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Attitudes and Perceptions of Women in Skilled Labor Regarding the Lack of Women in the Construction and Building Industry

Danielle Faye King
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Danielle Faye King

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Review Committee
Dr. Teresa Lao, Committee Chairperson, Management Faculty
Dr. Patricia Polastri, Committee Member, Management Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

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2023

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MBA, Barry University, 2008

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Philosophy

Management

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Abstract

Women in the construction industry face many challenges including discrimination, lack of parental benefits, negative stereotyping, and interpersonal conflicts. The problem addressed in this study was the underrepresentation of women in skilled labor positions. Guided by social cognitive theory, the purpose of this descriptive study was to explore the attitudes and perceptions of women in the construction and building industry to gain insight into the reasons for the lack of women. Two research questions addressed the attitudes and perceptions of women in skilled labor industries and why women enter and remain in skilled labor positions. Data were collected from semi structured interviews with 22 women in the skilled labor industry that had over 1 year of experience located in 12 different cities throughout the United States. Braun and Clarke's six-phase data analysis procedure was used to identify the themes from the interviews. The themes emerged from the data are the following: 1) Women in Skilled Labor Experience Discrimination and Sexual Harassment, 2) Women in Skilled Labor Are Respected by Coworkers, 3) Women in Skilled Labor Possess Unique Skills, 4) Women Enter Skilled Labor Professions for Various Reasons and 5) Earning Respect and Rewarding Work Keep Women in Skilled Labor. Implications for positive social change include increasing workplace diversity and women's representation in skilled labor positions. In male-dominated industries, having a more diverse staff may improve a company's culture and overall job performance.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my husband, children, and mother whose continued support afforded me the opportunity and determination to push forward.

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I would like to acknowledge Dr. Lao for her continued support and patience as my committee chair during this arduous process. Dr. Polastri was also a part of my amazing support system and committee. I so appreciate Dr. Manlandro's unwavering support and mentorship, and Dr. Hay for all of his follow-ups and direction during my last 2 years in the program. I would also like to acknowledge and thank three ladies from my third residency who encouraged me during my last semester. Anthea, Naima, and Ebony, you ladies are next!

Last but certainly not least, I would also like to acknowledge the amazing women in skilled labor who push forward every day despite the obstacles and especially those who were willing to lend their stories to this research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Skilled trades are strongly segregated, with women making up only 1%–3% of the workforce (Bridges et al., 2020). The construction industry is not immune to this phenomenon, often creating a hostile environment for women because it is a nontraditional, male-dominated industry (Rivera et al., 2021). Increased initiatives and policies have incentivized women to work in male-dominated fields. However, despite these efforts, women in the construction industry remain highly underrepresented (Sullivan, 2021). The U.S. construction sector thrives with almost $1 trillion in new projects (Wright & Conley, 2020). However, 79% of U.S. construction businesses reported needing additional workers to meet demand (Wright & Conley, 2020). With strong demand and limited supply, women are in an ideal position to fill the labor gap.

There is a need to gain insights into how women perceive different employment opportunities regarding quality and job expectations. The need for more women in construction suggests a research gap in understanding women's beliefs and attitudes toward skilled labor professions. Furthermore, in male-dominated industries such as construction, having a more diverse staff can also improve a company's culture and overall job performance (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017; Norberg & Johansson, 2021). The purpose of the current study was to explore the attitudes and perceptions of women in the construction and building industry to gain insight into the reasons for the lack of women in this field.

According to Beaman et al. (2012), many factors influence outcomes for women working or seeking to work in male-dominated fields, including perceived self-efficacy,

career choice, income, and involvement in decision-making positions. I used the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) as a framework to underpin the design and analysis of the study. In this study, the SCCT framework helped me provide the industry with a closer look at how to appeal to women in terms of career choice and keep women employed in the construction and building sector.

Background

There has been substantial advancement in women's educational achievements over the past decades. However, there are significant disparities in gender equity within traditionally male-dominated fields (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). For example, there is an underrepresentation of women in the construction industry (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). In addressing the workforce shortage in the construction industry, some researchers argued that increasing female involvement is a possible solution; gender inclusivity not only provides a diverse workforce but also increases productivity (Deckert, 2021). Additionally, studies indicated that increased female participation is essential to improving equality and efficiency (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017; Rivera et al., 2021).

The most common challenge contributing to the underrepresentation of women in male-dominated fields is the difficulty reconciling motherhood and family life with their employment (Bryce & Gardner, 2019). Long hours, lack of high-ranking female role models, lack of part-time and flexible employment choices, family obligations, male-dominated hiring procedures, and misconceptions about women's talents are some obstacles women encounter in the skilled labor industry (Bryce et al., 2019). The industry's antiquated development of family-friendly working practices tends to be

incompatible with women's need for increased flexibility at home (Bryce et al., 2019; Norberg & Johansson, 2021). Increased female representation in these positions might lead to changes in the conventional home division of labor, such as how childcare and other household tasks are delegated (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017).

The Associated Builders and Contractors of America, a national construction industry trade body, predicted that the construction sector in the United States would need to hire 430,000 extra employees by 2021 to meet rising demand (Deckert, 2021). However, over the past few decades, students have been pushed toward higher education rather than trade or vocational schools (Maclean & Pavlova, 2013). Decreased student influx and the aging of seasoned workers suggest that construction workers' local and national labor pools may remain problematic until systematic change occurs (Deckert, 2021). To investigate the issue, Eisenberg (2018) concentrated on the experiences of more than 30 women who entered the construction industry in 1978 with the aid of affirmative action and government intervention. Eisenberg also documented that several women left the industry shortly after joining due to unfavorable conditions. Despite governmental policies encouraging equality, other barriers have remained unchanged for over 20 years, resulting in a consistently low number of women in the industry (Eisenberg, 2018). Previous studies on women in the construction industry have stressed the value of interpersonal aspects, such as connections and mentorship, and encouraging institutional practices in advancing women (Francis, 2017).

Previous research on gender in the construction sector has concentrated on how the stereotypes of men in construction continue to influence the industry (Bryce et al.,

2019; Navarro-Astor et al., 2017; Norberg & Johansson, 2021). Such stereotypes include bravery, risk-taking propensity, technical adeptness, and strength. Apart from demonstrating that construction is a male-dominated business, these studies revealed the presence of a gender hierarchy in which hardness and toughness play an essential role in determining employees' place and level of respect within the organization (Norberg & Johansson, 2021). Understanding how women in construction perceive other women in the industry concerning their attributes and expected job contributions may give valuable insights into the work needed to make the workplace more gender inclusive (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017; Norberg & Johansson, 2021).

Historically, society perceived women as docile, emotional, and less forceful than males (Bryce et al., 2019). The general assumption tends to be that women must develop specific traits to excel in the construction industry (Norberg & Johansson, 2021). When women comment about their employment, one of the most startling findings is that sexual harassment is a persistent topic (Norberg & Johansson, 2021). References to forms of exclusion and discrimination appear regularly, demonstrating that gendered and sexualized interactions exist in the sector despite the laws and rules that prohibit them (Norberg & Johansson, 2021). This treatment may prevent women from entering or remaining in the construction industry.

Previous studies indicated that the construction industry faces several difficulties including unfavorable attitudes toward women in the industry manifested through hostility and discrimination (Abdussalam et al., 2021; Adeniji et al., 2022). The construction industry is a demanding workplace that does not support a healthy work–life

balance and contains a dearth of role models, which affects women's capacity to stay in the industry and advance their careers (Bryce et al., 2019; Lekchiri & Kamm, 2020; Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). In addition, Norberg and Johansson (2021) found that the diverse modes of access and promotion, as well as the business policies and culture regarding gender-related stereotypes, alter the attitude of recruiters toward male and female applicants. As such, the construction industry appears to be one of exclusion over inclusion, favoring male workers over female workers.

Problem Statement

The present study addressed the underrepresentation of women in the construction industry. Previous studies found that women in the construction industry face discrimination, lack of parental benefits, negative stereotyping, and interpersonal conflicts (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017; Norberg & Johansson, 2021). However, the scholarly literature was devoid of women's opinions about other women working in the construction business. The current study's goal was to examine women's views and perceptions in the building and construction sector to understand why fewer women are working in construction.

There is a shortage of skilled labor workers, and filling these positions with women will benefit them and the construction sector (Deckert, 2021; Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). Furthermore, skilled labor occupations that pay over $35 U.S. dollars per hour without a college degree might be a path to financial independence for women (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the opinions and attitudes of women in the skilled labor industry and use this information to encourage additional

women to choose jobs in the same profession (Babic & Hansez, 2021). Experience has shown, for instance, that women on average have better communication skills, enhanced practical decision-making skills, and less desire for personal gratification than men (Wright & Conley, 2020).

A need for more employees is impeding the construction industry's expansion. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that only 9.1% of America's construction employees are female (Wright & Conley, 2020). Such a high industry demand may benefit from women entering the profession and filling vacant positions (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). Factors such as baby boomer retirement, worker attrition, and the recent housing slump have contributed to the labor shortage (Arenas-Molina & Rodriguez, 2017). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic impeded the availability of competent personnel in the construction business, generating concern (Alsharef et al., 2021). Women might be the essential resource the building sector needs to flourish (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). Judy Lynn Archer, President and CEO of Women Building Futures, an Edmonton organization that helps Albertan women enter the construction trades by connecting them with training programs, noted that Alberta, Canada had experienced a chronic and long-term labor shortage. As a result, more companies consider women an untapped resource to fill their crews (Molina et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Study

Women with low wage-earning potential who may increase their earning potential by working in the construction business could be negatively impacted by the social ramifications of the absence of women working in the profession. The purpose of this

study was to identify the causes contributing to the lack of women in the construction and building industry by examining the views held by women working in these fields. This study may provide the industry with an in-depth analysis of how to appeal to women regarding a career choice in skilled labor and how to promote the inclusion of women in the construction and building industry.

Research Questions

The construction industry is one of the most important economic sectors in the world because it employs many people in specialized vocations in several countries (Carnemolla & Galea, 2021). However, the construction industry needs more trained personnel (Norberg & Johansson, 2021; Wright & Conley, 2020). Retention of women in the business sector and their relative absence in the construction sector, despite the economic and professional possibilities, need to be fully understood (Carnemolla & Galea, 2021; Lekchiri & Kamm, 2020; Ness, 2012).

Carnemolla and Galea (2021) found that women are not choosing construction as a career due to a "lack of awareness of construction-related opportunities, lack of self-alignment with the profession, the effect of male domination such as respect, career success, and enjoyment" (p. 828). Numerous studies explored why women are not entering construction (Arenas-Molina & Rodriguez, 2017; Carnemolla & Galea, 2021; Naoum et al., 2019). However, few researchers examined the perceptions of women currently in the construction sector. To examine the underrepresentation of women in the construction industry, I chose the following research questions to guide this study:

RQ1: What are the attitudes and perceptions of women in the skilled labor construction industry?

RQ2: Why do women enter and remain in the skilled labor construction industry?

Theoretical Foundations

The theories that grounded this study included social cognitive career theory (SCCT) and constructivist grounded theory (CGT).

Social Cognitive Career Theory

SCCT explains the evolution of a person's career through the interaction of three interdependent components (Lent et al., 1994). The three interconnected elements of career development, as indicated by the SCCT, are (a) how vital academic and career interests emerge, which covers the motivation behind pursuing a career and how willing one is to pursue such a career; (b) how individuals make educational and career decisions, which includes the motivation behind pursuing the career and accounts for the subsequent decisions or lack thereof to pursue the career path; and (c) how an individual attains academic and career success. In conjunction with the first two constructs, SCCT can account for how and what level of success an individual attains in a career (Lent et al., 2002). Researchers have used SCCT to investigate academic and vocational contentment (Lent et al., 2002).

Through the use of SCCT, the aim of the current study was to understand the underrepresentation of women in the construction sector. A person's learning experiences may be influenced by personal inputs or personality traits, as well as by subsequent career decisions or ideas about particular vocations, as seen by SCCT (Lent et al., 2000;

Schaub & Tokar, 2005). When applying SCCT to the construction industry, I sought to identify why women enter and remain in a male-dominated career and to shed light on how construction companies could improve their chances of recruiting and retaining women in skilled labor.

Lent et al. (2002) suggested that SCCT defines many educational and occupational aspects. The core tenet of SCCT is that factors such as relevant self-efficacy and outcome expectancies influence the development of academic and career-related interests, aspirations, and decisions (Lent et al., 1994, 2002). Therefore, SCCT may explain the underrepresentation of women in the skilled labor construction industry by explaining why women are not attracted to the career, why they may not feel welcome in the workplace, and why they may leave the field. The current study may provide insight into strategies for attracting more women to the field by understanding why women are underrepresented in the field of skilled labor construction.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

CGT focuses on developing new ideas rather than deriving theories from preexisting theoretical frameworks (O'Connor et al., 2018). Theory derivation is accomplished through the inductive examination of participant data (Martin & Barnard, 2013; O'Connor et al., 2018). CGT's conceptual history stems from the constructivist school of thought, which argues that individuals' life experiences influence how they interpret the world and construct objects and meanings of truth (Sebeelo, 2022). Constructivist grounded theorists focus on the social, historical, and material contexts of events (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019). Additionally, CGT assumes that activity and

meaning are dialectical: meaning determines the action, and action influences meaning (Sebeelo, 2022). CGT includes collecting data and analyzing reciprocal relationships by comparing data cases within and between (Charmaz, 2020; O'Connor et al., 2018). For example, Martin and Barnard (2013) used CGT as a theoretical framework for their research on women working in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Martin and Barnard discovered that the primary issues women encounter are formal and covert organizational procedures that support gender discrimination and bias. These behaviors included failing to adequately consider women's physical, identity, and work–life needs (Martin & Barnard, 2013). The use of femininity, taking on male traits, mentorship, and intrinsic motivational elements were components of women's resilience. Even though sample sizes may be limited, the grounded theory gave me an increased analytical capacity appropriate for this study (see Charmaz, 2020).

Research Design

I chose a qualitative descriptive design with semistructured interviews to answer the research questions. For the planned research design, I sought to interview at least 20 women in the construction industry. I offered the participants the opportunity to be interviewed in person, by phone, or via Zoom, depending on their comfort level. If necessary, I planned to contact managers or human resources staff in the construction industry to recruit participants. However, this recruitment step was not necessary. Participants were sent a survey with demographic questions to ensure they were qualified for the study. After enrollment, the participants completed interviews that included the following open-ended questions:

1. What challenges do women face in the skilled labor construction industry?
2. What attitudes influence women in the skilled labor construction industry?
3. What perceptions do women have regarding the skilled labor construction industry?
4. Why are women underrepresented in the skilled labor construction industry?
5. What does it mean to be a woman in the skilled labor construction industry?
6. Why should women consider a job in the skilled labor construction industry?
7. What benefits do women bring to the skilled labor construction industry?
8. Why is it important to have women in the skilled labor construction industry?
9. What resources are present for women in the skilled labor construction industry?
10. How can we empower women in the skilled labor construction industry?

I collected data through semistructured interviews using the participant's chosen interview modality. I transcribed interview recordings line-by-line for in-person or phone interviews. For virtual interviews using Zoom, I used the Zoom teleconferencing software for transcriptions. Thematic analysis was conducted according to Braun and Clarke's (2019) recommendations.

Definitions

Construction industry: The area of production and commerce that deals with creating, maintaining, and repairing infrastructure (Pacheco-Torgal et al., 2020).

Earning potential: The highest wage available for an individual in a given sector or career (Rinz, 2022).

Gender discrimination: Any situation in which a person is denied a chance or is mistreated because of their sexuality. In other words, gender discrimination, commonly called sexism, is any unequal treatment given to an individual based on their sexual identity (Nowak, 2021).

Gender stereotype: A stereotype in which someone is assigned specific traits, obligations, or obligations based on their membership in the societal group of women or men (Hentschel et al., 2019).

Labor: The bodily, psychological, and sociocultural effort needed to produce goods and services in an economy. Labor offers the expertise, staffing, and support required to convert unfinished materials into finished products and services (Bowen & Finegan, 2015; Wijaya et al., 2021).

Self-efficacy: The conviction that an individual possesses in their capacity to carry out the necessary activities to accomplish the performance levels they have set for themselves as goals (Maddux & Gosselin, 2012; Zheng et al., 2021).

Skilled labor: Vocationally educated, skilled, or experienced individuals in the workforce who can perform complex mental or physical duties. Skilled labor is frequently specialized in fields such as construction and may need extensive training and expertise (Kim et al., 2020). Beyond the construction industry, other skilled labor professions include plumbers, electricians, and pilots.

Scope and Delimitations

The study is delimited to women in skilled labor positions in the United States. The original scope of the study was intended to encompass women in the construction

industry. However, to increase the breadth of the investigation, the scope of the study was expanded to include all women in skilled labor positions. There were no delimitations on the participants' ages or locations in the United Stat

Es.Assumptions and Limitations

An assumption is something a researcher believes to be true but cannot be proven (Al-Ababneh, 2020). Understanding assumptions is necessary for research studies because assumptions underpin all of the decisions made by the researcher. There were two general assumptions of the current study. First, I assumed that the women participating in the study would answer the questions truthfully. I believed the participants would be truthful, especially considering the voluntary nature of the study. A second assumption was that the participants would provide rich descriptions of their attitudes and perceptions of why women enter the construction industry.

Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) defined limitations as weaknesses beyond the researcher's control and related to the research design, restrictions on the statistical models chosen, financial restrictions, or other variables. There were several limitations to the current study. First, this study was limited by the difficulty in subject recruitment in the construction industry. I anticipated participant recruitment would be a manageable problem because numerous social media pages target women in skilled labor positions. A second limitation was the choice to delimit the study to women in construction. The study's results may not be transferable to other populations of women in skilled labor.

