

2016

# Women Entrepreneurs: Keys to Successful Business Development and Sustainability Beyond Five Years

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Delores Foster

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Walden University  
2016

Abstract

Women Entrepreneurs: Keys to Successful Business Development and Sustainability

Beyond Five Years

by

Delores Duncan Foster

MS, Wesleyan College, 2011

BS, Fort Valley State University, 1975

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2016

## Abstract

Women-owned businesses are one of the fastest growing entrepreneurial populations, accounting for 8 million of the 28 million small businesses in the United States. Small businesses fail at a rate of 55% by the 5th year of operation and women, who own over 30% of all small businesses, contribute significantly to the 55% small business failure rate. Using Schumpeter's framework, this single exploratory case study investigated how women entrepreneurial small business owners use strategies to sustain their business operation beyond 5 years. A purposeful sample identified 2 women salon small business owners located in the Macon, Georgia metro area. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and a review of company documents. Three emergent themes were identified using Yin's 5 step analytic strategy approach: motivation for business start-ups, which included the motivation, skills, and education needed for business sustainability; success factors, which included innovation and the overall business environment, and employee and customer satisfaction which included customer and human relations. The impact of these practices can enhance social change by contributing to the sustainability and profitability of the organization which can enhance the economic security of the family, community, and the nation. New knowledge from this study could impact entrepreneurship success strategies and increase the number of women-owned businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to those who supported and loved me unconditionally throughout this doctoral journey. Eg, Terrence, and Idris, you are my rocks. Your love is one thing I could be certain of, and your confidence in my ability never faltered. To Eg, my husband, you altered your life and daily schedule for me to complete this doctoral journey, asking nothing in return. Thank you for all of the “pillow talks,” hugs, and words of encouragement that inspired me to get to the next level. Thank you for your unwavering love and support. You were undeniably my bedrock. To my son Idris, you were always there when I needed you. When I did not know where to turn, you were there motivating me not to abandon my dream. Your belief in my ability became my pillar of strength. Your success in setting and accomplishing goals served as an example of determination for my dream becoming a reality. To my son Terrence, through all of your personal health challenges, your love surrounded me as you continuously encouraged me to complete this journey instead of focusing on challenges in your life. Thank you for your compassion and encouragement. You recognized my strength, and you consistently reminded me to stay the course. Thank you for knowing my strengths and for believing that I could achieve my goal, no matter the challenges. You believed in me when I doubted myself. To my precious grandchildren, Jayden, Alexandria, Terrence Jr., Tyler, and Autumn thank you for always understanding days and weekends when I was writing instead of playing and vacationing with you. You made me smile when you would say I had to do important homework. You contributed in many ways to help me accomplish my dream. Thank you for being patient, and I will return the favor when you begin the writing process for your doctorate journey.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Entrepreneurs drive the American economy (U.S. Department of Commerce [DOC], 2014). One of the fastest growing entrepreneurial populations in the United States is women who own small businesses (Brush & Cooper, 2012). Women who own small businesses had a market growth rate of 44% over a 10-year span and added about 500 thousand jobs while other private companies were losing jobs (DOC, 2014).

Businesses owned by women grew twice as often as men-owned businesses (DOC, 2014). Despite this growth rate and economic impact, women who are entrepreneur small business owners, like all small businesses owners, still faced challenges of a high failure rate (U.S. Small Business Administration [SBA], 2014). One key factor affecting the business success or failure rates was strategic planning (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013a). Women who owned small businesses required additional development strategies to sustain their business (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013b).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how women who owned small businesses in the Macon, Georgia metro area developed strategies to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The results of the study might support women small business owners through business startup and growth stages and help improve business success and longevity.

### **Background of the Problem**

Women-owned businesses are valuable to the overall economy in the United States (DOC, 2014). The increasing presence of women in the business milieu since 1985 has changed the demographic of entrepreneurship in number and size (Brush & Cooper, 2012).

Women who are entrepreneurs start, operate, and grow businesses across all industries and make a vital impact on jobs, innovations, and the gross national product (Brush & Cooper, 2012). In 2011, women owned over eight million businesses, accounting for over 30% of all private companies in the United States (SBA, 2014).

Despite favorable research that showed the success of small business development by women who are entrepreneurs, the percentage of small business failure was high (Sarasvathy, Menon, & Kuechle, 2013). The U.S. Department of Commerce (2014) conducted a study in 2009 and found that 30% of small business startups fail within the first 2 years. By the sixth year, the failure rate reached 68% (U.S. Census Bureau [CB], 2012). The high failure rate was an important factor to consider when exploring what made a business fail or succeed.

A significant difference exists between women who are owners who succeed and those who fail (Sarasvathy et al., 2013). The question in this study was: what strategies make women entrepreneurs successful and how might the business success experience help preserve other women-owned companies. I used a qualitative case study design to explore business performance based on the success and failure of women who are entrepreneur business owners with the express purpose of discovering success strategies for future use by women who are entrepreneurs. The results may help entrepreneurs in the startup and growth stages of business development by providing practical insight into talents of entrepreneurial success.

### **Problem Statement**

Small business start-ups are the largest growing population in the American economy, accounting for 28 million companies in 2012, and over 8 million of the small businesses are women-owned (SBA, 2014). The percentage of small business failures reached 55% by the 5th year of operation (SBA, 2014) and women, who own over 30% of all small businesses, contributed significantly to the 55% of small business failure (SBA, 2014). The general business problem was that women salon owners often have limited strategies of how to grow and sustain their business. The specific business problem was that some women small business salon owners lack the necessary strategies to succeed in business beyond 5 years.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore the strategies that women small business salon owners needed to succeed in business beyond 5 years. The targeted population included two business owners and six business consultants who worked for the companies in the Macon, Georgia metro area, who shared their individual perspectives and experiences on surviving in business for more than 5 years. I observed women who are beauty salon owners at their worksite and collected documentation ranging from formal reports to newspaper clippings to demonstrate methodological triangulation and to reach data saturation. The information obtained from this study may serve as the basis for preparing women who are entrepreneurs so that they remain in business past 5 years. The result could be a guide to assist women who are entrepreneurs who are struggling to survive as they improve their strategies and practices. Data from this study might contribute to the

social impact of existing or future entrepreneurs. New knowledge from the study might increase the number of successful women who are business owners, which will lead to increased jobs and sales, and contribute to the economy of the local and surrounding communities.

### **Nature of the Study**

The focus of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore how women small business owners used strategies to sustain a business beyond 5 years of operation.

Qualitative researchers provide valuable insight into an individual's experiences (Blau, Bach, Scott, & Rubin, 2013; Southam-Gerow & Dorsey, 2014), which was useful when determining sustainability strategies of women who are entrepreneurial owners. A qualitative researcher uses a research method to understand the meaning of social or human problems (Neale & Bishop, 2012). A quantitative researcher uses numerical data to examine relationships between variables (Yin, 2014), which would not provide experiences of participants needed for this study. A mixed method researcher uses qualitative and quantitative research methods for experimental and investigative processes (Hossain, 2012; Yin, 2014). The need to manipulate data using investigative or experimental methods was nonexistent in this study.

The primary objective of this case study research was to explore a phenomenon by collecting a variety of data and observing individuals in real life contexts. Fully understanding a case involves collecting multiple sources of evidence from the documentation, interviews, and direct observations (Yin, 2014). Case study research serves as a valuable tool to explore issues in real life settings (Cronin, 2014; Wynn & Williams,

2012). The phenomenological research involves exploring lived experiences (Tomkins & Eatough, 2013), but this study did not include lived experiences or narrative reporting. Grounded theory or ethnography researchers required informal observations and lengthy interviews (Shover, 2012) instead of semistructured interviews as used in this study.

### **Research Question**

The primary research question that guided this study was as follows: What strategies do women small business salon owners use to succeed in business beyond 5 years? In this qualitative research study, I addressed the research question utilizing the following interview questions.

1. How did you become interested in entrepreneurship?
2. What business strategies did you use to support your entrepreneurial vision?
3. What strategies do you use to drive the growth of your business?
4. How do you compete with other salons in the area?
5. How do you use financial strategies to enhance the growth of your business?
6. What strategies do you use to overcome barriers to success?
7. What else would you like to share about becoming a successful entrepreneur?

### **Conceptual Framework**

In 2007, the economic downturn brought more focus to the topic of entrepreneurship (Geho & Frakes, 2013). Losing jobs in business operations during this economically depressed state influenced individuals to turn skills into entrepreneurial ventures (Ucbasaran, Shepherd, Lockett & Lyon, 2013). Parilla (2013) defined entrepreneurship as the process of creating new businesses, products, or services. Oncioiu (2012) noted that the

term entrepreneurship has been around since 1815 and had a variety of meanings and was encompassed by variations of theories. Theories have defined the concept of entrepreneurship, but the exact definition was vague and centered on the definition and meaning of the entrepreneur (Oncioiu, 2012). I used the entrepreneurship theory as the conceptual framework for this study to determine the strategies that women entrepreneurs used to make them successful beyond 5 years.

Richard Cantillon (1755) and Joseph Schumpeter (1934) developed the early classical theories of entrepreneurship. The primary theorist who classified entrepreneurs as individuals who invent, produce, or market a product, was Richard Cantillon (1755). Cantillon defined entrepreneurship as self-employment of any type, and an entrepreneur as one who takes the risk in the business enterprise. In the United States, Arthur Cole helped further define the entrepreneurship theory in 1948 at Harvard University (Jones & Wadhvani, 2007). Cole organized the Center for Research and offered a broad range of approaches to entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurship theory utilizing the work of Max Weber and Joseph Schumpeter (Jones & Wadhvani, 2007). Research on entrepreneurship continues to evolve (Hoang & Yi, 2015). The entrepreneurship theory grounded this research. For the purpose of this study, entrepreneurship represented the entrepreneur's ability to develop, organize, and manage a business with the intent to make a profit.

### **Operational Definitions**

Operational definitions ensure reader's clarity and meaning of the words and phrases that appear in the study. These definitions were consistent with definitions in the peer-reviewed research literature.

*Entrepreneur:* An entrepreneur is a person who innovates and assumes the risk of business (Murmann & Sardana, 2013; Santandreu-Mascarell, Garzon, & Knorr, 2013).

*Entrepreneurial failure:* Entrepreneurial failure is a business activity that is no longer operational (Coad, 2014).

*Entrepreneurial success:* Entrepreneurial success is a business process that has profits and longevity for 5 years or more (SBA, 2014).

*Entrepreneurship:* Entrepreneurship describes the capabilities to develop, organize, and manage a business and its risk with the intent to make a profit (Murmann & Sardana, 2013; Santandreu-Mascarell et al., 2013).

*Innovation:* Innovation is the creation of a new or better product, process, service, or technology that signifies a significant positive change in the society (Hardwick & Cruickshank, 2012; Van den Hove, McGlade, Mottet, & Depledge, 2012).

*Small business:* Small businesses are companies, independently owned, that employ less than 500 employees (SBA, 2014).

*Small business owner:* A small business owner is an individual who owns more than 50% of a small company (Rehman & Roomi, 2012).

*Sustainability:* Sustainability is the capacity to endure economic, environment and social measures (Belz & Binder, 2013).

*Sustainability entrepreneurship:* Sustainability entrepreneurship is emerging research that defines the process of recognizing, developing, and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities that create economic, environmental, and social value (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014; Belz & Binder, 2013; Maude, 2014).

*Woman-owned business:* A woman-owned business is a privately held company in which women own 51% or more of the business (DOC, 2014).

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

Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are the possibilities of the study that does not over or understate the results (Simon & Goes, 2013). Assumptions are beliefs that are accepted as true or likely to happen (Simon & Goes, 2013). Limitations are factors that are beyond the researcher's control, and delimitations are factors controlled by the researcher (Simon & Goes, 2013).

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are factors that are assumed but are not verifiable (Simon & Goes, 2013). The first of many assumptions in this study was that data collected was of interest and value to women who are business owners. The second assumption was the participants' candidness and honesty about successes and failures, and their length of time in business. Another assumption was that the company and the geographical location would produce sufficient information for defining strategies used by entrepreneurs to build success in business beyond the 5 years. The final assumptions were that the result of the study might contribute to the body of information that would actively assist entrepreneurs with business growth, expansion, and sustainability and that it might contribute to social change.

#### **Limitations**

Limitations are the possible weaknesses in the study (Simon & Goes, 2013). The first limitation of this study was participants' abilities to interpret and communicate their experiences effectively. Second, the interview questions and answers might not have

produced sufficient data to support the study. Third, the data collection choices of face-to-face interviews at the participant's choice of venture could result in scheduling conflicts, which might limit the study. A fourth limitation was that participants might not share experiences.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are the boundaries and restrictions on the scope of the study (Simon & Goes, 2013). The first delimitation of the study was that the study included only women. Second, the study included only small businesses in the geographical location of the Macon, Georgia metro area. Third, the study covered women-owned small businesses that had been operational for 5 years or more. Fourth, the study included women who manage and operate the business.

### **Significance of the Study**

Women who are business owners are a large and influential workforce in the American economy (Brush & Cooper, 2012). Women entrepreneurial success provides a significant competitive advantage for small businesses, a place where women outpace men (Chamorro-Premuzic, Rinaldi, Akhtara, & Ahmetoglu, 2014). The growth of women-owned businesses has made significant progress since 1985 (DOC, 2014). Women-owned businesses are vital contributors to the overall economy, keeping pace across all industries and generating \$1.2 trillion a year in sales (SBA, 2014). Women-owned businesses employ 51% of all people and over the last decade and a half, generate two-thirds of all new jobs (DOC, 2014). Despite the economic impact, women business owners lack the strategies needed to succeed in business for more than 5 years. New knowledge from this research

might increase the number of business successes beyond 5 years of business operation, which might close the gap between businesses that fail and businesses that succeed.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The United States Small Business Association [SBA] (2014) reported that 99.7% of all firms in the United States have a small business classification. Thirty percent of all U. S. companies are owned by women (SBA, 2014). This economic impact affects more than 23 million jobs that not only sustain individual workers, but also contribute to the economic security of family, community, and the nation (SBA, 2014). Despite this trend, 50% of these businesses fail within the first 5 years of operation (DOC, 2014). New knowledge from this current study could have an impact on entrepreneurship and increase the number of business startup successes beyond the first 5 years of operation. A positive social change might occur if the success strategies, provided by the study, help sustain women operated businesses beyond the first 5 years.

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

The research problem of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore what strategies women entrepreneurs used to succeed in business beyond 5 years. Women who are entrepreneurs who own small businesses make a significant contribution to the U. S. economy (CB, 2012). The performances of women as job creators at a time when other businesses were losing jobs are a testament to their impact (CB, 2012). Although women who are entrepreneurs are valuable to economic growth, and their rate of business creation outpaces men at a rate of two to one, their business survival rate beyond 5 years is exceedingly low (SBA, 2014). Women own 30% of all businesses in the United States, yet

they contribute significantly to the 55% of small businesses that fail within the fifth year of operation (SBA, 2014). Women entrepreneurs need knowledge that will help sustain their business beyond 5 years. This study might assist with sustainability development.

