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# Success Strategies Among Immigrant Small Business Owners in the Southeastern United States

Tony Nnabue  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Tony Chidebe Nnabue

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Review Committee

Dr. Karin Mae, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Janet Booker, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Alexandre Lazo, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer  
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2016

Abstract

Success Strategies Among Immigrant Small Business Owners in the

Southeastern United States

by

Tony Chidebe Nnabue

MBA, University of Phoenix, 2002

BS, Upper Iowa University, 1995

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2016

## Abstract

Although considerable concern exists regarding immigrant businesses, few studies address immigrant small business owners' strategies for success and sustainability. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the strategies that immigrant small business owners in metro Atlanta, Georgia can use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Cultural theory formed the conceptual framework for this study. A purposeful sample of 20 immigrant small business owners in metro Atlanta provided the data garnered from semistructured interviews for this research study. Using open coding, and modified van Kaam analysis of the interview data, 5 themes emerged for immigrant small businesses that were successful and survived beyond 5 years: strong work ethic and family dynamics, flexibility and independence, limited societal barriers, business experience, persistence and great customer service. Two themes emerged among immigrant small business owners whose businesses failed, which were, inadequate financial posture, and poor business and managerial knowledge. The findings of this study may contribute to social change as the strategies presented could guide new immigrants in establishing successful and sustainable immigrant small businesses. Results from this study could help educate small business owners about some of the causes of business failures.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to immigrant small business owners everywhere regardless of the size of your small business. You enrich people in your host countries with the gift of culture to help expand global business ideas and practice. Immigrant entrepreneurs all over the world provide business innovation, and employment. I salute you!

## Acknowledgments

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To my late father Chief N. I. Nnabue, KSJ, I wish you were here to celebrate this accomplishment. I save a special thanks to my late mother Mrs. Theresa I. Nnabue, Lady KSJ for all your help through the ages. You are a special person and mother to us all. I salute you!

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small and large businesses are essential for national development in the United States (U.S.). Small businesses are important in economic development (Valadez, 2012). According to the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of Advocacy, small businesses represent 99.7% of U.S. employer firms and 63% of the net jobs created between 1993 and mid-2013 (SBA, 2014a). In 2013, small businesses in the United States numbered 28.2 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). In a 2012 Survey of Business Owners (SBO), the U.S. Census Bureau reported 8 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015) minority owned small businesses including small businesses owned by Asians, African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, immigrants, and Veterans.

### **Background of the Problem**

Immigrant small-business owners in different parts of the world are successful (Vissak & Zhang, 2014). Business ownership among immigrants in Australia, Canada, and the United States is higher than the business owner rates of natives (Zolin & Schlosser, 2013). Immigrant-established ventures in the United States provide economic and social returns (Perera, Gomez, Weisinger, & Tobey, 2013); create employment, competition, innovation, and wealth (Carbonell, Hernandez, & Garcia, 2014; Docquier, Ozden, & Peri, 2014); and promote innovation regarding patents with spillover effects (Kerr, 2013). Immigrants started a quarter of the high technology companies in the last 10 years. Indian and Chinese immigrant engineers started 32% and 5.4% of technology

companies respectively in California's Silicon Valley (Wadhwa, Saxenian, Siciliano, 2012). Immigrant business owners earn less than U.S. born small businesses owners (Bates & Robb, 2014). Regarding cost, supporting immigrant owned businesses is more challenging than supporting nonimmigrant owned small businesses (Patel, Pieper, & Hair, 2012). As the number of immigrants increase, the need for employment also increases. Economic opportunities and better financial conditions motivate immigrants to the United States and to business ownership (Abada, Hou, & Lu, 2014; Smans, Freeman, & Thomas, 2014). Owning a small business is the means immigrants use to gain employment, entrepreneurship, and use social capital as a form of currency (Knight, 2015). Research on immigrant small business or entrepreneurship, has examined immigrant contributions to the U.S. economy and access to financial capital (Fairlie, 2012; Peri, 2012). Information regarding business challenges among immigrant small-business owners in the southeastern United States is limited.

### **Problem Statement**

Eighteen percent of the 28.2 million small businesses in the United States are owned by immigrants, and generate \$776 billion in receipts (Kallick, 2012; SBA, 2012). Immigrant businesses declined from 0.55 % in 2011 to 0.49 % in 2012 (Fairlie, 2013). The general business problem addressed in this study was that new immigrant small business owners are challenged with sustainability (Meuller, 2014; SBA, 2014b). The specific business problem was that some immigrant small business owners lack strategies to survive in business (Riva & Lucchini, 2015).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore strategies that immigrant small-business owners can use to survive in business. Minority-owned business organizations to include immigrant small businesses provide employment, are sources of innovation, and contribute to economic growth in the United States; they also provide access to international markets and networks, and they promote exports (Liu, 2012, Neville, Orser, Riding, & Jung, 2014; Wang & Liu, 2015). The population for the study was successful and unsuccessful immigrant small-business owners who live in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia. Atlanta is an immigrant gateway metropolitan city in the United States (Zhu, Liu, & Painter, 2013). Immigrant small business owners in the United States predominantly engage in businesses in healthcare, specialty shops, law firms, ethnic foods, general services, and restaurants.

The results of this study might guide for current and future immigrant small-business owners on how to be successful. This study might provide a framework for immigrants for starting and managing successful small businesses within immigrant enclaves in the United States. Information from the study could educate small-business owners about strategies for success that are not immigrant-specific, thereby improving the small-business sector of the U.S. economy.

### **Nature of the Study**

A qualitative research method with phenomenological research design was central to the nature of this study. Phenomenological design is based on a reflective analysis of

research participants' experiences of the phenomenon of study (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative research provides a holistic framework for understanding a problem (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2012). The suitability for interpretation and exploration of a phenomenon that participants could provide, made qualitative research method suitable for this study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012). Other approaches or research methods include quantitative, and mixed methods (Onwuegbuzie, Collins, & Frels, 2013). Quantitative research includes numerical scale data to provide statistical relationships of the study variables, and interpret data as well as write the research results (O'Leary, 2013). Mixed methods research combines quantitative and qualitative protocols in a single research study (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015; Heyvaert, Maes, & Onghena, 2013). A qualitative research method was appropriate for this study because the focus of the study is to explore the experiences of immigrant small business owners.

The qualitative research method includes grounded theory, narrative, ethnography, phenomenology, and case study (Flick, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2013). Grounded theory uses empirical information in research analysis, and theories to form the anchor of the analysis. Narrative research design, on the other hand, allows participants to know events, remember events, and tell about those events in their words (Flick, 2014). Ethnography design draws on knowledge from cultural anthropology as the researcher observes the participants of a study for an extended period and becomes part of the research process. Ethnography, grounded theory, and case study research designs were not part of this study.

### **Research Question**

A research question is clear and concise, and it should be the focus of the research study. A research question guides the literature review in a research by focusing on existing knowledge on the research issue (Connolly, Boyle, MacArthur, Hainey, & Boyle, 2012).

The central question was: What strategies can immigrant small business owners use to survive in business?

### **Interview Questions**

The open-ended interview questions, which also appear in Appendix A, were as follows:

1. What influence did your culture have to make your small business successful beyond 5 years?
2. What was your motivation to become a small-business owner?
3. How did you finance your small business?
4. What were your challenges to opening and sustaining your small-business?
5. Explain the business experiences that you had prior to becoming a small business owner.
6. Describe any language barrier, racism, or discrimination that you had to overcome.
7. What are some of your perceived success factors as a small-business owner?

8. What additional comments would you like to add about your strategies to starting and sustaining a small business beyond 5 years?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework used in this research study was cultural thesis. Tylor (1871) created the term *culture* in the English language, highlighting people's status regarding interaction with other people. Hofstede (1980) stretched the work of Tylor by developing the cultural dimensions theory, which extends cultural belief and values at the national level. Cultural theory, which uses elements of Taylor's and Hofstede's work, indicates that immigrants have cultural traits such as hard work, strong communal ties, frugality, and risk acceptance (Buechel, Hellmann, & Pichler, 2014). Immigrants have strong social values, and dedication that enhance and support business ownership (Kourtit & Nijkamp, 2012). Immigrants can see advantages and opportunities through a cultural prism when they arrive in the country, and their motivations as well as emotions have a cultural component (González Rey, 2014). Immigrants come from different parts of the world and bring with them their individual and national cultures. Fear of failure in business ownership has a link to culture (Wennberg, Pathak, & Autio, 2013). The use of cultural theory was appropriate to ground this study about the successful strategies used by immigrant small business owners can help avoid the barriers in the business milieu (Lofstrom, Bates, & Parker, 2014).

## Operational Definitions

Important terms that required definitions were part of this study. The definitions that follow were taken from peer reviewed sources.

*Brain drain.* Brain drain is the migration of educational talent from a developing country to a developed country in search of better employment opportunities (Gibson & McKenzie, 2012).

*Brain waste.* Brain waste is the employment of immigrants in positions below their education and training (Beckhusen, Florax, Poot, & Waldorf, 2013).

*Entrepreneur.* An individual who is self-employed or who employs other people in their business ventures and outcomes is considered an entrepreneur (Spivack, McKelvia, & Haynie, 2014).

*Ethnic enclave.* Immigrants bound together by business ventures, their employees, and the local enclave community (Valenzuela-Garcia et al., 2014).

*Ethnic minority.* Non-white individuals who belong to one or more of the following groups: Asian, Black, or Native-American (Kidwell, Hoy, & Ibarreche, 2012).

*Human capital.* Deals with individual skills, previous work experiences, and level of education (Sanroma, Ramos, & Simon, 2015).

*Self-employment.* Individuals that work for themselves in limited business or professional business practice (Faggio & Silva, 2014).

*Small business.* A business with 1 to 500 employees is a small business (SBA, 2014).

*Small Business Administration (SBA).* The SBA is a federal government agency that provides assistance, aid, and counsel to small business organizations to safeguard free enterprise and strengthen the U.S. economy (SBA, 2014).

*Social capital.* Social capital is an attribute embedded within, and is available through individual and familial network of relationships (Seghers, Manigart, & Vanacher, 2012).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are important factors in a research study. Assumptions are elements of a study assumed to be true. Limitations represent any inherent weakness of the study. Delimitations provide bounds of the study. This subsection focused on assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

#### **Assumptions**

Qualitative research assumptions are the internal beliefs and assumptions that the researcher brings to the research effort (Seidman, 2013). The following assumptions motivated and guided the focus of this research study. First, a qualitative phenomenological research design was the most appropriate research design to explore the strategies that immigrant small-business owners used to be successful in the southeastern United States. Second, a minimum number of 20 successful and unsuccessful immigrant small business owners participated in this research study. Third, the study participants provided voluntary, accurate answers to the interview questions that were the basis of the research study analysis. Next, the participants in the study were

immigrants who owned and operated their own small businesses. Finally, the participants voluntarily agreed to participate in semistructured face-to-face interviews to further this research effort.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are inherent in any type of research and represent the weaknesses of the research study (Svensson & Doumas, 2013). Participants of this qualitative phenomenological research study were immigrant small-business owners that resided in the Atlanta. The small sample size of 20 participants limited the generalizability of the research results (Van den Bergh & du Plessis, 2012). Location was a limitation because the results could be different in other locations (Itabashi-Campbell, Gluesing, & Perelli, 2012).

A purposeful, non-random sample for the research study could not control selection bias. To reduce this risk, I addressed this bias at the outset, by expanding the pool of potential participant to include women, immigrants from different parts of the world to, and many professions covering legal services, transportation, and marketing organizations. I made this concerted effort to minimize the bias, which have affected the research results. Purposeful sampling could have been a source of bias because of the types of immigrants that participated in the study, their countries of origin, and how fluent they were in the English language. My appearance and types of questions given to the participants could have led the participants to give answers to fit what they perceived to be correct answers.

