


2019

Strategies to Improve Small Business Sustainability

Tywon Guy
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

 Part of the [Entrepreneurial and Small Business Operations Commons](#), and the [Finance and Financial Management Commons](#)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Tywon L. Guy

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Dorothy Hanson, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Jorge Gaytan, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Rocky Dwyer, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

The Office of the Provost

Walden University

2019

Abstract

Strategies to Improve Small Business Sustainability

by

Tywon L. Guy

MBA, LeTourneau University, 2001

BS, University of Houston, 1997

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2019

Abstract

Small businesses are considered the backbone of the U.S. economy with significant contributions in the areas of job creation and economic development. However, 79% of small businesses fail within the first 5 years. This multiple case study aimed to explore strategies and knowledge of resources that owners of small businesses used to sustain business operations for longer than the first 5 years. The population included 5 minority owners of small businesses in Texas. Chaos theory formed the conceptual framework. The data collection process included semistructured interviews, member checks, field notes, company artifacts, and archival documents. Data were analyzed using Yin's data analysis steps of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. Three themes emerged from the analysis: effective management of the business environment, effective planning, and business owners' skills and knowledge. The U.S. Small Business Administration, local chambers of commerce, and owners of small businesses may benefit from the findings of this study by gaining an understanding of successful minority owners of small businesses' implemented strategies that enable business success and profitability. The implications of this study for positive social change include identifying sustainable strategies minority owners of small businesses can use to advance business growth, increase financial security, achieve employee job sustainability, and potentially stimulate the local community with job creation.

Strategies to Improve Small Business Sustainability

by

Tywon L. Guy

MBA, LeTourneau University, 2001

BS, University of Houston, 1997

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2019

Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my wife Kimberly and my two girls, Jasmen and Jaiden Guy. The completion of this rigorous academic program would not have been possible without your limitless love, encouragement, and prayers. A special dedication in loving memory of Kevin Eugene Smith, Kerven W. Carter, Jr., Dorothy Johnson, and Pearline Guy. Your words of inspiration and encouragement are rooted within me, I miss you dearly. Lastly, I respectfully dedicate this doctoral study to the youth who aspire to walk onward and upward.

Acknowledgments

I want to give all praise to God for his unmerited favor, grace, and mercy; without him, I would not have been able to endure the rigor of this academic program. To my wife, Kimberly, thank you for your unconditional love, faithfulness, attentive ear, and prayers when things got chaotic and frustrating for me. When I lost focus, you somehow spoke the right words or shared a decorous sermon that got me back on track. To my girls, Jasmen and Jaiden, you are the reasons I work so hard. Thank you for your love, understanding, and words of encouragement throughout my doctoral journey. Remember, don't let anyone tell you what you cannot do; every day learn something new; and with God, all things are possible. I love you.

To my parents, Tommy and Doris Guy, thank you for knowing when to love and challenge me. Thank you for the many sacrifices that supported my dreams. I hope you are proud. To my siblings, I appreciate your perpetual love and support. To Charles Pope and Shirley Pope, thank you for trusting, supporting, and believing in me.

I want to acknowledge my committee members, Dr. Dorothy Hanson, Dr. Jorge Gaytan, and Dr. Rocky Dwyer, who helped me find my scholarly voice. I am thankful for your patience and guidance throughout every stage of my doctoral journey. Lastly, I am immensely grateful to Dr. Douglas E. Brown, Dr. Marcus D. Cosby, and Dr. Howard-John Wesley for teaching and reminding me of the principles and promises of God. Your sermons lifted, encouraged, and inspired me while in my waiting season. You have truly enriched my life. I can corroborate, God is faithful.

Table of Contents

Section 1: Foundation of the Study.....	1
Background of the Problem.....	1
Problem Statement	2
Purpose Statement	3
Nature of the Study.....	3
Research Question.....	4
Interview Questions.....	4
Conceptual Framework	5
Operational Definitions	6
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations	7
Assumptions.....	7
Limitations.....	8
Delimitations.....	8
Significance of the Study	9
Contribution to Business Practice.....	9
Implications for Social Change.....	10
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature	10

Introduction.....	10
Purpose of the Literature Review	11
Organization of the Literature Review	12
Literature Search Strategy.....	13
Review of the Conceptual Framework	14
Supporting Theories of the Conceptual Framework	22
Predicting Small Business Failure	25
Small Business Survival	27
Small Business Performance.....	29
Small Business Environment	32
Small Business Finance	36
Small Business Outside Assistance	39
Small Business Strategic Planning.....	41
Small Business Strategic Management.....	45
Small Business Skills.....	48
Transition	51
Section 2: The Project.....	53
Purpose Statement	53

Role of the Researcher	54
Participants	56
Research Method and Design.....	58
Research Method	59
Research Design	60
Population and Sampling.....	62
Ethical Research.....	64
Data Collection Instruments.....	66
Data Collection Technique.....	68
Data Organization Technique.....	71
Data Analysis	71
Reliability and Validity	74
Reliability.....	74
Validity	75
Transition and Summary	78
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change	80
Introduction	80
Presentation of the Findings	80

Theme 1: Effective Management of the Business Environment.....	81
Theme 2: Effective Planning	92
Theme 3: Business Owner’s Skills and Knowledge	97
Applications to Professional Practice.....	105
Implications for Social Change	106
Recommendations for Action.....	107
Recommendations for Further Research	109
Reflections.....	109
Conclusion.....	111
References.....	112
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	145
Appendix B: Interview Questions.....	148

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The significance of the small business model and the contribution it has on the U.S. economy has led to a need for research exploring factors contributing to small business failure. Yusuf (2014) denoted outside financial resources enhances small business performance, success, growth, and survival. Government policies and regulations have made it difficult for minority small business owners' to obtain outside financial resources, leading to negative consequences and business failure (Ajayi, 2016). Minority owners of small businesses who incorporated strategic planning and financial strategies into daily business practices, position the business for increased performance, profitability, and sustainable growth (Milutinovic, Stosic, & Mihic, 2015). Calopa (2017) supported Milutinovic et al.'s (2015) work by suggesting strategies, such as strategic planning and financial management, are critical to small business performance and financial success. The lack of strategic planning and financial strategies has only exacerbated the problems for owners of small businesses. The absence of these factors creates stressful and chaotic environments, making it difficult for small businesses to survive (Cant & van Niekerk, 2013). Understanding strategies minority small business owners use to create competitive landscapes may provide new minority owners of small businesses with essential information to strategically reposition their business for long-term success (Milutinovic et al., 2015).

Background of the Problem

The small business model has a rich history in contributing to economic and social health (Pollack & Adler, 2016). Small businesses and the production of gross domestic products (GDP) have proven essential to the growth and health of the U.S. economy (Mutoko, 2014). Small businesses have become the backbone of the U.S. economy with significant contributions in the areas of job creation and economic development (Calopa, 2017). Visser, Chodokufa, Amadi-

Echendu, and Phillips (2016) noted small business owners' typically employ 50% of jobs and contribute 97% of GDP exports. As a result, small businesses are excellent competitors to the large business sector (Siddique, 2015).

Although small businesses are essential to the economy, many small businesses encounter significant challenges that impact business performance and success (Mutoko, 2014). McDowell, Harris, and Geho (2016) noted there are unique connections between small business owners' strategic plans, business skills, resource availability, and overall performance. Small business owners' ability to improve success-to-failure ratios is higher if small business owners possess tangible skills to mentally grasp root issues contributing to system chaos, declining performance, and business failure (Hyder & Lussier, 2016). Chouksey and Karmarkar (2017) posited that the primary skill needed by a small business owner is the ability to manage finances. Preferentially, new small businesses are created yearly, and many small businesses fail to survive beyond the first 5 years. Exploring factors contributing to small business survival may offer new and aspiring small business owners strategies needed to improve sustainability and ability to continue conducting business beyond the first 5 years.

Problem Statement

Small business start-ups lack strategies and knowledge of resources for sustainability and business growth (Decker, Haltiwanger, Jarmin, & Miranda, 2016). The U.S. Small Business Administration (2018) revealed that 79% of small business owners close their businesses within the first 5 years. The general business problem was that some small business owners initiate new start-ups without adequate planning, business knowledge and skills, and financial resources, resulting in early business failure. The specific business problem was that some small business

owners lack strategies and knowledge of resources for sustaining business operations beyond the first 5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies and knowledge of resources small business owners use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years. The population consisted of minority business owners in five small businesses located in Texas, possessing strategies and knowledge of the resources needed to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years. The potential implications for positive social change of this study included increasing minority small business owners' knowledge of strategies and available resources to create business growth and continue adding new jobs in the local communities throughout Texas.

Nature of the Study

The conventional research methods researchers use are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007). Qualitative researchers use an interpretive or constructivist approach with open-ended questions within semistructured interviews to obtain data, explore what occurred, or determine what is taking place in the organization (Lewis, 2015). In contrast, quantitative researchers use numbers to evaluate variables and closed-ended questions to examine a phenomenon and test derivative hypotheses (Smith, 2014). Mixed-methods researchers combine quantitative and qualitative methods to develop a comprehensive view to give a clearer understanding of the research problem (Abro, Khurshid, & Aamir, 2015). To explore strategies and knowledge of resources small business owners use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years, I selected the qualitative research method because I elected not use data variables to test hypotheses, which are included in

a quantitative study or for use in the quantitative section of a mixed-methods study. I did not choose the quantitative or mixed-methods research methodologies.

I considered three research designs available within the qualitative research method to explore strategies and knowledge of resources small business owners use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years. Among, the principal qualitative research designs are (a) case study, (b) phenomenology, and (c) ethnography. Researchers using the case study research design employ a variety of means to collect data, including documents, interviews, archival records, direct observations, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2018). I chose the case study design because, according to Yin (2018), researchers use a single, or multiple cases, to identify and explore current processes or activities impacting a phenomenon. Phenomenology researchers seek to capture the meanings of human lived experience as described by the individual experiencing the phenomenon (Smith, 2015). I did not select the phenomenology design because I am not seeking to capture the meaning of human lived experiences from my study participants. Researchers use an ethnographic design to study groups' cultures within the natural setting over an extended period (Hannigan, 2014). I did not select ethnography, as capturing observational data of a group in its natural setting was not the purpose of this study.

Research Question

The overarching research question for this qualitative multiple case study was: What strategies and knowledge of resources do small business owners use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years?

Interview Questions

The use of open-ended interview questions applied to this study focused on exploring what strategies and knowledge of resources were consistent with small business sustainability.

1. What strategies have you used to develop a profitable business?
2. Based on your experience, what key strategies do you believe have contributed the most to your business success?
3. What strategies have you used to maximize your resources?
4. What strategies did you use to obtain financial resources to start, grow, and maintain your business beyond the first 5 years?
5. How did your business knowledge or skills contribute to your success?
6. How did you obtain knowledge of available resources to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years?
7. How did knowledge of outside assistance or government programs contribute to your success?
8. What, if any, strategies did you use to obtain resources from outside assistance or government programs to contribute to your success?
9. What else can you share about the benefit of strategies and how knowledge of resources assisted you in sustaining your business beyond the first 5 years?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was chaos theory. Lorenz (1963) developed chaos theory and used it to study nonlinear, complex math, and science systems. Levy (2007) noted the potential benefits of using chaos theory to address multiple business phenomena such as forecasting and planning. Gunter (1995) suggested small business owners' failure in the areas of planning, development, innovation, and management stem from poor strategies. Researchers use

chaos theory as a potentially unique method to identify unpredictability within business environments (Levy, 2007).

I used chaos theory as a lens for this study because several researchers (Taneja, Pryor-Golden, Humphreys, & Singleton, 2013) noted chaos theory is suitable for obtaining tactical and strategic direction to build an environment for survival and long-term business success. As applied to this study, Lorenz's (1963) chaos theory aligned with this research study because I sought to explore strategies and knowledge of resources small business owners used to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years.

Operational Definitions

Business failure: When a business has consecutive negative losses, which requires the business owner to dissolve or exit the business (Simmons, Wiklund, & Levie, 2014).

Business planning: The process of developing processes to align with the business owner's vision, development of marketing plans, and revenue goals (Osievsky, Hayes, Krueger, & Madill, 2013).

Business success: The evaluation of a business performance against a decisive set of measurements or goals determined by the business owner (Weidinger, Fischler, & Schmidpeter, 2013).

Business strategy: A set of process or strategies that position a business for success (Li & Dimitratos, 2014).

Entrepreneurial failure: When a business falls short of business goals or forced to end operation (Sserwanga & Rooks, 2014).

Financial management: Processes or systems used to manage and measure financial

behaviors and effectiveness (Karadag, 2015).

Financial literacy: The ability to read and interpret financial statements that translate the financial behaviors of the business (Dahmen & Rodríguez, 2014).

Small business: An independently operated and owned for-profit venture with less than 500 employees (Hayes, Chawla, & Kathawala, 2015).

Small business growth: An owner's perception that improvement has occurred in the areas of assets, sales, market share, or employment (Rostamkalaei & Freel, 2016).