In this research study, I blended or used interchangeably women who are entrepreneurs and women who are business owners' terminology. The focus of this study were women who own 51% in private businesses or corporations. Topics for the literature review include changes in women entrepreneurship over time, why women enter into entrepreneurship, and strategies women use to maintain longevity in their business as identified by Hawkins (2012). Topics include the success and characteristics of businesses owned by women as compared to those owned by men and barriers women face in employment as opposed to entrepreneurship business.

Success is a subjective term, the definition of which may vary by business specialties, as not all companies use the same indicators to measure success (Heitner, Kahn, & Sherman, 2013; Toledo-López, Díaz-Pichardo, Jiménez-Castañeda, & Sánchez-Medina, 2012). For the purpose of this study, sustainability is a suitable term to measure the success of women in business beyond 5 years. The emerging studies of sustainable entrepreneurship recognize wealth and promote economic, environmental, and social importance (Belz & Binder, 2013). Entrepreneurs affect their community both economically and non-economically (Parilla, 2013). A qualitative exploratory case study method expanded the study on entrepreneurship and guided the research question: What strategies do women entrepreneurs use to achieve succeed in business beyond 5 years?

## **Search Strategy**

The literature and articles to study what strategies women entrepreneurs used to sustain their business beyond 5 years come from books, journal articles, and other scholarly sources. The study contains 177 articles out of which 163 (92%) of the articles are peer reviewed, and 168 (95%) articles were published within the past 5 years of completing the study. The literature review subsection contains 75 peer-reviewed full-text articles, out of which 68 (91%) were published within the past 5 years (2012-2016). I conducted research through Walden University Library databases using ABI/Inform Complete, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, Emerald Management Journals, Science Direct, ProQuest, PsycINFO, and the search engine, Google Scholar. Search terms included *females, strategies, entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship, success, failure, women, business owners, characteristics, motivations, education, finance, theory, and sustainability.*

## **Entrepreneurship Theory**

The theory of entrepreneurship touches many fields including economics, business studies, technology, innovation, sociology, and psychology (Carlsson et al., 2013). There are several theories of entrepreneurship (Oncioiu, 2012). In finance, new venture entrepreneurship and venture capital are recognized theories (Carlsson et al., 2013). Management area has three theories, recognition, creation, and the application domain (Carlsson et al., 2013). The application domain includes corporate entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, and self-employed, small, and family owned business theories (Carlsson et al., 2013). Entrepreneurship is a phenomenon that has been around since 1793 (Oncioiu,

2012). The entrepreneurship topic hit the mainstream as a research topic in 2000 and has become a popular study topic in many fields (Carlsson et al., 2013)

Entrepreneurship theorists include Austrian born Joseph Schumpeter (1934), who defined entrepreneurs as innovators. The entrepreneurship theory includes the American born Frank Knight (1921), who defined entrepreneurs as risk takers; and English born Israel Kirzner (1999) who defined entrepreneurs as the alert or individuals who exploit or explore market opportunities. Knight (1921) labeled entrepreneurs as risk takers who predict, take chances on, and take advantage of changing markets. Knight noted that uncertainty was something an entrepreneur could not measure or predict. Kirzner argued that entrepreneurs should perform well in environments of uncertainty. Successful entrepreneurs must understand the market, take calculated risk, pay attention to price, and take advantage of profit opportunities as indicated by Kirzner. In direct contrast, theorist Schumpeter (1934) suggested that the demand for new products created profits. Innovations of entrepreneur were the driver of new products, new methods, new markets, and new organizations and thus led to long term economic growth (Schumpeter, 1934).

Like the entrepreneurship theory, entrepreneurship has no single acceptable definition and, used interchangeably with the term entrepreneur, has a variety of meanings (Musai & Mehrara, 2014). The term entrepreneur comes from the French word *entreprendre* that means *to undertake* (Musai & Mehrara, 2014). Cantillon (1755) was the first to introduce the term entrepreneur into the economic theory. Jean-Baptise Say (1803) was the first to render the entrepreneur prominent, stating that entrepreneurs brought people together to build production teams. Cantillon referred to an entrepreneur as one who buys

means of production at certain prices and combined them to build new products. Cantillon defined entrepreneurship as self-employment of any sort. Say defined an entrepreneur as an agent who merged all means of production to find the value of the products. To determine the value, Say included the total capital invested, the value of wages, interest, rent, and profits. The first trend revealed in Cantillon's work referred to an entrepreneur as a person who undertakes business and acts as a mediator between capital and labor (Cantillon, 1755). Schumpeter (1934) defined entrepreneurs as creative destructor. Schumpeter's emphasis was on how entrepreneurs innovate by changing traditional ways, creating new products, installing production methods, and developing new markets and organizations. In addition to identifying what an entrepreneur was and what they did, Schumpeter reflected on the impact entrepreneurship made on the economy. The economic effects of entrepreneurs focused on understanding the relationship between entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, and economic development (McKeever, Jack, & Anderson, 2015; Oncioiu, 2012).

### **Entrepreneurship**

Research on entrepreneurship is continuously evolving (Carlsson et al., 2013; Hoang & Yi, 2015). Hoang (2015) explored the context of entrepreneurship and illustrated how contextualized views of entrepreneurship contribute to the understanding of the experience. There is a growing awareness of entrepreneurship on economic development (Santandreu-Mascarell et al., 2013). Entrepreneurs build new markets and establish new and better ways to organize businesses (Santandreu-Mascarell et al., 2013). The entrepreneurial framework is necessary to know when, how, and why entrepreneurship happens and who becomes

involved, as suggested by Carlsson et al. (2013). Exploring the impact of entrepreneurship, Santandreu-Mascarell et al. (2013) provided a variety of circumstances, which included developing new products, new processes, and new business sources. Hoang and Yi (2015) discussed the evolving nature of entrepreneurship and described entrepreneurs as individuals who operate a business for personal gain. Entrepreneurs are creative and capitalize on opportunities that will lead them to self-employment opportunities (Hoang & Yi, 2015). Arthur, Hisrich, and Cabrera (2012) suggested that the fundamental basis for understanding entrepreneurship opportunities should be inclusive of an opportunity for creative action, knowledge of what is happening in the local community, and familiarity with the market structure.

Studying another aspect of entrepreneurship, Santos (2012) looked at the globally recognized social entrepreneurship, which has three distinct characteristics: innovation in treating social problems, value creation, and market opportunity. McKeever, Jack, and Anderson (2015) explored the aspect of entrepreneurial success from an educational perspective and provided insight on the importance of education in entrepreneurship ventures. McKeever et al. found that while education was not the number one reason cited for entrepreneurial success, it ranked high when compared to other reasons. McKeever et al. suggested that entrepreneurs, academics, and others involved in entrepreneurship ventures could reduce the number of entrepreneur small business owners who are unsuccessful if they collaborated, developed good business strategies, and pooled their knowledge and resources.

## **Small Business**

Small businesses are important to the American economy (SBA, 2014). The SBA defined small businesses as independent enterprises employing 500 or fewer employees. Smaller firms or micro businesses employ less than 20 employees (SBA, 2014). There are over 27.5 million small businesses in the United States, and women own more than 8 million of these businesses (Manolova, Brush, Edelman, & Shaver, 2012; SBA, 2014). Women-owned businesses, where women-owned at least 51% of a business, generated \$1.2 trillion in receipts and paid \$218 billion in payroll (SBA, 2014). Small businesses represented 99.7% of all firms and generated 65% of all new jobs since 1994 (SBA, 2014). Small businesses employ nearly half of all employees in private businesses and account for 43% of U.S. private payroll (SBA, 2014).

Goetz, Fleming, and Rupasingha (2012) argued that there is a relationship between small business development and job creations. Goetz et al. highlighted the beginning and economic impact of small business development and noted that one self-employed worker exists for every three wage and salaried worker. Goetz et al. indicated that despite the perception that self-employment results from workers who lost jobs and were unemployed or underemployed, small businesses are growing, and their survival rate is likely to improve. Although Goetz et al. concluded that small firms created more jobs in the economy, they refuted the size of the increase, indicating the impact of underreporting businesses due to tax skirting.

Small business has a tremendous impact on job creation and the economy in the United States, but their survival rate is low (SBA, 2014). SBA (2014) statistical data from

2011 showed that 552,000 new businesses that opened in 2009 and 660,900 businesses closed during that same year. Campbell, Heriot, Jauregui, and Mitchell (2012) explored relationships between U. S. businesses that close and found that survival rates are consistent with all businesses in the United States. Nearly 50% of new small businesses close within the first 5 years (SBA, 2014). Seven out of 10 new businesses closed within 2 years of opening, and nearly half closed within 5 years (SBA, 2014). Businesses in the United States employ about 120.9 million people and of that amount, small businesses employ nearly half or 59.9%, larger firms employ 6.2% of workers and women employ 7.8 million workers (SBA, 2014).

In the state of Georgia, small businesses employed more than 1.5 million workers (SBA, 2014). The economy in Georgia grew at a slower rate than the U.S. average in 2013 reflecting net state product increase of 1.8% as compared to 2.2% for the United States overall (SBA, 2014). Georgia's unemployment rate exceeded the national average of 5.8%, but employment conditions improved from October 2013 of 7.8% to 7.7% in October 2014 (SBA, 2014). Small businesses in Georgia created 40,580 new jobs in 2012 and increased jobs by 1.4% in 2013 (SBA, 2014). In 2014, jobs increased by 2.9%, which was higher than the national average of 2.3% (SBA, 2014). In 2012, 66.5% of the 15,384 businesses created in 2010 survived and 79.5% of the 17,261 businesses created in 2013 survived. During the first quarter of 2014, 13,200 businesses opened, and 12,620 businesses closed (SBA, 2014). Small business owners who are unincorporated may not earn as much as individuals who are wage earners or small business owner, who founded, created, worked for, and incorporated the business (Astebro, & Chen, 2014). Small business owners who were self-employed at

their incorporated business for 12 months made an average of \$43,000, and those who were unincorporated earned an average of \$21, 000 (SBA, 2014).

The small business rate of survival is less than the rate of failure (Alsaaty, 2012). When businesses fail, job losses, and reduced tax revenue for the federal, state, and local government occur (Joshi, Prichard, & Heady, 2012). Many smaller businesses fail because of mismanagement and misappropriation of resources and opportunities (Alsaaty, 2012). Smaller businesses fail because it is more difficult for them to meet tax burdens and regulations (Joshi et al., 2012). Smaller businesses spend about 36% more than larger companies complying with environmental regulations and tax requirements (SBA, 2014). Van der Zwan, Verheul, and Thurik (2012) compared individuals with no small business ownership intentions and the nascent, young, and established entrepreneurs to understand the importance of the environment. Positioning for success is an important measurement for business sustainability purposes (Van der Zwan, Verheul, & Thurik, 2012).

### **Women Entrepreneurial Small Business**

Women-owned businesses are one of the fastest growing entrepreneurial populations in the U. S. economy (Brush & Cooper, 2012; DeVita et al., 2013; Loscocco & Bird, 2012). Since 1992, women have made a significant impact on innovation, employment, and wealth creation (Brush & Cooper, 2012; Geho, 2013). The Center for Women Business Research assessed the economic impact of women-owned businesses in the U.S. and provided data-driven knowledge detailing the impact on the economy and the social significance of women entrepreneurship (DOC, 2014). The status and achievement of women engaged in entrepreneurship focused on perceptions about economic viability and progress (DOC,

2014). The study included survey data and model of economic activity that provided the direct, indirect, and induced impacts of women entrepreneur small businesses (DOC, 2014).

Women are active participants in the workplace and make up 50% of the workforce (DOC, 2014). Although they hold only 4% of corporate executive positions, they occupy 40% of managerial positions (DOC, 2014; McGowan, Redeker, Cooper, & Greenan, 2012). Women leave their employment to start an entrepreneurial business; yet, they add to the number of other companies that fail within a 5 year period (McGowan et al., 2012).

Women's direct impact on the overall economy had little or no influence on their inclusion in research (Hughes, Jennings, Brush, Carter, & Welter, 2012). From 1972 to 1984, women-owned businesses increased revenue from 1.5 million to 3.5 million with a tremendous jump in 1999 to 9.1 million (Hughes et al., 2012). Women were the drivers of the American economy and generated substantial revenue, but their recognition did not keep pace with the progress they made (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Women gained recognition when the American Journal of Small Business and the Journal of Small Business Management published the first article about women written by Eleanor Schwartz in 1976 (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Women entrepreneurs contributed significantly to the gross national products, jobs, and innovations, but there is little known information about women entrepreneurship (Brush & Cooper, 2012).

In point of fact, only 10% of research focused on studies of women entrepreneurs (Brush & Cooper, 2012). The research was men centered and failed to represent a holistic picture of women entrepreneurship (Hughes et al., 2012). Hughes et al. explored the interest and activity of women entrepreneurship. They provided knowledge and awareness on the

development of literature on women business owners to counter the historical fact of the lack of attention given to woman's entrepreneurs, their innovation, and initiatives. Research with feminist perspectives on gender and power of the entrepreneurs could generate a rich understanding of women's entrepreneurship and help develop a clear definition of entrepreneurs beyond an economic framework (Hughes et al., 2012).

From a historical perspective of women entrepreneurship, Mee (2012) analyzed the growth of women business ownership to determine the problems women faced in the U. S. economy. Understanding the meaning of entrepreneurship success of men and women was essential for understanding success and failure of business ownership (Mee, 2012). Mee emphasized the importance of defining success for both men and women and the necessity of determining if success was different for men and women. Limited access to credit and family responsibilities affects women's business success (Mee, 2012). Credit reports reference women as people without access to equal credit and federal contracts (Mee, 2012). Kautonen et al. (2013) noted that obtaining credit and financial resources for their business may not be a priority for women business owners. Kautonen et al. (2013) suggested that women business owners may need resources that are more specific to personal needs in their lives. Mee then suggested ways to improve performance and the size of the business. Diaz-Garcia and Brush (2012) suggested that women-owned businesses are smaller in size by design and involve less operating time than other small businesses. Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013a) used four competencies to determine the impact on business performance and growth of women-owned companies. The competency clusters included personal and relationships, business and management, and entrepreneurial and human relations

competencies (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013a). Women entrepreneurs value proficiencies in these areas more than their men counterparts did (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013a). The impact of personal relationships, education, and human relations are major contributors in women business performance, economic growth, and the environment (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013a).

