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**ENTREPRENEURIAL WOMEN IN PUBLIC RELATIONS:**

**WHY OPEN COLLARS?**

by

**Kerry S. Humphrey**

**Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate  
School of The University of Maryland in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
1990**

**Advisory Committee:**

**Assistant Professor Larissa A. Grunig, Advisor  
Assistant Professor Katherine McAdams  
Assistant Professor Eugenia Zerbinos**

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Entrepreneurial Women in Public Relations: Why Open Collars?

Name of degree candidate: Kerry S. Humphrey

Degree and Year: Master of Arts, 1990

Thesis directed by: Larissa A. Grunig, Assistant Professor, College of Journalism

△ This study explores the growing phenomenon of women in public relations who run their own business from home. Based on issues such as unequal pay and promotions for women, feminine stereotypes, sexual harassment and the difficulty in making adequate child care arrangements, the author explored whether sexual discrimination is a contributing factor toward women leaving companies and launching their own public relations business.

Case studies of twelve open collar women in public relations were conducted. Each in-person interview gathered information from questions, observations and documentation. Resulting information was compared and contrasted to add insight into the open collar situation.

The findings indicated that autonomy and

flexibility were the main motivators for the women's open collar move, and economic feasibility was an important factor. Lack of adequate child care was not found to be as direct an influencer as the women's strong desire to be able to spend time with their children. Promotion and salary discrepancies were of considerable concern to the women, but were not found to be the most important reasons they left their companies. Sexual harassment was considered a relief to get away from, but was not found to directly factor in the open collar move. None of the women experienced problems with stereotyping; all were respected as professionals. (S. 14)

Organizations should recognize that if ambitious female workers are not challenged, if parents are not provided flexibility, and if gender-based inequality exists, talented employees may respond to the allure of the open collar world.



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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the folks at AFIT, who provided the light at the end of the tunnel; to my advisor, who led me through to the end; and to the open collars, who made the trip worthwhile.

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## CHAPTER I

## Purpose of the Study

Open Collar Phenomenon

This study explores the relatively little-researched phenomenon of women in public relations who are open-collar entrepreneurs. The term "open collar" was coined by home office consultant Paul Edwards (P. Edwards, personal communication, December 29, 1989). He decided on that name after noting that the vast majority of male office workers are required to wear a tie, and female workers are expected to dress equally conservatively. Observing that most of the home-based workers in his experience dress more casually, often with a shirt opened and partially unbuttoned, he felt the open collar label would convey the more comfortable and laid back dress code of the home-based worker.

The number of open collars is increasing in this high-technology society; the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has reported that 10 million businesses have home addresses (Wolfgram, 1984).

The open collar career differs from the more well-known arrangement, telecommuting, in that the latter involves employees who work either part- or full-time out of their home and belong to a company that they are tied to usually by a computer system. This study focuses on home-based workers who are entrepreneurs -- in particular, women who run their own business out of their homes.

#### Underlying Framework

Public relations is the field of interest in this case, because the author is starting out in this career and finds it interesting that open collar workers are common in service-based industries, particularly public relations (Edwards & Edwards, 1985).

The framework for this study also stems from current feminist theory and research on gender issues. Women entrepreneurs are part of an increasing trend; at least three million women run their own business (Bryant, 1984). Of the estimated 1.9 million Americans who work exclusively at home, about two-thirds are women (Christensen, 1988).

Some hail this as good news for women, since it offers a chance to both work and spend more time with their families (Edwards & Edwards, 1985). Others point to women's entrepreneurial strengths, such as their inclination toward researching more, attending more seminars and being more realistic about early sacrifices (Bryant, 1984).

However, some fear the increase of women entrepreneurs operating out of their homes will reinforce isolation, will link women with the domestic sphere and will create a woman's boutique image (Olerup, Schneider & Monod, 1985). Zimmerman (1986) believes that assigning dual responsibilities not only reinforces the stereotype of women as nurturers but implies that neither job is full time and therefore neither is valuable.

The author is not attempting to conclude that open collar work is either advantageous or disadvantageous, but rather she is trying to discover in this study why women become open collars. The author particularly intends to discover if sex discrimination in traditional work settings is a

contributing factor. Several sources demonstrate that pay and advancement barriers persist for women in public relations. The Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates female public relations specialists earn only 58 percent of what their male counterparts earn (Toth, 1989). According to the most recent p r reporter survey, women's median salaries are an average of \$16,000 below that of male practitioners (Jackson, 1989). The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) found the disparity to be \$12,000 in its 1989 survey, and the Public Relations Journal did a study that indicated a disparity of \$19,723 between median female and male salaries (Toth, 1989).

Edwards and Edwards (1985) found that gender is the greatest determinant of salary. Broom and Dozier (1985) studied gender and public relations roles and found that gender -- not education, training or expertise -- is the greatest indicator of whether a public relations practitioner will be a technician or a manager. Technicians mainly are involved with lower-paying tasks such as writing and producing

messages while higher-paid managers are involved with prescribing, facilitating the communication process and solving problems.

The number of women facing salary and advancement barriers is growing. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported that, although women account for 44 percent of the American labor force, 51.7 percent of public relations practitioners are women (DeRosa & Wilcox, 1989). Lukovitz (1989) puts the figure at 58.6, up from 1970 when only 27 percent of practitioners was female.

Currently, 63.2 percent of IABC members are female (Toth & Cline, 1989), and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is comprised of 48 percent women. Membership in the Public Relations Student Society of America shows a ten-to-one female majority across the country (Hunt & Thompson, 1988). This influx of women has caused many practitioners to fear a "velvet ghetto" will result, where women becoming the majority in public relations will reduce the field's status and pay (Cline et al., 1986). The concern stems from research such as that of Pfeffer

and Davis-Blake (1987), which found an inverse relationship between the proportion of women and the salaries of both men and women. Teaching and nursing are both examples of feminized fields with relatively low salaries and status.

Taking into consideration the concerns for women in public relations, the author is attempting to determine if there is a relationship between public relations women branching out on their own and their perceptions of sexual discrimination in organizations in such forms as uneven salary and advancement, stereotyping and harassment, and lack of child care.

Twelve case studies will be conducted of female public relations practitioners who work from home. The in-depth interviews will be done in person within the Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., areas. Unlike Christensen's (1988) case studies of 20 home-based women, which focused on whether being an open collar was the dream-come-true it was often purported to be, this study will focus specifically on public relations entrepreneurs and will seek to determine why these individuals decided to go open

collar.

### Applications

The U.S. budget deficit is now at one trillion dollars and is projected to reach three trillion dollars by the year 2000. With the economic success of countries such as Japan and West Germany in the world market, American businesses will have to make better use of all available resources, especially their employees, to meet today's challenges (Reznick & Prevatt, 1988). The findings from this study can provide valuable insight for firms interested in maximizing their human resources by predicting that discrimination will encourage many talented women to bail out to enter the world of the open collar.

The data collected also can benefit working women who are dissatisfied with their traditional careers and are seeking ways to break out of corporations. The author can provide a first-hand, realistic look into the open collar life, touted by many as being a route to the American dream (Edwards & Edwards, 1985).

Female students can benefit from this study as

they prepare for a career in public relations. These students need to be aware of all options in their field, as well as some of the problems they may encounter. Only when these individuals have knowledge of their obstacles will they be able to start overcoming them through such actions as negotiating skillfully, networking for support and information and self-advertising in a competitive world.

The study has value for society, as well. If our nation can become more attuned to the detrimental effect discriminatory practices have in terms of retaining valuable resources in a workforce with increasingly fewer white male entrants, perhaps it will be motivated to make strides toward more equitable treatment of women. If women entrepreneurs in public relations can help demonstrate the effectiveness of a female manager, perhaps the image of not only women but of the public relations field will be valued more greatly.

## CHAPTER II

## Review of the Literature

Open Collars

The phenomenon of open collar work, that of running a business out of one's home, has grown as modern society has become more information-centered. Over the past 30 years, America's economy has changed from an industrial-based society to an information- and service-based one (Edwards & Edwards, 1985). Edwards and Edwards have noted that more than half of U.S. workers hold information- and service-related positions, such as public relations specialist. With the proper equipment much of this work can be done efficiently out of a home, the authors note.

The advent of the personal computer has increased greatly the feasibility of home-based work. Personal fax machines and copiers have added to the technology available for today's open collar. An informed consumer can obtain a sophisticated office system -- computer with an information exchange modem, copier and fax machine -- for under \$3,000

("Your Home," 1988).

Edwards and Edwards (1985) stated that low overhead combined with the autonomy to pursue one's own schedule and selection of clients make home-based work an avenue to reach new heights of financial success and enjoy improved quality of life. The authors stressed that home-based work offers the additional advantages of reducing child care, auto, gas and parking costs. Just a daily half-hour commute takes up six 40-hour weeks per year, and an hour commute takes twelve 40-hour weeks (Edwards & Edwards, 1985). Wolfgram (1984) added that home-based work offers an escape from office politics, and this has been an attraction for many toward choosing the entrepreneurial track.

Business trends also influence the growth of home-based businesses. Trends, a newsletter published by the Futures Research Division of Security Pacific National Bank, reported that as public and private organizations shrink their middle management ranks and other staff, the need for and attraction of free-lance work will increase (cited in

Edwards & Edwards, 1985). In his book, The Third Wave, Alvin Toffler predicted this upsurge of home-based businesses, referring to them as electronic cottages (cited in Edwards & Edwards, 1985).

#### Extensiveness of Open Collar Work

The exact number of open collars is difficult to pinpoint; "home-based work appears to be an increasing trend, but statistical data are lacking to substantiate the growth" (U.S. Small Business Association, 1986, p. 3). Although it is estimated that home-based workers range from eight to 23 percent of the work force (U.S. Small Business Association, 1986), the exact percentage is not clear because, in part, different surveys of the population use different definitions of home-based work. Surveys vary in what is considered home-based -- some include moonlighters, volunteers and telecommuters; some include those who spend less than eight hours per week doing home-based work; and some include those whose occupation is farming.

The first population survey to attempt to

determine the size of the home-based workforce was conducted in 1985 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The survey determined that of a total of 18 million non-farm workers, 8.4 million worked at home for at least eight hours (Horvath, 1986). An AT&T count that year of Bell customers who used their residence telephone as their business telephone showed 23 million customers, many of whom were presumably moonlighters and overtime workers (U.S. Small Business Association, 1986).

The American Home Business Association puts the current number of home-based workers who at least work part-time at 27 million out of an total of almost 115 million workers (Micheli, 1988). The association estimates that by the year 2000, home-based businesses will employ 25 percent of the American workforce.

A 1988 study by LINK resources, a market-research firm, found that 25 million Americans work at at home at least eight hours a week, six million of them full time (Knocke, 1988). LINK predicted the home-based workforce will reach one

third of all laborers by 2000. Knocke wrote that the study also noted that 4.2 percent of the home-based workers were new to open collar life, and it observed that women accounted for 70 percent of all home-based sole proprietorships, and 51 percent of all home-based businesses.

The 1985 Bureau of Labor Statistics also found that, of the 8.4 million home-based workers putting in at least eight hours a week, 3,790,000 were women -- 2,375,000 in service-based industries such as public relations (Horvath, 1986). Although women were shown to be only 45 percent of home-based workers in that year, they were shown to be the majority of home-based workers putting in at least 35 hours a week -- approximately 60 percent. Horvath also noted that the survey found among non-farm home-based workers putting in over 35 hours or more a week, there were three times as many women with young children as there were men.

#### Entrepreneurship vs. Open Collar Work

Entrepreneurial trends have echoed the influx of women in home-based businesses; 89 percent of

women-owned businesses are one-woman shops (Cole, 1989). The open collar concept is a variation of the more familiar term "entrepreneurship."

Entrepreneur is defined in Webster's New University Dictionary (1989) as "one who organizes, operates, and assumes the risk in a business venture in expectation of gaining the profit" (p. 436).

Many of these self-employed people operate their proprietorships from an office and may employ assistants, if needed. However, a growing number of entrepreneurs are moving or setting up their offices at home to create flexible hours, cut down on commuting time and avoid high overhead costs (Knocke, 1988). These home-based workers frequently have high technology equipment comparable to what would be found in an office and in some cases may solicit the help of associates when necessary.

Entrepreneurship, from both office and home, has grown considerably in the past few years. Women entrepreneurs have increased particularly; from 1972 to 1982, the number of self-employed women in the United States increased by 69 percent (Scott, 1986).

About 2.8 million women were self-employed in 1987, one million more than in 1977 (Axel, 1988).

Many of these self-employed women chose their career path to better care for their children and at the same time advance in their field with fewer restrictions. A survey of entrepreneurial women in Georgia found that among the most common reasons cited for respondents' job decisions were increased compatibility with family duties and a chance to overcome a lack of opportunity they had experienced while working for others (Scott, 1986).

#### Men and Women Entrepreneurs

The study also found that many of the women decided to run their own businesses for the challenge, opportunity to be their own boss and the chance to make more money -- similar responses were given by entrepreneurial men surveyed (Scott, 1986). These responses are considered typical traits of the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs of both sexes tend to be independent, aggressive, creative and frustrated when they are not in charge (Gregg, 1985). Being in charge is an especially important

consideration for women in public relations, since the higher-paying, managerial positions still go disproportionately to men (Broom & Dozier, 1985).

While both male and female entrepreneurs demonstrate similar traits of aggressiveness and independence, they do not necessarily face the same problems, particularly in the open collar situation. Studies vary in their estimate of the number of male home-based entrepreneurs -- between 30 and 49 percent -- nevertheless, the majority are women (Bacon, 1989).

