

Women entrepreneurs, individual and collective work–family interface strategies and emancipation

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to examine the experience of women entrepreneurs and the challenges and issues they face in reconciling the work activities of the family sphere with those of the entrepreneurial sphere.

Design/methodology/approach – This study is based on a materialist feminist perspective and a theory of living work that take into account the visible and invisible dimensions of the real work performed by women entrepreneurs. The methodology is based on a qualitative research design involving individual and group interviews conducted with 70 women entrepreneurs.

Findings – The results show the various individual and collective strategies deployed by women entrepreneurs to reconcile the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres.

Originality/value – One of the major findings emerging from the results of this study relates to the re-appropriation of the world of work and organization of work by women entrepreneurs and its emancipatory potential for the division of labour. Through the authority and autonomy they possessed as business owners, and with their employees' cooperation, they integrated and internalized tasks related to the work activities of the family sphere into the organization of work itself. Thus, not only new forms of work organization and cooperation at work but also new ways of conceiving of entrepreneurship as serving women's life choices and emancipation could be seen to be emerging.

Keywords Feminist theory, Emancipation, Women's entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurialism, Work–family interface, Theory of living work

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Over recent decades, some entrepreneurship scholars have focused on the question of family responsibilities and the challenges and issues faced by women entrepreneurs in their entrepreneurial activities (Gherardi, 2015; Jennings and McDougald, 2007; Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008; Lee-Gosselin *et al.*, 2010; Loscocco, 1997; McGowan *et al.*, 2012; Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001; Shelton, 2006; Stoner *et al.*, 1990; Tremblay *et al.*, 2006). Efforts to produce knowledge on these challenges and issues have led to the development of diverse theoretical and epistemological conceptualizations and perspectives that affect the way the issues involved in women's entrepreneurship are understood. Several scholars have criticized the way knowledge is produced using conceptions of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs based on male norms and criteria, from a standpoint that sees



entrepreneurship essentially as an instrumentalized function of the economy (Ahl, 2006, 2002; Bruni *et al.*, 2004; de Bruin *et al.*, 2006; Mirchandani, 1999). Much of this knowledge is produced while considering only the activities of entrepreneurial work (Akehurst *et al.*, 2012; Costin, 2012; Mitchelmore and Rowley, 2013a; Robichaud *et al.*, 2013; Roomi *et al.*, 2009; St-Pierre and Cadieux, 2011), leaving out all the work activities related to the family sphere, which, in fact, do not disappear from women's life at work but are instead kept invisible. In fact, feminist studies have shown that women's work remains poorly defined (Anteby and Chan, 2013; Fougeyrollas-Schwebel, 2004; Greer and Greene, 2003; Hartsock, 1987; Kergoat, 2001). The concept of work as defined and conceptualized in the field of production work tends to overlook, or even euphemize, in women's work experience, the choices and strategies they mobilize to address the inseparability of the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres (Delphy, 2001a, 2001b, 2003; Dunezat, 2016; Hirata and Kergoat, 2017).

Based on these perspectives, the present study contributes to this line of investigation by seeking to gain insight into the work experience of women entrepreneurs, which involves reconciling the visible and invisible work activities of the family spheres[1]. This investigation implies the need to use theoretical perspectives that help, on the one hand, to clearly define the concept of work and the actual experience of work of women entrepreneurs and, on the other hand, to conceptualize the invisible and denied part of women's work as an issue of sexual domination, which remains under discussed in the feminist perspectives used in the entrepreneurship field.

To this end, this investigation will deploy, on the one hand, a materialist feminist perspective (Delphy, 2001a, 2001b, 2003; Dunezat, 2016; Hirata and Kergoat, 2017) that makes it possible to rely on a broader definition of the concept of work to grasp the inseparability of the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres in women's work experience. On the other hand, living work theory from the perspective of the psychodynamics of work (Dejours, 2012, 2013; Molinier, 2004) will be used to examine the work of women entrepreneurs by linking the dimensions pertaining to:

- the real work (visible and invisible work activities) and subjective experience of women entrepreneurs; and
- the social relations and collective dynamics constructed within the work itself and their consequences in terms of re-appropriating and subverting the world of work (Dejours, 2006; Dejours and Deranty, 2010; Molinier, 2002).

The combination of these perspectives reveals and supports the strategies put in place by women entrepreneurs to reconcile the visible and invisible work activities of the family sphere with the entrepreneurial work activities themselves. Although studies in the entrepreneurship field have examined the work–family interface, few of them have conceptualized entrepreneurship as work in a broader sense that involves all forms of work activity. Combining these perspectives will provide access to all the strategies mobilized by women entrepreneurs within the workplace itself.

Work–family interface strategies

The women entrepreneurship literature has identified different ways of posing the question and raising the issues surrounding the interface between work and family. Some scholars have shown that, for some women beyond their desire to ensure their independence or take up new challenges, the decision to engage in entrepreneurship appears to be one of the best means of reconciling the work and family spheres (Buttner and Moore, 1997; Duchéneau and Orhan, 2000; Hughes, 2006; Jennings and Brush, 2013; Lee-Gosselin *et al.*, 2010;

McGowan *et al.*, 2012). Others have referred to the impact of family responsibilities on the success (Weber and Geneste, 2014) or growth (Diaz-García and Brush, 2012) of businesses owned by women.

Several have addressed the question from the viewpoint of the challenges and issues involved in reconciling work and family life, including the conflicts and types of relations created between the work and family spheres (Lee-Gosselin *et al.*, 2010; Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001; Stoner *et al.*, 1990; Tremblay *et al.*, 2006). Some of these studies are aligned with a conceptualization that sees the tensions or conflicts between these roles as being linked to the incompatible pressures between work and family. Some authors tend to conceptualize the notion of reconciling work and family life mainly on the basis of a separation between the different work and family roles. Individuals give priority to either work or family, or to both domains simultaneously (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011). They assess their effectiveness and satisfaction based on these priorities and develop strategies to achieve a harmonious arrangement between these two spheres (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011). In this sense, some scholars have shown that women entrepreneurs can reduce their role in the family sphere by choosing not to have children (Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008; Shelton, 2006; Winn, 2004), to postpone having children (Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008; Shelton, 2006; Winn, 2004) or to reduce the size of their family (Shelton, 2006). Some women try to control their activities by setting clear boundaries between the time allocated to work and that allocated to family (Lee-Gosselin *et al.*, 2010; Tremblay *et al.*, 2006), thereby maintaining a form of separation between the two spheres. Shelton (2006) also raised the possibility of role-sharing, which partly consists in delegating some family obligations to an external resource.

Other scholars have referred to the notion of work–family balance, using a dynamic perspective to describe the contribution of each of these spheres, without necessarily addressing the issue of the domination of one sphere over the other (Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008; McGowan *et al.*, 2012).