Women-owned businesses tend to be smaller than men-owned businesses (CB, 2012; DOC, 2014). Many women enter self-employment for control over their life and schedules, which create more control and balance over work and family life than they experienced in other careers (Adkins et al., 2013; Chlosta et al., 2012; & Purvis & Bobko, 2012). Highly experienced and educated women left their employment because of job dissatisfaction for entrepreneurship opportunities (Krishnamoorthy & Balasubramani, 2014). These women, motivated by desire, leave top paying jobs and managerial positions to create new opportunities, new challenges, self-determination desires, and balance of their personal life and work experiences (Krishnamoorthy & Balasubramani, 2014; McGowan et al., 2012).

### **Women Entrepreneurship Motivation**

Women's motivation to start private businesses are similar to men and include the desire for independence and financial gain (McGowan et al., 2012). As women, the majority of men entered entrepreneurship to balance work responsibilities and to increase earning potentials for family commitments (McGowan et al., 2012). Occupational flexibility, which provides the opportunity to choose individual work hours, motivates women to start businesses of their own (Lee & Stearns, 2012). Women who are motivated to start an independent business must balance work responsibilities, earning potentials, and

domestic duties (McGowan et al., 2012). Growing numbers of women develop childcare businesses and indicate flexibility as their motivation for business startups (McGowan et al., 2012). Women's motivation, expectations, and involvement in entrepreneurship help them improve work and family lifestyles (McGowan et al., 2012). McGowan et al. (2012) studied 14 women who established and managed their business and found that women who successfully balance personal and business life showed the ability to balance business venturing (McGowan et al., 2012). McGowan et al. suggested that successful balancing of business and person lives attracts more women to entrepreneurship and serves as encouragement for women to persevere and overcome challenges that might cause them to fail (McGowan et al., 2012).

The relationship between professional and management skills possessed by women affect entrepreneurship motivation (Huang, Mass-Tur, & Yu, 2012). Unlike men, women cited their partner's encouragement as the key initiative for starting and maintaining their business (Huang et al., 2012). Family support from a spouse or partner was an important motivator for women over 50 to start a business (Logan, 2014). Logan (2014) explored the motivation of women starting an entrepreneurial small business at age fifty or older. Logan suggested that women 50 or older started a new business because they needed an outlet and because they had tremendously reduced family responsibilities. Logan indicated that a majority of the women started their business in an area unrelated to their previous work experience and that businesses studied were profitable and growing.

In addition to family support and women encouragement from partners, the internal desire to succeed drives women entrepreneurs (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2014). In a study

to explore the psychological motivations of women who enter into entrepreneurship, Chamorro-Premuzic et al. (2014) described entrepreneurs as innovators and risk takers. Women entrepreneurs enter into entrepreneurship because of the need to achieve, the need for independence, and the need for social status (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2014). The need to control, influence, and build financial wealth drives women entrepreneurs (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2014). Men grow their business to gain financial success while financial success for women is just one reason to achieve entrepreneurship growth (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2014; Manolova et al., 2012).

Chamorro-Premuzic et al. challenged the notion that women take more risk than men do. Unlike many other authors, Chamorro-Premuzic et al. identified personal values and lifestyle choices that focus on creative expressions, imagination, culture, and attractive surroundings as important aesthetic motivations. Ambition and independence highly motivate women entrepreneurs to start and succeed as small business owners (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2012; Krishnamoorthy & Balasubramani, 2014). Skills have a major impact and family support, market opportunities, and satisfaction affects entrepreneurial success (Krishnamoorthy & Balasubramani, 2014). Job dissatisfaction is a motivator to become an entrepreneur (Krishnamoorthy & Balasubramani, 2014). The lack of acceptance, role modeling, professional interactions, the confidence of the client, and suppliers, lack of experience and adequate training are obstacles faced by women (Krishnamoorthy & Balasubramani, 2014).

The motivation for success is the same for ecopreneurs, entrepreneurs who start a business with the focus on the sale of green products (Kirkwood & Walton, 2014).

Kirkwood and Walton (2014) listed five factors that motivate ecopreneurs to start and operate a business. These factors coincided with motivational factors of other entrepreneurs (Kirkwood & Walton, 2014.). Ecopreneurs concentrate on improving the environment within their companies and using their products and services to educate customers on protecting the environment (Kirkwood & Walton, 2014). While ecopreneurs are unmotivated by financial gain, they do concentrate on developing successful business operations (Kirkwood & Walton, 2014).

### **Women Entrepreneurship Success**

Women are entering entrepreneurship at an extremely high rate, and they are making an important economic contribution (Ettl & Welter, 2012). Women entrepreneurs businesses are less successful than men businesses are (Ettl & Welter, 2012). Because of this fact, Ettl and Welter (2012) questioned the definition of success as defined by various studies and studied the concept of achievement to develop a model of women entrepreneurs' success from both the individual and contextual aspects. The results from the interviews with women entrepreneurs focused on the success of women entrepreneurs based on their personal and business goals and motives to shed light on the meaning of success (Ettl & Welter, 2012). Some research demonstrated that motivation, opportunities, resources, and constraints of women differ when compared to men (Ettl & Welter, 2012). Women business owners benefited from family connections because they lack access to financial capital and social resources (Powell & Eddleston, 2013). In contrast, men entrepreneurs typically lack interactions through family ties because of the abundance of resources available to them and

because gender prominence discouraged pursuing work and family ties (Powell & Eddleston, 2013).

Powell and Eddleston (2013) used survey data to assess entrepreneurial success for measuring business performance and employment growth. Their survey measured entrepreneurial experience, status, and employee relationships. The survey results showed favorable support for women entrepreneurs who benefitted from family connections, business enrichment, and entrepreneurial success; however, according to the study, findings showed no support for men owned business interactions (Powell & Eddleston, 2013).

Sarasvathy et al. (2013) noted barriers to entrepreneurial success by looking at the high failure rates of entrepreneurs in business. They indicated that despite the failure of business ventures, entrepreneur's business success still makes an impact on the economy. Women success in business is obvious in Madonna's and Lady Gaga strategic planning (Anderson, Reckhenrick & Kupp, 2013). The five dimensions used in building the empire of entertainers like Madonna and Lady Gaga are equally important to success in the business (Anderson et al., 2013). To succeed, business owners must develop career plans, long term goals, visions of where they want to go and plans on how to get there (Anderson et al., 2013). Anderson et al. (2013) explored entrepreneurship within the entertainment industry to determine success factors, specifically examining Madonna's and Lady Gaga's career and achievements. Examining five dimensions of entertainer's career, they credited strategic planning as the reason for success in business (Anderson et al., 2013). Vision, understanding the customers and industry, leveraging competencies, addressing weaknesses, consistent implementation, and continuous renewal were all examined and noted as equally

important to success (Anderson et al., 2013). Having and executing a vision was the most important driver of Madonna's and Lady Gaga's success, which was simply to be the world's best women performers (Anderson et al., 2013).

Jiang, Zimmerman, and Guo (2012) summarized challenges and success factors of entrepreneurship and noted the impact and contributions women-owned businesses make to the U.S. economy, the growth of women businesses ownership, and the amount of sales in the United States. An entrepreneurs' business success directly influences four intangible resources that moderate the growth relationship in women entrepreneurial businesses (Jiang et al., 2012). Jiang et al. identified the four intangible resources as social, human, capital, and social competence. The relationship of intangible resources and the growth of women-owned businesses directly related to challenges women face when starting and growing a business (Jiang et al., 2012). Huarng et al. (2012) explored challenges and skills women entrepreneurs required for business ownership success and growth. Huarng et al. suggested that women level of education, prior work experiences, and prior business and management experience impacted success. The results of the study showed that the lack of education and managerial skills were prominent factors influencing motivation and challenges for women business owners success.

While women entrepreneur business owners may prepare and compete to gain success, their measurement of success may not come from profits but instead come from prioritizing the balance of business and personal life (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Chlosta et al., 2012; Purvis & Bobko, 2012). Bonte and Piegler (2012) suggested that gender roles affect the competitive nature of small business owners. However, the ideas of male business

owners may produce the most positive indications of business success according to research, but understanding strategies women use to gain success in business may influence more positive views of women-owned small businesses (Manolova, Brush, Edelman, & Shaver, 2012).

### **Gender**

Women-owned businesses show substantial growth in startups, but they are smaller and less retentive than men-owned businesses (DOC, 2014). Women grow their business twice as often as men do, but women-owned businesses lag far behind men owned businesses whether measured by average sales, average receipts, or employment (DOC, 2014). Research shared by Women Owned Businesses in the 21st Century (WOB) noted discrimination as a reason for the outcome differences but reported that conclusive data was unavailable to support the claim (DOC, 2014). Several studies as suggested by WOB, studies men and women gender disparities by trying to assign randomly men and women's identities, but it was not possible to assign gender randomly to business owners (DOC, 2014). Instead, researchers utilized statistical models of control to determine disparities and to test the impact of race or gender on the outcome for businesses (DOC, 2014).

While it is difficult to determine differences in men and women-owned businesses, data showed discrimination in financial and business market among minority business owners as well as inequalities in housing, education, and employment (DOC, 2014). Factors like preferences and attitudes signified the difference in business ownership of men and women and factors such as risk tolerance, limited work hours, type of occupation and industry, and the reasons for starting a business as the differences in women and men

businesses (DOC, 2014). The U.S. Department of Commerce in the outcome report by WOB noted that women often do not seek outside funding because of their feeling of being denied, which impacts business growth and sustainability. Gender roles varied historically because of the differences in the accepted occupations such as childcare tasks and the historical differences of behaviors and attitudes that differ between men and women (DOC, 2014).

Robb and Watson (2012) studied gender differences of firm performance in the U.S. and refuted the claim that male owned firms outperform female owned firms. Robb and Watson noted that the exclusion of demographic, risk and other appropriate performance measures when conducting research, which might have a major impact on the outcome of the findings. Robb and Watson conducted a study of 4000 new ventures in the U.S. utilizing appropriate performance measures to determine differences in business ownership between male and female. In the U.S., there is no difference in the closure rates of female and male-owned businesses (Robb & Watson, 2012). Also, there is no difference in the return on investments, and in risk performance of male and female businesses (Robb & Watson, 2012).

Manolova et al. (2012) suggested that women businesses are smaller than the average business because only 16% achieve annual revenue of more than \$500,000. Manolova et al. suggested that women might have different expectations for business growth than men. Manolova et al. indicated that men grow their business to achieve financial success although financial success is just one of many reasons women achieve growth.

Shinnar, Giacomini, and Janssen (2012) examined the relationship of gender and culture to determine how perceptions and intentions shape entrepreneurship. Shinnar et al. conducted a survey of women who lived in the United States, China, and Belgium and found that they all had higher positive impacts when entering self-employment than men do. In the United States, Shinnar et al. suggested that gender had no real effect on the relationship between fear of failure and the intent of starting a business. Shinnar et al. noted that in the U. S., women lack of business knowledge have a stronger negative impact on entrepreneurial market intentions than men do. Shinnar et al. findings showed that culture and gender influence how individuals perceive support or the lack of support. Shinnar et al. found that women in the United States and Belgium fear of failure and lack of knowledge were more important barriers than for men. Shinnar et al. discussed limitations in the study and noted that the research examined the relationship of college students who were business majors versus students with entrepreneurial intent and emphasized the limitation placed on entrepreneurship education beyond business schools.

Pérez and Morales (2014) studied gender differences from an early start perspective and documented early choices of women and men students on the decisions they make on occupational and career including entrepreneurship. Earning levels by gender from the social and individual perspectives determine if an early influence of private or public school choices affected transitioning decisions to working life (Pérez & Morales, 2014). In this research, they focused on the impact of entrepreneurial motivation and the desire for managerial occupation. Gender and the type of school attended (public or private) can heavily influence the desire for supervisory or managerial occupations and entrepreneurial

motivation (Pérez & Morales, 2014). Women who attended public school showed less interest in supervisory positions as a future career choice (Pérez & Morales, 2014).

The development need for women is different from the needs of men because women experience more childcare responsibilities that disrupt their careers (McGowan et al., 2012). Work life balance and inequalities in the workplace critically affect success for women business owners (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; McGowan et al., 2012). As women, the majority of men enter entrepreneurship to balance work responsibilities and earning potentials with family commitments (Manolova et al., 2012). Women enter into business ownership for factors similar to those of men, a desire for independence, and financial gain (McGowan et al., 2012). Gender inequalities are a problem for women, who are more likely to gain tenured positions or promotions by working their way up through the system whereas men were more likely hired into tenured positions (Pérez & Morales, 2014). Numbers of women who leave their executive management positions were significantly higher than men who leave (Pérez & Morales, 2014).

Looking at gender differences in financing, Mee (2012) analyzed the growth between men owned and women-owned small businesses that focused on problems faced by women-owned business in the economy. Mee presented information on equity in contracting for women and emphasized the need for improvement of federal contracting opportunities for women-owned small businesses. Mee provided evidence from some studies that addressed problems and challenges women face. The federal government recognized the impact of women in the American economy where women accounted for over 33% of all small business owners, although federal contract dollars only amounted to

3.4% (Mee, 2012). In about 2010, the SBA addressed the inequity in funding and created a 5% federal procurement program for women-owned small businesses (SBA, 2014).

Constraints by gender exist not only in the labor markets in which people work before becoming business owners but also in the decision they make about becoming business owners (Loscocco & Bird, 2012). Loscocco and Bird researched small business ownership to determine the route to equality and to develop a model from social construction perspectives on various options entrepreneurs must balance in the course of running their business. Entrepreneurs, both men, and women, must put effort to grow their business at the beginning of ownership, and they must achieve work-family balance (Bonte & Piegeler, 2012; Loscocco & Bird, 2012). According to distinctions used during various stages of the business, the process made it possible to assess where women begin to lag behind men (Loscocco & Bird, 2012). Van der Zwan et al. (2012) studied European countries, Asian countries, and the United States and found that gender differences are visible at the beginning stages of the business and near the end of the final stages of the businesses closing.

Zimmerman and Brouthers (2012) examined the international diversity of small businesses to determine the relationship between ownership and management teams' gender, entrepreneurial orientation, and the firm international diversity. They found that management teams that consist of entrepreneurial populations are more likely to pursue international diversification and that these teams are more likely to dispel the idea that international diversity is more difficult for women (Zimmerman & Brouthers, 2012).

Starting a business is a tremendous career transition (Davis & Shaver, 2012). The individual life experiences influence the goal to become an entrepreneur and build a high performing business at the beginning or late stage of a career influence (Davis & Shaver, 2012). Davis and Shaver (2012) observed the reasons individuals decided to grow larger businesses for both men and women in four different age groups and showed that the decision differed by gender. Both men and women express their desire to build a high-performance business early in their career at a time when they have a little capital or few family obligations (Davis & Shaver, 2012). Davis and Shaver showed that women and men intent to build a large business at an early career stage were similar. Women who pursued had highly educated parent with high levels of entrepreneurial intensity and men were young with no experience in the business industry (Davis & Shaver, 2012).

