in. Similarly, Beal (1995) researched the subculture of skateboarding and concluded that skateboarders identified skateboarding as a lifestyle opposed to a separate realm of their life. Protean careerists and entrepreneurs also share the value of being driven by what they are passionate about rather than what someone else deems acceptable.

Due to the importance and value many action sports participants place upon the lifestyle that is their sport of choice, authenticity is a salient component of action sports and the action

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sports community as a whole (Donnelly, 2006). Ultimately, action sports participants are considered to be members of a subculture that was built upon individually, a do-it-yourself attitude, and creativity (Donnelly, 2006; Farmer, 1992; Heino, 2000). Similar to the importance protean careerists place on being authentic and seeking a career with a heart, many action sports participants hold identical values and attitudes in relation to the sport they identify with most (Donnelly, 2006).

The literature reviewed above identified common career development theories often used to describe the traditional career development process, in addition to providing information specific to the protean career orientation and how protean career attitudes align with entrepreneurs and members of the action sport community. In the following section a brief summary of the connection between protean career attitudes and entrepreneurial motivations is provided.

**Summary**

The review of literature suggests that protean careerist and entrepreneurs often hold many of the same attitudes and are motivated to pursue a career for the same reasons. The common attitudes and motivators as identified by the literature are summarized in this section.

Many career theorists and career psychologists utilize commonly employed traditional career developmental theories when seeking to uncover the motivations and/or reasons for why individuals enter particular career fields or avoid certain careers. These professionals could benefit from exploring and understanding the value of the protean career orientation in order to better understand the nontraditional career development process as well as clients they may be working with who are interested in starting their own business or who have an interest they are particularly passionate about.

There is most certainly a lack of research on the career motivations and influence of personal identity of individuals who own and operate action sport retail businesses. Although researchers acknowledge the influence personal attitudes can have on career development, there is a lack of existing research that examines the interaction and influence personal interests and valued attitudes may have upon the career development process of action sport retail business owners. In order to learn more about this population researchers should utilize qualitative methodology, as the benefits of using qualitative research with a population that has not previously been investigated are plentiful.

Qualitative research allows for rich descriptive data to be gathered specific to motivations, life experiences, and internal processes regarding the career development process of action sport retail business owners. There is a current gap in the literature specific to the motivations and reasons why individuals start action sport retail business and how their personal interests and/or values contribute to the career development process.

Investigating the motivations and influence of personal attitudes and interests of the career development process of action sport retail business owners will allow for a greater understanding to be developed about why an entrepreneur starts, owns, and operates a business. Also, this information will provide directions for future qualitative and quantitative research by uncovering information specific to action sport business owners and the actions sports community as a whole.

**Current Study**

The review of literature highlights the potential similarities between attitudes of protean careerists and attitudes held by action sport participants. Although there is information related to

the motivators for traditional entrepreneurs, there is clearly a lack of research on action sport retail business owners.

The current study utilized consensual qualitative research (CQR; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) methodology in order to investigate the motivations and the personal/professional identity of action sport retail business owners. This study was also aimed at developing an understanding of the existence of any protean career orientation attitudes held by action sport retail business owners. Overall, the current study sought to investigate how the interaction of personal and professional identity influenced action sport retail business owners to start a business and what motivated them to pursue a career in the action sport retail market. The primary research questions guiding the current study were:

1. How does being an action sport participant influence action sport retail business owners to own and operate their own businesses in their career development process?

2. What role does personal and action sport specific identity play in starting an action sport retail business?

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

The goal of the present study was to investigate the personal and professional identity of individuals who own and operate independent action sport retail businesses, as well this study explores their motivations for starting their business. This investigation included: examining the participants motivations and influences for starting their business, exploring how their identity as an action sport participant has influenced their career trajectory and/or has changed since owning a business, and examining their perceptions of their business identity as it is influenced by their identity as an action sport participant. The researcher employed a qualitative research method known as Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill et al., 1997) to analyze interview data of men who own and operate independent action sport retail businesses.

Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) was an appropriate methodology for the current study as it allowed for the exploratory examination of the experience of multiple action sport retail business owners. CQR allowed for the research participants to share their experience and responses to the questions asked without having overt expectations an/or limitations. The collaborative nature of CQR aims to reduce research bias when analyzing data in order to remain as accurate to the participants reported experiences as possible.

This chapter outlines the methodology and research design of the current study. First, a description of the participants is presented, followed by a description of the measures and procedures implemented by the researcher to identify and recruit participants, as well as collect data. Lastly, the CQR methodology and procedures specific to the data analysis process are presented.

**Participants**

The criteria for participation required the participants to be a man who at the time of data collection owned and privately operated an independent action sports retail business (i.e., skateboard/surfboard/snowboard retail shop) located in California, Iowa, and/or Colorado and was over the age of 18. The study was limited to men due to the exploratory nature of the investigation and the importance of having a homogeneous sample in order to better understand the phenomenon. Participants were recruited via prior personal knowledge of who owned action sport retail businesses in the above-mentioned locale and via personal networks (i.e., via personal acquaintances within the action sport industry). Participant recruitment was geographically limited to California, Iowa, and Colorado, as these areas have the highest concentration of independently owned and operated action sport retail businesses and the primary researcher already had prior knowledge of businesses in those areas. The study was advertised as investigating the motivations, perceptions, and influences related to owning and operating an independent action sports retail business. All participants were screened via phone, e-mail, or in-person by the primary researcher to ensure that they met study criterion. Participants were informed that the interviews would last for approximately 30-60 minutes, would be audio-taped, and would be completely confidential. Participants were informed that they could discontinue participant in the study at anytime.

A pilot interview was conducted with a 28-year-old man who owned and operated a skateboard/snowboard shop in Colorado. The purpose of the pilot interview was to review the structure of the interview and to solicit feedback on the structure and/or wording of the interview in order to ensure that the questions were easy to understand and applicable. The participant noted that it was confusing and awkward that the interviewer continually referred to his

skateboard/snowboard shop as an action sport retail business.  The participant suggested that the interviewer refer to the type of shop (i.e., skateboard/surfboard/snowboard) or state the name of the individual business when asking questions in order to minimize confusion and enhance the flow of the conversation.  Additionally, he noted that questions inquiring about the personal action sport participation frequency were redundant and could be condensed to only one or two questions.  The final protocol is attached in Appendix I.  A total of nine men who owned and operated independent action sport retail businesses were recruited to participate in the study.

Nine men between the ages of 30-48 (M=36.33, SD=5.43) who owned and operated independent action sport retail businesses for 2-24 years (M=9.89, SD=7.36) participated in this study.  Participants were primarily recruited through phone and via personal networking.  Ethnically eight participants identified as Caucasian and one identified as Asian-American.

**Measures**

One semi-structured interview with 18 open-ended questions (see Appendix I) lasting approximately 20-35 minutes was conducted.  The interview inquired about the participants' motivations, perceptions, and influences for starting an action sports retail business.  Inquiries were also made regarding how their personal identity had influenced their professional identity and vice versa.  The primary interview protocol was developed based on the review of literature by the primary researcher and was further revised after the pilot interview had been conducted per CQR protocol (Hill et al., 2005).

**Procedures**

**Recruiting Participants.**  Participants were recruited primarily via personal contact and by telephone.  The primary investigator contacted independent action sport retail business owners in-person or by telephone and informed the potential participants of the purpose of the

study and eligibility criteria for participation.  If the participants met criteria and were interested in participating in the study the interview was scheduled via telephone or in-person, depending upon the participant's preferred means of communication.

**Interview Process.**  Interviews were semi-structured in nature and lasted a minimum of 20 minutes to a maximum of 35 minutes.  At the beginning of the interview participants were provided with a brief explanation of the purpose of the study as well as information pertaining to informed consent.   Interviews were either conducted in-person at various locations or via telephone based upon the participant's convenience and were audio-taped.  These locations included the participants' specific retail business.  The primary researcher who has previous training and experience with the CQR methodology conducted the interviews.  At the conclusion of the interview participants were debriefed and were provided with the opportunity to ask questions, provide feedback to the interviewer and reflect upon the interview itself.  The primary researcher kept a pre and post interview journal where he recorded the reflections and expectations of each interview.

**Transcriptions.**  All interviews were transcribed verbatim with the exception of minimal encouragers (i.e., uhhh, uh-huh, umm, etc.).  The primary research transcribed all of the interviews, and listened to each tape after the transcriptions to check for and correct any possible errors.  Each participant was given a pseudonym (see Table. 3) to protect his confidentiality and the transcripts were assigned a code number (001-009).  Additionally, all identifying information, such as names, specific locations, and business names was replaced with fictitious or alternative names.  At the conclusions of the interview transcription process, participants were offered the opportunity to review their interview transcripts but none chose to do so.

**Data Analysis**

The primary research team independently read and reviewed each transcript in order to conduct the data analysis. The research team met five times to discuss the identification of domains, core ideas, and conduct cross-analyses. The research team and data analysis procedure are described in detail in the following section.

**Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR).** Consensual qualitative research (CQR) was originally developed by Hill et al. in 1997 in order to systematically analyze interview data. The current study adhered to the updated CQR methodology as proposed by Hill et al. (2005). CQR allows for an understanding of a particular phenomenon to be gathered through multiple perspectives without there needing to be one absolute truth (Hill, 2012). CQR was an appropriate methodology for the current study due to the ability to examine multiple perspectives of action sport business owners and develop a deep understanding of their motivations and desires for starting an action sport retail business. CQR was an ideal methodology to employ due to the exploratory nature of the study and the need to meet each participant where they are in the career development process. CQR has been utilized in a number of previous studies due to the applicability of the method to exploratory investigations.

There are a number of key components of CQR that distinguish it from other forms of qualitative methodology. CQR utilizes an inductive data analysis approach, which places emphasis on describing a phenomenon and grounding the conclusions drawn in the data gathered (Hill, 2012). Semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions are the primary means of data collection. Open-ended questions allow for research participants to talk openly about the phenomenon of interest, rather than guide them to agree and/or disagree with the researchers way of thinking (Hill, 2012). Not only is emphasis placed upon the specific words

interviewees use to answer each open-ended question, but importance is also given to the context in which the words are spoken. Taking into consideration the context provides clues for how each individual participant views the world in which they exist (Hill, 2012). CQR relies upon a small number of cases to be examined in order for adequate attention to be given to understand each participant's story. CQR also relies upon a consensus among the multiple perspectives of the research team in order to accurately analyze data; more information specific to the role and function of the research team will be presented later in this chapter.