Significance of the Study

This study was critical because it could raise awareness of how the construction industry perceives the underrepresentation of women in the industry. Understanding this phenomenon may allow for programs and directed career guidance toward the research topic using the theory of SCCT (see Lent et al., 2002). The field of skilled trades can be an excellent opportunity for higher paying jobs for women and could help create financial independence (Naoum et al., 2019). In addition, the construction industry needs a larger labor pool, including women. There is a gap in the research about the perspectives and attitudes of women in the skilled labor area of construction regarding how they feel about the industry, why they are less hired, and what issues are inhibiting their progress. For this study, I interviewed women to determine their attitudes and perspectives based on the SCCT (see Lent et al., 2002). I addressed the social problem by encouraging construction companies in the local region to hire more women for skilled labor roles.

The results of this study could offer insight into why few women are working in the construction industry. The construction industry could also improve its recruiting methods to find more women in the skilled labor force (Wright & Conley, 2020). Construction companies and human resources departments could use the results to inform hiring managers how to create a habitable work environment for female employees and attract more female employees. Such methods could attract more women to the labor force, diversify the workforce, and help fill the labor shortage in construction and similar trades. Furthermore, the application of women's views, attitudes, and knowledge of

skilled labor, explored through the lenses of SCCT and CGT, may increase the number of women in construction (Lent et al., 2000; O'Connor et al., 2018).

Summary and Transition

In numerous organizations and fields of work, there is a clear division of labor based on gender, with males occupying positions with the highest salaries, the most respect, and the most power in organizational leadership (Norberg & Johansson, 2021). This problem, which creates a hostile climate for women due to the often nontraditional nature of the skilled labor sector, has made its way into the construction industry and affects those who work in it (Rivera et al., 2021). According to Buehren and Van Salisbury (2017), several variables influence male-dominated fields. These variables include female representation in male-dominated industries influenced by perceived self-efficacy, occupational choice, compensation, and involvement in decision-making positions (Beaman et al., 2012). In the current study, I examined the perspectives and attitudes of women currently employed in construction to identify the causes contributing to the relatively low proportion of women employed in the construction and building sector. Women who have a low potential for earning a living salary and who, by working in the construction business, can raise their earning potential through skilled labor may be negatively impacted by the societal ramifications of the absence of women working in the construction industry. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature backing this study and offers a comprehensive overview of SCCT and GCT as foundational frameworks.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Over the past 5 decades, the number of employed women has increased dramatically. Women now account for over half of the working population and often hold educational levels comparable to those of males (Begeny et al., 2020). Despite significant advancements in training and employment beyond the home, women continue to be underrepresented in several male-dominated fields such as the construction industry. Gender imbalance in these areas is among the most significant issues women encounter in such professions. Bridges et al. (2020) claimed that various factors influence male-dominated industries. Self-image, job selection, pay, and involvement in management positions are some variables that impact the underrepresentation of women in the workforce and male-dominated industries (Bridges et al., 2020; Tabassum & Nayak, 2021).

The lack of women in the construction industry suggests that the gender disparity might be reduced with an additional study on women's views and attitudes and the SCCT. In technical professions such as contracting, piping, and carpentry, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021) indicated that there are proportionally fewer women than men working in manufacturing. In the U.S. construction sector in 2016, 939,000 women held diverse occupations (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017, 2021). However, there needs to be more women working in these fields (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). Despite the numerous studies that have explored strategies to find a middle ground between career and family life, there is still a need for a remedy to this gap.

The current study's goal was to examine women's views and perspectives in the construction and building industry to understand why fewer women work in the skilled labor industry. Low-earning women hoping to boost their potential earnings by entering this area may experience societal consequences due to the paucity of women in the construction industry. This SCCT-framed study could help the construction and building industry look more closely at ways to attract and retain women.

Businesses that men usually dominate might profit from a staff that is growing increasingly diverse and comprises more women. The literature underscored the notion that more women must work in construction to alleviate the shortage of workers in the construction sector and to improve equity and efficiency (Ayodele et al., 2020). However, despite initiatives to hire more women, the sector continues to be gender-segregated worldwide (Norberg & Johansson, 2021). Norberg and Johansson (2021) examined how women were portrayed in the sector by men and discursively by women. The survey also addressed the skills and knowledge essential for women employed in the field. Although the major finding of the study was that there are numerous opportunities for women in the construction sector, closer examination revealed that women face prejudice, gender-biased attitudes, and unrealistic expectations when they first enter the field, according to the researchers. The data suggest that women can be professional workers in the construction industry despite challenges. The difficulties can go beyond a lack of skills and qualities, according to SCCT. According to Norberg and Fältholm (2018), researchers can create new ideas about women in construction and attempt to acquire new insights by looking at women's unique traits and skills. In keeping with Norberg and

Fältholm' study, the current study focused on data acquired from online databases. Like Navarro-Astor et al.'s (2017) study on women's career advancement in the construction industry, the current investigation focused on women in the construction industry rather than in a specific nation or workplace. I examined how women are represented discursively by integrating content analysis with corpus linguistic methods, a methodological approach that takes an empirical stance.

Literature Search Strategy

The Walden University databases provided the crucial tools to locate relevant prior research using key terms. Academic Search Complete, Dissertations & Theses @ Walden University, ProQuest Central, and SAGE Journals were among the databases used. I became familiar with the vocabulary used to explain the attitudes and views women encounter in the labor construction industry by reading scholarly publications about women in skilled labor. The studies identified were divided into subsections for this review. I used Boolean terms when combining search terms such as *women in construction*, *male-dominated industry*, *career planning*, *SCCT*, *diversity*, *skilled labor*, *skilled labor construction*, and *gender equality*. During the review of the literature, resources in constitutional, sociocultural, managerial, and psychological science, feminist theory, corporate management, and medieval spheres were discovered. Among the databases searched were EbscoHost, Thoreau, Science Direct, Business Source Complete, ABI/Inform, Journal ProQuest Central, and Sage Premier Journals. Google Scholar offered a separate option for supplementary content to guarantee a comprehensive investigation. This search included both seminal and contemporary

research. A total of 85% of the relevant publications satisfied Walden's criteria for research validity by being published between 2018 and 2023.

Theoretical Foundation

This section includes a description of the two theoretical foundations underpinning this study. First, the SCCT framework is described. This discussion is followed by a description of the CGT.

SCCT

SCCT was established in 1994 by Lent et al. Lent et al. (2000) evaluated SCCT's attempts to clarify the three interconnected elements of career advancement: (a) how primary vocations and professions are formed, (b) how individuals make decisions about careers and colleges, and (c) how individuals succeed in their education or career. Given the preponderance of women in the workforce, the logical links between the SCCT framework and the current study are pertinent because the SCCT may help explain why few women engage in skilled labor construction. The SCCT may also reveal why fewer women work in skilled labor construction and how to entice more of them to do so.

The SCCT discusses environmental factors that may influence women's choice to join or leave the construction industry and suggests that women decide based on preferences, aptitudes, or abilities. This study linked women's concepts and opinions to the SCCT to encourage women to work as skilled laborers in the construction industry. A theoretical justification for the study includes how SCCT provides personal characteristics that influence professional-seeking self-efficacy behaviors. Research, such as that carried out in the current study, may address the subject of women in skilled labor

positions from the viewpoint of SCCT to persuade more women to pursue employment in the construction industry (Lent et al., 1994, 2000).

Goals, self-efficacy, and result expectations are the three interactive elements that comprise the SCCT (Lent et al., 1994). To determine a person's path to professional progress, the three elements collaborate with other crucial characteristics of the individual, such as personality characteristics, their present situation such as aids and obstacles, and prior learning experiences (Lent & Brown, 2013). According to SCCT, personal inputs or personality traits determine how people learn, influencing their interests, goals, behaviors, and level of performance (Lent et al., 1994). Businesses could use this knowledge to attract and keep female workers for specialized labor positions in the construction industry. Growing data suggest that SCCT can be a useful paradigm for determining reasons for many facets of academic and occupational interest development, judgment, and productivity (Lent et al., 2002). Additionally, SCCT has sparked several projects to create and evaluate interventions that concentrate on facets of professional growth (Yusuff et al., 2019).

The SCCT explains the procedures and results that influence choices about employment and education. Incorporating the research of Hackett and Betz's (1981) career self-efficacy theory and Bandura's (1991) social learning theory, Lent et al. (1994) proposed SCCT. SCCT can shed light on encouraging more women to choose jobs in skilled trade construction and other fields where they may impact the workplace. The related self-efficacy and outcome expectancies have some bearing on academic and career interests, wants, and decisions, a core principle of SCCT.

The objective of this qualitative descriptive study was to develop ways to increase the proportion of women working in skilled labor positions in the construction industry by using SCCT and CGT as a guiding framework. The sector's demographic trends have changed due to several variables, including the aging and retirement of employed males (Arnholtz & Lillie, 2020), the difficulty in identifying and selecting instructors for construction-related educational courses (Oo et al., 2019), and graduates choosing not to work in the industry. This situation has created a need to advance initiatives to attract and retain women in the sector (Oo et al., 2019). In addition, according to Saeed et al. (2021), gender parity in any industry could enhance creativity, transformative leadership, and talent's capacity for wise decision making.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

Examining societal structures is the main objective of the qualitative research strategy known as CGT. Databases, field observations, and notes must be examined within and between each data collection tool to collect and examine linkages between data (Charmaz, 2020; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Gordon-Finlayson, 2010). The foundation of this theory is the discovery of social practices, theoretical sampling to detect groups, and the merging of groupings to create a theoretical framework. Charmaz (1990) produced data to support and refute the initial classifications using a theoretical sampling technique. Additionally, Charmaz's analysis helped shape the emerging theory, guiding the course of the subsequent interviews. Charmaz outlined four main criteria for this theory: (a) believability, which entails having adequate and pertinent data for the interview guide and constructing a comparison study; (b) uniqueness, which refers to

possessing an up-to-date conceptual model of a research issue; (c) resonance, which refers to the researcher crafting ideas to reflect their respondents and also offering insight to generalizations; and (4) usability, which entails establishing a base practice app.

Martin and Barnard (2013) used the CGT paradigm to study women in professions with a high male employment rate to understand women's challenges in recruitment and retention. Martin and Barnard performed an extensive qualitative study under the direction of CGT and employed in-depth, unstructured interviews involving five women to gather data. Martin and Barnard provided a critical theoretical rationale for the experiences of women working in organizations where men dominated by using the CGT theory. The study showed that gender played a role in discrimination and bias against women. Additionally, women viewed the supervisors as too rigid to satisfy their aspirations for a work–life balance.

CGT is a methodical research approach that enables data collection and specific analytical techniques. This approach is used to develop a theory that connects conceptual knowledge to the real world. Through targeted coding, where research analysis and efficient data collecting are targeted and validated, this approach improves the quality of research (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory enhanced my analytical ability despite the study's small sample size. Grounded theorists reach saturation by theoretically sampling their categories without adding new traits. Checking all of the created groups against the data is necessary for theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006).

Literature Review

This section includes a review of the relevant literature in this study. This section provides an overview of relevant concepts in this study including females in male-dominated sectors. Other common themes are closing the career gap between men and women in the construction industry, encouraging favorable working environments for women in the construction industry, and the impact of female inclusion in the construction sector.

Women's Career Development in the Construction Industry

The construction sector has endeavored to keep female employees and recruit female students (Bigelow et al., 2018; Ling et al., 2016; Worrall et al., 2010). Women are frequently seen as an untapped resource to fill positions for employees and laborers in the skilled-labor industry (Bigelow et al., 2018). Women's job decisions in the male-dominated crafts of construction and other trades can be complicated and influenced by several interrelated issues (Bigelow et al., 2018). Moore and Gloeckner (2007) listed characteristics such as gender role specialization, authority, discriminatory socially constructed practices, misogynistic views, and sociological factors that influence women's decision making in male-dominated careers. Social inequality occurs because men and women perform different jobs within the industry. In addition, men are predominant in technical and fee-earning employment, while most women in the construction industry work administrative positions (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). Some women also work as project managers at corporate headquarters in softer industries such

as landscape and design or in specialist professions connected to the environment or quality control (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017; Olofsdotter & Randevåg, 2016).

Because inclusion ideals have been emphasized in society, several government and corporate campaigns have boosted the number of women employed in the construction industry. Despite this, there have been few noticeable changes to the sector, which is still primarily controlled by men (French & Strachan, 2015; Lu & Sexton, 2010; Naoum et al., 2020; Shrestha et al., 2020). Moreover, barriers behind closed doors must be eliminated to encourage fair representation of women in this sector (Yu, 2020). Women's delayed and arduous career advancement is affected by wage disparities and social networks designed for men (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017) and a lack of female role models to look up to in the industry (Marks, 2021). The occupational segregation of the sector brought on by employers' discretionary job allocation limits the opportunities for women to progress in their careers. Also, difficult working conditions increase the conflict between multiple roles and strain the ability to combine work and family (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). These gendered professional restrictions may impact how seriously women take jobs as viable alternatives. However, the extensive research on the topic indicated the lack of studies devoted to addressing barriers to gender diversity. Tradeswomen in the United States dislike that several researchers are studying them while their working conditions are unchanging (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017).

Barriers to Women in the Construction Industry

Specifically, the construction sector contains comparatively few women at higher employment levels. In the administrative and outdoor occupations that make up the

construction industry, women comprise just 13% of the workforce (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021; Zitsman, 2019). According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), women are significantly underrepresented in the skilled labor industry compared to men, especially in skilled labor professions like construction, contracting, plumbing, and carpentry. In 2016, 939,000 women worked in various occupations in the United States construction sector (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017, 2021). Nevertheless, more men than women are still working in this area (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). Moreover, 80% of businesses said it was challenging to fill labor and wage positions (Jordan, 2020). Since the construction sector is experiencing a skilled labor shortage, the need for more women impacts the industry's workforce.

Many employment hurdles exist for women in the construction industry, and specific career routes may involve associated factors (Jones, 2022). According to studies, several elements can encourage women to pursue careers in the construction industry (Tunji-Olayeni et al., 2018). Such elements include (a) gender stereotypes and familial influence, particularly from fathers; (b) scholastic aptitude and preferences in school; and (c) role models, including mentors, lovers, and acquaintances. A systematic assessment of more than 60 papers published between 2000 and 2015 discussed women's obstacles in the construction industry (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). Women's perception of construction occupations is hampered by sexism, misogyny, and gender stereotypes (Rostiyanti et al., 2020). Other challenges include the inability to balance work and home responsibilities, a lack of professionalism, a dangerous workplace, sexual harassment,

strict schedules, the challenge of adapting to the masculine culture of the organization, and a lack of informal job connections.

Many of the risks faced by men and women working in the construction industry are similar, but some risks women face are frequently more significant (Chan et al., 2020). For instance, the safety and personal protection gear given to construction workers should be offered in suitable sizes and shapes to fit both women and men (Curtis et al., 2022; Oo & Lim, 2020). Rostiyanti et al. (2020) investigated the obstacles preventing women from working in construction using a mixed-method approach. They found the key barriers to women pursuing careers in the construction industry are lack of worksite security, long working hours, and lack of professional development training. Moreover, because women are a minority in the construction workplace, they often encounter an uncomfortable or unfavorable working environment (Rostiyanti et al., 2020). When questioned, most women quickly denied their occupations as not actual construction, claiming that only men or those working on the job site and in the field are qualified for such careers (Menzie, 2022). About 47% of the workforce are women (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). However, women made up just 9% of the construction workforce in 2015, and their representation barely grew to 9.9% of all positions in the industry by 2018 (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). These figures demonstrate that, historically, fewer women have been employed in the construction industry, and efforts to address this have shown only minor results.

Additionally, despite improvements in women's educational outcomes and workplace progression, only some areas of specialization have experienced equal

advancement (Norberg & Johansson, 2021). Notably, various skill levels are necessary for the construction industry, and the new apprenticeship model that lowers professional access barriers is important (Sokas et al., 2019). Leaders in the construction industry must promote the ability to train for and work in the construction sector at all phases of life. While ensuring that young people have the necessary skills to enter the workforce is crucial, this does not justify ignoring the gender gap (Tapia et al., 2020). Government and business should prioritize funding apprenticeships and courses for those pursuing new careers, particularly women. Additionally, contractors must guarantee that female trainees may find employment after completing their apprenticeship (Suresh et al., 2021).

Women encounter additional psychological obstacles that prevent them from succeeding in male-dominated fields, such as construction. Such obstacles may cause women to feel inadequate, which can impair their effectiveness and ego (McFadden, 2020; Turner et al., 2021).

Conversations surrounding the pervasive pay discrepancy and income disparities suggest sexism and unequal treatment are required to help women grow professionally (Adeniji et al., 2022). With such payment disparities, women may think that they are not valued equally by their employers or that their jobs are less fulfilling than those of males. Respondents to research by Tapia et al. (2020) spoke of the challenges women experience in the historically male-dominated construction industry, including mental issues and a lack of appropriately sized protective clothing. About 25% of respondents said that mentorship and training are beneficial and that having a professional mentor early in one's career is essential for later success (Tapia et al., 2020). Additionally, around 18%

of those surveyed believed outreach programs for high school students worked well as a recruiting tool and provided the students with access to valuable programs. Tapia et al. (2020) also cited past studies on the reasons for gender inequalities in the construction industry. Table 1 presents the findings, with the lack of knowledge about the employment prospects for women being the main reported contributing factor (Tapia et al., 2020).

Table 1

Root Causes for Gender Gap in the Construction Industry

Number	Cause	Previous study
1	Lack of information about the job opportunities for women	Orlando (2009)
2	Culture of the site conditions: lack of childcare	Dainty and Lingard (2006)
3	Adoption of "either/or" attitude to career and family	Lingard and Lin (2004)
4	Male-dominated image of the construction industry • Brute strength • Strong tolerance for outdoor conditions	Agapiou (2002)
5	Tough work experience • Adversarial business relationships • Poor working practices • Environmental insensitivity • Reputation of underperformance	Kamardeen and Sunindijo (2017)
6	Work/family conflicts	Wentling (1996)
7	Issues related to work hours: • Long working hours • Limited time off	Watts (2009)

Note. Findings derived from a meta-analysis by Tapia et al. (2020).