Accuracy of the research results was dependent on the veracity of the information that the participants provided. Lack of a mechanism to corroborate the lived experiences that the participants provided during face-to-face interviews was a limitation of the study. Face-to-face interviews is a form of inquiry (Seidman, 2013), and the presence of an audio recorder might have introduced bias because some people are shy when being recorded. This situation could reduce full disclosure of information despite the assurances from the researcher that the participants and their responses were confidential. Finally, time and other resource availability were limitations because of the short time-sensitive nature of the research completion requirement.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations define the scope or boundaries that the researcher sets for the research study (Svensson & Dumas, 2013). Initial delimitation of the study was the geographical location. Only immigrant entrepreneurs in the Atlanta area participated in the research study. A second delimitation of the study was the use of purposeful sampling method to identify the participants of the study. A third delimitation was that the immigrant participants engage in business services in shipping, transportation, law, convenience stores, and hair salons. A fourth delimitation was that the participants for the study were successful immigrant small business owners who were in business a minimum of 5 years. Finally, participants for this research study had to speak and understand English language because I did not have the financial resources to hire a translator.

### **Significance of the Study**

This doctoral study explored the strategies for success that immigrant small owners use to be sustainable beyond 5 years. Included in this section are contributions to business practice. This section also includes implications for social change.

#### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The significance of this study was the potential to empower immigrant small business owners to improve their quality of life through the generation of knowledge relevant to immigrant small business success and sustainability. Immigrant owned businesses played a significant role in economic development (Kemeny, 2014; Vissak & Zhang, 2014). Small businesses with majority immigrant ownership employed 4.7 million people in the United States and earned \$776 billion in receipts in 2007 (Kallick, 2012). Previous research about immigrants in business included different themes such as enclave economies, ethnic businesses, immigrant entrepreneurs, and networks (Ma, Zhao, Wang, & Lee, 2013). The strategies that immigrant small business owners used to become successful and sustainable beyond 5 years contributes to business practice.

#### **Implications for Social Change**

Results from this study might help immigrant small business owners to expand their businesses and hire more employees from their communities; thereby strengthening those communities. Information from this study could inform leaders of the SBA to create programs to help immigrant small business owners to overcome business challenges; this information could help immigrant communities and provide positive

social change. Researchers from the United States Department of State and Homeland Security could use information from this study to plan for refugee and asylum seekers who plan to become small business owners in the United States and contribute to effective positive social change.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The objective of this research study was to explore the strategies used by immigrant small-business owners in the southeastern United States to be successful, and sustainable beyond 5 years to address the central research question: What are the strategies for success for immigrant small-business owners to be successful beyond 5 years? A comprehensive review of literature about immigrant small-business ownership was necessary to position this study within the larger body of work about immigrant small businesses. The literature review includes seminal work of Wilson and Portes (1980) regarding the ethnic enclave theory and several works about cultural theory. One strategy to locate information about immigrant small businesses was to search multiple databases for literature regarding immigrant small business ownership. Keyword searches included the following: *immigrant small business; immigrant self-employment; immigrant entrepreneurship; success factors for immigrant small business owners; challenges facing immigrant small business owners; motivation for entrepreneurship; immigrant social capital; immigrant middlemen; and ethnic enclaves*. The search covered the following peer-reviewed journals: *Demography, Contemporary Sociology, Thunderbird International Business Review, International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small*

*Business, Small Business Economics, International Migration, Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship, Academy of Management Review, Journal of Management, Annual Review of Sociology, A Journal of African Migration, Journal of Management and Marketing Research, Journal of Management Development, and International Journal of Urban and Regional Research.* Aggregation of the research articles used multiple protocols including a word document to track and store the sources of information that is relevant to this study.

The literature review included a review of a minimum of 60 peer-reviewed journals from professional and academic literature. One hundred and six peer-reviewed journals were used (See Table 1).

Table 1

*Literature Review Sources*

Source of literature content	Total resources	Number of resources 5 years or newer 2012–2016	Total peer-reviewed resources 5 years or newer 2012–2016
Peer reviewed journals	214	206	96%
Books, government sources, other non-peer reviewed sources	23	14	
Dissertation	2	2	
Total literature review resources	239	222	92.8%

**Immigration Trends**

The history of immigration in the United States vacillates between openness and restrictions (Bodvarsson & Van den Berg, 2013). People tend to enter host countries they assume to be prosperous because of perceived better economic conditions, whereas sociologists assert that people immigrate because of better social networks of friends and relatives in host countries (Becerra, 2012). Migrants enter the United States at a high rate because of the perceived financial, economic, and employment opportunities that the U.S. provides (Cadena, 2013). Immigrants in the United States in 2013 numbered 41.3 million (Census Bureau, 2013). An opportunity that immigrants find attractive is the capacity to become business owners at a rate higher than natives (Liu, 2012). Emigration provides individuals with different employment opportunities.

Immigration status influences the types of employment that immigrants seek, from self-employment to salaried-employment. Immigrants in the United States are more likely than native citizens to become self-employed or small-business owners (Oyelere & Belton, 2012). A similar study in Canada indicated that immigrants engage in self-employment because of societal issues such as discrimination (Abada et al., 2014). Andersson, Hammarstedt, Hussain, and Sheikur (2013) addressed immigrant self employment vis-à-vis native self-employment in parts of Europe including Sweden. Many benefits accrue to a host country because of immigrant business ownership from an increase from the collection of sales tax to expansion of cultural diversity, and innovation (Vissak & Zhang, 2014). Opportunities in the host country determine how immigrants become small business owners. A market exists for immigrant small business owners

inside the immigrant neighborhoods because of the longing or requirements of immigrants for their native foods, and the receipt of services from members of their ethnic community (Stowers, 2012; Zolfagharian, Saldivar, & Sun, 2014). Demand for familiar goods and services creates a market niche for immigrant small-business owners, from tropical foods for Hispanic and African immigrants, to oriental food items for Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, and Korean immigrants, and other assorted goods and services for different immigrants (Adekunle, Filson, & Sethuratnam, 2013; Mouw, & Chaves, 2012). Issues of displacement and marginalization in the Irish labor market propel immigrants to self-employment. Marginalization and displacement were the focus of a qualitative research study by Turner (2010). An analysis of the 2006 Irish population census records highlighted issues such as immigrant job displacement, social integration, occupational, and downgrading. African immigrants had the highest share of low-skill occupations in the Irish economy even though they had the qualification for higher jobs, thereby introducing the concept of *brain waste* (Turner, 2010). Immigrants from the United States, Australia, and other parts of the European Union filled high-skill occupations. The concept of *brain waste* was part of the discussion in the study. This research study is a useful reminder to future immigrants about immigration trends in parts of the European Union.

Many of discouraging factors such as language difficulties, discrimination have not deterred immigration to the United States and other parts of the developed world because immigrants find that business ownerships help them to assimilate in the host

countries (Dhingra & Parker, 2015). The idea of linking business ownership, assimilation, and immigration is ongoing (Lofstrom et al., 2014). Regardless of the reasons for immigration, the opportunities for increased income, social norms, and laws make the United States the top destination for people seeking to emigrate (Ryo, 2013). As immigrants travel across national borders, some seek education, while others seek different types of employment.

The trend in immigration is global. Ogunsiji, Wilkes, Jackson, and Peters (2012) undertook a qualitative study in support of the global trend in immigration by highlighting the difficulties that West African women faced in Sidney, Australia; Ogunsiji et al. collected the data for the study through audiotaped face-to-face interviews of twenty-one West African women. Ogunsiji et al. audiotaped the interview sessions, transcribed the information word-for-word, and analyzed the emerging themes. The authors found from the study that participants in the study encountered similar challenges faced by immigrants after emigration: alienation, limited success in forming social networks, difficulty finding employment, and isolation. Reviewing the emotional and social wellness of West African immigrants in Australia is significant from a healthcare perspective.

Gele and Harslof (2012) conducted a qualitative research study of 24 African immigrants over the age of 50 residing in Norway, in which they looked at the participants' civic engagement after immigration into Norway. The focus of the study was the exploration of the barriers and facilitators of civic engagement. Civic

engagement in this context constitutes activities dealing with becoming involved with the community, voting, and involvement with both national and international news. Twelve percent of the 423,000 immigrants that reside in Norway are African immigrants. Gele and Harslof interviewed the participants for the study between January and April 2010, and opined that African immigrants are hard to reach using other forms of research instruments. Gele and Harslof audiotaped the interview responses, produced verbatim transcription, and found that the barriers to civic engagement for African immigrants included: poor health, language difficulties, and lack of trust for public organizations. One way that immigrants assimilate in a host country is through small business ownership. Several theories that help elucidate immigrant small business ownership exist, such as cultural theory, disadvantage theory, enclave theory, Human and social capital theory, and the theory of planned behavior.

### **Cultural Theory**

Cultural theory proposes that immigrant and ethnic groups have in-born cultural attributes such as hard work, persistence, strong sense of community, frugality, risk acceptance, and tolerance for self-employment (Jang & Kim, 2013; Yoo, 2014). There is a link between cultural traditions and the propensity for immigrants to start businesses through the creation of immigrant social networks in host countries (Chung & Tung 2013). Using a case study of Indian immigrant small business owners in New Zealand, de Vries (2012) found that cultural traits such as adaptability, and a strong work ethic helped Indian small business owners in different host countries. Adaptation is a coping

mechanism that second generation Chinese immigrants in Spain have used to overcome discrimination, and find success as small business owners (Yiu, 2013). Researchers confirmed that while group culture could support small business ownership, and cultural values influence business integration in a host country (Ye, Parris, & Waddell, 2013). Not all scholars share link or relationship of culture, entrepreneurship, and culture. Cultural identity is not enough to propel an individual to becoming a business owner (Aldrich & Yang, 2012). Whereas an individual's culture may help to foster business competences, Aldrich and Yang did not confirm any elements of culture that helped to spur business development.

Business choice may rest on one's perception of the business environment. However, the choice of a business type determines where an immigrant becomes attached to start business, usually engaging in similar businesses of other immigrants (Patel & Vella, 2013). As part of exploring culture in a qualitative research study, Piperopoulos (2012) explored whether ethnic female business owners behaved more as 'female' or more as 'ethnic' business owners. Data collection was from 15 ethnic minority business owners from the Attica and Macedonia region of Greece through face-to-face interviews. A significant finding from the study was that ethnic female business owners behaved the same as ethnic male business owners, but distinguished themselves because of their motivation. Female ethnic business owners demonstrated more of their femininity than their ethnicity (Piperopoulos, 2012). Immigrants and ethnic minorities consider the issue of acculturation in a host country differently. Examining the acculturation of first-

generation Nigerians in the United States is an example of such an effort (Ndika, 2013). Data for Ndika's quantitative research study came from 104 first-generation Nigerians from different states within the country. Acculturation centers on several variables including, integration, assimilation, separation, assimilation and separation, and assimilation and integration. These acculturation strategies influence psychological as well as physical well-being. Ndika found that Nigerians frequently used the assimilation and separation strategy of acculturation, while the least strategy was integration.

Place of origin makes people view the issue of culture differently. Lalonde (2013) conducted a research study of the influence of culture on Arab business ownership using ethnography. Participants for this study were four Arab immigrants, and one non-Arab business partner. The research setting was in Quebec, Canada. Lalonde participated as a team member for a period of two years. Analysis of the data for the study included a description of the observed phenomenon, followed by discussions, intuitions, and impressions. Part of the analysis was a review of Arab culture and its influence on business leadership. Lalonde explained some aspects of Arab culture including group dynamics, paternalism, and nepotism. Influence of Islam religion was part of the discussion in this research study.

Another study to address ethnic business ownership with cultural influence was Shinnar, Giacomini, and Janssen's (2012) research using Hofstede's cultural dimensions' approach and gender role theory to explain ethnic business ownership. Traditionally, ethnic business explanation can use either a cultural, neoclassical economics, or

institutional economic approaches. Perceptions of the barriers to business ownership as well as the desire to become an entrepreneur are examined. The business ownership barriers examined include issues dealing with limited support, fear of failure, and competency. A presentation of culture exists as the fundamental value system indigenous to a group or society that drives people to behave a specific way. Results of the study show that cultural and gender are significant when considering the perceptions of challenges to small business ownership as well as intentions.