CQR methodology places great emphasis upon the importance of establishing and maintaining a collaborative approach among the various members of the research team. The research team is comprised of at least three members who participate equally in conceptualizing the interview protocol and analyzing data. Participants are believed to be experts of their own experiences and are valued components of the study. CQR places value on words rather than numbers, which allows for a deeper and richer understanding of a given phenomenon.

**Research Team.** The primary research team consisted of the primary researcher, a woman judge, and a judge who identified as a man. The primary researcher identified as a man and European American, the woman judge identified as European American and the man judge identified as Asian American. The primary research team members were 29, 27, and 30, respectively when the study was conducted. At the beginning of the study the primary researcher was in his 4th year of his doctoral program, the second judge was in her 4th year of her doctoral program, and the third judge was also in his 4th year of his doctoral program. All of the judges had previous experience with the CQR methodology.

A 27 year-old African-American woman in her 4th year of her doctoral program served as the external auditor for this study. The role of the auditor is important as it "exists outside the

process of consensus and acts as a 'check for the team' at set points throughout the analysis" (Hill, 2012, p. 137). This person, because they are not actively involved in the analysis throughout the study, can provide a different perspective, and can allow for increased objectivity and potentially recognize or reduce overall bias among the team members' analyses (Hill, 2012, p. 137). The external auditor was provided information specific to the CQR methodology and her role and responsibility as the auditor by the primary researcher. The primary research, judges, and the external auditor attended the same Counseling Psychology doctoral program.

The primary research team discussed expectations and biases prior to the data collection process. Personal notes were kept prior to and after the completion of each interview in order to record reflections and track biases and expectations of the researchers. Prior to data collection the researchers thought that the participants might be slightly reluctant to participate in a research study do to the close knit nature of the action sports community.

**Identification of Domains.** The first step in the analysis is to set up a list of "domains"; this is an early set of broad categories that are used to better organize the data. These domains are developed directly from the data based on the analysis team's perceptions of the content areas within the data. The data was compiled into a set of Excel spreadsheets with each participant's transcript having its own spreadsheet document. The primary research team members (judges) independently read and reviewed the interview transcripts and developed a list of general overarching themes or ideas (preliminary domains). Once each team member developed a list of preliminary domains the judges met together as a group in order to discuss the domains they each came up with in order to come to a consensus. These meeting resulted in the identification of seven domains. After this step, the data was presented to the external auditor for review.

**Core Ideas.** After reaching consensus and once domains were identified, the judges independently developed categories of core ideas in order to organize the data into meaningful groups. Each core idea is generated from the participants' responses to the interview questions. During this process, the members of the team use the previously chosen domains and examine the expression of these domains for each individual participant. Then, each participant's responses within a domain are to be summarized in a concise and succinct manner that "captures the essence of what was said" (Hill et al., p. 547). Judges kept a record of where each core idea came from by indicating the page number and participant where the core idea was identified in the transcripts. Once each judge had their own list of core ideas, they met together as a group on four different occasions in order to present the core ideas they found that emerged from the data. They also provided an explanation regarding their reasoning for including each core idea. The judges discussed the inclusion of each core idea until they came to an agreement. If an agreement could not be met by all of the judges then the core idea presented was discarded.

**Cross-Analysis.** After the domains were identified, cross-analysis was conducted to further organize and clarify the data in order to focus on the larger scope of the data. This is intended to allow the research team to look across multiple cases to search for patterns in the data once consensus had been reached. The data is sorted by domain allowing the research team members to analyze each domain one at a time. This process was done individually by each member of the research team and then the team reconvened to come to consensus with each domain.

**Frequency.** Lastly, categories were labeled based on the frequency of occurrence of the core idea in each category. The researchers employed Hill et al.'s (2005) revised labels of "general," "typical," and "variant." A label of "general" was given to a category that was

reported by all or all but one of the participants (8–9).  "Typical" describes a category that was acknowledged by more than half of the participants up to all but one (5-8).  The "variant" label includes at least two participant reports up to half of the participant reports (2–4).  These labels were used to better communicate the results and to allow for comparison across research studies.

**Draft of Final Results.**  Participants were informed upon enrolling in the study that they could request copies of their interview transcripts.  None of the participants chose to do so.

## Chapter 4: Results

Following analysis, seven domains emerged; these included: (1) Reasons and Process of Becoming a Surfer/Skater/Snowboarder, (2) Personal Impact of Identification as an Action Sport Participant (Surfer/Skater/Snowboarder), (3) Motivations to Become a Retail Business Owner in the Action Sport Industry, (4) Process of Becoming a Action Sport Retail Business Owner: Career Trajectory, (5) Identification as a Businessman and Impact of Business Ownership on Personal Identity, (6) Factors Influencing Desires to Sustain Business Ownership, (7) Perceptions of Action Sports Industry as a Retail Business Owner. Each domain was separated into multiple categories, as noted in the methods section. Findings detailing the frequencies and illustrative quotations for the domains and categories are reported in Table 2. The seven domains, core ideas, categories and subcategories, and frequencies will be described in detail in this chapter.

Table 2. List of Domains, Categories, Frequency, and Specifier

| Domain | Category | Frequency | Specifier |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Reasons and Process of Becoming a Surfer/Skater/Snowboarder | | | |
| | Length of Action Sport Participation | 9 | General |
| | Intrigued by Action Sport Culture and Desire to be Apart of the Lifestyle | 8 | General |
| | Influenced by a Family Member and/or a Friend | 4 | Variant |
| 2. Personal Impact of Identification as an Action Sport Participant | | | |
| | Impact of Action Sport Participation on Personal Identity and Personal Characteristics | 9 | General |
| | Personal Reasons to Continue Participation in Action Sports | 9 | General |
| | Passion and Love for Sport | 9 | General |
| | Form of Exercise | 2 | Variant |
| | Socially Important | 2 | Variant |
| | Increase Mood | 1 | Rare |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Be Outside | 1 | Rare |
| | Participate in Sport with Children | 1 | Rare |
| | Saliency of Action Sport Identity | 9 | General |
| 3. Motivations to Become a Retail Business Owner in the Action Sport Industry | | | |
| | Identification as a Surfer/Skater/Snowboarder and Passion to Work in the Action Sport Industry | 8 | General |
| | Previously Worked in Action Sport Industry | 4 | Variant |
| | Demand for Action Sport Retail Business | 3 | Variant |
| | Personal and Professional Flexibility and Autonomy | 5 | Typical |
| 4. Process of Becoming a Action Sport Retail Business owner: Career Trajectory | | | |
| | Happenstance | 6 | Typical |
| | Continue Family Business | 2 | Variant |
| 5. Identification as a Businessman and Impact of Business Ownership on Personal Identity | | | |
| | Perceptions of Self as Identifying as a Businessman | 9 | General |
| | Primary | 1 | Rare |
| | Secondary | 8 | General |
| | Impact of Increased Responsibility on Business Identity Development | 1 | Rare |
| | Impact of Being a Business Owner on Perceptions of Personal Identity | 9 | General |
| | More Serious | 3 | Variant |
| | More Responsible | 5 | Typical |
| | More Frustrated and Less Patient | 1 | Rare |
| | Shift in Action Sport Participation and Identification due to Being a Business Owner | 7 | Typical |
| | Increased Identification with Action Sports | 5 | Typical |
| | Decreased Action Sport Identification | 1 | Rare |
| | Decreased Action Sport Participation | 1 | Rare |
| | Opinions of Others Perceptions of Their Identity as a | 1 | Rare |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Businessman | | |
| **6. Factors Influencing Desires to Maintain Business Ownership** | | | |
| | Satisfaction of Contributing to Others Enjoyment of the Action Sports | 5 | Typical |
| | Passion for the Action Sport Industry | 8 | General |
| | Enjoy the "Perks" of Owning an Action Sport Retail Business | 7 | Typical |
| | Be Own Boss | 2 | Variant |
| | Flexibility | 1 | Rare |
| | Ability to Travel | 2 | Variant |
| | Continued Involvement in Action Sports | 2 | Variant |
| **7. Perceptions of the Action Sport Industry as a Retail Business Owner** | | | |
| | Opinions of the Commercialization of the Action Sport Industry | 9 | General |
| | Desires to Open an Action Sport Retail Business Again | 9 | General |

**Pseudonyms**

The following table illustrates the pseudonyms for the nine participants. Blake is a 30 year-old Caucasian man; Tyler is a 31 year-old Caucasian man; Mike is a 40 year-old Caucasian man; Jack is a 37 year-old Caucasian man; Jim is a 35 year-old Caucasian man; Adam is a 38 year-old Caucasian man; Kevin is a 33 year-old Caucasian man; Spencer is a 48 year-old Asian-American man; and Steve is a 35 year-old Caucasian man.

Table 3.  Pseudonym Chart

| Pseudonym |
|---|
| Blake |
| Tyler |
| Mike |
| Jack |
| Jim |
| Adam |
| Kevin |
| Spencer |
| Steve |

## Domain 1:  Reasons and Process of Becoming a Surfer/Skater/Snowboarder

The data within this domain capture the business owners' reasons and process of becoming a surfer/skater/snowboarder.  The three categories within this domain include Length of Action Sport Participation, Being Intrigued by the Action Sport Culture and Experiencing a Desire to be Apart of the Lifestyle, and Being Influenced by a Family Member and/or Friend. As an overall domain, Reasons and Process of Becoming a Surfer/Skater/Snowboarder includes descriptive information about why and how the business owners in this study started participating in action sports and what influenced their decisions.

Table 4.  Reasons and Process of Becoming a Surfer/Skater/Snowboarder

| Category | Frequency | Specifier |
|---|---|---|
| Length of Action Sport Participation | 9 | General |
| Intrigued by Action Sport Culture and Desire to be Apart of the Lifestyle | 8 | General |
| Influenced by a Family Member and/or a Friend | 4 | Variant |

**Length of action sport participation.**  Each business owner in the study was asked to identify for how long they had participated in action sports for.  All of the business owner indicated they had been surfing/skating/snowboarding for over 20 years and that they each started at or before the age of 10.