Outside assistance programs: Exclusive strategies offered by non-profit organizations, government agencies, or private ventures designed to serve as a knowledge resource to promote performance and growth (Yusuf, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are items within a study the researcher cannot verify or has no control but provide a contribution to the evaluation of a research question (Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2013). This study has four basic assumptions. The first assumption was the qualitative methodology is a proper methodology to explore strategies small business owners use to sustain business beyond the first 5 years. The second assumption was that participants will have experiences and specific knowledge regarding the phenomenon under investigation. The third assumption was that the selected small business owners will have the ability to provide strategies and methods used to obtain resources to build a sustainable business. The last assumption was that four small business owners are an adequate sample size from the identified population to collect enough data to achieve saturation, as discussed by Lips-Wiersma and Mills (2013).

Limitations

Limitations are systematic bias that researchers are not able to control but inappropriately affect the research study (Price & Murnan, 2004). Kirkwood and Price (2013) noted acknowledgment of underlying research limitations allow researchers to make sense of research data to interpret findings accurately. Limitations affect (a) external and internal validity, (b) internal validity of research design, (c) integrity of research design, and (d) external validity associated with generalization of research results (Greener, 2018). Researchers outline limitations to provide readers with the depth of research coverage and completeness (Hailer, 2015). An inherent limitation was the geographical focus of this study.

The first limitation of this study was the findings may not reflect all small businesses domestically or globally. Focusing on Texas may limit the transferability of findings due to the difference in state regulations and economy makeup. The third potential limitation involved the study participants' inability to remember events verbatim and reluctance to provide sensitive financial information. The final limitation was the overall sample size.

Delimitations

Delimitations are systematic bias that researchers are can control and inappropriately affect the research study (Price & Murnan, 2004). Researchers use delimitations to identify the limits and boundaries of research (Denscombe, 2013). A delimitation of this study was the exclusive focus on strategies and knowledge of available resources small business owners use to sustain business operations. This study excluded small business owners with less than 5 years of business operations in Texas. Researching within a restricted area limits the researcher's ability to present conclusions based on the defined research topic (Denscombe, 2013).

Significance of the Study

The conclusion and findings from this study could provide minority small business owners with strategies that reduce small business failure rates. With sustainable strategies and increased knowledge, a minority small business owner could facilitate business success and survival beyond the first 5 years. Increasing existing and aspiring small business owners' knowledge of outside resources may lead to small business growth. Lougui and Nystrom (2014) noted the importance of equipping new and existing small business owners with essential skills to enhance business operations. Gill and Biger (2012) emphasized the contributions small business owners have made to achieve economic growth and create jobs. Small business owners could use the findings from this study to enable business growth, benefiting the employees and communities in Texas.

Contribution to Business Practice

The findings of this study may provide minority small business owners with effective strategies that facilitate small business success and sustainability. Decker et al. (2014) conducted a research study on small businesses and revealed the need for robust strategies to minimize small business failure. Small business owners could use the findings from this study to obtain strategies and knowledge to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years. Glaub, Frese, Fischer, and Hoppe (2014) affirmed that new business ventures have conditions of complexity, high risk, and resource scarcity, which creates uncertainty for small business owners. Other small business owners may use the findings of this study to potentially identify or adapt strategies and knowledge to seek and acquire outside funding, formulate planning strategies to reduce risk, and identify essential business skills required for individuals attempting to start a new small business venture.

Implications for Social Change

Although the small business sector is rapidly growing, majority of new small business ventures fail before the 5-year milestone (Lougui & Nystrom, 2014). When a small business venture fails, negative impacts emerge, including job loss. If implemented the recommendations from this study might have implications for positive social change in the form of short-term strategies small business owners can use to enhance planning, business acumen, and discernment on engaging outside financial resources to grow and sustain business operations. Leaders can use the findings of this study to create social change by influencing more individuals to follow their dreams and improve their economic status by becoming small business owners.

The findings from this qualitative study provided positive implications for social change by identifying strategies minority small business owners can use to create business success and sustainability. To further effect social change, the U.S. Small Business Administration's personnel might use the recommendations from this study to update training material, website documents, resources guidelines, and recruitment programs to provide struggling and aspiring minority small business owners with sustainable business strategies. Small business owners may benefit from the findings by gaining new knowledge of strategies that promote business success and quality of life for their employees. Small business owners may use the results of this study to enable business growth and to stimulate the economy by adding new jobs in the local communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies and obtain knowledge of resources small business owners use to achieve business success. De Leeuw, Green, Dyakova, Spanswick, and Palmer (2015) noted good researchers use a specific framework to gather relevant factors or

evidence to support to the research topic. Using chaos theory as the conceptual framework for this study provides structure to obtain a deeper context to answer the research question: What strategies and knowledge of resources do small business owners use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years? The subsequent sections include a short synthesis on the purpose of literature review in research, and the organization and search strategy of the literature review. The next section includes a critical and thorough review of the conceptual framework, supporting and contrasting theories, and synthesis of business systems that influence small business sustainability.

Purpose of the Literature Review

Literature reviews are distinct methods for researchers to efficiently gather evidence and a way to present facts to support research. There are several methods researchers use to obtain ample information on a research topic. Goodman, Gary, and Wood (2014) provided suggestions for researchers needing to conduct bibliographic or evidence-based research. The bibliographic search method offers universal steps for novice researchers and quick tips to do research (Hufford, 2013). The two methods researchers use to conduct bibliographic research are the push method and the pull method. The push method involves researching and teaching theories, and the pull method requires researchers to research existing literature to obtain evidence (Goodman et al., 2014). The snowball method occurs when the researcher begins with a definite article and works backward. The building blocks method requires using keyword combinations to retrieve relevant articles. The Boolean connector method was an effective method to search key terms using modern search engines and bibliographic databases (Hufford, 2013). Researchers seeking to find relevant literature on a specific topic should incorporate the use of connectors such as *AND*,

OR, and *NOT* (Goodman et al., 2014). These Boolean operators narrow down search results to ensure search engines provide results relevant to requested search parameters.

Academic literature reviews enhance the value of academic research and contribute to student learning (Hufford, 2013). Academic literature reviews are distinct methods researchers use to gather evidence and present facts to support research. Pickering and Byrne's (2013) research on academic research provided examples of how colleges and universities are using academic literature reviews as a method to evaluate a student's learning. As a result, academic libraries have expanded their library databases and now offer more academic literature for dedicated students and novice researchers needing information on a specific author or topic.

Hufford (2013) noted academic research libraries had become an effective and efficient tool for novice researchers. Academic and research libraries have modified online tools giving researchers the ability to conduct more comprehensive research. Academic literature reviews have helped students improve their knowledge, perspectives, and overall competence. Hufford (2013) highlighted engagement from the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Assessment Committee, which is the group that equips librarians with the appropriate resources and examples to assist students with their research.

Organization of the Literature Review

The literature review for this doctoral proposal includes eleven categories outlining business systems relevant to small business sustainability for review: (a) chaos theory, (b) predicting small business failure, (c) small business survival, (d) small business performance, (e) small business environment, (f) small business finance, (g) small business outside assistance, (h) small business strategic planning, (i) small business strategic management, and (j) small business skills. In the review of chaos theory, I explored the seminal work of Lorenz (1963), and the

extended work from researchers using chaos theory as an interpretive framework to understand and respond to changes occurring within business systems. There is a discussion on the selection of chaos theory versus other conceptual theories.

This study includes a comprehensive review for researchers to gain deeper insight into factors that impact or influences small business sustainability. The second and third categories predicting small business failure and small business survival provides literary reviews supporting the need for additional research. The fourth category small business performance includes positive implications when small business owners apply focus on business performance. The fifth category small business environment extends the discussion on factors impacting small business performance. The sixth and seventh categories provide a comprehensive analysis of small business finance and their needs for outside assistance. The final four categories of small business strategic planning, small business strategic management, and small business skills include the benefits of practical application of these elements within the business environment.

Literature Search Strategy

This academic literature review aimed to encapsulate, analyze, and review past and current reference articles, books, and conferred doctoral studies relevant to the business problem. The resources were obtained from multiple business databases made available through Walden University's online library. The search strategy involved utilizing the Boolean connector method to search key terms in various search engines and databases. To limit search results to peer-reviewed journals a search filter was applied. The databases used were ProQuest, Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM Complete, SAGE Premier, Google Scholar, Emerald Management Journals, and Sage Journals. The following government websites were used to obtain statistical data relevant to the research topic: (a) U.S. Small Business Administration

(SBA), and (b) U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The main search terms used were the following key words: *chaos theory, small business, small business failure, small business success, business performance, small business survival, strategic management, business skills, small business strategic planning, and outside assistance*. I used Ulrich's Periodicals Directory to confirm articles were peer-reviewed articles. This doctoral study encompasses a total of 255 references, of which 88.2%, have publication dates between 2014 and 2019. The academic literature review encompasses 172 references, of which 155, or 90.1% are peer-reviewed articles and have a publication date within the 2014-2019 period, two government websites representing 1.2%, 13 doctoral dissertations and books representing 7.6%, and two non-peer reviewed articles representing 1.2% of the total.

Review of the Conceptual Framework

Chaos theory (Lorenz, 1963) originated to evaluate inconsistencies occurring within systems (Stacy, 1995). Researchers confirmed many small business owners are not skilled at identifying apparent system or pattern changes (Burke, 2017). Bland and Roberts-Pittman (2013) suggested the focus of chaos theory is the assumption that making small interchangeable actions may lead to meaningful changes. The study of chaos theory and understanding Lorenz's (1963) butterfly effect may provide small business owners with practical steps to improve business environments, increase performance, obtain more resources, and achieve sustainability. This section includes a synthesis of literature surrounding chaos theory as it relates to specific systems within the small business model.

Chaos theory. In 1963, Lorenz introduced chaos theory as a tool to study and measure elements of science and nonlinear math systems (Levy, 2007). In 1975, Li and Yorke (1975) used chaos theory to enhance mathematical steps to pinpoint criteria on maps. Huu and Kock (2011)

noted the principles of chaos theory refers to complex patterns and randomness. Öztürk and Kızılkaya (2017) suggested chaos theory involves understanding the possible number of occurrences within a system and the method business owners use to look at things differently. Hideaki (2018) defined chaos theory as the method qualitative researchers use to study unstable behavior in dynamical systems. Singh and Singh (2002) noted meteorologist Lorenz sought to find a method to model the chaotic behaviors of systems that change overtime. Dynamic systems create chaos when small disturbances occur in the original condition, and the changes continue to magnify (Singh & Singh, 2002). The minor irregularities will transform into a phenomenon, and Lorenz used the term butterfly effect to describe help understand the irregularities (Singh & Singh, 2002). While Li and Yorke (1975) used chaos theory in the areas of mathematics and social sciences, Horsley (2014) found many researchers and academicians using chaos theory in qualitative research to identify and analyze the behaviors of business system behaviors.

Several researchers (Huu & Kock, 2011; Narh, Thorpe, Bell, & Hill, 2016; Stacy, 1995; Turner & Endres, 2017) determined chaos theory is an effective method for evaluating business systems. Stacy (1995) noted researchers use chaos theory principles as the foundation for evaluating properties of business systems, to identify negative outcomes, and understand patterns of instability. Huu and Kock (2011) noted researchers use chaos theory to identify system relationships and found the relationships are not constant and unanticipated. Narh et al. (2016) confirmed when chaos theory principles are used for business application, researchers are able to identify occurrences of chaos and reveals interactions between the business systems. Turner and Endres (2017) found that researchers use chaos theory methods to conduct business research exploring business system behaviors and effectiveness of the business systems.

Horsley (2014) found business systems that go unattended self-organize into bifurcations

that lead to destabilization. Diagnosis involves identifying the chaotic levels to determine the chaotic patterns (Huff & Kock, 2011). Öztürk and Kızılkaya (2017) confirmed change would continuously occur, and immutable in business development. As a result, McBride (2005) confirmed when researchers use the principles of chaos theory to develop an interpretive framework to obtain knowledge and develop recommendations to address system changes.

Researchers (Bland & Roberts-Pittman, 2013; Davies, 2018; Huu & Kock, 2011; Öztürk & Kızılkaya, 2017) provided distinct definitions for Lorenz's (1963) butterfly effect that assisted with learning a different method to identifying system chaos. The premises of chaos theory expound on Lorenz's butterfly effect, which Lorenz used as a metaphor to convey small changes to a system will eventually reverberate and create significant changes (Bland & Roberts-Pittman, 2013). Lorenz noted these changes resemble two wings making it difficult to predict the current state of the system. Lorenz used the term butterfly effect to identify and describe a system in chaos (Huu & Kock, 2011). Öztürk and Kızılkaya (2017) defined Lorenz's butterfly effect as system dependence on the initial conditions while the structure creates fundamental changes. Davies (2018) found over time business systems shift from the initial condition and the sensitivity creates dramatic changes. Narh et al. (2016) confirmed business systems or activities eventually deviate over time and the process gaps enable chaos.

Researchers (Bland & Roberts-Pittman, 2013; Huu & Kock, 2011; Lorenz, 1963; Narh et al., 2016) found chaos theory to have significant benefits related to having chaotic systems. Lorenz (1963) noted chaotic operations often become ubiquitous, but chaos theory techniques enable favorable adjustments to improve future conditions of business systems (Narh et al., 2016). Bland and Roberts-Pittman (2013) affirmed having the ability to validate chaotic interaction has assisted business owners in the areas of decision making and planning. There are positive impacts from

chaotic systems. Huu and Kock (2011) found chaos enhance business systems, such as innovation, creativity, improvements to business vision, business strategies, and increased standards. Therefore, identifying the initial premise within systems can lead to meaningful impact, contributing to the long-term sovereignty of business systems and business (Narh et al., 2016).