Women in Other Male-Dominated Trades

Besides construction, male-dominated trade jobs include welding, electrical, carpentry, electrical, plumbing, and forestry, among other occupations. In line with these other male-dominated industries, several issues prevent women from having successful

careers. Such issues include sociocultural factors that affect how individuals perceive gender roles, how people perceive gender at work, and how people perceive gender in general (Bridges et al., 2021). According to the results of interviews with tradeswomen, social and cultural capital determines how successful women are in skilled crafts (Bridges et al., 2021). Much of this capital depends on personal traits, initiative, and resources obtained formally in or outside the workplace. Mentoring, supervision, formal networks, and role models—success elements linked to business and government activities and strategies—were only sometimes accessible to women (Bridges et al., 2021). Moreover, research suggests that working with other women and engaging in informal networking is crucial for supporting women in trade occupations and developing much-needed social capital (Bridges et al., 2020, 2021; Conor et al., 2015). Women indicated that having access to encouraging coworkers in related roles improved their work time smoother and more enjoyable (Bridges et al., 2021). Real-world tradeswomen groups and online informal social networks have been beneficial for networking, informal mentoring, role modeling, and providing support and encouragement (Bridges et al., 2021).

Another male-dominated trade, foresting, has also struggled with gender equality on a global scale. Even though women are essential players in the forestry industry, obtaining their representation in forest organizations and participation in decision-making is still challenging (Christie & Giri, 2011; Östlund et al., 2020). Women who work in traditionally male-dominated fields like forestry have frequently received negative feedback. For example, women experienced hostility when entering Norway's forestry industry, historically one of the most male-dominated rural occupations (Östlund et al.,

2020). Senior officials in Chandrapur, India, opposed the first women to graduate from the Central Forest Rangers College in 2007 (Christie & Giri, 2011). Resistance to women working in forestry in Canada came from outside and inside the foresting communities (Christie & Giri, 2011). According to research done with the Society of American Foresters (Kuhns et al., 2004), 71% of those polled said that women did not have the same possibilities in the field as men. In addition, 65% of women reported experiencing gender discrimination at work (Christie & Giri, 2011). Thus, the representation of women in skilled labor is a problem in the United States and globally.

Occupational Health Hazards

Women may have additional considerations regarding trade employment if they plan on getting pregnant, as significant dangers are associated with some skilled labor jobs, such as welding and electrical work. Cherry (2022) found a link between vibration, primarily caused by the use of grinding equipment, and fetal loss in female welders. This work was built on an investigation of fetal loss by McDonald et al. (1988), who identified vibration as a risk factor and discovered that it was notably associated with a rise in late abortions and stillbirths. The comparison acknowledges that women's lifestyles in the trades may differ significantly from those of women pursuing more traditional career paths (Cherry, 2022). Although there is no difference in the rate of fetal loss among women working in the electrical and welding industries, both trades have ergonomic demands that must be considered by women working in those trades (Cherry, 2022).

Legal and political issues remain regarding acknowledging the hazards connected to female labor (Lippel, 2021). Skill labor workers, in general, may be exposed to

hazardous materials, such as carcinogens or other noxious chemicals (Hossain et al., 2020). The difficulties in identifying occupational malignancies in female employees are more significant than in their male counterparts (Lippel, 2021). First, it is challenging to counteract the influence of industrialists who produce carcinogens and expose workers of both sexes to them, making it challenging to identify occupational malignancies (Othman et al., 2020). Second, funding for research into the causes of cancer in the workplace is decreasing (Raj et al., 2014), yet research into malignancies in the workplace that affect women has never been a top focus (Hohenadel et al., 2015). Third, an academic debate has erupted over a few rare studies on the occupational causes of breast cancer in skilled labor positions (Brophy et al., 2012, 2013).

Women Who Work in the Construction Industry in Different Cities and Countries

Only 11.1% of Australian construction workers were women as of February 2015, with 5.3 percent working full-time and 5.8 percent working part-time (Loosemore & Malouf, 2019). The following statistics demonstrate the strata of women working in the construction industry: The employment rate in Canada in 2007 was 2.5%, compared to 9.5% in the United States and 7.5% in Turkey, according to Statistics Canada (Arslan & Kivrak, 2004), 0.2% in Nigeria (Jimoh et al., 2016), and 10% generally across most of Europe. In a study explicitly conducted in Australia, Bryce et al. (2019) concentrated on women's obstacles in the construction industry, such as rigid work schedules and an absence of a work-life balance. The writers uncovered obstacles that include the conflict between work and family obligations, the prevalence of men in the field's hiring practices, and the belief that women are too frail and incapable of filling the same

positions as men. This study sheds light on why women decided not to engage in the construction industry, which decreased the number of female leaders in the construction sector (Bryce et al., 2019).

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, women will represent around 13 percent of the workers in the construction industry by 2022 (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Notwithstanding the income inequality, some construction jobs provide better prospects for women (Jones, 2022). The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that women are more likely than men to work in administrative or office settings in the construction sector. Moreover, the distribution of women in construction is geographical. More women work in the construction industry in the southern or western states of the United States compared to the midwestern or northeastern portion of the country. The best small- to medium-sized cities for women working in construction are Wichita Falls, Texas; Carmel, Indiana; Burbank, California; and Sandy Springs, California. Overall, construction businesses employed 1,298 women, with Minneapolis, Minnesota, the largest city with the highest percentage of women employed in the field at 19.1% (Jones, 2022). Seattle, Washington (17.6%), came in second, and San Francisco, California (17.0%), came in third (Connley, 2020; Jones, 2022).

Difficulty in Balancing Work and Family

One of the most significant barriers to women entering the workforce is work-life conflict, which data indicates affects women far more frequently than males (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). Additionally, research shows that some of the problems working women face are significantly influenced by their family obligations. As a result, construction

business leaders must take measures to give women the flexibility they require to keep a balanced work-life balance (Dainty & Lingard, 2006; Kurowska, 2018). These difficulties women encounter are brought on by economic, ethnic, familial, and sexual norms (Collins et al., 2020).

Tomazevic et al. (2014) describe work-life balance as combining personal and professional responsibilities. According to Tasnim et al. (2017), work-life balance is one of the most critical social issues affecting the success rate of firms and businesses. Tasnim et al. (2017) recruited 40 female employees from various organizations to further study women's professional and home life disparities. According to the results, many female workers battled excessive work hours, employment intransigence, feeling overloaded, problems with parenting, prejudice, preconceptions, a lack of oversight support systems, and minimal parental support (Tasnim et al., 2017). The research focuses on creating uniform guidelines for firms to reduce the abovementioned issues and help female employees balance their home and professional lives. An advantageous work-life balance can exist (Lupu & Ruiz-Castro, 2021). However, an unbalanced work-life can harm employees and their managers (Ahmed, 2020).

To help women with their work-life struggles, numerous scholars have offered a variety of recommendations and remedies. Women can use these recommendations and alternatives to maintain work-life balance. Oludayo and Omonijo (2020) assert that establishing a work-life balance depends on having supportive managers. With a supporting management group, women could manage stress and anxiety at work. According to Orechwa (2021), the time and place of employment may contribute to a

lack of flexibility. Since the human resources department at a construction site would differ from one at a department shop, the workforce should support policies that consider context-specific employee well-being and balance (Bell et al., 2012).

Influences on Professional Women's Career Advancement in Construction

Studies have shown that particularly when it comes to assessments of management and finance, men and women do not typically measure employment performance using the same metrics (Krivkovich et al., 2022). Women are more likely than males to define success in terms of their internal standards, such as self-gratification, mastery, prestige, leadership, and control (Babic & Hansez, 2021). There may be methods that encourage and educate women to think critically about their social roles and gain perspective on how they view their professional accomplishments (Cimpian, 2022; Somani, 2017).

Francis (2017) investigated the variables affecting women's career advancement in the construction sector and discovered that specific variables had the most impact. In contrast to organizational and personal influences, personal characteristics are responsible for around 56% of the variation in professional success. This notion is significant because it confirms the viability of SCCT theory as a framework for examining how women choose and remain in skilled labor occupations. Indeed, SCCT examines relationships between individuals and their career-related contexts and attempts to account for an individual's entire environment that influences career-related decisions.

Overcoming Barriers Faced by Women in Leadership in the Construction Industry

The experiences of more than 30 women who used affirmative action to work in the construction sector in 1978 were the focus of Eisenberg's (2018) research. Eisenberg claims that everything has stayed the same recently and that very few women are still working in the construction industry. This finding is crucial to highlight because there needs to be increased awareness of the underrepresentation of women in skilled work in the construction industry (Adeniji et al., 2022).

According to studies, particular motivational factors can help women break down barriers in the profession, particularly in the construction industry. Achieving work-life balance is crucial, and businesses may help women by utilizing these well-known motivators (Hansen et al., 2020). Businesses should consider allowing women to raise families, giving them more liberty, adaptability, and authority (Baird et al., 2021). Women who must balance jobs and family can benefit from strategic planning, organizing, and delegation (McElwain et al., 2005; Uddin et al., 2020).

Despite the difficulties that lie ahead, empowered women frequently prefer to stay in industries where males predominate (Campuzano, 2019). Nevertheless, many women are optimistic about the prospects for women's future professions and wish to hold leadership positions (Machín-Rincón et al., 2020). Future success depends on revolutionary leadership and progressive attitudes toward equating the position of women in the workforce (Kemp, 2020). As a result, research revealed that some women take great delight in overcoming gender inequalities in the workplace, demonstrating their strong sense of self and determination for success (Martin & Barnard, 2013).

Young men and women experience various social expectations and are treated differently. Gendered stereotypes must be dismantled to make the construction industry more inclusive. According to Norberg and Fältholm (2018), women must overcome obstacles because they face discrimination. Many women use the words "abuse," "misogyny," "bias," and "bigotry" to describe the workplace climate in the construction industry (Norberg & Fältholm, 2018, pp. 3-6). The widespread incidence of these statements and claims demonstrates the severe problem of discrimination in the building and construction industry. Managers and business officials should monitor discrimination in the workplace to ensure it does not occur, and women should be able to seek support if faced with workplace discrimination (Norberg & Fältholm, 2018).

Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management in the Construction Industry

SCCT emphasizes comprehending how people choose their careers and educational paths (Lent & Brown, 2013; Lent et al., 1994, 2000). Researchers use dynamic factors, such as self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals, to identify the contextual factors (environmental issues) about particular demographics, such as women. Moreover, SCCT indicates that these factors affect an individual's relationships with particular forms of work, such as preference, productivity, and interest models (Lent & Brown, 2013; Lent et al., 2000). Specific self-efficacy beliefs, self-assurance in one's abilities, and anticipation of results are essential components of SCCT. For instance, the SCCT's self-management approach for the construction workforce considers how women manage their work and personal commitments.

Lent et al. (2016) extended the original research that served as the foundation for SCCT to include occupational and educational contexts. The original research focused on content features of career advancement, or the types of activity domains people tend to gravitate toward and are likely to succeed and stay in, such as the formation of interests, the setting of choice goals, and the attainment of performance outcomes. According to Lent et al. (2016), students occasionally postpone tracking or balancing their self-esteem and career-related knowledge until they have independently obtained knowledge or self-awareness. Instead, it is possible that one's opinions, such as likes, objectives, and talents, will be evaluated instantly in light of their expert knowledge, with options being maintained or eliminated based on continuous evaluations of fit by employers. Women can evaluate their self-efficacy, thoughts, and performance expectancy by looking at developing their skills, deciding on a career trajectory, and becoming employed using the SCCT as a logical framework. Women can, for instance, acquire work experience that they can later relate to socially, giving them constructive criticism on their viewpoint and sense of self-efficacy (Lent et al., 1994).

Women and Leadership in Construction

According to surveys, women in the construction sector said there was not enough financing to increase the training and education of female employees, which resulted in a managerial gap (Regis et al., 2019). There is an evident absence of female representation in male-centered workplaces, which retain a predominantly male career advancement model (Tokbaeva & Achtenhagen, 2021). Mainly, availability can be problematic for women because managers frequently require workers to be on-site for lengthy periods

despite family responsibilities (Cha, 2013). Many people believe women face challenges while handling their profession's requirements while working as a parent. Women may have role conflict and task management concerns, which could exacerbate issues with work-life stability (Calderwood et al., 2021). Despite the best efforts of the majority of society to provide women with new work alternatives, they must be aware of the glass ceiling (Smith et al., 2018). Research has proven that career retraction due to family responsibilities has contributed to the erosion of women's career routes in pursuing leading positions in various sectors, such as construction, sixty years after researchers coined the term glass ceiling. The glass ceiling significantly affects women's slow progress (West, 2020).

Due to the historical prevalence of male-dominated industries like construction, women frequently need assistance. This situation develops, at times, because managers are not inclined to take women's mentoring needs into account or make accommodations for them in these particular work environments. In addition, the construction industry's work settings may not appeal to women. There are several obstacles for women trying to achieve in this field because of their employers' lack of concern and empathy (Abdussalam et al., 2021). Creating strategies for helping women manage their work-life balance and experience inclusion in their workplaces is crucial. In sectors with a male predominance, women will continue to experience poor workplace inclusion in fields like construction and encounter obstacles to success (Babic & Hansez, 2021).

Lekchiri and Kamm (2020) studied the difficulties experienced by women in leadership roles in the U.S. construction industry. The study's primary goal was to gain

knowledge about the nature of these issues and identify the best practices, approaches, and solutions for promoting women's employment and engagement in the U.S. construction industry. Lekchiri and Kamm (2020) found that, due to pervasive gender inequality in workplace culture and an absence of support, women commonly work in U.S. construction sectors that do not match the essential demands necessary for them to thrive in the profession. More research is therefore required to fully understand the dearth of women in the construction business and its likely causes.

Arenas-Molina and Rodriguez (2017) evaluated case studies of both genders who work in the construction sector to identify probable causes of the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles. According to Arenas-Molina and Rodriguez (2017), attitudes regarding gender-related issues in corporate practices and culture, as well as various types of ease of access and progression, had a detrimental impact on thoughts of the lack of representation of women in the construction industry. These data provide relevant male and female perspectives on the construction sector.

According to studies, women have a better opportunity to advance their careers in senior management by gaining more education and experience (Ugwu et al., 2021). Professional growth incorporates environmental, cognitive, and personal elements that impact a career goal. As a result, awareness of how workplace obstacles affect the benefits of assuming leadership responsibilities can be identified (Mason et al., 2019; Metheny & McWhirter, 2013).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leaders aim to foster ethical behavior within a social system to bring about good changes. Four elements make up transformational leadership: inspiration, personalization, influence, and intelligence (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013). In order to motivate employees to perform in a way that promotes the advancement and achievement of the whole company rather than individual interests, transformational leadership is used, according to Schiuma et al. (2022). Leaders in the building and engineering industries might use these leadership tactics to encourage and uphold moral and ethical standards, maintain honesty and communication, and coach women. This leadership style concentrates on managers or supervisors attempting to motivate staff to persist and increase the percentage of women working in the construction industry (Cherry, 2022). Women and all employees must be happy at work if they wish to advance as leaders in their industry. How much a person enjoys their job influences motivation, efficiency, and other attitudes (Mulang, 2021). Through internal and external incentives, leaders can increase employee job happiness and workplace productivity (Agarwal, 2021). The intentions of various organizational teams impact employee job satisfaction, as Dappa et al. (2019) further underscore. Therefore, it is essential to take an employee's well-being into account. Women may experience emotional exhaustion due to high-stress levels in the construction industry, which may leave them physically, mentally, or emotionally exhausted (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013).

Organizations are challenged to find strategies to recruit, inspire, and retain individuals in complex work contexts. Therefore, successful employment requires

women in construction to communicate well (Naoum et al., 2020). Communication problems negatively impact the dynamics of the building industry (Othman et al., 2020). Leadership can, therefore, set up a participative management effort that provides women a voice in their intended fields. Additionally, monthly team meetings promoting female inspirational actions might strengthen communication. Therefore, leaders should implement this strategy and others to ensure effective communication in the workplace (Akparep et al., 2019).

Vocational Education and Training

In addition to gender discrimination and barriers in construction and other male-dominated trades, there are similar disparities in vocational education and training (VET). There have also been consistently more women enrolling in construction-related VET programs than in jobs in many European countries, suggesting that many women want to work in skilled labor fields but have yet to find an opportunity (Clarke, 2021). For example, there is a significant lack of female instructors and mentors in VET, and language and conduct can be discriminatory and purposefully leave female students out (Bridges et al., 2020). Thus, gender inequality and stereotypes are prevalent in the construction VET sector, reinforcing occupational segregation in the workplace and the gender division of labor, preventing women from pursuing non-traditional, higher-paying careers. These preconceptions and patterns in society thoughts regarding gender roles and sexist stereotypes on what women and girls are skilled at and what they should or should not choose as a career must be comprehended and examined without bias for any

measures to address the gender disparity in VET to be sufficiently substantial (Bridges et al., 2021).

Apprenticeships

Currently, apprenticeship training emphasizes knowledge and skills, and apprenticeships are generally required to enter construction and other trades (Bridges et al., 2020). There is a general dearth of considering professional pathways, training in trades, and a particular disregard for managerial abilities (Bridges et al., 2020). The existing recommendations for women recruitment in the construction industry should include marketing the sector at the foundational levels, such as elementary and secondary schools (Shibani et al., 2021). By building a bridge between educational institutions and employers, female recruitment can be successful, according to Shibani et al. (2021). For example, a group called Hawaii's Women in Technology Program researched the tactics used by businesses to publicize their job openings and the responses from female applicants. They found that to make recruitment strategies more successful for females. The change should start within the industry by incorporating various cultural competencies and ways for the hiring process, and discriminatory practices should be mitigated. In addition, managers should be able to train to close the cross-cultural and gender conflicts across the organization. They have access to a database of female students as Women in Technology aims to increase the link between guidance counselors and educational institutions (Shibani et al., 2021).