Some authors have identified the possibility of linking the work sphere to the family sphere, considering them as interrelated dimensions that cannot be conceived of separately (Brush, 1992; Gherardi, 2015; Jennings *et al.*, 2010; Jennings and McDougald, 2007; Lewis *et al.*, 2015; Loscocco, 1997). Several scholars have shown that women deploy strategies to achieve flexibility in terms of work time and places of work (Gherardi, 2015; Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008; Lee-Gosselin *et al.*, 2010; Lewis *et al.*, 2015; Loscocco, 1997; McGowan *et al.*, 2012; Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001; Tremblay *et al.*, 2006). Moreover, Jennings and McDougald (2007) suggested that women can meet family demands while working in their firm. Gherardi (2015) noted the possibility for women entrepreneurs to bring their children to work, as they do not have maternity leave, or to bring entrepreneurial work home. These strategies appear to allow women to effectively work out arrangements to undertake both their business project and family project, thus challenging the issue of separation between the work and family spheres (Gherardi, 2015).

These studies bring to light the interlinkages between the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres. As pointed out by some scholars, it is important to consider the family and entrepreneurial spheres as being “integrated”, whereas they have historically been separated or, at least, kept invisible, when establishing the research objects (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003; d’Andria and Gabarret, 2016; Jennings and Brush, 2013). In this sense, Brush *et al.* (2009) explained that the power relations and inequalities characterizing the domestic sphere have remained largely invisible in studies examining women’s entrepreneurship. According to Brush *et al.* (2009), the persistence of these invisible aspects should be taken into account to understand the forms that women’s entrepreneurship can take.

To conclude, these studies have brought out the various strategies that can be implemented by women entrepreneurs to reconcile or balance work and family. They have also called into question the separation between the entrepreneurial work sphere and the family sphere. In this respect, some authors have pointed out the need to consider the invisible aspects related to the family sphere to understand women's entrepreneurship. Based on these analyses, the present study aims to use two theoretical perspectives (materialist feminism and living work theory in the psychodynamics of work) to examine the visible and invisible aspects of the work of women entrepreneurs and identify the work–family interface strategies they implement.

Theoretical perspectives

Some scholars have emphasized the importance of developing tools to help us understand the choices and strategies mobilized by women regarding their work, using a broader definition of the concept of work (Anteby and Chan, 2013; Fougeyrollas-Schwebel, 2004; Greer and Greene, 2003; Hartsock, 1987; Kergoat, 2001). Relying on a broader definition of the concept of work makes it possible to grasp the inseparability characterizing the time and places of work of women entrepreneurs and, more broadly, their relationship with work. This broader conceptualization of the concept of work has been theorized by the critical perspective of materialist feminism, which posits the existence of a sexual division of labour (professional and domestic, paid and unpaid, productive and reproductive and market and non-market) (Galerand and Kergoat, 2008; Galerand and Kergoat, 2014). This sexual division of labour demonstrates the existence of relations of exploitation of women in work, by considering the work activities of the family sphere, still largely performed by women, not to be work (principle of separation in the sexual division of labour) and to be of little value (principle of hierarchization in the sexual division of labour) (Delphy, 1970, 2001a, 2001b; Galerand and Kergoat, 2014; Guillaumin, 1978a, 1978b; Tong, 2009). However, these activities do not disappear; they are not only separated from one sphere to the other but also rendered and kept invisible within the production work sphere itself. Yet, the fact that the work activities of the family sphere are not only separated from the production sphere, but are also hidden, even euphemized, in the workplace, reveals the existence of relations of sexual domination around issues of work and its divisions (Delphy, 1970, 2001a, 2001b; Galerand and Kergoat, 2014; Guillaumin, 1978a, 1978b; Tong, 2009). However, in the entrepreneurship field, few scholars have taken this materialist feminist perspective into account in producing knowledge. The feminist perspectives mobilized in entrepreneurship research have, rather, been liberal (Brush, 2009; Constantinidis, 2014), social (Brush, 2009; Constantinidis, 2014) or post-structuralist (Constantinidis, 2014) and do not posit the existence of relations of sexual domination. More generally, some scholars have raised the lack of entrepreneurship research that engages in a feminist theoretical perspective (Ahl and Marlow, 2012; Neergaard *et al.*, 2011; Poggesi *et al.*, 2016) and, more specifically, in the materialist feminist perspective (Greer and Greene, 2003).

Some scholars have maintained that the feminist agenda remains “hidden” in many of the articles examined in their systematic review of the literature (Poggesi *et al.*, 2016). In fact, among the few studies aligning with one of the feminist perspectives, the position taken on the chosen feminist perspective remains vague and under discussed. Hurley (1999) also underscored the reluctance among entrepreneurship scholars to engage in one of the feminist theoretical perspectives. In her view, these scholars appear to stay away from these perspectives to maintain the dominant organizational theories. Neither do these feminist theoretical perspectives appear to be encouraged within institutions, whether in graduate studies programmes or academic journals, being considered “deviant” (Hurley, 1999).

Based on this perspective, it appears essential to mobilize a feminist theory that takes into account the existence of relations of exploitation of women's work that remain hidden and denied because of the pressures exerted by the sexual division of labour (Icart and Pizzi, 2013). The critical theoretical perspective of materialist feminism is based on a conceptualization of women's relationship with work that renders the work activities of the family sphere in women's work lives visible to consider their omnipresence in the daily modes of operation developed by women when they integrate into what is referred to as "paid" work (Haicault, 2000). This understanding of the sexual division of labour reveals the efforts made to reconcile the work activities of the family sphere with the entrepreneurial work. It also enables us to examine how women construct and undertake their business project, considering all of their activities and life projects (Henry *et al.*, 2016).

In addition to the materialist feminist perspective, it appears relevant to mobilize living work theory to examine work in light of its visible and invisible aspects, giving meaning to the subjective work experience of women entrepreneurs and what this involves in terms of their relationship with work, with others and with production. In this respect, the theoretical perspectives pertaining to the field of the psychodynamics of work are particularly relevant for examining the work of women entrepreneurs by linking the dimensions pertaining to:

- (1) the real work (visible and invisible work activities) and subjective experience of women entrepreneurs; and
- (2) the social relations and collective dynamics constructed within the work itself, and their consequences in terms of re-appropriating and subverting the world of work (Dejours, 2006; Dejours and Deranty, 2010; Molinier, 2002).