Several researchers (Edgar & Nisbet, 1996; Horsley, 2014; Li & Ye, 2015) found chaos theory assist with understanding chaotic business environment. Li and Ye (2015) found chaos begin with disorders occurring in the business environment. Edgar and Nisbet (1996) suggested many owners of small businesses operate with convulsive environments, which contributes to chaotic activities that eventually leads to damaging systems. Damaged systems impact business survival (Edgar & Nisbet, 1996). Small business owners that can identify chaos in their business are able to implement effective strategies that may contribute to survival. Edgar and Nisbet found examining and removing chaotic system irregularities will lead to the development of successful long-term strategies. For small business to survive with a turbulent environment, small business owners must renew the strengths of products, services, networks, logistics, and human resources (Huff & Kock, 2011).

Reducing chaos naturally requires implementation of new strategies (Horsley, 2014; Huff & Kock, 2011). Horsley (2014) suggested business owners use chaos theory principles to proactively respond to chaotic system systems. Huff and Kock (2011) revealed implementing fast actions require small business owners to reconsider existing routines and accept unconventional solutions. Huff and Kock found small business owners learn from fast actions and should continuously update and modify strategies. Huff and Kock recommended small business owners use the following steps to survive during chaotic environments: (a) diagnosis, (b) action, (c)

learning, and (d) growth.

Huu and Knock (2011) used chaos theory principles to evaluate the 2008 financial crisis and to increase SME survival. Huu and Kock utilized chaos theory in a case study research exploring processes to improve survival for SMEs. Huu and Knock focused on the SME model and how small businesses survive with turbulent environments. During the 2008 financial crisis, many SMEs had difficulty obtaining financial resources from banks. The inability to secure financial resources created significant challenges impacting the survival of small businesses. Although the financial crisis had a substantial impact on all businesses, many small businesses operated in crisis mode. The crisis created challenges with declines in market share and profits (Huu & Knock, 2011). The 2008 financial crisis led to unexpected changes in infrastructure, labor force, market structure, and legislation. Huu and Kock found the following characteristics required for SMEs survival during complex environments: (a) owners expected chaos, (b) quickly changed business focus, (c) had the ability to reorganize structure, (d) changed strategic focus from production to marketing, (e) established strategic alliances, and (f) cut cost. In addition, Huu and Kock found some business systems are dynamic in behavior, and the structures adjust during turbulent times. Small business owners could make a significant impact on systems' behaviors with minor changes (Huu & Knock, 2011).

Researchers (Edgar & Nisbet, 1996; Horsley, 2014; Huu & Kock, 2011) found that small business owners may be the blame for chaotic systems. Horsley (2014) found many business owners do not have experience dealing with chaotic systems or know how to correct systematic problems or processes. Edgar and Nisbet (1996) suggested a small business owner's success requires an understanding of all business systems and having the ability to make sense of each system. Huu and Kock (2011) suggested traditional approaches to management are obsolete and

chaos theory principles are beneficial to small business owners; by providing methods to create new strategies, overcome demanding environments with multi-dimensionality, speed, and increased flexibility. Moreover, researchers suggested the application of chaos theory principles has proven a small business owner can succeed in a turbulent environment (Huu & Kock, 2011).

Chaos theory application. Researchers (Sanial, 2014; Sing & Sing, 2002; Turner & Endres, 2017) noted the benefits of applying chaos theory to address a business phenomenon. Researchers use the principles of chaos theory as a lens to gain a contextual understanding of small business failure (Turner & Endres, 2017). According to Sanial (2014), researchers use chaos theory to obtain new perspectives while understanding dynamic organizations and organizational change. In addition, business practitioners use chaos theory to understand chaotic systems and learn how to identify predictable behaviors (Sanial, 2014). Sing and Sing (2002) found a significant number of management researchers use chaos theory for application in the areas of business and management science. I reviewed several studies where researchers used chaos theory to develop an understanding of a phenomenon or applied chaos theory to resolve a business problem.

Hideaki (2018) applied the principles of chaos theory to grasp an understanding of child abuse, as it relates to education, differences in laws, and individual character. Hideaki connected chaos theory to the problems by suggesting laws and skills are similar to mathematical variables. By understanding the variables, Hideaki identified the chaotic systems. Hideaki used chaos theory principles to identify inconsistent skills among Japanese educators. The application of chaos theory allowed Hideaki to identify chaotic occurrences among Japanese educators and counselors. As a result, rearranging the educators and counselors' thinking resulted in implementation of new processes to reduce chaotic processes and child abuse (Hideaki, 2018).

Turner and Endres (2017) used chaos theory as the foundation to study small business owners' success rates. Turner and Endres conducted a qualitative multiple-case study to explore strategies small business owners use to succeed beyond the first 5 years. Researchers found the case study design as a versatile tool to analyze various disciplines (Turner & Endres, 2017; Yin, 2018). Turner and Endres defined a small business owner as a proprietor with less than 500 employees, as outlined by the SBA (2016). Turner and Endres noted that researchers use chaos theory to extend existing knowledge of behaviors to improve business effectiveness. Turner and Endres confirmed the application of chaos theory serves as an effective method to address business problems. Turner and Endres revealed three themes that emerged through semistructured interviews and triangulation: (a) designing and networking as a customer versus a business, (b) ineffective business plans, and (c) difficulty differentiating in the market. Additional findings included the assumption customer service, business environments, and the community serve as catalysts for small business sustainability (Turner & Endres, 2017). Turner and Endres affirmed researchers use chaos theory as the lens to identify specific themes that contributes to small business success. Turner and Endres suggested future research should focus on small businesses in various geographical locations and multiple industries.

Singh and Singh (2002) used chaos theory in a research study to identify and understand various approaches to management. Singh and Singh noted chaos theory originated from mathematics and identifies aperiodic behaviors to capture a phenomenon. Singh and Singh defined aperiodic as chaotic systems that never return to the initial condition but may readily come close. Singh and Singh defined chaos theory the path researchers take understand chaos and to bring order to hidden natural occurrences. Singh and Singh found chaotic systems convoluted and challenged traditional logic. The aim of the Singh and Singh suggested the application of chaos

theory to strengthen project management and develop execution strategies. Fundamentally, chaos involves unpredictable systems that produce stable and unstable activity (Singh & Singh, 2002).

Singh and Singh (2002) found several implications of chaos theory to the area of management. Singh and Singh debunked the myth that strategic planning has no value by suggesting management scientists are not able to deliver sustainable results. Singh and Singh suggested researchers use chaos theory as theoretical confirmation for the effectiveness of strategic planning. Singh and Singh found business systems such as long-term planning, similar to strategic planning, fail due to the number of intervening events. Singh and Singh found business owners are able to control natural events using chaos theory principles to develop strategies to reduce the unpredictability associated with long-term planning. The unpredictability of events may be too acute for a new small business owner to grasp (Singh & Singh, 2002).

Conventional and traditional approaches to management are linear, and researchers use chaos theory principles to reverse negative assumptions of existing management (Singh & Singh, 2002). Singh and Singh (2002) found using one principle of chaos theory may spark change and promote creativity beyond thinking linear. According to Lorenz (1963), making small system changes gives business owners a new perspective and roadmap to implement system changes.

Nigh (2017) selected chaos theory to explore strategies SME managers used to reduce disruptive vulnerabilities in the field of supply chain management. Nigh conducted an instrumental case study with a sample population of four business managers in Indiana. Nigh found researchers use chaos theory in business application to manage imperfect information, environment disorders, and system uncertainty. After data collection and analysis, Nigh revealed the following themes: (a) organizational value, (b) commit to sustainability, (c) training, and (d) workforce acquisition. In addition, Nigh suggested SME business owners should focus on soft

analytical skills.

Supporting Theories of the Conceptual Framework

Researchers use various conceptual frameworks to explore a phenomenon. To gain a more profound knowledge of strategies for small business sustainability, I conducted additional research on theories researchers used to study small business survival and sustainability. I evaluated these supporting theories to ensure chaos theory provided the best fit to answer the research question of this qualitative research study. Next, is an overview of complexity theory and transformational leadership theory.

Complexity theory. McElroy (2000) suggested researchers use complexity theory as lens to identify chaotic systems behaviors. Researchers studying system behaviors can use complexity theory to understand how complex systems influence business performance. Anning-Dorson (2017) found as complexity increases, the ability to predict and plan becomes difficult. Anning-Dorson confirmed the importance of understanding environmental factors and sub-factors, such as suppliers, customers, technology and all relevant factors that shapes the business. Researchers (Gleick, 1987; Morgan, 2006) affirmed complexity theory constructs equip researchers with the ability to identify the interaction occurring in chaotic business systems. Researchers use complexity theory to apply theoretical constructs to understand how business owners may develop and implement strategies or obtain new knowledge for small business survival (Anning-Dorson, 2017). Complexity theory serve as a suitable framework because the constructs of complexity theory produce alternative views of what is happening with business systems (Cicmil, Cooke-Davies, Crawford, & Richardson, 2017).

Anning-Dorson (2017) conducted a study to evaluate the impact innovation has on business performance when environmental pressures exist. Anning-Dorson argued complexity

theory complemented the examination of competitive intensity and customer demands. Anning-Dorson found complex business environments are good for business because complexity create both threats and opportunities. Anning-Dorson highlighted additional findings related to competition, market demands, enhance business innovation, and strategies to improve performance.

Researchers use the constructs of complexity theory as a lens to evaluate relational challenges occurring in a phenomenon (Chan, Gountas, Zhang, & Handley, 2016). Chan et al. (2016) applied complexity theory to evaluate unsuccessful and successful business models operating in a foreign business environment. Using the constructs of complexity theory, Chan et al. identified three relevant themes: (a) lack of knowledge of the business environment, (b) inability to obtain financing, and (c) management oversight. Chan et al. found application of complexity theory occurs when researchers have a focus specifically on business environments. The focus of this research extends beyond the business environment. Therefore, complexity theory was not an appropriate framework to use to explore strategies and knowledge of available resources small business owners use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years.

Transformational leadership theory. A related theory used to research business survival is transformational leadership theory. Small business owners should possess essential skills to start, maintain, and grow a business. Imran, Ilyas, and Aslam (2016) found individuals possessing characteristics often found in the transformational leadership style have a higher chance of success. Northouse (2018) defined transformational leadership as the process leaders use to transform people. Northouse found transformational leadership theory constructs and charismatic leadership has a positive impact on specific business systems. When people change, a

business can accomplish more. Imran et al. found transformational leadership, employee learning, and training is directly related to business success.

The emergence of transformational leadership theory began with the classical work of James MacGregor Burns, when he suggested leaders are responsible for business performance and employee motivation (Northouse, 2018). Ghasabeh, Soosay, and Reaiche (2015) noted transformational leadership theory is the leading researched theory and still identified as the least appreciated among the many theoretical frameworks. Nielsen and Daniels (2016) found Burn's transformational leadership theory measures leaders based on the following four attributes: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. Imran et al. (2016) suggested small business owners that display transformational leadership skills have a higher success rate for improvements in the areas of employee motivation, business performance, and business success when compared to other leadership frameworks.

Imran et al. (2016) noted transformational leadership sparks employee creativity and raise the levels of employee development. As a result, Imran et al. (2016) suggested small business owners must acknowledge the importance of focusing on the organization, employee development, and business learning. Ghasabeh et al. (2015) found several studies where researchers confirmed small business have a higher chance of failure when the business owner and employees possess little to no knowledge. Berkovich's (2016) application of transformational leadership affirmed the dominant paradigm for how business owners can use transformational leadership theory constructs to improve the small business model. Berkovich highlighted the values of transformational leadership and suggested leaders should continue using transformational leadership constructs to enhance business environments and boost employee

skills. Transformational leadership theory is an excellent framework to use when the research question requires a focus on leadership or the business owner. Researchers may use the constructs of transformational leadership theory to expose the skill or knowledge levels of the business owner. Therefore, upon reflection from the additional research, I confirmed chaos theory is an appropriate framework to ground my study.

Predicting Small Business Failure

Horta and Camanho (2013) found scholar-practitioners and researchers have spent the past three decades conducting extensive research, explicitly trying to understand why small businesses fail and seeking methods to proactively predict business failure. Byrne and Shepherd (2015) defined business failure as an event when business revenues significantly fall, expenses rise to the point where the business becomes insolvent, or the business becomes unattractive to acquire new equity funding. Byrne and Shepherd found evaluating and understanding business failure has become a new required task for business owners.

Khanal and Mishra (2016) suggested business owners should utilize the ex-ante method, which is a process that evaluates the current state of a business, as the method to predict the future. Alternatively, the ex-post method is a process some business owners use to predict an outcome based on specific attributes (Khanal & Mishra, 2016). Given the absences of baseline measurements, previous researchers resorted to recorded events as the primary method to measure business failure (Everett & Watson, 1998). Horta and Camanho (2013) found local communities and society suffer significant losses as a result of business failures. Horta and Camanho found business failure create a negative impact on stakeholders such as employees, creditors, and investors. Small business owners should recognize the importance of establishing a business model designed to detect early signs of failure (Horta & Camanho, 2013).