Encouraging investment in talented women by improving partnerships, internships, and apprenticeships helps them obtain full-time employment in the

construction sector (Shibani et al., 2021). The coordination and development of communication strategies at the foundational levels of a profession, which consist of secondary schools and post-secondary construction management programs, were also highlighted to improve the recruitment process significantly (Clarke, 2021). Generally, women who studied in male-dominated apprenticeship programs performed worse in the job market than their male counterparts (Frank & Frenette, 2019). Compared to their male counterparts, women who chose these programs were less likely to be employed and hold a job connected to their field of study. However, the likelihood of receiving sick leave benefits at work was the same for male and female apprentices who studied in programs predominately attended by men (Frank & Frenette, 2019).

Career Enhancement for Women in Construction Sector

Incentives for better compensation, self-efficacy, and confidence in one's ability to do construction-related jobs assist women in the business. By assisting them in their attempts and eliminating the salary gap, it will be possible to stem the exodus of talented women from the business (Krivkovich et al., 2022). As a result, women will grow in their professions and be supported for roles at the senior level (Babic & Hansez, 2021). Women can be encouraged to work in construction by, among other things, highlighting the roles that are exciting at the job site, campaigning to recruit women, showcasing the faces of women who are already working there, and imploring the academic system to ensure that young girls are aware of their potential (Balfour, 2022; Shibani et al., 2021).

Wright and Conley (2020) used data and labor market statistics to demonstrate the need for more women in construction. They looked at the Women in Construction Project

(Canter, 2018), funded by the government to lessen gender inequality. According to Wright and Conley (2020), government involvement could be a potent instrument for eradicating inequality in sectors like construction. For instance, the government has developed bipartisan infrastructure measures, creating millions of construction positions for both men and women (Zhavoronkova & Khattar, 2021). Furthermore, the InfrasstructureBill contains fundable opportunities that might help the government increase women's access to construction occupations. Additionally, contractors could be mandated to employ a certain proportion of their workers from a particular region (Zhavoronkova & Khattar, 2021). This study contributes to this concept of inclusion since it examines an idea that was successful and suggests a strategy for aiding the private sector. This study will investigate and describe the importance of inclusion, particularly in the construction industries, and how it can lead to stronger societies and companies.

Summary

The current chapter reviewed relevant literature to contextualize the need for further research in the field of women in construction. The structural and cultural barriers preventing women from fully integrating into the construction sector have been the subject of numerous research investigations (Clarke, 2021). These include unfavorable working and employment conditions, especially long hours, fragmented employment, unfair hiring and firing procedures based on reputation rather than qualifications, a lack of opportunities for work-life balance, the persistence of traditional stereotypes, and sexist and patriarchal attitudes (Clarke, 2021). From a diversity perspective, the

construction industry is growing steadily with guidelines for leadership and career advancement for women. Based on the literature presented, construction can be seen as one of the most gender-segregated industries, with men representing most of their employees (Ness, 2012). The culture in the construction industry values undertaking potential hazards and putting in long hours in occasionally challenging circumstances. According to research, gender segregation is maintained and challenged by the dominant male paradigm of construction (Ness, 2012). As a result, we require revolutionary leadership and female representation in the construction industry.

Women's social difficulties in this industry may be given more traction by reviewing this subject, and future research may benefit from the techniques and recommendations provided. Researchers can examine the influences on how women have been treated in sectors with a predominance of men thanks based on the findings of this literature review. Some researchers noted that women in the construction and engineering fields identified significant hurdles that they believed were out of hand and that their bosses' viewpoints and working conditions had to shift. Few studies examined how women performed in building and their prospects for management positions (Babic & Hansez, 2021; Krivkovich et al., 2022; Shibani et al., 2021).

For women to confidently join male-dominated job fields and leadership positions, they need role models who have achieved success. This descriptive qualitative study examines the potential connections between SCCT and CGT and how they might help increase women's representation in skilled labor construction. Changes in the industry's sociodemographics result from several factors, including the aging and

retirement of the company's predominantly male workforce, the complexity of recruiting and keeping trainees in initiatives for construction-related learning to yield sufficient graduates, and graduates choosing not to enter the field. These changes have influenced the growth of measures targeted at obtaining and keeping women in the construction industry (Oo et al., 2019).

For an enterprise to be effective and fair, heterogeneity in the workplace must be taken into consideration. Society may suffer if women are undervalued in male-dominated industries (Deckert, 2021). This dissertation aims to increase awareness of female employment opportunities and methods. The specific methodology utilized in the study is presented in Chapter Three. In addition to discussing data-collecting methods and analytical procedures, this chapter gives a study framework and a description of a data collection instrument that identifies research participants.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Women are underrepresented in the construction industry. Cain (2021) noted that only 3% of women work as skilled laborers in construction. The underrepresentation of women in the field starts from technical and construction programs, leading to a need for more skilled female laborers in the construction sector. Among the significant contributors to women's underrepresentation in the field are gender-associated challenges, culture, and racial ethnicities; these factors have a significant influence on the career trajectories of women in the construction field as well as in the decision-making process (Soo-Cheen et al., 2020). There is a need for the development of approaches that will increase the participation of women in the construction sector, which can be learned through analysis of perceived barriers and women's career and decision-making processes. Female students are not equally represented in construction and professional educational programs, which illustrates the need for more women in the construction sector (Corona-Sobrino et al., 2020). To understand the gender gap in the construction industry, it is essential to look at how women perceive gender, culture, and racial ethnicity to understand the influencers during the decision-making process.

I explored women's attitudes and perceptions of women in skilled labor construction in this qualitative study. I examined how women working in construction entered the industry and how they have been able to cope with the challenges associated with being a woman in an industry dominated by men. I also explored why women are underrepresented in the skilled labor industry and what changes leaders can make to have more women contributing to the construction industry. The present study addressed

women's perceptions of their work environment and how it can be improved. The findings from this qualitative study may be used to mitigate female underrepresentation in the field. By understanding the phenomenon, programs can be instituted to help women break into the industry through policy changes.

The skilled labor industry is a fantastic opportunity for women to address the dependency challenge. Women have the opportunity to work in this industry and achieve financial independence. The working environment must be favorable to all women (Baruah & Biskupski-Mujanovic, 2021). Furthermore, the labor industry requires a large pool of diverse labor; therefore, studies need to look at the perceptions of women in the skilled labor industry. This chapter provides the methodology used for data collection from the industry stakeholders. The chapter also includes the materials and instruments used for collecting and analyzing data, methods of ensuring the trustworthiness of the research, and my responsibility in the study. The chapter concludes with a short introduction to the next chapter.

Research Design and Method

I used a qualitative descriptive method to explore the attitudes and thoughts of women in the skilled labor construction industry to understand why they entered the field and remained in it. This approach helped me understand the underrepresentation of women in the skilled labor construction field. Johnson et al. (2020) and Baruah and Biskupski-Mujanovic (2021) noted that the qualitative approach is appropriate for looking at individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and opinions on a research topic to assign meanings and understanding of social phenomena. The social phenomenon under

investigation in the present study was the underrepresentation of women in the skilled labor construction field. I explored women's perceptions of being employed in the skilled labor construction field. The research questions chosen for the study enabled me to acquire knowledge of women's lived experiences in the skilled labor construction field. The methodology allowed the participating women to describe their perceptions of the underrepresentation of women in the industry, barriers that affected women in the industry, and what leaders can do to increase the representation of women. The research approach encouraged the participating women to share their experiences, perspectives, attitudes, and opinions on the study topic to generate further meaning and explain the social phenomenon under study.

Qualitative research methods provide researchers with insight into complex problems in circumstances where quantitative studies would have been limited (Forero et al., 2018). For the present research, I needed to obtain personal opinions and perspectives of women working in the industry to understand why women are underrepresented. Despite efforts to ensure diversity in the work environment, women in the construction industry have remained underrepresented, which supported the need to obtain the perceptions and opinions of women working in the industry to explain the cause of the problem. I looked at several societal factors influencing the phenomenon in the industry; issues such as cultural and racial factors and stigma associated with the industry are some of the main contributors to the underrepresentation of women in the field (Motsei, 2020). The qualitative research method included open-ended interview questions enabling me to explore the perceptions of female workers at a deeper level, thereby contributing to the

understanding of the complex phenomenon under study. My ability to explore participants' perspectives, attitudes, and opinions of the complex issue of female underrepresentation in the skilled labor construction sector was essential for the study.

I selected a qualitative descriptive research approach. This research design is used to answer "what," "who," "where," and "when" queries (Doyle et al., 2020). Firsthand experiments or observations cannot provide the answers to qualitative questions. As a result, the researcher queries those familiar with the phenomenon under investigation, and the researcher can also obtain data from secondary sources such as books and peer-reviewed journals (Sharp & Munly, 2022). Descriptive research addresses the occurrence rather than looking into the "how" and "why" of a phenomenon. The descriptive design is not based on particular techniques such as bracketing in phenomenology, bounded systems in case studies, or constant comparative analysis in grounded theory. Instead, the descriptive design includes techniques from other designs suited to the given investigation (Doyle et al., 2020).

A qualitative descriptive design was chosen as the research method for this study because I sought to comprehend the perceptions of women working in the construction industry regarding why they chose the construction industry. This design allows a researcher to examine a current occurrence in its environment (Aspers & Corte, 2019). I used a qualitative descriptive design because it helped me provide a detailed account of the problems and trends of women in construction workplaces (see Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Through this research method, I achieved an in-depth understanding of why women are underrepresented, the underlying issues in the industry that make women

underrepresented, and the challenges and barriers to women working in the skilled labor construction industry.

Study Population

The study population consisted of women who had worked in the skilled labor construction industry for at least 1 year (see Darvin et al., 2021). I chose this population to gain insights into the research problem. Examining the perspectives of employed women in the industry allowed me to examine issues affecting them in the construction industry (see Jimoh et al., 2016). Understanding their perceptions, opinions, and attitudes toward the work environment gave me a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. In the study, some participants had worked in the construction industry for an extended period. These women contributed to the research by sharing their experiences and perceptions of women working in construction. The women also shared their experiences and attitudes toward their work environment, thereby benefiting the study.

I used a purposive sampling technique to choose the research participants. Purposeful sampling is a standard qualitative research methodology. Purposeful sampling involves following specific selection criteria based on the research problem. Purposeful sampling promotes the recruitment of participants based on their ability to offer relevant data regarding the research problem, purpose, and research questions (Williams-Denton, 2022). Purposeful sampling was used to recruit 22 participants working in the construction industry. According to Shaheen and Pradhan (2019), purposeful sampling is a sampling strategy that qualitative descriptive researchers employ to find participants

who can offer in-depth and comprehensive information on the research topic being examined.

Two groups were chosen for the study. One group comprised at least 10 female leaders, while the other comprised at least 10 regular working women, for at least 20 participants. I aimed to recruit participants who could provide their lived encounters with the phenomenon under research and provide insights into the research problems. I aimed to overrecruit the research participants in case some opted out of the study during the research process. Hennink and Kaiser (2022) noted that at least 20 participants in a qualitative descriptive study help the researcher achieve desired results and answer the research questions; I aimed to explore the various experiences and perceptions of the participants, hence the larger sample size. Having 22 participants for the study resulted in a well-balanced outcome because there were many conversations between me and the stakeholders during the interview process (see Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

When assessing the sufficiency of the data collected, qualitative researchers should verify the data based on shared experiences, attitudes, and perspectives gathered rather than the number of participants. When selecting the study participants, I sought to keep data saturation in mind. According to Braun and Clarke (2021), saturation occurs when the incoming data sources cannot create more valuable data, and the data being gathered becomes repetitive. The quality and depth of the data should outweigh the sample size. According to Hennink and Kaiser (2022), 20 participants should be sufficient to reach saturation in a qualitative descriptive study, which is the most

prevalent guideline for evaluating the suitability of purposive samples in qualitative research.

Instrumentation

Data instruments consist of materials used for collecting data from participants. I employed several instruments to collect data in the current study. I used semistructured interviews to comprehend women's perceptions and attitudes of working in the skilled labor construction industry (see Moso-Diez et al., 2021). These semistructured interviews allowed me to explore the phenomenon under study and probe the participants' experiences of working in the skilled labor construction industry. Windapo and Paul (2021) noted that researchers should prepare interview questions to align with the research purpose and enable the investigator to analyze the problem more deeply.

I used an interview guide to ensure the interview questions fit the study's theoretical framework and stated goal. I used the SCCT, which explains how self-confidence, outcome expectations, and personal goals affect motivation to pursue career interests (Bernard et al., 2020). This theory also explains why obstacles people encounter in pursuing a goal may prevent them from reaching it. With the understanding of this theory, I used an interview guide to explore the barriers and challenges women face in the construction work environment.

In qualitative descriptive studies, researchers can use interviews to clarify, comprehend, and examine participants' beliefs, actions, experiences, and perceptions. Interview questions are typically open-ended to obtain detailed information (Doyle et al., 2020). The goal is to capture data-rich information that can be helpful in the study. I

achieved this goal by permitting the participants to describe their lived experiences and perceptions related to their choices to pursue a career in the construction industry. The goal of every interview session in a qualitative descriptive study is to gain information relevant to the research questions and to obtain rich descriptions while attempting to comprehend the participants' perceptions (Pickles et al., 2019). Among the fundamental problems for researchers is staying focused; an interview guide can help researchers focus on the study goals and aims.

Another instrument used in the study was field notes. The notes helped not only with reflective processes but also with describing participants' perceptions (see McGrath, 2021). During the interviews, I took notes on my interaction with the participants. I conducted the interviews via Zoom; therefore, I could evaluate the nonverbal communication cues displayed by the participants, and these cues helped me understand the participants' attitudes and perceptions (see Razaghi et al., 2020). While conducting the interviews, I observed the participants' sighs, pauses, and emotional experiences. Nonverbal cues are essential information that can be lost during transcription (McGrath, 2021). Using field notes in the current study provided critical information (see Pacheco-Vega, 2019).

Data Collection and Analysis

I used one main method of collecting data: interviewing. I interviewed 22 participants; each participant offered her own experience of the research phenomenon (see Tracy, 2018). I conducted the interviews via Zoom; each interview was allocated 60–90 minutes. This time frame was enough time to focus on all of the participants to

ensure an interview rich in data (see Azungah, 2018). The participants' accounts of the problem offered excellent details of personal experiences with the phenomenon. Having adequate time with every participant was necessary because it allowed me to interact with them personally and to establish rapport to help make them comfortable.

Data collection included two instruments. The first was the semistructured interview, and the second was a purposeful sampling demographic questionnaire, which every participant returned to help me assess the participant's eligibility for the study. After transcription of the audio-recorded data, I conducted coding data analysis to identify (see Kabir, 2016).

According to Raskind et al. (2018), data analysis is a methodical procedure that entails working with the obtained data, arranging them into manageable pieces that can be readily identified, and locating recurring patterns in the data. I conducted data analysis to systemize data, search for patterns, identify themes, and discover what is essential. The most frequently cited motivation for employing a descriptive approach is explaining perspectives and impressions, particularly in areas where little is known about the issue under investigation (Doyle et al., 2020). A qualitative descriptive design was suitable for the current study because the design acknowledges the subjective nature of the issue and the variety of participant experiences. Data analysis allowed me to portray the results in a manner that reflected or matched the terminology used in the initial research question (see Saldaña, 2014). Interviews were used in this qualitative descriptive study to explore, clarify, and grasp participants' opinions, behaviors, experiences, and events. Interview questions were open-ended to obtain in-depth information (see Doyle et al., 2020).

I used thematic analysis in this study. One of the main objectives is to find themes or important patterns in the data and then utilize those themes to discuss the study or make a point (Braun & Clarke, 2019). A strong thematic analysis does more than summarize the data; it explains and clarifies it. Using the primary interview questions as the themes is a typical error (Braun & Clarke, 2019), as this approach often means that the material has been sorted and summarized rather than examined. The six-step framework for thematic analysis consists of the following steps: gathering, discussing, coding, creating code categories, conceptualizing the themes, and contextualizing and presenting the results (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

I coded the information collected from the people who participated; coding is the process by which data is assigned meaning (Lowe et al., 2018). I used thematic analysis coding for the study, which involves categorizing data into titles and subtitles that allow more straightforward data analysis. The data collected was assigned meaning and coded utilizing NVivo, a qualitative analysis software program.

Techniques of Ensuring Trustworthiness

I employed several methods to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Guba and Lincoln (1994) note that a study should maintain its quality and integrity via credibility and dependability. Also, measures to address transferability and conformability were employed. Qualitative findings, unlike quantitative studies, should not be regarded as generalizable due to the limited size of the samples. However, findings can be determined based on their transferability depending on the study's instruments, context, and participants (Hayre, 2020). The four main elements, credibility, transferability, reliability,

and confirmability, work together to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research and are outlined in this section.

Credibility

When a research study correctly represents the viewpoints of its participants, they are considered trustworthy (Stahl & King, 2020). Credibility, also known as internal validity, is the phrase used to describe a person's opinions in a qualitative inquiry, according to Korstjens and Moser (2018). Since study participants answered truthfully and I did not alter the recording to ensure that they accurately captured the participant's experiences, the study can be regarded as credible because participants can trust the findings of published research because they believe them to be their own (Cilesiz, 2011). The study design is one major factor that can mitigate threats to credibility in this study. I chose the qualitative descriptive approach since a qualitative study does not require a sizable number of participants to evaluate its reliability. This design also provides the study participants' perspectives and ideas, ensuring that the researcher's perspective does not dominate their opinions.