**Intrigued by action sport culture and desire to be apart of the lifestyle.** During the

interview, business owners were asked what initially motivated them to begin

surfing/skateboarding/snowboarding. Within this category, the majority of business owners

described being intrigued by the surf/skate/snowboard culture and desired to be apart of the

action sport lifestyle (eight out of nine). For example:

> *Steve:* Growing up in [a beach community], man, it was just kind of another
> outlet. Skating was the first part of it, just around the neighborhood with all the
> groms… We lived at the end of the street, in a cul-de-sac, so… [The beach
> community I grew up in] just had that lifestyle, you know? It was like a sideways
> standing lifestyle, you know? We all played regular sports too, we were all
> outside running around doing stuff, but it was cool because of the individuality of
> skating and surfing... It was something that you didn't have with all the team
> sports, you know? You just got burnt on all the Orange County coaches that
> wanted you to be a pro-athlete… "Dude, I'm 5-7 and with barely any
> athleticism." I mean, when it comes to like jumping and throwing and all that
> stuff, I mean, I don't know, I was okay, you know? But when it came to
> skateboarding, you just got to do whatever you wanted, really.

In this case, this business owner described feeling inspired to begin skateboarding due to

perceiving the skateboard culture and lifestyle as cool and personally appealing.

**Influenced by a family member and/or a friend.** Four business owners identified they

first became interested in surfing/skating/snowboarding due to being influenced by a family

member and/or a friend. One mentioned he was influenced by his older brother, while the other

three described being influenced by friends. For example:

> *Spencer:* Uhh, March of 1988. Umm, yeah, I was eight years old and my older
> sister was dating this guy who was a skater at the time. Long story short, my
> birthday was coming up. He knew I was always bumming his board from him and
> stuff. I was already bitten by the bug at that point. So, he took me to a skate shop
> called Cal Skate, and said, "I'll buy you a set up." Cal Skate in Portland, Oregon,
> it was just this awesome shop. They're still around now. They're just a real core,
> awesome, amazing place. There was Chad behind the counter with dreadlocks,
> and it was badass as hell. A bunch of punk rockers hanging out and shit. It was
> rugged, you know, just how skateboarding was in the late 80's. It was just this
> kind of delinquent activity. I got myself a Vision deck, Bones wheels, and

Venture trucks.  Hell, here I am twenty-three years later and I'm still skating. That's what got me bitten, you know, that's what started it all off. And I've been skating ever since, man. Been addicted to it and been stuck to it ever since.

Spencer's response illustrates the powerful influence a friend had upon his initial desire to begin skateboarding.

**Domain 2:  Personal Impact of Identification as an Action Sport Participant (Surfer/Skater/Snowboarder)**

The data within this domain captures the business owners' perceptions of how being a surfer/skater/snowboarder has impacted their personal identity.  Within this domain are three categories: Impact of Action Sport Participation on Personal Identity and Personal Characteristics, Personal Reasons to Continue Participation in Action Sports, and Saliency of Action Sport Identity.  This domain captures business owners' responses to questions specific to if they identify as a surfer/skater/snowboarder and how their participation in action sports has impacted their personal identity.  The following categories illuminate the impact being a surfer/skater/snowboarder has had on the personal identity of the business owners who participated in this study.

Table 5.  Personal Impact of Identification as an Action Sport Participant

| Category | Frequency | Specifier |
|---|---|---|
| Impact of Action Sport Participation on Personal Identity and Personal Characteristics | 9 | General |
| Personal Reasons to Continue Participation in Action Sports | 9 | General |
| Passion and Love for Sport | 9 | General |
| Form of Exercise | 2 | Variant |
| Socially Important | 2 | Variant |
| Increase Mood | 1 | Rare |
| Be Outside | 1 | Rare |
| Participate in Sport with Children | 1 | Rare |
| Saliency of Action Sport Identity | 9 | General |

**Impact of Action Sport Participation on Personal Identity and Personal**

**Characteristics.** All of the business owners identified that participating in the action sports

surfing/skating/snowboarding impacted their sense of personal identity. Specifically, they

described that their personal identity was shaped due to their participating in the action sports.

Examples:

> *Blake:* Uhh… I think because of being a skater and snowboarder that I am pretty
> mellow for the most part. I guess that could just be the way I am but its most
> likely because of the activities I do and the friends I have… which are all skaters
> and snowboarders. I think people look at me differently because I'm a skater, you
> know. Skaters are seen as the dirty weird guys for the most part,… Well, I guess I
> fit that mold (laughs). Its definitely just who I am, I'm a skater.

> *Steve:* I think for a long time, it was pretty evident that I was a surfer, skater, or
> snowboarder. It was very important, it was who I was. You know, especially
> being younger, you know obviously, you [have] to identify with something. It
> really defined who I was. You know, I'd walk around as, I'm a surfer, I'm a
> snowboarder, you know. The older I get, I kind of identify myself as being more
> of a father and a dad that works way too much (laughs). But I still kind of identify
> with that, I think especially with my business, I have to in order to keep being
> authentic and relevant.

> *Tyler:* Surfing has impacted me in many ways, you know. I think it has made me
> the person I am… and I think that is in large part to my family and the friends I
> have because of the sport. I feel like I'm way more laid back than I would be if I
> didn't surf.

These three quotes illustrate the powerful impact surfing/skating/snowboarding had upon the

personal identity of these business owners and the degree to which surfing/skating/snowboarding

defines the person they are.

**Personal Reasons to Continue Participation in Action Sports.** All of the business

owners identified specific personal reasons they continue to participate in the action sports. As

outlined above in Table 3, there were six different personal reasons these business owners noted

for their continued participation in the action sports. All of the business owners described their

passion and love for surfing/skating/snowboarding as a salient reason for their continued

participation. For example:

> *Blake:* Umm, just because, I mean I love doing it. I guess, just a huge part of my life whether, you know, all my friends are because of that and, yeah, pretty much my life revolves around it!

> *Tyler:* I'm still, you know, still pushing myself to do better. There's still some personal things I want to accomplish in the sports and I think just setting a genuine goal and just going for it completely. Snowboarding is probably my favorite sport but we don't sell snow products here in the store, you know. I just love snowboarding, and everyone in the industry snowboards, you know. It's a pretty seasonal thing but you can really relate to people a lot, with snowboarding still. You know, though… People around here can relate to surfing really good and I think that's why its part of my life more so than snowboarding.

These quotes describe the influence the business owners love and passion for

skating/surfing/snowboarding has had upon their continued desire to participate in action sports.

**Saliency of Action Sport Identity.** When asked if the business owners identified as an

action sport participant, all of them described identifying themselves as a

skater/surfer/snowboarder.

> *Tyler:* Uhh… I would like to think of myself as someone who identifies as more of a surfer, for sure. There is a lot that goes into the business part of it, you know… managing, paying the bills, buying, all of that stuff. But I would say that I'm a surfer before I say I'm a businessman.

> *Mike:* Oh yeah, definitely. I feel like surfing is the most important thing to me… that and my family. It's the thing that keeps me going, you know. It's the one thing that makes me happy. And skating has always been right beside that, even though I've never been the full street skate guy. Growing up, I've been more of a transition guy, but it's all part of the same thing, you know.

> *Mark:* In terms of me identifying, I will always be a skater. Like I said, I hope to be able to push around at least as transportation at the bare minimum for as long as I can. I still read every [skateboard] magazine and get my hands on every new

[skateboard] video, just to see what's going on… like it will never change… You know a person that plays high school football still watches football every weekend of his life even though he cant play anymore. And that's like me, I will always follow this and be apart of skateboarding.

These three responses indicate the value these business owners place upon their identity as a surfer/skater/snowboarder, and highlight that their action sport identity is more important to them then their identity as a business owner.

**Domain 3: Motivations to Become a Retail Business Owner in the Action Sport Industry**

This domain primarily captures the motivations and reasons the business owners decided to own their action sport retail business. There are four categories within this domain: Identification as a Surfer/Skater/Snowboarder and Passion to Work in the Action Sport Industry, Previously Worked in Action Sport Industry, Demand for Action Sport Retail Business, and Personal and Professional Flexibility and Autonomy. Some of the categories within this domain reflect internal motivations and reasons, while others developed due to the influence of others or some other external factor.

Table 6. Motivations to Become a Retail Business Owner in the Action Sport Industry

| Category | Frequency | Specifier |
|---|---|---|
| Identification as a Surfer/Skater/Snowboarder and Passion to Work in the Action Sport Industry | 8 | General |
| Previously Worked in Action Sport Industry | 4 | Variant |
| Demand for Action Sport Retail Business | 3 | Variant |
| Personal and Professional Flexibility and Autonomy | 5 | Typical |

**Identification as a Surfer/Skater/Snowboarder and Passion to Work in the Action Sport Industry.** This category includes business owners' mention of how their identification as a surfer/skater/snowboarder and personal passion to work in the action sport industry influenced

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their decision to own a action sport retail business.  Eight of the business owners stated their

identity as a surfer/skater/snowboarder and their personal passion for the action sport industry

motivated them to own a retail business in the industry.  For example:

> *Kevin:*  I always loved surfing growing up since I was 8, 9, 10 years old. I'd
> always had a passion for it and knowing that I didn't want to go to work with my
> father. He was an insurance agent at the time and I was possibly going to take
> over his business, but never like working with him and didn't want to go that
> route. I wanted to do something with surfing just because it is close to my heart.

> *Jim:*  I don't know if I would have started the shop if I didn't grow up skating and
> snowboarding… I don't even know if I would have even, well, you know, if I
> would have known that a need existed for a shop at that time.  So… I really, I
> really doubt I would have even gone in this business if I wasn't involved in those
> sports, you know.

> *Spencer:*  No, hell no, I wouldn't have opened the shop if I wasn't a skater.  I
> don't know why anyone who doesn't skate would ever want to open a skate shop
> at all. You know, I have no idea why anyone in this world, you know, if it's not a
> labor of love.