Everett and Watson (1998) noted the historical results revealed 30% to 50% of small business failures materialize from various economic factors. Globalization and technological evolution are common factors contributing to business failures; however, Horta and Camanho (2013) suggested small businesses failure stem from an increase in local competition, government regulation, business owner's lack of business skills, or inadequate of strategies. Bennett (2016) confirmed implementing proven strategies help negate common challenges affecting start-ups and small businesses.

Hyder and Lussier (2016) suggested a need for a precise definition of the term business failure researchers can predict or determine why businesses fail. Simmons et al. (2014) suggested owners who initiates or begin the exit process; should not fall into the business failure bucket. Everett and Watson (1998) noted five distinct definitions for small business failures are (a) discontinuance of ownership, (b) discontinuance of business, (c) bankruptcy, (d) business disposed of, or (e) business owner's inability to make a go of it. Business discontinuance occurs when an owner has considered retirement, moved resources to another opportunity, or merely desire to liquidate (Everett & Watson, 1998). Everett and Watson evaluation of exit rates, the researchers discovered the business discontinuance label might be misleading.

Everett and Watson (1998) found bankruptcy may not be the appropriate method to measure business failure. Although bankruptcy is an unbiased measurement, Everett and Watson suggested bankruptcy is too narrow of a definition to determine whether a business truly failed. Everett and Watson noted many businesses that have revenues slightly above the profit line may still consider bankruptcy; these businesses should not be considered a failed business. Businesses that take proactive steps to liquidate assets or dispose of property to avoid additional losses, even though there is no impact to creditors, are not business failures (Everett & Watson, 1998). When

business owners are not able to make a go of the business and forced to end operations are excellent examples of business failures (Everett & Watson, 1998). Alternatively, Van Praag (2014) defined business failure as a compulsory exit stemming from inadequate financial opportunities to stay in business.

Small Business Survival

Oertel and Walgenbach (2012) suggested the overall characteristics of a small and medium-sized business may have an adverse impact on the organization's survival. Nwabueze (2013) posited scholarly work has yet to highlight strategic formulas to increase the small business survival rates. Nwabueze found basic marketing strategies such as market segmentation, market planning, and product or service differentiation are required strategies to boost small businesses' survival rates in highly competitive environments. Oertel and Walgenbach found the mortality risk of a small business increases when the ownership structure changes or when a founding partner exits. Oertel and Walgenbach found small business survival occur when ownership structures are uncertain, small business owners' inability to develop and implement marketing strategies, or when fundamental management concepts fail to align. In addition, Oertel and Walgenbach revealed the loss or decline in relationships with critical stockholders such as suppliers, regular and potential customers, or investors creates lead to profit losses, affecting survival.

Researchers have found little factual evidence validating small business survival depends upon person-initiated drivers (Van Praag, 2014). McDowell et al. (2016) suggested small business survival requires a strategic focus on cost containment and operational efficiency. Determinants of business survival may have a quantifiable linkage to person-specific determinants rather than business-specific (Van Praag, 2014). In addition, Van Praag (2014)

stated that economist Joseph Schumpeter suggested that businesses will not survive without leadership and innovation. Van Praag suggested that business survival depends on passable factors such as perseverance, judgment, business knowledge, and the right business conditions.

Business owners with adequate education, talent, and capital had a higher chance of survival (Van Praag, 2014). Modern empirical knowledge highlights person-oriented drivers that are essential to survival: (a) small business owner must have relevant experience, (b) the younger the owner is, the better the performance, (c) the more available capital will lead to a higher chance of survival, (d) if the small business owner is pulled in versus pushed will have higher motivation to creating business success, and (e) small business owners with higher education will have higher chance of survival (Van Praag, 2014).

McDowell et al. (2016) suggested small business owners who implement external strategies where able to achieve market growth and increased revenue for survival.

Cant and van Niekerk (2013) found a business owner's ethics and business decisions significantly relates to business survival. Cant and van Niekerk revealed small business owners struggle with keeping survival as the main focal point. Cant and van Niekerk revealed the ongoing success and contribution small businesses play in economies have forced small business owners to increase their focus on business survival. The pressure to create profitability becomes a catalyze for unethical decisions. Examining a small business owner's business ethics often reveal the dilemmas business owner encounter where business success depends on the business owner's decision (Cant & van Niekerk, 2013). In addition, the pressures for business survival compounded with stressful or competitive business environments often create adverse effects on small business owners' decisions.

Small Business Performance

Small businesses have played a vital role in economic development, growth, poverty reduction, and employment creation (Ibrahim & Shariff, 2017). As a result, researchers noted the necessity to explore strategies that may create performance improvements for small businesses (Ibrahim & Shariff, 2017). Performance and profits are arguably the most common indicators used to measure business success (Ajayi, 2016). Ajayi (2016) found in the 1950s, researchers defined organization performance as the extent people fulfill objectives.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, scholars realized organization performance reached beyond theoretical success measurements (Ajayi, 2016). Considering the complexity with understanding business performance, Ajayi used the following four concepts to provide a distinct set of definitions to illustrate organization performance: (a) performance is the degree in which nonfinancial and financial metrics are used to measure objectives, (b) performance is a causal dynamic model that predicts future results based on current actions, (c) performance requires clarity in the field of responsibility, and (d) performance must be quantifiable.

When small business owners embark on a new venture, the aims involve building a business with sustainable income and financial growth (Lipi, 2013). Improvements in performance translates into desirable revenue growth (Milutinovic et al., 2015). Lester et al. (2003) noted organizations that can withstand the terrains of the survival stage would inherit characteristics of a sustainable organization. The performance of the organization provides small business owners with measurable traits for determining whether the business is sustainable.

Several researchers (Albano, Antellini, Castaldi, & Zampino, 2015; Mazzi, Flynn, & Haynie, 2016; Mutandwa, Taremwa, & Tubanambazi, 2015) found several critical factors related to small business performance. Mazzei et al. (2016) noted small business owners frequently fail

to incorporate fundamental concepts to drive positive actions creating high-performance.

Mutandwa et al. (2015) discussed several strategic factors that may disturb the performance of a small business. The strategic factors include: (a) access to credit, (b) management skills, (c) business environment, (d) availability of infrastructure, (e) marketing services, (f) production efficiency, (g) quality of products, (h) customer service, (i) business cost, (j) entrepreneurial culture, and (k) material availability (Mutandwa et al., 2015). Albano et al. (2015) supported Mutandwa et al.'s work by providing the following gaps associated with the business owner: (a) inability to obtain critical information, (b) failure to secure high-value contracts, or (c) late payments are noticeable barriers that prevent small businesses from meeting their performance goals.

In another study, Kuépié, Tenikue, and Walther (2016) evaluated small business owners' inability to adjust to unforeseen events, failure to understand the benefits of social networks, inability acquire resources, and inefficiency with obtaining commercial credit. Considering a variety of factors, researchers regard social networks as critical elements to improve small business performance (Lans, Verhees, & Verstegen, 2016). Kuépié et al. found social networks open doors to credit, innovation, and prove to have a linear relation to economic and performance success. Although, building social networks are challenging to build, the acquired relationships promote productivity and increase business performance (Walther, 2015). In the 21st century, it is critical for small business owners to develop relationships to create opportunities for success and obtain learning (Lans et al., 2016). Social competence within the small business workplace provides owners with strategies to significantly improve performance (Walther, 2015). Lans et al. (2016) noted small business owners are responsible for expanding a social competence while engaging social networks to balance performance.

Sharma and Dave (2014) suggested that defining goals significantly increase the performance of a small-medium enterprise. Sharma and Dave found a positive relationship between small business owners' goals and the performance of the organization. Sharma and Dave guaranteed positive performance when there is an alignment between business needs and the business owner's goals. Sharma and Dave found social goals, concerns related to profit and growth, or shareholder value often conflict with the business owner's priorities, which leads to inconsistent performance. Sharma and Dave explored the relationship between goals and small business performance, and Sharma and Dave revealed the regression results confirmed a significant relationship existed between performance and business goals. In addition, Sharma and Dave claimed there are six essential goals to deliver positive performances: (a) develop a company that creates happy, productive, and proud employees; (b) provide owners with benefits and financial security; (c) create quality products; (d) ensure personal growth and advancement; (e) promote positive business citizenships; and (f) create job security (Sharma & Dave, 2014). Sharma and Dave confirmed that small business owners must formulate specific goals and implement effective strategies designed to drive performance and long-term sustainability.

Financial resources contribute to the realization of a small business owner's ideas, business strategy, performance, and survival. Researchers (Mikic, Novoselec, & Primorac, 2016) found financial resources have a positive and negative effect on all business systems. Mikic et al. (2016) suggested that small business owners should identify funding options and available financial resources prior to considering business start-up. Mikic et al. noted the importance of small business owners having the ability to discern the benefits of financial resources and the positive impact on performance. Mikic et al. found small businesses' growth, survival, and sustainability are not possible without adequate financing. Potential funding sources for small business owners are self-financing, debt financing, and equity capital (Mikic et al., 2016). Mikic

et al. noted all funding sources brings a form of complexity, creating pressure on the business owner to perform.

Several researchers (Dragnic, 2014; Leonidou, Christodoulides, Kyrgidou, & Palihawadana, 2017; McDowell et al., 2016) revealed there are growing concerns about small business owners failing to acknowledge internal factors that have a detrimental effect on performance. Dragnic (2014) suggested the following eight factors impacts small businesses' internal and external systems: (a) life cycle stages, (b) technology, (c) business size, (d) product and technology innovation, (e) autonomy, (f) roles, (g) importance of goals, and (h) formalization and centralization. Internal drivers such as uncertainty, the requirement for substantial financial contributions, high complexity, lack of expertise, the absence of a belonging culture, and proper organizational structure leads to poor performance (Leonidou et al., 2017).

Dragnic found customer type, business sector, and the current state of the economy are additional external factors researchers denotes as having an impact on small business performance. Leonidou et al. (2017) noted additional challenges are (a) entrepreneurial orientation, (b) entrepreneurial innovativeness, (c) flexibility, (d) adaptability, and (e) locality. McDowell et al. found a fit between market conditions, available resources, and strategies all serve as a catalyst to small business performance. Leonidou et al. found serious consequences when business owners do not implement business strategies to heighten financial performance, build competitive advantages, and address the various internal and external concerns.

Small Business Environment

Ajayi (2016) suggested ongoing challenges with business performance, profitability, and sustainability may indicate chaos exists within the business system constructs. Ajayi found the environment is a critical construct that is an essential role in small business success. Ajayi noted

the business environment comprises of either external or internal forces, or a combination of both that daily impact operation. Ajayi suggested the business environment is a set of internal and external systems that collectively work together to create positive influences on business operations. Ajayi found employees, culture, work practices, suppliers, clients, required technology changes, government decisions, competition, economic, and social trends are several system constructs that make up a business environment.

Due to the high visibility of business environments, new business owners should consider taking necessary steps to understand each feature that make up a business environment. Typical features included in a business environment are (a) the overall sum of all the systems impacting all external partners; (b) consists of forces such as legal conditions, technological requirements, suppliers, government, cultural, political, suppliers, competitors, and customers; (c) a dynamic construct that consistently changes; (d) changes are unpredictable with no insight to future occurrences; and (e) business environment is unique in each country, region, and city (Ajayi, 2016). Removing chaos from the business environment may lead to small business success, growth, and sustainability.

Ajayi (2016) suggested business environments are the central hub for operations and the most critical factor contributing to small business success and sustainability. Mazzei et al.'s (2016) research on high-performance found small business owners frequently fail to adopt work practices promoting creativity and innovation. Wu, Bacon, and Hoque (2014) found that small business owners' focus on the start-up phase prevent implementing Human Resource strategies to deliver innovation and growth. Prajogo (2016) noted innovation promotes productive activity for small business owners. Although researchers typically depict innovation as a competitive tool, Prajogo posited innovation is the product of a productive business environment.

Mazzei et al. (2016) found several case studies evaluating components of small business environments highlighted the use of HR management practices and the significant impact on employee attitudes towards innovation. Lans et al. (2016) noted Human Resource management offers insight into fundamental concepts often overlooked by small business owners. Lans et al. confirmed small businesses rarely reap the benefits from formalized human resource practices. Small business owners typically avoid Human Resource practices due to increased labor cost despite the benefits in the area of employee turnover (Wu et al., 2014).

Mazzei et al. suggested the implementation of Human Resource disciplines may foster innovation and breed high-performance environments. The eight disciplines Mazzei et al. outlined were (a) focusing on the employee's abilities when hiring, (b) focus on selective hiring, (c) hiring creative and smart candidates whom would be committed, (d) develop a formal onboarding process, (e) encourage greater autonomy with the individual or team, (f) offer financial incentives through pay-for-performance compensation models, (g) do not overlook low status differentials by being disrespectful, and (h) guarantee job security to remove the individual's fear of communicating innovative ideas.

Wu et al. (2014) noted existing literature highlights adoption of Human Resource strategies are often contingent upon the following factors: (a) small business owner's concern with market condition, (b) small business owner's interest with business characteristics, and (c) small business owner's lack HR knowledge or the business does not have a Human Resource expert. Wu et al. found small businesses are considered susceptible to market conditions stemming from competition, large customers, skill mix of available workforce, or requirements based on the industry or sector in which the business operates. Large-scale business customers

often encourage small business owners to concentrate on adoption of policies that create low-cost operations (Wu et al., 2014).