#### Reasons for Becoming Open Collar

One reason women start their business from home rather than office is lack of sufficient funds. Women continue to make less than men, and they still stand to face stereotypes in the banking industry preventing them from getting enough start-up capital. In some cases, bankers hesitate to lend women start-up capital for fear they are less serious about their business and will either drop out to have a baby or give up due to experiencing low profits (Cole, 1989).

Another reason for women going open collar

rather than running their businesses out of offices is children. Two out of three open collars are in dual-career households and more than half have children under 18 at home (Micheli, 1988). Although men gradually are playing an increasing role in the upbringing and development of their children, the major responsibility for their welfare remains largely on the mother's shoulders. With adequate child care difficult to find and afford, many women decide to work at home in order to spend quality time with their young ones and ensure they are receiving proper attention.

Although these factors apply to self-employed women more than to men, both genders of sole proprietors share commonalities, particularly in personality characteristics. Self-confidence, risk-taking, and an internal locus of control are common to men and women entrepreneurs, including open collars. Said Harvard psychoanalyst Abraham Zaleznik of all entrepreneurs, "They don't have the normal fear or anxiety mechanisms" (Cited in Cole, 1989, p. 63).

Bernard Tenenbaum of the Rothman Institute of Entrepreneurial Studies added: "What you and I see as a risk, they have a solution for. They have intuitively quantified it in their heads and feel it is not a problem" (Cole, 1989, p. 63).

Thus, entrepreneurial traits of both men and women are as varied as the impulses that drive them. Nonetheless, women face additional challenges such as corporate discrimination, insufficient start-up capital and difficulty in finding child care. These problems, combined with the drive for autonomy, are particularly influential in the open collar decision.

#### Public Relations Roles

A public relations open collar must not only be in charge of making all decisions but must complete the more mundane tasks of carrying them out -- typing, mailing and telephoning. However, in an organization, the public relations activities are commonly divided into technician and managerial roles.

These two roles were analyzed by Dozier (1984). Dozier found managers participated in policy

decisions, were held accountable for public relations efforts, and were involved in scientific measures of program impact. He found that technicians mainly handled producing of materials and implementing the decisions of others, and they were not likely to conduct any style of active scientific evaluation.

The technician role involves providing services that include writing, editing, photography, contacting media and creating publications. The managerial role involves conceptualizing and directing public relations programs, conducting environmental scanning, planning strategy, making policy decisions and serving as liaison among and between the media, the outside public and the internal chief executive officer. Tasks include being prescriber and communications facilitator (Brody, 1985).

A study by Broom and Dozier (1985) discovered that a gender imbalance exists between the technician and managerial roles. They found that women do a substantially greater amount of technical role activities -- preparing news releases, typing

promotional activities and responding to telephone queries -- than do their male counterparts. The males were more likely to be found in management roles such as meeting with senior management and conducting environmental scanning.

Broom and Dozier (1985) also found that women have a markedly lower annual income -- by 1985, men were earning average salaries more than twice as large as women's. Furthermore, the researchers found that women gain smaller increases in salary than their male peers. Even when salaries for men and women are adjusted for education, years of professional experience and tenure in the organization, the differences in income remain substantial, partially a result of the concentration of women in the lower-paying technician positions. Supporting this observation, a study funded by IABC found that women in public relations are increasingly filling the technician roles as they are being paid less (Cline et al., 1986).

#### Increase of Women in Public Relations

The concern for the large number of women in the

technician role becomes acute when considering the increasing number of women entering the field. The Public Relations Journal estimated that 58.6 percent of public relations/business communication practitioners are women (Toth, 1989). IABC estimated the percentage at 70 (DeRosa & Wilcox, 1989). DeRosa and Wilcox cited a p r reporter survey of public relations practitioners that showed that almost 80 percent of the respondents in the 25 - 29 age group were women.

IABC shows a membership that is 63.2 percent female (Toth & Cline, 1988). PRSA surveys indicate 48 percent of its members are women (Hunt & Thompson, 1988) and the Public Relations Student Society of America shows country-wide membership with a ten-to-one female majority (Hunt & Thompson, 1988).

At the University of Maryland, 75 percent of undergraduates in public relations are female (G. Stewart, personal communication, December 15, 1989). Nationwide, 60.8 percent of undergraduates are female; for every two men receiving public relations degrees in 1988, three women graduated in the field

(Becker, 1989).

Students are of particular importance because they are the ones who will be encountering the challenges in the field of public relations and they are the ones who will help shape what it becomes. If students, particularly female colleagues, can be made aware of the obstacles they will face and can learn the art of skillful negotiation and self-advertising, they will have an advantage in a competitive field.

Miller (1988) encouraged extra support for female students, including such systems as financial aid, dependent care, counseling and support services such as mentors. Hunt and Thompson (1988) agreed with these steps, holding that educators need not only to strive for a balance of the sexes but to put new emphasis on the young women since they are the majority to take leadership roles, improve negotiating skills and strive to be management material worthy of a high salary.

Male students are being targeted for special attention, also. Many universities are making an effort to recruit more males into public relations

courses because their percentage of enrollment is so low. Rutgers University uses a quota system, male teaching assistants to serve as role models, managerial-type public relations teachers and an internship and mentor program to match males with role models in the field. In addition, professors there make a point to select clients for class projects that will interest males as well as females, such as a telecommunications company and commercial real estate firm as opposed to previously-used boutique and flower shop clients (Hunt & Thompson, 1988).

These recommendations come as a result of the fear of the feminization of public relations. Many practitioners fear a "velvet ghetto" will develop in the field if the increasing number of women in public relations leads to decreased status and pay (Cline et al., 1986).

The growing number of women creating their own agencies and open collar businesses is also of concern. These organizations, sometimes referred to as "boutique agencies," stand to further erode the

image of public relations as a prestigious, powerful field and threaten to give a "pink collar" image to the field (Mathews, 1989).

Cline et al. (1986) examined the impact of increasing feminization of public relations and indicated the pattern is likely to continue. They noted that predominately female fields such as teaching and nursing are notoriously low-paid and low-status. Toth (1989) cited a 1987 Census Bureau study that concluded that the earnings of a person will be lowered as the ratio of women in his or her occupation increases. A study by Touhey (1974) also found that the status of an occupation declined when subjects thought more women than men would enter the field.

Broom and Dozier (1985) postulated that encroachment may result from the feminization of the profession. That is, the dominant coalition of many organizations may turn to men outside public relations from such fields as marketing, advertising and law to fill the managerial roles in public relations. As Bernstein (1989) warned:

as women become increasingly visible, management, still largely male and apt to remain so for the foreseeable future, might change its perception of public relations' role. And if so, public relations could be placed at risk of losing status and clout (p. 67).

Along with status and clout, public relations salaries are also at risk of reduction, especially when it is noted that women in public relations make significantly lower average salaries than do their male counterparts.

#### Salary and Advancement

The median salary of women in public relations is \$16,000 below that of male practitioners and this disparity increases to \$22,750 in the 50 - 59 age bracket ("25th Annual Survey," 1989). The Public Relations Journal reported a salary disparity of its members of \$19,723 (Toth, 1989).

IABC found in its 1989 survey that women lag behind men in salaries by \$12,000 -- \$5,600 of this was found to be accounted for by gender alone when all other variables were held constant (Toth, 1989). IABC estimated that a woman working 45 years

typically will end up earning at best \$300,000 less than a man in public relations and at worst the figure could be closer to one and a half million dollars (Cline et al., 1986).

Not only do women face salary barriers, but they encounter roadblocks toward advancement, as well. A survey of public relations practitioners found satisfaction in salary and promotion opportunities was lower for women than men (Selnow & Wilson, 1985).

The term "glass ceiling" was described by Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986), referring to the obstacle women managers aspiring to top corporate jobs encounter. The women can see where they want to be; but unless they somehow are able to break the glass ceiling, they will continue to be below the men in the corporation.

Blumenthal stated that public relations is perceived as a non-operational area that seldom leads to the most powerful top-management posts (cited in Toth, 1989). When it is a women in public relations attempting to move up, the resistance increases for a variety of reasons, including preconceptions,

stereotypes and expectations men have regarding women as managers (Schwartz, 1989).

This resistance to women rising up in the ranks is not peculiar to public relations. A Fortune survey analyzed the career paths of men and women who received MBAs in 1976 from 17 of the most selective business schools in the nation. After ten years, 30 percent of the women reported they had dropped out of the managerial track, while only 21 percent of the men had done so (Taylor, 1986). Taylor also noted that a University of Pittsburgh study found that 34 percent of female business graduates surveyed had dropped out of the labor force, compared with only 19 percent of the men. In many of these cases, the bailing out was a result of dissatisfaction in the organization's management system.

Another survey found that two-thirds of 17,000 male and female employees of the nation's largest corporations during the last sixteen years cited evidence of sexual harassment and three-fourths of the women felt excluded from management ranks because of their gender (Houghton, 1988).

A University of California and Korn/Ferry International survey of 300 women at or above the vice-presidential level in the nation's largest corporations found that the foremost reason cited as a career obstacle was being a woman and receiving unequal treatment because of it (Taylor, 1986). A 1985 study of 128 female directors found that half cited discrimination from male colleagues, employers or both and 91 percent said they had to try harder to get ahead because of their sex (Clutterbuck & Devine, 1987).

To some, home-based work is an option when the decision is made to bail out of corporate life after tiring of fighting the salary and advancement barriers.

#### Child Care

Home-based work also is an option for working women seeking to find an answer to modern work-family conflicts. A U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics survey determined that two-thirds of open collars are women; half of these women said they became home-based to spend more time with their family (Christensen,

1988). Christensen found in her own study of open collar women that although the mothers did get to spend more time with their children, some form of additional care was needed since the mother could not watch her children all day and still devote attention to her job.

Many mothers have found adequate day care difficult to find. In 1986, of 10 million children with working parents, only one and one-half million were in licensed child care centers. The rest were either in centers that were unreviewed by a public body to ensure adequacy of care or were with relatives or friends or left alone (Christensen, 1988).

Care is expensive, ranging from \$3,500 in pre-school to \$8,000 for in-home care each year (Fierman, 1988). This expense has been an important concern to U.S. organizations, because the United States is the only major industrialized nation without a federally-supported child care system (Braddy, 1989). Fewer than 10 percent of American

employers offer any kind of child-care aid to their employees (Post, 1989). However, demographics are forcing a new awareness of family importance in the workplace. By the year 2000, 64 percent of new labor force entrants will be women (Post, 1989).

Currently, 54 percent of women work; 90 percent of these women have or are projected to have children during their life. Additionally, the fastest-growing labor segment is women with children under age six (Nollen, 1989).

A talent drain can be seen when these figures are considered. Between 1981 and 1985, only 72 percent of women who had children returned to work from maternity leave (Sandroff, 1989). Maternity benefits are a problem as well. Only 40 percent of working women in the United States receive six weeks or more of paid disability for child birth (Taylor, 1986).

Many managerial women embrace the notion that work and family are mutually reinforcing and are prepared to make trade-offs such as less personal time, more reliance on baby sitters and fewer

vacations and business travel (Nelton & Berney, 1987). However, these women need cooperation and support from their corporations, as well.

Companies that become involved in child care issues can benefit from their employees in the form of increased morale, productivity, recruitment, retention potential and dedication and from decreased absenteeism and turnover (Cascio, 1982). A survey of 5,000 employees in five companies that found that 76 percent of the women and 58 percent of the men felt supportive child care would increase productivity (Fernandez, 1986).

In 1987, a Fortune 500 company, Aetna Life & Casualty, instituted a strong child care support system that resulted in a 23 percent drop in the number of women who quit after taking maternity leave. The company estimated that the costs of recruiting and training to fill a vacancy plus lost productivity from the job turnover equals 93 percent of the first-year salary for the position ("The 60 Best," 1989). Nevertheless, only 3,300 of the top 44,000 companies offer any type of child care assistance.

Corning Glass Works took action after noting in a survey that its women were leaving the company at twice the rate of men. It decided to become more family-friendly when it realized that replacing these workers was costing them more than two million dollars a year (Ehrlich, 1989).

Companies with an on-site center often find it useful to keep it open longer hours. The computer company Apple, for example, does not close its center until 7 p.m. And several companies are trying to reduce child care costs to their employees by subsidizing their own center -- SAS Institute operates its center as a free perk.

Flexible benefits are part of a valuable program for working parents. Apple is an exemplary company in this regard, allowing employees to direct pre-tax payments to child care services and even providing a hotline to help employees get the most out of their benefits.

In addition, many companies that are family-supportive provide employees with a feasible schedule, leaving a window to arrive and leave work

-- for example, IBM Corporation allows two hours. Some organizations permit their employees options such as telecommuting from home, job sharing and part-time work. IBM has combined all of these options into a strong parental-leave program that allows employees to take three years off with their job guaranteed upon return. During the last two years, employees work part-time, from home if needed, to keep in touch and maintain skills.

For some women, a workable compromise has come through the cooperation of their organization by setting up a "mommy track." This phrase refers to a work system described by Felice Schwartz in the Harvard Business Review (Schwartz, 1989). The system provides alternative work patterns, flexible hours, job sharing and telecommuting. Thus, a mother would be able, for example, to depart early to pick up her child from school or to end her office week on Thursday to care for her infant at home three days per week. The reshaping allows mothers to care for their families without having to take years away from the job and risk not being able to reenter in the

same standing.

Critics of this track worry that it will become an excuse to pigeonhole women into the less-serious positions such as technician tasks and treat all working mothers as less efficient, not so upwardly mobile or high performing as childless working women (Ehrlich, 1989). Ehrlich added that it furthers the stereotype of the woman being the nurturing parent and risks making all women subject to a slower track solely due to their ability to have children, regardless of whether they choose to.