These quotes illustrate the importance of the business owners identity as a

surfer/skater/snowboarder and their passion for the action sports on their motivations to open an

action sport retail business.

When asked if he would have opened an action sport retail business if he didn't identity as a

surfer/skater/snowboarder, one businessman stated:

> *Steve:*  Absolutely not. No I wouldn't of at all. I mean, it played a huge role into
> why I even started the business, you know I picked this because I skated, surfed,
> and snowboarded.  That's the only reason why I did it in the first place. Now, it's
> kind of different. I'm trying to make a living at it, but I think it's still the only
> reason why I'm doing this.
> I think like a lot of guys who enjoy the action sports, we started this business
> because we like skating and surfing and snowboarding and we thought it'd be
> cool to own one.  You know growing up and hanging out in one, in a skate shop.
> We thought, oh, this would be a dream job. So, I tried to create our dream job, and
> that's really why we got into this.

**Previously Worked in Action Sport Industry.**  Four business owners expressed being motivated and influenced to own and operate their retail business by their previous experiences working in the action sport industry.  For example:

> *Blake:*  *I started working for my first shop when I was 19, so still kinda a teenager.  The way I started was I kinda fell into it under circumstances, where I was working for somebody else and the opportunity arose to stop working for them and to kinda start my own thing.  So it was more kinda like a cluster of events that lead to where I am today, uh more so than, you know, I guess pursuing it necessarily at the time.*

> *Mark:*  Never, ever would I have ever even worked at my first job in skating at that indoor skate park, I mentioned to you earlier, if I wasn't a skater. The chance that I got to even work at that park was because the guy who was there before me, he was there from the beginning of it, he was probably there four years prior to me working there. I was going there regularly, but there was some seniority as far as people that had been there longer and would go there more consistently, they knew the owner.  I was the low man on the totem poll, for sure.  But I think that it was a spot of luck. I called to see how many people were down there that day, cause I was thinking about going down and skating, and then the person who normally answered the phone didn't that day.  And I was like, "oh hey, where is so and so, and oh yeah, he quit."  I never applied for a job… I was 16, I mean I didn't get a job until pretty late, like 16, I might have even been like 17. I just threw it out there, and he was just kinda looking for a person that he didn't maybe necessarily know super well…. So, I think it was totally just the right place and right time.  I just started a couple days later.  Honestly, I never had any... Up until that very second that it came out of my mouth of like, "oh hey if you need some help, like I'll help." I never once thought of working there. Yeah, never once.  It's actually kinda crazy to think about now, I've never really thought about it.

The above examples illustrate the influence having prior work experience in the action sport industry had upon the business owners desire to start their own retail business.

**Demand for Action Sport Retail Business.**  Three business owners described being motivated to open their retail business because they felt there was a demand for an action sport retail shop in the area they were located.  When asked why he started his business where he did, one business owner noted:

*Jim:*  Uhhh, so I went to [a university in the northern California area] and there were no places or shops up there to buy skateboards or snowboards or pretty much anything in town.  So I just decided to just open my own store rather than have to drive uh, twenty to twenty-five minutes to the next town to buy something.

Another business owner described:

*Mike:*  Well to tell you the truth actually.  Uhh…  Like it all started when I needed a place to buy skateboards. So, I knew I wanted to do a business and then I, you know, saw this opportunity to involve skating… you know, what I was into. I saw there was a niche in the market that needed to be filled in the area. Yeah, that's why I got into owning shops, was basically because I saw a need.  I wanted to start a business, as I said before, and I was into skating and wanted to provide something that, well I guess, I saw was needed in the area.

These examples highlight the influence of supply and demand in the armlet place on the business owners desire to open an action sport retail business in a particular geographic location.

**Personal and Professional Flexibility and Autonomy.**  Five of the nine business owners expressed wanting to own their own action sport retail business due in part to wanting to have flexibility in their schedule and have the autonomy of working for themselves.  For example:

*Blake:*  If I can do this on my own, start my own shop and not work for anybody else, then this is ideal, maybe more ideal than maybe working in the industry for anybody else.

While another business owner noted:

*Kevin:*  Uhh.. just because of the way of life. Being able to be laid back and just being able to go into work with shorts and a t-shirt. I didn't want to wear a suit and tie or even a collared shirt, for that matter.  I also wanted to be able to surf when I wanted.  You know, I'm able to surf every morning and if it's good then I can stay out and open the shop up a little later if I want.  I just get to live the life I want, pretty much.

Many of the business owners noted being influenced to start their business due to the desire to have personal and professional flexibility and autonomy to behave in personally meaningful ways without needing to work for anyone else.

**Domain 4:  Process of Becoming a Action Sport Retail Business Owner: Career Trajectory**

This domain consists of business owners' expressions regarding their career trajectory and their process of becoming an action sport retail business owner.  Within this domain there are two categories: Happenstance and Continue Family Business.

Table 7.  Process of Becoming a Action Sport Retail Business owner: Career Trajectory

| Category | Frequency | Specifier |
|---|---|---|
| Happenstance | 6 | Typical |
| Continue Family Business | 2 | Variant |

**Happenstance.**  Six business owners noted a part of their process of starting their retail business was happenstance.  These business owners described experiencing a series of events that ultimately led to them opening their business.  For example:

*Mike:*  You know I had a couple of good breaks working in stores, just, you know, full of people and got offered a sub-rep. job and then some repping jobs, and the rest is just history, you know.

*Mark:*  I didn't. I can't even say that it dawned on me necessarily. I was completely content with what I was doing, this is the strange part. I just got a phone call on New Years Day one day from a relative of mine and he said, "I know it's always been a dream of yours to open your own store so if you want, go ahead." Cause usually when you go to a bank and ask for a loan, they would want 10% of what you're asking for. He goes, "you know, if you go open your own store and do your own thing, I'll front the 10% and you do it." I never once mentioned to this person that I wanted to own my own store and it really hadn't even been, I didn't think I could. Just based off of that it kind of gave me the motivation to, I wonder if I could really do this.  So I went and did all the research and all the legwork and put together a business plan. Actually ended up not needing any money for the loan. They actually gave it to me 100% more or less, of what I needed. I never had any money down. It was that relative that sparked me to just even try. Like I said, I had never, I don't recall ever talking to anyone

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about, that I really ever wanted to do my own thing. I had always mentioned that I had some ideas that I couldn't always implement where I was at… but that's kinda how it all worked out.

Mark's response illustrates how he did not intend to start his own retail business until a family member suggested the idea and offered his assistance.

**Continue Family Business.** This category was only mentioned by two of the business owners. They indicated their desire to continue their family's businesses as an integral component of their career trajectory.

*Tyler:* Well I was fortunate enough to kinda get born into it. My dad actually started the business in 1974, so about thirty-five years ago. Yeah, he started the business and I kind of grew up learning retail, and during dinner, my dad would be talking about it, and so throughout the years, all I really knew was retail. I guess I just fell into it. I don't know if I ever had the choice of ever doing anything else.

*Adam:* So after I went to college at the [a university on the East Coast], I graduated from the business school there in 2001. Just post .com blow up and the job market was pretty weak. I came back to [beach community in Southern California], kind of thinking about what I wanted to do and what I should do and that point I had some conversations with my dad. And he was like, "why don't you go ahead and come to work here for a little while?" Obviously, twelve years later, I'm still here, so I guess it all worked and I figure it is for the best. I kinda always thought I'd take over the family business at some point.

Both of these business owners explained their interest in owning an action sport retail business was highly influenced by the business already being in their family. Also, they described feeling motivated to own the business in order to continue their family's legacy by furthering their family's business.

**Domain 5: Identification as a Businessman and Impact of Business Ownership on Personal Identity**

Within this domain are business owners' perceptions of their sense of identity as a businessman and how being a business owner has impacted their sense of personal identity. There are five categories within this domain: Perceptions of Self as Identifying as a Businessman, Impact of Increased Responsibility on Business Identity Development, Impact of Being a Business Owner on Perceptions of Personal Identity, Shift in Action Sport Participation and Identification due to Being a Business Owner, and Opinions of Others Perceptions of Their Identity as a Businessman. Below is a table which shows the number of business owners who identified each of these categories.

Table 8. Identification as a Businessman and Impact of Business Ownership on Personal Identity

| Category | Frequency | Specifier |
|---|---|---|
| Perceptions of Self as Identifying as a Businessman | 9 | General |
|     Primary | 1 | Rare |
|     Secondary | 8 | General |
| Impact of Increased Responsibility on Business Identity Development | 1 | Rare |
| Impact of Being a Business Owner on Perceptions of Personal Identity | 9 | General |
|     More Serious | 3 | Variant |
|     More Responsible | 5 | Typical |
|     More Frustrated and Less Patient | 1 | Rare |
| Shift in Action Sport Participation and Identification due to Being a Business Owner | 7 | Typical |
|     Increased Identification with Action Sports | 5 | Typical |
|     Decreased Action Sport Identification | 1 | Rare |
|     Decreased Action Sport Participation | 1 | Rare |
| Opinions of Others Perceptions of Their Identity as a Businessman | 1 | Rare |

**Perceptions of Self as Identifying as a Businessman.** All of the business owners

described having perceptions of their identity as a businessman. Only one business owner

reported he primarily identified himself as a business owner over being an action sport

participant (surfer/skater/snowboarder):

> *Jim:* I'm actually into the business side more now. I'm more into business than
> the actual sports. I find the shops that have the skateboarders who are super into
> skating instead of running a skate shop and not know anything about running a
> business, and they actually end up running a business because they know how to
> skate, not how to run a business.

Jim indicated he identifies more as a businessman at his current stage of life.

While the other eight business owners reported their identity as a businessman or business owner

where secondary to their identity as a surf/skater/snowboarder. For example:

> *Tyler:* Uhh… I would like to think of myself as someone who identifies as more
> of a surfer for sure. There is a lot that goes into the business part of it, you
> know… managing, paying the bills, buying, all of that stuff. But I would say that
> I'm a surfer before I would say that I'm a businessman (laughs).

> *Mike:* As a businessman? Uh… yeah. I kind of have to be, you know. I still do
> all the business sides of it, you know. I don't really hire out anything. I just kind
> of do it all. So definitely. I have to do payroll, all the accounting, ordering, you
> know, all the bullshit. (laughs).