The characteristics of small businesses have presented concerns that small business owners need to implement strategies designed to create high-performance business environments. Wu et al. found small businesses' size, age, and ownership structure produce formal challenges due all critical matters are considered assumptions. Researchers use human resource strategies to assist with creating productive business environment which will drive positive financial performance for the business (Wu et al., 2014). Besides, small-medium businesses may not have adequate resources to absorb the increased levels of complexity (Wu et al., 2014).

The business owner of a small business should serve as the Human Resource expert and should implement appropriate strategies to promote a productive working environment (Ajayi, 2016; Wu et al., 2014). Scholars found small business owners are less likely to hire a human resource expert until there is confidence the business has a chance with long-term success and justification for changes in the business environment (Wu et al., 2014). Small businesses' performance, growth, and sustainability are dependent upon the nexus between the business environment and business strategies. As a result, the business environment is essential to small businesses because (a) the environment assist with determining threats and opportunities, (b) the environment highlights new areas of growth, (c) a positive environment creates a continuous learning environment, (d) the environment assist with brand and image opportunities, and (e) the environment displays the strengths and weakness of the business (Ajayi, 2016).

Ajayi (2016) suggested business environments are chaotic, dynamic, and multifaceted and play a significant impact on small business success. External forces play a vital role in determining the effectiveness of the organization's innovation strategies (Prajogo, 2016). Ajayi

noted the following external environmental forces have a history of impacting business performance: (a) political, (b) economic, (c) legal, (d) socio-cultural, (e) demographic, (f) technological, (g) financial, (h) social media, and (i) competitive. Small business owners with an understanding of external forces are able to develop strategies to create boundaries and minimize impact (Ajayi, 2016).

Small Business Finance

The U.S. Small Business Administration (2018) revealed 79% of small businesses fail within the first 5 years. Krishnan, Nandy, and Puri (2015) suggested the major factor contributing to small business failure stems from small business owners not having adequate funding. Rahman, Belas, Kliestik, and Tyll (2017) recommended that small business owners experiencing financial constraints should seek more funding by exploring additional financing options.

Yeboa and Koffie (2016) confirmed the primary constraint for small business owners involves not having access to capital funding or ability to obtain financial resources from the banking sectors. Nitescu (2015) recommended small business owners use innovation, dynamism, and flexibility to remain competitive, which requires financial resources to introduce new solutions. Rupeika-Apoga (2014) suggested inadequate funding create significant obstacles for small business owners and directly limit the opportunity for future growth. Kersten, Harms, Liket, and Maas (2017) found 39% of small businesses revealed limited financing as the primary hindrance to business development, growth, and success.

In 2011, investors and public donors offered more than \$20 billion to fund finance programs for small businesses (Kersten et al., 2017). By 2014, the donations reached more than \$135 billion for small business finance programs and development assistance for small business owners (Kersten et al., 2017). Despite Kersten et al.'s research, Yeboa and Koffie's (2016) found

financial institutions continue to repeatedly deny capital financing for small business owners. Rupeika-Apoga (2014) suggested using new methods to validate small business statistics related to creation, growth, and sustainability to obtain a precise understanding of financing needs. Failure to provide funding requirements for small businesses may halt job creation and slows down economic growth (Rahman et al., 2017). Kennickell, Kwast, and Pogach (2017) noted given small businesses play a critical role in job creation and economic development throughout the United States; policymakers must develop options to alleviate financial constraints for small business owners.

Researchers (Kersten et al., 2017; Krishnan et al., 2015; Rupeika-Apoga, 2014) found banks make use critical assumptions to guide the decision-making process for small business owners seeking bank financing. Krishnan et al. (2015) found banks are challenged with obtaining data on small business performance data. Krishnan et al. noted banks assume successful small business owners search for methods to acquire additional funds and suggested small business owners are not able to articulate the actuality of financial constraints. Krishnan et al. found many banks still question whether adequate financing for small business lead to increased performance and change the financial condition for those considered financially constrained. Rupeika-Apoga (2014) confirmed small businesses with limited resources are not able to improve business performance with innovative actions.

Kersten et al. (2017) suggested financial constraints often occur with small businesses versus the large businesses. Kersten et al. found financial constraints arise because (a) banks are less willing to lend due to high-risk factors derived from the business' smaller size and age, (b) high cost of monitoring and appraisal activity, and (c) high costs to liquidate given that the dollar value decreases based on size. Rupeika-Apoga found additional rationale for financial institutions

not providing financing to small business owners are: (a) inability to provide collateral, (b) small business owners unable to prove creditworthiness, (c) overall cash flow, (d) no credit history, (d) premiums are too high, (e) expensive transaction cost, and (f) no relationship with banks.

Yeboah and Koffie (2016) found many small business owners are forced to use a funding mix that is not able to support business growth. Yeboah and Koffie opined finance representatives view small businesses as a high-risk practice and small business owners typically fail to provide the required documents for financial institutions. Nitescu (2015) suggested banks have elected to freeze high-risk funding but continue offering funds to larger companies, low-risk businesses, and the government. Rahman et al. (2017) noted many financial institutions have begun imposing collateral requirements on small business owners seeking financial resources to improve the financial position for financially constrained businesses. As a result, collateral requirements are ranked third on the World Business Environment Survey (Rahman et al., 2017).

Nitescu (2015) found in addition to the high-risk factors, researchers have revealed additional reasons small business owners are not able to obtain funds. The reasons involved: (a) financial solutions that are not tailored for the small business model, (b) small business owners lacking knowledge of alternative funding options, (c) small business owners without technical and management skills, (d) irregular patterns in financial history, business earnings, and growth opportunities, (e) insufficient credit history and weak financial structure, (f) no governance process, (g) failure to scale down activities due to being less diversified, (h) high costs to transport goods; poor infrastructure, (i) high costs to implement support services, and (j) government regulations creating strict tax frameworks, and bureaucracy barriers (Nitescu, 2015). Rahman et al. found small business owners are unable to produce audited documents, financial statements, nor able to bypass stringent credit requirements imposed by banks. In addition,

Rahman et al. noted small business owners fail to manage business credit resulting in harsh financial terms, making it difficult to secure bank financing.

Several researchers (Calopa, 2017; Kennickell et al., 2017; Kersten et al., 2017) found the formation, growth, and success of small businesses are highly dependent on small businesses owners' ability to improve financial literacy to increase the chances for obtaining. Calopa (2017) suggested policymakers and scholar-practitioners have expressed intense interest in whether small business owners possess tangible financial literacy skills to run a business. Calopa found communication skills, marketing skills, management skills, and ability to promote teamwork are essential for making strategic decisions, but small business owners need financial literacy skills to boost eligibility to acquire financing. Kersten et al. (2017) found many funding options for technical training programs but business owners are challenged with securing funding for finance training. Kennickell et al. (2017) suggested small business owners with financial literacy skills are able to achieve a better relationship with local and commercial banks.

Small Business Outside Assistance

Researchers (Chrisman & McMullan, 1996; Yusuf, 2014) found outside assistance significantly critical to starting a new business for the first time. Yusuf (2014) found scholars suggested nascent small business owners fail to comprehend the positive benefits of assistance programs, guided preparation, and startup support to stimulate business success. Yusuf noted programs such as government assistance, programs offered by educational institutions, professional networks, non-profit companies, or for-profit companies are agencies offer various business acumen and financial assistance training programs for new business owners. Yusuf defined guided preparation as the use of outside programs or personnel to assist with planning and other required activities during the start-up phase. Chrisman and McMullan (1996) revealed

small business development centers contribute more than \$130 million annually for new business owner support programs. Yusuf noted outside assistance program administrators confirmed 45% of small business failure stem from the non-use of outside assistance programs. Yusuf revealed growth-oriented business owners such as lawyers, accountants, or professional financial advisors elected to utilize outside assistance rather than primarily on bright ideas. Yusuf found small business owners that sought outside assistance, in fact improved the business chances of growth and survival.

Chrisman and McMullan (1996) suggested business owners should conduct an evaluation of outside assistance programs to confirm selected program will have a positive cost-benefit. Chrisman and McMullan found conducting a cost-benefit analysis is a prerequisite for small business owners to ensure the outside assistance programs are able to support business operations, business owner's goals, innovation, or enhancement of other business systems. Chrisman and McMullan found evaluating the economics of small businesses have confirmed there are both primary and secondary benefits to using outside assistance programs. Chrisman and McMullan defined primary benefits as net assets that small business owners use to enhance business performance. Chrisman and McMullan highly recommend maximizing all elements classified as primary benefits to achieve positive results. Chrisman and McMullan found small business owners fail to acknowledge unused advice diminishes over time resulting into zero value for the business. Chrisman and McMullan defined secondary benefits as elements that increases the revenue or employment growth.

Galope (2014) suggested assistance programs fund allocation often disproportionately award monies to small business owners with postgraduate degrees. Galope found several scenarios where grants and subsidies were made available only to entrepreneurs with patents or

small business owners with confirmed experience. Galope found many assistance programs awarded funds to start-ups residing in a specific state. Galope suggested states known for high performance or innovation typically received priority and the majority of funds provided by assistant programs. Galope found small businesses have a higher opportunity to receive funds during the early stages versus seeking help after business operations start to take a downward trend. Although new start-ups are inherently risky during the early years, many assistance programs are optimistic new small businesses have a high probability of succeeding (Galope, 2014). Researchers have yet to find defined characteristics outside assistance programs use as a measure to predict small businesses potential for success (Galope, 2014).

Small Business Strategic Planning

Over the past decade, researchers found small business owners' success or failure starts with strategic planning (Cordeiro, 2013). Cordeiro (2013) opined inadequate planning has become evident especially within the small business community. Cordeiro revealed many small business owners received praise for the contribution to economic growth in the 20th century; just as many small business owners still struggle in the area of planning. Cordeiro found small business planning has been a hot topic since the 1970s. Mazzarol, Clark, and Reboud (2014) found researchers have yet to: (a) outline types and nature of planning, (b) determine specific focus areas for planning, (c) describe the relationship between performance and planning, (d) provide systematic benefits for small business owners, and (e) articulate the benefit of planning in chaotic environments.

According to Katona (2014), some small business owners are not able to comprehend the consequences of inadequate planning and fail to realize the benefits of proper planning. In fact, Siddique (2015) suggested small business owners are rudimentary compared to those operating

large corporations. Cordeiro revealed the results of a research poll where business owners confirmed day-to-day demands limit a business owner's ability to focus on strategic planning. Despite the challenges small business owners face relevant to resource deficiencies and competitive disadvantages; business owners can use strategic planning to implement strategies that lead to success and sustainability (Calopa, 2017). Milutinovic et al. (2015) found strategic planning determines the competitive advantage and assist with understanding the business' capabilities.

Cordeiro (2013) noted based on classical management theory, strategic planning is a standard process that initiated by the business owners. According to Cordeiro, strategic planning is the process of preparing future assumptions models or reactive processes to guide decisions during turbulent times, and the plans should directly relate to the business owner's priorities or goals. Cordeiro noted effective strategic planning requires developing specific plans that should include the following: (a) outline the business, (b) detail the required steps or activities, and (c) define the primary purpose.

Several researchers (Katona, 2014; Rakicevic, Omerbegovic-Bijelovic, & Lecic-Cvetkovic, 2016; Siddique, 2015) found strategic planning significantly improve collaboration, marketing efforts, and assist with chaotic environments. Collaborative efforts among small business owners and support service group may improve the planning process developing suitable strategies to minimize business system chaos (Rakicevic et al., 2016). In addition, Rakicevic et al. (2016) recommended using strategic planning when gaps in internal or external forces create chaos in the business environment. Katona (2014) found planning significantly improve business efficiency, operations, and a method to create marketing strategies. Siddique (2015) found small business owner use strategic planning to evaluate the business and a tool to develop realistic and

attainable goals. In addition, Katona found small business owners use planning as a method to introduce the owner's vision and mission of the organization.

Rakicevic et al. (2016) suggested small business owners' first step to improving planning starts with seeking help from a support system. Rakicevic et al. noted support systems are any institution that provides small business owners with financial or non-financial resources to support business operations. Rakicevic et al. found small business owners that utilize external support services yield a higher growth rate and built a sustainable business. Rakicevic et al. defined financial support as process when a business owner receives financial loans to finance business operations. Rakicevic et al. further suggested small business owners have a greater chance to obtain strategic goals if the business owner have access to an ample amount of funds. Rakicevic et al. noted small business owners should consider seeking financial support from an internal or external support system as a means to fund operation. Rakicevic et al. found non-financial support services do not involve the use of money. Non-financial support involves services such as (a) mentoring, (b) consulting services, (c) training seminars, (d) brand or reputation enhancements, (e) technology or networking help, and (d) introduction to networking clusters (Rakicevic et al., 2016).

Researchers (Cordeiro, 2013; Katona, 2014; Rakicevic et al., 2016) found support services are critical to strategic planning. Rakicevic et al. (2016) found many business owners are scrutinized for not seeking help from a support system. Rakicevic et al. noted support services are excellent options for small business owners who are seeking additional options to achieve business growth. Cordeiro (2013) found the following business functions benefit from effective planning: (a) staffing, (b) production, (c) planning, (d) sales, (e) marketing, (f) distribution, (g) reporting, (h) accounting, and (i) finance. Katona (2014) noted small business owners regularly

fail at planning or seeking help from external or internal support system. Katona suggested large businesses tend to have adequate resources, which leaves ample time toward strategic planning.