The key here is education. Many corporations slowly are realizing that working-parent issues need to be dealt with starting at the top with the corporate culture and top managers. Johnson and Johnson actually added a statement to its credo to show a commitment to responding to family issues. Dow Chemical has hired a full-time family issues coordinator, and 3M Company has a full-time child Inc.'s top personnel officer holds the title "vice president for people."

These changes have come about from a realization

of the importance of retaining valuable resources. As Peter E. Friedes, chief executive of Hewitt Association, put it, "The savings to get back one returning mother with experience, even for only 60 percent of her time versus having to hire and train someone else is large" ("The 60 Best," 1989, p. 88).

Still, the stereotyped notion of women being less serious about careers and primarily concerned with their role as nurturer and mother persists for many.

#### Sexual Harassment

Another notion assigned to women is perhaps more insidious: that they are submissive by nature and can be approached in a sexual manner in a work setting. It has been almost a decade since the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) wrote its guidelines defining sexual harassment as a form of discrimination and, therefore, illegal under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Morgenson, 1989).

The EEOC (1980) defines sexual harassment as:

"unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature . . . when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or a rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment" (p. 74677).

The commission has reported the number of sexual harassment complaints filed is growing; they rose from 4,272 in 1981 to 7,272 in 1985 (Terpstra, 1989). These figures are not surprising when considering the pervasiveness of the problem. The number of women who have been harassed on the job as estimated from surveys ranges from 42 to 90 percent, Terpstra added.

#### What Can Be Done About It?

Because of the widespread problem, an estimated three out of four companies nationwide have instituted strict policies against harassment (Morgenson, 1984).

Morgenson also pointed out that sexual harassment in such forms as unwelcome advances, leers, touches and comments is not about sex, but about power, and

as more women recognize and deal with this accordingly, incidents of sexual harassment may lessen in the years ahead. Therefore education is the key for both men and women; millions of dollars are spent each year teaching employees about the issue (Morgenson, 1984). Morgenson also felt that this type of learning is vital toward overcoming the stereotype that working women will put up with sexual harassment, however subtle the offensive behavior.

#### Sex and Gender Stereotypes

Stereotypes, according to Shepard (1985), are the brain's way of setting expectations to lend some predictability to life. Unfortunately, they also tend to restrict the people stereotyped into a self-fulfilling mold. Stereotypes against working women have been acted on in subtle forms in spite of laws prohibiting sexual discrimination; unequal pay and advancement opportunities persist.

With the increase of women entering today's workforce and the growing percentage of the labor market being made up of women, the concern from feminist theorists is rising. Socialist feminists

stress that disparities between women and men in the workforce need to be examined and communicated so that group action can persuade society to consider the effects of gender inequity on society politically, economically and ideologically (Toth, 1989).

According to Toth (1989, p. 60), "The feminist theoretical perspective recognizes the pervasive influence of gender on society." Toth, a feminist in public relations, noted that feminist theorists believe that the categorization of gender has meant assigning power and dominance to men and subordination to women.

The term "gender" as a composite definition from such sociologists as Spencer and Helmreich (1978) refers to a biological/physiological characteristic regarding bodily structures, genes and hormones.

Spence and Helmreich (1978) defined gender as a biological classification based on superficial anatomical characteristics. Bem (1976) wrote that gender referred to genitalia, body build, reproductive system -- biological functions

determined at birth.

The terms "gender" and "sex" are not interchangeable. While gender involves predetermined physical traits such as bodily characteristics, sex involves such characteristics as masculinity and femininity, which refer to the presence or absence of traits such as assertiveness or submissiveness that distinguish normatively between men and women in society (Spence & Helmreich, 1980).

Bakan (1966) held a biodeterminist view, wherein biology dictates behavior. He noted four levels of gender differentiation: biological/reproductive, secondary sex characteristics, assumed differences in psychological makeup and place in the social structure.

The latter two levels of distinction between the sexes are of concern to socialization theorists. Socialization theorists believe these differences are not biological but are cultural sex roles -- learned behaviors that actually are a product of socialization.

For example, gender is defined by Powell (1988, p. 44) "as a scheme for categorizing individuals that uses biological differences as a basis for assigning social differences."

Kohlberg (1966) referred to gender as a three-part process of sex-role acquisition. First, gender serves as an identity to link one's self with one of two groups, males or females. Secondly, gender becomes an organizer for a person to model himself or herself with by developing a system of values and behaviors considered appropriate from reactions by parents, peers and authority figures for the group they have identified with. Finally, Kohlberg contended that gender is reinforced by imitative behavior of a same-sex parent and further reinforced when it is rewarded by attention or praise.

#### Possible Cons of Open Collar Work

Traditional sex roles for women have focused on their roles as caregiver and nurturer (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble & Zellman, 1978). Opponents of the idea of home-based work believe the open

collar track will further contribute to women's oppression by reinforcing woman's place as being in the home caring for and nurturing her family (Oakley, 1974).

Coyle (1984) expressed the fear that women are placed at risk of labor abuse since a home office is outside the protection of workplace legislation and union organization. She pointed to women during the 1930s, who were forced by the depression to endure sweat shop-like conditions while ironing, doing laundry and sewing out of their home.

Olerup, Schneider and Monod (1985) projected that home-based work will have a negative impact on society as more women become open collars. The authors said that such a system brings the pink collar ghetto to an even narrower sphere, reestablishing workforce separation in a literal sense based on gender. Zimmerman (1986) also contended that not only does open collar work negatively affect women's image in the workforce by assigning them the primary role as nurturer, it implies that neither caregiving nor her open collar

job is full time and thus devalues both tasks.

Christensen (1988), after studying hundreds of open collar women and focusing on 20 individuals in her book Women and Home-Based Work, conceded that home-based work can be workable and even advantageous to some women. She asserted, however, that for many women open collar work attaches women with the stigma that their domestic role is primary to their secondary task of career accomplishment.

This stereotype of femininity can be detrimental to success in the male-dominated world of management. Women typically are considered less-job oriented, more emotional, weaker and less logical than men.

Surveys in 1987 and 1988 found that, of 30,000 individuals questioned, 24 percent of the men and 19 percent of the women felt many women were not really serious about their careers (Fernandez, 1988). A study of more than 50 groups of research subjects asked to produce adjectives describing men and women revealed men were deemed dynamic, aggressive, authoritarian, decisive, rational, strong, ambitious, athletic, stubborn and tough. Women were called soft,

pretty, emotional, weak, manipulative, indirect, warm, nurturing, moral, faithful and family-oriented (Shepard, 1985).

To be considered feminine, Peirce (1989) asserted:

Women must be warm, caring, nurturing. To make it in the business world, she must be assertive, competitive and firm, which are male characteristics. The professional woman is caught in a bind not only internally but externally as well (p. 33).

Some socialists advocate androgynous behavior to combat the dilemma (Sargent, 1984). This style involves combining masculine and feminine traits. Advocates of this approach believe it incorporates the best of both sets of characteristics -- being task-oriented as well as people-oriented.

A key researcher of androgyny is Sandra Bem, who believed that it is possible for an individual to be both masculine and feminine depending on the situation and appropriateness of these variations (Bem, 1975).

Haskell (1985) agreed that for a woman to succeed in business, she must learn the corporate

world of male traditions and put to use traditionally male characteristics such as competitiveness and networking.

Morrison, White, Van Valsor and the Center for Creative Leadership (1987) also stressed the importance of networking and seeking a mentor as an important step in reaching a success. Morrison noted that because men dominate the corporate world, they have the advantage of information passing through camaraderie. However, if women can seek support from a powerful figure, ideally a woman who understands her unique situation, she can enter a support system that can help her get noticed in her organization.

Mills, professor of management at the University of Oklahoma, recently explained how body language is an important factor in conveying an image (cited in Poisson, 1989). She cautioned that actions such as fiddling with jewelry, crossing legs, caressing hair or skin and allowing a rising inflection in one's voice are common among women and signal passiveness. She advocated attempting to adopt several male traits such as speaking in a firm voice, maintaining a

"poker face" and even arm crossing to present herself with a more positive impact in the business world.

Stone (personal communication, November 2, 1989), owner of her own consulting firm in marketing and advertising as well as founder of two other companies and a national bank, holds a seminar on sex roles to help women recognize behavior that perpetuates negative stereotypes. She warned against passive body language as well as a mentality that shows ignorance of the male culture. She argued that women need to understand ten basic rules to get ahead: (1) corporate rules have an impersonal effect, (2) all players must learn the rules and cooperate with the team, (3) all players in a team have their own position, (4) each player's part fits into the big picture, (5) male camaraderie is not for exclusion as much as it is for fun, (6) "coaches" -- bosses -- are not to be talked back to, (7) defeat should be taken in stride, (8) one should never say "die," (9) if no risk is taken there will be no reward and (10) if one has no plan he or she will lose. Stone believed that women need to avoid

falling into stereotypical behavior such as trying to be special, taking things personally, avoiding camaraderie with other women and acting timid.

Others dispute the notion that women must adopt masculine characteristics such as aggressiveness to succeed. Lott (1981) wrote that labeling behaviors as feminine and masculine only serves to reinforce the gendering of behavior.

A promising way to deal with the problem of negative stereotyping in sex roles is to accentuate the positive aspects of what is considered feminine. Loden (1985) referred to this as "feminine leadership," and she believed this style of management utilizes the full range of women's natural talents and abilities. She argued that women are more concerned with maintaining close personal relationships, consider feelings in decision making and are more inclined to subordinate short-term, personal advancement to improve the long-term health of the organization.

Loden (1985) considered women superior communicators. While no conclusive scientific

evidence backs up this common belief (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble & Zellman, 1978), the stereotype of women excelling at verbal and written skills can benefit public relations practitioners.

#### Grunig's Four Models of Public Relations

Grunig (1987) defines public relations as "the management of communication between an organization and its publics" (p. 6). He developed four models of public relations which describe the manner in which an organization deals with its publics based on communication (one way or two way) and intended effect (asymmetrical or symmetrical). The models are: press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric. The press agentry model defines practitioners who see the media as means for achieving an end. Such practitioners are not concerned with truth or feedback, only with selling their publics on an idea or product. In contrast, practitioners using the public information model strive to provide accurate information; however, they tend to withhold unfavorable information and do not seek feedback from their

publics.

Practitioners of the two-way asymmetric model do seek input from their publics and do strive to provide them with true facts, but only in order to persuade their publics to a particular cause. Those who follow the two-way symmetric model, on the other hand, are practitioners who are concerned with promoting mutual understanding with their publics through accuracy, feedback and interaction. Unlike the other three models -- press agency, public information and two-way asymmetrical -- the two-way symmetrical model is considered more cooperative and balanced.

Wetherell (1989) found in her study of public relations practitioners that men were more likely to use the two-way symmetric model. She noted that one reason more men practiced this preferred style of public relations was the men in her studies were more often managers, were more experienced and had more training in public relations than the women surveyed.

Yet Wetherell (1989) did find that practitioners who used the two-way symmetrical model indicated high

levels of both masculinity and femininity, which suggests that femininity has a role to play in effective public relations.

A recent survey on the impact of the increasing number of women in public relations asked a sample of public relations practitioners for their prediction on the subject (Joseph, 1985). Many were of the opinion that women would add a creative, perceptive touch and would be effective communicators. One practitioner said that as more women in public relations are recognized as professionals, the field might be given a more sensitive image than the often notorious appearance it now has (Joseph, 1985). Other predictions include: competition for public relations jobs will increase between men and women, corporations will consider public relations a useless function and more women either will leave to raise families and not return or they will open their own agencies.

This final prediction relates back to a major purpose behind this study: to find out if sex discrimination is a major factor in public relations

women becoming open collar entrepreneurs.

#### Preliminary Study

To serve as a preliminary examination of the thesis topic and to help determine which questions are most pertinent, a small series of interviews was conducted (Humphrey, 1989). Six open collar public relations women in varying locations were interviewed over the telephone. The question posed to each interviewee was, "Why did you decide to become an open collar in your field?"

The following were the ten factors the women were asked to rate from "not important" to "most important" toward making this career move:

to be my own boss, to control my schedule/hours, to increase my income, to care for my children, to overcome sexual harassment, to control choice of clients, to overcome office-related stress, to overcome limited advancement for women, to overcome lower salary for women and to model after a mentor.

The choice "to be my own boss" was derived from Edwards and Edwards' (1985) notion that many open collars enjoy autonomy. The "to control my

schedule/hours" choice came from this literature as well, as did the "to control choice of clients." The choices "to increase my income" and "to overcome office-related stress" also come from Edwards and Edwards (1985) and Wolfgram (1984), who found monetary benefits and a method of escape from problems such as car and child care expenses an attractive benefit of open collar work.

The "to overcome limited advancement for women" and "to overcome lower salary for women" choices stem from literature such as that of Broom and Dozier (1985) and Cline and Toth (1989), which found women earn median salaries significantly lower than that of men, and that gender is the greatest determinant of both technician role and lower salary.

Finally, the "to model after a mentor" choice comes from sources such as Morrison, White, Van Valsor and the Center for Creative Leadership (1987), who stressed the importance of a woman receiving support from within the organization. "To overcome sexual harassment" comes from literature such as that of Clutterbuck and Devine (1987), who found that a

majority of women surveyed cited discrimination occurred from colleagues, employers or both.