Many women are motivated to start small businesses because of their discontent with equal pay as men in comparable circumstances (Sayers, 2012). Women earn 77 cents for every dollar men earn (Sayers, 2012). Employers often underestimate women ability which impacts hiring practices that lead to the men and women wage gap (Sayers, 2012). Women and men entrepreneurial business owners work longer hours than non-self-employed as noted by WOB (DOC, 2014). WOB indicated that self-employed women work fewer hours (40.1 hours) than self-employed men do (46.2). Women business owners tend to provide more support for the family than men do (DOC, 2014), which could have a major impact on the business survival rates for men.

## **Education and Training**

An increasing number of women are becoming leaders of their businesses and are struggling to achieve success (Fenwick, 2012) for more than 5 years. Fenwick (2012) reviewed literature that addressed women business owners from the broad perspective of understanding leadership roles and showed growing evidence on how women entrepreneurial leadership is fundamentally different from men. Knowledge of the findings could have a major impact on business survival rates for women business owners. Fenwick used four criteria to classify and examine women in leadership: characteristics and development, starting and leading business, leadership and management strategies, and barriers and conflicts.

Entrepreneurs come from various backgrounds with similar characteristics but their behavior and leadership impact new and sustainable business ventures that will have a lasting impact on the growth of jobs and economic development (Arthur et al., 2012). Women's career experiences influence their entrepreneurship decision making despite having achieved top management success (Pérez & Morales, 2014). To climb the corporate ladder women must work long hours and make strong commitment loyalties to the firm (McGowan et al., 2012). In an attempt to combat the challenges of balancing working hours and personal life demands, many large companies offer flexible hours or work from home opportunities (McGowan et al., 2012). The demands of corporate life intrude on the quality and quantity of family time, especially family with young children (McGowan et al., 2012). Salaries and promotions for women with children are less than salaries and promotions for women without children (McGowan et al., 2012). Despite the controversial salary issue,

women who meet corporate challenges and demand and make the commitment to grow within the environment, still face barriers when attempting to move up the corporate ranks (McGowan et al., 2012).

Balancing work and personal lives are main barriers and reasons as to why women quit their job (Pérez & Morales, 2014). It is easy for women to leave organizations when they work for bosses who show no sensitivity or those who place little or no value on women requirements to balance personal and work life (McGowan et al., 2012).

Stereotyping, discrimination, men dominant cultures, and little access to leadership development options are other reasons women leave their employment environment for the entrepreneurship experience (McGowan et al., 2012). To alleviate work-life balance stress, corporate demands, and overlooked corporate promotions, women leave their employment for self-employment opportunities and economic success (McGowan et al., 2012).

Businesses owned by women entrepreneurs are great indicators of economic success, and leadership and one way to enhance entrepreneurship is to encourage women to open their own business (Pérez & Morales, 2014).

Women hired more employees during the economic downturn than did larger corporation who downsized and laid off workers (McGowan et al., 2012). The economy and organizations suffer when skilled women leave their employment for any reason (Pérez & Morales, 2014). Women business owners are a large and influential workforce in the American economy (Brush & Cooper, 2012). Branch (2012) completed a study of individual experiences in leadership positions to determine barriers faced in the workplace. Branch's study included women and men with executive management experience from all

cultures and backgrounds to understand and to provide an outline of obstacles to executive promotions and to provide insight on cultural differences of various groups.

Management teams impact performance outcome and success of the entrepreneurial small business (Eisenhardt, 2013). Entrepreneurial businesses are more likely to be successful when they form alliances and when they develop a well known board of directors (Eisenhardt, 2013). Many entrepreneurs experience business success when they develop new products and competitive business models when they hire highly qualified employees, and when they use well-informed business practices (Eisenhardt, 2013). Management teams have enormous opportunity to succeed and grow their business at a much greater rate than individuals serving in an executive role of a large firm (Eisenhardt, 2013).

Pérez and Morales (2014) conducted a study that helps women better understand career advancement opportunities to top management positions and their aspiration to become future entrepreneurs. Pérez and Morales outlined career development desires for women in top management and their motivation to establish entrepreneurship opportunities. Pérez and Morales suggested that women career experiences influenced them to find alternate routes to employment that often led them to entrepreneurship, despite having achieved top management success.

### **Access to Capital**

Access to capital is important to the success of new ventures (DOC, 2014; Manolova, Manev, & Gyoshev, 2014). In 2011, venture capital investment and bank lending to small business owners averaged around \$80,000 per year (SBA, 2014). More women than men entrepreneurs face greater obstacles in obtaining capital for their business

(SBA, 2014). Access to capital for women is not commensurate with their business growth, although capital is required to expand businesses and adjust to changing market and economic conditions (SBA, 2014). Women-owned businesses have lower financial capital because women, unlike men, are more likely to face credit denials, and unreasonable loan terms (SBA, 2014). The differences in loan approval rates between women and men are having lower credit scores, smaller businesses, and growth potential (DOC, 2014).

Small business loans, credit cards, and lines of credits from banks, influence the overall success of the business (Fadahunsi, 2012). Mee (2012) discussed the lack of financing available to women in business and focused on difficulties women face in competing in highly competitive industries. Mee stressed the limitations of the federal contracting system as it related to meeting the lending percentage requirement to women. Women Business owners face challenges in acquiring resources needed to start or expand their businesses (Brush & Cooper, 2012). The lack of resources is problematic for women because of their economic impact, their high growth rate in business startups, and their education and experience (Brush & Cooper, 2012). Although women start businesses at two times the rate of men, they exit at a faster rate, which creates a barrier for women entrepreneur (Brush & Cooper, 2012).

### **Sustainability Entrepreneurship**

Sustainability entrepreneurship is an innovative process designed to meet the needs of the general population while saving or preserving the environment (Santandreu Mascarell, Garzon Benitez, & Knorr, 2013). A sustainable entrepreneur solves environmental problems by generating new products, services, techniques, and methods

designed for growth and preservation (Wagner, 2012). Wagner suggested that sustainable entrepreneurs strive to achieve sustainable growth by increasing sales and receipts and by being competitive. To increase sales, owners must develop a durable strategic plan and employ a staff of talented employees (Santandreu-Mascarell et al., 2013). Develop sustainability requires businesses to evaluate the internal structure of the company and develop a strategy to sustain products and services (Belz & Binder, 2013).

Sustainability entrepreneurship defines entrepreneurial opportunities that contribute to the economic, environmental, and social impacts that improve the quality of life for the workforce, families, and the environment (Belz & Binder, 2013). Santandreu-Mascarell et al. (2013) addressed the position of sustainable entrepreneurship about sustainability innovation and noted the impact of market share, sales growth, and reaction to competitors on company measurements. Santandreu-Mascarell et al. also indicated the importance of environmental and social issues.

Rajasekaran (2013) suggested that the focus of sustainable entrepreneurs not only concentrate on economic growth but also focus on sustainability practices that will grow and improve the company, society, and the environment. Gagnon (2012) suggested that sustainability entrepreneurs focus on continuous improvements that grow and sustain the company and society. Gagnon indicated that sustainability entrepreneurs concentrate on business improvement, problem solving, and expanding the business. Sustainable entrepreneurs' creativity, employment of others, and wealth helps improve the environment, society, and humanity (Gagnon, 2012).

Wagner (2012) introduced four approaches to successful sustainability transition in addition to summarizing current ideas about transition policy and management processes. Wagner focused on innovation systems, knowledge, competencies, and networks. Innovation systems approach stress the importance of improving innovation capability of companies to support production and sale of green products (Wagner, 2012). Sustainable development requires more than having the knowledge and economic motivation to become green (Shepherd, Patzelt, & Baron, 2013). Entrepreneurs who have the knowledge and motivation to stimulate the environment and who understand the landscape of the environment and how to use the innovation systems approach, have a greater opportunity to grow their business while promoting humanity (Idrus, Pauzi, & Munir, 2014; Shepherd et al., 2013).

### **Innovation**

Small businesses are important drivers of innovation and job creation in the American economy (Judd & McNeil, 2012; Shukla & Shukla, 2014). Gagnon, Michael, Elser, and Gyory (2013) suggested that innovation drives sustainable business outcomes and influences socially and economically viable communities. Lindgren (2012) studied small and medium size business to determine if classic business innovation leadership and strategy building ensured success. Lindgren found that small businesses used reactive business model strategies and focused on specific customer or market demand. Utilizing leadership innovation strategies does not necessarily enhance strategic positions or processes in their market and industry (Lindgren, 2012). Business innovation leadership strategies unused as a

practice but were sometimes unsuspectingly practiced and often downplayed potentials for business modeling (Lindgren, 2012).

Innovation is discovering possibilities through different means of production or productivity (Santandreu-Mascarell et al., 2013). Businesses increased their chances of survival when they innovate and improve operation (Bello & Ivanov, 2014; Ivanov, 2013). Their survival rates decrease as the business grows (Peltier & Naidu, 2012).

### **Hair Salon Industry**

Revenue for hair salon industries is expected to increase from 3.2% to 58.7 billion by 2019 (SBA, 2014). The SBA (2014) reported that salon profits in 2009 increase from 1.9% to 5.7% in 2014. Hair product sales provide 5% to 15% of total revenue, and the industry revenue will continue to rise with larger profit margins sales of higher value products (SBA, 2014). Various hair products contain chemicals that subject professional salon operators to a greater risk of harmful exposure (Madnani & Khan, 2013), which indicates one reason state regulators require licensing (DeWinter, 2012).

The increase in industry operators drove employment growth (SBA, 2014). The trend has increased annual beauty salon employment at a rate of 3.8%, reaching 1.7 million employees in 2014 (SBA, 2014). The SBA suggested that salon owners and operators often work part time; however, self-employed workers may work long hours which may include week and evenings that are the busiest times of the workday. The median wage for salon workers is 10.95 and for a specialist, the wage may increase to 12.06 for barbers or 10.91 for a hairstylist (SBA, 2014).

The increasing salon job markets impact higher enrollment at cosmetology school. Salon owners and operators must meet the course and hour requirement set by the licensing board (DeWinter, 2012). The licensing, issued by the state board, may include board requirements for hair cutting, coloring, sanitizing, manicures, and massages (DeWinter, 2012). DeWinter noted that professional licensing solidify skills in perming, relaxing, and hair coloring. Industry profits and enrollment may encourage more new business to enter the industry (SBA, 2014).

The hair salon industry in the U.S. includes 86,000 businesses with annual income of \$20 billion (SBA, 2014). Demographics and population drive demand and profits of independent companies depend on experience, expertise, and marketing skills (SBA, 2014). Location and quality of service help small salons compete with other businesses while large companies purchasing and marketing abilities gives them a competitive edge. Training and education are important to salon operators as it is for all entrepreneurs as it allows the opportunity to strengthen soft skills and gain professional knowledge and practice (Van Rijn, Yaung, & Sanders, 2013).

Services offered by hair salons include hair cutting, coloring, styling, nail care, skin care, and product sales(SBA, 2014). The SBA (2014) noted that most typical salons offer haircutting and styling, coloring, shampooing, and permanents hair treatments. Developing skills are important for competing in the marketplace (Alasadi & Alsabbagh, 2015). Sale of products provide 5% to 15% of revenue and is an important revenue source for many hair salons (SBA, 2014). Developing hair care products that will be healthy for all type hair including oily, dry, and damaged innovates the hair salon market (Madnani & Khan, 2013).

Hair salon businesses provide an environment where customer and hair stylist can interact (Mwangi & Bwisa, 2013). Larger and older households are best customers for salon services that include haircuts, massages, manicures, and facials (SBA, 2014). The SBA (2012) reported that customers between the age of 35 to 64 spend 8% to 14% on services and married couples without dependent children at home spend 25% on services and that parents of school-aged or older children at home with larger household income spend 31% to 37% on services.

Job options for salon operators will continue to grow (SBA, 2014). A large number of job openings will become available from the need to replace workers who move to other occupations, retire, or leave the profession (SBA, 2014). The SBA (2014) noted that the increased demand for hair coloring, straightening, and other treatments impact job demand. Job seekers must expect strong competition for higher paying jobs at salons employing large pools of experienced personnel (SBA, 2014).

### **Business Strategies, Growth, and Performance**

Business strategy influence performance, growth, and motivation to sustain business operations (Blackburn, Hart, & Wainwright, 2013). Blackburn et al. related business growth and performance to the impact of employment change, turnover, and profitability. Blackburn et al. noted that businesses that have strategic business plans are more likely to be larger and older, and businesses who undergo change are found to do so because they are following business plans and strategies. Strategic consideration in business growth and performance is determined by whether the owner-manager works on the business or in the business and whether business owners collaborate with other businesses (Blackburn et al.,

2013). Blackburn et al. noted that more educated owners are found to extend network contacts and show good business practices. Blackburn et al. also suggested that younger businesses are more likely to engage in change that will consistently impact growth and performance. Yusuf et al. (2014) studied competitive business strategies and performance and found a correlation between businesses that compete and business growth. Business owners who are competitive are more likely to run a profitable business (Bonte & Piegeler, 2012). Businesses that take competitive advantage of marketing opportunities are noted to have lasting business operations, increased revenue, and new product offering to consumers, which signifies the growth and success of the business (Bonte & Piegeler, 2012; Yusuf et al., 2014).

Although women may compete for their market share, their motivation for business growth may not come from profits and may be more focused on flexibility, internal goals, satisfaction, and personal fulfillment (Kautonen et al., 2013). Women are more likely to be efficient in business operation when management processes and practices meet their lifestyle needs (Kautonen et al., 2013; Marlow and McAdams, 2013). Women entrepreneurial small business owners often lack sufficient strategies to grow and sustain a business beyond 5 years. Understanding the behavior that motivates women to become entrepreneurial business owners may lead to improved strategies, growth, and sustainability of their business (Sweida & Reichard, 2013). Sustainability entrepreneurs contribute to economic, environmental, and social needs that focus on improving the quality of life for the workforce, families, and the environment (Belz & Binder, 2013). Nordqvist, Wennberg, and Hellerstedt (2013) who argued that issues within the environment directly impact issues of

women-owned businesses, noted that the entrepreneurship theory assisted in identifying various sets of processes of small business owners. A gap exists in knowledge and research on findings to produce new processes for profit and growth strategies (Marlow & McAdam, 2013; Nordqvist et al., 2013). A review of the literature indicated that women initiate profit strategies and decisions based on their unique behaviors (Coleman & Robb, 2012; Gicheva & Link, 2013; Marlow & Swail, 2014). If appropriate resources were in place to meet the needs of women business owners, their business could improve in sustainability and growth (Hughes et al., 2012).

### **Transition and Summary**

Women entrepreneurial owners account for more than \$1 trillion in economic productivity (DOC, 2014). The evident of business growth suggests that women-owned businesses are financial resources that are vital to the overall economy (DOC, 2014). The growth and failure rates of women entrepreneurs' businesses are indicators of the need for further development and exploration (DOC, 2014). I used a qualitative exploratory case study design to provide an in-depth look at the inner workings and interactions of women entrepreneur small business owners to determine what strategies these owners used to sustain their business beyond a 5 year period. The information and knowledge gained and developed from the case study will be available for others to review so they might apply principles that will help them maintain their business for more than 5 years.