This perspective gives crucial importance to the subjects' discourse, the reconstruction of the meaning they give to their experience and the analysis of the subjective and intersubjective dynamics mobilized by work (Dejours, 2013). The writings of Wolf-Ridgway (2012) in the psychodynamics of work relating to the work of entrepreneurs refer to the need to take into account the issue of the individuals' subjective relationship with work. More generally, some scholars have argued that the issue of work as an object of study remains a blind spot in the production of knowledge in the field of management theories (Chanlat, 2017; Fleming and Mandarin, 2009; Pelletier, 2014) and, to our knowledge, in the entrepreneurship field. According to Cope (2005), considering the lived-world is particularly relevant in entrepreneurship research. The living work theory from the perspective of the psychodynamics of work is also used to raise the issue of domination in and through work, taking into account the collective dynamics constructed within the work itself and their consequences in terms of re-appropriating and subverting the world of work. Domination through work refers to the relations involved in the economic domination of neoliberalism over work and over the human and subjective dimensions (Dejours and Deranty, 2010; Renault, 2008).

In short, to reflect the idea that family activities are considered as work activities, we will use *the notion of the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres*. As such, this study seeks to understand the work experience of women entrepreneurs based on the strategies they use to effectively reconcile the work activities of these two spheres. The theoretical perspectives of this study are grounded in:

- (1) a materialist feminist perspective used to investigate the sexual division of labour and its spheres of activities, including that of domestic and family work based on a broad definition of the concept of work (Anteby and Chan, 2013; Fougeyrollas-Schwebel, 2004; Kergoat, 2001); and

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- (2) the living work theory from the perspective of the psychodynamics of work, used to elucidate the experience of the real work performed by women entrepreneurs (visible and invisible dimensions) through the social relations and collective dynamics constructed within the work itself (dynamic of cooperation) and their consequences in terms of potentials for emancipation and social transformation (Dejours, 2006; Dejours and Deranty, 2010; Molinier, 2002).

Combining these two theoretical perspectives (materialist feminism and living work theory from the perspective of the psychodynamics of work) makes it possible to put the research design at the centre of feminist epistemologies (Henry *et al.*, 2016) to gain insight into these women's experiences of work and the meaning they give to these experiences (Cope, 2005). Moreover, as these two perspectives have some common axiomatic bases, they are somewhat commensurable (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). In particular, these perspectives consider the lived experiences of these women in their work as entrepreneurs, including both its visible and invisible aspects. They examine the persistence of two forms of power relations related to work: the relations of economic domination over work and the relations of men's domination over women. These two perspectives are also coherent insofar as they are both grounded in minority and critical perspectives and are found at the centre of social and political issues surrounding the concept of work, leading to opportunities for transformation.

Design/methodology/approach

This study is part of a broader research project aimed at gaining knowledge on the work of women entrepreneurs and the specificity of the challenges and issues they face in terms of subjective mobilization, cooperation and emancipation. It aims, more specifically, to gain a deeper understanding of women entrepreneurs' experience of work through an analysis of the strategies they deploy to effectively reconcile the work activities of the family and the entrepreneurial sphere. The methodology used is based on a qualitative research design developed from a collection of narrative data (Mitchell, 1981), and uses individual and group interviews to examine women entrepreneurs' engagement in work and relationship with work. This method proves to be particularly productive in gender research, bringing out the complexity of the roles and responsibilities involved in the work of women entrepreneurs (Josselson and Lieblich, 1994). Individual interviews are a pertinent/suitable method for gaining insight into the lived experience of women entrepreneurs (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2016) because this information cannot be easily gathered through questionnaires and observations (Josselson and Lieblich, 1994). The individual interviews were conducted using a dynamic process that involved moving back and forth between data collection and analysis. This dynamic process allowed us to analyse the new material as it was collected, so as to open up new questions and clarify some aspects, helping to guide the subsequent individual interviews. Once the individual interviews were completed and the collected material analysed, group interviews were also used to present the preliminary results of the individual interviews to the participants and allow them to discuss their experience of work together, bringing out the more invisible dimensions of their work and deepening the meaning they gave to their experience (Dejours, 2000). It thus proved to be useful to mobilize group interviews in addition to individual interviews (Boutin, 1997).

Women's entrepreneurship is characterized by different realities, expressed through a variety of terms: company directors, business owners, owner-managers and autonomous or self-employed workers. The work of women entrepreneurs is characterized by the fact that they have created, bought or inherited a business for which they assume the risks and

financial, administrative and social responsibilities, whether or not they have employees (Cornet and Constantinidis, 2004, Lavoie, 1988). The inclusion criteria for participants were as follows:

- They had to hold at least a share of ownership and participate in the strategic and operational decisions of the business.
- They had to have at least two years' experience as company director.

These women were fully engaged in their entrepreneurial project and took full responsibility for it[2]. Our recruiting strategy drew on various actors, associations and organizations with links to female business owners[3]. "Snowball" sampling using volunteers was used to recruit a varied profile of participants and ensure a diversification of cases and experiences. These cases were diversified by age group, origin of entrepreneurship (creators, buyers, family successors) and family status (with or without a spouse or family responsibilities). A total of 70 individual interviews were conducted with women entrepreneurs. This diversification of cases, irrespective of their statistical frequency, allowed for contrasting analyses to be made and brought out a more comprehensive picture of the experience of women entrepreneurs (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). The interviews were also conducted in two countries (France and Canada) to obtain a greater diversification of experiences. The practices of women entrepreneurs have been the same in France and Canada. For the individual interviews, the interview protocol was used in a flexible way to allow the participants to appropriate the interview questions. The themes covered included a description of the work they performed and their modes of engagement, exchange and cooperation regarding the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres. The participants were also asked to talk about the strategies they used to reconcile their various undertakings and activities, the meaning they gave to their projects and the challenges they faced in terms of success, self-accomplishment and emancipation. The interviews were conducted in stages, so as to introduce an interactive process between fieldwork and theory, and the data were processed and analysed along the way. Subsequently, two group interviews (in Canada) were also conducted, on a voluntary basis, with the women entrepreneurs who had participated in the individual interviews, to validate our interpretations of their relationship with work and consider the gendered specificities in their discourse (Bond *et al.*, 2002; Messing *et al.*, 2003). These group interviews helped to enhance, validate and clarify the findings obtained during the individual interviews and allowed for the methodological triangulation of data by combining two data collection strategies (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). These group interviews also produced new data based on the observation and analysis of the social interactions among the women (Gough and Robertson, 2012).