The results of this preliminary study are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Factors in Open Collar Choice

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Importance of Factor</u>				
	<u>Most</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Ave</u>	<u>Slight</u>	<u>Not</u>
Be my own boss	2	4	-	-	-
Control schedule	1	4	1	-	-
Increase income	1	3	1	1	-
Care for children	1	1	-	-	4
Sexual harassment	1	-	1	1	3
Choose own clients	-	4	-	-	2
Office stress	-	2	1	3	-
Advancement bias	-	1	1	3	1
Salary bias	-	1	1	3	1
Model after mentor	-	1	1	1	3

The factor most of the women cited as the most influential in their branching out on their own was the desire to be their own boss. Two women said this factor was most important and the rest considered it

very important. This contradicts the stereotype of women not taking their career seriously. As one respondent said, "It's better when you're the boss -- you make your own rules and don't have to answer to anyone because you're in control."

The second most popular factor was flexibility, the ability to control one's schedule and hours. One woman cited this as most important, four felt it was very important, and the last deemed it of average importance.

A typical statement came from one respondent:

Life's too short to focus only on constantly working. I reached the point where I asked myself how I would feel about my life if I were to look back on it. Professionally, I'd be happy, but personally, I'd be unhappy. Something was missing. Now I commit more time to enjoying life and find this gives me more energy for work.

Income was the third most common factor. One woman said this was most important, half found it very important, one said it was of average importance, and the last deemed it slightly important. The women all expressed that as open collars, they are more satisfied now with their

earning potential than when they worked for a firm. One woman indicated she is not making more in total salary, but she is reaping greater financial benefits for the time she is putting in because she works from home.

The fourth most important factor was child care. All four respondents who indicated this factor was not important had no children at the time they became open collar. One woman said child care was very important and the other found it the most important factor for her decision to go open collar. Both of these women expressed disappointment with their previous firms. One said the firm was too small for day care, and the other considered maternity leave in her old firm unreasonably short. This typifies the conflict many working mothers feel in juggling their personal and professional lives when facing an often unsupportive business world.

Sexual harassment was cited as important to half of the women -- one slightly, one very and one the most important factor of all. The half who felt it was not an important factor explained that they have

learned to tolerate sexual harassment in the work world. One woman, however, listed sexual harassment as the primary reason she left her firm. In her words:

I resigned after they moved up the assistant to the head when he left -- even though I was much more qualified. The new guy was a monster and drove all the ladies out. He had a condescending attitude and kept badgering all the women. I just couldn't take it anymore.

The choice of clients was very important to four of the women. The two who found it non-important are serving the same clientele as before they turned open collar. Said one woman who stated she enjoyed having control over who to work with, "I like being able to go after an interesting job or turn down a job when I'm already bogged down."

Overcoming office-related stress was important to all of the women -- slightly to half, of average importance to one, and very important to the remaining two. As one woman stated, "I hated playing the game. You know -- being forced into smaller accounts and mysteriously ending up with all the

women under you."

Other women echoed her distaste of company politics. In addition, one woman pointed out that she enjoys not having to face the traffic jams and undergoing the parking search.

Limited advancement and lower salary for women received identical ratings by the six women. One deemed each very important and one indicated neither was important to her. This woman felt her previous firm was progressive. However, the woman who rated this area highest stated:

Women take a hell of a beating in this field. When I was in my previous firm, I was making half the salary of my male counterparts and my workload was ridiculous -- I had eleven accounts whereas the men had no more than two. And I got the distinct impression that women were not welcome at the top. I know I was excluded.

This perception of a glass ceiling was felt by another woman who noted:

In the smaller firms you see women at or near the top, but when you get into the really big, important metropolitan-area firms, there are only men up there. I was told that the big clients wouldn't accept a woman in the upper ranks, that it would make them

uncomfortable.

The final factor covered in the interview was whether a role model or mentor was an influencing factor in the respondent's open collar move. Half said this was not an important factor, one said it was slightly important, another deemed it of average importance, and the last said it was very important to her. The three who said this was not important echoed the sentiments many women have about a lack of available role model in the upper ranks who has successfully combined personal and professional achievement. All six women felt networking and career support are important to growth and success.

This initial study indicates that sex discrimination affecting public relations roles and salaries contributed to why the six open collars interviewed decided to go home-based. These factors underlay these women's common goals for increased leadership, autonomy and financial success.

These results can best be summarized by Bryant (1984):

After years of experience in corporations,

a woman may find she hits a glass ceiling, that despite long service and considerable management talent she is not getting near a top position. She's ambitious, has the self-confidence and business acumen to make it and is tired of waiting indefinitely for someone to give her the chance to do so. So she bails out of corporate life and opens her own business (p. 284).

#### Research Questions

The problems of goal-oriented women in public relations serve as the focus of this thesis, which is to answer the question: "Why do women in public relations become open collars?" This study seeks to find out if sex discrimination in the forms of unequal salary, barriers to advancement, inadequate child care and acting on stereotypes through unequal treatment and harassment is a contributing factor in women leaving organizations to become open collar entrepreneurs.

To study this, the author poses the following research questions:

R1 -- How adequate was child care in the open collar's previous organization?

R2 -- How strong is autonomy as a motivator for

open collars?

R3 -- How strong is flexibility as a motivator for the open collars?

R4 -- How important was the previous organization's salary system as a factor in the open collar move?

R5 -- How important was the previous organization's advancement system as a factor in the open collar move?

R6 -- How important was stereotyping as a factor in the open collar move?

R7 -- How important was sexual harassment as a factor in the open collar move?

The first research question relates to findings from the literature reviewed that adequate child care is difficult to find and to afford in this country. Christensen (1985) found that a large percentage of open collar mothers chose that path to care for their children and noted that millions of children are placed in non-licensed child care centers. Post (1989) and Ehrlich (1989) noted that few employers offer child care to their employees, and Braddy

(1989) observed that America is the only major industrialized nation with no federal child care support.

The second and third research questions stem from literature regarding reasons entrepreneurs have given for branching out on their own. Gregg (1985) and Scott (1986) have found that being one's own boss is one main reason women become entrepreneurs. Edwards and Edwards (1985) and Wolfgram (1984) have noted that freedom from office politics and commuting hassles were common incentives for open collars.

The fourth research question comes from the literature showing a significant salary discrepancy between women and men in public relations. The median woman's salary is \$16,000 below that of a man ("25th Annual Survey," 1989). Toth (1989) showed an \$11,150 disparity, The Public Relations Journal a \$19,723 difference and IABC a \$12,000 imbalance.

The fifth research question relates to the literature on discrepancies in advancement for women. Broom and Dozier (1986) noted this discrepancy is primarily based solely on gender and Cline et al.

(1986) found this to be a problem, as well. Selnow and Wilson (1985) surveyed public relations practitioners and found satisfaction in promotion opportunities was lower for women than men.

The sixth research question relates to the literature on sex and gender stereotypes, which places women in a role of primary caregiver and nurturer and makes them appear to be inferior managers due to perceived characteristics such as being irrational, emotional and less serious about their careers than men. Shepard (1985) found in a study of numerous groups of research subjects that women were deemed less aggressive, decisive, tough, ambitious and rational than men. Fernandez (1988) noted that almost one fourth of the men and one fifth of the women in his survey felt that many women were not really serious about their career. The seventh and final research question relates to the literature on sexual harassment. Terpstra (1989) estimated the number of women who have been sexually harassed on the job to range from 42 to 90 percent. Houghton (1988) observed that two-thirds of the

people he surveyed cited evidence of sexual harassment and exclusion due to gender in the nation's largest corporations. In addition, Terpstra noted that the EEOC had 7,273 sexual harassment complaints in 1985.

These research questions address the focus of this thesis -- why do women in public relations go open collar?

## CHAPTER III

## Methodology

This study examines the reasons female public relations entrepreneurs give for deciding to become home-based. The primary objective of the study is to determine whether sex discrimination is a major factor in such women choosing the open collar career.

Choosing the Case Study Method

The case study as defined by Yin (1984) is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23).

The case study method was chosen because it is according to Yin (1984) "the preferred strategy when how or why questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 13).

The questions in this study deal with why the

women went open collar and whether and in what ways sex discrimination was a factor, both events the investigator had little control over. The phenomenon in this case is women as open collar entrepreneurs in public relations and the context is gender challenges in the field.

The study is designed to explore whether discrimination is a factor in the reasons twelve particular women chose their home-based career. As Yin (1984) stated, the case study is a way to present "extended networks of implications that are ... crucial to ... scientific evaluation" (p. 7).

The study uses a multi-case approach by focusing on twelve women. The multiple-case approach allows the investigator to expand and minimally generalize theories through speculating the behavior of a larger population from carefully selected units of analysis. Yin stressed that case studies are involved with units of analysis, in this case each individual woman, rather than with samples of population. This type of study relies on analytical rather than statistical generalization.

The decision to use open collars from Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C., was made due to time and expense constraints of conducting in-person interviews. In-person interviews were selected over telephone interviews because the researcher felt building a face-to-face rapport on such sensitive issues would elicit more candid responses (Parten, 1966). Also, people tend to limit their responses when talking over the telephone, and the researcher wanted to encourage interviewees to talk at length.

Another benefit of an in-person interview is the opportunity to pick up on non-verbal cues and to make use of a variety of evidence such as documents and observations. In this case, brochures, biographies and client listings as well as type and location of equipment, existence of interruptions and dress and demeanor of interviewees can provide valuable information about the open collar experience of each case in the study. Expressions can give a hint as to how strongly the speaker feels about a subject, how truthful she is being and how comfortable she is with a question (Brady, 1986). Documents can indicate

volume and variety of clients. They can provide insight into how the interviewee conducts business. Observations about surroundings can be valuable in determining how casual the individual appears and how advanced their equipment is. Such things as interruptions and layout of the working area can be invaluable in learning about the interviewee (Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

#### Selecting the Respondents

The number of desired interviewees for the case study was set at twelve, with hopes of getting four individuals from each area selected. Any fewer open collars would have been detrimental to the purpose of a multiple-case study, which is to be able to expand and generalize on a theory based on a repetition of an experiment. Twelve was considered an adequate number, twice as many as the pilot study and large enough to be useful in showing some pattern of response.

The names of the open collars used in the study were derived from the Public Relations Society of America Membership Directory, Nation's

Capital Chapter, 1990, the 1989 Consultants and Consulting Directory, and the Women-Owned Business Directory (1984). Only those listings under a post office box for an address, a home telephone identical or close to the work telephone, a name matching that of the listed executive president -- with no subordinate officers or a designation as a consultant -- singular -- were used.

The author began with forty-three listings and collected ten more names from those listed who knew open collar women in the field. After the names, addresses and telephones numbers of all 53 were collected, the researcher sent each a cover letter explaining her study and indicated she would contact the recipients soon. After a week, the researcher contacted the women to see if they had received the letter, to check if they were indeed open collar and, finally, to arrange a meeting time to conduct the case study.

The author went down the list contacting one woman from each state before going on down the list. Numerous women were unable to assist in the study as

they either were not open collar or not in public relations. One gentleman whose name was mistaken for that of a woman's declined very cordially, offering future assistance if needed.

Twelve women were left available for the study after this gleaning procedure. Of these twelve women who did fit into the study category, only one declined to participate -- she was embarking immediately on a trip. The individual expressed her regrets and offered names of several associates, one of whom lived in the local area and agreed to an interview. Such strong support is notable, especially when considering that refusals of home interviews are relatively common. This may be due to such factors as high crime rate, more females living alone, abuses of social surveys for marketing purposes and lack of time available in a busy schedule (Hartman and Hedblom, 1979). The participation for the study seems to indicate that the topic is of interest to those involved.

After each individual was contacted, a meeting time was set up in her home. The author used one

hour as a guideline for the length of time needed for each interview; Yin (1984) has used an hour as an example of the typical length of the interview with a key informant in a case study (p. 83).

An hour-long period allows several minutes for introductions, settling into the home and work area, establishing a rapport and setting up tape recorder and notebook, yet allows adequate time for detailed answers to interview questions as well as additional comments on the topic. The author intended the "hour" to be a flexible guideline so that there was no rush for respondents who had more lengthy comments and no pressure for those who answered more briefly.

#### Conducting the Pretest

To help ensure the questions used in the case study solicited the desired information, a pretest of three open collars -- one fourth the number used in the actual case study -- was done. The objectives were to determine if there were any misunderstandings of the questions or discomfort with the content, to find out if the questions were leading, and to discover if the questions answered what the

researcher wanted to know. The three open collars were contacted in the same manner as in the actual test, being called after receiving a cover letter. A tape recorder was used to avoid any discrepancies and to serve as backup information.

The questions used in the pretest were derived from ideas the researcher sought to explore as a result of questions raised from the literature reviewed. Each question was designed to help answer the research questions. Each observation of the environment and collection of documents was useful in illustrating and adding insight to these points.

The pretest demonstrated the advantage of the focused, open-ended interview style that was chosen. This type of interview, according to Yin (1984), asks "for the facts of the matter as well as for the respondents' opinions about events" (p. 83). It allows for maximum exchange of information and helps avoid the researcher inadvertently putting words into the interviewee's mouth. This style of interview also helps increase validity by asking each respondent basically the same set of questions.

The pretest also helped demonstrate which order was most advantageous for placement of questions. The researcher purposely asked several questions in different ways to pick up on any contradictions and to strengthen the reliability and validity of concurring answers. By asking the questions at different points in the interview, the respondent is much less aware that repetition is being done and is more inclined to answer honestly. Brady (1976) noted that "there [is] a formula for cross-checks to spot exaggeration or reticence in a subject ... when [an interviewer] puts one statement against an earlier one and detects contradictions" (p. 189).