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which qualitative research findings may be used in different contexts or environments (Kyngäs et al., 2020). According to Hansen et al. (2020), transferability in qualitative research is the capacity of a study's findings to be applied to other persons or locations. Since this study used a qualitative technique to precisely capture the experiences and points of view of the study participants, the results can be applied to future research on analogous studies. Additionally, a purposive sample

was employed to confirm that research participants were qualified to participate, assuring the validity of the findings.

Dependability

Leung (2015) defines dependability as the consistency of a study, sometimes referred to as the reliability of the research. Furthermore, Nguyen et al. (2021) discuss the dependability of studies that use well-established research methodologies. Emails requesting replies were sent to research participants, and if they signed the informed permission forms, interviews were scheduled and conducted. With the participants' permission, I recorded these interviews and transcribed them verbatim; the transcriptions were given to the participants for review. If required, modifications were made to verify that everything was accurately recorded. Field notes were taken during the interviews as the correctness of the data ensures its dependability, and it may be reduced if the participant was unheard due to network connection issues, which affects the transcriptions. However, the flexible nature of the qualitative descriptive research design allows the researcher to ask probing questions when necessary.

Confirmability

The ability of others to corroborate or verify research project findings is known as confirmability (Elo et al., 2014). Ensuring confirmability involves ensuring that the researcher's prejudices won't affect the results. It is possible to improve the study by increasing confirmability via:

1. I ensured the accuracy of the results by providing a detailed description of the methodology.

2. My preconceptions were acknowledged or declared.
3. I supplied a large number of evidence to support claims.
4. I paid more attention to the participants' experiences and perceptions than my own.

Researcher's Responsibility

The researcher is vital in the current study as the primary tool. The researcher seeks to understand why women are underrepresented in the skilled labor construction industry. In qualitative studies, the researcher takes part in the process of collecting the data as well as analysis. Also, the investigator comes up with meaningful conclusions for the research (L Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). I participated in the data collection procedures and engaged with the participants while getting their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences in the skilled labor industry. The researcher, as the study's principal instrument, will ensure transparency throughout the study. Moreover, during the research period, I was open about the participants' responsibility, experience, expectations, and mannerisms (Williams & Moser, 2019). I ensured that the study stakeholders were well-experienced in the skilled labor industry, met the criteria for inclusion, and were briefed on what was expected of them.

Ethical Considerations

While noting the importance of research and its social benefits, the Belmont report highlighted ethical issues that are often neglected during the research (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Hence, the Belmont research published ethical codes that should be

followed during research. I adhered to strict ethical rules and regulations; firstly, I sought Institutional Review Board (IRB #06-15-23-0336338, awarded on June 15, 2023) clearance before conducting the study. The IRB ensures that all research involving human beings as subjects and data sources is done ethically and follows strict guidelines (Arifin, 2018). While seeking IRB clearance, I committed that the research involved minimal risks to the participants, and the participants will be provided with the informed consent and protection of the stakeholders throughout the study. After receiving IRB approval, I contacted the participants following the procedures outlined above. Interested participants were contacted and briefed on their needs throughout the research. Stakeholders were given consent forms to read and reread the contents before appending their signatures.

The researcher allowed participants not interested in the research to leave freely at any stage of the research period. I informed all stakeholders that the study was voluntary, and no incentive would be provided for their participation (see Suri, 2020). The participants' identities were kept anonymous during and after the research. Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants' recordings and transcriptions.

Summary and Transition

Female underrepresentation in the skilled labor construction sector is a problem that needs to be addressed; this qualitative research study seeks to understand the underlying issues that make women underrepresented in the industry. The chapter gave a detailed explanation of the techniques utilized in data collection and analysis of information. The chapter described the qualitative study method that will be used in the

study to seek an understanding of the research problem. Additionally, the chapter provided the rationale for choosing the qualitative descriptive method as a research data-collecting method. The qualitative descriptive method was the most appropriate design as the investigator seeks to comprehend a certain phenomenon. Interviews were used as the key data source in the research. The interviews provided the participants with a platform to provide their perceptions and reflections on the research problem based on their years of experience. The chapter also provided ways I maintained trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and the researcher's responsibility across the research procedure. The next chapter describes the data analyzed and assigns meanings to the interviews and data collected during the research problem.

Chapter 4: Results

Male workers have populated skilled labor professions that require specific skills but not necessarily a college education. Examples of skilled labor positions include plumbing, construction, and electrical technicians. Women comprise 1%–3% of the skilled labor workforce (Bridges et al., 2020). Women in the skilled labor industry report experiencing a hostile work environment (Rivera et al., 2021). However, the U.S. skilled labor industry is in high demand, with more than $1 trillion in new projects available for skilled employees (Wright & Conley, 2020). This increase in demand for skilled labor highlights the labor shortage, necessitating an increase in skilled labor employees. With strong demand and limited supply, women are in an ideal position to fill the labor gap in the skilled labor industry. The purpose of this study was to identify the causes contributing to the lack of women in the construction and building industry by examining the views held by women working in these fields Two research questions were devised to address the purpose of the study:

RQ1: What are the attitudes and perceptions of women in the skilled labor construction industry?

RQ2: Why do women enter and remain in the skilled labor construction industry?

Twenty-two women in skilled labor were recruited to participate in semistructured interviews about their experiences in the skilled labor industry. The findings of this qualitative study are presented in Chapter 4. First, I describe the study's setting and the participants' demographic characteristics. Next, I describe the data collection and data analysis procedures and present evidence of the study's trustworthiness. The study

findings follow, highlighting important themes elucidated by the participants' interviews. A summary concludes the chapter, which leads to Chapter 5, which includes a discussion of the findings in the context of the academic literature and the implications of the study.

Research Setting

Following IRB approval, I posted my recruitment flier on my personal Facebook page. I also contacted Facebook group administrators and asked permission to post my recruitment flier (see Appendix A) on their pages. Once I received permission, I posted the recruitment flier to the following Facebook groups: Women in Construction (24,400 members), Women in Construction Group (371 members), and Women of Trades (10,200 members). I received 47 responses from potential participants within 30 days of my initial posting of the recruitment flier. Potential participants who reviewed the recruitment flier were instructed to scan a QR code linked to a short demographic questionnaire. Because I conducted the study online, there was no specific research setting. Once the participants submitted responses to the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B), I contacted them to provide them with the informed consent form. The participants returned the informed consent form within 36 hours. Once they returned the informed consent form, I scheduled interviews at a mutually convenient time and date.

Demographics

Participant selection proceeded based on the predefined inclusion criteria delimiting the study:

1. Participants must be women employed in a skilled labor position.
2. Participants must have at least 1 year of experience working in skilled labor.

I verified that each participant met the inclusion criteria by examining each participant's responses to the screening questionnaire. The participants were all women in skilled labor positions. They were in different stages of their careers and worked in different types of skilled labor. The demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Participant	Respondent number	State	Skilled labor profession	Manager	Experience (years)
P1	R5	FL	Construction	Yes	5
P2	R6	FL	Painting	Yes	20
P3	R7	NC	Telecom technician	No	40
P4	R8	CA	Construction	Yes	15
P5	R9	CA	Plumbing	Yes	22
P6	R12	TX	Construction	Yes	20
P7	R10	MS	Construction	Yes	15
P8	R13	NJ	Construction	No	10
P9	R16	CA	Electrical work	No	20
P10	R2	FL	Construction	No	8
P11	R29	TX	Painting	Yes	5
P12	R28	VA	Painting	Yes	5
P13	R30	FL	Carpentry	No	3
P14	R15	GA	Roofing	Yes	3
P15	R1	MN	Construction	Yes	3
P16	R24	NY	Painting	Yes	4
P17	R25	CA	Painting	Yes	3
P18	R22	WA	Painting	Yes	3
P19	R23	NY	Painting	Yes	4
P20	R42	CA	Glazing	Yes	7
P21	R43	OR	Carpentry	No	10
P22	R41	TX	Construction	No	3

Table 2 indicates that the participants represented diverse skilled labor positions. Eight participants (36.4%) worked in construction, seven participants (31.8%) worked in

the painting industry, and two participants (9%) were carpenters. Other fields represented included the telecom industry (P3), plumbing (P5), electrical work (P9), roofing (P14), and glazing (P20). Seven participants (31.8%) were from the Southeast, four participants (18.2%) were from the South, seven participants (31.8%) were from the West, three participants (13.6%) were from the Northeast, and one participant was from the Midwest. Fifteen participants were in leadership positions. The participants had varied years of experience.

Data Collection

Data collection began on June 19, 2023, 4 days after receiving IRB approval to conduct the study. I scheduled 22 1-hour interviews using my Walden University email address. I interviewed the first 22 participants who provided informed consent and attended the interviews. Twenty-two participants completed the interviews with no attrition. I conducted the interviews using the Zoom telecommunications platform. Participants were assigned a participant identification number (e.g., P1, P2) for data collection and identification purposes and to protect their confidentiality throughout the study. Participant identification numbers were assigned based on the order in which the participants completed the interviews, not the order in which they completed the demographic survey.

Before I started the interview, I confirmed with each participant that they consented to have their interview audio-recorded and their data used in the study, which the participants acknowledged verbally. Data were collected using the recording function of the Zoom telecommunications software. During the interviews, I followed the

interview guide to ensure I asked all participants the same questions. However, when necessary, I added prompting questions to maintain a fluid and conversational dialogue. I took notes during the interviews to promote researcher reflexivity. A summary of the interview data is provided in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of Interview and Transcription Data and Reflexivity Notes

Participant	Reflexivity note	Interview length	Transcript length (pages)
P1	Knowledgeable, very detailed on why she joined the field of skilled labor.	27:58	8.5
P2	Excited to help and extremely clear on why there should be more women within her field.	28:51	11.2
P3	Gave great examples and very detailed in job descriptions of poor experiences as a woman in her field in the 1980s.	31:55	9.6
P4	Insightful and provided a clear understanding of the difficulties of hiring women, as a skilled labor business owner.	27:47	9.8
P5	Knowledgeable and very detailed of experiences on the job that differed from other genders.	37:18	16.0
P6	Spoke about the importance of having women on the job and was excited to help	40:25	12.1
P7	Knowledgeable, and gave great examples and helpful suggestions of how to retain women in skilled labor.	53:00	19.2
P8	Detailed regarding personal experiences and provided deep discussion of her cultural experience.	35:09	9.5
P9	Vast experience, gave great examples and suggestions of longevity of women in skilled labor.	40:25	12.6
P10	Spoke with confidence and how women maintain within the field especially in cold weather.	39:05	12.1
P11	Spoke with authority, less examples.	17:25	6.8
P12	Inciteful, few examples minimal regarding rich discussion	17:16	5.8
P13	Minimal detail but still gave good information	16:08	6.0
P14	Very detailed, great examples of the importance of women in the skilled labor profession	19:38	6.1
P15	Less detailed but useable information	8:51	5.7
P16	Minimal information.	9:27	5.6
P17	Excited with good suggestions for women in the field.	8:20	5.0
P18	Insightful and spoke with confidence as a plumber.	9:34	5.3
P19	Quick responses but good information regarding painting.	6:41	4.8
P20	Spoke with confidence and gave great suggestions for keeping women in skilled labor.	23:01	8.4
P21	Gave great information and detailed examples.	61:08	19.8
P22	Spoke with confidence and I would easily identify with her	40:12	12.3

I used the transcription capabilities of the online transcription software Otter.ai to transcribe the data. The number of typewritten pages collected for each interview are summarized in Table 3. Transcripts were completed in Microsoft Word and were single-spaced using Arial font size 11. I compared the transcriptions to the audio recordings to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions. I cleaned the transcripts during this comparison to eliminate repeated or filler words. I also made slight grammar modifications where necessary. After the transcriptions were completed and verified, I emailed each participant a copy of their transcript for their review (see Rowlands, 2021). Rowlands (2021) recommended sending interview transcripts to the participants so they could confirm that the transcripts accurately reflected their thoughts. No participants responded to the transcript review email.

Data Analysis

I used Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase data analysis procedure to analyze the data from the semistructured interviews. Phase 1 was familiarizing myself with the interview data by reading the transcripts multiple times. I read each interview transcript multiple times from start to finish. Reading the transcripts multiple times allowed me to understand the data that I collected. I formed general impressions regarding the depth and content of the participants' answers. During this phase, I analyzed each participant's responses for any personally identifiable information. No participants revealed any personally identifiable information. Consequently, there was no need to redact any information from the interview transcripts.

Phase 2 was the coding phase. During this phase, I applied codes to the participants' responses and grouped them into seven categories. Saldaña (2014) recommended that codes be descriptive so that the meanings from the participants' ideas could be assigned to the code. I followed this guidance when designing my codes. Phase 3 was the pattern recognition phase. During this phase, I highlighted text segments from each code. I examined all excerpts from each code and used pattern recognition to group similar text segments within codes. I then grouped codes to develop axial categories. NVivo helped to group the codes into categories and assign themes.

Phase 4 was the constant-comparative phase. I read responses from all participants to solidify codes. Inductive coding was used to code the data. In inductive coding, descriptive codes are applied to the participants' thoughts without preconceived notions (Saldana, 2014). To develop codes, I read each participant's responses to the interview questions and provided a descriptive code that embodied their response. For example, many participants indicated that they remained in skilled labored positions due to experiencing respect in the workplace. The code that was applied to this response was "Remain: Respect in the workplace." I read the participants' responses to each interview question until all interview questions had been exhausted. This phase helped me examine the data across participants, solidify the codes, and ensure the patterns I identified were true across all the data (see Appendix F). In Phase 5, I organized my data into themes. I organized the categories according to my research questions to develop themes. During this phase, I refined the categories to ensure they were descriptive and addressed their respective themes and research questions. I identified five themes, which are described in

the Results section. Finally, after categorizing categories into themes and assigning themes to research questions, I examined the data holistically to ensure that their logical meaning had been extracted to answer each research question.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1994) defined a study's trustworthiness as the degree of the researcher's confidence in the data, transcribing, and procedures used to ensure the quality of the research activity. Four critical components of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability must be addressed to establish confidence in qualitative research.

Credibility

A study is credible when it accurately captures the perspectives of its participants (Saldaña, 2014). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), credibility means the results of qualitative research are believable from the perspective of the participants. Participants can trust published research findings because they believe them to be their own. In the current study, credibility was evidenced in multiple ways. First, I protected participants' confidentiality to ensure they answered honestly, an essential assumption of this study. Second, the recordings were altered to ensure that they reflected the participants' experiences. Third, credibility was promoted by using verbatim quotations from the participants when reporting themes.

Credibility was also addressed through member checking. Member checking is crucial to ensure credibility (Johnson et al., 2020). I sent the participants a one-page data analysis summary and invited them to confirm the study's findings or provide additional

commentary. Finally, I ensured credibility by journaling my thoughts and feelings throughout the research process. According to McGrath (2021), journaling ensures the researcher's reflexivity, supporting the study's credibility.

Transferability

According to Tong et al. (2012), the ability of a study's findings to be applied to different people or places determines transferability in qualitative research. Transferability refers to the extent to which the study results can be applied to other groups, contexts, or settings (Lindgren et al., 2020). Creswell and Poth (2016) noted that the transferability of a study can be ensured by providing enough details on the procedures used to carry out the study. To address transferability, I provided detailed descriptions of the methods and the processes used to derive conclusions from the research data. I used sampling sufficiency and thick descriptions to enhance transferability (Kyngäs et al., 2020). Sampling sufficiency refers to how the researcher obtained an appropriate sample size representing the phenomenon and population. A thick description allows increased comprehension of the study's phenomenon so it can be compared to other circumstances (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability

Dependability is a critical component of trustworthiness and the validity of the data in the research. Dependability involves consistency or the congruency of the results (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Although dependability in a qualitative study is challenging, the researcher should try to present information to allow future investigators to repeat the study (Shenton, 2004). Forero et al. (2018) explained that studies with well-documented

and reliable research methods are considered dependable. Dependability can be ensured by creating an audit trail that documents the process and decisions taken in the research where future researchers may replicate the same study and derive conclusions (Nowell et al., 2017). Therefore, to ensure that the study findings have dependability, I created an audit trail in my research journal throughout each step of the research process to ensure that details are recorded and could be repeated by others.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the capacity of others to confirm or verify findings in a research project (Elo et al., 2014). While conducting a study, I used reflexivity, a researcher's constant reflection on their learning, experience, and perception (see Ravitch & Carl, 2019). In order to manage biases and be truthful while employing reflexivity, I acknowledged prior experiences. These measures will allow the reader to assess the veracity of the presented findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). When conducting interviews, I used the reflective journal to record personal reflections while conducting interviews to ensure I did not contribute any biases to the data collection.

Results and Findings

In this section, I describe the results of this qualitative descriptive study. Five themes were extracted from the analysis of the participants' interviews, (see Appendix E) via categories. Three themes were assigned to RQ1, which addressed the attitudes and perceptions of women in skilled labor. These three themes included the participants' descriptions of discrimination, respect from coworkers, and their unique capabilities. Related to RQ1's aligned theme of discrimination was supported by 17 participants out of

22 women that described discrimination in the workplace by either coworkers, supervisors, or customers and at least two out of 22 by their accounts and descriptions reported experiencing sexual harassment by coworkers or customers. There were 13 participants out of 22 who felt they possessed unique skills such as enhanced communication and problem solving.

Two themes were assigned to RQ2, which addressed why women enter and remain in skilled labor positions. The first theme assigned to RQ2 addresses why women enter skilled labor, while the second theme addresses why women remain in skilled labor. Relating to RQ2 the 22 participants shared experiences of why they entered skilled labor for example family businesses, flexibility, higher pay, job satisfaction and wanting to be hands on. Theme five revealed, 11 women out of 22 described experiences of earning respect and rewarding work is why they remain in skilled labor.