Data processing and analyses

The data analysis began as soon as the first interviews were completed and continued using a dynamic method involving analytical description, interpretative deduction and theorizing induction throughout the process (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2016) (see Appendix 1). First, a phenomenological examination of the material was conducted through sensitive listening to the interviews and by reading and carefully rereading the interview transcripts (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2016; Tengelyi, 2006). At the same time, the material was analysed using conceptualizing categories to help us better understand the entrepreneurs' lived experience (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2016). This analytical method made it possible to directly identify phenomena through the meaning that emerged from the conceptualizing categories, thus going beyond a strict synthesis of the material analysed. These categories were used to gradually categorize the phenomena from the interviews, by comparing them with each other, and by carrying out a reflexive, progressive and recursive process of "theoretical"

construction (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2016). Envisaged as a dynamic analytical tool, conceptualizing categories could lead to a progression or regression in the analyses throughout the research process by adding new interviews. The idea was not so much to bring out a group of elements or classify them, but rather to identify a phenomenon through linkages (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2016). These linkages within the interview material and with the theoretical perspectives used helped to bring out the different forms and configurations of the conceptualizing categories, as well as an understanding of the meaning of the human work experience lived by women entrepreneurs.

More specifically, the conceptualizing categories were produced through a dynamic method involving analytical description, interpretative deduction and theorizing induction throughout the process (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2016) (see Appendix 2). The analytical description contributed to the construction of categories based on the participants' comments, helping to name and identify the meaning of the phenomenon based on the interview material itself. Some categories were also constructed during the interpretative deduction process, based on the theoretical perspectives used for this study, linking some interview material with some theoretical concepts. Lastly, the theorizing induction supported the creation of categories while remaining close to the interview material through sensitive and careful listening to the sequences of experiences and events. Throughout this dynamic analytical process, the constructed categories were bound to evolve; some were modified or clarified, and new ones were created (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2016).

Concretely, a first "vertical" analysis of the interviews was conducted to obtain a general description of the participants. In each interview, the different work activities of the entrepreneurial sphere, that is, those performed by the entrepreneurs to produce a product or service through their business, were identified. Their mode of operation was analysed to bring out the interlinkages between these work activities, in particular the hierarchy of activities, the time invested in each activity and the more difficult aspects, as well as the particularly well-liked aspects of their work. Next, the interviews were analysed and grouped together (horizontally) to bring out, based on the visible and invisible dimensions of the work of women entrepreneurs, the strategies they used to reconcile the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres. This process also helped to elucidate the collective dynamics constructed within the work itself, and their consequences in terms of re-appropriating and subverting the world of work. This task involved going back and forth between these findings and the knowledge produced in the field of women entrepreneurship and based on the theoretical perspectives used, which constitutes the particular contribution of this study. In accordance with these perspectives, conducting and analysing the group interviews helped to document the individual and collective strategies developed by these women entrepreneurs and discuss the social and political issues facing them.

General description of participants

The following section presents a general portrait of our sample, composed of 70 women entrepreneurs, followed by a presentation of the various spheres of activity in which they were engaged. Our sample was mainly composed of owners of small- and medium-sized businesses (Table I). This is in line with studies showing that an overwhelming majority of women entrepreneurs head small, or even very small, businesses, with fewer than ten employees (Carrington, 2006; Cornet and Constantinidis, 2004; Duchéneau and Orhan, 2000; Fouquet, 2005).

The businesses involved covered a variety of economic sectors, including product creation and manufacturing, accommodation and food, construction, transportation, trade and technical and professional support services. A greater number of women in our sample

Table I.
Characteristics of the
sample of
entrepreneurs

Categories	70 women
Origin of entrepreneurship	44 creators 26 buyers
Number of employees	Fewer than 10 employees: 51 10-50 employees: 17 More than 50 employees: 2
Mean years of experience	13 years
Mean age	46 years old
Marital life	Living with spouse: 47 Living alone: 23 Spouse ME: 24
Children	With children: 59 Children under 18 years: 47 Single-parent: 13

were involved in the technical or professional services, trade and hotel and restaurant sectors. In the product creation and manufacturing sector, more women created and manufactured products to measure or in an artisanal fashion. In addition, a few women were involved in the construction sector, more specifically housing construction and plumbing.

Findings

The following section presents the findings of this study which, as mentioned in the Methodology section, were brought out through a dynamic process of analytical description, interpretative deduction and theorizing induction, throughout all the stages of data collection and processing.

While this article focuses more specifically on the work experience of women entrepreneurs, the living work theory from the perspective of the psychodynamics of work brought out how the work activities of the family sphere were reconciled with to those of the entrepreneurial sphere, based on an analysis of work situations and the real work performed by women. Thus, the first section deals with the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres of women entrepreneurs. The second section specifically concerns the experience of women entrepreneurs and presents a close analysis of the individual and collective strategies they mobilized to reconcile the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres.

Multiple work activities of women entrepreneurs

A close analysis of the daily work of these female entrepreneurs revealed a multitude of activity in the entrepreneurial sphere requiring their involvement. Work activities relating to production and creation, quality monitoring, work organization planning and management, staff management, marketing and commercial development, strategic planning and financial management and administrative, secretarial or accounting work, were all likely to appear on the entrepreneur's agenda. The women entrepreneurs mentioned having to shift from one task to another, often in very little time, sometimes even simultaneously. Caught up in a whirlwind of activity, they would often switch back and forth between dealing with small details and making major decisions, all without losing sight of the technique or overall approach. This kind of work requires a wide range of skills and continuous learning, leading to the development of new know-how. Entrepreneurs are

constantly required to move outside their areas of competency and cope with a set of demands for which they sometimes have no experience or knowledge whatsoever.

Moreover, the analysis of their real work (visible and invisible work activities), as captured by the women entrepreneurs' description of their work experience and the meaning they gave to it, brought to light the invisible work activities related to the family sphere. These activities, often carried out discreetly, between two phone calls or two business appointments, were scattered throughout the day-to-day work of women entrepreneurs: picking up the children from day care, taking a child to the dentist, calling the doctor, accompanying a parent to the hospital, grocery shopping, driving the babysitter home, etc. These work activities of the family sphere were not separate from the work activities of the entrepreneurial sphere:

Women see themselves as leaders in all spheres of life. Business leader, head of the family, taking care of children, the meals, the husband, the housework, and also, their business. It's a lot. It's hard to separate all that. Maybe there are some women who can. Sure, they may be able to separate them. But anyway, that's not my case. — Julie, communications.

In addition to the multitude of work activities pertaining to the entrepreneurial sphere [mentioned above], the women entrepreneurs also carried out various other daily work activities that intersected with and belonged to the family sphere. These work activities represented a sphere in itself, but one that was interrelated with and integrated into the work activities of the entrepreneurial sphere, whether or not these women entrepreneurs had children:

For women, creating their own business means knowing how to manage their agenda along with family concerns. They absolutely have to find ways to fit them together. For a man, I'm not sure that's the case. — Élisabeth, consulting firm.

To sum up, these findings reveal that, for the women, the work activities of the family sphere constituted a sphere in itself, but one that was interrelated with and integrated into the work activities of the entrepreneurial sphere, whether or not they had children.