During the pretest, the author decided the respondents would prefer anonymity. Respondents indicated they would be more comfortable if their names were withheld, because some of the opinions and experiences they expressed are of a sensitive nature -- in regard to both clients and former employers. The researcher assured them that their names would indeed not be used in the hope of promoting greater openness and candor in their responses.

The pretest showed that the hour guideline was fairly accurate; although one interview took less than 45 minutes, the other two ran just over one hour. Respondents answered in depth, and in many cases digressed to answer inadvertently questions designed to be posed later in the interview. In these cases, the author referred back to these comments when the questions came up for further clarity.

It was encouraging that the pretest respondents felt that the questions were clear and more than covered what they had intended to express when they first began to consider the interview. They indicated that they were eager to learn what the case study respondents would say. Therefore, the author promised to provide a copy of the case study findings to all respondents, including those in the pretest.

#### Questions Asked

The questions asked were as follows (See also Appendix B):

(1) Why did you decide to go into business from your home? (Opener question pertaining to all

research questions.)

(2) How do you feel about this move? (Opener question pertaining to all research questions.)

(3) How would you feel about going back to a company again? (Opener question pertaining to all research questions.)

(4) What is your family and social life like now that you live and work under the same roof? (Pertains to research question one.)

(5) What are your child-care arrangements? (Pertains to research question one.)

(6) How has being open collar changed this? (Pertains to research question one.)

(7) How has moving into a more isolated environment affected you? (Pertains to research question two.)

(8) How do you deal with interruptions? (Pertains to research question one.)

(9) How are you doing financially, compared to before you went open collar? (Pertains to research question four.)

(10) What type of clients do you have?

(Pertains to research question three.)

(11) How does this differ from before?

(Pertains to research question three.)

(12) What do clients expect from you? (Pertains to research question two.)

(13) How would your peers characterize you?

(Pertains to research question two.)

(14) What type of image did you have in your previous firm? (Pertains to research question six.)

(15) How were opportunities for promotions in your previous organization? (Pertains to research question five.)

(16) How about salaries? (Pertains to research question four.)

(17) One woman I studied expressed disgust with a male co-worker who made offensive comments to her and explained they were harmless jokes when confronted. Have you had experiences with such incidents and if so, how do you feel about it? (Pertains to research question seven.)

(18) Here's a hypothetical situation: You have a strict deadline three hours away to get something

completed for your most important client and suddenly your child or husband or parent or neighbor (depending on family situation) falls very ill. How do you handle the situation? (Pertains to research question one.)

(19) What are your plans for the future?  
(Closing question, pertaining to all research questions.)

(20) What would your advice be to a woman in public relations considering going open collar?  
(Closing question, pertaining to all research questions.)

#### Observations Made

In addition to collecting and studying documents, the following observations were made during each interview (See also Appendix B):

(1) Is much of the work technical? (Pertains to research question five.)

(2) Is desk cluttered or neatly organized?  
(Pertains to research question two.)

(3) Does telephone ring often? (Pertains to research question one.)

(4) Does equipment appear advanced -- second phone line with answering machine, hi-tech computer, tax machine, copier machine? (Pertains to research question three.)

(5) Is desk located in a separate room?  
(Pertains to research question two.)

(6) Is interviewee casually dressed? (Pertains to research question two.)

(7) What type of decor does the working area of the home have? (Pertains to research question two.)

(8) What type of interruptions are there?  
(Pertains to research question one.)

(9) Are there children nearby? (Pertains to research question one.)

(10) Does interviewee appear stressed or relaxed? (Pertains to research question two.)

(11) Does interviewee generally meet clients at home? (Pertains to research question three.)

#### Conducting the Case Studies

Since the pretest revealed the interview protocol was thorough enough to answer all the points the author intended and because the order of the

questions flowed fairly naturally yet allowed for some double-checking of answers, the case studies were conducted using this schedule. Again, the tape recorder was used for accuracy and anonymity was assured for candidness.

Some of the case studies took well over an hour, and respondents seemed very open and talkative with their answers. All interviewees were happy to provide the author with documentation such as the biography they send to clients. None objected to conducting the interview so that the author could observe the working area.

In each case, the respondent indicated considerable interest in the open collar trend and many noted that the interview reacquainted themselves with their own memories regarding their reasons for and feelings about their move. All were generously willing to contribute their time and all offered further assistance when needed. Therefore, the author feels confident that the responses were honest and well thought out.

### Considering Validity

The researcher acknowledges there are possible risks to the validity of the case study -- that is, the concern that the study accurately measures what it purports to. Since this study relies on self-reports, there is the chance the information will be skewed toward what the interviewee thinks the researcher wants to hear. In an attempt to avoid this, a face-to-face, woman-to-woman rapport was built with each individual in her home setting. The interviewees were made aware of the nature of the study and were urged to be candid and straightforward to help assure accurate findings. Also, the questions were set up so that several repeat themselves in another form to guard for consistency. The author feels that the lengthy, animated responses were open and candid. In addition, spoken words were not the sole source of data -- documents such as biographies, news releases and pamphlets were used to add insight into each woman's situation.

Construct validity is an important test for a study's accuracy. This demands that correct

operational measures be used for the concepts being studied (Yin, 1984). Critics of case studies point to the fact that case study investigators may fail to develop sufficient measures and tend to be subjective. Several tactics can be used in a case study to increase construct validity, however, and the author has employed two main tactics: using multiple sources of evidence and creating a data base that not only includes the reports of responses but is made up of the supporting documentation mentioned. In this case, the author interviewed a dozen participants and obtained biographical and professional documents from each individual. In addition, personal observations were made in a systematic way, following the interview protocol. This base of information was compiled and observed in the same manner for each interviewee.

Internal validity is another important test for a study. This concerns the ability of a study to lead to a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to specific other conditions (Yin, 1984). The analytic tactic of

pattern-matching is useful in this case for demonstrating inferences. In pattern-matching, several pieces of information, such as questions, observations and documents, are related to a theoretical proposition. In this study, the author collected responses of several women to questions which stem from the theoretical literature reviewed. The responses were compared to each other to identify commonalities and differences which applied to the author's propositions. Observations and documents were reviewed in a similar manner. By using different sources of data, the author intended to strengthen the study's usefulness. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989) "Triangulation is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point [and can] ... enhance a study's generalizability" (p. 146).

The problem of external validity, or ability to generalize beyond the immediate case study, can be addressed by noting that this study does not purport to be typical of all open collars nationwide. Rather, the study is designed to add

further insight into a specific phenomenon illustrated by the pattern of twelve sets of responses and serve as a starting point for any future research on the phenomenon. The author is striving to generalize a particular set of results not to a larger universe, but to a broader theory expanded upon in the literature review. Marshall and Rossman (1989) stated that "by linking the specific research questions to larger theoretical constructs ... the writer is showing that the particulars of the study serve to illuminate larger issues, and, therefore, are of significance" (p. 12). In this way, then, this study can be said to be valid.

#### Considering Reliability

Reliability is an important consideration in any study; a study needs to be designed so that if the same procedures are followed by another interviewer, similar results will be obtained. In this study, the author took steps toward minimizing the errors and biases that reduce reliability. A common threat to case study reliability is investigator bias (Yin, 1984). The researcher has been careful not to

introduce personal notions into the respondent's interpretations. A tape recorder was used to ensure notes were correct, and the questions were written so that they were not prejudiced towards one point of view. Also, the interview protocol spells out which questions are to be asked in which order to control replicity conditions. Nevertheless, if a male interviewer were to attempt to conduct a similar study, respondents' candor could possibly be reduced due to the nature of the topic.

A final complaint about case studies, according to Yin (1984), is that they produce massive, unreadable documents and as such are useless. The researcher has attempted to solve this problem by organizing her findings in such a way that patterns of responses are matched to provide for coherent comparisons and clarity of outcomes. This also could help future researchers obtain similar results.

#### Analyzing the Responses

Pattern-matching was used to analyze the evidence. Answers to each question were written on separate sheets of paper. A separate folder was

labeled for each question and filled with twelve sheets, one for each respondent's answer to the particular question. Observations also were written on separate sheets and placed in their respective folder. Documents were sorted into twelve separate folders, one for each respondent, along with a brief description of the individual.

A cross-case analysis was then done to search for commonalities, coinciding patterns, contradictions, trends, and support or disconfirmation for the research questions. By interpreting each response in relation to every other and then relating the data back to the hunch underlying the question, a "chain of evidence" (Yin, 1984, p. 96) is maintained and internal validity is strengthened.

CHAPTER IV  
FINDINGS

Description of Respondents

The twelve open collar women interviewed all were involved in public relations, but their focus varied somewhat. There was also a considerable range of ages and the length of time each had been open collar. Four respondents were found in Maryland, only two open collars were found in the District of Columbia and six respondents came from Virginia. Since the three areas are so close and similar geographically, the author feels the number of respondents from each section is balanced adequately.

Before detailing respondents' answers to the interview protocol, a brief introduction of each woman who participated in the study is provided to give highlights of the variety of individual situations.

The woman who has been working at home the longest -- more than ten years -- began her public relations career after World War II. She started out

working for an advertising agency in New York; and as her reputation grew, she began branching out. She started her own television show, Shoppers' Matinee, published several cooking books, marketed her own food product and wrote articles for several magazines. She began working solely from home upon moving to Charlottesville, VA, with her husband, a macrophotographer (they have no children). Currently, she freelances for several publications and handles public relations for her and her husband's environmental program, Small Secrets. She enjoys assisting her husband, who is an open collar as well.

Also an open collar for a decade, a woman from Bethesda, MD, brings a broad background to her public relations business. Involved with many non-profit agencies, she coordinated for the Martin Luther King Jr. march on Washington, the D.C. Special Olympics and the Make a Wish Foundation of Greater Washington. Previous commercial clients include Coors Beer, Holiday Inn and Majestic Air Service. Currently, she counsels clients in public relations and creative

marketing with specific emphasis on senior citizens. Her children are grown now; but they regularly bring her grandchildren by the house to visit, contributing to what she calls a hectic but rewarding working situation.

A woman from Arlington, VA, with approximately a decade of home-based experience focuses on public relations and marketing for the art of silhouette cutting. Previously trainer for the Congressional Learning Center, where she taught government office skills to new graduates in the D.C. area, she now enjoys freelancing for several publications and marketing her own book. She also works with other public relations practitioners at camps, fairs and arts and crafts centers to publicize her rare talent. Her daughter is grown, but she assists with graphics, when necessary.

An open collar for nine years now, another woman from Arlington, VA, undertook an ambitious project -- creation of a magazine, Swim, entirely on her own, including writing, advertising, photography, editing, publishing and distribution. Now with a circulation

of about 10,000, the magazine is the product of several people's input; but the editor remains the same -- now a mother of a two-year-old girl -- and continues to work from a more flexible home environment.

A practitioner with more than 30 years of experience, a woman from Washington, D.C., has been open collar for approximately six years. She focuses on health care issues and writes for several hospital publications. Self-described as "a sucker for a cause," she also gets involved in projects dealing with aging and housing. She has no children, and although her husband's children are grown, they bring the grandchildren by the home regularly. She particularly enjoys working from home because she can enlist the assistance of her husband, when needed.

A woman from Charlottesville, VA, who is also involved in health care projects, has been working from home for several years as well. Spurred into the open collar move when her company moved out of town, she freelances for government agencies and does analysis for hospitals. The household is busy -- she

has children, and her husband also works from home -- but she indicates she would rather have it this way than going back to an office and missing out on rearing her family.

A recent open collar, a woman from Bethesda, MD, started out working for a real estate company and gradually began taking more and more work to her home. Currently she considers herself an open collar, although she still maintains contact with the company on a limited basis. Completing a weaning-away process from her former company, she spends the majority of her time working from her home office, which she prefers. Although the company would like to keep her on, she plans on ending the relationship soon so that she can focus on her open collar endeavors full-time. She has no children living at home -- they are in college.

A woman from Washington, D.C., has been open collar for over three years and prefers to consider herself a generalist in terms of the variety of her clients. She freelances for several publications, including one for the military. Her experience with

the USO as well as her transfers with her husband (a retired serviceman) has made her familiar with this type of client. Three of her children, all grown, also joined the service. Although she has a busy schedule, she is attempting to increase her client load even further and enjoys the flexibility open collar work allows in this regard.

A woman in Silver Spring, MD, has been an open collar for less than two years and already has a major client -- Bell-Atlantic Mobile Systems. In addition, she has other clients that came to her largely due to her positive reputation in the public relations field. Coinciding with her open collar move, she moved into a town house and became a mother. She is grateful for the open collar move because she can spend more time with her girl, now almost two.

A woman from Reston, VA, has been open collar for just over a year and has a wide variety of clients: national associations, recycling and health agencies and several local companies. The mother of two young children writes for several publications in

addition to her organization projects. While keeping in contact with organizations she has previously worked for, she enjoys the freedom of freelancing from home.

An open collar for less than a year, one Annapolis, MD, woman uses her eleven years of public relations experience toward attracting large clients -- a major utility company among them -- while caring for her young child. In addition, she writes for a government newsletter, is involved with a college at the University of Maryland and is affiliated with a society that provides management consulting for non-profit agencies. Being open collar allows her to use her experience with her former company -- a non-profit agency -- and to control the direction of her own public relations program.

Finally, the woman with the most recent open collar career -- not yet a year -- nevertheless is doing quite well. The Stafford, VA, practitioner has more than ten years of experience in the field and believes working from home will allow her to advance as far as possible. Already her list of clients

include government agencies, telecommunications firms and publishing companies. She currently has no children, but plans to in the future.

#### Results of Interview Protocol

The interview protocol (See Appendix B) contained twenty questions and eleven observations. Each is covered in the following pages.