> *Spencer:* You know… Yeah, I definitely do. I'd say that I'm a skateboarder first
> and foremost, and then a businessman secondly, you know what I mean? I'd say
> it's more of a co-op, but I'd say that I'm definitely... I don't want go as far as to
> say your typical skate shop owner in a sense that I have to keep margins at a
> certain level in this and this and this. As long as the rent is paid, and as long as my
> loans are paid, and I have enough money left over for some groceries, I'm happy.
> I'm not trying to buy a new car out of it, you know.

These responses highlight that all but one of the business owners consider their identity as a

surfer/skater/snowboarder to be more salient to them than their identity as a businessman.

**Impact of Increased Responsibility on Business Identity Development.** This category was only mentioned by one business owner; this man mentioned that as he has more responsibilities in his life he notices that he identifies more as a businessman than he had in the past:

> *Mark:* I do a lot more now see myself as a businessman probably in the last 3-4 years. In the beginning, in the early days, I was mid 20's still, and I was single… so if this place did enough to pay its bills, order or restock, and still had enough money left by the end of the week to go have a couple beers on the weekend, like, I was doing great. Now, that it is different and it's a constant stream of things. I'm able to think about starting a family and things, and now it seems a lot more real. It still doesn't seem like work. I mean… but it's a little more like work.

**Impact of Being a Business Owner on Perceptions of Personal Identity.** All of the business owners indicated their sense of personal identity had been impacted due to them being a business owner. Within this category, three business owners described themselves as more serious now than they were before they owned their business. For example:

> *Kevin:* I mean, like, I think I'm reliable and functional and responsible for all that. That would be the main thing I guess. That's a hard one. I guess it's made me a little more serious because I have a family to support and things I'm responsible for. I need to make sure that I get certain things down in order to live my life.

> *Blake:* Umm, you know, I'd say it's… definitely made me be more of a stern person I guess than I would normally want to be. Um, you know I have to, within the workspace, there has to be discipline, there has to be consequences, I guess laid out to employees and business relationships. I'd say that a lot of that is… not of my character but it's necessary sometimes to, you know, on a business aspect.

These quotes describe how these two business owners feel they are more serious due to being a business owner, as they have more responsibilities to care for.

Five business owners mentioned they feel they are more responsible then they were prior to owning their business:

*Steve:* Because I have a family I have to raise and have to support. So, I have to get a paycheck. So I have to make this run like a business in order to do that and provide for my family and manage all my responsibilities. You know, I've got to push that a little bit more than I have in the past.

*Jim:* I mean, it's all that I do. It's not like any other job. In any other job, you get off work and then go home, you know… but that's not me. But like, like I wake up in the morning, and I go check my emails, I always have my phone on me and have people calling me all the time from the different stores. It's really, extremely involved with all of the, you know, different parts of the business. I'm always there and it's always a part of me.
Just being more responsible and not blowing off work. I could at times… Like I was just invited down to Mexico and had to pass because it's crunch time right now with the business. So yeah, being more responsible.

*Spencer:* I think that I'm just more responsible for stuff and making sure that I make at least enough money to pay rent and keep the lights on. I don't know if its changed a lot but it definitely has.

In these cases, the business owners described feeling more responsible due to owning a business, due in part to their need to complete the necessary duties inherent in operating a business.

One business owner stated he feels he is more frustrated and less patient now than before he was a business owner:

*Steve:* You know, I don't think it's impacted it too much. I mean maybe it has… I have been getting a little more frustrated with business lately. I get frustrated with… because business has gone through the downs a lot more lately than the ups. I get frustrated with… I probably have a little less patience and tolerance for people… I think personally I've become a little more jaded, like I mentioned before.

**Shift in Action Sport Participation and Identification due to Being a Business Owner.** Seven of the nine business owners reported being a business owner has impacted their ability to participate in the action sports, as well as impacted the way they identify with surfing/skating/snowboarding. Within this category, five business owners described identifying

more with surfing/skating/snowboarding due to being an action sport retail business owner.  For

example:

> *Spencer:*  I still identify as a skater for sure. I actually think that owning my shop
> has allowed me to skate more than I did when I was working for other companies
> in the industry.  I guess it has changed and I am able to be more involved in
> skating, if that is even possible.  I know when I was a pro skater skating meant
> something different to me than it does now.  Like I said before, I think I love
> skateboarding more than I ever have since owning my shop.

> *Adam:*  I think that my passion and stoke for surfing and the other sports has
> strengthened due to constantly being surround by them 24/7 basically.  I think that
> I'm way more into the sports because I am apart of the shop and, you know, my
> life is pretty much surfing, skating, and snowboarding.

> *Blake:*  I've become more of a participant of the sport, you know, than ever
> before I owned the store.  I feel like I actively do skateboarding, snowboarding,
> and even surfing, you know, even more than before.

In these cases, the business owners describe participating more in action sports since owning

their businesses due in part to having greater exposure.

One business owner mentioned he has had to decrease his skateboarding participation lately due

to an increase in seasonal business:

> *Spencer:*  Actually lately, I'm getting ready for Christmas and gearing up all the
> stuff, inventory wise, and all the logistics of that. So sadly, it's only been about 2-
> 3 times a week that I've been skating lately.  Unfortunately, I've been so flustered
> with all the joys of running a business, I haven't been able to skate as much as I
> normally do (laughs).

While one business owner stated he noticed he identifies himself less as an action sport

participant than he did before he owned his action sport retail business:

> *Steve:*  I'll be honest… For the course of the later years of our business, I relate
> less to it [action sports]. But then I also find a little bit of joy in it now because my
> kids are into it… I see the pureness in my children doing it. And so it brings me
> back to some of the purities of it.  And because I've made it my business, I think
> that it has affected my joy of the sport.  I look at my friends who never got

involved in the surf, skate, or snow industry that I grew up with, and I think they still have a more pure feeling about the sports than I do.

**Opinions of Others Perceptions of Their Identity as a Businessman.**  This category was only mentioned by one business owner, who described feeling that others who may not know him don't see him as a typical business owner but that people who do know him may see him as more of an actual business owner.

> *Blake:*  Umm, welp, I'd say that, well I guess I am perceived as someone, you know, who may not, you know, to the average person, who is maybe is a businessman or, I'd say the average person doesn't think of someone that owns a skate shop as a businessman. It has a different light being a skate shop owner, it definitely comes off as, you know, to the average person as more relaxed or you know, compared to say a businessman who is an accountant or something. The people that do know me, know that I'm a business owner, you know, of a skateboard/snowboard/action sports store. I think they do consider me a businessman, but to the outsiders, you know, I might come off just as, you know, just as another action sports participant.

## Domain 6:  Factors Influencing Desires to Maintain Business Ownership

This domain consists of factors the business owners identified as being factors that influence their desire to sustain their business and continue owning their retail business.  There are three categories within this domain: Satisfaction of Contributing to Others Enjoyment of the Action Sports, Passion for the Action Sport Industry, and Enjoy the "Perks" of Owning an Action Sport Retail Business.  Below is a table which shows the number of business owners who identified each of these categories.

Table 9.  Factors Influencing Desires to Maintain Business Ownership

| Category | Frequency | Specifier |
|---|---|---|
| Satisfaction of Contributing to Others Enjoyment of the Action Sports | 5 | Typical |
| Passion for the Action Sport Industry | 8 | General |
| Enjoy the "Perks" of Owning an Action Sport Retail Business | 7 | Typical |
|     Be Own Boss | 2 | Variant |
|     Flexibility | 1 | Rare |
|     Ability to Travel | 2 | Variant |
|     Continued Involvement in Action Sports | 2 | Variant |

**Satisfaction of Contributing to Others Enjoyment of the Action Sports.**  Five of the

nine business owners mentioned that one factor that was satisfying and influenced them to

continue to own their retail business was being able to introduce people to action sports and

share their passion for skating/surfing/snowboarding.  For example:

> *Mike:*  Satisfying part of it...um… You know, it's cool like when people come in
> and you know, they... there's something about someone coming in, and like
> getting a skateboard and like seeing how stoked they are on it. There's a kid,
> actually, that came in today and bought a complete, and he actually was so siked
> to put it together himself. He was like, "I'm going to build this. It's my first one".
> You know, and I was just like, you can just see his smile and how siked they are
> and know that that's like your shit, you know. That's like, that's soooo cool. That
> stuff is the best, like talking to people about things, even though you might not
> sell them something right off the bat. It's just like, rapping out about something
> with somebody about things that you love, you know. Like, it's something that
> you really really truly like. It's not like I'm selling someone laundry detergent,
> it's shit that I really really do appreciate in life.

> *Adam:*  It's so cool to get people into surfing or skating or snowboarding for the
> first time… and just see how stoked they get on jumping in the water or rolling
> around on their board; its so rad.

> *Kevin:*  Well that spark of helping a kid out getting situated with a new board and
> wetsuit, and whatever. Getting them into the water, and just seeing them get that
> stoked off surfing... It still happens today. I mean, I had a kid that just got his first
> new custom surfboard and he just had a smile ear to ear when he came in the store
> and was on cloud 9 when he left, you know. I later found out that he told his

father when they were pulling out of the parking lot to drive carefully so that the board wouldn't get damaged (laughs). You know… that's always been a really cool part of it. You know, paying the bills, getting people stoked, and helping others enjoy the sport I love so much.

These cases illustrate the satisfaction and motivation these business owners feel from being able to introduce people to the action sports community and provide them with the product to engage in surfing/skating/snowboarding.

**Passion for the Action Sport Industry.** Eight of the nine business owners stated that their passion for skating/surfing/snowboarding, as well as for the action sport industry, is a major influencing factor for them to continue owning their business.

> *Tyler:* I think the most satisfying thing is just showing up everyday to somewhere you want to be, just doing some work when you really want to be there. Like walking in and seeing one hundred fifty new boards is kinda amazing. Just being like, "oh my god, this board is so sick, look at that." Its great to be super comfortable like, in the place you work and just stoked on everyday and showing up and there being something new and awesome.