Wang and Altinay (2012) explored the intentions of immigrant small businesses owners to become entrepreneurs. The theoretical framework uses both social embeddedness, and ethnic entrepreneurship theory. Data collection for the research was through 258 face-to-face interviews of Chinese and Turkish small business owners in the United Kingdom. Analysis of research data did not show a significant effect of social capital on entrepreneurial orientation of the small business owners. This study indicated that Chinese immigrant small business owners to expand their businesses than did Turkish immigrant small business owners. Nonowner managers hold other cultural values than business owners, and these values go beyond cultural patterns (Ng, 2012).

Middleman minority theory is associated with the cultural view of business ownership (Liu, Miller, & Wang, 2014). Immigrants groups use self-employment and business ownership to improve their social standing by using their cultural capital. Bonacich (1973) posited that within the middleman minority paradigm, immigrants pursue low-end businesses because of minority specific challenges such as

discrimination, and limited opportunities for advancement. The positions as middlemen allow these immigrant business owners to serve as conduits for ethnic products between consumers and immigrant business owners (Bonacich, 1973). These middlemen serve as traders or representatives in business operations. Immigrants seek the help of middlemen within their networks for capital, labor, and information necessary for business operations and survival, including translation services (Chan, 2015).

Traditionally, using a cultural paradigm to address individual behavior in research has limitations. These limitations address individual cultural norms while recognizing the effect of multiple cultures on individual behavior (Morris, Chiu, & Liu, 2015). Morris et al. (2015) addresses the intermingling effect of other cultures on individuals in their study on polycultural psychology.

### **Ethnic Enclave Theory**

The seminal work about ethnic enclave hypothesis is the pioneering work about the Cuban immigrant enclave in Miami Florida by Wilson and Portes (1980). Using a longitudinal survey to examine employment for the first group of Cuban refugees, Wilson and Portes found that a significant number of the new Cuban immigrants went to work for other immigrants, and that those immigrants did better than the immigrants who went to work in white-owned businesses. This idea of immigrants going to work for other coethnics represented the ethnic enclave hypothesis.

In ethnic enclave theory, immigrant small business owners use social ties of culture, common language, and other social capital elements as a basis for business formation and development (Prashantham, Dhanaraj, & Kumar, 2015; Zolin, Chang, Yang, & Ho, 2015). Ethnic enclave small businesses are noticeable in Indian neighborhoods in the United Kingdom, African sections of the Netherlands, Turkish Towns in Germany, ‘little Mexicos’ in the United States, and Chinatowns in many parts of the world. Examined in this quantitative research study are ethnic ties among new Indian business ventures within other business clusters or outside the business clusters (Prashantham et. al. 2015). A geographical and network perspective formed the theoretical framework of the study. One hundred and two immigrants were part of the study. Prashantham et. al sought to find the relationship of ethnic and non ethnic ties in international business expansion. Results of the study indicated that businesses outside an enclave build more ethnic ties, and businesses inside the business enclave capitalizes on ethnic ties for international business expansion. Nonethnic ties were found to be more important in propelling international business expansion.

Traditionally, minorities and immigrants aggregate to specific sectors of the economy, and are attracted to peculiar market niches. Using a previous study to explore the role of ethnic enclave on the earnings of 6 new immigrant groups taken from 8 of the largest cities in Canada (Fong & Hou, 2013). Drawing on 2006 Canadian Census data, Fong and Hou expanded the understanding of immigrant economic attainment in different workplaces, industrial sectors within the ethnic enclosures of the eight Canadian

cities. Fong and Hou used multivariate analysis to find out that immigrants earned less in neighborhoods with high concentrations of co-ethnics.

Within ethnic enclaves, ethnic networks have an effect on the decisions by immigrant men to seek self-employment as an alternative to wage employment (Toussaint-Comeau, 2012). Data for this research study was from the 2000 United States (US) Census 5 % Public Use Micro Sample restricted to males between the ages of 25-54. Forty percent of the sample for this study comprise of Mexican immigrants. Toussaint-Comeau found that in areas with immigrants from the same country of origin, the probability of self-employment would be higher if the immigrants had higher self-employment intensity than otherwise. This study indicated the 'pulled' effect concept in immigrant self-employment research. Inclusion of a latent variable as part of the self-employment choice is a limitation of Toussaint-Comeau's study.

Work experiences of minorities include salaried and selfemployment. In this Canadian study, Fenwick (2012) conducted 19 in-depth interviews of Blacks and other minority ethnic groups (Chinese, Filipinos, and Latin American) to gather data for the study. Much of the discussion in the study about self-employment pertained to the different networks that Blacks and other ethnic minority groups use when seeking employment. Networks afford ethnic minorities opportunities for social as well as economic contacts.

While emphasizing ethnicity in ethnic enclave theory, this research study included the example of Halle/Saale in eastern Germany to find pathways for migrant economic placement. Schiller and Calgary (2013) went beyond the traditional use of ethnicity in employment benefit analysis. Economic, political, and cultural positioning of the cities that the immigrants plan to re-settle constitute a platform for exploring migration studies. Time, as well as opportunities within each city, could make the emplacement of immigrants successful without using the ethnic lens. Cities could become the place where immigrant business ownership studies could constitute as cities vie for economic and urban renewal. Limitation of the research study involves the paradigm shift from studying migration from an ethnic lens to the proposed protocol.

Issues such as social embeddedness, entrepreneurial orientation, and firm growth in minority small businesses in the United Kingdom have made ethnic enclave theory less important (Wang & Altinay, 2012). Jones, Ram, Edwards, Kiselincev, and Muchenje (2014) conducted a qualitative study of 165 new immigrant business owners in East Midlands, in the United Kingdom. The central premise of the study was to explore mixed embeddedness from the point of view of difficult business environment, and lack of resources. Jones et al. found that although immigrant business owners face structural disadvantages as a result of economic and environmental conditions, part of the problem could be the relative novelty of their business. Positive relationship exists between business performance and entrepreneurial orientation (Fatoki, 2012). Some authors said a link exists between an immigrant's religion, and in some instances, social class for their

choice of employment (Audretsch, Bonte, & Tamvada, 2013). Language, social structures, and geography are significant in ethnic enclave business studies as is disadvantaged theory.

### **Disadvantage Theory**

In business parlance, disadvantage theory is often referred to as 'blocked mobility theory. This theory posited that immigrants face numerous obstacles to find meaningful employment in host countries, and consequently find economic survival through starting their own businesses (Light, 1979). Disadvantages associated with employment to include training, and language skills act as push factors for business ownership or self-employment (Rueda-Armengot, & Peris-Ortiz, 2012). Self-employment is not a sign of accomplishment for some immigrants but is an alternative to unemployment (Lofstrom, 2013). There is confirmation of ethnic enclave idea in studies from different parts of the world to include Canada (Fuller & Martin, 2012; Reitz, Curtis, & Elrick, 2014).

In the broader context of immigrant business engagement, some immigrant groups turn the societal disadvantage into an ethnic niche that allows them to pursue their business vision (Hedberg & Pettersson, 2012). Hedberg and Pettersson (2012) explored the motivation of immigrant women in Swedish society to provide culture based care in the immigrants' quest for entrepreneurship. The basis of the analysis for the study is 20 in-depth interviews of immigrant women from 13 different countries. A variation exists among immigrant groups that report labor market disadvantage. Jacquemet and Yannelis

(2012) found that more settled immigrants in Chicago, such as the Italians, are less likely to report discrimination than newer immigrant groups. Similarly, Asian immigrant groups are more likely to report blocked mobility when addressing their reasons for seeking self-employment, and there is significant variation in earning among the groups (Shin & Liang, 2014). There is no consensus about blocked mobility as a mechanism that spurs self-employment among immigrants, including many variations of discrimination (Koopmans, 2013). The disadvantages associated with blocked mobility affect women more disproportionately than men in different parts of the world (Carter, Mwaura, Ram, Trehan, & Jones, 2015; Heilbrunn, Abu-Asbeh, & Abu Nasra, 2014). Women from developing world have more disadvantages (Azmat, 2013). Mixed embeddedness stresses the disadvantages to immigrant business owners as a result of economic and political structures, but the disadvantages of immigrant business ownership are not a universally shared idea. Ram, Jones, Edwards, Kiselichev, Muchenje, and Woldesenbet (2012) contend that mixed embeddedness strays close to the idea that structure causes everything, and supports the assertion that diversity is a financial asset as well as a public benefit.

### **Human and Social Capital**

Researchers have shown the effect of human and social capital on immigrant small business ownership (Santarelli & Tran, 2013; Stam, Arzlanian, & Elfring, 2014). Human capital fosters education and learning, and social capital includes the availability of civic organizations, family, and friends (Gao, Sung, & Zhang, 2013; Kidwell et al,

2012) as well as unpaid and reliable labor, pooled monetary resources from relatives (Poon, Thai, & Naybor, 2012; Sheng & Mendes-Da-Silva, 2014). Evidence from China shows that human social capital could emanate through political ties, and this form of capital could be instrumental in the advancement of business operations (Zhang, Ma, & Wang, 2012). Poon et al. found that institutional social capital had the opposite effect for females engaging in business in parts of northern Vietnam. Human capital links to a high propensity for immigrants to engage in business ownership, but the interplay of both human and social capital could be a constraining factor, as is the case in Vietnam (Santarelli & Tran, 2013).

The use of social capital in immigrant small business evaluation that addressed the generational influence of second and third generations of immigrants who followed their parent's footsteps was conducted by Neville et al., (2014). A review of different generations of Asian immigrants who become small business owners show economic gaps among older Asian immigrants when compared to other racial groups (Nam, 2014). Areas with high concentrations of immigrants demonstrate higher possibility for the use of human and social capital in business development that positively influences business operations (Seghers et al., 2012). Kwon, Heflin, and Ruef (2013) indicated that a factor such as social trust lead to high self employment as exhibited by immigrants, and in the long run community social capital is stronger for natives than for immigrants.

In a study in Greece, researchers sought to find a link between social capital and innovation in the tourism sector of the economy (Petrou & Daskalopoulou, 2013). Petrou

and Daskalopoulou found that innovation in the tourism sector comes from cooperation among the organizations. Similarly, using a qualitative research protocol in the United Kingdom, Nwankwo, Gbadamosi, and Ojo (2012) explored religion, spirituality, and entrepreneurship among British Africans. Part of the conceptual framework for this study by Nwankwo et al. was the inclusion and review of social capital. Nwankwo et al. found that ethnic small business owners were successful under the patronage of religious organizations and that individual and group networks play a significant role in the beginning and growth of businesses. Business ownership is enhanced when there is social capital supported by cultural capital (Light & Dana, 2013). The use of social capital including family resources is relegated to immigrant enclaves, but is part of small business strategy (Klinthäll & Urban, 2014). Problems exist with early assumptions about human capital in immigrant business ownership (Beckers & Blumberg, 2013). Beckers and Blumberg found that higher social and human capital did not equate to more earnings for immigrant small business owners. Sociocultural assimilation through business ownership was not a proven mechanism for higher economic success. Syrett and Sepulveda (2012) used political changes to address the issue of economic diversity in London. The information from the United Kingdom questions the role of social capital as a mechanism that supports immigrant owned businesses.

### **Theory of Planned Behavior**

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) links attitudinal intentions to actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Many scholars have expounded on Ajzen's work to address peoples'

intentions of starting a business (Ajzen & Sheikh, 2013). Kautonen, Van Gelderen, and Tornikoski (2013) used the theory of planned behavior (TPB) to support the ideas regarding business intentions. Data for the study involved a 2 phase collection method in 2006 and 2009 from participants in Finland. The findings of the research confirm the precepts of TPB: that participants' attitude, and behavioral control are significant predictors of business startup intentions. Confirmatory results from the research study support TPB. Participants from developing countries have higher business ownership intentions than those from developed countries. A similar study testing the applicability of the theory of planned behavior used a dataset from 253 Ethiopian and German students (Mueller, Zapkau, & Schwens, 2014). Mueller et al. found that people from individualistic countries use prior business experience making their intention to go into business. People from collectivistic societies are inclined to use group resources, and role models when considering business ownership (Mueller et. al, 2014).