#### Question 1 - Why did you decide to go into business from your home?

Five of the women interviewed indicated their main reason was to find greater autonomy and flexibility, supporting the theories that entrepreneurs are exceptionally autonomous. One woman said she felt "wrung out from the killer pace" of corporate life and felt nothing was worth putting up with such a workaholic lifestyle. So, she began working from home, where she can set her own schedule and allow herself time to pursue outside interests. Another echoed these comments on a hectic office environment and believes open collar work allows her "the chance to think, relax, and enjoy some peace and quiet with less interruptions." One woman pointed to

her ability as an open collar to pick and choose her clients. Broad variety of clients was very important to her and she noted that most companies are relatively narrow in range of projects and clients. Another woman said she felt frustrated with her former company because it restricted her from launching programs she considered necessary. Finally, she branched out on her own and enjoys the power of "not having to answer to anybody, but just going ahead with a good idea." This sentiment was echoed by another woman, who got tired of having to "work everything around people's egos instead of just working on the important things -- the projects that were ambitious and would help the company much better in the long run."

Four of the women cited sheer feasibility as their incentive to open up shop at home, reflecting the literature indicating the increased affordability of going open collar in today's high technology society. In one woman's case, her company moved out of town and, having children and a self-employed husband, she declined to relocate. Since she already

had contacts and a good reputation, she decided to buy a few pieces of equipment and freelance. Another woman found that reemerging in the workforce in her 40's after going back to school placed her at a disadvantage in the competition for jobs with younger graduates. Purchasing a relatively sophisticated yet inexpensive computer, she set up her business at home. She decided to rely on her reputation from previous experience to bring her the heavy client load she now enjoys. Another woman decided to work from home after moving to the nation's capital area with her husband. She said that what she does best -- writing, photography and dealing with others on the telephone -- is as easily done from home as in an office. Another woman decided upon moving into the metropolitan area that it would be more economically feasible to start her business at home than to deal with the overhead expenses of an office. Since her home is relatively near the nation's capital, she found it easy to round up large clients. Although she is new to the area she feels confident that through word of mouth her reputation will grow.

Three of the women indicated that they went open collar basically so they could spend more time with their young children. One pointed out, "She's only young once and I would never want to miss out on the most important part of her growing up." Another commented: "What's the point of working if you knock yourself out on professional things and don't have enough time left over for what really matters? My daughter is the best thing that's ever happened to me." One woman became pregnant at the same time she was transferred with her husband to the D. C. metropolitan area from California. She keeps in contact with her former company and arranges her day so that she can meet all her deadlines yet still have time to spend with her young daughter. She enjoys letting her child help her in ways that may not be time- and labor-saving but provide the child with a sense of importance and accomplishment.

Question 2 - How do you feel about this move?

All the respondents indicated that they were very happy about going open collar. One especially enthusiastic respondent said: "I love it! I can think

of nothing better -- it's convenient, all I have to commute is three stories, and I get to spend more time with my family. I'm very proud of my own business." Another respondent felt that working open collar proved to herself that she has more self-discipline than she ever dreamed of. One interviewee conceded that open collar work has its ups and downs, but she said the benefits of freedom far outweigh the loss of office camaraderie. Another interviewee echoed these comments, saying that she misses being around her office friends but is glad she doesn't have to answer to anyone when making decisions.

Question 3 - How would you feel about going back to a company again?

To this, one respondent joked, "not now that I'm spoiled -- I mean here I can get a really good cup of coffee!" She added that she just was not a nine-to-five type of person and the open collar life was much more suited to her style. One woman believed she might go back, but it would have to be after her children were grown. Three of the women

indicated that they doubted they would go back to a company but said they might if their business took a severe downturn and they got a good offer from someone else. As one woman put it, "Never say never!" Three other women said they would not even consider going back because they felt their age would be a disadvantage in a relatively young workforce.

Question 4 - What is your family and social life like now that you live and work under the same roof?

One woman said things felt solitary much of the time since her husband passed away and her children are grown, yet she said when her children and grandchildren visit things can get hectic. Another also felt home work was quiet -- her children are away at college and her husband works days outside the home -- but found it easier to work with such silence. All of the women with children at home found things hectic but all said they enjoyed being near their children and being able to spend time with them.

Question 5 - What are your child-care arrangements?

Only those with young children were asked this question. None of these five women used day care centers. One had a neighbor visit for several hours each day; two arranged their schedule so they worked when their children were playing, napping or at school; and two had a teenaged girl come to her home three days a week to watch her child.

Question 6 - How has being open collar changed this?

Four of the women indicated that they went open collar at approximately the same time they became pregnant. Each said she did not like the idea of having to put her child in day care -- one even indicated that she did not trust many of the day care centers in her area. Apparently, she had heard a few negative stories from friends who were using nearby centers. She also alluded to several isolated newspaper articles about day care center workers being convicted on molestation charges. In addition, she pointed out, day care centers are a very easy place for a child to pick up many kinds of contagious illness such as colds and the flu.

One woman, however, had young children before

going open collar and said she used day care before she moved her business into her home. This woman did not consider day care centers a problem and indicated she was happy with the local center she used.

Nevertheless, she said she likes spending quality time with her youngster now that she works from home and does a great deal less worrying about her child than when she used the day care.

Question 7 - How has moving into a more isolated environment affected you?

All twelve respondents acknowledged that open collar work is more isolating than office work and all expressed missing the camaraderie, as the literature would suggest. However, all of the respondents said that they did not consider the isolation much of a problem because they maintain their friends and contacts, get out to professional meetings and lunches and have peers they can call to solicit advice or brainstorm with. One woman said, "Sometimes when I'm at home I'll think of something I've just got to share with someone, so I just get on the phone -- just like if I was at the office, only I

don't use the intercom."

Some respondents seemed to be bothered by isolation more than others, though, and one woman joked that sometimes the only adult voices she hears during the day are either on the telephone or on television. She enjoys going for a brief walk when the house gets too stifling and frequently runs into a neighbor to converse with when she is out. Another respondent said, "Things do get lonely sometimes, but I'm just so busy that it never lasts for long."

Question 8 - How do you deal with interruptions?

All respondents acknowledged they had their share of interruptions when asked this question. Five of the respondents believed they have fewer interruptions than they did in an office. One woman said, "Here, I can ask to call someone back. Before, it would start out with a head through my door, followed by a whole body, then they'd take steps towards my desk, and the next thing I'd know, they be sitting in my chair talking about some personal problem and I wouldn't want them to think I was unsociable!" Four of the respondents indicated

that their answering machine was their "lifesaver" (in the words of one respondent) when things got busy -- they could take in messages and get back to the callers when they had more time.

Three of the respondents said that when things get busy they close their home office door to avoid interruptions. As one woman commented, "My son knows not to come up, but when the door is closed he really knows it!" One woman said that although her house is much quieter than an office, she sometimes feels motivated by all the office-style hustle and bustle and related a story of a woman who made a professional recording of office sounds and plays them in the background during her open collar hours to help provide a busy atmosphere. The interviewee joked that she would like to get ahold of the tape so she could impress clients with such an atmosphere when they call on the telephone.

Question 9 - How are you doing financially, compared to before you went open collar?

All of the respondents indicated that making more money was not their motive nor expectation in

going open collar. One woman did feel she was doing twice as well financially as before she went open collar, and considered it "a nice surprise."

Another woman currently is earning about the same as before her move but believes if she continues at her pace she will surpass her corporation earnings. But most of the women were not making more than before they went open collar.

One woman pointed out that her income was supplemental, and she felt relieved that her husband had a medical plan and insurance benefits for the two of them. This point is interesting when considering that all of the respondents were married to relatively successful men, although in two cases the husbands were also open collars and in one case the husband had passed on. Most of the women, however, felt that although they were not earning as much as before, their quality of life was greater. Two women pointed out that they feel they are keeping more of the money they earn -- not having such high commuting, clothing, function and parking expenses. Three women pointed out that now they will not have

to worry about child care expenses and that being able to spend time with their children, pick and choose their own direction and proceed at the pace they choose far outweighs the reduction in income.

Question 10 - What type of clients do you have?

This question lead to a wide variety of responses: telecommunications firms, government agencies, national association, non-profit agencies, hospitals, real estate organizations, publications and local corporations.

The majority of the projects the women undertook involved people-oriented themes -- introducing a public figure, approaching businesses with an angle such as the importance of health care or the marketability of products geared toward the aging and gaining publicity for an organization.

The responses were interesting when noting that home-based women once had the "boutique shop" image mentioned in the literature reviewed and were not considered capable of handling a large corporation. Apparently, this image is fading, at least in these

women's cases, because several had major clients. One woman said, "It's heartening to think that a huge company like Bell Atlantic would have me handling their public affairs and not go for some big prestigious pr firm to make themselves look good." One woman pointed out that it is a smart move that prompts companies to take on open collars -- their asking price is often lower than a public relations firm that must pay overhead, salaries and benefits. Another woman believed companies may realize open collars tend to work harder and do more because they may not be as well known and established. Yet another interviewee believed she received a major firm's contract because of her reputation in the field. She indicated she was impressed that a large company would let her record rather than her open collar status speak for her.

However, not all of the women had large clients; several women had a number of smaller clients, including some individual persons seeking recognition and a particular image through a public relations program.

Question 11 - How does this differ from before?

All of the respondents indicated that their type of client is similar to the kind they dealt with in their previous corporation; but the variety was much greater and the load more varied. This appears to relate back to open collar entrepreneurs' drive for more flexibility, mentioned in the literature review. One woman said, "Now I do it all -- media, com-rel, releases -- and can pick up clients that interest me." Another felt more productive because she was able to focus on clients she morally believed in -- non-profit agencies, organizations helping the aged and companies dealing with health care.

Nevertheless, one woman expressed slight dismay that, since most of her clients were relatively small, they had lower budgets and she was not able to launch large projects. Another woman echoed these restrictions but indicated she enjoyed the challenge of finding ways within a tight budget to accomplish what she felt was needed, completing what is considered a traditionally feminine role.

Question 12 - What do clients expect from you?

Responses to this question varied. Two women believed their clients expected more personal attention than they would receive from a large public relations firm with many employees. Three other women found that their clients were drawn to them because of their extensive experience in the field and also were attracted to their lower asking price when compared to a large public relations firm. Three women pointed to professionalism as a main expectation, believing their clients were drawn to them by their reputation. Two other women said quality was considered an important criterion by their clients, regardless of the practitioner's open collar status. One woman said clients usually expect something that can be done right away and felt she was at an advantage over large public relations firms because she could make her decisions immediately without having to go through several approval chains of command. One woman believed clients do not really know what they want as far as public relations goes but want to be sure they get good publicity.

Question 13 - How would your peers characterize you?

The respondents came up with several different answers to this question. Not wishing to sound conceited, the women all made various disclaimers to the effect that these were comments from other people and they were not sure how accurate they were. Two of the women believed peers considered them ethical and two chose the description of creative. Two of the interviewees said they were considered "entrepreneurial" -- one woman learned this from a group encounter session her office held to improve interpersonal relations and help each employee learn about her- or himself. Two women used the terms "credible" and "effective," and felt this reputation helped them gain recognition for obtaining clients after they went open collar. One woman said she was considered energetic and full of initiative, one said she was called "dependable" and another woman said she was intelligent about high-technology projects. The final woman said: "I think people are kind of in awe of me. A lot of people don't know how I can juggle everything -- a child, husband, career."

Question 14 - What type of image did you have in your previous organization?

This question led to varied responses, as well. Three women indicated they had a good reputation in their previous firm, and two said they were considered thorough. Two women believed they were respected as professionals and one woman said those in her previous organization called her "a pistol." Other descriptions revealed were "flexible," "good leader" and "responsive." One woman said she was never told by the employer or employees of her company how they felt about her until she decided to leave; at this point they praised her efficiency and credibility.

Question 15 - How were opportunities for promotions in your previous organization?

Five of the respondents said their company was fair with its promotion system. One termed her company "progressive" and was happy that her CEO had the person in the public relations slot report directly to him. Seven of the respondents, however, were unhappy with their former promotion system. One

woman noted, "In one case, [the company] deliberately excluded a woman from a prime opening -- and she was well qualified, had seniority and had a strong reputation. Even the board wanted her, but the president hired a man from the outside." Another woman noticed that few of the top positions in her company were filled with women and felt a glass ceiling kept her limited as far as her advancement in the company.

Question 16 - How about salaries?

Responses were similar to the preceding query for this question, as well. Five of the respondents thought their previous salary system was reasonable, and in one case very good. Seven of the respondents were unhappy with their previous salary system, however. One woman said, "I feel that if I had been a man in that slot I would have been paid more -- not much, maybe a \$5,000 difference -- but still, I don't think they were completely fair." Another pointed out that she believed her company underpaid public relations, "even the administrative slots were making more than my position."

Question 17 - One woman I studied expressed disgust with a male co-worker who made offensive comments to her and explained they were harmless jokes when confronted. Have you had experiences with such incidents and if so, how do you feel about it?

This scenario was developed because it is usually easier to identify an unpleasant situation rather than to volunteer information about it happening. In addition, an example can help to jog a person's memory, especially about controversial topics. Contrary to what the literature regarding the pervasiveness of sexual harassment would suggest, eight of the respondents said they had not been victim of such actions. One woman said: "You get the jokes sometimes, but I really don't mind, so I just kind of laugh along with everyone. . . . As far as anything else, I think maybe my conservative appearance conveys that they wouldn't get away with it so they don't try anything."