> *Mark:* The thing that amazes me the most still to this day is that there is never once a day that I wake up and dread coming here [his retail store]. Not once, not once in 12 years. I think that's the good thing cause I always hear people who have... I know, I have a rough day, but it never disturbs me the next day. I hear people who are miserable with what they do, and they don't want to take the step to do something that they enjoy, you know. I consider myself lucky to be doing what I love, in an industry I love.

> *Adam:* But having the passion… I don't ever wake up in the morning and go,"Shit I don't want to go to work today," you know. I wake up and I'm like, "Let's go, let's go do this!" Like, I want to go see what the day has in store for me. I just get stoked to go to work everyday and have the opportunity to do what I do, I love it!

The above examples highlight the motivation these business owners receive from their passion for surfing/skating/snowboarding and how it influenced them to continue owning their businesses.

**Enjoy the "Perks" of Owning an Action Sport Retail Business.** Seven of the nine business owners reported continuing to be motivated to own their retail business due to receiving specific "perks" they associated with owning a business in the action sport industry. There were four specific "perks" or benefits specifically mentioned: Be Own Boss, Flexibility, Ability to Travel, and Continued Involvement in Action Sports. One business owner explained:

> ***Blake:*** The fact that I don't have to work for anybody else and that I can make my own hours and I can, you know, go on trips, and be apart of this industry; it's rad!

While another business owner stated:

> ***Tyler:*** Just having the perks of being able to go on some surf trips with some companies and still be able to do businesses. Like one of the perks is having businesses take you all over and participate in this sport. They want to invite you because they know the store does well and they know we are good at surfing and that we love surfing. They know that we would appreciate it, and stuff like that… It just keeps me going.

**Domain 7: Perceptions of the Action Sport Industry as a Retail Business Owner**

The final domain consists of responses regarding the business owners' perceptions of the commercialization of the action sports industry and their desire to open an action sport retail business again if they had to do it all over again having had the experiences they have had as business owners. Within this domain are two categories: Opinions of the Commercialization of the Action Sport Industry and Desires to Open an Action Sport Retail Business Again. Below is a table which shows the number of business owners who identified each of these categories.

Table 10.  Perceptions of the Action Sport Industry as a Retail Business Owner

| Category | Frequency | Specifier |
|---|---|---|
| Opinions of the Commercialization of the Action Sport Industry | 9 | General |
| Desires to Open an Action Sport Retail Business Again | 9 | General |

**Opinions of the Commercialization of the Action Sport Industry.**  This category

consists of responses specific to the business owners' opinions of the growth and

commercialization of the action sports industry.  All of the business owners indicated there were

benefits and drawbacks associated with the commercialization of the action sports industry from

their perspective as a retail business owner.  For example, when asked about their thoughts about

the commercialization of the action sports industry:

> *Blake:*  I have mixed feelings about this… because, you know, I guess as a shop
> owner I make money based in part upon how popular skating and snowboarding
> are… does that make sense? The more popular skating is, the more people come
> in and the more stuff we sell.  I'm so stoked to see young and old people getting
> into the sports I love and walkin into the shop to buy product from people that are
> core retailers.  Uhhh… one of the downsides, well there are a lot of downsides
> actually… well, I don't really know.  It's just lame that a lot of the large
> companies that have never cared about skaters and snowboarders and trying to get
> into it just to make a buck and make money off of us.  I actually, you know,
> sometimes take this shit personally because I care that much about it.  Not only
> does it take money out of my business but it also dilutes the things I love and you
> know, kinda makes them less special in a way.

> *Adam:*  I mean, we're a pretty big surf shop in this country, and you know, we
> tend to kinda get coined more of the commercial side of the retail space. Like, I
> just read on Yelp that someone said, "Oh, you know, they are just another run of
> the mill commercial surf shop." Which I'm like, "I don't think that's true at all."
> I think we have some years of, you know, history, we're all from the same family,
> but again, I figure its okay. I think the other side of that story though is that a lot
> of these brands have gone public and I think there's been a lot of short-sided
> decision making in our industry, you know. Because it's so niche and we need it
> to be special. Because of the size and where it's gone, you know.  It's become
> maybe not quite as special, and then you have kind of the internet and the digital
> world, and it's... There's good parts and there's bad parts.

The brands I sell are the same brands that the big corporations sell now. But I embrace it. That for me, is like, "Hey, there's something good about the big corporations wanting to also sell the same product that I've got." But, the other side of that story is the brands who are building that product need to be very careful about how they're going about doing what they are doing, you know. There's been mistakes made and blah blah blah, but I mean, it's not all bad. It's great that the industry is growing and that more people are getting into the industry but there are some problems with the way the industry is changing from a business standpoint. It's not all good for us but its definitely not all bad either.

The above responses highlight the benefits and drawbacks of the commercialization of the action sport industry. The benefits include, the increased popularity of surfing/skating/snowboarding and the increased amount of people engaging in the action sports. The drawbacks include as the increase in corporate companies entering into the action sport industry and making it less 'special', as well as the action sport manufacturing companies becoming publicly traded companies and overproducing product that floods the marketplace.

Along with reporting benefits and drawbacks of the commercialization of the action sports, five of the business owners described the impact they feel larger corporate action sport retail stores, also referred to as big-box stores, chain stores, or mall stores, are having upon the action sport industry. For example:

*Mark:* I mean there's a give and take to that. Certainly, that globalization and all the big money that is in it now, has just gotten more and more kids into it. A percentage of those kids will continue on and find us. Whereas, when I was growing up there was just a skate shop, and that's where you went. You couldn't just go buy a skateboard at random places in the mall or things like that. Now, a kid might go and buy a skateboard at a department store, and he'll eventually find us if he gets really into it, and submerses himself in the culture and gets all the magazines and everything. He will eventually get to this point where there's like a community of people that he can identify with. Whats the negative of that? The negative of that though is that kids buying stuff from those big stores starts to push a lot of these little businesses out that aren't able to keep up.

*Steve:* When we have companies like TIlly's selling the lifestyle… not selling the passion, they are only selling the lifestyle. And when the kids who are living the

lifestyle because of the passion, they start to see other kids who are fake and the posers, and they go, "wait a second, I don't want to be a part of that, I need to re-identify myself as a skater that will look like 'this', and I can't look like 'that' anymore." And when skateboarding looks too commercialized, when snowboarding looks too commercialized, and surfing becomes too commercialized, the true participants, the people who are truly into it, are going to recognize that and see the fakeness and bullshit… and say, "I don't want to be that, that's not why I got into this, I didn't want to be like that."
I think those big department stores and huge corporate companies get kids who are wanting to be into it, and they're going to find a way to be into it for the lifestyle because its 'cool', and not be into it for the passion because they are actually authentic skaters, surfers, and snowboarders. You know what I mean?  At that point the real authentic kids see that a bunch of fake kids have gotten into it and have basically made it not cool anymore.
And then the kid that's buying it because they want to be cool is not seeing the cool kid wearing it anymore, and they're not going to wear it, which means they stopped buying it. And then they see their dad wearing the crap, and then they say, "Wait a second, what the fuck is going on here?" (laughs)
Oh it 's very convoluted, and it's very hard to figure out to where that line is and who you support and what you do as a retailer.  And that's where I think as a non-educated, person with passion for this, we might have an advantage. In the long run, right now, we're suffering and we're getting our asses kicked. But I'm hopeful that there's only a matter of time before it reverses itself and a business like Tilly's goes out of business because they're not true. They're just selling teen fashion and they're selling cool. Cool is only good for so long and then something else has to be cool. But if you look at the true skate shop and the surf shops and really the true ones… they're always selling cool… It's just sometimes, other people start selling their cool, and then it makes it hard on us… you know what I mean?

In these cases, big-box chain retail stores are described as hurtful to the authenticity of the action sport industry, which the above business owners believe will ultimately negatively impact the viability of the industry moving into the future.

**Desires to Open an Action Sport Retail Business Again.**  This category includes the business owners responses to being asked if they would choose to own and operate an action sport retail business again if given the opportunity to start all over again.  All of the business

owners stated they would choose to own and operate an action sport retail business again if they

were to start over again.

> *Spencer:* Yep, totally, absolutely. 110%. There's a couple of things I would have done differently from the get go, but I definitely would've done the shop. If I could rewind the hands of time, I would've done everything pretty much the same except a few little tiny tweaks. There's slight little things I would've done differently than I did, but nothing too major.

> *Adam:* For sure, there's no question! I mean, I don't regret one thing and I would totally, I mean, like I said, I always pinch myself. I try not to take it for granted the fact that we have an amazing opportunity in this situation and, I mean… Obviously for me, I try to step back and go look, maybe I'm a little jaded or a little… because I've been in the business at a time when it's at a size and place where we can, you know, where we can do fun things.

**Summary**

In summary, seven domains emerged; these included: (1) Reasons and Process of

Becoming a Surfer/Skater/Snowboarder, (2) Personal Impact of Identification as an Action Sport

Participant (Surfer/Skater/Snowboarder), (3) Motivations to Become a Retail Business Owner in

the Action Sport Industry, (4) Process of Becoming a Action Sport Retail Business Owner:

Career Trajectory, (5) Identification as a Businessman and Impact of Business Ownership on

Personal Identity, (6) Factors Influencing Desires to Sustain Business Ownership, (7)

Perceptions of Action Sports Industry as a Retail Business Owner.  The results indicate that eight

of the nine business owners interviewed initially began participating in action sports

(skating/surfing/snowboarding) due to being intrigued by the action sport culture and having a

desire to be apart of the action sport lifestyle.  Also, four business owners also described being

influenced by a family member and/or friend to try surfing/skating/snowboarding.  All of the

business owners in the present study noted they began surfing/skating/snowboarding prior to age

10 and have participated in the action sports for over 20 years.

Additionally, business owners in this study noted being a surfer/skater/snowboarder impacted their personal identity and they all identified their passion for action sports as the most salient reason for continued action sport participation.  Also, all of the business owners described their identity as a surfer/skater/snowboarder as being the most salient aspect of their personal identity.  The results also revealed that the business owners were motivated to own an action sport retail business due to their primary identification as a surfer/skater/snowboarder and passion to work in the action sport industry, due to their previously working in the action sport industry, due to perceiving a demand and need for an action sport retail business in a particular geographic region, and due to their desire for personal and professional flexibility and autonomy. Similarly, the process of being an action sport retail business owner was found to be guided by two primary factors: they didn't necessarily plan to be a business owner but that due to a series of events of happenstance situational factors they decided to open their business, as well as a desire to continue an already established family business.