Entrepreneurship business sustainability will lead to increased jobs and sales in the American economy.

The entrepreneurship theory, founded by Joseph Schumpeter and Richard Cantillon in the early nineteenth century, grounded the study that supports four primary research areas, women entrepreneurs, motivation, characteristics, and management skills. A review of the literature includes the history and information of entrepreneurship, starting from its beginning with a focus on building current knowledge that helps pursue greater insight. Creative, innovative, economic development and leadership are theories discussed in the literature review.

In Section 2, I presented information detailing the study's methodology and design, an examination of the researcher's role, study participants, population, and sampling, as well as provided information on data collection techniques, instruments used for collecting and analyzing data, the analysis process, reliability, and validation. Following Section 2, I reintroduced the purpose of the study in Section 3, shared the findings of the study, the implications of social change, recommendation for action and future research, and reflected on experiences of the research.

## Section 2: The Project

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to understand what strategies women entrepreneurs used to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. I explored small salon businesses to determine the business strategies used by women who were entrepreneurs to sustain their business, which will help prevent the high failure rate of small businesses. Section 2 includes a discussion of the research purpose, participants, the researcher's role, method and design, the population and sampling, data collections and analysis, validity, reliability, and ethical considerations.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore the strategies that women small business salon owners needed to succeed in business beyond 5 years. The targeted population included two beauty salon owners in the Macon, Georgia metro area, who shared their individual perspectives and experiences on surviving in business for more than 5 years. I observed women who were salon owners at their worksite and collected documentation ranging from formal reports to newspaper clippings to demonstrate methodological triangulation and to reach data saturation. The information obtained from this study may serve as the basis for preparing women who are entrepreneurs so that they remain in business past 5 years. The result could be a guide to assist women entrepreneurs who are struggling to survive as they improve their strategies and practices. Data from this study might contribute to the social impact of existing or future entrepreneurs. New knowledge from the study might increase the number of successful women who are business

owners, which will lead to increased jobs and sales, and contribute to the economy of the local and surrounding communities.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I was the primary data collection instrument for this qualitative study and explored the life and work of women who are small business entrepreneurs to discern how they influence business survival rates past 5 years. In qualitative research, the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument is to collect data, organize data, and analyze the results (Collins & Cooper, 2014). Collaborating with, listening to, and explaining the intent and purpose of the study helps the researcher gain the trust of participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2012).

The researcher must maintain ethical standards at all times (Akhavan, Ramezan, & Moghaddam, 2013). The ethical principles and guidelines of the Belmont Report created by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subject of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1974) served as the basis for the ethical protocols that I followed as the researcher. Following the Belmont Report on Ethical Principles for Human Rights, the researcher must prevent harm to participants, and respect the participants' desires during the interview process (Cseko & Tremaine, 2013). I adhered to the protocols of the Belmont Report throughout the study by giving each participant the right to withdraw from the study at any time, by minimizing any potential risk, and by providing respect to each participant.

As the researcher, I assumed the role of mitigating any bias associated with the collection and analysis of data. Mitigating bias can be a difficult task because an individual's personal experience, perspectives, and values can easily create bias (Parker &

Henfield, 2012; Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012; Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie, & Green, 2012). When researchers collect, organize, and analyze data, they interpret the results through a personal lens, which may affect the trustworthiness of the data (Parker & Henfield, 2012; Pezalla et al., 2012; Wisdom et al., 2012). To help minimize bias, I acknowledged my personal views and focused on the participants' views and meanings. A focus on the participants' perspectives and interpretations helped the researcher hear and understand the participants' meanings and views (Parker & Henfield, 2012; Pezalla et al., 2012; Wisdom et al., 2012).

As an active observer and data collector for this study, I had no previous experience in the hair salon industry, and my only contact was through regular attendance to receive services. The primary data for the research came from semistructured face-to-face interviews. For dependability and consistency, I utilized an interview protocol. The use of an interview protocol provides a level of dependability and consistency by reducing possible problems that might arise during the interviews (De Ceunynck, Kusumastuti, Hannes, Janssens, & Wets, 2013; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Rowley, 2012). Using the interview protocol gives the researcher the opportunity to ask each participant the same question in the same order (De Ceunynck et al., 2013; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Rowley, 2012). For clarity, I asked follow-up questions during and after the interviews and provided the opportunity for the participants to review the result and confirm their meaning and any interpretations. Following an interview script and confirming interpretations minimizes bias, adds validity, and ensures that the research is ethical (De Ceunynck et al., 2013; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Rowley, 2012).

## **Participants**

Participants for this study were owners of salons located in the City of Macon, Georgia metro area. I reviewed a list of salon owners using the Georgia Secretary of State Board database system (2015) to determine possible participants. The Georgia Secretary of State (2015) houses statewide information for over 12,961 active salon owners that include 130 salons in the metro area of Macon, Georgia. The database provides the names, addresses, telephone numbers, business description, and size of the salon.

Through the use of purposive sampling, I selected 10 salon owners from the SOS database to ensure that I had an adequate number of eligible participants for the study. Eligible owners were women who operate hair salons and had at least 5 or more years of sustainable operation in the Macon, Georgia metro area. A purposefully selected sample helps the researcher support the research question (Dworkin, 2012; Nyman, Ballinger, Phillips, & Newton, 2013; Yin, 2012). In a purposive sampling, the researcher targets a special group where nonrandom participant selections are deliberate or difficult to locate (Dworkin, 2012; Nyman et al., 2013; Yin 2012).

To gain access to the owners, I personally delivered a letter of introduction and information (see Appendix C) that described the research, answered any questions from the owner and collected e-mail addresses. Once I established a pool of eligible participants, I explored information about the companies using their websites and the Georgia Secretary of State (2015) database. After the Institutional Review Board had granted approval number 05-18-16-0364755, I started the research process.

To establish a working relationship, I made telephone calls to potential participants to thank them for my initial visit, to thank them for their interest, and to ask them to expect an e-mail consisting of an invitation and consent form that must be signed and returned to participate in the study (Appendix A). Upon receiving signed consent forms, I reduced the list of 10 potential participants to two, centering selections around geographical location, diversity, and the personal fit between the participants and myself. A good fit between researcher and the participants increases trust and the likelihood of obtaining more detailed responses to interview questions (Pinsky, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2012). Participants not chosen for the study received an e-mail thanking them for their willingness to participate in the study and explaining the reason for exclusion, which included geographical location and diversity. Participants chosen for the study received a phone call to establish interview dates and times.

### **Research Method and Design**

Research methods and designs are the logistics that drive the direction that the researcher takes from the initial research question to the findings and conclusion of the study (Yin, 2012). Yin (2012) noted that methods used by the researcher, whether qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods were critical to the overall research results. I chose the qualitative research method for this study.

### **Research Method**

Qualitative research involves scope and flexibility of the study (Yin, 2012) which was useful when determining what strategies women entrepreneurs use to succeed in business beyond 5 years. Qualitative studies involve data collection using a variety of

designs including the case study, phenomenology, ethnology, and grounded theory (Yin, 2014). Quantitative research involves objective measurements of data using surveys and experiments to examine the predetermined hypothesis (Silverman, 2013). The mixed method includes qualitative and quantitative research and provides the opportunity to tackle a research question for in-depth, contextualized, and natural but time-consuming insights (Denzin, 2012). The mixed method approach is useful for the investigative perspectives of qualitative research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Collecting data to develop and test hypotheses as required in a quantitative study (Petty, Thomas, & Stew, 2012) was not necessary when exploring strategies entrepreneurs use to sustain a business for more than 5 years.

In this research project, I used a qualitative approach to explore the growth and stability of women who are entrepreneurial small business owners. In qualitative research methods, the researcher focuses on the holistic understanding of processes and experiences (Silverman, 2013; Yin, 2012; Zivkovic, 2012). Zivkovic (2012) indicated that qualitative research is appropriate to use when exploring the problem to understand a trend. In quantitative research methods, the researcher focuses on objective data measurements when examining a predetermined hypothesis (Silverman, 2013). In a qualitative method, often used in case study research, the researcher concentrates on the analysis of complex issues without the use of numeric data analysis (Silverman, 2013; Yin, 2012; Zivkovic, 2012). In qualitative research, there are no predetermined or precise measurements of the hypothesis as in quantitative or mixed methods research (Petty et al., 2012; Silverman, 2013; Zivkovic, 2012). I used a qualitative method for this study.

## **Research Design**

The qualitative research designs considered for this study included phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Each research design is different in scope, and each has its advantages and disadvantages (Yin, 2014). The choice of research design depends on the objective and nature of the study, consideration given to selecting a design (Yin, 2014). Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested that the choice of research design should include saturation data strategies that will improve the quality and validity of the study. Data saturation occurs when no new or relevant data emerges (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I used a case study research design for this study because it provided me the opportunity to collect data, observe participants in their natural location, and meet data saturation. I ensured data saturation when there was no need for additional data, and I continued to ask questions until answers became repetitive. When no apparent gaps or unexplained questions existed, and when enough information was available to answer the research question, data saturation occurred.

Case study research is a valuable tool when used to explore issues in their physical setting (Cronin, 2014; Shover, 2014; Yin, 2014). A phenomenological researcher provides a deep understanding of the phenomenon, but data saturation might be difficult to achieve since the area under study includes a large population of participants (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Ethnographic researchers require extensive time to collect data and a lengthy time in the field to interview members in an informal rather than semistructured format as used when conducting case study research (Shover, 2012; Yin, 2014). A grounded theorist requires a large number of participants to produce a theory, and theories are not necessary

components of this study (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Each research design including phenomenology, narrative, and grounded theory was suitable for this study, but the case study design was the most suitable given the timing and budget as well as validity and reliability of the research question.

Case study designs may be exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory (Yin, 2014). Yin noted that exploratory research is valuable in gaining an understanding of issues in the early stage of the study. Descriptive research helps when gathering information on the background or details on the topic, and explanatory is useful when elaborating on, building, or testing ideas (Yin, 2014). I used an exploratory case study approach to determine the strategies women entrepreneurs use that make them successful in small business ownership beyond 5 years. An exploratory case study approach provides an opportunity to understand the characteristics, background, and qualities of participants in their physical location (Yin, 2014).

### **Population and Sampling**

The population for this study included women who are hair salon owners in the Macon, Georgia metro area. For this purposive sample size of 10 business owners, the owners were required to have started as an entrepreneur and to have maintained a business for at least 5 years. Purposive sampling is a technique used in a qualitative investigation because it has characteristics relevant to the research questions, time in the field, and available resources (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012; Yin, 2012). Purposive sampling permits the researcher to acquire participants who are generous with information and who are highly knowledgeable in the field of study (Leedy & Ormrod,

2013). In a purposeful sampling, participant's selection is dependent upon the criterion of the study and may be nonrandom and deliberately targeted (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012).

For the purpose of this research, the women I selected were required to have started their business from its inception and to have handled company operations or management. There was no income limit for participants, but they had to be profitable and operate their business within the Macon, Georgia metro area. Only women were part of the study. I used Listservs databases that are frequently used by hair and skin care producers in the state of Georgia to identify potential participants. These databases provided hair salon listings by geographical areas; they were the source of reference for identifying women to participate in the study.

I interviewed each woman using a semistructured interview format, and I asked open-ended questions. Interviews, scheduled at the convenience of the participants, took place in a private area of the business location. Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013) posited that members are not likely to be distracted and will more likely share information when the interview took place in the comfort of their environment and scheduled at their convenience.

Purposeful sampling gives each participant an equal opportunity when representing others and permits the researcher to choose participants who might provide in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012; Yin, 2012). Selecting a purposive sample offers an opportunity to focus on the sample size or the number of people interviewed rather than the benchmarks used to select participants (Dworkin, 2012). Dworkin suggested that in qualitative studies, small sample sizes, rather

than large one, should be sufficient to meet data saturation because the focus is on gathering an understanding of the situation. Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested that data saturation focuses on the richness of the data rather than the size of the sample. Rich data, according to Fusch and Ness, refers to the quality of the data.

O'Reilly and Parker (2013) conveyed that data saturation includes the sample size, ending points, coding, and evaluating. Data saturation, occurring when data becomes repetitive (Fusch & Ness, 2015), ensures the quality and collection of adequate data that supports the study (Walker, 2012). Asking open-ended questions for a sample size of two and asking more questions until answers became repetitive assisted in achieving data saturation for this study. Purposeful data collection provides a greater chance of achieving data saturation (Dworkin, 2012). Using a sample size of two and asking precise questions until no new data occurred provided the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge and information and helped achieve data saturation at a faster pace.

### **Ethical Research**

I requested the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University to conduct this study. The Institutional Review Board requires approval before data collection when research involves people or human subjects (Chappy & Gaberson, 2012). The purpose of IRB is to assure that the participants are treated ethically in research and that their participation is voluntary (Chappy & Gaberson, 2012; Klitzman, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). After I had obtained approval number 05-18-16-0364755 from the Walden University IRB, I e-mailed potential participants to invite their participation in the study and to get their willingness to participate by electronically consenting to and returning the

Participant Consent form (see Appendix A). I explained the intent of the study and advised the participant of their right to withdraw from the study, before or during the study, by e-mail or verbal communication. Participants may withdraw from a research study at any time without consequences (Chappy & Gaberson, 2012). I advised the participants that the research participation is voluntary, confidential, and non-compensatable to the participants of the study. Incentives or compensation to participants may influence participation (Amarasinghe et al., 2013; Sánchez-Fernández, Muñoz-Leiva, & Montoro-Ríos, 2012; Yin, 2012). In an e-mail to the participants, I included a copy of the participant's consent form, a sample of the interview questions, explained the need for company documents and records, and explained the need to audio record the interview (see Appendix A).

In keeping with the Belmont Report (1979), I followed the ethical protocol involving human subjects at all stages of the research and I followed the three general principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. As the researcher, I maintained ethical obligations and integrity at all levels of research. I protected the names, rights and privacy of members at all time referring to members in written documents, labels, and files as Participant I and Participant II. I electronically stored participant's data on an external hard drive and in locked file cabinets for 5 years after which I will shred the manual files and destroy electronic storage files.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

I am the data collection instrument for this study. Yin (2012) described the data collector as the researcher who collects the research data. As the qualitative data collector, I asked fundamental open-ended questions in semistructured interview sessions to explore

strategies women used that help them succeed in business beyond 5 years. Richie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013) noted that the researcher might use more than one data collection instrument.

Semistructured interviews and collection of documents are other instruments chosen to assist with data collection. As the investigator, I collected documents and records that told the company success stories, and I held face-to-face interviews that were interactive and flexible. Yin (2012) suggested that in face-to-face interviews, asking open-ended questions assisted with collecting vital information and themes about the study.