Four of the women, however, did experience some form of this type of harassing behavior. One woman resented being called "dear," and another was

bothered when she was asked to cover the telephones when a secretary was ill -- despite the fact that any of the men was available. Another woman had trouble with co-workers making suggestive jokes and felt they may have done so for the challenge since she presents a serious demeanor. One woman said: "The chairman of the board, who normally is very pro-women's rights and is very sensitive, had a bad habit of patting me on the head affectionately in public since I'm so short. He cut it out when I explained that I did not like it, though."

Question 18 - Here's a hypothetical situation: you have a strict deadline three hours away to get something completed for your most important client and suddenly your child/husband/parent/neighbor falls very ill. How do you handle the situation?

To this question, all of the respondents indicated that their families come first but at the same time they have made a point never to miss a deadline. Each respondent said she would call the client for an extension if she could not get her husband or other relative to handle the situation.

One woman said: "This has happened to me before when my daughter was ill. I took her to the hospital and called my husband from there to come over.

Meanwhile, I worked on the project but the client gave me more time -- they understood."

Question 19 - What are your plans for the future?

The respondents differed in their answers to this question. Half hoped to build up their business more, and three of these planned eventually to hire associates. One hopes to start a family soon, another wants to settle down a bit and travel more. One woman plans to write another book and another is attempting to get published in more prestigious publications. One wants to take on more clients and move into a larger house and another wants to cut back on her number of clients but take on bigger projects with the major ones.

Question 20 - What would your advice be to a woman in public relations going open collar?

Interesting suggestions came from this final question. Three women advised that it is important to get experience first and build up a

reputation while gathering contacts. Two said it is helpful to keep active in public relations organizations and to attend as many seminars and workshops as possible. Two women thought organization and self-discipline are vital and one woman found it necessary to specialize. As she put it: "You can't spread yourself too thin and keep control. Find your strengths and concentrate on fine tuning them." Another woman said she suggested a prospective open collar keep her goals in mind and refrain from expecting miracles when starting out. Another woman pointed to the importance of self-confidence and self-marketing skills. One woman said a network of peers was important for brainstorming and keeping informed and added that "a good husband is also an asset." The twelfth woman said, "Realize it involves intensive effort and energy -- and wonderful satisfaction."

#### Observations

Observations of the respondent, her business and her working area were made through examining eleven points (See also Appendix B). The points are covered

below.

Is Much of the Work Technical?

Much of the work the respondents did was technical -- they did their own typing, filing and telephone calling. One woman indicated she would prefer to find an associate to take on these tasks, but most of the women considered the more mundane technical tasks to be a necessary evil toward reaching the goals they set when performing the managerial function. One woman claimed she occassionally enjoyed the repetitive technical jobs -- they were therapuetic for her during a hectic day.

Is desk cluttered or neatly organized?

All of the respondents' desks were cluttered with numerous papers; but half had their stacks of paper neatly organized, either piled in a corner or placed in a filing area. The amount of documents on the desks hints at the relatively large volume of work covered by each interview. The neatness some women showed in their organization may stem from the fact that their desk is a part of their home; the tendency toward keeping their office as clean as the

rest of the home may subconsciously be held in this instance. There is also the possibility that these women got to be successful in part due to their organizational skills, and the tidiness demonstrated with their desks is perhaps an extension of this talent and drive for organization.

Does telephone ring often?

In seven of the interviews the telephone rang between questions; in one case it rang three times. This was no problem, however, because the respondent told the caller she would reach them shortly and resumed the interview. While each respondent had an answering machine, those taking calls preferred to handle them personally when possible, even if just to let them know they were in the middle of an interview and would have to get back to them later. The telephone interruptions helped demonstrate the type and level of interruptions the women faced in a typical day.

Does equipment appear advanced?

All of the respondents had advanced equipment. Only one had no computer; she used an electric

typewriter. Most had a relatively new computer, printer, faxer and copier. All four who had no fax machine or copier said they use a place nearby with reasonable rates to do their faxing and copying or rely on a courier if faxing is not necessary.

Is desk located in a separate room?

All of the interviewees had their desk located in a separate room; in one case the house had a separate loft/studio area for such an arrangement. Another converted an unfinished basement area into her office. These arrangements helped to demonstrate how easy it is for an open collar to set her office up in a similar manner to a corporate office. All of the women felt their office provided them with sufficient privacy, quiet and access to necessary items such as manuals and other documents located on the bookshelf or in the file cabinet.

Is interviewee casually dressed?

All of the interviewees could be considered to have been casually dressed, thus fitting in with the unbuttoned-shirt, relaxed image behind Edwards' (1985) coining of the term open collar. This also is a

physical distinction between open collars and entrepreneurs. Not one wore a two-piece skirt set or grey/navy outfit, and ten were in pants -- half of these were nice jeans. One woman commented, "I like being able to dress comfortably -- I always said I write better without a bra on!"

What type of decor does the working area of the home have?

It was interesting to note the differences in office style. Some mimicked the decor of a contemporary corporate office, complete with simple, black or white Scandinavian-style furnishings and plastic foliage. Others emphasized the casual aspect of open collar work and were decorated more colonial-homey, complete with soft couches, large paintings and personal touches such as gifts from children. Both the modern and the homey offices had some type of bookcase, in most cases filled with a wide variety of books, ranging from human resource textbooks and public relations handbooks to paperbacks and Reader's Digest condensed books. Family pictures were displayed in almost every

office, similar to what is often seen in corporate offices.

What type of interruptions are there?

Perhaps due to the previous knowledge of the interview and the ability of the interviewee to set aside time for it, there were few interruptions -- fewer than the author expected. Two of the respondents had brief visitors, but the interview was resumed quickly. Telephone calls were easily put off and in the two cases where children were present, they generally played quietly.

Are there children nearby?

Those women with children encouraged them to resume their play when they became talkative, and returned to answering questions. The author was amazed at the skill several of the open collars demonstrated in simultaneously watching and responding to her child while listening to, thinking about and responding to my questions.

Does interviewee appear stressed or relaxed?

All of the interviewees appeared relaxed during the interview. After reviewing the literature on the

personality traits of a typical entrepreneur and being aware of the qualities needed for someone in a people-oriented field such as public relations, the author expected the interviewees to be pleasant, outgoing and personable. The author was not disappointed; each woman was friendly and animated and seemed relaxed during the interview. In each case, the respondent was hospitable, offering coffee and tea and providing a comfortable chair or couch. One woman commented, "This is a refreshing break for me -- I'm usually the one doing the interviewing!"

Does interviewee generally meet clients at home?

Rarely did any of the respondents meet clients at home. This may be due to persisting discomfort with a potential "boutique" image and also may result from most of the women's proximity to clients. One woman indicated that, because of her central location, she occasionally hosted clients in her office but usually she went to their office or met for lunch in the city. Another woman indicated that she enjoyed going to meet clients because, "it gives me a chance to dress up -- you know, the pumps,

business suit, jewelry -- and it's nice to get out of the house every now and then for a change of pace." But one woman, who lives alone, alluded to the discomfort of having someone, particularly a man, come to her home office. She indicated she once turned town a project because she did not like the idea of the client insisting on coming to her office.

#### Documents and Publications

The author collected various documentation from each individual, such as news releases, biographies that are sent to potential clients, pamphlets and promotions of projects.

One interesting facet of the documentation was the various ways in which the women marketed their business. Two of the women had a folded pamphlet about themselves and their business, complete with their picture and logo (one woman's logo was a distinct cursive-font style for her name and the other's was her monogram in a diamond). One of the women's pamphlets focused primarily on her achievements and experience, while the other offered an interesting public relations survey. Readers of

the pamphlet answered the survey to themselves as they read along, and when finished they were provided a synopsis of what their scores meant. Higher ratings meant their public relations needs were fairly well met, and additional ways of improving were offered. Lower ratings meant they needed more help, and advice was provided on how to create a more dynamic program.

Many of the women had a compilation of comments about her and her business available to send, as well. The credibility of these women is clearly evident when considering that one woman's projects were lauded by such media giants as The New York Times and The Washington Post. Another was praised by such influential practitioners as the director of MCI public relations and the director of the U.S. Telephone Association.

Most of the women sent biographies to potential clients to provide them with background information about themselves, their business, their skill and expertise and their specialties. These biographies demonstrated the women's professionalism and

experience. One biography gave a brief definition of such services as communications plan, marketing methods, publicity, media relations and special events. It went on to say how the practitioner could handle the clients' needs in each area and gave examples of her qualifications. Another biography relied heavily on the practitioner's extensive background of experience and included references to her position with the Public Relations Society of America: she had been on its Board of Directors, had been an Assembly Delegate, was Chairman of Hospitality and was Chairman of the Membership Committee of the Travel and Tourism Section for the organization.

News releases also gave a clue to the women's impressive accomplishments. Some had been published in local newspapers, others had written for magazines such as the military's Life in the Times, the local The Virginian and Realtor, or the popular Washington Journalism Review.

One last interesting observation from the documents regarded the ambitiousness of many of the

women. One woman had embarked on a particularly creative side business venture and presented the author with a newly created pamphlet advertising it. The project was designed to cure a common phobia in today's society -- the fear of flying. It involved a set of videotapes designed to walk a person step-by-step through the process of taking a flight on an airplane. The tape series is purported to be quite successful.

#### Answering the Research Questions

The questions and observations addressed in the interview protocol are designed to answer the research questions posed in the literature review. The questions "Why did you decide to go into business from your home?," "How do you feel about this move?" and "How would you feel about going back to a company again?" served as opening questions. They were designed to have an underlying application toward all of the research questions. The questions "What are your plans for the future?" and "What would your advice be to a woman in public relations considering going open collar?" were closing questions. They

also were intended to apply to all of the research questions and were intended to help offer additional insight into the women's situation.

Research Question 1 - How adequate was child care in the open collar's previous organization?

The protocol questions: "What are your child-care arrangements?," "How has being open collar changed this?," "How do you deal with interruptions?," "How would you handle the hypothetical situation if your child got ill but you had a deadline three hours away with your most important client?" and "What is your family and social life like now that you live and work under the same roof?" all added insight into the open collar's child care situation. The observations "Does telephone ring often?," "What type of interruptions are there?" and "Are there children nearby?" applied here also.

Of the four mothers interviewed, only one had her children before going open collar. This woman stated, "I did not trust day care centers and had a hard time finding a place." The other three mothers

indicated that they would never put their child in a day care center and prefer to be able to care for their own child, with help from a babysitter and friends. This seems to indicate that the women did not have quite the difficult time affording and obtaining day care as the literature such as that of Braddy (1989) and Christensen (1985) would suggest. Rather, the findings indicate that the mothers' decision to work from home was related to a personal concern toward participating in her children's growing up and the open collar arrangement was the most satisfactory way to do this. These findings seem to suggest that average-quality day care is not so much hard to find and afford as the theoretical literature reviewed suggests, but that these women with young children prefer to be able to spend time caring for their young ones and being a part of their growing up.

Research Question 2 - How strong is autonomy as a motivator for the open collar?

Protocol questions "How has moving into a more isolated environment affected you?," "What do clients

expect from you?" and "How would your peers characterize you?" were designed to add insight into the open collar's personality traits. The observations "Is desk cluttered or neatly organized?," "Is desk located in a separate room?," "Is interviewee casually dressed?," "What type of decor does the working area of the home have?" and "Does interviewee appear stressed or relaxed?" also provide a more in-depth look into the women's lives. Five of the respondents indicated the major reason for their move was to be their own boss. While the others did not point to autonomy as the main reason they felt it was an importing influencer. This supports literature such as Gregg (1985) and Scott (1986) on entrepreneurial traits, which holds that people who run their own business like to take charge and enjoy power and control. Relating to these traits, the women felt their peers generally considered them efficient and motivated. The overall casual, relaxed demeanor of the women and the individualistic way with which they set up their working area further demonstrated the women's

autonomy.

Research Question 3 - How strong is flexibility as a motivator for the open collar?

The interview questions "What type of clients do you have?" and "How does this differ from before?" were applied here. The observations "Does equipment appear advanced?" and "Does interviewee generally meet clients at home?" also apply.

The flexibility question was answered strongly by five of the respondents. These women indicated that the ability to devise their own schedule was a main factor in their open collar move. Others did not feel flexibility was the main factor in their move but considered it important. This supports the literature on entrepreneurs from sources such as Edwards and Edwards (1985) and Wolfgram (1984) that states that people in business for themselves enjoy running their own show at their own pace. The universality of high-technology equipment reflects the literature on the affordability of advanced equipment and the flexibility it offers the open collar worker.

Research Question 4 - How important was the organization's salary system as a factor in the open collar's move?

The questions "How are you doing financially compared to before you went open collar?" and "How were opportunities for salaries in your previous organization?" apply to this research question. Seven of the respondents indicated they were not happy with their previous firm's salary system. This supports the theoretical literature on unequal salaries between men and women in public relations. However, the imbalance does not appear to occur in every company.

Many of the interviewees expressed disappointment with the discrepancy between men's and women's salaries, which supports literature such as that of Toth (1989), pointing out the imbalance of pay based on gender. Interestingly, however, these women also indicated that they were not doing as well financially now than they were before they went open collar and they did not expect to in most cases since they were no longer part of a big firm with a large

budget. One explanation for this difference in reactions to the money question may stem from the fact that although the open collars were making less in general than they were with a company, they were free to expand their business if desired with no office-politics restricting them and they had many quality-of-life perks not present in corporate life. In addition, as one woman put it, "I don't mind so much driving slow if the traffic's heavy, but it gets maddening if you see all the cars in the next lane somehow speeding along right next to you." This sentiment implies that setting one's own financial limits is tolerable but being trapped in a gender-based imbalance is not.

Research Question 5 - How important was the organization's advancement system as a factor in the open collar's move?