From individual strategies to collective strategies

The analysis of the interviews brought out different individual and collective strategies used by women to reconcile the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres. First, this section presents the more individual strategies that the women entrepreneurs used to this end. Second, the findings also revealed the existence of more collective strategies, developed by the women entrepreneurs within the organization of work itself, in the entrepreneurial sphere.

Individual strategies for reconciling the work activities of the two spheres

In a more traditional sense, separation strategies were observed when the women implemented a division between these spheres in terms of time and space. They organized their day so as to separate the time they spent in the business from the time they spent at home or with the family. For example, they worked while the children were at day care or school, after dropping them off and before picking them up.

The women entrepreneurs' intensive engagement in their business project led several of them to implement outsourcing practices, delegating some of the tasks related to the work activities of the family sphere. Among these tasks, child care was frequently delegated to a day care centre or nanny. When the children were in school, they might also attend the before-school and after-school care programme. Some women mentioned being able to rely

on the support of parents, parents-in-law, friends or their spouse. However, while these tasks were delegated, the women remained primarily responsible for managing, planning and organizing arrangements to obtain these forms of help. The same was true when it came to the specific needs of their children with regard to school or unexpected health problems or specific needs related to taking care of aging or sick parents. Moreover, tasks relating to interior and exterior house maintenance were often delegated to domestic workers. Some women stated that they preferred outsourcing these activities to spend more time with their families:

I outsource everything to do with housework, but I manage it and take care of it if there's the slightest hitch. — Berthe, housing construction.

It's true that I organize it, I'm the one who thinks about it and manages it, even though I do have a cleaning lady and a nanny – my reflex is still to wonder, “well, it's 3 o'clock, I hope she hasn't forgotten my children” I think about it. — Anne, dental office.

As regards strategies of flexibility and permeability, several women entrepreneurs implemented proximity strategies to be physically closer to their families, enabling them to transition from one sphere to another more easily. Many businesses were developed with their office or workshop at home, or geographically close to the place of residence or the children's school. The business project was an integral part of the family project, not the other way round; the business grew alongside the children. Working time and patterns were also adapted to the family project. In fact, the women entrepreneurs continuously adjusted their work schedules to the needs of the family sphere:

I've organized my life around my business, which is close to home. This has allowed me to juggle both. — Claudine, plumbing service.

For me, the housework, my business, everything is linked. – Justine, consulting firm.

I deal with home matters, then when my son takes a nap, I get out my sheets, and papers, and take care of phone calls. — Jacinthe, pharmaceutical business.

I think precisely in terms of changes in my situation, for example, when my son grew up and maybe didn't need me to be there so much, well I took up other duties. I think we have to make choices depending on the tasks that need to be done. — Éliane, real estate broker.

I found the solution: I bought a building. There was an apartment above, the children were upstairs and I was just below them. I took them (to school), I went to pick them up, we did the homework, and I went back down when they were sleeping. It was very easy for me. — Bérangère, baker.

Collective strategies for internalizing the work activities of the family sphere into those of the entrepreneurial sphere

More surprisingly, our results also revealed the existence of collective strategies, developed within the organization of work itself. These were strategies for integrating and internalizing the work activities of the family sphere into the work activities of the business. In fact, the women entrepreneurs developed adjustment strategies that were integrated into the employees' work schedules, leading the latter to participate in this organization of work time: they knew that at a given time, the boss would need to go pick up her children and that

that time should be freed up for her, or that her schedule should be modified to allow her to integrate her work activities from the family sphere into her workday as an entrepreneur:

I don't have high staff turnover, why? Because this gets them involved, it creates a family at work. It keeps them longer perhaps because there's cooperation on both sides. If I'm stuck one morning, I can call somebody and that person will know and understand and I won't be worried, the store will open and the employee will do what needs to be done. Same thing if one morning, that person calls or texts me, I'll arrange to find somebody or I'll go in myself. — Nadia, appliance retail outlet.

The organization of entrepreneurial work was adapted to the work activities of the family sphere. Moreover, the employees were called upon to cooperate in this redefining this work. Indeed, they sometimes took care of the boss's children in the workplace, mobilized themselves to replace her at a moment's notice so that she could pick up her children at school and freed up a space for the children to come and do their homework at the plant after school. These activities were carried out during working hours and were thus fully remunerated:

When I gave birth, I didn't have any leave, so I worked with the playpen in my office. I have a seamstress who is also a mother and she's attuned to my needs. So, for example, if I'm busy with a client and my son wants water, well, she'll take care of it. — Virginie, sportswear creation.

Furthermore, the women entrepreneurs made their actions visible in the workplace. Not only did they talk about the work activities of the family sphere in the workplace, but they also showed the importance they gave to their families, and how they organized themselves while pursuing their entrepreneurial project. Through their autonomy and decisional authority, the women entrepreneurs shaped the work organization in their own image rather than being completely shaped by it. Thus, not only new forms of work organization but also new ways of conceiving of entrepreneurship as serving one's life choices could be seen to be emerging. This shifting of the work activities of the family sphere into the entrepreneurial sphere and employee cooperation in the way work was reorganized was largely referred to, discussed and validated in the group interviews. The women entrepreneurs realized the extent to which they had re-appropriated the world of work and the organization of work to serve their life choices:

On days when school is closed, I say to my daughter, "Come to the worksite with mommy, come get in the car." She comes with me, she goes to see the ceramics guys, she follows them. They all know her, I used to bring her along in her car seat when she was small. Sometimes, she also comes with me to the clients. I have no choice. — Tamara, renovation service.

Moreover, as soon as they legitimized some work activities of the family sphere within the work organization for themselves, they also had to grant legitimacy to the work activities of the family sphere for their employees:

I have an employee who just had a little girl, and really, it's somebody who's important for the pharmacy. She has two girls, one's 5 and the other's just a few months old. When she got back to work, I organized telework for her, I have two employees who telework and I told her that if I had children, I'd arrange to telework myself. — Anais, pharmacist.

The girls know that if someone's missing, the others can step in because we've done it before. The others step in and, if someone's sick, no one will complain because they know that the gang will be there to support them when they're not there. The team spirit really takes over. This way of taking up the torch makes people really want to stay because they know they'll have support, they won't be told "Oh, you're absent again because your child is sick." — Rita fast-food business.

We're really supportive and no questions are asked when it's a family problem and the same thing goes for me if I have to be absent. — Jessica, plastic products manufacturing.

