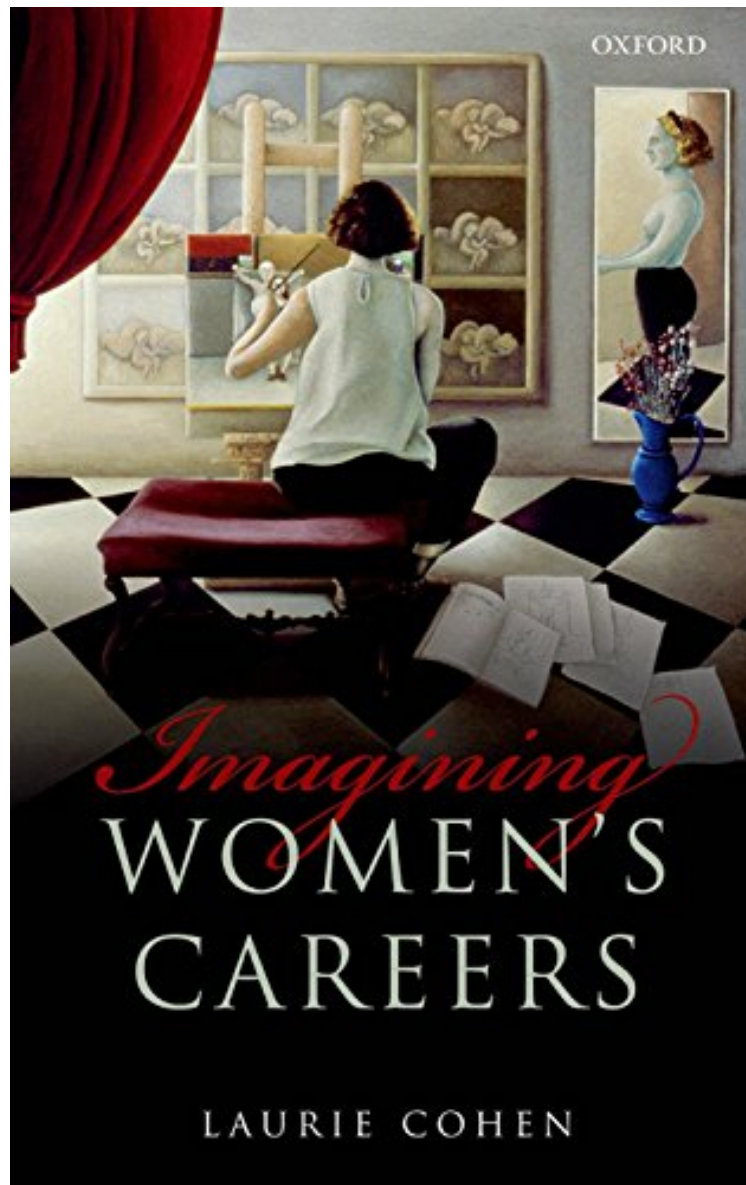


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## Imagining Women's Careers

Laurie Cohen

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**Laurie Cohen : Imagining Women's Careers** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Imagining Women's Careers:

It is over twenty years since scholars began to question the adequacy of the extant career theory for illuminating women's lives. Since then the literature has developed apace. This book contributes to these on-going debates. This

book is about women's careers, how they think about and enact their working lives, and how these patterns change, or stay the same, over time. It focuses on seventeen women, based in the same northern English city, working in a variety of occupations, who left their organizational positions to set up their own businesses. In the early 90s they participated in a research study of this career transition, and a decade and a half later were interviewed for a second time. *Imagining Women's Careers* is based on these accounts. It investigates the women's transition to self-employment and on-going career development; contextual change between the two periods and why, in career terms, this mattered; their experiences of late career and retirement; and the role of others in their career-making. The concept of the career imagination is introduced, defining and delimiting what is possible, legitimate and appropriate in career terms, and prescribing its own criteria for success. In part, the book is about change: women moving from young to middle, or middle to old age; society moving out of and back into recession; an academic literature which has deconstructed and redefined the concept of career itself. However it is also about continuity: enduring relationships, commitments to people and places, deeply held values and identities.

This is an authoritative and thought-provoking book, which makes maximum use of the methodology of semi-structured in-depth interviews to reconsider many assumptions about the apparently straightforward notion of the career. It left me thinking about what the implications of this research might be for the two domains largely left out of this particular story: how men see their careers in our increasingly fragmented work environment, and where the myths of motherhood fit into women's career imaginations. \* Ruth Garland, LSE Blog \*About the Author Laurie Cohen, Professor of Organizational Behaviour, Nottingham University Laurie Cohen is a Professor of Organizational Behaviour at the Nottingham University Business School. Her doctoral work focused on women's transitions from employment to self-employment - an area that she has continued to work in ever since. In addition, she is interested in career-making in emerging forms of organization, and research methods in the study of career, especially interpretive approaches and the use of narrative. For many years she has also been involved in a series of studies on work and careers in professional organizations, focusing mainly on scientific research establishments and more recently engineering organizations.