To improve the effectiveness of strategic planning, small business owners should focus on the following: (a) capturing gaps in the existing environment, (b) allocate resources to achieve specific goals, (c) improve and maintain competitive advantage, and (d) predict future environmental elements (Cordeiro, 2013). Cordeiro noted small business owners can use planning to understand competitive environments, evaluate competitors, or predict future competition. Small business owners can use strategic planning to obtain specific data on the internal business environment; giving them the capacity to identify internal process issues or resource gaps (Cordeiro, 2013). Cordeiro found strategic planning allows business owners to use a proactive approach for analysis and method for addressing uncontrollable pressures from outside forces such as (a) technological changes, (b) direct and indirect competition, (c) government policy changes, or (d) globalization.

Researchers (Cordeiro, 2013; McDowell et al., 2016) found strategic planning significantly critical to business development and strategic success. Cordeiro (2013) noted small business owners have ongoing concerns that employees' lack focus and suggested business owners use strategic planning to get the resource base involved. McDowell et al. (2016) noted the resource base provides business owners with valuable insight into current market trends and competition. In addition to strategic planning, McDowell et al. suggested business owners use resource training, books, or outside systems to increase the resource knowledge base for effective planning.

Siddique (2015) noted over the past decade, small business owners have begun shifting away from theoretical practice to process methods to enhance business development and

planning. Siddique found the new process methods includes specialized instruments to enhance business owners' analytical skills. Siddique's examination of strategic planning revealed successful small business owners have begun utilizing specialized tools to maximize planning. Siddique found PEST tools are: (a) political, (b) economic, (c) socio-cultural, (d) technological and financial analysis, (e) distinctive core competency, and (f) cost-benefit review. Siddique found business owners use PEST tools to uncover process gaps and identify focus areas boost competitive advantage. Overall, researchers agreed strategic planning contributes to the success of small businesses (Siddique, 2015).

Small Business Strategic Management

The small business model has made a significant contribution to the U.S. economy through innovation, competitiveness, and influential employer (Brezinova & Prusova, 2014). Mazzarol et al. (2014) examined the challenges small businesses have due to the limited number of employees. Mazzarol et al. noted small businesses are limited on the number of individuals fulfilling management level functions, which lead critical management strategies dormant. McDowell et al. (2016) noted due to the finite number of resources, management of the business is dependent on the business owner's skills or talents. The dual roles prevent business owners from devoting attention to managing resources; creating competitive advantage; and focusing on strategy implementation, innovation, growth, and sustainability (Mazzarol et al., 2014). Mazzarol et al. found small business growth requires leadership and action from owners who can use strategic management principles to create business opportunities. McDowell et al. noted in order for small businesses to achieve growth, small business owners must have flexibility to adopt new strategies to improve internal systems. Strategic management principles play a contributing role

in helping small business owners reach competitive advantage goals and over time sustainability (Jahanshahi, Nawaser, Eizi, & Etemadi, 2015).

Strategic management first appeared in 1980, when Ken Simmons defined strategic management as the analysis of business activity and business strategies to achieve business success (Kalkhouran, Rasid, Sofian, & Nedaei, 2015). Mazzarol et al. (2014) conducted extensive research on strategic management, examined various attributes and characteristics of small business owners and compared small business owners to leaders of large organizations. Mazzarol et al. noted many small business owner's vision, principal goals, and primary focus center around maximizing profits. Mazzarol et al. found small business owners can minimize chaos by incorporating management strategies to align with the business owner's strategic vision. Mazzarol et al. recommended small business owners use strategic management methods to guarantee alignment between the following factors: (a) business owner's strategy, (b) leadership style, (c) internal systems, (d) staff, (e) business environment, and (f) organization structure.

Researchers (Brezinova & Prusova, 2014; Drejar, 2017; Jahanshahi et al., 2015) found strategic management functions significantly improve business operations, enhances performance improvements strategies, and employee development. Brezinova and Prusova (2014) suggested small business owners use strategic management principles to reduce cost, enhance decision-making, increase employee motivation, and improve competitive advantage. Drejar (2017) suggested small business owners use strategic management to improve the following managerial tasks: (a) dealing with changes in the environment, (b) adjustments to improve sustainable technology, and (c) evaluation of non-changing or existing technologies. Jahanshahi et al. (2015) suggested small business survival requires strategies to improve competitive advantage and economic value. Jahanshahi et al. found with an additional focus on learning processes and

market orientation, small business owners are able to improve employees' commitments while maintaining focus on performance. In addition, Jahanshahi et al. found business owners' skills and employees' aptitude contributes significantly relate to business success.

Organizational learning is a key element for maintaining, creating, and improving a business' competitive position (Drejar, 2017). Drejar (2017) recommended small business owner use strategic management principles to minimize changes occurring from internal and external issues forces. Mazzarol et al. (2014) found strategic management involves three basic critical principles: (a) evaluate internal structure, (b) develop strategy, and (c) require resources to carryout strategic goals. Brezinova and Prusova (2014) defined strategic management as a tool business owner use to provide direction, clarity on goals, increase internal communication, enhance quality management, staff motivation, resource allocation, project coordination, project future opportunities, and combat competition.

Kalkhouran et al. (2015) found strategic management contributes to the success of business accounting functions and performance. Kalkhouran et al. found using strategic management principles allows business owners to boost the economic well-being of the employees and performance of the business. Kalkhouran et al. noted a shortage of research exploring the benefits of management accounting impact on business performance. Kalkhouran et al. confirmed many business studies focus on the behaviors of the business owner versus measuring the relationship between strategic management, business accounting functions, and business performance. Drejar (2017) found new technology requirements have severe impacts on small business owner and business performance.

Mazzarol et al. (2014) suggested using new technology requirements as an innovation tool to enhance technology and boost competitive advantage. Mazzarol et al. found small

business owners view innovation as a method to find new processes, competitive markets, and strategies to enhance all business systems. Jahanshahi et al. (2015) found analyzing the effects of strategic management confirmed small business owners must develop relevant strategies and objectives to reach full potential. McDowell et al. (2016) noted small business performance relies on the business owner's growth, maturity, ability to create new opportunities, overcome challenges, and effectively adjust strategic focus. Milutinovic et al. (2015) found business owners who implemented strategic processes significantly boosted the performance while improving innovation, competitive advantage, and business success.

Small Business Skills

Several researchers (Chouksey & Karmarkar, 2017; McDowell et al., 2016; Pollack & Adler, 2016; Visser et al., 2016) noted small business owners' skills are significantly critical to the success of a small business. Visser et al. (2016) found evidence that new small business owners start businesses with limited: (a) business knowledge, (b) education, (c) business skills, and (d) functional capabilities. McDowell et al. (2016) suggested to achieve success as a small business, the business owner should possess a high level of intangible skills such as business knowledge, business skills, ability to utilize resource staff, capable of delivering new innovation, and boost the company's competitive advantage. Visser et al. noted many small business owners are at a disadvantage compared to executives at larger organizations, due to the limited skills in the areas of management, finance, and business development. Chouksey and Karmarkar (2017) suggested to achieve sustainability and business success depends on the business owners' behaviors and ability to drive business growth with business development strategies. Pollack and Adler (2016) found improvements in the areas of business operations, performance, and profit margin gives the general assumption business owners' skills have improved.

Business knowledge increases a business owner's ability to identify opportunities and minimize the risk of failure (Chouksey & Karmarkar, 2017). Visser et al. (2016) suggested small business owners should consider enhanced training or business school to develop conceptual and business skills. Visser et al. defined technical skills involves having expert knowledge of a specific process or procedure. Hunsaker (2014) defined conceptual skills involves displaying mental capacity to develop effective processes, enhance employee performance, demonstrate business knowledge, and able to understand the interrelationships of the internal systems. Visser et al. found conceptual skills are critical for management level, and technical skills are useful for the supervisor roles.

Bublitz and Noseleit (2014) found successful small business owners utilize both conceptual and technical skills. Bublitz and Noseleit found the conceptual skills of small business owners and specialized skills of employees are critical to business performance, growth, and success. Stuetzer, Obschonka, and Schmitt-Rodermund (2013) found small business owners' talent and innate ability leads to positive results. Visser et al. examined small business performance and growth and found limited results when business owners do not possess knowledge of internal processes and systems. Visser et al. found successful business owners showed effectiveness in the areas of decision-making, risk-taking, and problem-solving. Visser et al. research confirmed work experience, specialized training, and formal education are critical to business growth and sustainability. Bewayo (2015) noted small business owners are not capable of achieving business success without business education, training, or skills.

New small business owners enter the market with big ideas but lack essential strategies and knowledge of critical systems such as (a) human resource management, (b) service enhancements, (c) financial policies, (d) marketing campaigns, or (e) general efforts related to

launching a business (Milutinovic et al., 2015). Chouksey and Karmarkar (2017) suggested the lack of knowledge occurs when business owners avoid business training and supplement learning by seeking entrepreneurship path. For example, Pollack and Adler (2016) found evidence that project management skills significantly enhance the success of small business owners. Chouksey and Karmarkar noted developed skills in the areas of marketing and finance allows small business owners to generate new business opportunities. Glaub et al. (2014) confirmed the primary goal for small businesses should involve developing the business owner's skills. Chouksey and Karmarkar found five essential skills small business owners can use to help identify business opportunities. The skills business owners should have to be successful are (a) able to obtain information on competitive markets, (b) make proactive actions to address customer problems, (c) possess experience in marketing, and (d) have the capability to manage employees (Chouksey & Karmarkar, 2017).

Researchers (McDowell et al., 2016; Stuetzer, Obschonka, & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2013) examined small business owners and found the owners' skills and education levels are critical to business success. Small business owners with little managerial expertise hinder business growth and success (McDowell et al., 2016). Chouksey and Karmarkar (2017) examined small business owners and found some business owners do not have experience in the areas of business ownership, employee training, or have the education base to develop a sustainable business. In contrast, business owners exhibiting balance skills typically realize progress, growth, and success (Stuetzer et al., 2013). McDowell et al. (2016) posited inexperience as a liability for small business owners and makes business owners susceptible to business failure.

The four characteristics of a susceptible business owner are: (a) lack of experience contributing to internal issues, (b) limited market knowledge, (c) failure to develop a connection

with customer base, and (d) inability to establish a network with individuals who are able to assist with business needs (McDowell et al., 2016). Many researchers examining small business economics suggested small business owners should make a substantial investment towards the enhancement of business knowledge and skills (Stuetzer et al., 2013). Stuetzer et al. (2013) suggested small business owners seek business knowledge from outside training or higher education. Bublitz and Noseleit (2014) identified methods such as formal education and prior work experience provides small business owners with competence skills that are critical to business success factors. Visser et al. (2016) stated the small business model plays a critical role in creating competition and achieving economic prosperity. Therefore, small business owners should take appropriate measures to develop business and conceptual skill with training or education.

Transition

In Section 1, I provided the foundation for this study and the background of the problem; introduced the problem and purpose statement; discussed the nature of the study and overarching research question and interview questions; revealed the conceptual framework of the study; discussed operational definitions and assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study; highlighted the significance of the study; and provided an extensive review of academic and professional literature by researchers who explored factors related to the small business model. The conceptual framework served as a lens to view the business problem and factors that impact small business success such as small business failure, small business survival, small business performance, outside assistance programs, small business strategic planning, small business strategic management, and small business skills.

In Section 2, I provide the (a) project review and restatement of the purpose statement, (b) process to obtain participants, (c) research design and method, (d) population and sampling, (e) ethical research, (f) data collection instruments, (g) data collection technique, (h) data organization technique, (i) data collection analysis, and (j) reliability and validity. In Section 3, I provide the (a) introduction, (b) presentation of findings, (c) application to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommendations for action, (f) recommendations for further research, (g) summary of my experience during the DBA process, and (h) conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

Small businesses have become engines in the areas of production of gross domestic products (GDP), social development, economic growth, employment growth, and wealth creation (Ejmalian & Syed, 2015). Despite the success, small businesses face significant challenges resulting in business failure (Mutoko, 2014). Chan et al. (2016) suggested small business owners' limited experience and failure to obtain financial resources limit contributes to business failure. More than 79% of small businesses will not survive past 5 years (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016). Obtaining knowledge of causes contributing to small business survival will lead to sustainable strategies for small business sustainability (Mas-Verdú, Ribeiro-Soriano, & Roig-Tierno, 2015). The focus of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies of small business owners with experiences using resources and have sustained business beyond the first 5 years of operation. Section 2 consists of the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participant's eligibility, and the research method and design. Also, within Section 2, I define the scope of the population while justifying the sampling method. I outline the informed consent guidelines to acknowledge requirements for ethical research. I identify and discussed the primary and secondary data collection instruments, data collection process, data organization, data analysis, and reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies and knowledge of resources small business owners use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years. The target population consisted of minority business owners in four small businesses located in Texas, possessing strategies and knowledge of resources to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years. The potential implications for a positive social change of this doctoral

study includes increasing small business owners' knowledge of strategies and available resources to create business growth and continue adding new jobs in the state of Texas.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, researchers have a critical role with identifying participants, data collection, data analysis, and presenting emerging themes (Yates & Leggett, 2016). The role of the researcher entails planning, interviewing, and collecting data from participants (Yin, 2018). Yates and Leggett (2016) suggested the data collection process involves conducting open-ended interviews and reviewing documents to delineate the participants' experiences. The role of the researcher consists of determining the appropriate method to capture participants' responses and turn them into meaningful insight (Moon, 2015). As the researcher, I obtained study participants, collected and analyzed data, and provided an unbiased summary of the findings for this qualitative multiple case study.