It was concluded that all but one of the business owners concerned their identity as a businessman to be secondary to their other personal identities, as well as noting that being a businessman impacted their level of seriousness, level of responsibility, or degree level of frustration tolerance and patience.  Five of the business owners described identifying more with the action sports as a result of being an action sport retail business owner.  In terms of factors that influenced the business owners to maintain their business, they noted satisfaction of contributing to others involvement and enjoyment of the action sports, passion for the action sport industry, and enjoying the "perks" of owning an action sport retail business as being influential.

Finally, all of the business owners identified benefits and drawbacks of the commercialization of the action sport industry, including increased popularity of surfing/skating/snowboarding and the influx of corporate retail stores impacting the authenticity of the action sport industry.

**Chapter 5: Discussion**

Due to the lack of research exploring the experience of action sport retail business owners, the present study aimed to gain a greater understanding of the perceptions of action sport retail business owners specific to their motivations, attitudes, and interests in owning and operating an action sport retail business, as well as how their personal involvement in action sports contributed to their career trajectory. Three major themes that emerged from the data were the saliency of the business owners' identity as an action sport participant (surfer/skater/snowboarder), influences and motivating factors for wanting to own and operate an action sport retail business, and perceptions of the action sport industry as a retail business owner. After these themes are discussed, limitations to the present study and suggestions for future research, in light of current findings, will be addressed.

**Saliency of the Business Owners' Identity as an Action Sport Participant**

The results of the present study indicate that eight of the nine business owners interviewed initially began participating in action sports (skating/surfing/snowboarding) due to being intrigued by the action sport culture and having a desire to be apart of the action sport lifestyle. This is consistent with Heino (2000), who noted snowboarders value being able to generate their own culture driven by their interests and values. The business owners described valuing the individuality they perceived they could have by engaging in action sports, as well as the ability to have fun, which is consistent with previous research indicating that many action sport participants are motivated to participate for their own personal fulfillment and sense of enjoyment (Heino, 2000; Farmer 1992). Farmer (1992) found that surfers' values differed from those of dominant American values and centered on the desire to pursue enjoyment from riding the perfect wave. The participants in the current study indicated valuing their ability to

participate in action sports.  Additionally, Diehm & Armatas (2004) researched motivation

characteristics of surfers and found that surfers had higher than average levels on intrinsic

motivation to engage in the sport of surfing when compared to individuals engaged in more

traditional sports, which is consistent with the findings of this study.  Related, Beal (1995)

investigated the subculture of skateboarding and concluded that skateboarders identified

skateboarding as a lifestyle opposed to a separate realm of their life.  The value and importance

placed upon the business owner's interest in culture and lifestyle are elements that are missing in

prominent traditional career theories, including Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice

(Holland, 1997).

In addition to describing their reasons for initially participating in action sports and their

process of becoming a surf/skater/snowboarder, business owners in this study were able to

articulate the impact of being a surfer/skater/snowboarder has had on their personal identity, their

personal reasons for continuing to participate in action sports, as well as the saliency of their

identity as a surfer/skater/snowboarder.  The data shows that participating in action sports

significantly impacted the personal identity of all of the business owners.  Specifically, they

described their personal identity has been shaped due to being a surfer/skater/snowboarder,

which is consistent with previous findings that surfers appear to develop salient aspects of their

self-concept and identity from surfing, as well as consider the sport to be a central element that

influences every role of a surfer's life (Fuchs & Schomer, 2007).  Surfing/skating/snowboarding

is much more than a sport to these business owners; it's a way of life.

Not surprisingly, the results revealed that only one of the eight business owners identified

their primary personal identity as a businessman, while the other eight indicated their identity as

a businessman was secondary to their identity as a surfer/skater/snowboarder.  Although there is

not any previous research exploring the identity of action sport retail business owners, these results are consist with research indicating that surfers/skaters/snowboarders consider their action sport identity to be a salient component of their overall identity (Beal, 1995). This is consistent with the value protean careerists place upon including their personal and professional lives into their careers (Hall, 1996).

The majority of the business owners also reported being a business owner had impacted their action sport identity and degree to which they participate in action sports. Five of the business owners described identifying as a surfer/skater/snowboarder more as a business owner than before they owned their retail shop. This is thought to possibly be the case due to the business owners' passion for the action sports and being more immersed and exposed to the action sports through their retail business. It is important to note there is are certain amounts of unearned privilege inherit in many of the business owners ability to be immersed and exposed to the action sports industry.

All of the business owners indicated their passion and love for surfing/skating/snowboarding was a significant reason for their continued participating in action sports. They described loving being able to engage in the sports, as well as experience a sense of personal accomplishment. Previous research on action sports supports this notion and suggests that the feelings action sport participants experience while engaging in their sport of choice may contribute to this feeling of love (Fuchs & Schomer, 2007). Additionally, Seifert and Hedderson (2010) investigated the intrinsic motivation of skateboarders and found that gaining a sense of personal satisfaction from skating was a significant motivator to engage in the sport. Unlike other sports or leisure activities, the desire to continue surfing/skating/snowboarding appears to transcend life stages.

The business owners in the present study also described their passion for the action sports as being a significant motivating factor in wanting to maintain ownership of their business. Similarly, protean careerists are value-driven and self-directed in their career pursuits, which has been found to result in improved sense of work satisfaction when compared to individuals who are more motivated by organizational values (Segers et al., 2008). Additionally, seven of the business owners identified enjoying the "perks" of owning an action sport retail business, including being their own boss, having increased occupational and personal flexibility, having the ability to travel, and having the opportunity to continue to surf/skate/snowboard, as an influential factor in maintaining business ownership. Prior research supports these findings, particularly the desire to be ones own boss and have increased flexibility (Carter et al., 2003; Shane, 2003; Watson, Hogarth-Scott & Wilson, 1998). Walker and Brown (2004) investigated what success factors were important to 250 business owners in Western Australia and found the business owners greatly valued being their own boss and having a flexible lifestyle significantly more than making lots of money. Similarly, Kirkwood (2009) concluded entrepreneurs were motivated to own their business largely due to their desire for personal and occupational independence, as well as their desire to continue living a certain type of lifestyle they valued, which is consistent with the findings of the present study.

Overall, the business owners in the present study identified their identity as a surfer/skater/snowboarder to be salient to their personal identity and described their passion for the action sports as a significant aspect of their life. Further research needs to be conducted exploring the connection between the passion for participating in action sports and identity development. It would also be beneficial to explore the self-directed career search process of

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individuals in the action sport industry compared to those who make careers in more mainstream markets.

**Motivations to Become a Retail Business Owner in the Action Sport Industry**

The results of the present study indicate that the business owners were motivated to own an action sport retail business due to their primary identification as a surfer/skater/snowboarder and passion to work in the action sport industry, due to their previously working in the action sport industry, due to perceiving a demand and need for an action sport retail business in a particular geographic region, and due to their desire for personal and professional flexibility and autonomy. All but one of the business owners revealed their primary identification as a surfer/skater/snowboarder and their passion to work in the action sport industry was a motivating factor in becoming an owner of an action sport retail business. These findings are consistent with previous research exploring the motivations of entrepreneurs in other industries, revealing that small business owners were motivated in part due to their desire to engage in meaningful and enjoyable work (Watson, Hogarth-Scott & Wilson, 1998). The present study adds information that action sport retail business owners were largely motivated to start their business due to the salience of their identity as a surfer/skater/snowboarder and their passion for the action sport industry. This is consistent with Super's Life-Span, Life-Space Theory of career development and the notion that an individuals self-concept significantly contributes to his/her career choice and career development process (1990). Similarly, these findings are also consistent with the protean career orientation view that an individual's passion significantly contributes to their motivation to pursue a particular career (Briscoe & Hall, 2002).

The results of this study also revealed that nearly half of the business owners were motivated to start their business due in part to their previous experiences working in the action

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sport retail businesses and/or for a company in the action sport industry. One business owner noted he began working at a skate/snowboard shop when he was 19 years and enjoyed the experience. Prior research indicates that prior experience working in a related industry may impact the motivation to start a business in that particular industry (Shane, 2004). In contrast, previous research also indicates that frustration with previous employment/employers can be motivating factors to pursuing entrepreneurship (Watson, Hogarth-Scott & Wilson, 2008). The results from the present study reveal that prior experience working in the action sport industry motivated and influenced some of the business owners to start their own action sport retail business. It is important to note that individuals' who have the ability to be exposed to the action sport industry and work in the action sport industry have a certain amount of privilege that others may not be afforded. Others may be interested in working in the action sport industry but may not have had the opportunities to do so that the participants in the current study had.

Along with being intrinsically motivated to start their businesses, three of the business owners noted they were partly motivated to start their retail business because they saw a demand for an action sport retail business in their particular geographic region. Similarly, Kellett and Russell (2009) posit that entrepreneurs in the action sport sector look for gaps in the marketplace in order to find an area to supply products and services to skaters/surfers/snowboarders. Although Kellett and Russell (2009) argue the gaps in the market place are sought in order to solely make money selling action sport goods, this notion was not supported in the present study. Kirkwood (2009) also concluded that entrepreneurs were partly motivated to start a business after perceiving there to be an opportunity in the market place. This is consistent with Super's Life-Span, Life-Space Theory of career development, in that he posits individuals life

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circumstances and social context change over the lifespan and influence career choice and opportunity (Super, 1980).

In addition to the business owners being motivated to open their business due to perceiving a demand in the market, they also indicated being motivated to achieve personal and professional flexibility and autonomy. Five of the business owners described starting their business due in part to their desire to work for themselves and be able to do what they wanted when they wanted, including go surfing, skating, and/or snowboarding. Prior research exploring entrepreneurial motivations supports these findings and highlights business owners motivations for independence, autonomy, and personal control (Carsrud, Brannback, Elfving & Brandt, 2009; Kirkwood, 2009; Shane, Locke & Collins, 2003). Kirkwood (2009) found that one of the most important "pull" motivators to the 75 entrepreneurs she interviewed was the desire for independence. This finding is not surprising given the population studied, as personal independence and autonomy are also valued characteristics among action sport participants (Seifert & Hedderson, 2010).