Thus, they were more often called upon to support their employees' demands aimed at reconciling the work activities of the family sphere with those of the work sphere. They therefore had to assume the consequences of this, for example, when they had to replace an employee who had to care for a sick child or parent. They were attuned to their employees' needs, but they were also expected to be and to understand them. Although the women entrepreneurs saw the many benefits of making room for their employees' work activities pertaining to the family sphere, some mentioned that they felt the burden of these demands, both in terms of the time involved and its resulting costs. The benefits of these practices can be measured more in terms of quality of life at work than economic value. These practices remain fragile from a viewpoint that considers only economic rationality as having use value.

During the group interviews, this internalization strategy was discussed by the women entrepreneurs who had re-integrated the work activities of the family sphere into their business. The women entrepreneurs expressed their desire to maintain a place and a space for the work activities of the family sphere within the entrepreneurial work activities themselves. Similarly, some women who had experienced a division between their paid work activities and their work activities of the family sphere in previous work situations did not wish to repeat this division after having been able to re-integrate all their work activities by engaging in entrepreneurship. They reported taking all of their work activities into account when making business choices, including the work activities of the family sphere. They expressed their desire to make business choices that allowed them to "act freely" while preserving the aspects of their work activities they deemed important, which included maintaining the place given to their children in their lives:

I could have decided to work seven days a week, mornings and evenings, but I have my family, so I decided to hire more employees while my son is young, even if it means earning less for a while, rather than sacrificing my family — Group 1, Rita, fast-food restaurant.

Collectively, they criticized certain aspects of the model for success of the business project that appears to be valued socially. Among other things, they referred to the pressure they felt from a perspective of business growth that was essentially centred on sales revenues. While they had nothing against substantial sales revenues, they nevertheless found it unfortunate that the importance they gave to successfully achieving work-family balance or reconciliation was not valued. This was a significant gain reported by the women (sometimes even the most significant gain) that allowed them to fully appreciate the freedom afforded them by being entrepreneurs and having control over the organization of work. Some women found it reassuring to be together during the group interview and be able to openly discuss with the other women the meaning they gave to their business project without having to sacrifice the work activities of the family sphere:

I find our discussion reassuring because I've been in business for 10 years and I feel this pressure to constantly make a bigger sales figure. Sometimes, I feel that others see me as "wasted talent" or sometimes people try to make me feel guilty about not growing my business globally because, on some level, I know I could do it. Being an entrepreneur, I can make the sales I want [...] and I'm in a good place with my children. — Group 2, Justine, consulting firm.

This is one of the first times I've felt reassured about this, about my business choices. I had a mentor once who suggested that I grow my business a certain way, that is, by opening a store to sell my clothes, to make more money. For me, as long as my work allows me to make an income,

and be with my children, to support myself and have freedom in how I schedule my time, I'm happy. — Group 2, Virginie, sportswear designer.

Discussion

The following section discusses the way women entrepreneurs engage in entrepreneurial work, the challenges and issues involved in reconciling the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres, wherein power relations are reproduced, and lastly, the re-appropriating of the world of work and the organization of work by women entrepreneurs and its potentials for emancipation with regard to the division of labour.

How women entrepreneurs engage in entrepreneurial work

Our study results shed light on the diversity and multiplicity of entrepreneurial work activities performed by women entrepreneurs, in addition, for women entrepreneurs, to the work activities of the family sphere. Despite some progress made in terms of task sharing, compared to men, women still assume greater responsibility for domestic and care tasks (Méda, 2010; Nicole-Drancourt, 1989), and these differences appear to persist in the case of the entrepreneurs under study. Our study results echo those of Nicole-Drancourt (1989), revealing that, when men build a career, their wives mobilize to release them from domestic and family responsibilities whereas, when women build a career, their spouses do not necessarily get more involved in the domestic and family spheres. Thus, “this career model for men has no parallel for women” (Nicole-Drancourt, 1989, p. 67) (trans.). In fact, the women entrepreneurs interviewed continued to perform and take charge of the majority of the work activities of the family sphere. According to Pailhé and Solaz (2010, p. 33), “family concerns in the workplace are still more common among women, who continue to bear most of the weight of domestic responsibility” (trans.).

Challenges and issues involved in reconciling the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres

Our results show that the women entrepreneurs mobilized strategies to superimpose the work time and places and patterns of work relating to the work activities of the family sphere and other spheres of the business to better integrate them. As described by Haicault (2014), the work activities of the family sphere encroach on the other activity spheres and are superimposed on them in a dynamic and continuous process. In their studies on the domestic work performed by women, Chabaud-Rychter *et al.* (1985) showed early on that:

Most often, the scheduling for the day presents numerous moments that are not spent on just one type of activity, but rather on what appears to be a combination of multiple tasks, or the superimposing and overlapping of various activities. The continuous transition from one series of activities to another entails an extreme intermingling of these activities, ultimately leading to their superimposition (Chabaud-Rychter *et al.*, 1985, p. 32).

In the case of women entrepreneurs, it is no longer a case of managing the double workday, that is, the work of the business and domestic work. These two worlds are not separated:

Women are never away from domestic work, even when they are working professionally, even when they are at a movie. Whatever their extra-domestic activity of the moment, women are always simultaneously engaged in domestic work time, within a paradigm of permanent availability (Chabaud-Rychter *et al.*, 1985, p. 46).

Our results are thus consistent with studies on women's entrepreneurship revealing the strategies adopted to reconcile the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres,

where women make the necessary arrangements to reconcile these spheres in terms of work time, and the places and patterns of work (Bourgain and Chaudat, 2015; Diaz-Garcia and Brush, 2012; Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008; Lewis *et al.*, 2015; Loscocco, 1997). These strategies represent important assets when children arrive and throughout the children's development (Bourgain and Chaudat, 2015). However, our study results show that women entrepreneurs pay the economic cost in terms of opportunities to develop their business, which tends to grow at the same pace as the children. In other words, economically, their business grows at the same pace as the social and human development of their children and family, as the pace is adjusted to this growth. Contrary to the idea of growth threshold suggested by Cliff (1998), where women limit the growth of their businesses because of family responsibilities, our results show, rather, that the entrepreneurial project develops at the same pace as the family project. While some studies point to the constraints and challenges involved in achieving work-family balance (Loscocco, 1997; McGowan *et al.*, 2012), our study results reveal that reconciling and integrating the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres constitutes a challenge in itself. This challenge entails negotiating and making arrangements that vary in time and space, based on the needs of the children and those of the business, and the efforts made by women entrepreneurs to hold together the entrepreneurial project and the family project at the same time and in the same space.