RQ1: Attitudes and Perceptions of Women in Skilled Labor

In this section, I describe the participants' attitudes and perceptions of women in skilled labor. I assigned three themes to this research question. The first theme is that some women in skilled labor experience discrimination and sexual harassment from coworkers and customers. The second theme is that some women in skilled labor have the opposite experience and are welcomed and revered by their coworkers and customers. The third theme is that women in skilled labor possess unique skills compared to their male coworkers.

Theme 1: Women in Skilled Labor Experience Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

The women in this study indicated that they experienced discrimination from different sources, including supervisors, coworkers, and customers. The participants' accounts of discrimination are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Participants Experienced Discrimination From Multiple Sources

Participant	Source of discrimination	Excerpt from interview
P2	Coworkers	"When I first started in this profession, it was hard because 20 years ago, there were hardly any females in the construction industry, especially in the type of work that I do. So, I was kind of looked down on by the male population."
P3	Supervisors	"They didn't have faith in women being able to do the telecom industry, the technical part of it. So, it was not easy. They didn't want to tell you a lot of things. There's heavy lifting, climbing, screwing and tools and they just didn't think that we were serious. So, they didn't want to waste their efforts and teach us anything."
P5	Customers	"When I started plumbing, it really reached a whole other level, because I'd show up just to a house and the things that people would say. I got some rude comments. [A customer] looked at me and laughed out loud."
P7	Coworkers	"On the construction side, dealing with superintendents, and laborers, they initially had an issue with one of me being a female. I got a lot of pushback on some comments."
P9	Customers	"On many occasions, these customers started talking to my apprentice, instead of me because he was a guy. When I started addressing it, they don't make eye contact. It happens all the time."
P12	Customers	"Sometimes there are people that think you're a woman, and you won't be able to deliver a particular job as it should be."
P13	Coworkers	"I would say one of them is at first, there was lack of support by my colleagues because they kind of brought this gender-based thing when they were looking at me. It did make me feel inferior."
P17	Coworkers	"Some workers look down on me and the things that I can do. Because I'm a woman, people around and the society didn't believe that I could do that."

Participant P3 experienced discrimination from her supervisors. She found that her supervisors didn't believe she was capable of the physical aspects of her industry. Consequently, they did not invest time in training her. P3 said, "They didn't want to waste their efforts and teach us anything." Lack of investment in her career training put her at a disadvantage. Other supervisors would not hire the participants because of their gender. P13 recounted:

> There were limited opportunities. When you apply to any kind of company, they say, 'No, they don't need a woman.' It was hard to hear that. They needed men. They haven't experienced women in this kind of job before. I faced a lot of challenges.

Despite federal laws governing equal opportunities for women, P13 experienced discriminatory hiring procedures that precluded them from obtaining jobs in the skilled labor industry. P18 also experienced this type of discrimination. P18 said, "The challenges I face are not actually getting jobs, like the male gender get the painting jobs." Thus, based on the participants interviewed in this study, some women in skilled labor experience discrimination from supervisors or during the hiring process.

Some participants experienced discrimination from their coworkers. P5, who indicated that some coworkers were respectful, found others less respectful. P2 believed her male coworkers looked down on her as a woman in construction. She said, "They [thought] there's no way a female can do this. She doesn't belong out here." P21 found it difficult to manage some relationships with her coworkers. She said:

> A lot of times, I have worked for men who are not as smart, not as educated, not as self-disciplined, with lower emotional intelligence than I had, who are in control of significant circumstances in my life. That has been hard. Yeah, tiptoeing around their egos.

The participants, therefore, described a lack of respect from their male coworkers. P20 also described similar conditions, feeling like she had to prove herself consistently. P20 said, "The company that I went into, not one of the men wanted a woman in it. I struggled the whole first three years. I have to prove myself every single day." Thus, the participants experienced gender discrimination from their male coworkers.

Other participants found their customers to be discriminatory. For instance, P5 experienced rude customers who didn't believe she was qualified for her job. She described, "I showed up at a house one day, and the guy looked at my manager, and then he looked at me and got this puzzled look on his face like he cannot figure out why this girl is standing in front porch. He [said], Oh, 'you must be the helper.'" P5 described feeling inferior to her male colleagues due to such customer interactions. P9 also experienced discrimination from customers, saying, "The customers talk to my apprentice rather than me. It happens on almost every job." Like P5, P9 found customers unsupportive of her capabilities as a woman in skilled labor. P12, however, experienced discrimination of a different type. P12 indicated that customers thought they would have to settle for less than their desired outcome due to having a woman performing the work.

Some participants described being sexually harassed by their male coworkers. For instance, P9 experienced consistent sexual harassment. P9 said:

> Let me start with coworkers. Even today, I find it very archaic. I laugh at sexual harassment training because I'm on a daily banter on a daily basis. There's banter about sex, homosexuality, cognizing comments about women right in front of me, and inappropriate jokes about almost everything. But I have, unfortunately, learned to navigate and just smile and move on and brush it off because that's how I survived for 20 years.

P9 described her male coworkers consistently discussing sex and other inappropriate workplace topics. She found this work environment uncomfortable but was forced to endure it to make a living. P22 also described sexual harassment. P22 said, "There's a lot more of men and labor workers who try to hit on me or try and take me out to eat or try to make advances on me." P22 also described unwanted advances by her male coworkers. Thus, some women in skilled labor positions experience sexual harassment in addition to discrimination. This conclusion is based on the recollections of the participants in this study, who encountered multiple forms of discrimination and sexual harassment from coworkers and customers.

Theme 2: Women in Skilled Labor Are Respected by Coworkers

While some women's experiences in skilled labor comprise sexual harassment and discrimination from supervisors, customers, and coworkers, other women in skilled labor found their coworkers supportive and respectful of their career pursuits and aspirations. The participants' descriptions of support and respect from their coworkers are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Participants Experienced Respect From Their Coworkers

Participant	Excerpt from interview
P4	"Really, tons of respect, like I think they like having a woman in the field and a woman in a managerial position or had absolutely no problems at all."
P6	"For the most part, I was welcomed into the industry."
P7	"For the company that I worked for at the time, they made a big push to bring in more women, and I luckily got in the wave. Because I saw value-added, they really helped promote me and helped push me, move me up."
P8	"I think in my case, they were respectful."
P10	"At least in the fuel industry, specifically has like, really, really friendly guys just get along with each other so well."
P19	"So far, it's been a good experience. The space I've had has been a very nice one."

The participants reported being respected by their coworkers. For instance, P4 said that she received "tons of respect." She further explained, "I think that if you're confident as a woman in this profession, you're going to be fine. Hold your own. I just go into every circumstance or any situation, just confident, and so I don't have any problems." P4 believed that women in skilled labor have opportunities if they are confident and proficient. P6 found that her male coworkers welcomed her into the industry. P7, like P4, found advancement opportunities because she added value to her company. She said, "Because I saw value-added, they really helped promote me and helped push me, move me up." P7 was provided with opportunities to advance within her company, and she now holds a management position.

Like some of the other participants, P2 also indicated that she felt supported by her coworkers. P2 said:

> I feel like I have 100% support on any job that I'm on. Whether it be my GC, or my coworkers, I always have support if there's something that needs to be done that's very strenuous. My coworker tries to do that before I even have the chance to do it. So, I do feel very supported.

P2 acknowledged that there are challenges associated with being a woman in skilled labor, including the physical demands of the job. She found that some of her coworkers volunteered to perform the strenuous aspects of jobs, which made her feel supported.

The participants who indicated they were respected by their coworkers found that their work environments were colloquial and friendly. P8, who worked with her father, described her coworkers as friendly and as having good boundaries. P8 said, "The people that he hired, I don't recall having any miscommunication with them because I think my dad set up good boundaries between myself and those people." P8 was able to form strong relationships with her coworkers because of the environment fostered by her father. P10 described her coworkers as friendly and supportive. She explained, "I've found that all the trackers are just like really accepting. You know, they just don't care." P10 believed that her coworkers didn't care that she was a woman; they were more interested in her competency regarding her job. The experiences of these participants were markedly different from the experiences of the participants who contributed to Theme 1. Potential reasons for the differences in the participants' experiences, including generational differences, will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Theme 3: Women in Skilled Labor Possess Unique Skills

The third theme assigned to RQ1 describes the unique skills that women in skilled labor possess compared to their male counterparts. Most of the women in this study identified skills they excelled in compared to men in their respective industries. The participants' accounts of their unique skill sets are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Women in Skilled Labor Possess Unique Skills

Participant	Skill	Excerpt from interview
P2	Communication skills	"Probably personality is one. I'm more outgoing. I'm very talkative. So, I think I can communicate better being a female. With me being a painter, I do a lot of work for military families, and I think they feel more comfortable having a female in their homes.
P3	Problem-solving skills	"I think as a woman, we bring the ingenuity part to it because we have to find alternatives to the heavy lifting."
P4	Compassion	"I would say, I am a lot more compassionate and understanding when things do happen, and things do go wrong."
P5	Customer relations	"Women feel so much more comfortable when a woman shows up to their house."
P6	Humility	"Being able to be humble and not carry this overwhelming ego."
P7	Detail-oriented	"I think sometimes the detail orientation, the communication skills, and kind of even overseeing the overall picture, I felt like I've been better suited for it, especially the details as far as a female."
P8	Detail-oriented	"I tended to pay more attention to the details, whereas a lot of the other ones paid more attention to the bigger picture."
P11	Communication skills	"My ability to organize and communicate with people."
P15	Communication skills	"I think I communicate better. I specialize in that, and I communicate to a lot of people better."
P16	Communication skills	"I think I'm good at organizing the women. I'm good at motivating them, encouraging them, I'm good at that."
P20	Problem-solving skills	"Multitasking, organizational skills, Having a clear thought process for troubleshooting."
P22	Detail-orientation	"Honestly, detail to attention, or my attention to detail. Yes. Without a doubt."

As shown in Table 6, the essential skills highlighted by the women were: (a) communication skills and customer relationships, (b) problem-solving skills, (c) compassion, (d) humility, and (e) being detail oriented.

Communication Skills and Customer Relationships. Communication skills was highlighted by the participants as a unique skilled possessed by women in skilled labor. P2 described herself as talkative and outgoing, qualities she believed were useful for communicating with clients. P2 further explained:

> I think more so since I'm painting, I go into somebody's personal home versus new construction. In new construction, it really doesn't matter because you're not really hands-on with homeowners or anything. When I do a lot of my repaints, I'm hands-on. So, I think it's they're just more comfortable that I'm a girl.

P2 indicated that some customers are more comfortable with women performing jobs than men, due to the intimate nature of the work. P2 suggested that her gender facilitates interactions with clients, allowing them to feel comfortable. P5 also indicated similar thoughts. P5 found that being a woman facilitates customer relations. She said, "That part no guy can do. No guy can make a woman feel comfortable in her own home to go take a shower." Thus, one area in which women in skilled labor excel is facilitating customer relationships through enhanced communication skills.

Other participants mentioned communication skills as unique skills they possess compared to men in their industries. Participant P11 said that her "ability to organize and communicate with people" was one of her unique strengths. P15 also described herself as specializing in communication with others. P16, a company owner, encourages women to

apply for positions. She believed her communication skills enhanced their longevity with her company. She said, "I think I'm good at organizing the women. I'm good at motivating them, encouraging them, I'm good at that."

Problem-Solving Skills. Other participants indicated that they possessed enhanced problem-solving skills compared to men in their industries. P3 believed that this derived from the necessity to find alternative solutions to lifting heavy materials. P3 further explained:

> We have to sit down and accomplish the same thing and not manhandle it. What that does is really kind of teach the guys that you don't have to do that. You can save your body and do it this way and get the same effect.

P3 indicated that her problem-solving skills distinguished her from her male colleagues. Other participants indicated that problem-solving skills were sometimes unique to women. P14 said:

> What I can say is [if there] is something that I don't know, and I need to learn knowledge, I find a way to get it. If I need to have some knowledge of something that I'm not familiar with, I take the time that I have to investigate before giving an answer. Right, that is what I think is one of those things that really is not tapped me, but I haven't taken time.

P14 indicated that an essential component of troubleshooting is researching appropriate solutions. She believed she takes the time to research a problem, while other coworkers may not. Thus, for some participants, problem-solving skills are enhanced compared to their male colleagues.

Compassion. P4 was the only participant who indicated that compassion was a skill they possessed more than their male colleagues. P4, as a leader in her construction business, uses compassion when working with her contractors. She explained, "I think that my view on things is a little different than a man's view would be. Just understanding that people also have a life outside of work. I'm a little bit more compassionate about that." P4 believed that her compassion is important for building relationships with her workers and that she is better able to understand the interpersonal relations of her workers than male leaders.

Humility. Participant P6 highlighted humility as an essential quality she possessed compared to her male colleagues. In addition to the excerpt in Table 6, she explained, "Being able to admit if you've done something incorrectly and fix it. Just being humble, but also wanting to really do a good job." P6 believed that her humility set her apart from her male coworkers, who she described as less willing to admit when they had made a mistake. P2 also spoke about humility. She said:

> I just do the best job that I possibly can. I learned this a long time ago, nothing's ever perfect. No matter how hard I try to make something. I'm never going to get something 100% perfect. I've had to learn the hard way. So that's been a tough lesson for me because I want everything perfect.

P2 also showed humility in acknowledging that no work is ever going to be perfect, even though she strived for perfection. Thus, humility is an important quality that the participants highlighted as a unique skill.

Detail Oriented. Some of the women interviewed in this study believed that they were more detail-oriented than their male coworkers. P7 highlighted this as one of her strengths. She said:

> I think that sometimes the detail orientation, the communication skills, and kind of even overseeing the overall picture, I felt like I've been better suited for it, especially the details as far as a female.

P7 indicated that being detail-oriented was one of her strengths. However, within the context of being detail-oriented, she described herself as also being able to visualize the broader scope of a project. She believed that women are innately capable of broad visualization and detail orientation compared to men. P8 also described detail orientation as her unique skill. She explained, "I tend to be more precise, and to this day, in everything that I do, I tend to pay more attention to the details." Thus, being detail-oriented is a unique quality possessed by some women in skilled labor professions.

RQ2: Reasons Why Women Enter and Remain in Skilled Labor Professions

Two themes were designed to address RQ2. In Theme 4, I describe reasons why women enter skilled labor positions. In Theme 5, I describe the reasons why the participants chose to remain in skilled labor.

Theme 4: Women Enter Skilled Labor Professions for Various Reasons

The fourth theme extracted from the analysis of the participants' interviews is that women enter skilled labor professions for various reasons. The participants gave six main reasons why they entered their professions in skilled labor. The five reasons were: (a) skilled labor was a family business, (b) skilled labor provides flexibility, (c) skilled labor

is higher paying than other professions, (d) skilled labor is enjoyable, (e) the participants wanted to promote equal opportunities, and (f) skilled labor provides hands-on work.

Skilled Labor Was a Family Business. Nine participants (P1, P2, P4, P6, P8, P15, P18, P21, and P22) originally entered skilled labor due to familial influences. Excerpts from the participants' interviews are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Some Participants Entered Skilled Labor Due to Family Influences

Participant	Excerpt from interview
P1	"I started because it was the family business."
P2	"It was a family business. Money wasn't the only thing. I've been working side by side with my dad for the past 20 years. So, being able to do this with family was a big plus for me."
P4	"Mike, my husband, at the time boyfriend, was already in the profession. I had just gotten divorced. I was teaching aerobics at the time, and we just decided to start our company together."
P6	"My older brother worked in construction through the years, and then he actually became an iron worker. I would hear him talk and I started working with subcontractors in small construction and residential."
P8	"The deciding factor was primarily because my dad was doing it and I was daddy's girl. That's what helped. That's how I got into it."
P15	"My mom, she was my main motivation. She was in skilled labor."
P18	"A family member is actually motivated to paint. I actually have a family member who does painting."
P21	"My entry into the trades was motivated because my grandfather, who had a large construction company in the mid-Atlantic in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia area, and when I was growing up, I thought I was going to be working there and running it. But my father lost control over it."
P22	"I come from a family full of mechanics. So, I've been working outside for the majority of my life since I was little."

Many participants described entering their skilled trades because their family members were tradesmen. For P2 and P8, the ability to work alongside their fathers was a

major driving force for entry into the profession. P4 started her business with her husband. She found that he needed help managing the business and stepped in to assist. P4 further elucidated, “We needed both of us to be a team for us to be successful.” Other family members were cited as inspirations for entering skilled labor, including mothers (P15), siblings (P6 and P18), and grandparents (P21). Thus, some women interviewed in this study entered skilled labor due to family influences.

Skilled Labor Provides Flexibility. Four participants (P2, P10, P11, and P14) described entering skilled labor because it allowed for flexibility in determining their schedules. For instance, P2 said, “I like the flexibility in me being my boss, me having children being a single mom, it was just so much easier.” P2 chose a job in skilled labor because of the flexibility it provided to allow for time to dedicate to her family. P14 chose skilled labor for a similar reason. She said, “I decided to have more time to dedicate to my family.” P10 enjoyed the flexibility to choose her own assignments. P10 said, “I’m really self-motivated, and there’s not one to tell you what to do.” Thus, for some participants, the inherent flexibility of skilled labor was a driving force for entering the profession.

Skilled Labor Is Higher Paying Than Other Professions. Many participants chose skilled labor for financial stability. The participants’ descriptions of this category are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Participants Entered Skilled Labor for Financial Stability

Participant	Excerpt from interview
P2	"Before I did painting, I did nursing. It was a big change. Money had a lot to do with it, just how I could make more to provide for my family."
P3	"I chose the telecom profession because of the money, the ability to be able to make a good living. The living wage was greater."
P5	"When I was starting in the work field, it was the most lucrative work."
P6	"It's a lot more money than I could have made, sitting behind a desk somewhere."
P10	"I was just working at a hardware store and not making a whole lot of money. One of my coworkers has just gotten out of training and recommended it."
P13	"Skilled labor helps women to achieve greater economic independence, independence, and financial stability."
P14	"I get my own way to improve my income."
P20	"I think it was the ease of having somebody who could help me get into the Union. And then, of course, the pay and benefits."
P21	"I chose carpentry specifically because it was general enough in commercial construction, that it was an ideal entry into management."
P22	"I knew I wanted to get into construction or petroleum, mainly for the money."