It was important to build relationships and establish rapport with the participants when first arriving at the business location for the interview (Ritchie et al., 2013). I spent the first few moments making conversation that relaxed the participant but avoided discussing the research topic until the interview started. When the interview was ready to start, the participant and I moved to a private area to proceed without distractions.

At the beginning of the interview session, I introduced the research topic and provided a clear overview of the nature and purpose of the study. I reaffirmed confidentiality, sought permission to record the interview session, informed the participant of the non-compensated interview and advised them of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. As indicated by Ritchie et al. (2013), participants should have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

For reliability and consistency, I used the interview protocol and questions referenced in Appendix B and shared with participants in a pre-interview e-mail. I asked each participant the same questions. Ritchie et al. (2013) indicated that reliability occurs

when each participant is asked the same questions, in the same order. Yin (2012) noted that repeating data collection procedures and acquiring the same results make the data reliable.

For credibility and validity, I provided member checking during and after the interview. Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) suggested that member checking allows the participants to understand and determine the researcher's intent and actions, and it gives members a chance to correct errors and challenge incorrect interpretations. Member checking is effective during and after the interview (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). During the interview, I summarized or restated the information, and then question the participant to determine accuracy. After the interview, I shared the findings with the participants for their critical analysis and comments on the results. The participants either affirmed their views, their feelings, and experiences or challenged and corrected the interpretations.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Conducting face-to-face interviews provides an advantage to the interviewer during data collection (Richie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2012). During the site visit at the business location, the interviewer can discuss and collect information that documents the company's success (Yin, 2012). In-depth interview formats permit the researcher to explore factors to understand the participant's reasons, feelings, opinions and beliefs for answers given but also cause anxiety and frustrations, a disadvantage to the participants (Richie et al., 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2012). To guide and simplify the interview process, I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix B). During the interview, I employed member checking to ascertain the correct meaning of

participants responses by following up with additional questions if needed for clarity. Member checking provides participants the opportunity to evaluate the adequacy and meaning of the data (Reilly, 2013). Richie et al. (2013) suggested that introducing additional questions during a semistructured interview may produce in-depth knowledge and information. For accurate reporting of the participant's answers, I recorded the interview using digital voice recorders that included an Audacity voice recorder on my personal computer, an android cellular phone, and a digital remote recorder.

Collecting documents while on site serves as a convenience advantage to the participant and researcher by saving mail time and expenses (Yin, 2012). I reviewed documents including financial records, newspaper clippings, articles, recognitions, commendation, and other documents that told the company's success story. When data collection was complete, I used the interview notes and recording devices to transcribe the interview contents. Accurate transcription increases the dependability of data (Honan, 2014). I shared all findings with the participants, and while there may be no direct benefit to the participant, the knowledge gained might assist other entrepreneurs in sustaining their business beyond 5 years.

### **Data Organization Techniques**

To gather and track data during the interview, I followed an interview protocol (see Appendix A) and used three audio recording devices including an Audacity recorder on my personal computer, a handheld Sony audio recorder, and an audio recorder on a handheld personal cellular phone. An interview protocol is a useful tool to use when conducting and guiding the interview process (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I conducted performance checks

on all devices before the interview. Performance tests assure that devices are in great working conditions and that the sound is clear (Ritchie et al., 2013). Ritchie et al. suggested that recording is desired and recommended so that the researchers takes very few notes while interviewing to listen fully to the participant, and do the in-depth probing. Recording provides an accurate record of the interview, capturing the language, hesitations, and tone (Ritchie et al., 2013; Yin, 2012).

I collected documents including news clippings, financial statements, and balance sheets, during the interview session, which was useful in documenting the business success. Yin (2012) suggested that document collections help provide an in-depth picture of the study. To organize the data, I used a Microsoft Word spreadsheet and recorded information by theme, application, and date. I also digitally scanned interview transcripts, and field notes and saved them by theme, application, and date. Organization provides convenience and organizing by theme, application, date, and participant, helps when reviewing and extracting data (Campbell et al., 2013; Flannery & Gormley, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I utilized a research journal to record events and documents during the research project. A journal will be useful for recording the collection of company documents, the interview date, beginning and ending time, and location (Ritchie et al., 2013; Yin, 2012).

To organize data, I utilized an Excel spreadsheet and Nvivo software to track, code, and analyze data. NVivo software is a well-established tool for analyzing interview data (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012; Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2015). An Excel spreadsheet was useful for gathering themes to analyze and coding data collected during interviews, and recording participant's identification numbers. Secured documents,

electronic files, and hardcopy documents should remain password protected in fireproof locked file storage (Wahyuni, 2012) for 5 years (Yin, 2012). I will secure all documents, maintain the only passwords to electronic files and the only key to lock file storage for 5 years, then destroy all files.

### **Data Analysis**

Analyzing data was a critical component of qualitative research (Pittaway & Thorpe, 2012; Ritchie et al., 2013; Yin, 2012). Ritchie et al. (2013) noted that the researcher's ability to gather, comprehend, and manage data are significant and challenging stages of the data analysis process. Pittaway and Thorpe (2012) noted that demonstrating rigorous data analysis through a careful and comprehensive articulation of data is critical to improving the qualitative entrepreneurship research. In this qualitative exploratory case study, I used semistructured interview questions as one source for the methodological triangulation as demonstrated by Heale and Forbes (2013) data analysis process. Heale and Forbes suggested that methodological triangulation enhances data analysis when conducting case study research, and ensures comprehensive data collections when utilizing multiple data sources. To determine the strategies used by women small business owners with demonstrated business success over a 5 year period, I used methodological triangulation and collected company financial statements, articles, reviews, and interview data.

To ensure the credibility of the data, I carefully read notes, listen to record responses from the interview questions and conduct an in-depth analysis of each interview before analyzing the data. I transcribed the interview recordings and e-mailed participants the material to determine accuracy and meaning. Member checking ensures the accuracy of

language and meaning (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Houghton et al., 2013; Sinkovics & Alfoldi). Once the data was deemed accurate by the participants, I uploaded data into NVivo 10 computer software program, for coding, pattern and theme development, and data clarification. Onwuegbuzie et al. (2012) posited that NVivo10 software is a good software for qualitative researchers' use in identifying patterns, and it enhances transparency in the analytical process and reduces time spent on data analysis. The numbers assigned to ensure confidentiality in the NVivo software matched the participant's number. I used the themes that emerged during data analysis in the NVivo software to understand the research question and to develop the findings. The entrepreneurship theory grounded this study on strategies women entrepreneurs use to become business owners who sustain their business operation for 5 years or more. I correlated the findings from this study with other studies to identify strategies that might help women succeed in business beyond 5 years.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity help define the strength of research data as opined by Ritchie et al. (2013). Ritchie et al. explained that the term reliability means research is consistent, dependable or replicable. Validity ensures the trustworthiness and credibility of data (Yin, 2014).

#### **Reliability**

Reliability results when the outcome of the study remains constant and produces the same results when replicated (da Mota Pedrosa, Naslund, & Jasmand, 2012; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012; Street & Ward, 2012). Street and Ward (2012) noted that reliability demonstrated dependable, consistent, and replicable outcome. In qualitative research; reliability is noted

equivalent to credibility, trustworthiness, consistency, and dependability of the evidence (Ritchie et al., 2013). Dependability relates to reliability (Munn, Porritt, Lockwood, Aromataris, & Pearson, 2014).

Ritchie et al. (2013) explained the need to assure data quality and interpretation as well as the need to assure reader's trustworthiness by providing information about the process. In the study to identify strategies women used that made them successful in business past 5 years, I used member checking to ensure quality and accuracy of data interpretation. To establish credibility, I used methodological triangulation to detail data collecting from a variety of sources including participant's interview responses, articles, websites, and financial statements. Member checking will help in assuring dependability and credibility (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Houghton et al., 2013; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012) since I provided the opportunity for participants to confirm the meaning of their transcribed data.

### **Validity**

One basic function of validity in research was to generate authentic and valid results for a study (Ritchie et al., 2013). In qualitative research, the validity of the study results relates to dependability, trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability (Ouwuegbuzie et al., 2012). For validity enhancing strategies, I used methodological triangulation, a tape recorder, and member checking. Member checking adds to the dependability of my study results assuring dependability and credibility (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Houghton et al., 2013; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Dependability is similar to confirmability; confirmability refers to the neutrality and accuracy of data (Houghton et al., 2013). For

accuracy, I established confirmability of data by developing themes and words frequencies with NVivo.

Triangulation is useful when checking the validity of data and help confirm and improve the clarity or precision in research findings (Ritchie et al., 2013). Bekhet and Zauszniewski (2012) explained that methodological triangulation enhances the credibility of study results and involves more than one data collection method. The three forms of data collections I used to add credibility to my study included semistructured interviews, document review, and member checking. Member checking is a participant validation technique that helps to improve accuracy and provides credibility in qualitative research (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Houghton et al., 2013; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012).

Trustworthiness of data serves as a form of validation to check the accuracy and transferability (Ho, 2012). Transferability of a study is a detailed description and finding for the reader's use in determining comparability with other situations (Ho, 2012). To enhance transferability of my case study research, I provided detailed descriptions of my data and findings; however, transferability is always the choice of the reader to decide (Ritchie et al., 2013). To assure data saturation, I collected information until there was no new themes or information as demonstrated by Fusch and Ness (2015).

### **Transition and Summary**

Women entrepreneurs start businesses twice as often as men do; however, sustainability becomes an issue because businesses owned by women close before reaching 5 years of operation while businesses owned by men continue to survive (DOC, 2014). The intent of this study is to determine how small salon operators use strategies for business

sustainability past 5 years. The results of the research may influence social change by providing information to other women small business owners to improve business longevity. Section 1 of the study includes the background of the problem, the purpose of the research, and the nature of the study. Section 2 of the study includes information on methods and designs, the researcher's role, study participants, population, and population sampling. Section 2 also includes data collection techniques, the analysis process, the instruments to collect and analyze data, reliability, and validation of the data. In Section 3, I included information on research outcomes, findings, professional practice, social change, and recommendations for further studies. I outlined my experiences and biases and discussed any change in thinking that is different because of the research.

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

Section 3 includes a detailed description of the results of the study's findings. In Section 3, I will share the (a) presentation of findings, (b) application to professional practice, (c) implications for social change, (d) recommendations for action and further research, and (e) reflections on my experiences of the research.

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore the strategies women small business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years. To gain an understanding of the phenomenon, I conducted semistructured face-to-face interviews with two small business salon owners located in the Macon, Georgia metro area. Data for the study came from face-to-face interviews and company documents. Company documents included strategic business plans dated January 31, 2015, strategic business plans dated January 31, 2016, balance sheets ending December 31, 2015, budgets for the year ending December 31, 2016, income statements for the month ending January 2016. Company documents also included business meeting notes dated February 1, 1997, and July 1, 2015, awards for years 2009 through 2015, cosmetology degrees, and cosmetology licenses. The semi-structured interviews and collection of company documents provided methodological triangulation of the data. After reviewing and transcribing the data from each interview session, I loaded the participants' responses and documents into NVivo 10 software, which helped me develop and categorize themes. The analysis of data in NVivo 10 software revealed three strategies that women who are salon owners use to build lasting and sustainable businesses. The first strategy was passion and motivation, with the owner

having the passion for business success and motivation to assist employees in improving skills, service to customers, and ethics. The second strategy focused on building a successful business operation, and the third concentrated on human relations. The findings showed key strategies that salon owners used to build a successful business centered around employee and customer satisfaction, which leads to increased profits and sustainability.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The research question that guided this study was: What strategies do women small business salon owners need to succeed in business beyond 5 years. To gain an understanding of strategies women use to sustain their business past 5 years, I conducted semistructured interviews with 2 salon owners in the Macon, Georgia metro area. Each owner met the criteria of being a women entrepreneur who owned and operated a business for 5 or more years. Ten salon owners were selected using a convenience sample that allowed me the opportunity to obtain relevant information by contacting owners about participating in the study. Convenience sampling provides maximum opportunity for repetition and relevance of findings for data saturation (Walker, 2012; Reilly, 2013).

After personally delivering a welcome letter to each selected owner, I emailed a consent form and selected the first two participants that returned the form consenting to participate. Both selected owners met the study's criteria and had extensive experience and expertise in the hair salon industry. After receiving the consent forms, I contacted participants by phone to arrange the interview time and site. Each participant agreed to have the interview recorded. During the interview, which I conducted over a 2-day period, I asked each participant 7 interview questions (see Appendix B) and performed member

checking during and after the interview to strengthen the validity of the results. Each interview, conducted in a private area at the participant business location, lasted less than an hour. Member checking, conducted after asking the last interview question, lasted less than 7 minutes. After completing each interview, I collected the participants' documents, which included strategic business plans, balance sheets, budgets, income statements, business meeting notes, company awards, cosmetology degrees, and cosmetology licenses.

I transcribed the recorded interview data personally and replaced each participant name with the codes P1 and P2. After 1 week, I shared a review of the summarized transcript with each participant at their location to clarify and verify responses. Company documents received codes of D1 (business strategic plans, January 31, 2015); D2 (business strategic plans, January 31, 2016); D3 (balance sheet ending December 31, 2015); and D4 (budgets for the year ending December 31, 2016). Company documents also received codes D5 (income statement for the month of January 2016); D6 (business meeting notes, February 1, 1997, and July 1, 2015); and D7 (Habitat for Humanity Outstanding Performance & Volunteer awards from 2009 through 2015). Company documents included cosmetology degrees and cosmetology licenses as code D8. The use of additional documents enhances methodical triangulation of the data (Walsh, 2013). The next step was to load the interview data and company documents into NVivo for coding and analysis of themes. Five relevant categories emerged from the coded data (a) customer-centric (b) human relations (c) motivation (d) innovation (e) skills and education. Using Yin's 5 step analytic strategy approach, I sorted the five relevant categories into three key themes: (a)

motivational influences, (b) building a successful business operation, and (c) human relations. Additionally, I discussed each category under the key- or sub-theme.

The entrepreneurship theory drove this research and focused on the creativity, innovations, and the ability of women to create and run a business with the intent to make a profit (Brush & Cooper, 2012; Geho, 2013; Murmann & Sardana, 2013; Santandreu-Mascarell et al., 2013). Entrepreneurs build new markets and establish new and efficient ways to organize and run businesses (Santandreu-Mascarell et al., 2013). Participants in this study used creative ways to market their businesses. P1 used signs on both sides of the street to enhance visibility and to advertise the location and products of the business. P1 and P2 created an elegant salon that the customers could feel proud of and spread the word of mouth advertising about the salon's location, business products, and services. To make a profit, P1 and P2 developed operating budgets to determine the cost of operation and included calculations of the number of booth rentals needed to help maximize profits for the business. Each participant used fee for services to help offset their salaries (D4, operating budget, for the year ending December 31, 2016). Like P1, P2 used window advertising to increase visibility for the business and to promote products and services. P2 established operating procedures for consistency in managing and directing business relations. Each owner used creative and innovative ways to make profits. Both participants showed me financial statements (D3, balance sheets dated December 31, 2015; D5 income statements for January 2016) that reflected profit for the business, and presented business plans (D1, business strategic plans, January 31, 2016) that included business strategies for company

growth and expansion. The participants' responses were consistent with previous research by Hanif (2013), who indicated that basic strategies are necessary for business success.