Not one of the business owners in the present study identified money as a motivating factor in wanting to own their own business. This finding is inline with the protean career orientation and the value that is placed on engaging in a career that is consist with personal values, opposed to choosing a career for fincial gain (Segers et al., 2008). Also, this is in direct contrast to the vast majority of prior research exploring the motivations and desires of small business owners and entrepreneurs. Previous research clearly indicates that money is a primary motivator of the majority of business owners (Kirkwood, 2009; Watson, Hogarth-Scoot & Wilson, 1998). Kirkwood (2009) qualitatively investigated the motivating factors of entrepreneurs in New Zealand and found that one of the two primary motivators was the desire to

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make money.  It could be that money was not a primary motivating factor in the present study because the business owners were primarily motivated to open their retail business due to their identity as a surfer/skater/snowboarder and passion to work in the action sport industry.

Additionally, the business owners also identified a number of salient factors that influenced their decision to maintain ownership of their action sport retail business, including the satisfaction of contributing to others involvement and enjoyment of the action sports.  The majority of the business owners reported one main contributing factor to their desire to continue owning their retail business was the satisfaction they received from knowing they contributed to others enjoyment of surfing/skating/snowboarding.  The sense of fulfillment gained from introducing others to surfing/skating/snowboarding is not surprising given the high degree of passion and identification the business owners reported they had for the action sports.  Alstete (2002) qualitatively researched the perceptions of prospective entrepreneurs and found that the participants believed they would be driven to start and maintain a business due in part to believing they were experience increased personal and professional satisfaction.  The sense of satisfaction gained from introducing individuals to the action sports appears to be in conflict with the value some surfers/skaters/snowboards place of maintaining authenticity within the various sports (Beal & Weidman, 2003).

Overall, the business owners were motivated to own an action sport retail business due to their primary identification as a surfer/skater/snowboarder and passion to work in the action sport industry, due to their previously working in the action sport industry, due to perceiving a demand and need for an action sport retail business in a particular geographic region, and due to their desire for personal and professional flexibility and autonomy.  Additionally, the majority of the business owners were motivated to continue owning and operating their business due in part

to the satisfaction they received from introducing others to the action sports. It is important to recognize that upward mobility and interest in considerably growing their business was not mentioned by any of the business owners. This may be due in part to the business owners' interest in maintaining the authenticity of the industry, which will be discussed further in the next section.

**Perceptions of Action Sports Industry as a Retail Business Owner**

Lastly, the business owners were asked about their perceptions of the commercialization of the action sport industry as a retail business owner, as well as if they would open an action sport retail business again knowing what they know now after having experience owning an action sport retail business. All of the business owners shared their opinions of the commercialization of the action sport industry and noted there were pros and cons to the industry changing in the ways it has.

The pros of the commercialization of the action sport industry that were mentioned included increased business due to the increased popularity of skating/surfing/snowboarding, more people participating in action sports, and being able to help the industry grow by supporting newer and smaller brands. Many of the business owners noted the increased exposure of surfing/skating/snowboarding was good for the industry as a whole, but there were aspects of the increased commercialization that negatively impacted their businesses. These findings are interesting and no current literature was found on this particular area. Further research regarding the growth and commercialization of the action sport industry from the viewpoint of retail business owners and manufactures is needed in order to understand the impact and perceptions of the evolution of the industry.

The cons of the commercialization of the action sport industry, included more "big-box" chain stores entering into the market and taking business away from the independent retail businesses, decrease in sales due to over saturation in the market, increase in internet sales platforms, and overall decrease in authenticity of the action sport industry. The majority of the business owners specially mentioned one of the most impactful cons of the commercialization of the action sport industry was the increase in corporate "big-box" chain stores entering into the market and taking away business from the smaller independent retail stores, in part because they were able to sell things cheaper and undercut the market. The business owners also noted that "big-box" stores were not able to provide customers with an authentic experience and they perceived employees of corporate retail chains to not be as knowledgeable or authentic.

Nearly every business owner in the present study mentioned feeling the commercialization of the industry has made it feel less special or less authentic. Authenticity is an aspect of surfing/skating/snowboarding that is highly valued by participants (Wheaton & Beal, 2003). Beal and Weidman (2003) noted skaters highly valued authenticity among themselves, other skaters, and companies within the action sport industry. The authors also concluded that the majority of action sports manufacturing companies strive to preserve the authenticity of the industry by creating products marketed toward "core" or authentic skaters/surfers/snowboarders. It is important to note that authenticity or the preservation of an industry or culture is not salient components of current career development theories. Since authenticity is held in such high regard within the action sport industry it is not surprising the business owners partly viewed commercialization of the action sport industry as a con if they believed it jeopardized the authenticity of skating/surfing/snowboarding. Once again, the satisfaction the business owners noted for introducing new participants to the action sports is in

conflict with their dissatisfaction with the action sport industry becoming less authentic. Further research is needed to be done investigating how authenticity is viewed by other action sport participants and business owners, as well as how authenticity can be preserved as the industry continues to grown and change.

**Implications for Practice**

The present study revealed the business owners in this study were primarily motivated to start their own business due to their passion and interest in the action sport industry, an industry they had a personal interest in and connection to. Given these findings, it appears it may be beneficial for practitioners working with individuals who are experiencing career exploration concerns, should utilize the individuals interests and passions when discussing possible career options. Allow many practitioners already incorporate the personal interests of their client, it is important for the clinician to be open-minded and not pass judgment on the personal values of their client. Practitioners should also be open to individuals' interests, regardless of how mainstream or not they are. It could also be beneficial for practitioners to develop an understanding of individuals past experience in possible careers of interest in order to learn how those prior experience could positively or negatively impact their desire to pursue employment in a given sector.

It is also important for practitioners to take into account their clients culture and lifestyle values. Not only to incorporate the client's current culture values and lifestyle, but to discuss possible cultural changes and lifestyle shifts with the client. The findings of the current study also highlight the importance of exploring the personal agency individuals have, in order to allow them to feel empowered and capable of making career choices that provide life meaning and a sense of purpose.

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Additionally, the findings of the current study highlight the need to challenge the importance that is often placed upon gaining upward mobility through career choice. It is important that practitioners not only understand client's understanding and desire for upward mobility, but that that they also challenge their own views of upward mobility.

**Limitations**

The current study adds to the scarce literature on action sports, and in particular, action sport retail business owners. Although the current study provides an understanding of the experiences of the business owners who participated, there are several limitations of the study that must be addressed.

Although the CQR methodology was followed in the present study, by virtue of being a qualitative investigation the sample size of the current study was fairly small. Additionally, the sample only included men who identified as United States citizens, and were either Caucasian or Asian- American. Due to these factors and others, the relatively small and homogenous small of participants allowed for an exploratory investigation, although the generalizability of the results is rather limited. Also, only independent retail business owners were included in the present study, which excluded the experiences of larger chain store retail business owners who may have drastically different experiences and views from the business owners included in the present study.

Also, the interviews were conducted by the present author who had prior interactions with four of the business owners who participated. These prior interactions could have influenced the business owners to participate in the study and/or influenced the way they answered the questions asked. Even though there were a number of stability checks included in

the analysis process to account for research bias, it is important to note the trustworthiness of the data collected could have been influenced.

Finally, due to the relatively unique population studied, the results of the current study may not be transferable to other industries and/or careers. It is important to understand the values, culture, and motivations of the participants included may be unique to individuals interested in the action sports and are not representative of the larger population.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The present study was an initial attempt at exploring the motivations and experiences of action sport retail business owners. The qualitative methodology of the current study allowed for an in-depth understanding of the business owners experiences to be gained, however there were aspects of their experiences that could be further explored.

Further research on action sport retail business owners in the United States and in other countries may help to understand the similarities and differences between the experiences of business owners in various countries. It may be beneficial to continue exploring motivations to pursue a career in the action sport industry, as well as research the personal and occupational values of retail business owners. Future studies may investigate the experiences of women who own action sport retail business and compare their experiences to those of men. It may also be beneficial to explore the gap in woman business owners within the action sport industry in order to better understand the role woman do and/or can play in the further development and growth of the action sport industry.

**Summary and Conclusion**

This study sought to understand the personal and professional identity of individuals who own and operate independent action sport retail businesses, as well as explore their motivations

for starting their business. This qualitative investigation examined the participants motivations and influences for starting their business, explored how their identity as an action sport participant influenced their career trajectory and/or changed since owning a business, examined their perceptions of their business identity as it is influenced by their identity as an action sport participant, as well as explored this perceptions of the commercialization of the action sport industry. The results of this study indicate that overall, business owners in this study identified being a surfer/skater/snowboarder as their primary identity over being a businessman. The business owners also described being motivated to start their business due to their involvement and identification with action sports in order to be their own boss, have personal and professional autonomy and flexibility, and be able to contribute back to the action sport industry. Interestingly, the business owners in this study did not identify the desire to make money as a motivator to open their business.

Additionally, the majority of the business owners in the present study identified their passion for participating in the action sports has increased since starting their retail business. Although further research exploring action sport business owners, it appears that this preliminary study likely represents the vast majority of action sport retail business owners.

**Appendix I**

**Interview Questions**

1. How old are you? How long have you owned your action sport retail business?

2. Do you identify yourself as an individual who participates in action sports?

3. What action sports do you participate in and how often do you engage in action sports?

4. How long have you participated in action sports for? Why do you participate in action sports?

5. Would you consider being an action sport athlete to be salient to your personal identity? If so, how has being an action sport athlete impacted your personal identity?

6. What motivated you to open your business? What drew you to the action sports industry?

7. How did you open your business? What resources did you have to first start our business?

8. How did your involvement in action sports contribute to your occupational choice/desire to start your retail business?

9. How satisfied are you with owning an action sport retail business?

10. If given the opportunity to start all over, would you choose to own and operate an action sport retail business again? If so, why? If not, why?

11. How has your identity as an action sport participate changed since owning your retail business?

12. Would you consider being a business owner to be salient to your personal identity? How has being a business owner impacted your personal identity?

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