Yitshaki and Kropp (2016) used grounded theory research design to present an overview of motivations opportunity recognition within social entrepreneurs. Drawing from ideas from both push and pull factors, the authors explored how issues such as job dissatisfaction, and self-motivation to work independently helped the 30 Israeli participants in the study recognize their opportunities to become social entrepreneurs. Using a form of narrative analysis called "life story method" Yitshaki and Kropp reviewed how motivation was based on prosocial behavior and how this behavior played a role on current life events. The review of business motivations from the standpoint of

opportunity recognition for the social entrepreneurs. Immigrant small business owners go into business either because of push or because of pull factors, and these factors play a role in opportunity recognition.

An important examination of the theory of planned behavior is the work of Verheul, Thurik, Grilo, and van der Zwan (2012). Data for their study came from 28 European countries as well as the United States. Drawing on four environmental factors including administrative complexities, access to information, access to finance, and general economic conditions, the authors found that women have little preference for self-employment, resulting in low self-employment numbers. This examination did not factor the prevalence of men in self-employment among immigrant men.

### **Immigrant Small Business Motivation**

Crick and Chaudhry (2013) conducted an exploratory research study in the United Kingdom (UK), of family-owned Asian firms, and the motivation for engaging in international operations. The authors made a distinction between internationally oriented Asian entrepreneurs, and transnational entrepreneurs. Internationally oriented Asian entrepreneurs had business operations in the United Kingdom, but with sales overseas. Transnational entrepreneurs had business operations embedded within their ethnic environments, and used family resources from their countries of origin to help in their overseas operations. This research extended the socio-cultural viewpoint of minority small business ownership.

Dawson and Henley (2012) explored whether individuals decide to become entrepreneurs because of 'pull' or 'push' reasons. These distinct reasons explain any ambiguities when looking at the gender of the entrepreneurs. The United Kingdom Quarterly Labour Force Surveys from 1999-2001 contained data for the research study. Dawson and Henley (2012) found from the study that 86% of the participants mentioned one reason for self-employment. Men and women responded differently. Participants stated they received motivation because of independence. Family commitments were included in the motivation for women entrepreneurs. No clear distinction between *push* and *pull* motivators emerged from the study. Other authors explored that explored the motivational factors for starting small and medium enterprises in Malaysia found links between pull factors such as family social capital and push factors such as work experience, personal attitude, and interest as sources of motivation in starting businesses (Chan & Quah, 2012)

Chen and Elston (2013) conducted a qualitative research study to explore the characteristics of Chinese small restaurant owners regarding motivate Data for the research study were the result of hand-collected survey questionnaires gathered from 4 cities across 3 Chinese provinces. Analysis of the research data resulted in the following findings: the participant small restaurant owners were motivated by their desire for self employment, family issues, and profits; a significant number of the small restaurant owners funded their business operations privately, rather than through financial

institutions. This research was limited to entrepreneurs from three Chinese provinces, and this could influence the generalizability of the research results.

In a qualitative case study in Mongolia, Aramand (2013) explored the role that motivation played in women business ownership. There was a review of the brief geography of the country, gross domestic product of \$3400 and global ranking of 160. Two theoretical frameworks used in the study were need for achievement theory, and self-efficacy theory. Two cases of women-owned businesses identified through two exploratory field trips to Mongolia were appropriate for the study. Results of the cases studies showed that the need for achievement is a source of motivation for small business owners. Self-efficacy was also a motivating factor that could lead to success.

There has been a significant growth of immigrant business ownership in Greece (Liargovas & Skandalis, 2012). Liargovas and Skandalis (2012) examined the motivations for immigrants in Greece to engage in business ownership. One hundred and nineteen immigrants were participants of the research study. The participants of the study were from Albania, Bulgaria, and USSR republics, Poland, Romania, Egypt, India, and Nigeria. Conceptual framework for the study addressed immigrant survival needs, community ties, ethnic advantages, and social networks. Based on the empirical analysis of the data, Liargovas and Skandalis found that immigrants in Greece were motivated to become entrepreneurs based on their family needs to survive, community ties, market dynamics and economic conditions. Al-Dajani and Marlow (2013) conducted a longitudinal qualitative study in Amman, Jordan to explore both empowerment and

business ownership, using a theoretical framework. Data for the study were from detailed semistructured interviews of 43 displaced migrant Palestinian women engaged in home-based businesses. The authors revealed a socio-political underpinning to business ownership, and marginalization of women. The women demonstrate strength because of their home-based businesses. Al-Dajani and Marlow's study includes much information about immigrant entrepreneurial motivations.

Crick and Chaudhry (2013) conducted an exploratory research study in the United Kingdom (UK), of family-owned Asian firms, and the motivation for engaging in international operations. The authors made a distinction between internationally oriented Asian business owners, and transnational business owners. Internationally oriented Asian entrepreneurs had business operations in the United Kingdom, but with sales in other countries. Transnational business owners had business operations embedded within their ethnic environments and used family resources from their countries of origin to help in their overseas operations. This research extended the socio-cultural viewpoint of minority entrepreneurship.

Ornisakin, Nakhid, Littrell, and Verbitsky (2016) explored immigrant entrepreneurial orientation and success. Reviewing literature about entrepreneurship, the authors identified themes including: orientation, risk taking, competitive aggressiveness, autonomy, proactiveness, and innovation. Ornisakin et al. used interview questionnaire data drawn from 15 to 20 immigrant small business owners in New Zealand to review external business environmental factors including firm performance, munificence,

dynamism, and hostility. Results of the study highlight the importance of immigrants, and immigrant businesses. A limitation of the study is the small number of the participants, and this small number limited generalization of the study results (Ornisakin et al., 2016).

Business ownership motives and characteristics of small restaurant owners was examined by Chen and Elston (2013). Using the contributions made by small family businesses in the economy as the backdrop, Chen and Elston sought to address goals of the small business owners, their perceived business challenges, and specific features of their restaurants. Data for the research study arose from survey questionnaires administered on participants from a convenient sample of small restaurant owners in five Chinese cities of Changsha, Huizhou, Wuhan, Yueyang, and Zhangjiajie. The authors found from the study following cluster and discriminate analysis that the motives of small restaurant entrepreneurs are autonomy, family protection, and profit maximization. Chen and Elston also learned from the study that entrepreneurship was the family source of income of small restaurant owners.

International migration is a mechanism that individuals use to generate large incomes globally. There is lack of information about transnational households (Seshan & Yang, 2014) to conduct a research study. The authors examined in this research study, how transnational households made financial decisions, and what motivated migrants to make those decisions. Participants of this quantitative research study were migrant workers in Doha, Qatar from the Indian state of Kerala. Seshan and Yang conducted both baseline and follow-up survey that they used in their empirical analysis. They found no

apparent gaps in monetary savings and remittances of the participants of the study.

Solesvik (2013) conducted a quantitative research study in Ukraine to examine the role of education on entrepreneurial motivations and intentions. Using a survey instrument, Solesvik collected data from 321 students in three universities in the Ukraine to explore their attitudes toward business ownership, behavior, and subjective norms. Students who participated in business programs were more likely to engage in business ownership (Solesvik, 2013). A limitation of the study is that data for the study was from three universities in the same location.

### **Immigrant Small Business Challenges or Barriers**

Lofstrom et al. (2014) performed a quantitative research study to examine people's propensity to engage in business ownership and the specific challenges to some industries. Lofstrom et al. examined the reasons why some people have the proclivity to become entrepreneurs and others do not engage in small business ownership. A connection exists between increased individual wealth and the possession of educational human capital to entry in business ownership (Lofstrom et al., 2014). Barriers to small business ownership such as industry-specific, financial resources, cognitive skills, and financial capital are issues in the study. Results of the study showed that education or financial challenges do not predict the likelihood of entrepreneurial entry of participants.

In a qualitative research study, Hakak, Holzinger, and Zikic (2010) explored the barriers and paths to success for Latin American immigrants in Canada. Data for the

research study arose from semistructured, indepth interviews of 20 Latin American graduates of Masters of Business Administration (MBA) programs in Ontario, Canada. Hakak et al. used three theoretical frameworks including social networks, discrimination, and factors for success in their exploration of the phenomenon. Despite the educational levels of the participants, Hakak et al. found that the participants believed they had many obstacles in the Canadian workplace. These obstacles include limited networks, language challenges, cultural issues, and racism. Success factors include their Latin American heritage, and indigenous networks

Different factors influence individuals in their decision to immigrate or emigrate. Medina and Posso (2013) conducted a research study that examined what factors were influential in the decision of Latin American immigrants in the United States to return to their countries of origin. Part of the examination was to seek an understanding of the role educational level played in the decision to go back home. Using U.S. Population Census data and other occupation data, the authors examined the emigration rates by education, and country of birth of South American immigrants. Analysis of the data reveal that the probability of South American immigrants with university degrees remaining in the United States was lower compared with people who had secondary or lower levels of education.

Azmat (2013) explored the challenges faced by migrant women business owners in an effort to understand whether those challenges were opportunities or obstacles to business ownership. The author used entrepreneurship theories including cultural theory,

disadvantaged theory, and mixed embeddedness theory to identify challenges and obstacles that migrant women face as business owners. Multiple factors including human capital, culture, family, institutional factors, gender, and social capital emerged as possible barriers for migrant women business owners. Identified in the study is the dual role that culture, family, and social capital could play either as a barrier or as enabler for migrant women business owners.

Ogunsiji et al. (2012) used a qualitative research design to explore the difficulties that West African women faced after emigration to Sidney, Australia. The authors collected the data for the study through audiotaped face-to-face interviews of twenty-one West African women. Authors audiotaped the interview sessions, transcribed the responses verbatim, and identified emerging themes in the analysis process. Participants in the study encountered similar challenges faced by immigrants after emigration: alienation, limited success in forming social networks, difficulty finding employment, and isolation. Reviewing the emotional and social wellness of West African immigrants in Australia is significant from a healthcare perspective (Ogunsiji et al., 2012).

Ishaq, Hussain, and Whittam (2010) described *racism* as a barrier to entry in business ownership. This barrier applies the mostly to ethnic minority businesses in the United Kingdom. In this qualitative research study, the authors used semistructured interviews with questionnaire design. Ethnic minority entrepreneurs in Glasgow were the participants in the study. One hundred and twenty interviews took place for this research study. Ethnic minority participants for the study consisted of minorities who were born

Pakistani, Indian, and Bangladeshi by birth. More than half of the participants claimed they had suffered discrimination at their locations, and so experienced racism. Given the contributions to the Scottish economy by ethnic minorities, the government cannot overlook racism, which is a hindrance to entrepreneurship. Study has a limitation because it focuses only on Glasgow.

Schlosser (2012) described a strategy of taking an active stance to help immigrant small business owners through mentoring. The author used 'action research method' (which uses problem solving strategy and theory to solve societal problems in collaboration with both researchers and participants) and case - based approach in this research study. Immigrant-specific business problems such as lack of knowledge of business practices and regulations were noticeable, and professionals addressed the problem through mentoring including the use of a balanced scorecard approach as a mechanism for monitoring the results of the mentorship efforts. Schlosser (2012) identified challenges that immigrant business owners face and suggested methods to address the challenges.

This quantitative research study included the examination of Latino informal immigrant business owners in the border region of South Texas (Pisani, 2012). Pisani raised three research questions: What is the demographic profile of the Latino informal immigrant business owner? What is the occupational profile of the Latino informal business owner? What is the business profile of the Latino informal immigrant business owner? A purposeful sample of 198 Latino informal business owners participated in the

research study using an interview protocol. Findings include Latino informal immigrant businesses center around sales of food, auto and general household domestic services, and childcare (Pisani, 2012).