In addition to advertising, the women business owners provided excellent customer services to the consumers and created a positive environment for employee satisfaction. Employees willing to sign a 2-year contract had the option to attend paid training offered by P2 as a way to help individuals build skills and knowledge about new developments in the field, which included the latest trends and styles for customers and the business. To motivate the employees to give quality services to customers and commitment to the business, P1 noted during member checking that employee participated in contests to select the hair stylist of the year, who would have the option to participate in local and state hair shows. I observed photos of the winners that were elegantly framed and made part of the office décor. P1 and P2 offered Christmas parties each year for customers and employees to thank them for their services. P1 noted that building personal relationships with employees and customers contributed to repeat customers and satisfied employees. Personal relationships, education, economic, and human relations were major factors to the women's business performance, economic growth, and the environment (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013a). The themes identified in this study denote common business management attributes that successful women business owners have in common. These similarities could be helpful tools that benefit other women in the development of successful business operations that remain operational for 5 years or more.

## **Participants**

Participants considered for this study came from a search of the Georgia Secretary of State Board of Cosmetology website. I selected 10 active salons that met the profile needed for the study in the Macon, Georgia metro geographical area. Ten prospects received a welcome letter, and 8 were interested in participation. Eight prospects received an email consent to participate, and 2 were purposely chosen to participate in the face-to-face, recorded interviews (see Table 1). Salon owners selected for the study had 25 years of experience in the cosmetology industry.

Table 1

*Response from Business*

Salon Prospects	Number Responding	Percentage of Response
Number of Contacts	10	100%
Number Conflicts/Declines	2	20%
Non-Respondents	4	40%
Total Respondents	4	40%

**Emergent Theme One: Motivational Influence**

The first theme to emerge from the data collection was the owners' motivation to start, build, and maintain a successful small business. Each participant discussed their motivation to create a business that had the ability to grow and emerge as the best small business in the city. Dalborg, von Friedrichs, and Vincent (2015) indicated that motivation is key to building a successful business, and the absence of it hinders growth and success. When discussing motivation, mentioned by each participant in 5 interview questions, having

a passion for entrepreneurship was their driving force to business ownership. The desire for flexibility, financial rewards, and independence were three specific motives for entrepreneurship identified by the research. A common motive stated by each participant was the desire to leave the corporate work sector because of job dissatisfaction and value.

The findings of this study were consistent with previous research by McGowan et al. (2013), which showed that women's motivation for small business ownership included the desire to be independent, the desire to have flexibility, and the desire to be economically self-reliant. Table 2 shows the occurrence frequency of sub-themes that generated from the analysis of data on why women are motivated to start and sustain a successful business. These sub-themes, discussed later in the findings, impact the strategies women use to succeed in business past 5 years.

Table 2

*Frequency of Sub-themes*

Themes	Reference	% frequency of occurrence
Independence	8	50%
Flexibility	5	31%
Financial Success	3	19%

**Independence.** Women's motivation for success included the desire for independence. Owners require dedication to be and stay independent as noted by P1 in interview questions 1, 2, 4, and 5. Each participant indicated that their desire to be

independent grew out of job dissatisfaction. Each participant also indicated that their interest in entrepreneurship continued to grow as they witnessed inequalities in the workplace. While P2 had the early aspiration of becoming an entrepreneur, the encouragement to get involved came from her family members after she experienced struggles at a full-time salaried job. Similarly, the thought of becoming an entrepreneur for P1 was not a consideration until her spouse approached her with the idea after she endured challenges at a day job. For P1, her spouse's suggestion sparked her interest to learn more about business ownership in the area where she possessed very strong skills. Each participant discussed the desire to become an entrepreneurial small business owner and what was needed to be successful in business. P1 developed a passion for sharing her skills with others, finding mentors in the cosmetology field, and acquiring education to enhance her skills (D8, cosmetology degrees & cosmetology licenses). P2 entered full-time post-secondary education to enhance her skills and business development. Consistent with previous research, family encouragement and support was a motivation for P1 and P2 to start an entrepreneurial small business. Independence and passion motivate women entrepreneurs in business startups and having strong skills in the area impacts entrepreneurial success (Block, Sandner, & Spiegel, 2015; Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2012; Krishnamoorth & Balasubramani, 2014). Through member checking, one participant mentioned that working as a business owner was more satisfying and more demanding than regular employment because of the need for longer work hours and greater personal investments and involvement. Job dissatisfaction motivates individuals to become entrepreneurs (Block et al., 2015; Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2012; Krishnamoorth &

Balasubramani, 2014). The findings of this study showed that motivation, skills, education, and other personal characteristics impact the success of business start-ups, growth, and success, which affect strategic decisions, business performance, and survival.

**Flexibility.** Each participant mentioned flexibility as an important contributor and motivator for becoming a business start-up. Occupational flexibility provides the opportunity to choose personal work hours and successfully balance personal and business life (Lee & Stearns, 2012; MCGowan et al., 2012). P1 and P2 indicated passion for the skill they possessed and cited flexibility as a motivator that reduced stressors such as having the ability to achieve work-life balance. Each stated a sense of accomplishment in business ownership that was unattainable in regular employment because of more professional and creative control. The flexibility to manage family situations was important to each participant, and while their familial role influenced their decisions to pursue entrepreneurship, work-life balance was not the key motivator for becoming a business start-up. Each participant of this study was married at the time of their business startup but did not depend on the small business for childcare although the flexibility of business ownership provided flexibility for child transport, emergency issues, control, and influence. Having the freedom to control the personal schedule was a key motivator for business startup. P1 and P2 found comfort in knowing they did not have to rely on others for childcare and support when working the required long hours, as they could provide care and oversight at the workplace if the spouse had conflicting schedules. During member checking, P2 stated that the flexibility to earn money to support the family without relying on others to care for the children while they worked was an important motivator. P1 stated during member checking

that the flexibility to contribute to the community through mentoring, employing citizens, and providing services that contribute to health and beauty of the population was motivators that impacted the business success and sustainability. P1 showed documents where the entire staff worked yearly on a project to rebuild homes for a needy family (D7, Habitat For Humanity Appreciation Awards, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015). Consistent with research on women who are small business owners, P1 and P2 stated their flexibility in allowing other women employees to utilize flex work schedules and job-sharing opportunities to balance work and family situations (D6, Business meeting notes, July 2015). The data from the document review of the meeting notes detailed how employees discussed utilizing flex schedules to take care of family and personal business without jeopardizing customer care. P2 noted that allowing the worker to utilize flex schedules served as a huge fringe benefit for employees. Women are motivated to become entrepreneurial business owners because of the needs and differences that impact flexibility in the workplace (Ratten, 2016).

**Financial Success and Income Security.** Each participant mentioned the importance of using financial strategies to build wealth for their business. However, consistently mentioned in the literature but not by a participant of this study, was that women purposely created lower profit businesses. Kautonen et al. (2012) suggested that American women did not prioritize building financial resources for their small businesses. Consistent with the current research findings, Dalborg, von Friedrichs, and Vincent (2015) and Chamorrow-Premuzic et al. (2014) found that women entrepreneurial business owners were motivated to create financial goals that created wealth for their small business. P1 and P2 mentioned

using personal funds for a business start-up and stated that they later acquired business financing to grow and sustain their business.

During member checking, P1 mentioned that one should not use the personal funding to create a business venture because it could lead to management issues especially when personal funds are needed to meet personal obligations but are not available because of business use. P1 mentioned strategically planning to meet financial obligations that created profits for the business by determining the number of booth rental needed to help cover business expenses (D2, Business Strategic Plans, January 2016; D3, Balance Sheet ending December 2015). P2 also stated that booth rentals along with fees for services rendered help to sustain business profits after taking care of business expenses (D4, Budget for the year ending, December 2016). P2 mentioned that selling products (D5, Income Statement, January 2016) added to the profits of the business. However, P1 noted that advertising and selling product was taxing on management who found it difficult to maintain adequate inventory. The financial rewards for each participant confirm previous research indicating that work-life balance supports the ability to earn money for the support of family without relying on others to care for their children while working. Balancing work and life issues were not the key reason for business start-up for P1 or P2, but having flexibility to manipulate their schedules when needed, whether for family vacations or transporting children, were enriching. Likewise, having measured control over when, where, and how to work were satisfying and beneficial to the owner and employees of their business.

### **Emergent Theme Two: Building a Successful Business Operation**

The second theme to emerge from the interview responses was the owner's desire to create a business for success and sustainability as noted in interview questions 1 through 7. P1 noted the intent to build a business with the ability to expand and make a profit (D1, business strategic plan dated January 31, 2015). P2 expressed having the desire to build a business reputation known throughout the Macon/Bibb area (D1, business strategic plan dated January 31, 2015). Previous research indicated that to succeed in business, owners must develop career plans, long term goals, visions of where they want to be and plans on how to get there (Anderson et al., 2012; Glaub, Frese, Fischer, and Hoppe, 2014).

Two strategies emerged as being extremely important to a successful business outcome: (a) mentoring, and (b) building the business brand. While P1 used mentoring opportunities to learn business methods and procedures, P2 chose to expand upon the previously earned 4-year college degree and enroll in cosmetology school to enhance skills and to build on previous business knowledge and experiences (D8, BS degree, & cosmetology degree). P1, who had skills and a cosmetology degree but worked in a different field, chose to leave regular employment and start a business (D8, cosmetology degree & cosmetology license). P1 developed a plan of action which included choosing a mentor to shadow in the industry with the intent to work and build on business ownership. P1 first mentioned shadowing a man owner/operator for 2 years and then shadowing a woman owner/operator for an additional 2 years.

Two noteworthy differences emerged from the data that included *working in* and *working on* the business. P1 noted that business operations that were owned and managed by the male mentor were very successful, organized, and client focused, but, the women

operated business struggled with management issues including hiring the right stylists. P1 credited strategic differences on management and work style of men versus women. P1 shared the experiences and noted in member checking that the male business owners hired employees and contracted with others to take care of the business needs and demands while he *worked on* the business, promoting the business brand, advertising product, and services, and increasing value of employees by providing opportunities for skills building. P1 also noted that the women owner/operator *worked in* the business in every capacity, performing the role of business operators, managers, janitorial, bookkeeper and all the other duties as required for business operation. P1 noted that the women business owner lacked time to build and promote the business brand, the business products, and services. Consistent with research, there are differences between the business role of men and women when they start, build, and grow business ventures (Ratten, 2016).

P1 discussed success factors in each of the 7 interview questions. P2 discussed success factors in 6 interview questions noting that as a women business owner, she worked in each area of the business, serving in the role of manager, bookkeeper, janitorial, secretary, marketing and all other duties as needed. P2 stated that she worked in this capacity for several months but could see no gain on the balance sheet. After one year, P2 reorganized and developed a business plan that would maximize business opportunities and profits (D2, business strategic plans, January 31, 2016).

P2, although educated and skilled, used personal funds to start her business and did not have financial resources to hire employees or market the business. After developing business strategies, P2 secured business loans for business operations. P2 hired others

staffers to run the business and rented booths to help sustain business income. P2 started to *work on* the business and used educational knowledge and skills to help sustain and grow the business.

Pooling knowledge and resources to grow and sustain business ventures are consistent with research by McKeever, Jack, and Anderson (2015) who explored entrepreneurial success from an educational perspective. Consistent with previous research, small businesses increase job opportunities. Hiring employees make a huge economic impact on the community (Belz & Binder, 2013; Goetz, Fleming, & Rupasingha, 2012).

Table 3

*Frequency of Sub-themes mentioned for Business Success Strategies*

Source	References	% Frequency of occurrence
P1 and P2, Interview Q1	3	08%
P1 and P2, Interview Q2	6	18%
P1 and P2, Interview Q3	8	24%
P1 and P2, Interview Q4	4	12%
P1 and P2, Interview Q5	6	18%
P1 and P2, Interview Q6	4	12%
P1 Interview Q7	3	08%
Total	34	100%

**Emergent Theme Three: Human Relationships**

The third theme to emerge from the study is human relationships. Human relations are vital to building the value of the business and give the business a competitive advantage,

which impact cost and economic sustainability (Bengesi & Roux, 2014; Allen, Ericksen, & Collins, 2013). Bengesi and Roux (2014) indicated that business strategies that focus on the needs of customers are an effective approach to address challenges in a competitive business environment. Fostering good relationships between management and employees by training employees, addressing their needs, and creating a positive workplace climate helps to sustain the business (Allen et al., 2013). Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013a) indicated that human relations are major contributors to women business performance, economic growth, and the environment. Three categories emerged from the coded data and company documents which included customer and employee relations, network, and community involvement. Table 4 shows frequency of human relations sub-themes mentioned during interviews with participants.

Table 4

*Frequency of Sub-themes mentioned for Human Relations*

Categories	References	% Frequency of Occurrence
Customer and Employee Relations	16	62%
Networking	7	26%
Community Involvement	3	12%

**Customer and Employee Relations.** Participants responses to interview questions 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 indicated that good relationship with customers, employees, and the community helps to grow and sustain the business. A review of document (D7, outstanding performance award, January 15, 2014) showed how the business and its employees impact

the community. P1 indicated that employees of the company are the most important part of what makes the business grow. P1 and P2 stated that when the employees work well as a team, they are more focused on meeting the goals and objective as planned.

Each participant discussed how employees work together on projects, communicate ideas, and motivate each other to get things done. During member checking, P2 noted that without a stable and pleasant workplace climate managing challenges that arise within the business would be difficult. P1 and P2 noted that having an engaging workplace climate and employees who are knowledgeable and skilled help attract loyal customers and help the business more easily adapt to changing markets and challenges.

P2 noted in member checking that retaining quality employees and helping them to remain interested and participatory in the business activities and functions, requires flexibility, patience, and compassion. P2 also noted that while focusing on retention requires sufficient time and efforts, it is cost effective for the business because it eliminates time and energy and helps the business stay financially sound by reducing the cost to recruit and train new employees. P1 stated in member checking that having healthy relationships in the workplace was motivational to employees and important in driving cohesiveness and in increasing productivity. Employees who are motivated and interested in the well-being of others are more productive than those who are not and offers help when and where needed to improve outcome (Boxall, 2013).