The study participants consisted of small business owners in Texas with successful experience using strategies and knowledge of resources to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years. I had an indirect connection to this research topic and have familiarity with the geographical area where the study participants operate. During high school, my goals were to obtain a bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral degree, and start my own consulting company. As a result, I have spent the last 20 years researching steps to start a small business and seeking methods to increase my business knowledge. My goals to start a consulting company and increase my business education provided the foundation to understand strategies to improve small business sustainability. Ly, Vickers, and Fernandez (2015) affirmed students' knowledge, skills, and preparation for the future generally occurs with business education.

Researchers must acknowledge, adhere, and maintain an ethical framework when

conducting research (Wiles, 2013). The following three premises are suitable guidelines for researchers conducting qualitative research: (a) acknowledge ethical issues that may arise throughout the research process, (b) evaluate different ethical approaches and select a method suitable for the researcher's intellect and moral guidelines, and (c) do not focus on routine conduct (Wiles, 2013). Researchers are required to develop methods to minimize risk and enhance ethical thinking (Wiles, 2013).

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects (1979) published The Belmont Report to provide a structured framework as a method to analyze ethical issues and provide principles for ethical research. The Belmont Report contains the following principles researchers are required to follow (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects, 1979). Sims (2018) defined respect for persons requires researchers to treat individuals as autonomous. An autonomous individual should: (a) consider benefit and potential harm, (b) establish how potential benefits and risk align with personal values or goals, and (c) take actions based on the provided analysis. Researchers can apply this principle by providing participants with voluntary informed consent. The informed consent covers voluntariness, comprehension, and disclosures. I followed the ethical principle, respect for persons, as outlined in the Belmont Report by requiring study participants to review and sign the informed consent form before allowing an individual to participate in this study.

The informed consent form provided participants with information on the study and measures I will take to protect their rights. Sims (2018) defined beneficence as the process researchers take to maximize research benefits and minimize participant risk. As the researcher, I took measures to identify risk and take necessary steps to mitigate risk for the study participants. According to the Belmont Report, justice requires researchers to provide fair procedures and treatment to the selection process of research participants. I informed Walden University's

Institutional Review Board (IRB) the detail steps I used to identify and reduce potential risk for study participants. The role of the researcher is to remove one's personal lens to maintain an open mind when attempting to understand a phenomenon (Sorsa, Kiikkala, & Åstedt-Kurki, 2015). Morse (2015b) noted remaining neutral assists researchers in mitigating bias. To mitigate bias and avoid viewing data through a personal lens, I audiotaped the interviews, developed interview transcripts, conducted member checks, and used triangulation.

Researchers use interview protocols to strengthen and enhance the quality of data collected from participants' interviews. Montoya (2016) suggested researchers use the following four steps to strengthen interview protocols: (a) confirm interview questions link to the research question, (b) use an inquiry approach to drive the conversation, (c) obtain interview protocol feedback, and (d) implement a pilot for the defined interview protocol. The interview questions aligned with the overarching research question to understand the strategies and knowledge of resources small business owners use to sustain business beyond the first 5 years of operation. I used an inquiry approach to gain an understanding of strategies small business owners use to obtain business success. I obtained interview protocol feedback to increase reliability, trustworthiness, and confirmed research questions were not confusing or vague. I elected not implement a pilot for the defined interview protocol.

Participants

The participants for this study were a purposive sample of small business owners in Texas with successful experience using strategies and have knowledge of resources to sustain business beyond the first 5 years. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on the assumption the richness of the participant's information is relevant to the research questions (Yin, 2018). For this study, I sought participants that met the following eligibility criteria: (a) minority

small business owner in Texas, (b) in business for a minimum of 5 years, (c) registered as a legal business, (d) possess successful experience obtaining outside resources designed to increase profitability, and (e) small business owner with less than 500 employees.

Hoyland, Hollund, and Olsen (2015) noted that developing strategies to increase participants' awareness of the research study and articulates the informed consent process increases researchers' ability to gain access to a business. As a result, many researchers develop relationships with insiders to gain access to potential businesses (Hoyland et al., 2015). To gain access to participants, I began the process by obtaining a listing of small businesses and owners' contact information from the Chamber of Commerce to assist with the identification of participants. I visited several prospective small businesses and established rapport with the employees and the business owner. During the initial contact, I shared the significance of this qualitative research study, articulate the informed consent process, and asked for approval to gain access to their business.

Establishing a working relationship requires researchers to provide trustworthy criteria regarding the aim of the study (Anney, 2014). Establishing productive and open working relationships build trust and enhance study participants' willingness to share knowledge (Jack, DiCenso, & Lohfeld, 2016). Zang and Jiang (2015) noted good working relations determine the amount of time and knowledge participants are willing to share. I provided trustworthy criteria regarding the goal of the proposed study. I established a productive and open working relationship that built trust with the participants and enhanced their willingness to share their experiences.

The selection of study participants involves researchers developing alignment between participants, the research design, and the overarching research question (Satalkar, Elger, & Shaw,

2016). Researchers should confirm potential participants' eligibility to ensure selected participants' experiences and knowledge align with the research topic (Watts, Williams, Kim, Bramwell, & Krishnan, 2017). Yin (2018) stated qualitative researchers can avoid obtaining useless data by defining the eligibility requirements criteria for study participants. Cooper and McNair (2017) suggested establishing criteria for participation protects the participants. Weber, Geneste, and Connell (2015) found many definitions of small businesses does not reflect the natural characteristics based on size or number of employees. For this study, I elected not focus on a specific industry; I selected participants that have the following characteristics: (a) minority small business owner more than 5 years, (b) knowledge of strategies to drive business success and sustainability, and (c) knowledge of available resources.

Research Method and Design

Research involves using strategic steps to gain an understanding or obtaining knowledge to predict and describe a phenomenon (Merten, 2015). The focus of this proposal was to explore the strategies and resources small business owners use to sustain business beyond the first 5 years. The paradigm of research requires researchers to make a methodological choice when selecting their research method (Merten, 2015). The standard methods researchers use are (a) qualitative, (b) quantitative, and (c) mix methods. Researchers use a quantitative approach when closed-ended questions and numerical data assists with revealing a phenomenon (Merten, 2015). Qualitative researchers use open-ended questions, artifacts, and words to obtain a complete understanding of a phenomenon through the lens of people (Merten, 2015). Mix-method researchers combine qualitative and quantitative methods to collect and analyze data to answer research questions (Merten, 2015).

Morse (2015a) noted that data saturation strengthens a researcher's knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon. Fusch and Ness (2015) noted data saturation occurs when researchers obtain enough data and no new information is feasible. Data saturation is reached when researchers are not able to obtain new data or develop new themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Research Method

I used a qualitative research method to explore strategies and obtain knowledge of resources small business owners use to sustain business beyond the first 5 years. Yin (2018) summarized qualitative research with five features: (a) ability to explore a phenomenon based on real-world situations, (b) obtain direct views from participants, (c) understand the interrelated conditions of participants, (d) explain existing practices to understand participant's human behaviors, and (e) use multiple instruments to obtain multiple sources of evidence. Qualitative researchers use semistructured interviews to gain insight into a phenomenon (Lewis, 2015). Qualitative research does not involve the examination of data variables to determine relationships (Barnham, 2016).

Quantitative researchers use numbers and hypotheses testing to determine if a relationship exists between two or more variables (Smith, 2014). Miller (2017) suggested researchers use quantitative research to examine a social phenomenon. Quantitative research involves the application of statistical methods versus methodological steps to establish reliability and validity (Brink, 2015). I did not select the quantitative method because I did not use numbers to determine relationships between variables or hypotheses testing to examine a phenomenon. I did not use statistical methods to establish reliability or examine a phenomenon.

Mixed-methods research involves both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to examine a research problem (Abro et al., 2015). Yin (2018) noted researchers use mix-methods

design to take advantage of the differences and similarities in quantitative and qualitative methods. Reilly and Jones (2017) suggested mixed-methods research is suitable when researchers focus on why questions and looking for phenomenon boundaries and insights into mechanisms. I did not select the mixed-methods research methodology because I did not use why questions or need to take advantage of the differences and similarities of the quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain an understanding of a phenomenon. The qualitative research method is suitable to explore strategies and gain knowledge resources small businesses use to sustain business beyond the first 5 years.

Research Design

Leedy and Ormrod (2015) defined research designs as systematic processes researchers use to connect research data, research questions, data analysis, and researcher findings for a phenomenon. To explore strategies and obtain knowledge of resources small business owners use to obtain sustainability, I used a multiple case study research design. Researchers use the case study design when research questions require in-depth or extensive descriptions of a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Qualitative researchers use case study research design to explore lived experiences of a participant's phenomenon in their natural environment (Vohra, 2014). Yin (2018) suggested case study research design is a suitable research design when the research question asks how, why, or what questions to understand a phenomenon.

Qualitative researchers use the phenomenological research design to capture the commonality of individuals' lived experiences of a specific phenomenon (Smith, 2015). Researchers use the phenomenological design as a lens to understand an individual's conscious and how experiences are formed (Greenfield & Jensen, 2016). Lawlor and Solomon (2017) suggested researchers use phenomenological design to gain an understanding of how experiences

cultivate during extraordinary circumstances. I did not select the phenomenological design because I did not evaluate an individual's conscious or attempt to understand how circumstances cultivate experiences.

The ethnographic research design is appropriate when group observations are required to understand a phenomenon (Hannigan, 2014). Ethnographic research designs require researchers to capture group behavior patterns and group interaction over an extended period as it occurs within their natural environment (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Researchers use ethnographic design to observe behaviors, to understand what people think and believe, and method to interpret what people do (Lopez-Dicastillo & Belintxon, 2014). Group observations within businesses are not suitable for this study to explore strategies and obtain knowledge of resources to achieve small business sustainability. For this study, I did not select an ethnographic design because I was not seeking to conduct group observations to identify behavior patterns or use group interaction to understand a phenomenon.

Data saturation involves the process of researchers obtaining enough data to replicate the research study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Saunders et al. (2018) defined data saturation as the process where new data begin to repeat, and no new themes emerge. According to Morse (2015a), researchers can achieve data saturation and obtain rich data by using an adequate sample size. Fusch and Ness (2015) noted that researchers use interviews as the primary data collection method to reach data saturation. For this study, I achieved data saturation by interviewing four minority small business owners and member checks to obtain rich data on the research topic. I continued conducting interviews and data analysis until no new themes emerged or the data began to repeat.

Population and Sampling

I used a purposive sampling method to identify four minority small business owners with sustainable business strategies and knowledge of available resources. Researchers use purposive sampling when the ideal participants align with the overall purpose of the study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Boddy (2016) found qualitative researchers use a purposive sampling method to obtain different views from participants experiencing a specific phenomenon. Bougie and Sekaran (2016) suggested researchers use a purposive sampling method to obtain input regarding the research topic from the study participants. I gathered specific data from experienced small business owners who had successful strategies and knowledge of resources that sustained business beyond the first 5 years in Texas.

The population for this study consisted of minority small business owners in Texas. I obtained a sample from the minority small business population to understand what strategies and knowledge of resources small business owners use to sustain business beyond the first 5 years. Singh and Masuku (2014) posited the sample size is critical for qualitative researchers, in which researchers use sample size to find insight into the population based upon information gathered from the sample. Researchers use sampling to retrieve a subset of data to predict factors for the entire population (Singh & Masuku, 2014). Singh and Masuku suggested researchers use of sampling allows researchers to collect data efficiently and at a reduced cost. Fugard and Potts (2015) posited qualitative researchers' primary goal involves ensuring the sample size is manageable but large enough to provide a deep understanding of the phenomenon. In addition, qualitative researchers use sampling to reach data saturation (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016).

Fusch and Ness (2015) found researchers who failed to reach data saturation impede

content quality and reduce research validity. Noohi, Peyrovi, Goghary, and Kazemi (2016) suggested data saturation is reached when researchers are not able to reveal new information, themes, and requires researchers to halt the data collection process. Data saturation refers to the point in the research process when no new information is discovered and this redundancy signals to the researchers that data collection may cease (Malterud et al., 2016). Fusch and Ness found researchers are able to reach data saturation by selecting the appropriate sample size and conducting interviews.

Yin (2018) suggested a researcher's sample size should produce sufficient data or the researcher should continue the data collection process until reaching data saturation. Fusch and Ness suggested researchers use triangulation as a method to reach data saturation. Fusch and Ness noted triangulation involves the use of multiple methods during the data collection and analysis process. Fusch and Ness found triangulation enhance researchers' ability to reach data saturation. To ensure data saturation, I selected and interviewed four successful minority small business owners and continued the data collection process until no new information or themes were identified. I used triangulation during the data analysis process to reach data saturation.