### **Immigrant Small Business Success Factors**

Immigrants could affect business costs among nations, help increase trade because of nostalgia, influence outsourcing, help country of origin development through remittances, and provision of technical expertise through return migration (Martinez, Cummings, & Vaaler, 2014). International trade takes place through a framework of international buying and selling. The cost of business forms the conceptual basis of this research study. Martinez et al. (2014) investigated the effect of migrant remittances to developing countries and the effect of the remittances as a mechanism to provide funding for business development. Baycan, Sahin, and Nijkamp (2012) conducted a research study based on the generational effect of immigrants on entrepreneurship. Priority of the study was to address the generational phenomenon using a sectoral study on Amsterdam, Netherlands. Data for the analysis was collected from 1960s – 2000s from Turkish entrepreneurs. Results of the study indicated a change in immigrant entrepreneurship between the first generation and second generation. Performance of migrant businesses is different based on first and subsequent generations of the migrants (Baycan et al., 2012). Assimilation of immigrants in host countries affects their education and employment standards.

A similar research study about succession of family firms looked at succession from the perspective of immigrant family firms (Nordqvist, Wennberg, & Hellerstedt, 2013). Using cluster analysis involving multivariate techniques and a review of 117 articles published between 1974 and 2010, Nordqvist et al. identified groups of categories of data relevant to their study. These categories that address family firm succession include selling the firm, handing over the firm to a family member, or deciding to close the firm. Human and social capital availability to the parents played a significant role in their decision of the succession pathway for the immigrant business.

A multiple case study could contribute understanding of family business using Moslem values (Dewi & Dhewanto, 2012). Given the number of Islamic immigrants around the world, information from this study is significant. Six Moslem families took part in the interviews to find out the important success factors for their family businesses (Dewi & Dhewanto, 2012). Using a theoretical context embedded in family and Islamic family business, Dewi and Dhewanto (2012) looked at two constructs: reason for doing business, and the definition of success in family business. Dewi and Dhewanto addressed success factors in Islamic family business including honesty, charity, good intention, and positive thought on conflicts. Significant amount of the information for this study emanates from the Islamic holy book or the Qur'an.

Neville et al. (2014) highlighted the significance of immigrant entrepreneurs in international trade when such business takes place because of the immigrant's overseas ties. The authors of the quantitative research study sought to examine whether immigrant

companies outperform other non-immigrant firms. Data for this Canadian study arose from a 2004 survey of Canadian business owners. Businesses started between 2000 and 2004 were among those in the survey. Drawing on the knowledge-based view of a company, the authors tested the idea that businesses started by immigrants that engage in international trade could outperform nonimmigrant firms. Neville et al. found from the study that immigrant firms whose owners used their international connections outperformed nonimmigrant firms because of their competitive advantage.

Success of Korean immigrant small business owners relied on availability of rotating credit organizations (Shinnar, Cho, & Rogoff, 2013; Zonta, 2012). Whether these credit associations provide loans on a long-term basis as do financial organizations or act as savings entities within the Korean communities is not clear (Perera et al., 2013). There is support that networks based on ethnicity influence the generation of social capital in a country such as Korea (J. Kim, 2013).

### **Social Embeddedness Theory**

Social embeddedness theory posits that in a modern society, economic decisions interweaves within social relationships (Granovetter, 1985). Immigrants use many strategies to immerse their businesses and create social networks in the process (Grant & Thompson, 2014). Whereas community values as well as embeddedness affect immigrant business development (Perera et al., 2013), mixed embeddedness could be used to explain immigrant business engagement in a country such as the United Kingdom (Jones

et al., 2014). Embeddedness is important when examining relationships between business owners, their communities, and this affects business practices as well as results (McKeever, Jack, & Anderson, 2015).

Social embeddedness lacks easy explanation in simple terms partly because of culture; however, community and environmental conditions influence the possibilities of establishing immigrant small businesses (Beckers & Kloosterman, 2014). Scholars are arguing that the theory of embeddedness is still evolving following the trajectory of previous theories that were not fully developed (Wang & Altinay, 2012). Beckers and Kloosterman (2014) found a significant influence of social embeddedness and immigrant business startup including business incubation.

### **Transition**

Section 1 was an introduction to the foundation of the study and the background of the current issue of study. My focus in this study is to explore the success factors for immigrant small business owners in Atlanta. The state of Georgia ranks behind New York, Florida, California, and Texas as places where immigrants start small businesses in the United States. Review of the professional and academic literature includes the conceptual evolution of small business research. This review of literature supports the thesis that the exploration of the success strategies for immigrant small business owners involves the examination of multiple issues that business organization such as challenges, and success factors. Theories such as planned behavior, and ethnic enclaves are relevant

to the study of immigrant small business ownership regardless of industry, from high-tech, firms in the California Silicon Valley to Vietnamese nail salons in Georgia.

Given the high failure rate of immigrant small businesses (Tengeh, 2013), exploring the success factors for immigrant small businesses is significant. Exploring the success factors highlights the challenges that immigrant small business owners overcome to be successful. The economic benefits of successful immigrant small businesses include employment, and strengthening the ethnic communities where the immigrants live and work.

The chasm between immigrant high-tech small business and other forms of immigrant small businesses merits further exploration. This study includes information that contributes to knowledge in the area of immigrant small business ownership in the United States, and other parts of the world. Information from this research has elements of additional insight into immigrant small business ownership by way of research method, design, population of study, and data analysis after specified data collection. Section 2 includes the research protocol, whereas Section 3 delineates the research findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendation for action and further research study, and reflections and concluding statement.

## Section 2: The Project

This qualitative phenomenological research study involved semistructured interview protocol to explore the perceptions and experiences of immigrant small-business owners in the Atlanta metro area. The overarching research question in this study addressed the strategies that immigrant small business owners in Atlanta, GA used to become successful. Information from professional and academic literature indicates a high failure rate for immigrant small businesses (Mueller, 2014); more research regarding strategies for immigrant small business success is worthwhile. Results from this study may contribute to social change by advancing ideas that would be helpful to current and prospective immigrants in the United States and other parts of the globe to be successful in their business endeavors by contributing to their business environments (Besser, 2012; H. Kim, 2013). Success would help encourage employment, and it would increase cultural diversity in both product, and service offerings from immigrant small-business owners.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore strategies that immigrant small-business owners in the Atlanta metro area have used to succeed in business beyond 5 years. Minority-owned business organizations to include immigrant small businesses provide employment; are sources of innovation, and contribute to economic growth in the United States (Liu, 2012). The population for the study was successful immigrant small-business owners who live in the Atlanta metro area. Atlanta

is an immigrant gateway metropolitan city in the United States (Zhu et al., 2013).

Immigrant small business owners in the United States predominantly engage in businesses in healthcare, specialty shops, law firms, ethnic foods, and restaurants.

Results of this study might guide current and future immigrant small-business owners on how to be successful. This study provides a framework for immigrants to start and manage successful small businesses within immigrant enclaves in the United States. Information from the study could educate small business owners about strategies for success that is not immigrant-specific, thereby improving the small business sector of the U.S. economy.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The process of conducting a research study involves gathering data, organizing, and presentation of findings (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). A researcher in a qualitative study is instrumental for data collection (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). My role involved conducting this qualitative research study to meet the goals of the study with as little bias as possible. The conduct of the study adhered to strict ethical standards of justice, beneficence, and respect of the participants (Belmont Report, 1979; Ruch, 2014). I drew on a purposeful and convenience sample of a minimum of 20 immigrant small business owners in Atlanta.

As an observer in this research study, I adhered to the disclosure of data research requirement based on the need to know principle. Personal introductions put people at ease, and this helped gain trust of the participants, as well as inform them that I planned

to conduct an in-depth face-to-face audio-recorded interview. The interview questions were open-ended, which allowed observing participant demeanor, facial expressions, and body language; hence the decision to use semistructured interviews. This technique provides the dependability a structured interview offers, together with the flexibility of unstructured interviews (Son, 2014). I was reflexive, and bracketed for my personal bias by maintaining a reflective journal, and taking notes during the interview process to augment the audio records of the interview sessions (Cottrell & Donaldson, 2013; Tufford & Newman, 2012).

### **Participants**

The population for the research study was immigrant small business owners in Atlanta. Study participants were successful and unsuccessful immigrant small business owners who had been in business a minimum of 5 years. A reason for choosing this population sample is to explore the strategies that these immigrant small business owners used to make their businesses sustainable for 5 years.

Access to study participants was by purposeful sample, and a sample of 20 participants was ideal for this study (Soydas & Aleti, 2015). Selection of the research participants was from Atlanta immigrant small business owners' pool. Purposeful sampling was ideal for gathering data from people with experience and knowledge about a phenomenon (Bernard, 2013). I used purposeful sampling for the collection of pertinent data from immigrant small business owners who are knowledgeable and have the lived

experiences that could inform the research goals (Eriksson, Nummela, & Saarenketo, 2014; Kvorning, Hasle, & Christensen, 2015).

First, I sought voluntary participation of successful immigrant small business owners through a formal request letter to 50 immigrant small business owners whose names appear in in the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and in the Yellow Book, followed by telephone calls. Second, there was an invitation to other immigrant small business owners whose reference came from other participants. Those immigrants provided information about other immigrants whose names may not be in the Yellow Book. This strategy, which was respondent-driven, was helpful to identify participants who had similar experiences in the phenomena of study. Avoided excessive use of respondent driven referral strategy to reduce skewing the data (Walters, 2015).

I sent a detailed introductory participant letter using US postal service to prospective participants (see Appendix B). This letter highlighted the scope of the research study to include benefits and guaranteeing privacy and confidentiality of research data. No incentives accrued to participants of the study, and the letter reached the participants prior to the beginning of the study. Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time, and this policy was part of the participant consent form that each participant must sign prior to participation.

Different types of research studies employ different sample sizes, and in qualitative research, books, journals, and book chapters support sample sizes of 5 to 50

(Dworkin, 2012). Sample size was useful in determining saturation. Some researchers have questioned the significance of sample size (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). In the case of qualitative studies, saturation means that collecting more data after saturation could not yield new information on the study. Sample size plays a role regarding data saturation (Houghton, Casey, & Murphy, 2013).

I interviewed a minimum of 20 participants to achieve saturation of the interview results. These interviews of successful and unsuccessful immigrant small business owners were face-to-face. Audio recorder served to record the interview sessions. Face-to-face interviews took place during the weeks following the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval at the participants' place of employment, a library, my office, and a quiet restaurant, whichever location that the participants preferred. One of the participants was interviewed at my office, two at a quiet restaurant, and 17 participants were interviewed at their places of business. Thereafter, transcription of the interviews occurred. I have stored data from the interviews in a locked safe in my home, and will destroy the documents after 5 years through shredding, incineration, and wiping of all electronic data.

### **Research Method and Design**

Researchers use three research methods, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method (Hair & Sarstedt, 2014). Each of these research methods has strengths and weaknesses. These research methods use different designs to accomplish research objectives. Careful review of the different research methods showed that a qualitative

research method would be suitable to explore the success factors for immigrant small business owners in Atlanta. A qualitative research study deals with exploring a phenomenon and seeks to understand the lived experiences of the participants. In such a case, the researcher is an active participant in the research design (Maxwell, 2012). A researcher's worldview often influences the choice of research method, but the nature of the research question drove the research method for use in this research study.

### **Research Method**

A qualitative research approach offers an in-depth method and interpretation of the lived experiences of successful immigrant small business owners (Maxwell, 2012). There is a variety in the immigrant small business ownership in Georgia. A qualitative research approach to conduct the study explored the lived experiences of successful immigrant small business owners in Georgia was ideal. Qualitative research provides rich descriptions of a research phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The central research question of this study is: What are the issues or factors that make immigrant small business owners successful in Atlanta? A detailed description and experience from participants underscores qualitative research (Morse, 2015). After thorough consideration, quantitative and mixed methods research paradigm would not be appropriate for this study because I am not attempting to quantify any value from the research results (Applebaum, 2012). Studies are available that use qualitative methods to address issues in immigrant small business ownership, self-employment, and

entrepreneurship (Essers, Doorewaard, & Benschop, 2013; Hightower, Niewolny, & Brennan, 2013).