The participants who chose skilled labor for financial reasons described having greater control over their finances than non-skilled labor professions. P6 described skilled labor as providing more financial independence than office-based jobs. P21 chose skilled labor because of the upward mobility. She believed that women could find management positions easier in skilled labor than in office jobs. Thus, for many of the participants, financial independence and stability was a main factor in choosing skilled labor.

Skilled Labor Is Enjoyable. Five participants (P3, P7, P13, P19, and P21) chose skilled labor positions because they found skilled labor enjoyable. For instance, P3 said:

> I guess to start with, I was originally in college for engineering, civil engineering. I took a summer internship with a company out in South Carolina that did precast pre-stress concrete. I'm not sure if they were ready for an engineering intern, so they put us with a project manager and also field work, spent the summer more or less than that division, and fell in love with it.

P3 chose skilled labor despite having an undergraduate degree in engineering because of her experiences working in skilled labor during her internship. She described herself as falling "in love with it." P21 also described enjoying skilled labor. She said, "I've always enjoyed working with my hands. I enjoyed building things and creating things." Thus, for some of the participants, skilled labor was chosen out of enjoyment.

Participants Wanted to Promote Equal Opportunities. Three participants (P16, P17, and P22) chose skilled labor due to a desire to promote equal opportunities for women. P22 entered skilled labor because of the ability to meet like-minded people. She said, "Basically meeting and talking to new people and just helping create the future, essentially. I just kind of knew I wanted to be a part of that." P22 entered skilled labor because she saw an opportunity to "help create the future" for women. P17 shared a similar thought saying, "I joined labor professional because I love and wish to help the women, culture of labor." P17 joined skilled labor because she believed her presence in the field would help other women. P16 also "just developed the interest because I wanted to be of help." Thus, for these women, their presence in the skilled labor professions was due to wanting to help other people, especially women.

Skilled Labor Provides Hands-On Work. Five participants (P6, P7, P8, P12, and P17) found skilled labor enjoyable because of the hands-on nature of the work. P6 described enjoyment in the challenge of hands-on work. She said:

> When an opportunity came open for outside sales in the concrete division, which had more to do with adhesives, epoxy, concrete crack repair, rebar, and jowling. And then also, with the direct fastening, that's when I applied for that position because I wanted to learn more and be challenged. I also wanted to be in front of the customer on the job sites because I was also fascinated with construction since I had worked in the trades when I was much younger, roofing, drywall, and framing.

P6 wanted to pursue skilled labor because of the challenge associated with working with her hands. P7 also enjoyed hands-on work. She said, "I've always been artsy as I like to create something, build something from scratch to the final product. I've done paintings, everything like that, but it's the actual build process I love. I fell in love with it." P7 enjoyed working with her hands and physically building things that she could admire in the final product. P17 emphasized similar thoughts. She said, "I just love colorful things. I love making something nice out of nothing." The participants joined skilled labor because they enjoyed working with their hands. According to the participants, doing hands-on work gives them a sense of accomplishment that other forms of employment cannot replicate. The participants indicated that they viewed their work as more than just employment. They took joy and pride in being able to produce work with their own hands to produce something of value to their customers. Therefore, based on the participants

interviewed in this study, some women enter skilled labor because they enjoy hands-on work.

Theme 5: Earning Respect and Rewarding Work Keep Women in Skilled Labor

The final theme extracted from the participants' interviews involved the reasons why women in skilled labor professions choose to remain in skilled labor. The women provided two main reasons. First, they described earning the respect of coworkers and clients as a motivating force for remaining in skilled labor. Second, they described their work as rewarding.

Earning Respect of Coworkers and Clients. While the participants may have entered skilled labor professions for a multitude of reasons, many participants described earning respect as a driver for remaining in skilled labor. The perceptions of the participants contributing to this category are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Participants Remain in Skilled Labor Because They Earned Respect

Participant	Excerpt from interview
P4	"I think that people respond well to women in construction because there's not a lot. And I know me, personally, I love it when I call a different construction company, and it's a woman owner."
P6	"It's also great to know that you positively impacted and added value, and to maybe inspire other people in general, male and female. I've had many people come to me and say that I did, in the trades or in sales, I was able to inspire them."
P12	"One of my one wonderful and rewarding roles in my profession is that the accolades that I get. It's not about the pay."
P13	'I feel joy because I'm able to do things with my hands. They're being appreciated and I'm applauded by some other people not looking at my gender and, understanding that a woman can do this."
P18	"Okay, what I find rewarding is it gives me joy, I'm happy when I'm doing it. And when I get a better client, who actually calls for me to paint for them, I get better pay. Most of my clients, they actually happy with me doing the job for them."

The participants described respect as a motivator for remaining in skilled labor. P4 exuded pride when she spoke about being a woman who owned a construction company. She believed that, over time, she had gained the respect of her coworkers and the industry, which motivates her to continue pursuing construction as a trade. P6 spoke about people she's inspired, which is important to her. She said, "It's also great to know that you positively impacted and added value and to maybe inspire other people in general, male and female." By working in a skilled labor profession, P6 inspires others. P12 is also motivated to continue working in her chosen trade due to the impact she has on others. She explained:

> I just feel happy when people appreciate what I do or give me comments like, Wow, I love this. Wow, I love the way you deliver this job. So firstly, the

> accolades that they gave me, I find it so pleasing. I find it so good. I find it so encouraging. It makes me do more in my work.

P12, like some of the other participants, described the accolades she gets from coworkers and clients as motivating forces for continuing to work in skilled labor. P13 enjoyed her work and found pleasure in her clients enjoying the finished product. Thus, for some women in skilled labor, a motivating force to remain in the profession is the respect they earn from clients and coworkers.

Rewarding Work. The second main reason the participants cited for remaining in skilled labor is the fact that they find their work rewarding. P6 described her work as rewarding, not only for her direct client, but also for society. She said:

> It's always great to drive back, past a building that you either your company's parts are what made it stand up, the training that you did on the job, your own hands, whether you laid track or poured the concrete. Whatever it is that you did, it's always great to see, or if you were the person that was engineering and designing it. So, it's great to go by those buildings and see, like, Okay, we built this building, that now it's generating careers for people is creating paychecks for family, and food and insurance and all that great stuff.

P6 enjoyed the impact that her work had on her local community. She believed that by constructing a building, she provided jobs for local community members. P7 also enjoyed the rewarding nature of seeing a final product. She said:

> It's the ability to work with people that it is nice to be recognized for. But I guess I get back when I can take something from start to finish. When I see a structure there. I got to be part of the art.

P7 enjoyed seeing the mark she left for her community, knowing that she was a part of constructing an important building. P8 concurred with P7 and P6. She said, "There is nothing like seeing your mark on the landscape." For these participants, the rewards of the work were motivating forces for remaining in skilled labor positions.

Some participants remain in skilled labor due to pure love of their work. For instance, P20 said:

> I love being able to go show them that I can do it. And I think when I can go home on a day, and I'm like, 'Yeah, I was right there beside them. I did everything they did.' That just makes my whole entire day.

P20 enjoyed the challenge of being a woman in skilled labor, finding it enjoyable to work alongside men and make a product that made her clients proud. P17, like P20, enjoyed being able to see a finished product. She said, "The beauty of the work. It gives me joy. I do appreciate the work after everything, compared to the first time I started and the finished work." Thus, some participants remained in skilled labor due to the enjoyment they derive from their employment.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented the findings of this qualitative descriptive study. First, I presented the research setting and participant demographic characteristics. The participants were in different geographical regions of the United States and worked in

multiple skilled labor professions. The data collection and analysis procedures were detailed, and evidence of trustworthiness was presented. Next, I described the study's findings in terms of the study's two research questions. Three themes addressed RQ1, which detailed the participants' attitudes and perceptions. Theme 1 detailed how the participants encountered discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. Through Theme 2, I explored participants' perceptions of being respected by their coworkers. In Theme 3, I examined the participants' perceptions of unique skills they possessed compared to their male counterparts. The essential skills highlighted by the women were: (a) communication skills and customer relationships, (b) problem-solving skills, (c) compassion, (d) humility, and (e) being detail oriented. Two themes addressed RQ2, which evaluated why women enter and remain in skilled labor professions. In Theme 4, I analyzed the reasons that the participants gave for why they entered skilled labor positions. The participants elucidated five reasons: (a) skilled labor was a family business, (b) skilled labor provides flexibility, (c) skilled labor is higher paying than other professions, (d) skilled labor is enjoyable, (e) the participants wanted to promote equal opportunities, and (f) skilled labor provides hands-on work. Through Theme 5, I found that the participants remained in skilled labor because they strived to earn respect from their employers, coworkers and customers. In Chapter 5, I describe the study's findings in the context of the academic literature and the chosen theoretical foundations. The implications of the study are discussed, and I provide recommendations for future research and practice.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to identify the causes contributing to the lack of women in the construction and building industry by examining the views held by women working in these fields. The skilled labor industry has long been dominated by male workers, with women making up only 1%–3% of the workforce (Bridges et al., 2020). Women in this field often find themselves in a hostile work environment (Rivera et al., 2021). However, the demand for skilled labor in the United States is skyrocketing, with over $1 trillion worth of new projects on the horizon for skilled labor employees (Wright & Conley, 2020). This surge in demand has exposed a glaring labor shortage, creating an opportunity for women to step in and bridge the gap in the skilled labor industry. This chapter provides a discussion of the findings from the current study examining the causes behind the underrepresentation of women in the construction and building industry, as explored through the perspectives of female professionals in these fields. In this chapter, I discuss the implications and recommendations of the insights gained from 22 female skilled labor professionals who participated in semistructured interviews regarding their experiences in the industry.

Review of the Findings

Through data analysis, I revealed five themes from the findings. Theme 1 (some women in skilled labor experience discrimination and sexual harassment) revealed that several participants reported encountering discrimination and sexual harassment in their skilled labor professions. Discrimination was encountered from multiple sources including coworkers, supervisors, and customers. Some participants described

experiencing skepticism and doubt from coworkers who believed women could not perform certain tasks or did not belong in the industry. Discriminatory hiring practices were also noted, and participants reported difficulties securing jobs due to gender. Additionally, some participants found clients or customers to be disrespectful, questioning their qualifications and often assuming they were less competent than their male colleagues. Furthermore, some individuals experienced distress due to improper comments, jokes, and advances from male coworkers. Participants explained that this toxic work environment pushed them to navigate difficult situations regularly to keep their jobs.

Theme 2 (coworkers respect some women in skilled labor) highlighted the positive experiences of participants who felt supported and respected by their coworkers in the skilled labor industry. The women reported being welcomed and appreciated by their male colleagues, with some receiving significant respect and recognition in their workplaces. For example, P4 emphasized that she received considerable respect from her coworkers, attributing her success to her confidence and competence in her profession. P6 mentioned feeling welcomed into the industry by her male colleagues, reflecting a more inclusive work environment. Additionally, P7 shared how her company actively promoted women in the workforce and acknowledged their value to the organization, resulting in her career advancement. These individuals reported that their work settings were friendly and conducive to positive relationships with coworkers, implying that the culture in their companies fostered respect and acceptance.

Through the third theme (various skill sets of women in skilled labor), I found that participants had distinct characteristics contributing to their business success. In contrast to the experiences detailed in Themes 1 and 3, this theme exhibited participants' remarkable organization, efficient communication, problem-solving skills, and calmness. The participants described that these abilities not only improved their effectiveness but also aided in developing positive relationships with consumers, making them feel more at ease and satisfied with the service offered. Generational factors may have influence these differences observed among the themes, as women who entered the industry in the 1980s and 1990s may have encountered more discrimination than their younger counterparts. Additionally, industry-specific dynamics, such as the male egocentric nature of the painting industry, could also have contributed to variations in experiences among participants, with those in roles such as painting and plumbing reporting more discrimination-related challenges.

In theme 4, I found that the participants entered skilled labor professions for various reasons. Six main reasons were identified: family legacy, flexibility, higher earning potential, enjoyment of the work, a desire to promote equal opportunities, and the appeal of hands-on work. Some women entered the skilled labor field because it was a family tradition, allowing them to work alongside relatives and create a sense of continuity. For others, the flexibility offered by skilled labor, such as self-employment or flexible schedules, was a significant draw. Financial considerations, including the potential for higher income and greater financial independence, also motivated many participants. Additionally, some women found skilled labor enjoyable, often stemming

from hands-on work or a passion for building and creating. Lastly, a subset of participants entered skilled labor to contribute to gender equality and provide opportunities for women in male-dominated fields, driven by a desire to make a difference.

The research findings in theme 5 shed light on a crucial aspect leading to women's persistence in the skilled labor construction industry: intrinsic rewards and earned respect. Women who stay in this sector do so because they find it personally and professionally meaningful. Their contributions to construction projects give them a sense of success and pride, emphasizing the significance of their work. Over time, these women have earned the respect of their coworkers and bosses, breaking through gender barriers and obtaining acknowledgment for their abilities and knowledge. This regard increases their job happiness and generates a supportive work atmosphere that encourages them to remain in the skilled labor workforce.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings in Theme 1 revealed that some women in skilled labor experience discrimination and sexual harassment, which aligns with previous research on the challenges women face in male-dominated industries such as construction. The discrimination experienced by participants from various sources, including coworkers, supervisors, and customers, echoes the pervasive gender biases and stereotypes documented in Bryce et al.'s (2019) study. Furthermore, discriminatory hiring practices, which some participants encountered, are consistent with previous findings that highlighted the reluctance of companies to hire women in skilled labor positions (see

Norberg & Johansson, 2021). Additionally, Moore and Gloeckner (2007) reported that there is significant sexual harassment in the industry, which creates a hostile work environment. These findings underscore the need for addressing systemic gender bias and implementing policies to create more inclusive and respectful workplaces for skilled labor.

In contrast, Theme 2, which indicated that some women in skilled labor are respected by their coworkers, offers insights into the potential impact of workplace culture and support systems on women's experiences. The positive experiences of participants who felt supported and valued by their male colleagues align with research suggesting that a conducive workplace culture can lead to a more inclusive environment (see Norberg & Johansson, 2021). For example, Bryce et al. (2019) discovered the emphasis on acceptance and recognition in some participants' workplaces corresponds to efforts made by some companies to promote gender diversity and inclusivity. However, these experiences may not be universal because some participants in the current study reported experiencing discrimination in the industry. The contrast between Theme 2 and Theme 1 highlights the significant role that workplace culture and company policies can play in mitigating discrimination and fostering gender equality.

Theme 3, which reflected the unique skill sets of women in skilled labor, aligns with prior research emphasizing the importance of skills and competencies in career advancement for women in male-dominated industries (see Francis, 2017). The participants' possession of skills such as effective communication, problem solving, and levelheadedness resonates with the literature's focus on the value of these skills in

breaking down gender-related barriers (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). Rostiyanti et al. (2020) also described the notion that these skills make customers feel more comfortable, which echoes the importance of client relationships in skilled labor professions. However, the observed generational differences and industry-specific factors, such as the male egocentric nature of the painting industry, demonstrate the complexity of women's experiences in skilled labor, which can be influenced by contextual factors (Bryce et al., 2019). Theme 3 underscores the potential for women to excel in skilled labor when their unique skills are recognized and valued.

Theme 4 reflected the diverse motivations that drive women to pursue careers in skilled labor, offering a nuanced perspective on their career choices. The participants cited six primary motivations for entering skilled labor professions. Similar to the findings of Rostiyanti et al. (2020), many women followed family legacies, viewing skilled labor as a tradition passed down through generations, which highlights the influence of familial support and early exposure to the industry (Tunji-Olayeni et al., 2018). Additionally, Bryce et al. (2019) cited a desire for flexibility in work schedules resonating with those seeking to balance family responsibilities, echoing women's challenges in balancing work and personal life (Orechwa, 2021).

In Theme 5 of the research findings, it became evident that earned respect and rewarding work kept the participants in their skilled labor positions. This aligns with literature on women in male-dominated industries. Studies emphasized that job satisfaction and a sense of personal fulfillment are critical factors influencing women's decisions to persist in skilled labor careers (Johnson et al., 2020; Jones, 2022). Women in

the skilled labor construction industry derive a deep sense of accomplishment and pride from their contributions to construction projects, making their work meaningful and fulfilling (Johnson et al., 2020).

Limitations

Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) defined limitations as weaknesses beyond the researcher's control and often related to the research design, restrictions on the statistical models chosen, financial restrictions, or other variables. The current study was limited by the difficulty in participant recruitment in the construction industry. I anticipated this to be a manageable problem because numerous social media pages had targeted women in skilled labor positions. Originally, this limitation had implications for the transferability of the study's findings because delimiting the study to women in construction imparted limits on the transferability of the findings to women in other skilled labor positions. To mitigate this limitation and enhance the number of participants available for the study, I expanded the population from women in construction to encompass women in any skilled labor positions, which should improve the transferability of the study's findings. The experiences of women within this study cannot be generalized to the entire population of women in the skilled labor profession. I interviewed 22 participants who shared their experiences and perceptions. However, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1,173,000 women now work in construction and make Up 9.9 percent of the construction industry in the United States (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022).

A second limitation in the study is potential researcher bias, which is a general concern in phenomenological studies (see Moustakas, 1994). To mitigate potential researcher bias, I used a reflexive journal in which I noted my thoughts related to each research activity. This procedure allowed me to account for my preconceived notions. However, my personal experience as a certified general contractor of six years could have contributed bias to the study. I did attempt to remain impartial during my research.