Shifting and reproducing power relationships

Among the strategies deployed by the women to reconcile the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres, some women outsourced some activities to domestic workers, as shown in a number of studies on women entrepreneurs (Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008; Lee-Gosselin *et al.*, 2010; Lewis *et al.*, 2015). However, as the work activities of the family sphere nevertheless did not disappear, even though some activities were delegated, the women remained generally responsible for them and had to coordinate the work to be done. This outsourcing appeared to shift the power relationships to other women, often immigrant women in a precarious situation, and were thus at the intersectionality of the sexual, ethnic and social division of labour and race, class and gender relations (Dussuet, 2016; Kergoat, 2005). According to Molinier (2009), this outsourcing appears to help circumvent rather than confront men's resistance to sharing the work activities of the family sphere, by employing a subordinate woman. This shifting of reproduction appears to simply maintain the feminist standpoint within an individualistic feminism without effecting real social change, "maintaining a culture that continues to favour men and requires a pool of unskilled female workers" (Molinier, 2009, p. 121). When it came to occasional needs, such as after-school care, a number of the women entrepreneurs were also able to delegate some tasks to their parents, parents-in-law or spouse.

Women entrepreneurs re-appropriating and subverting the division of labour and emancipation

A major finding emerging from our results relates to the re-appropriation of the world of work and organization of work by women entrepreneurs, and its emancipating potential for the division of labour. In fact, the results of our study show that the work of the women entrepreneurs was characterized by their capacity to legitimize and bring to light, within the production work itself, the work activities of the family sphere. The autonomy and decisional authority they possessed as business-owners allowed them to transform the organization of work to respond to the demands in terms of work activities of the domestic and family sphere. They managed to "put their employees to work", encouraging them to

cooperate in coherently integrating the multiple work activities, including those of the family sphere. It is interesting to note that the duties assigned to employees relating to the work activities of the family sphere were remunerated as part of work time. This subverting by women entrepreneurs thus appears to have gone beyond integrating the work activities of the family sphere into the activities of the entrepreneurial sphere. It represents a challenge to the sexual division of labour and the non-value attributed to the activities of the family sphere, which are usually kept invisible. According to [Galerand and Kergoat \(2008, p. 70\)](#), “it’s the very definition of work as socially organized, productive and liable to be exploited which implodes” (trans.), such that the activities of the domestic sphere can be revealed as real work and can be socially organized in a different way.

The women entrepreneurs’ capacity to make visible the work activities of the family sphere that are usually kept invisible made it possible to grasp this reality of women’s work. Not only new forms of work organization and cooperation at work but also new ways of conceiving of entrepreneurship as serving women’s life choices and emancipation could be seen to be emerging. By discussing their experience and legitimizing in the workplace the work activities of the family sphere that are usually kept “invisible,” the women entrepreneurs appeared to have re-appropriated their history, making progress with regard to the gendered relations of domination and what they entail for the division of labour ([Daune-Richard and Devreux, 1992](#); [Hirata and Kergoat, 2017](#)). The cooperation strategies implemented to take care of the work activities of the family sphere within the entrepreneurial workplace were consistent with a subverting strategy with regard to these women’s work. They subverted the demand made of women who participate in paid work to make the work activities of the family sphere invisible, requiring that they hide and deny this part of work. This part of work is thought to be detrimental to the pressure of performance exerted on workers through the relationships involved in the domination of economic rationality over work. Women’s struggle to subvert the domination of the sexual division of labour and give a predominant place to the work activities of the family sphere in production relations faces dual domination ([Deranty, 2011](#)). This dual domination involves, on the one hand, men’s domination over women and, on the other hand, the domination of economic rationality over human and subjective rationality.

Moreover, the cooperation strategies mobilized within the work organization of the business were coherent with the broader definition of women’s real work, insofar as they brought this unenviable and undervalued part of the work to light, gave importance to it, transformed their work organization to accommodate it and shared it with others, seeking to give it meaning. Establishing these strategies allowed these women entrepreneurs to construct a “legitimate” identity. However, although innovative, these cooperation strategies nevertheless remained quite invisible and fragile *vis-à-vis* the persisting power relationships and the pressure put on women entrepreneurs such that activities involving economic performance and success are valued. In this respect, women’s entrepreneurship research has focused on how women entrepreneurs’ work is evaluated, that is, essentially based on economic reports and the value of success [see the studies by [Akehurst et al. \(2012\)](#); [Costin \(2012\)](#); [Mitchelmore and Rowley \(2013b\)](#); [Robichaud et al. \(2013\)](#); [Roomi et al. \(2009\)](#); [St-Pierre and Cadieux \(2011\)](#)]. Few studies have taken this argument further, going beyond a theory of gender difference, to bring out more clearly the existing pressures exerted by the sexual division of labour on women’s choices. Yet, our study results show the interest and importance that these women entrepreneurs attached to the way they organized work, which allowed them to effectively reconcile the work activities of the family sphere with the work activities of the business. This re-appropriating of the world of work attests to a real subverting of the

weight of the domination of the sexual division of labour in the world of work which normally forces women to choose between career and family. In fact, the possibility to “act freely” or “choose freely” stemming from the decisional authority they held as entrepreneurs allowed them to not only better reconcile their work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres but also give value to the work activities of the family sphere. The women gave importance to the work activities of the family sphere, made these activities visible and obtained their employees’ cooperation – all these demonstrate the priority status they gave to these activities. They managed to restore value to what was considered of no value and remained hidden, thus subverting the lack of value normally given to the work activities of the family sphere by incorporating them into the work activities of the business sphere. In this regard, the materialist feminist perspective recognizes the existence of the principle of hierarchization of the sexual division of labour, that is, that everything concerning the work activities of the family sphere (reproduction work) has been given less value than the activities of entrepreneurial work (production work) (Delphy, 1970, 2001a, 2001b; Galerland and Kergoat, 2014; Guillaumin, 1978a, 1978b; Tong, 2009).

In light of these results, women’s capacity for mobilizing collective dynamics to internalize and make visible and vital the work activities of both the family and entrepreneurial spheres marks a breakthrough in the potential for emancipation from the sexual division of labour with regard to both the principle of separation and the principle of hierarchization, which implies a collective construction. These strategies led them to create a work organization that served their work reality, taking into account a broader definition of their work spheres and leading, more broadly, to the possibility of envisaging societal transformation regarding their work (Martin, 2003).