Using a qualitative research method, Bhimji (2010) explored how undocumented immigrant day- laborers survived during 2009 economic downturn in Los Angeles, California. The author conducted 30 in-depth interviews of undocumented immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador at three hiring sites in Los Angeles. Previous research studies of undocumented immigrants using ethnographic research approaches were in the study. Other ethnographic studies took place corroborating some of the elements in Bhimji's work (Nwosu, Nwosu, & Nwosu, 2013). Social networks including religion helped the day laborers to cope with the economic difficulties exerted by the downturn in the economy. Result of the study show that religion was significant in lives of day laborers.

Azmat and Zutshi (2012) conducted a qualitative research study that explored the perception of Sri Lankan immigrants in Victoria, Australia about corporate social responsibility. This research study included the exploration of the issue of stakeholders, and social capital when considering social responsibility. Data for the study was from in-depth semistructured interviews of Sri Lankan business owners in Victoria, Australia. Twelve interviews of business owners mainly from service and retail sectors, took place, and later transcribed after the participants gave their consent. Azmat and Zutshi explained that the study participants were aware of the concept of corporate social responsibility, but understood the concept differently.

Kumar and Krueger (2013) explored the immigration effect of the proposed Startup Visa Act. Drawing on Yin's (2013) qualitative case study design, Kumar and Krueger selected Indian American immigrant entrepreneurs in the technology sector for this study. The design of the startup visa proposal is to give a two-year visa to immigrants who are willing to invest a minimum of \$250,000. Areas addressed in the study include human capital, entrepreneurial intentions, entrepreneurship exposure, triggering events, and opportunity recognition. Indian American immigrant entrepreneurs are able to see business opportunities, make it through economic hard times, and expand their businesses during periods of prosperity (Kumar & Krueger, 2013).

### **Research Design**

A research design provides basic guidance to the researcher on how best to accomplish the research goals. Phenomenological design is a design protocol that allows researchers to explore the lived experiences (Maxwell, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Through phenomenological design, a researcher could identify thematic connections that participants ascribe to their experiences of the phenomenon of study thereby improving business practice (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The focus of this study is the success of immigrant small business owners in Atlanta. In addition, the use of interpretative phenomenological design enables a researcher to be creative and reflexive (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014) to understand how a population under study views their experience. How the population makes sense of their experiences is central to this study about the success of immigrant small business owners.

Qualitative research study could use other designs such as narrative, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory depending on the nature of the inquiry and the choice that a researcher makes (Giorgi, 2012; Maxwell, 2012; Yin, 2012). A case study, which can be single or multiple, explores a real-life social phenomenon (Yin, 2012). This research design could serve in this study, but the need for multiple sources of evidence made the use impractical at this time. Ethnography is a study design to explore the nature of social structure, culture, power, and human agency (Carspecken, 2013). Researchers that use the ethnographic design have to immerse themselves in the study environment for a significant amount of time to observe and gather research data. The time required for this engagement made this design impractical for this study. Grounded theory uses stories from participants to help a researcher to focus on a phenomenon of study, help provide explanations, and generate new theories about the phenomenon (Maxwell, 2012). The focus of this study was not advancing or developing any new theories on immigrant small business ownership. A grounded theory design is outside the boundaries of this research study. Finally, narrative is a study, design that uses stories of the lived experiences of the participants to explore a phenomenon (Dalpiaz, Tracey, & Phillips, 2014). The nature of this research study including time requirements render this design inappropriate for the study.

A careful consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of all the designs available to a qualitative researcher, the qualitative phenomenological design is appropriate for the study of the success factors for immigrant small business owners in

Southeastern United States. Review of similar studies about immigrants support this design choice. Hailu, Mendoza, Lahman, and Richard (2012) studied immigrants in the United States, and their lived experiences after entering with a diversity immigrant visa (DV) using a qualitative phenomenological design. A review of the benefits and consequences of DV as an immigration policy tool constituted part of this study. The study presents phenomenology as an idea, and approach to research design. Hailu et al. selected seven participants through a combination of chain or snowball, criterion, purposeful sampling, structured face-to-face, one-on-one interview, and a follow up telephone interview. The authors used 10 interview questions with one follow up question. In the data analysis section, categories of ideas morphed into themes that were later underwent analysis.

Hewapathirana (2014) conducted a qualitative phenomenological research study to explore global entrepreneurship through the link of bonds, and bridge building by the participants. Hewapathirana explored the business dynamics between Sri Lankan small business owners, and their immigrant counterparts in other parts of the world. Using in-depth interviews, of 10 small business owners, Hewapathirana documented using both social and network work theories how Sri Lankan small business owners benefited from their business association with other Sri Lankan immigrants in other parts of the world. Given that the objective of the study was to explore the success strategies for immigrant small business owners using semistructured interview protocol a phenomenological, design is appropriate (Seidman, 2013).

### **Population and Sampling**

The population of this study focused on successful and unsuccessful immigrant small business owners in Atlanta, GA who have been in business a minimum of 5 years. Each year, 785,000 new small businesses start in the United States (SBA, 2012), and 63,342 new businesses started in Georgia between 2006 and 2010 (Immigration Policy Center, 2013). I used a purposeful sample to select a minimum of 20 participants for this study to meet the research goals (Maxwell, 2012). These 20 successful and successful immigrant small business owners reside in Atlanta are self-employed or own over 51% of the business organization. Hailu et al., (2012) used a purposeful sample in their study of the lived experiences of diversity visa immigrants in the United States.

There are variations in sample size in qualitative and quantitative research studies. Qualitative studies usually employ small sample sizes (Griffith, 2013; Mason, 2010). Hailu et al., (2012) used a purposeful sample of seven in their study of the lived experiences of diversity visa immigrants in the United States, and Spaten, Byrialsen (2013) used a purposeful sample of three in their study of men's grief, meaning, and growth of phenomenological investigation into the experience of loss. Researchers have used a purposeful sample of 26 in their study of teacher educators' perspectives about the relationship between research and teaching in South African universities (Mutemeri & Chetty, 2013).

Given the variations in the sample sizes that researchers employ in phenomenological research, I interviewed 20 participants to achieve saturation, and the

interview process continued until data saturation. The idea of unsatisfactory saturation regarding sample size in qualitative studies has been attractive to researchers (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Similarly, a research study that found geographic and migration histories among participants salient, used a sample of 12 participants (Hudson & Mehrotra, 2014).

### **Ethical Research**

Research is a tool to find out new information, review existing information on the issue of study to support the probability of making a meaningful future prediction. A research study rests on the integrity of the researcher (McLaughlin & Alfaro-Velcamp, 2015), and many leaders are charged with maintaining that integrity including the various IRBs. Many issues were at the forefront while conducting this research study. These included the protection of research participants from any form of injury, the promotion of the integrity of the research, and guarding against misconduct and impropriety by conducting the research in such a manner that positively reflect on the institution. Protection of privacy was important at each step of the research process to include informed consent (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012). I have safeguarded the research materials for 5 years following the completion of the research study. The research materials are stored in a locked container with combination lock to improve confidentiality and safety. Research materials remains in this safe locked black box at my home with a security monitoring system. I will destroy all confidential data by shredding, and electronic data by erasing after 5 years of the completion of the study. This research activity occurred in a way that did not support, marginalize, and disempower any of the

participants by ensuring that each participant received respect throughout the research period and beyond. Responses from participants have codes that made it difficult to link participants to their responses. Information from this research involved shared benefits, which would become available to the study participants. Exploration of the research objectives using a qualitative phenomenological method entailed purposefully sampling for interview 20 successful immigrant small business owners in the Atlanta. Request for informed consent that showed the participants' involvement in the study was voluntary, that they can stop their participation at any time. Participants could inform me of their intention to end their participation verbally in person, by telephone, and email. Participants signed a consent form on the day of the interview. The participants returned the consent forms on the day of the scheduled interview prior to the commencement of the interview session.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Data collection instruments vary in a qualitative research study. I was the data collection instrument for this study. The skills I brought to this research study were vital important to the study results (Rowley, 2012). A qualitative research method offers a researcher many different designs in the conduct of a research study. I selected the phenomenological design to study the success strategies of immigrant small business owners in Southeastern United States. Data collection occurred through in-depth, face-to-face, semistructured interviews of successful immigrant small business owners in the Atlanta, Georgia area of the southeastern United States. Using an interview protocol

helped gain understanding of the lived experiences of immigrant small business owners (Maxwell, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2013). Interview protocol was placed in Appendix C. Following an interview guide for a research study helps support research quality. Validity and reliability of the research instruments are a measure of qualitative research method. One way to achieve reliability and validity was to ask the participants the same basic questions with minor variations in follow-up questions.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Data collection technique for this study was interviews. The data collection technique served to provide a mechanism to collect clusters of data. That mechanism helped to identify themes in participant's perception of the phenomenon on immigrant small business ownership. Exploration of the actual experiences about a phenomenon is at the core of phenomenological research study (Maxwell, 2012). Data included answers from in-depth, face-to-face interviews of participants who are the small business ownership experience (Siedman, 2013; Englander, 2012). I used semistructured interview format to ask open-ended questions, and explore the small business ownership strategies of a minimum of 20 successful immigrant small business owners.

Phenomenological research has different forms such as semistructured, structured and unstructured (Moustakas, 1994). Semistructured interviews provided the opportunity to ask follow-up questions that allowed the participants to expound on their answers to the questions (Doody, & Noonan, 2013; Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013). Interview data collection from the participants was voluntary (Litz, Pearson, & Litchfield, 2012). The

interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and the participants had opportunities to provide additional answers to follow-up questions. Face-to-face interviews with an audio recorder was used during the interview process. I took notes during the interviews. Taking notes provided cues for follow-up questions, and are part of the record of the interview session should the recording device fail at any juncture during the interview process.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Organization of the research data occurred in such a manner that provided security, ease of access for the researcher, and was systematical to capture all time sensitive milestones of the research study. The initial phase of the data collection process included transcription of the interview questions and responses onto a word document. As part of the follow-up process, the participants had the opportunity to review the document to ascertain that the document is a true reflection of what they wanted to convey during the interview phase of the research.

The transcribed data underwent coding using computer software NVivo that is qualitative research analysis software on the market. ATLAS.ti, QUALPRO, TEXTBASE ALPHA, and HyperQual are other software for data organization and analysis. Selection of NVivo was because of ease of use, familiarity, and use during a previous small scale research project. Coding the data highlighted themes that formed the basis of analysis for the research project. Protecting the participants' identity was paramount, including the use of generic names, and the safekeeping of participant

information in a locked safe for a period of 5 years prior to destruction. Data for the study is in multiple safe media such as computer hard drive, flash drive, computer discs to create redundancy should data organization techniques fail.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis was the design when considering the interactive or systemic components of a research such as goals, conceptual framework, research questions, methods, and validity (Maxwell, 2012). Some authors have used similar components in their explanations of research design that address data analysis (Goodenough & Waite, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The initial step in qualitative data analysis is to review interview transcripts of the audio recordings as well as supporting notes taken at the interview (Maxwell, 2012).

The interview questions addressed the central research question. Audio recordings of all interviews resulted in a transcription to a Microsoft Word document, which was imported into NVivo software by copying and pasting the interview transcripts into NVivo. Bernauer, Litchman, Jacobs, and Robinson (2013) utilized NVivo software to analyze connections of critical thinking and inductive approach to technology. Reviewing the initial data made categorizing possible, as well as permit coding and the analysis of themes incorporating new published information. These steps included interview questions, and provided the logical analysis of all the research questions and responses. Participants had an opportunity to review the transcripts from their face-to-face interview to make sure that their responses were accurately reflected and recorded.