Recommendations

Future research in the realm of women in skilled labor might consider several crucial recommendations to address these limitations. Future research on women in skilled labor could adopt more comprehensive participant recruitment strategies, collaborating with industry stakeholders and exploring diverse skilled labor professions. An intersectional approach, a mixed-methods approach, and comparative analyses with male counterparts could be employed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of women's experiences while evaluating the effectiveness of diversity initiatives to guide efforts to create inclusive workplaces.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Given the difficulty of recruiting women in the construction business, it is critical to implement more widespread participant recruitment tactics. Collaboration with industry organizations, unions, trade schools, professional networks, and associations relevant to skilled labor could increase the pool of possible participants. Furthermore, researchers could take a more inclusive approach by looking at women in skilled labor occupations other than construction. This broader approach could provide a more

complete picture of women's experiences, obstacles, and possibilities in male-dominated trades. Comparative research across professions could also shed light on common themes and issues influencing women in skilled work.

Recognizing the intersectionality of women's experiences, future research could include an intersectional lens that considers how various factors such as race, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status intersect with gender to shape women's experiences in various skilled labor professions. Researchers could use mixed-methods approaches combining qualitative and quantitative methods to gain holistic knowledge. This approach could reveal trends and patterns while also providing in-depth insights into participants' experiences.

Gender discrepancies, workplace dynamics, and potential biases affecting both men and women in skilled labor could be illuminated by comparisons with male colleagues in the same professions. Furthermore, examining the efficacy of organizational initiatives that promote gender diversity and inclusion, such as mentorship programs and diversity training, could provide valuable insights into strategies that foster a more equitable environment for women in traditionally male-dominated fields. Incorporating these ideas into future studies may help to provide a more complete and nuanced understanding of women's experiences in skilled labor and could shape policies and practices to promote inclusive and fair workplaces for women in these professions.

Recommendations for Practice

Addressing the gender gap in the skilled labor industry requires proactive measures and strategic initiatives to create a more inclusive and equitable work

environment. In this section, I present a set of recommendations for practice that may serve as a roadmap for organizations, industry stakeholders, and policymakers. These recommendations are designed to empower women in skilled labor professions, promote gender diversity, and foster a workplace culture that values and supports the contributions of all professionals regardless of gender. From mentorship and support programs to creating safe and inclusive work environments, these strategies aim to bridge the gender divide and unleash the full potential of women in the skilled labor sector.

Mentorship and Support Programs

The first recommendation is to create mentoring programs that connect experienced female skilled labor experts with novice workers. Mentors can help women handle problems and advance in their jobs by providing direction, support, and useful insights (Rivera et al., 2021). These programs may also provide opportunities for networking and relationship building, both of which are essential for job advancement. Furthermore, workplace support networks or industry associations may provide a sense of community and encouragement for women in skilled labor professions, assisting them in overcoming challenges and achieving success.

Promote Equal Pay

It is critical to address the issue of gender wage disparities in the skilled labor field. Employers should undertake regular salary audits to identify gender pay inequalities if they are noted. Furthermore, businesses should be transparent about their remuneration policies and push for equal pay for equal labor, regardless of gender. By

aggressively addressing this issue, the sector can attract and retain female talent while displaying a commitment to fairness and equity.

Flexible Work Arrangements

Recognize the significance of work-life balance for women in skilled labor, particularly those with family obligations. Employers should provide flexible work arrangements, such as flexible hours or remote work choices, to meet their demands while focusing on production and efficiency (P2, P10, P11, P14). Organizations can recruit more women to the sector while retaining critical personnel by providing these alternatives.

Leadership Opportunities

Make it easier for women to move to leadership positions in the sector. Instead of gender, organizations should recognize, and reward talent based on skills and merit (P15, P21). Providing leadership training and development programs designed exclusively for women can empower them to take on leadership roles and contribute to the growth and innovation of the sector.

Partnerships With Women's Organizations

Collaborate with women's empowerment and gender equality organizations to exchange best practices and resources for boosting women in skilled jobs. Collaboration with these groups can provide valuable insights and assistance in developing gender-inclusive programs. The industry may expedite progress toward greater gender diversity by harnessing the knowledge and resources of these organizations.

Safe and Inclusive Work Environments

Make workplaces secure and free of harassment and discrimination. Implement explicit anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and procedures and train all staff to foster an inclusive and respectful environment (Rivera et al., 2021). To attract and keep women in skilled labor professions, a culture of respect and accountability must be promoted.

Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for the skilled labor industry. Women now comprise a small proportion of the skilled labor workforce, and this study emphasizes the critical need for diversification (Bridges et al., 2020). As the demand for skilled labor employees grows, it is critical to capitalize on women's potential to bridge the labor gap and introduce diversity into the business (Wright & Conley, 2020). Employers and industry stakeholders can take proactive steps to encourage and support women in pursuing skilled labor occupations by providing equitable access to training, apprenticeships, and job opportunities.

Family influence significantly influences women's job choices in the skilled labor sector. To overcome this, educational programs and mentorship measures should be implemented to encourage young women to seek jobs in skilled work. Employers can also develop family-friendly work cultures, allowing women to manage their career and personal life efficiently. The study also reveals that financial stability and the potential for higher earnings are strong motivators for women to enter and remain in skilled labor (P2, P3, P5, P6, P10, P13, P14, P20, P21, P22). To attract and retain female talent,

employers can offer competitive compensation packages and emphasize the industry's earning potential. Furthermore, the enthusiasm and satisfaction that some women gain from manual labor should be recognized and encouraged to encourage more women to seek jobs in skilled labor (P3, P7, P13, P19, P21). Collaboration among educational institutions, industry associations, and businesses can result in outreach campaigns emphasizing the contentment and happiness of working in skilled labor.

Finally, some of the study's female participants entered skilled labor to push for equitable chances (P16, P17, P22). This emphasizes the necessity of building an inclusive and supportive workplace culture in which women feel empowered to advocate for their and their peers' rights. Open debates regarding gender equity concerns and resources for women to develop in their jobs can help this cause. By implementing these consequences, the industry will be able to develop a more inclusive and diverse workforce, benefiting from the talents and viewpoints of women ready to contribute to its growth and success.

Conclusion

In this study, I examined the underrepresentation of women in the construction and building industry by examining the views held by women working in these fields. The findings have significant implications for both research and practice in the skilled labor sector. The study emphasizes the critical need to diversify the skilled labor workforce. With women making up a small percentage of the business, closing the gender gap is critical as the demand for skilled workers rises. Employers and industry stakeholders must take proactive initiatives to recruit and support women who want to

work in skilled labor, such as providing equal access to training, apprenticeships, and job opportunities.

Family influences were discovered to play an important role in women's job choices in the skilled labor sector. Educational programs and mentorship initiatives should be developed to encourage more young women to seek jobs in skilled work. Employers can also foster family-friendly work environments that allow women to successfully manage their jobs and personal life. According to the study, financial stability and the opportunity for better earnings are essential motivators for women to engage and remain in skilled labor occupations. Employers can attract and retain female talent by providing competitive remuneration packages and closing gender pay discrepancies. Recognizing and encouraging the satisfaction of hands-on work can also motivate more women to pursue jobs in skilled labor.

Furthermore, it is critical to cultivate an inclusive and supportive working culture. Women who want to promote gender equality should be encouraged and supported. Transparent talks regarding gender equality concerns and opportunities for women's professional development can help foster an environment in which women feel encouraged to speak for their rights. Addressing the gender gap in the skilled labor industry would necessitate a multimodal approach that includes education, recruitment, workplace policies, and cultural shifts. By putting these ideas into action and recognizing women's potential in the skilled labor market, the industry can pave the way for a more varied and prosperous future, benefiting from the unique abilities and perspectives that women bring to the table.

Through this study, I learned that women make important contributions to skilled labor professions. The women participating in this study highlighted essential skills that their male counterparts do not. Some of these skills included enhanced communication with coworkers, supervisors, and customers, and superior problem-solving skills. These findings indicate that including more women in skilled labor positions can increase workplace diversity and the quality of products and services provided by skilled labor companies. The women also spoke about how to increase entry and retention in skilled labor positions. Many participants entered skilled labor positions because of the inherent flexibility with schedules, which allowed them to provide for their families. The women indicated they remained in skilled labor positions because they enjoyed the respect they earned in their positions. These findings suggest that skilled labor business leaders should increase awareness of the value that women bring to skilled labor positions, which could allow women to bypass many respect-related hurdles that hinder their upward mobility.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flier

Research
OPPORTUNITY
for Women in Skilled Labor

Danielle King, a doctoral student at Walden University is seeking women in skilled labor to participate in a 30-45 minute virtual interview conducted over Zoom.

Research Participants:

- **Must be a woman in a skilled labor profession**
- **Must have at least one year of experience in skilled labor**

Research participants will:

- **Scan the QR code to complete a short (2-minute) survey indicating your interest in participation**
- **Participate in a 30-45 minutes virtual interview**
- **Review study findings (10 minutes)**

Contact Danielle for more information:

danielle.king2@waldenu.edu

Appendix B: Participant Screening Questionnaire

What is your biological sex assigned at birth? [Male/Female/Prefer not to answer]

2. What is your gender identity? [Male/Female/Other (please specify)]

3. Are you currently working in a skilled labor profession? [Yes/No]

4. What is your skilled labor profession?

a. Construction

b. Electrical Work

c. Plumbing

d. Carpentry

e. Brick Masonry

f. Roofing

g. Welding

h. Painting

i. Other (please specify).

5. Are you a manager or in a leadership position at your company? [Yes/No]

6. How many years of experience do you have as a skilled laborer?

7. If you're interested in participating in an interview, please leave your contact information for the researcher:

a. Name

b. Email address

c. Phone number

Appendix C: Participant Invitation Letter

Date: XX/XX/2023

From: Danielle King

Subject: Request to Participate in Doctoral Study Interview

To: Participant

Hi Participant name,

My name is Danielle King and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am recruiting women employed in skilled labor professions to participant in my doctoral study. By way of this letter, I would like to invite you to participate in a virtual interview to answer 12 open-ended questions about your experiences as a woman working in a skilled labor profession.

Purpose of the Study:
The purpose of this study is to identify the causes contributing to the lack of women in the construction and building industry by examining the views held by women working in these fields. Implications for positive social change of this study include understanding the reasons that women choose to enter and remain in skilled labor professions, which may inform organization policies aimed at supporting female skilled laborers.

Why I Need You?

I will need you to schedule a time I may conduct a virtual interview with you that will take place during Zoom. During the interview, I will ask you 12 questions approved by my dissertation committee at Walden University. The topic of the questions will all surround your experiences as a woman in a skilled labor profession. Once the interview is complete, I will transcribe your responses and provide you an opportunity to check the content for accuracy.

Please contact me so I can schedule some time to conduct a virtual interview with you.

Thank you for your consideration and participation in this study.

Danielle King

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Date of Interview: _____

Respondent Number: _____

1. Introduce self to the participant

Thank you for participating in this study and your willingness to complete the interview process. My name is Danielle King and I'm a student at Walden University conducting research on the perspectives and experiences of women in skilled labor professions.

2. Introduce the research question, the purpose of the study and answer any initial questions the participant may have.

The purpose of my study is to the reasons that women enter and remain in skill labor professions. The research question I'm trying to address are:
1. What are the attitudes and perceptions of women within the skilled labor construction industry?
2. Why do women enter and remain in the skilled labor construction industry?

3. Thank the participant for their participation in the study.

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in my study.

4. Review the informed consent form and answer any questions the participant may have.

Before we continue, I need to verify that you have signed the consent form and understand the ethical standards for this interview. All personal information will be stored electronically and may only be accessed to me via a password. Raw data, such as field notes, will be kept locked in a file cabinet only accessible to myself. When the information from the interview is published in the final study, participant confidentiality will remain. All transcripts and recordings of the interview will be kept private on a

password-protected computer accessible to myself only. Do you have any questions about the consent form or any of the measures taken to preserve your confidentiality?

5. Provide the participant with a copy of the informed consent form for their personal records and review.

Here's a copy of the informed consent form for your personal records and review.

6. Begin recording the interview.

Do I have your permission to begin recording the interview now?

7. Introduce the participant using their respondent number, the date and time of the interview.

During this interview, I'm going to refer to you as Participant (Insert participant number). Today's date is (insert today's date) and the time of the interview is (Insert Today's time).

8. Start the interview using the interview questions.

Interview Question	**RQ, Theory**
1. Can you describe why you chose to enter a skilled labor profession over other employment options? *Prompts:* • What other employment tracks did you consider? • What was the deciding factor on why you chose a skilled labor profession?	RQ2
2. What was your motivation to enter a skilled labor profession? How did your interest in your profession start?	RQ2, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)
3. Can you describe your experiences as a woman in a skilled labor profession? *Prompts:*	RQ1, RQ2

- Can you describe your experiences interacting with your supervisor?
- Can you describe your experiences interacting with coworkers?
- Can you describe your experiences interacting with clients?

4. What aspects of your profession do you believe you're better suited for as a woman compared to your male coworkers?	RQ1
5. What are some challenges you encounter as a woman in a skilled labor profession? *Prompts:* • Do you think your gender plays a role in the challenges you describe? • Do your coworkers and supervisors treat you different than male employees?	RQ1
6. What do you find rewarding about your profession? *Prompts:* • Do you think your gender plays a role in the rewards you derive from your profession?	RQ1, SCCT
7. In what ways can your employer help improve your job satisfaction?	RQ2
8. Do you feel supported as a female in a skilled labor profession? *Prompts* • Do you feel supported by your employer? If so, what does the employer do to help you feel supported? • Do you feel supported by your coworkers? If so, what does your coworkers do to help you feel supported?	RQ1
9. How do you defined success in your career?	RQ1, SCCT
10. What contributes to your success as a woman in a skilled labor profession? *Prompts* • What action does your employer take to aid in your success? • What actions do your coworkers take to aid your success? • What actions do you take to ensure your success in your profession?	RQ1

11. What actions can employers take to support women in skilled labor professions?	RQ2
12. Why do you think more women aren't choosing skilled labor professions over other professions?	RQ2
13. Do you think that women in skilled labor professions leave prematurely? Or do you find that women express a desire for longevity in their skilled labor professions?	RQ2
14. If you had to design a program to women in skilled labor professions, what would that program look like?	RQ2
15. Do you have anything else you'd like to share about your experiences as a woman in a skilled labor profession?	RQ1, RQ2

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9. Ask any follow-up questions.

10. End the interview and stop the recording. Explain to the participant of the member checking and transcription review process.

We have reached the end of this interview. Thank you for your participation in this study and sharing your personal experiences with me. I appreciate your transparency and honesty in each of your responses. Do you have any questions about the interview or the research process?

As a reminder, I will take the audio from these recordings and transcribe them verbatim. I will be emailing you a copy of the interview transcript. It would be great if you can review the transcript and make sure that you're comfortable with all of the responses. If you'd like any changes to be made to the transcript so that it more accurately reflects your thoughts and ideas, please let me know. That's an important part

of the research process.

11. Thank the participant for the participation in the study.

Thank you again for participating in my study. You can contact me at any time if you have any questions or concerns.

Appendix E: Codebook

Theme 1: Women in Skilled Labor Experience Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

Two categories were used to develop Theme 1. Category C1 describes discrimination the participants experience in the workplace. Category C2 describes sexual harassment experienced by the participants.

Category C1: The Participants Experienced Discrimination in the Workplace

Code	Participants
Discrimination by Coworkers	P7, P13, P15, P17, P21
Looked Down Upon by Men	P2, P6, P21
Discrimination By Supervisors	P3, P13, P18, P20, P21
Discrimination By Customers	P1, P5, P7, P9

Category C2: The Participants Experienced Sexual Harassment

Code	Participants
Sexual Harassment by Coworkers	P9
Sexual Harassment by Customers	P22

Theme 2: Women in Skilled Labor are Respected by Coworkers

One category was used to develop Theme 2. Category C3 describes how some participants were respected by their coworkers in skilled labor positions.

Category C3: Women in Skilled Labor Were Respected By Their Coworkers

Code	Participants
Friendly, Helpful Coworkers	P7, P10, P22
Respect from Coworkers	P4, P8, P19
Welcomed Into Industry	P6, P7, P11

Theme 3: Women In Skilled Labor Possess Unique Skills

Two categories were used to develop Theme 3. Category C4 describes how the participants use their communication skills and problem-solving skills to facilitate relationships with coworkers and customers. Category C5 describes the women as being deeply invested and compassionate about their work.

Category C4: The Women Have Enhanced Communication and Problem-Solving Skills

Code	Participants
Communication with Coworkers	P11, P16, P20
Communication with Customers	P2, P5 P15, P21, P22
Problem-Solving Skills	P3, P9, P14, P20, P17

Category C5: Women Are Deeply Invested and Compassionate About Their Work

Code	Participants
Compassion	P4, P21, P22
Invested In Work	P5, P6, P8, P9, P22
Detail Oriented	P1, P3, P15, P16, P17, P18, P19, P21

Theme 4: Women Enter Skilled Labor Professions for Various Reasons

One category contributed to the development of Theme 4. Category C6 describe the six reasons that the participants chose to enter skilled labor professions.

Category C6: The Women Chose Skilled Labor For Six Reasons

Code	Participants
Family Business	P2, P4, P6, P8, P15, P18, P21, P22
Flexibility, Make Own Decisions	P2, P10, P11, P14, P22
Higher Paying	P3, P5, P6
Job Satisfaction	P3, P7, P13, P19, P21
Promote Equal Opportunities	P16, P17, P22
Wants to Be Hands On	P6, P7, P8, P12, P17

Theme 6: Earning Respect and Rewarding Work Keep Women In Skilled Labor

One category contributed to the development of Theme 5. Category C7 describes how women in skilled labor remain in the profession to earn respect and because the work is rewarding.

Category C7: Women Remain in Skilled Labor For Respect and Rewarding Work

Code	Participants
Remain: Rewarding Work	P3, P6, P7, P8, P17, P20
Remain: Earned Respect	P4, P6, P12, P13, P18, P22