Furthermore, this possibility for the women entrepreneurs in our study to put entrepreneurship at the service of their life choices brings to mind the new desire among young people for a world of work that takes into account the numerous facets of their lives in accordance with a polycentric conception of existence, that is, a conception of life and values organized around several activity spheres wherein many projects can be conducted at the same time (Mercure and Vultur, 2010; Vendramin *et al.*, 2008). Young people appear to seek to construct a plural identity that is no longer shaped by a division of labour, but effectively by a life at work that integrates all the facets of their life projects. Certainly, this desire to integrate the numerous facets of their lives is related to the difficulties of job integration and retention among young people, who are facing a major transformation of the world of work and the precariousness caused by it.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of our study provide insights into women entrepreneurs’ relationship with work and raise questions regarding the roles played by women in the traditional division of gender roles (Ahl, 2006). Moreover, they bring another perspective and challenge the results of studies showing that women entrepreneurs live in two separate worlds, that of the business and that of the family (Winn, 2004), and seek to establish boundaries between these two worlds (Lewis *et al.*, 2015). In our view, the knowledge produced is based on the theoretical perspectives used to produce it. In this sense, some scholars in the materialist feminist perspective (Daune-Richard and Devreux, 1992; Haicault, 2000; Hirata and Kergoat, 2017) have shown that it is not enough for studies to demonstrate this transition from invisibility to visibility among this group of women. In fact, simply adding women to study samples to compare them with men, without mobilizing feminist theoretical perspectives, does little to help us better

understand their lived experience [see, for example, the studies by Fairlie and Robb (2009), Manolova *et al.* (2012)]. The same is true for studies that mobilize the concept of gender by adding it as a simple variable, without identifying it as a critical concept used to consider the issues involved in the relations of domination [see for example, in the entrepreneurship field, the studies by Chasserio *et al.* (2014), Costin (2012); Davis and Shaver (2012); Humbert and Brindley (2015); Hurley (1999); Van der Steege and von Bettina (2014) and Weber and Geneste (2014)]. Similarly, studies focusing on gender using the social constructions of males and females, while overlooking the relations of domination of one gender over another, do not make it possible to render the work activities of the family sphere visible [see, in particular, the studies reviewed by Poggesi *et al.* (2016)].

In this sense, our study responds to the need, pointed out by some scholars, to mobilize the perspectives from feminist theories to renew the research objects relating to women's entrepreneurship (Ahl and Marlow, 2012; Calás *et al.*, 2009). This study thus sheds new light on the definitions and perceptions of women's entrepreneurship (Lee-Gosselin *et al.*, 2010) as well as on the research questions explored and methodologies used (Ahl, 2006, Hughes *et al.*, 2012). The contribution of the materialist feminist perspective involves recognizing the enduring relations involved in men's domination over women, thus leading to a redefinition of the concepts of work and exploitation (Delphy, 1970, 2001a, 2001b; Galerand and Kergoat, 2014; Guillaumin, 1978a, 1978b). This means that the work activities of the family sphere do indeed constitute work, have value and can take their place in the organization of work within the realm of paid work and economic production. The contribution of this study lies in the potential emancipation of women entrepreneurs, who have the autonomy and authority to reconcile and integrate the work activities of the family and entrepreneurial spheres within the collective dynamics and social relations of work. Thus, it is not so much a question of doing things differently, as raised by some feminist perspectives of difference, but rather of acting freely. Indeed, it is a question of freedom from the domination imposed on women by the sexual division of labour and, in this sense, a question of emancipation. This emancipation movement, wherein the issues involved in the social relations of domination are reconfigured, is necessarily a collective movement (Galerand and Kergoat, 2008). The mode of organization developed by these women entrepreneurs fits into an "alternative vision" (Alvesson and Billing, 2009) which encourages women to turn to entrepreneurship and create businesses in their own image rather than seeking to integrate into existing ones. This reconfiguration of the world of work appears to bring a new form of socio-economic regulation of the activities related to care work, so essential to the continuity of the world (Fusulier and Nicole-Drancourt, 2015).

Notes

1. The work activities of the family sphere include: "all tasks related to caring for people performed in the context of the family-conjugal home and for relatives — unpaid labour performed mainly by women" (Fougeyrollas-Schwebel, 2004, p. 235) (trans.), whether this work involves care given to children or an aging relative, or organizing and maintaining living environments.
2. Mumpreneurs were not expressly excluded from our sample; however, our recruiting process did not lead to their being selected.
3. On this subject, many of these business owners did not know one another, although a few of them did. The recruited participants were not sourced from a common network; some did not belong to any network.

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Appendix 1

Dynamic method of analytical description, interpretative deduction and theorizing induction throughout the process:

- categorizing phenomena based on the interviews themselves, by comparing them with each other, and carrying out a reflexive, progressive and recursive process of "theoretical" construction;
- naming phenomena through the meaning emerging from the conceptualizing categories;
- using dynamic analytical tools, allowing for a progression or regression in the analyses throughout the research process by adding new interviews;
- the idea was not so much to bring out a group of elements or classify them, but rather to identify a phenomenon through linkages; and
- these linkages within the interview material and with the theoretical perspectives used helped to bring out an understanding of the meaning of the human work experience lived by the women entrepreneurs and revealed the forms and configurations they took.

Analytical description

The analytical description contributed to the construction of categories helping to name and identify the meaning of the phenomenon based on the interview material itself

For example, the various work activities of women entrepreneurs were identified, namely, production and creation, quality monitoring, work organization planning and management, staff management, marketing and commercial development, strategic planning and financial management, administrative, secretarial or accounting work and “domestic work” and their operating modes defined, bringing out the interrelations between and superposition of activities, such that the notions of time and space emerged

Interpretative deduction

Some categories were also constructed through a process of interpretative deductions, based on the theoretical perspectives used for this study, linking some interview material with some theoretical concepts

For example, a category was constructed relating to the work activities of the family sphere based on the “domestic work” identified in the interview material, a category linked to the broad definition of the concept of work based on the materialist feminist perspective

Theorizing induction

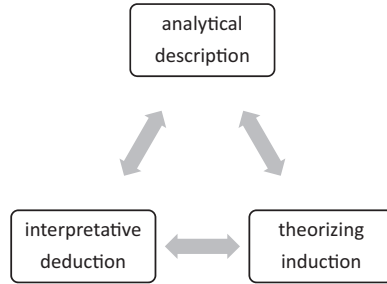
Theorizing induction also helped to create categories while remaining close to the interview material through sensitive and careful listening to the sequences of experiences and events. Throughout this dynamic analytical process, the constructed categories were bound to evolve; some were modified or clarified, and new ones were created

For example, a category called “the multiplicity of the work activities of women entrepreneurs” was constructed, grouping together the various work activities that the women entrepreneurs engaged in, including the work activities related to the family sphere

For example, the “domestic work” category identified in the interview material evolved throughout the process to become the “work activities of the family sphere”

By conceptualizing the work of women entrepreneurs in this way, we were able to bring out the issues of collective internalizing practices in terms of re-appropriating the world of work and the organization of work by the women entrepreneurs and reveal therein, in light of the materialist feminist perspective, its emancipatory potential for the division of labour

Table AI.
Example of the dynamic process of constructing conceptualizing categories according to Paillé and Mucchielli (2016)



Source: Paillé and Mucchielli (2016)

Figure A1.
Dynamic model of
data processing and
analysis method
using conceptualizing
categories

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