Eight of the participants provided additional information by clarifying the information on the interview transcript.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Initial discussions about quality criteria in qualitative research pertained to postpositivist research paradigms (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Reliability and validity referred to objectivity of a research study (Siedman, 2013). Researchers associate validity with trustworthiness, and view research based on credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability based on postpositivist ideas of objectivity, reliability, internal and external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following section included the reliability and validity of the research processes, instruments, and the study to ensure credibility.

#### **Reliability**

The term *reliability* in qualitative research deals with the authenticity of the procedures and instruments in the study. Qualitative researchers use reliability and validity during the design and analysis phases of qualitative research to gauge the quality of the research study (Patton, 2002). Reliability and validity is similar to the concepts of credibility, neutrality of confirmability, consistency, or dependability, and applicability or transferability used to measure quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the human instrument in this research study, my reliability to follow the research protocol of respecting the participants, giving them the opportunity to stop whenever they want to was critical (Granot, Brashear, & Motta, 2012).

## **Validity**

The term *validity* is a measure of how the research study correctly reflects the idea that the author is trying to study. Several strategies could have been appropriate to ensure the validity of the research study including: the use of open-ended questions, follow-up questions, avoiding leading questions, listening more, and talking less, and staying focused and observant during the interview phase of the research study (Granot, Brashear, & Motta, 2012). Peer debriefing improves validity by permitting other people to review the data (Molina-Morales, Belso-Martinez, & Mas-Verdú, 2013; Trudgen, & Freeman, 2014).

Member checking provided the participants an avenue to make sure that my interpretations of their responses are accurate (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). Equally important was the use of rich, thick description when describing data from the interview transcripts that addresses the research phenomena at issue in this research study (Power & Gendron, 2015). Reviewing the audio-recorded transcripts, enhanced the data and provided information clarity.

## **Transition and Summary**

The objective of Section 2 was to present a detailed account of the research project. The goal of this study is to explore immigrant small business ownership with the intention of inspiring more immigrants to engage in business ownership in host countries. A review of the professional and academic literature highlighted immigration trends, cultural and enclave theories that address immigrant business ownership, business

challenges, success factors, motivation to become small business owners, and the effect of social capital in immigrant small business ownership.

This phase of the research project addressed my role as the researcher, voluntary participants for the research study, research method, and design. Part of the ethical research requirement was complying with the IRB requirement that no data be collected prior to their approval for the research study to move forward. Data collection, including the use of audio recorder to capture interview reports, and data organization including safe keep of all research study materials in a locked safe to maintain privacy for 5 years prior to destruction was part of the protocol. Data analysis of the interview results involved NVivo computer software to enhance authenticity, reliability, and validity of the research study.

Section 3 begins with a re-stating of the purpose statement and research questions that guide this research study. A detailed presentation of the research findings followed, buttressed by application for professional practice. Implications for social change, recommendations for further research, and personal reflections about the doctoral study journey concluded the doctoral study.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section 3 addresses a comprehensive account of the results of this study. The section begins with an introduction that addresses the purpose of the study, and a transient summary of the results of the study. Section 3 also includes (a) presentation of the findings, (b) application to professional practice, (c) implications for social change, (d) recommendations for action, (e) recommendations for future research, (f) reflections, and (g) summary and study conclusions.

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the personal strategies that immigrant small-business owners can use to use survive in business and be successful. Data for understanding of the phenomenon of immigrant small business ownership success was gathered by using 15 face-to-face interviews of successful immigrant small business owners in metro Atlanta as well as 5 immigrant small business owners in metro Atlanta whose small businesses failed. Responses from the immigrant small business owners were analyzed using NVivo 10 qualitative software, which is in line with using software for qualitative data analysis (James, 2012).

The objective of the study was to explore strategies that immigrant small business owners use to survive in business beyond 5 years. Participants in the study represented transportation, general services, legal, consulting, and production sectors of the business economy. Average length of their immigrant small business ownership experience was 12 years. Demographically, the immigrant small business owners included men, women,

different educational backgrounds, and originally come from three different regions of the world (Table 2).

Table 2

*Demographics of Participants*

Nodes	# of participants	% of participants
Men	15	75
Women	5	25
Asian	8	40
African	9	45
South American	3	15
High school	3	15
College	12	60
Postgraduate	5	25

*Note.*  $N = 20$

Findings indicated five themes associated with immigrant small-business ownership success and survivability and two themes associated with immigrant small-business failures.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The central research question addressed in this research study was: What strategies can immigrant small-business owners use to survive in business? I asked the immigrant small business owners eight questions centered on culture, motivation,

financing, challenges, experience, other barriers to include language, racism, discrimination, and perceived success factors. Interview questions were as follows:

### **Interview Questions**

1. What influence did your culture have to make your small business successful beyond 5 years?
2. What was your motivation to become a small business owner?
3. How did you finance your small business?
4. What were your challenges to open and sustain your business?
5. Explain the business experiences that you had prior to becoming a small business owner.
6. Describe any language barrier, racism, or discrimination that you had to overcome.
7. What are some of your perceived success factors as a small business owner?
8. What additional comments would you like to add about your strategies to starting and sustaining a small business beyond 5 years?

Data analysis, which was initiated after data collection, revealed seven themes. The modified van Kaam method was used in this research analysis to achieve data saturation. I used the NVivo 10 qualitative research analysis tool to identify nodes during coding, and emergent themes from participants' answers to the research questions.

### **Theme 1: Strong Work Ethic and Family Dynamics**

The emergent theme from participants' responses to the interview question about the effect of culture to immigrant small-business success centered on spirituality, strong work ethic, and influence of family in their business endeavors. Participants' spiritual beliefs in their ability to engage and succeed in small business, and the support system that some immigrants receive from religious organizations and institutions, helped to fund some immigrant businesses (Balog, Baker, & Walker, 2014; Nwankwo et al., 2012).

Family dynamics is important to the immigrant small business owners because of the opportunity for interconnectedness of family and business, and the use of family members as a resource in running the business. Employment of family members is a way to reduce risk in business operation because the family members are people that you know very well (Alsos, Carter, & Ljunggren, 2014). Use of family members to support business as a way of reducing business cost can address both private and public migrant business engagement (Essers, Doorewaard, & Benschop, 2013).

ISBO 7 summed up the significance of family dynamics and strong work ethic to him when he replied to the interview question about the effect of culture on his immigrant small business this way: "My mother was always the family provider. She had a small business, getting up in the morning at 7:00, and coming home at night at 7:00. I figured out how basically a family culture works, my main thing was to own a small business of my own one day, and to be a very hard working person." Table 3 reflects the nodes for the themes of spiritual belief and strong work ethic.

Table 3

*Strong Work Ethic and Family dynamics*

Nodes	# of participant responses	% of total responses
Religious belief	6	19
Work ethic: hard work	14	36
Family	11	45

*Note: N = 20*

**Theme 2: Flexibility and Independence**

Participants' responses to the question about their motivation to become small business owners yielded two recurring themes referenced as flexibility and independence. Participants indicated through the three nodes for this theme that they wanted freedom to work, and work as long as they could. A flexible work schedule, and a choice in the type of work that the participants did was a to exercise independence. Immigrant small business owners value flexibility in setting their time to work, and speeding time with their family members and friends. The attribute of flexibility is consistent with the research addressing organizational culture where the results show the importance of being flexible to increase performance (Tuan, 2012).

Eighty-seven percent of the participants stated that flexibility and independence to work however long they want, when they want, and the choice of a job that they want were contributing motivational factors to engage in immigrant small business ownership. Immigrant small business owner (ISBO) number 8 captured the essence of the question about motivation this way: “I was a single parent, and I came here with my 3 little children. And at times, they go to school, and you must have time for them. It is not easy that they will come, and they are kids. You can’t come and leave them alone. If I have my own business, I can have time for them, to help them with their homework, and other things.” Essers, Doorewaard, and Benschop (2013) observed that Turkish and Moroccan migrant female business owners engaged in business endeavors that satisfied their desire to play a role in their families, and maintain business independence. Twelve percent of the participants stated that their primary motivation to become immigrant small business owners was to earn a living, and control the amount of their earnings based on their individual effort. When asked the question about motivation to become immigrant small business owners ISBOs 5, and 6 stated, even though at different times, but almost in unison, “to make money.” Immigrant small business owners in Canada earn money than paid employees in Canadian Gateway and non-gateway metropolises (Fong, Jeong, Hoe, & Tian, 2015). Table 4 reflects the nodes for the theme: flexibility and independence.

Table 4

*Flexibility and Independence*

Nodes	# of participant responses	% of total participants
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Freedom to work	10	24
Flexible work schedule	16	39
Choice in type of work	10	24
Make money	5	12

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*Note: N = 20*

### **Theme 3: Financing**

Regarding the question on the source of funding to start their immigrant small business, 90% of the participants stated that they used personal savings, help from family members and friends to finance their small business. ISBO 17 was typical in the source of finance for the immigrant small business and said, “We started out in 2000, and back then the principal had a 401 K. The 401K had about \$270, 000 in it, from working in corporate. This was just before the 2000 crash of the stock market. So I dissolved the 401K and took out all the money, and paid the 20% penalty fee, and started the law firm.” ISBO 14 on the other hand said this “In the beginning it wasn’t easy because you didn’t have any credit when you just came. So through family, you borrow a little money, you start doing business slowly, and you start raising it up, and when I have the income from it, I can borrow the money from the bank.” Ten percent of the participants used bank loans to finance their business. High incidence in the use of personal financing from family and friends is consistent with the results on the access of capital to finance immigrant entrepreneurship (Kwong, Jones-Evans, & Thompson, 2012).

Table 5

*Financing*

Nodes	# of participant responses	% of total participants
Personal, family & friends	18	90
Financial institutions	2	10

*Note: N = 20*

#### **Theme 4: Poor Business and Managerial Knowledge**

Five of the immigrant small business owners whose small businesses failed stated that the primary reason that their business failed was from inadequate financing of the business operation. The immigrant small business owners initially used part of their personal savings, money from family members and friends to open their businesses. They did not secure any other source of financing, and during slow periods in their business operation, they did not have enough capital to finance payroll, supplies, and after months of struggle, had to close their businesses.

Lack of understanding of the current local, state, and other laws governing zoning that affected their business operations was another reason that two of the five businesses failed. These business owners stated that they did not know the regulatory requirement about health inspections for meat products, the tax requirements, and this lack of knowledge helped them to liquidate their supplies and cease their small business operations. The combination of internal and external factors such as lack of capital, and

poor knowledge of business environmental requirements lead to small business failures (Fatoki, 2014).

Table 6

*Poor Business and Managerial Knowledge*

Nodes	# of participant responses	% of total participants
Business funding: private	18	69
Inadequate working capital	5	19
Poor knowledge of business laws, and regulations	3	12

*Note: N = 20*

**Theme 5: Business Experience**

Twenty five percent of the successful immigrant small business owners had professional degrees in law, and academia. Education is a factor that influences business creation among immigrants in different parts of the world including the Valencian community (Carbonell et al., 2014). The other participants had business experience albeit

in different business sectors, and some of the experience was through on-the-job training. Employment of immigrants as apprentices from co-ethnic communities help reduce labor costs which in turn influences business success (Gomez et al., 2015). Two of the businesses that failed, had immigrant owners who assumed that their business training in their home country, was equivalent to the business requirement in the United States. They failed to understand the difference in market sophistication between their home country and the United States.

Table 7

*Business Experience*

Nodes	# of participant responses	% of total participants
Apprenticeship	6	30
On the job training	9	45
Education	5	25

*Note: N = 20*

**Theme 6: Limited Societal Barriers**

The biggest surprise from this research study was the consensus with which all the participants stated that they did not openly or directly suffer from racism and discrimination in their business pursuits in metro Atlanta. This is different from responses

of Chinese immigrant women entrepreneurs in Canada and Australia that experienced both sexism, and racism (Chiang, Low, & Collins, 2013). Eighty percent of the participants stated that they did not experience racism or discrimination. Twenty percent of the participants stated that they have not experienced discrimination or racism, but believe that it exists. They, however, have no anecdotal evidence to support that claim.