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research by Allen, Ericksen, and Collins (2013), which indicates that human relations and the capacity to interact effectively with people significantly increases business success and longevity. The findings indicated

that good relationships with employee and customers help the small business grow and survive. Small business owners depend on employees to utilize their knowledge and skills to accomplish the business goals (Allen et al., 2013). P2 noted that when there are unity and purpose with the staff, the employees feel connected, and problem solving and innovation expands. Also, P2 added that satisfied employees utilize their knowledge and behavior to attract and retain customers, which increase sales and profits. A review of the business strategic plans (D2, business strategic plans, January 31, 2015) showed that the company awards employees who recruit a minimum of 4 new customers per month with various gifts and monetary awards. The plans also show that customers who refer new customers receive a 10% discount on fees for service and free hair services when they refer 5 or more in a one year period.

The results of the study are consistent with previous research and align with the entrepreneurship theory noted by Hoang and Yi (2015) who described entrepreneurs as individuals that create and organize the business to make a profit. Eisenhardt (2013) suggested that entrepreneurs small business owners experience success when they hire highly qualified employees and implement well-informed business practices. Small business entrepreneurs who take competitive advantage of market and staffing opportunities have lasting business operations and profits, which signifies growth and success (Bonte & Piegeler, 2012; Yusuf et al., 2014).

**Networking and Community Involvement.** Participants indicated that women entrepreneur small business owners need to network with community leaders, organizations, and associations to succeed in business. P1 discussed network opportunities in interview

question 7 and each participant discussed community involvement in interview question 7. Although community involvement and networking are missing in this research, it is consistent with previous research finding by Compton and Pollak (2013) that indicated that women business owners could benefit from network and community involvement. Other research studies on women small business owners, noted that networking, whether in local, state or federal areas, is key to women business ownership success (Gupta et al., 2014; Haus, Steinmetz, Isidor & Kabst, 2013; Sullivan & Meek, 2012). Blackburn et al. noted that more educated women small business owners take advantage of network opportunities as a way to increasing knowledge, opportunities, and personal growth. P1 stated that the business targets clubs or events that best meet their business interest. P1 shared a business plan that describes the network and community participation events (D1, business strategic plans, January 31, 2016). P1 and P2 stated that they encourage community involvement and schedule local events where all employee meets and jointly offer services and assistance. When asked about networking in member checking, P2 noted the use of online networking to increase the coverage area and outreach to consumers. All participants mentioned using word of mouth to consumers and others to grow sales and encourage customers to come to the business. During member checking, P2 noted incorporating volunteering for at least one charity event per year into the strategic business plans (D7, Habitat for Humanity Volunteer Awards). P2 noted that all employees participated and looked forward to participating each year, knowing that they were helping to make the world a better place. P1 and P2 gained benefits from volunteer participation and received loyal customers.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The study is significant to understanding the reasons that small businesses fail and why only 50% succeed beyond 5 years. The objective of this study was to explore the strategies that women business owners use to stay in business beyond 5 years and to analyze the finding of the strategies that impact success and sustainability. The findings and recommendations of the study could serve as the foundation for women entrepreneurial business owners to achieve business growth and success by changing operational styles and methods. The result could be a guide to assist women who are entrepreneurs who are struggling to survive as they improve their strategies and practices. The findings of this study might also assist women who are business owners in improving their professional practices that could lead to better strategic decisions making, increased motivation, skills, education, and other personal characteristics that impact the success of business start-ups, growth, success, business performance, and survival.

The results of this study supported the entrepreneurship theory. The results indicated the strategies women entrepreneurial small business owners use to develop, organize, and manage a business with the intent to make a profit. Entrepreneurship represents self-employment of any type, and the entrepreneur is the person that innovates and assumes the risk of the business (Murmman & Sardana, 2013; Santandreu-Mascarell, Garzon, & Knorr, 2013). The findings were significant to professional practice, and this finding would provide an in-depth look at the inner workings and interactions of women entrepreneur small business owners to determine what strategies these owners used to sustain their business beyond a 5 year period. Women entrepreneurial business owners would use key strategies

on motivation, success strategies, business value, and human relations to improve sustainability and growth. Hughes et al., (2012) indicated that if appropriate resources were in place to meet the needs of women entrepreneurial business owners, their business could improve in sustainability and growth.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Women-owned small businesses represent the fastest growing populations in the United States (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013). Thirty percent of all U.S. small businesses have women owners, supplying 23 million jobs that help sustain individual workers and the economic security of the family, community, and the nation (Sarasvathy et al., 2013). Small businesses recovered faster during the economic downturn and women small business owners added jobs when larger companies were losing jobs (Geho & Frakes, 2013, McGowan et al., 2012, Moscarini & Postel-Vinay, 2012). Small businesses are vital to the health of communities in the United States and are the primary engines of innovation and growth (Gale & Brown, 2013; Gili, Roca, Basu, McKee, & Stuckler, 2013). Small businesses close at a rate of 50% after five years (DOC, 2014). When small businesses fail, unemployment may increase, and the economic conditions can suffer (Phillips & Land, 2012; SBA, 2014). Nasr and Boujelbene (2014) indicated that training and academic programs in small business ownership could help expand knowledge and skills for future small business owners. Providing business strategies used by successful women business owners could help improve business performance, growth, and sustainability. Knowledge gained from this study could be used to create professional development programs and training resources. The business strategies may positively affect future business owners who

desire to start and maintain a business. The study could impact social change when adding jobs and reducing unemployment. The finding if used by business owners could also affect social behavior as families who are employed may not depend on government assistance and live in low-income communities.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Successful women business owners can take a leadership role to assist business owners who experience challenges in business sustainability. Women who have improved business operation and maintained their business for more than 5 years could share their experience and expertise with other women small business owners (Phillips & Knowles, 2012) to assist with business growth and development. Three recommended strategies are noted for future and current women business owners from this study: (a) getting motivated to create a lasting and highly functioning business, (b) developing strategies that will help grow and sustain the business, (c) focus on customer service and employee relations satisfaction.

The first recommendation from this study is for women entrepreneurial to develop a passion for business ownership when they are ready to pursue their dream of starting their entrepreneurship business. Having a passion for business ownership was a driving force that participants consistently discussed that help them achieve and sustain business success. The owners often referred to a desire to be independent, the desire to have flexibility, and the desire to be economically self-reliant. The business owners noted their satisfaction with business ownership that helped them achieve a work-life balance where they could earn money to support the family and provide care and support to the children while they worked.

This information is recommended for use by current or aspiring women business owner and will help in reducing obstacles that women might face. This information will also support options for self-employment when women are gainfully employed and face difficulties and demands of child and family care. Women are willing to learn from each other and sharing tips and resources could help other women business owners increase the longevity of their business (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013). Sharing how small business ownership requires hard work and how it provides independence, flexibility and the opportunity to balance work and life with other women can help them with building a long and lasting business.

The second recommendation was to create highly efficient and proficient workplace by strategically developing goals to help grow and expand the business. Using mentors, building the business brand, and building the financial base were important to the participants of this study. Information gain through this research can be useful research to develop training material and tools for other women small business owners use in growing and sustaining their business. Training keys and information could be the material used by community colleges training programs, the Small Business Development training programs, and Workforce Development, which is a local program designed to provide training and work options to dislocated worked and those in danger of becoming dislocated.

The third recommendation to business owners who seek to achieve success in business operations is to focus on the customers and employees, which adds business value and business longevity. Customer service and employee satisfaction were very important to business sustainability for participants of this study. The participants focused on offering top-notch services to customers in a nice, friendly, and relaxing environment. The

participants also focused on having happy and satisfied employees who were highly skilled and who could and wanted to provide top quality services to customers and employees. This information could be disseminated to women organizations and would be useful information to create training programs for current and inspiring business women. I would disseminate the findings of the study through journals and conferences, and present information at workshops and conventions. I would offer seminars and workshops for women business owners on creating business value and longevity to community colleges, Workforce Development Offices, and the Small Business Administration.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that women small business salon owners needed to succeed in business past 5 years. Further research could increase the knowledge and expertise on the strategies that entrepreneurial women business owners need to expand economic opportunities for their business (Braunerhjelm & Henrekson, 2013). The research questions and answers might have provided insufficient data, and the participants' ability to interpret the questions and communicate the answers might be limited but member checking provided means for participants to answer more questions and expand on their answers. Recommendations for further research might involve the addition of different types of small businesses and different geographical locations to determine if the results are specific to the type of business studied. Also, a larger sample size of participants is recommended to determine if the data might yield similar or different results. The larger sample size might make it easier to obtain richer information that might be useful in understanding the strategies women small business owners need to sustain a business past 5

years. Future research could also test different research questions and extend the length of the study.

### **Reflections**

During the study of small business entrepreneurial owners, I met small business owners and gained an understanding of their world of owning and managing a sustainable business. Each owner interviewed shared similar passions and desires to succeed in business. They cared about their business and products, and without their leadership and ambition to succeed, the sustainability of their company may have had very different outcomes. I gained greater levels of respect for entrepreneurial small business owners or those interested in starting small business ventures, especially women, who unlike men, have difficulties accessing capital for a startup because of this experience.

While I found no research bias because I have no personal experience in small business ownership, this research experience has changed my thinking and has encouraged me to explore additional opportunities and resources that might help women owners gain financial stability and success. This research has also motivated me to develop and share success keys that might be useful to others in establishing, maintaining and sustaining successful businesses.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

There are over 9 million women-owned business in the United States, employing nearly 8 million workers and generating over \$1.4 trillion in revenues (SBA, 2014). Women small business entrepreneurial owners are a large and influential workforce in the American economy, owning 30% of all small businesses (Brush & Cooper, 2012). The main problem

of women-owned small business is that 50% cease to operate beyond 5 years. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how women small business owners develop and implement business strategies to sustain their business beyond 5 years and to better understand the experiences that help women owners succeed. The result of the study might assist in improving business growth and survival rates, which leads to better economic security. I used semistructured interviews to gain insight into the strategies women business owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Two salon owners in the metro area of Macon, Georgia participated in semistructured interviews to answer the research question: What strategies do women salon business owners need to succeed in business beyond 5 years? I collected data using semistructured interviews and triangulated the data by reviewing articles, business plans, financial statements, and interview data.

The successful entrepreneur business owner develops new ideas that expand business growth and opportunities by creating and implementing strategies focused on success (Braunerhjelm & Henrekson, 2013). The findings of this study show that successful women entrepreneurs business owners depend on numerous layers of support including skilled labor, support services, and market shares, but manager's leadership and support are essential to a successful venture. Five categories relating to building value and growth emerged from the research data and document review: (a) customer-centric, (b) human relations, (c) innovation (d) motivation, and (e) skills and education. The results of the study showed that owners increase business chances of success when they maintain planned growth strategies.

Participants of the study indicated achievement of growth and sustainability when owners *work on* instead of *working in* the business. Owners who *work on* the business rather than *working in* the business identifies profitable growth and sustainability opportunities that focused on products, services, customers, and employees. Owners who are motivated to start and maintain a business, who develop success strategies focused on sustaining the business, and who create an environment where customers and employees are satisfied and happy, position the business for recognition, growth, and sustainability. The finding showed that growth and survival opportunities begin with the development of core business strategies. Successfully developing and implementing business strategies helps the business to succeed beyond 5 years. Business strategies influence performance, growth, and motivation to sustain business operations (Blackburn, Hart, & Wainwright, 2013).

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## Appendix A: Participant Consent Form

**Purpose:** You are invited to take part in a research study to explore the strategies needed to sustain small businesses beyond 5 years in the hair salon industry. I am inviting successful hair salon owners that have sustained their business for 5 years or more in Macon, Georgia, metro area to participate in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

Delores Duncan Foster, who is a doctoral student at Walden University, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to explore what strategies female entrepreneur small business owners use to succeed in business past 5 years.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

Participate in one, approximately 30-minute audio-recorded interview at a location of your choice

Provide company documentation of profit and loss statement, news articles, and reports

Participate in member checking of the result as needed during and after the interview which will include not more than 5-7 minutes of post interview member checking

Here are some sample questions:

- How did you fund your company in the first 5 years of business operation?
- What planning criteria did you use in the first 5 years?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this type of study will not involve any risk of discomforts. Being in this study would not pose a risk to your safety or well-being.

Potential benefits of this study include the opportunity to provide new insight and help prepare women small business owners on becoming successful and sustaining their business beyond 5 years.

**Payment:**

There is no compensation, gifts, or awards associated with participating in this voluntary study.

**Privacy:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name, your company name, or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by the researcher in a locked cabinet, and all electronic data will be kept secure on a password-protected, external hard drive. Data will be kept for at least 5 years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Alternatively, if you have questions, you may contact the researcher, Delores Foster, by phone (xxxxxx) or e-mail (xxxxxx). You may also contact the doctoral committee chair, Dr. Patricia Fusch, by e-mail (xxxxxx). If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, you may contact the University's Research Participant Advocate by phone (xxxxxx). Walden University's approval number for the study is 05-18-16-0364755, and it expires on May 17, 2017.

Please print or save this consent form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information, and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By replying to this e-mail with the words, "I consent," I understand that I agree to the terms described above.

## Appendix B: Interview Questions and Interview Protocol

- I. Introduction, brief overview of the study, and building rapport
- II. Discuss and Review the Consent Form Contents and Answer Questions or Concerns  
Have the participant acknowledge consent signed via e-mail
- III. Discuss privacy and confidentiality
- IV. Start the Recording
- V. Introduce Participants with Coded Identification, date and time
- VI. Begin Interview with Question #1 and proceed to the Last Question
- VII. Follow up with Additional Question as Needed
- VIII. End Interview Questions
- IX. Begin Member Checking with Participants
- X. End Member Checking
- XI. Thank Participants for Participating in the Study
- XII. Provide Reminders of Contact Information and Numbers for Follow-up Questions or Concerns
- XIII. End Protocol

### Interview Questions

- I. How did you become interested in entrepreneurship?
- II. What business strategies did you use to support your entrepreneurial vision?
- III. What strategies do you use to drive the growth of your business?
- IV. How do you compete with other salons in the area?

- V. How do you use financial strategies to enhance the growth of your business?
- VI. What strategies do you use to overcome barriers to success?
- VII. What else would you like to share about becoming a successful entrepreneur?

## Appendix C: Letter of Introduction

<Date>

Dear (Participant Name),

My name is Delores Foster, and I am a doctorate student at Walden University. To fulfill my graduation requirements, I am conducting a study on small business sustainability in the salon industry. As a salon owner who has sustained a business beyond 5 years, you are an ideal candidate to provide valuable information from your experiences and expertise.

If you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, you can expect to:

- Be contacted again by e-mail to get your signed consent to participate in the study
- Participate in a face-to-face interview that will last 1 hour or less
- Be interviewed in a private space of your choice
- Participate in an audio recorded interview session
- Have your personal information kept confidential and not identified in the study
- Have minimal risks or discomfort
- Participate voluntarily with no incentives
- Receive a transcribe summary to the interview to review for accuracy

Please note that your participation is voluntary, and there is no risk of withdrawing from the study at any time. If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to give your consent by email as indicated above. If you have questions or need additional information, please email me at xxxxx or telephone number xxxxx.

Sincerely,