The question "How were opportunities for promotions in your previous organization?" underlies this research question. The observation "Is much of the work technical?" applies here as well. Seven of the respondents expressed

dissatisfaction with their previous firm's promotion system and in most cases felt a glass ceiling existed because of their sex. This supports literature such as Broom and Dozier (1986) and Cline et al. (1986), which noted the discrepancy in advancement between men and women was based primarily on gender.

Although much of the work the open collars do is technical, the women indicate they do not mind because they also conduct a great deal of managerial business and realize the technical tasks are necessary to carry out the public relations program.

Research Question 6 - How prevalent were perceived stereotypes as a motivation to go open collar?

The question "What type of image did you have in your previous organization?" applied here. Four of the women interviewed felt subtle types of behavior were directed toward them due to their gender. However, overall the respondents indicated their previous employer and employees held them in high regard and each interviewee believed she was respected as an efficient professional. This tends to contradict the

literature on sex and gender stereotypes, which held that working women are often perceived as inefficient and less serious about their career, from sources such as Shepard (1985) and Fernandez (1988). Nevertheless, in the few cases mild negative stereotypes were sensed, they were in one woman's words, "a nice relief to get away from."

All of the cases seem to indicate that negative stereotypes concerning women in the workplace were not held by any of the people in the women's previous organizations. Whether it be because the women were exceptional, the organizations were progressive or because negative stereotyping of working women is recognized as wrong and thus is declining, these findings do not reflect those of the theoretical literature reviewed indicating the pervasiveness of negative stereotyping of working women.

Research Question 7 - How prevalent was sexual harassment as a motivation to go open collar?

This final question relates to the protocol scenario "Have you had experience with such incidents as the hypothetical situation of a co-worker making

offensive comments and passing them off as harmless jokes and how do you feel about it?" The majority of those interviewed indicated they had not been victim to such behavior, although four did experience some form of harassment. Those who did dealt with it in various ways -- laughing it off, confronting the offender and explaining it would not be tolerated and ignoring the behavior. These findings seem to indicate that sexual harassment in the case of the women interviewed is not as prevalent as the literature, such as Terpstra (1989), would suggest.

CHAPTER V  
CONCLUSIONS

New Knowledge Developed

This study differed from previous research on open collar women (Christensen, 1988), in that it found the home-based career to be a positive experience. Contrary to opinions such as those of Oakley (1984) and Olerup, Schneider and Monod (1985) who felt the isolation of home-based work could be detrimental to women, the impression shared by respondents in this study was that home-based work is rewarding overall.

Each respondent experienced unique events leading to her career move, but all of the interviewees shared certain common reasons for working from home. As predicted by the author, gaining autonomy and flexibility, caring for children and escaping a perceived glass ceiling were the most common factors involved in the women's career move. All of the respondents indicated they were happy with their career move, and the few who said they might go

back to corporate life explained they would only do so if things began to go downhill with their own business.

The study closely matched the findings of the preliminary study in regard to the main reasons for the open collar's move being a drive for greater autonomy and flexibility. These findings support the literature from sources such as Scott (1986) and Gregg (1985), who observed that entrepreneurs are independent by nature and prefer to set their own schedule.

The findings on the importance of the open collar being home to care for her children closely matched the findings in the preliminary study. Of the respondents who had children, one had her child before going open collar and cited difficulty obtaining suitable day care. The three who went open collar before having their children all indicated they would not trust their child to a day care center. However, the findings cannot be said to strongly support literature such as that of Christensen (1988) and Fierman (1988), which observe

that day care is difficult to find and afford. All four women with children indicated a preference for caring for their own children, which indicates a problem not so much for companies without day care centers but for companies that do not provide a flexible schedule and adequate maternity leave to women with young children.

The respondents supported the author's prediction that respondents would be concerned that salary and promotion opportunities for public relations women in corporations still lagged behind men. However, the importance of this discrepancy toward the women's open collar move was not as strong as surmised from literature such as that of Toth and Cline (1989) on salary discrepancies and Broom and Dozier (1985) on advancement barriers. The study's findings closely matched those of the preliminary study in that salary and advancement imbalances were not the most important factors toward the open collar move. Only one woman branched out on her own as a direct result of feeling held back by a glass ceiling. However, all indicated that although the

imbalance was not their main reason for leaving, it figured into their decision and once they had their own business they felt great relief from such barriers.

The study offered information not covered in the preliminary study regarding negative stereotypes of working women. It was found that, contrary to the literature such as Fernandez (1988) and Shepard (1985) that holds that women are considered less efficient and job-oriented, the women interviewed were considered in high regard by their previous company. They received both admiration and respect. Ironically for the companies, it was this efficiency and professionalism that helped their former employee become an open collar success after breaking away.

Findings on sexual harassment were similar to the preliminary study in that the majority of respondents did not consider the issue to be a major factor behind their open collar move. However, the preliminary study revealed one woman whose main reason for leaving her company was to escape the sexual harassment she encountered there. Although

several women in the study indicated they had been victim to mildly offensive behavior, this was merely an irritating factor, not an important enough factor for them to quit. These findings do not support the observations from sources such as Terpstra (1989), who stated that sexual harassment was a widespread, pervasive problem in corporate society.

The study did find a relationship -- though subtle -- between public relations women branching out on their own and their perception of sexual discrimination in organizations in such forms as uneven salary and advancement, stereotyping and lack of child care. The study found a more direct relationship between the women starting their own home business and their drive for autonomy and flexibility. Also, it was discovered that the economic feasibility of going open collar facilitated the women's career move.

#### Supplemental Insights

Observations from the women's surroundings and documentation provided added further insight into the women's situations. The women's casual dress

confirmed Edwards' (1985) observation that home-based workers can dress with a more laid-back, easy style. However, the women's office decor revealed that although some were comfortable with a homey atmosphere other preferred a modern style similar to many formal corporate offices. All of the women used high-technology equipment and each set aside a separate area to gain some privacy and to contribute to a professional environment. The interviewees dealt with various interruptions during the interview; but they were able to handle them quickly, either diverting a child's attention to a toy or game, telling callers she would get back to them or asking visitors to return later.

Many of the women interviewed had quite successful businesses -- several had major clients, most were highly recommended by influential sources, many had been published in noted newspapers and magazines and others put out biographies filled with impressive qualifications and experience. The creativity of the women could be seen from their diverse and imaginative promotional pamphlets,

including those for ambitious side-projects. Although not all of the women interviewed had major clients each felt successful in her own right -- some for having found a positive balance of the family and work experience and others for proving to themselves that they had the independence and self-discipline to run their own business.

#### Limitations of Study

Due to time and expense constraints, twelve women were interviewed from the local area. Although this number serves as a useful starting point in generalizing the findings to the overall theory which sparked the research and although geographical area does not play a vital role in the topic being studied, a larger number of women spread out over a wider geographic area could produce a stronger data base of information.

The study can serve as a beginning for future research. Scholars may find it useful to interview male open collars in addition to female. In this way, comparisons between men's and women's responses could point out interesting commonalities or

differences between the genders' situations. Same sex interviews would be more likely to produce the most candid responses in this case, as women would tend to be more comfortable answering sensitive questions when a woman is asking them, and in the same manner, men would presumably be more comfortable being interviewed in this case by a man.

Cross-checks and repeating questions such as included in this study would be useful in further research, as well, to check for the contradictions and omissions that self-reports can result in, particularly during interviews on a sensitive topic.

Future studies may find it useful to include more single open collars, who are not influenced by the security of spouse benefits. In addition, it may prove informative to include follow-ups of the case studies after a certain time period to provide illumination into changes of the open collars' attitudes and progression.

#### Applications

All of the respondents indicated that they had good reputations as being efficient, hard workers.

Perhaps it is that same drive that drove them into their entrepreneurial endeavor. With it economically feasible for women to branch out on their own, companies need to be aware that their talented resources may be tempted to leave if they feel their potential is being wasted.

#### Implications for Organizations

Salary and advancement systems need to be made equal -- the literature has shown this problem persists. The study suggests that women may not be as much concerned with their salary being higher as their salary being in proper proportion considering their position. The study also suggests that with autonomy and flexibility being such strong drives in many talented women, companies should provide encouragement for these workers to pursue their own direction and embark on more ambitious projects.

Companies may not necessarily need to worry about their day care system as much as they need to reexamine their flexitime, job sharing and maternity leave programs because respondents in this study showed a great interest in being able to spend more

time with their children.

Companies that can accept a woman on her own merit and not let preconceptions interfere will be able to make better use of their efficient female workers. In the same vein, companies with a strong policy against sexual harassment will provide female workers with an environment that is less intimidating and more conducive to equality and efficiency. Fortunately, most of the women in the study benefitted from such progressive human resources management; but subtle offenses still did occur.

#### Implications for Entry-Level Women

Young women starting out in the field would do well to heed the advice of the respondents in this study. Self-confidence, self-marketing skills, determination, professionalism and ethics are a vital part of career success. These young women can benefit from being aware of the open collar option, the ease with which it can be started, the freedom it provides and the success that can be reaped from it. Those corporate workers who are or are planning to be mothers and desire time with their children would do

well to push for longer maternity leave, a more flexible work schedule or some form of job sharing.

The negotiation skills mentioned and the awareness of the subtlety of stereotypes and harassment are of paramount importance to women in public relations stuck in a technician-role rut. To rise to the managerial ranks, these women need to network for support, self-advertise and demonstrate in every way possible how they can contribute to the effectiveness of an organization's dealings with its publics. The study has shown that in many cases, corporations readily recognize professionalism and efficiency in its outstanding female employees -- the trick is for these outstanding women to see that their corporation puts their talents to use.

The women in this study have shown that they are effective managers, are useful in promoting a positive image and have a high value toward ethics. This demonstrates that even with a small office, no staff and a restricted budget and experienced female practitioner can do a superlative job on a wide variety of projects, many of which are for major

corporations.

#### Implications for Students

Female students also can benefit from being aware of the open collar option as well as the problems they may encounter when working for a corporation. Skills such as the ability to negotiate for a higher salary, higher position or even increased responsibility and broader range of projects are important to learn. The ability to recognize subtle forms of stereotyping and harassment and deal with them accordingly is also vital.

#### Implications for the Field of Public Relations

This study has added to the theoretical body of knowledge of public relations; it puts the factors of gender-based pay and promotion imbalances into a less extreme perspective. Although salary and advancement discrepancies were shown to be factors in the open collars' move, they were not the direct, major causes of dissatisfaction that the literature such as that of Broom and Dozier (1985) and Toth and Cline (1989) would suggest. This seems to indicate that although gender-based pay and promotion inequalities in public

relations exist and are factors behind the open collars' move, they are not as important reasons for leaving a company as other considerations such as the drive for autonomy and flexibility.

Implications for Society

The study also has value for society. If our nation can become more attuned to the detrimental effect discriminatory practices have in terms of retaining valuable resources, perhaps we will have an advantage over the other two "superpowers" -- Japan and West Germany -- both notoriously patriarchal societies.

Perhaps most encouragingly, the study demonstrates that with a little experience, ingenuity, motivation, equipment and room in the house, a woman can control her own career and still include time to dedicate to the things in her life outside work that are most important.

APPENDIX A  
COVER LETTER

Date

Practitioner's Name and Address

Dear Ms. Practitioner's Name:

I'm a graduate student in the College of Journalism at the University of Maryland. My thesis involves women in public relations who are "open collars," or work from their home, and the reasons they made this choice.

After spotting your business in a consulting directory, I decided to ask your assistance in participating in one of my case studies. I plan to find twelve women who are home-based practitioners and conduct in-depth interviews in their home.

I hope to ask a few open-ended questions about your career move, as well as observe you at work for approximately an hour to get a feel for the life of a home-based practitioner.

I'll be contacting you soon to make sure you'll be able to fit me into what I realize is a busy schedule. I'm excited about the open collar phenomenon; and if you are indeed home-based, I thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

signature

APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I. Brief greeting, restatement of case study purpose,  
introduction to interviewee and surroundings.

II. Questions

- A. Why did you decide to go into business from your home?
- B. How do you feel about this move?
- C. How would you feel about going back to a company again?
- D. What is your family and social life like now that you live and work under the same roof?
- E. What are your child-care arrangements?
- F. How has being open collar changed this?
- G. How has moving into a more isolated environment affected you?
- H. How do you deal with interruptions?
- I. How are you doing financially, compared to before you went open collar?
- J. What type of clients do you have?

- K. How does this differ from before?
- L. What do clients expect from you?
- M. How would your peers characterize you?
- N. What type of image did you have in your previous organization?
- O. How were opportunities for promotions in your previous organization?
- P. How about salaries?
- Q. One woman I studied expressed disgust with a male co-worker who made offensive comments to her and explained they were harmless jokes when confronted. Have you had experiences with such incidents and if so, how do you feel about it?
- R. Here's a hypothetical situation: You have a strict deadline three hours away to get something completed for your most important client and suddenly your child or husband or parent or neighbor (depending on family situation) falls very ill. How do you handle the situation?
- S. What are your plans for the future?
- T. What would your advice be to a woman in public relations considering going open collar?

III. Check paperwork and environment for further clues:

- A. Is much of the work technical?
- B. Is desk cluttered or neatly organized?
- C. Does telephone ring often?
- D. Does equipment appear advanced -- second phone line with answering machine, hi-tech computer, fax machine, copier machine?
- E. Is desk located in a separate room?
- F. Is interviewee casually dressed?
- G. What type of decor does the working area of the home have?
- H. What type of interruptions are there?
- I. Are there children nearby?
- J. Does interviewee appear stressed or relaxed?
- K. Does interviewee generally meet clients at home?

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