On the issue of language, there was consensus about how conscious many of the participants think whenever they were communicating with customers from other ethnic or racial group. Forty percent of the participants spoke about talking with an “accent.” ISBO 16, stated that she was frustrated anytime a customer asked her to repeat something or intoned that they did not understand her. She went on to infer that she feels that others have an “accent” as well, but that she makes every effort to understand what other people are saying. Differences in language create a linguistic distance. Linguistic distance has a negative effect on immigrant assimilation, social participation, and business ownership (Isphording, & Otten, 2014).

Table 8

*Societal Barriers*

Nodes	# of participant responses	% of total participants
Language barriers	3	15
Racism	none	none
Discrimination	none	none

*Note: N = 20*

**Theme 7: Persistence and great customer service**

Immigrant small business owners believe and the participants of this research study corroborate the belief that superior customer service gives them comparative advantage. The same is true about working hard and long hours. ISBO 14 in speaking about success factors said this: “You have to work really hard, and look for the niche,” while ISBO 9 said “I didn’t peg my working hours to 8 or 9 hours per day. I could spend as much time as I wanted or was required in order to get the job done.” ISBO 10 stated that, “competitive pricing, great customer service, and good location that is close to my customer base” is a strategy for immigrant small business ownership success. Fifty percent of the participants emphasized customer service as one of their greatest strategy for success. As self-employed individuals, immigrant small business owners that participated in this study told me that they have no set work hours at their respective business sites. They work as long as there is work, and ISBO 20 told me “there is always work to be done.”

**Tie to Conceptual Framework**

The findings of this research study were consistent with the cultural theory that can form the basis of immigrant small business ownership. Religion as a form of spirituality affects the choice of work, and the business practices of immigrants (Audretsch, Bönte, & Tamvada, 2013). Hard work, and honesty, which are cultural traits, are consistent with the conceptual framework, and contributes to immigrant small

business ownership success (Chen & Elston, 2013). Correlation exists between cultural values and immigrant entrepreneurship (Krueger, Liñán, & Nabi, 2013).

### **Tie to Existing Literature**

All the participants of the study used different concepts and strategies from the literature on immigrant small business ownership to make their small business successful, and survive beyond 5 years. The trajectories to business success for immigrant women, their motivation, language barriers, and financial constraints that lead to business failure (De Vita, Mari, & Poggesi, 2014) were evident in the themes from the study. Immigrant small business owners are persistent. Three of five participants whose small businesses failed, were able to build successful businesses through persistence. Persistence led the three participants to achieve higher education resulting in business success and survival (Millán, Congregado, & Román, 2014).

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

Small business startups, as well as existing small businesses to include immigrant small business owners, could use the findings to grow their businesses, and make their businesses survive beyond 5 years. Entrepreneurs should pay special attention to theme 4 which addresses poor business and managerial knowledge in the form of failure to meet the financial requirements of small business, and lack of understanding of the laws and regulations (Gill & Biger, 2012), to avoid business failures.

As noted in theme 5, immigrant small business owners bring business experience from their home countries, and are able to exploit market niches in their host countries.

Immigrants in North American cities could improve professional business practice by bringing their human and social capital to create a fertile environment for new business enterprises (Shin, 2014). Business environment is a determining factor in small business innovation (Naidu, Chand, & Southgate, 2014).

Elements of this study improved the literature on immigrant small business ownership factors that could lead to small business failure. The exploration of both success factors and factors could lead to small business failures, and could serve as a guide to nascent immigrant small businesses and existing small businesses on how to grow an immigrant small business (Lin & Tao, 2012).

### **Implications for Social Change**

Implications for positive social change include the clarification of strategies that make immigrant small business owners successful and sustainable beyond 5 years. Successful small businesses to include immigrant small businesses foster economic growth, expand employment, improve cultural expansion between host and home countries of immigrants, and expand global trade through exporting. Successful small businesses engender better health conditions for its community members than do members of communities with failing small businesses (Blanchard et al., 2012).

Immigrant small business owners using the results of this study could help improve the employment posture in metro Atlanta, which could help reduce the unemployment rate in Georgia. Small businesses create more jobs than large businesses (de Wit & de Kok, 2014). Poor employment posture has been linked to poor community

health in areas such as eating, and alcohol disorders, anxiety disorders, increase in crime rates (Gili, Roca, Basu, McKee, & Stucker, 2013; Phillips & Land, 2012).

Immigrant small business owners could contribute to the expansion of international trade and innovation. Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs used their network, connections, and business knowledge to innovate and expand business activities in both China and Canada (Vissak & Zhang, 2014). Results of this study could help immigrants from other parts of the world to innovate, and internationalize their small businesses in both their host and home countries.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The objective of this phenomenological research study was to explore strategies the immigrant small business owners can use to survive and be successful. A combination of the themes from this research study support recommended actions that immigrant small business owners should do to both survive in business, and be successful. Participants of this research study emphasized two cultural traits that made their immigrant small businesses successful including strong work ethic and spiritual belief. Strong work ethic has been found to make immigrant small businesses successful (Abada et al., 2014). The immigrant small business owners whose businesses failed emphasized poor business and managerial knowledge in the form of inadequate financing, and lack of required knowledge of business laws and regulations. Immigrant small business crowding in enclave communities played a part in the business failures. Understanding and

avoiding these contributing factors to immigrant small business failures will promote immigrant small business survivability.

Eighty percent of the participants of the study financed their immigrant small business through personal savings and financial help from family and friends. Limited access to capital from financial institutions reduces the opportunities for business expansion, and leads to business failures (Carter et al., 2015). Financial institutions and policy makers should find methods to improve the availability of financial capital to minority owned businesses including immigrant small businesses.

Publication of this study could add to the information that business practitioners could incorporate to their future business plans about starting and running an immigrant small business. Additionally, scholars could add information from this study to futures studies on immigrant small ownership. I will share information from this study to the participants in the form of a one to two page executive summary of the research results. I will make effort to present the findings of the research to the SBA so that the SBA loan program could be effective.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Immigrant small business ownership could benefit from more research studies. The choice of a qualitative research study with phenomenological design made the use of small sample size of 20 participants drawn from metro Atlanta possible. A small sample size could limit the generalizability of the study results (Van den Bergh & du Plessis, 2012). Future research could expand the geographical reach of the study by including

immigrants in other parts of Southeastern United States to compare, and to see if the study results are peculiar to Atlanta Georgia. A quantitative study with a larger sample size to study immigrant entrepreneurs, would be a good start to finding out if a larger sample size could lead to generalizability of the research results (Zolin & Schlosser, 2013).

Further research could include immigrants from specific countries of the world, including countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, and South America to determine if there are differences in experiences that make immigrants from those areas successful or unsuccessful. Expanding further research to the individual country level could better address if national culture plays a significant role in business ownership, survivability, and success. Differentiation of the success factors based on gender will expand the knowledge in the area of immigrant small business research. Finally, a longitudinal study could explore the results of this research phenomenon over a prolonged period (Koh & George, 2016).

### **Reflections**

In reflection, I found the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) Doctoral Study process as challenging as the efforts that immigrant small business owners have to employ for their small businesses to survive and be successful. The doctoral study process, like small business ownership, requires many support systems in order to succeed. Faculty, and other students in the DBA Doctoral Study program were helpful.

Family members as well as friends in the immigrant small business community were supportive throughout my doctoral journey.

It was refreshing to find out through this study, that the participants did not experience overt racism or discrimination. This finding may be a greater reflection on metro Atlanta as an area of the United States that is welcoming of immigrants, and a place where immigrants could engage in business ownership with little societal barriers. In the end, I recognized through this doctoral program that we are a community of immigrants here in the United States, regardless of how far removed you are from when your ancestors arrived.

I have grown academically, professionally, and globally because of my participation in this doctoral study journey. This research project introduced me to many academic journals, immigrant small business owners from over twenty countries, and students and faculty from many different parts of the world to make me believe that I am now a global citizen. Participants of my study have not reflected on their business journeys, their participation gave them the chance to reflect, and many of them expressed their gratitude.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore strategies that immigrant small business owners can use to survive in business and be successful. Section 1 comprised (a) an overview of the study, (b) the problem and purpose statements, (c) the nature of the study, (d) the research question with interview questions,

(e) operational definitions, (f) assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and significance of the study, (g) implications for social change, and (h) review of literature.

Section 2 encapsulated the role of the researcher, an examination of the participant pool from metro Atlanta, as well as the research study method, and design. This section included population sampling, ethical practice, data collection instruments, data analysis and organization. The last elements of Section 2 dealt with validity, reliability, dependability, confirmability, credibility, and transferability.

Finally, Section 3 included the research findings, as well as other ancillary elements such as applications to professional practice, and influence to social change. Recommendations for future research, a reflection about the doctoral study process, and a summary that closes with a strong concluding statement making the take-home message clear to the reader.

This qualitative phenomenological study provided a mechanism to answer the research question. Data was derived from an in-depth analysis of eight semistructured interview questions from 15 successful and five unsuccessful immigrant small business owners in metro Atlanta. Analysis of the interview data using the modified van Kaam method uncovered seven themes (a) strong work ethic and family dynamics, (b) flexibility and independence, (c) limited societal barriers, (d) business experience - exploiting a niche market, and (e) persistence and great customer service. These five themes helped the immigrant small owners to be successful, and survive beyond 5 years. Two major themes (a) poor business and managerial knowledge regarding inadequate

financing, and (b) limited understanding of the market including location, and regulations laws were the primary reasons for immigrant small business failures. Immigration small business owners shared their passion for the work that they did, were willing to work very long hours to make their small businesses successful, and had a passion for great customer service. Their different immigration history, equipped them with this feeling of persistence in their business endeavors, and made them to try harder, longer, in their efforts to make their small businesses successful.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

The central question is: What strategies have immigrant small business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years. The open ended questions follow:

### **Interview Questions**

1. What influence did your culture have to make your small business successful beyond 5 years?
2. What was your motivation to become a small business owner?
3. How did you finance your small business?
4. What were your challenges to open and sustain your business?
5. Explain the business experiences that you had prior to becoming a small business owner.
6. Describe any language barrier, racism, or discrimination that you had to overcome.
7. What are some of your perceived success factors as a small business owner?
8. What additional comments would you like to add about your strategies to starting and sustaining a small business beyond 5 years?

Appendix B: Letter of Introduction  
Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Date:

Address:

Dear Madam/Sir,

An integral part of satisfying all the requirements for a doctoral degree program is the completion of a doctoral research study. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study to explore the success strategies for immigrant small business owners in Atlanta, GA. As a successful or unsuccessful immigrant small business owner in Atlanta GA, your participation is vital to helping document your strategies for success.

Participation in this research project is voluntary, and all your will be kept confidential.

Review the enclosed consent form, and ask any questions that you have prior to deciding on participation in this research.

Participation in the research study is contingent on the following conditions:

1. You have to be an immigrant small business owner.
2. Your small business is located in Atlanta GA.
3. You have succeeded in business for at least 5 years.
4. You have owned a small business that failed.
5. You have resided in the U.S. for 5 years or longer

If you meet these conditions, and would like to participate in the research, let me know. My contact information is at the end of this document. If you decide to participate in the research, I will contact you in the future for an audio recorded personal interview that will last for 40 to 60 minutes. You will have an opportunity to review your information prior to inclusion in the study.

Your time is valuable, so I thank you in advance for your time and this opportunity.

Sincerely,

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol

- I. Start with self introduction to participant(s).
- II. Settle in, organize note pad, and set up audio recording device.
- III. Provide copy of Consent Form and review the form with participant.
- IV. Turn on recording equipment.
- V. Give the participant a copy of the interview questions to follow along.
- VI. Begin interview session by introducing participant with a previously established code name, date and time of the interview session.
- VII. Start by asking the first question on the list of interview questions.
- VIII. Ask follow up questions for clarity and in depth answers.
- IX. End interview when after the last question on the list, and remind participant(s) about member checking.
- X. End of interview protocol.