Ethical research requires a fair selection of study participants (Chen, 2016). Chen affirmed researchers should not exclude specific participants without a methodological reason or believe the participants do not have an awareness of the research topic. Watts et al. (2017) suggested researchers use terms such as eligibility criteria, inclusion criteria, diagnostic methodology, or clinical criteria to help clarify the method in which participants are selected. For this study, I clearly defined the requirements for selecting participants and criteria for selection. The study participants met the following criteria for participation in this study: (a) minority small business owner in Texas, (b) in business for a minimum of 5 years, (c) registered as a legal

business, (d) possess successful experience obtaining outside resources designed to increase profitability, and (e) minority small business owner with less than 500 employees. Participants were willing to have the interview sessions taped and agree to the informed consent.

Rimando et al. (2015) suggested researchers conduct interviews in a neutral, private, and comfortable setting to promote honest and open communication from the study participants. Researchers should avoid selecting rooms where environmental issues such as loud background noise or room temperature, may negatively affect the data collection process (Rimando et al., 2015). I secured a private conference room to minimize environmental distractions. Using a private conference room proved appropriate to conduct interviews and useful for data collection. Haahr, Norlyk, and Hall (2014) noted the most appropriate interview setting is created during the interview and gives the researcher the opportunity to obtain an adequate amount of data from the participant. I used the established interview protocol (Appendix A) and interview questions (Appendix B) to create the most suitable interview setting to enhance the data collection process.

Ethical Research

Harriss and Atkinson (2015) noted research that involve human participants require researchers to follow strict steps to ensure compliance to ethical research guidelines. Researchers adhere to ethical guidelines to minimize perceived biases and to maintain data integrity throughout the data collection process (Alby & Fatigante, 2014). Researchers use informed consent as a tool to obtain participants' written consent and to communicate the benefits of the study (Brett, Staniszewska, Mockford, Herron-Marx, Hughes, Tysall, & Suleman, 2014). Perrault and Keating (2017) described informed consent as the process researchers use to get participants' agreement to participate and to inform participants of potential risks. I used the informed consent form, following the requirements established by Walden University's Institutional Review Board

(IRB). Institutional Review Boards have oversight over research proposals and protect individuals participating in research studies (Connelly, 2014). Perrault and Keating noted participants typically do not read the informed consent forms and suggested researchers take additional steps to obtain signatures. Perrault and Keating recommended researchers to require participants sign the informed consent forms before scheduling interviews. To ensure strict compliance, I asked participants to read and sign the informed consent form or provide electronic approval before scheduling interviews. To ensure compliance of all ethical guidelines, I completed the online training course, Protecting Human Research Participants conducted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and received certification number 2847886 (Appendix C).

Researchers use the informed consent process to provide participants with the scope of the project and advise participants of their legal right to withdraw from the study (Sherlock & Brownie, 2014). Connelly (2014) noted researchers use informed consent to notify participants there will be no compensation and participation is voluntary. Harriss and Atkinson (2015) suggested researchers provide the informed consent form in writing and noted it should include (a) researcher name and institutional affiliation, (b) aim of the research, (c) potential risks, (d) anticipated benefits, (e) right to withdraw, and (f) right to refuse participation in the research study. If participants no longer wanted to participate, they had the option to inform me by phone or electronic written communication. For this study, I did not offer the participants an incentive and their participation is strictly voluntary. As the researcher, I will make the final research findings available to the study participants.

According to Connelly (2014) and Yin (2018), researchers must adhere to ethical requirements by protecting participants' privacy and confidentiality and safeguarding private information during the data collection and data analysis process. Disguising participants'

information ensures no reader can recognize or identify the study participants (Grossoehme, 2014). A crucial requirement in ethical research involves incorporating additional measures on the storage of the participants' data (Connelly, 2014; Harriss & Atkinson, 2015; Yin, 2018). I used defined codes to disguise the participants' personal information and replaced their names with a participant code. The participants' codes were as follows: P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. I removed any identifying information on the names of the participants' organizations. I used O1, O2, O3, O4, and O5 for the participating organizations. I will keep all research data, audio recordings, and notes in a locked secured location within my home for 5 years to protect the participants' confidentiality. After 5 years, I will shred all written documents and destroy all audio recordings. I obtained IRB approval prior to conducting research to ensure full compliance with IRB ethical standards. The IRB approval number for this study is 03-18-19-0545727.

Data Collection Instruments

Yin (2018) noted that qualitative researchers are the primary instrument used in the data collection process. As the researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument for this qualitative study. Researchers use instruments such as interviews, archival records, physical artifacts, direct observations, and documents to collect data (Yin, 2018). Parker (2014) found researchers use data collection as a method to explore a phenomenon and to extend knowledge of a research topic. Researchers use data collection to capture data the researcher can use to assist with answering the research question or identify the phenomenon (Paradis, O'Brien, Nimmon, Bandiera, & Martimianakis, 2016). Bryman (2015) noted conventional methods researchers use are questionnaires and interviews to explore a phenomenon. I conducted semistructured interviews with a minimum of four small business owners and reviewed company documents to collect data on the research topic.

Researchers use semistructured interviews to ascertain participants' responses regarding a phenomenon (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Cridland, Jones, Caputi, and Magee (2015) noted semistructured interviews allows researchers to maintain focus on the aims of the research study. According to Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez (2015), interview preparation allows researchers to adequately prepare and identify appropriate questions. I used semistructured interviews to provide structure based on the interview protocol (Appendix A) but allowed flexibility for participants to provide more spontaneous narratives and descriptions.

Flick (2014) found qualitative researchers neglect the analytical benefits of reviewing written documents. Flick noted researchers should consider the functional methods of documents and how organizations use documents in daily activities. Flick suggested researchers pay careful attention to the methods in which organizations conceptualize and classify documents. Paradis et al. (2016) suggested researchers use the research question to guide the number or type of documents such as (a) meeting notes, (b) newspaper articles, (c) governmental reports, (d) organization protocols and policies, (e) records, and (f) checklists. Owen (2014) found using organization documents allows the researcher to corroborate interview data. As the researcher, I used organization documents to validate data collected during the interviews. In addition, I reviewed organization documents to assist with understanding the phenomenon and answering the research question.

Thomas (2017) confirmed researchers use member checking to enhance research credibility. Researchers use credibility to strengthen their research, and member checking methods to verify the interpretation of participants' views (Cope, 2014). Researchers use member checking to obtain feedback from participants and method to validate the research results (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Researchers use member checking to obtain feedback

on data collected from study participants to avoid misrepresentation of research findings (Andrasik et al., 2014). As the researcher for this qualitative study, I used member checking as a mechanism for participants to provide feedback and to confirm accuracy of data collected during the data collection process. I used member checking to increase the credibility of this qualitative study. I used member checking by interpreting the participants' responses to interview questions, giving these interpretations back to the participants, and asking participants to verify that my interpretations of their responses were accurate.

Data Collection Technique

Researchers collect data from study participants as a method to understand a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Qualitative researchers use techniques such as semistructured, unstructured, or structured interviews as a method to collect data (Parker, 2014). I used the semistructured interview technique to collect data from a minimum of four study participants. Researchers use a dependable interview protocol to collect quality interview data (Yeong, Ismail, Ismail, & Hamzah, 2018). As the researcher, I used a defined interview protocol (Appendix A) to guide the interview process.

Researchers use semistructured interview questions to obtain an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives of a phenomenon (Vohra, 2014). Researchers use the semistructured interview method to communicate freely with study participants about the research topic (Anyan, 2013). Researchers use interview questions to guide the interview process and as a method to remain focused on a research topic (Cridland et al., 2015). I used nine open-ended interview questions (Appendix B) to collect data relevant to the research topic during the interview process.

Yin (2018) suggested organizational documents complement field interviews. Peyrefitte and Lazar (2018) found using documents as a data source contribute to the development of the

researcher's knowledge base. Barlow (2016) suggested researchers use documents based on the rich and insightful data to assist with the understanding of the business. Researchers use documents to supplement data collected during the interview process and as a method to triangulate the data (Yin, 2018). As the researcher, I reviewed organizational documents to develop an understanding of the participant's business and as a method to supplement interview data and achieve methodological triangulation.

There are advantages and disadvantages of using semistructured interviews and company documents or artifacts to collect data. McIntosh and Morse (2015) found semistructured interviews keep researchers focused on the research topic. Deakin and Wakefield (2014) noted semistructured interviews are the preferred data collection method for researchers exploring a phenomenon. Semistructured interviews allow researchers to use comfortable settings to conduct participant interviews (Scheibe, Reichelt, Bellmann, & Kirch, 2015). Vohra (2014) noted the semistructured interview technique allows researchers to collect consistent data from each study participant. Furthermore, researchers use semistructured interviews to collect data for subsequent stages of the research process (Cridland et al., 2015).

Cridland et al. (2015) noted several disadvantages of conducting semistructured interviews at the participant's home. Home settings are not secure and do not provide a private environment to safeguard confidentiality (Cridland et al., 2015). Many novice researchers do not have the proper skills to conduct semistructured interviews (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez (2015) suggested qualitative researchers should: (a) adequately prepare, (b) identify constraints, (c) establish rapport, and (d) actively listen. I put emphasis on the semistructured interview steps as outlined by Cridland et al. (2015) to ensure I was efficient in

conducting interviews. I did not conduct a pilot study after Walden's IRB provide approval for this qualitative study.

Company documents or artifacts serve as another source of primary evidence for qualitative researchers to corroborate the data (Yin, 2018). Peyrefitte and Lazar (2018) found researchers review company documents as a method to compare and contrast data. Barlow (2016) expressed reviewing company documents are low risk and unproblematic for ethical researchers. Yin (2018) found researchers use documents, artifacts, and archival records to assist with understanding the business.

Yin (2018) noted collecting and reviewing company documents as a time-consuming task. Yin noted a common disadvantage for researchers attempting to use company documents because researchers frequently have difficulty accessing documents. Barlow (2016) affirmed researchers are often allowed to view public domain documents and challenged with gaining access to restricted documents. The increasingly recognized benefits require researchers to work with gatekeepers to gain access to documents that may be considered sensitive (Barlow, 2016). I sought help from study participants to provide me with documents relevant to specific business problem or questions discussed during the interview.

Member checking involves researchers sending the participants a draft copy of the case summaries for review, to add comments, or make corrections (Thomas, 2017). Researchers use member checking to ensure accurate interpretation of participants' responses (Birt et al., 2016). Cope (2014) noted researchers use member checking to add credibility to the researcher's interpretation of participant responses obtained during the interview process. Researchers use member checking as an opportunity to give study participants the opportunity to confirm and validate the researcher's emerging findings and to avoid researchers' bias (Andrasik et al., 2014).

I used member checking by interpreting the participants' responses to interview questions, giving these interpretations back to the participants, and asking participants to verify that my interpretations of their responses are accurate.

Data Organization Technique

The tools researchers use for data organization are essential for data analysis and reporting the research findings (Yin, 2018). Bromana and Woob (2017) noted researchers use software tools such as spreadsheets for visualization, data analysis, storage, data entry, and a method to reduce errors. Researchers using spreadsheets for storage aspects and data entry should follow the following basic principles: (a) put one item in a cell, (b) set dates in a YYYY-MM-DD format, (c) organize data using rows for subject headers and columns for variables, (d) build a data dictionary, (e) avoid calculations, (f) avoid leaving cells empty, (g) be consistent, (f) create backups, and (g) use simple text to save data (Bromana & Woob, 2017). Recording participants' interviews with a recorder, provide researchers with an efficient method to transcribe, code, and organize data during the analysis phase (Vohra, 2014). I used instruments such as journals, research logs, data labeling, hand-held recorder, and cataloging to organize the research data. In addition, I used data analysis software to organize and transcribe interview notes. I will store audio recordings and raw data in a locked file cabinet for 5 years.

Data Analysis

Qualitative researchers use multiple steps to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). A critical step in a researcher's process involves the complex task of data analysis (Yin, 2018). Gibbs (2018) defined data analysis as the transformation of data. Chambers (2018) defined data analysis as the exploratory method researchers use to explore raw data thoroughly, to identify relationships, patterns, and a method to display findings. Researchers

use the data analysis process to identify, interpret, or define problems based on responses obtained from participants involved in a phenomenon (Lewis, 2015). Renz, Carrington, and Badger (2018) suggested data analysis is a significant step in qualitative research because it allows researchers to investigate processes or reasons for a phenomenon.

As the researcher, I used methodological triangulation to validate research findings. Triangulation involves researchers using multiple data sources or methods to ensure the credibility of a research study (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Wilson (2014) defined triangulation as using multiple approaches during the research process to obtain richer data to support the research findings. Researchers use triangulation to provide validity to research findings (Mayer, 2015). Wilson noted there are four types of triangulation: (a) data, (b) investigator, (c) theory, and (d) methodological. Data triangulation involves the use of different data sources or the use of different times, different places, and different people for data collection (Wilson, 2014). Investigator triangulation is a systematic comparison by using multiple people in the data collection and data analysis process (Wilson, 2014). Theoretical triangulation requires researchers to approach the data through the lens of multiple theories to extend knowledge (Wilson, 2014). Finally, methodological triangulation involves the use multiple methods to collect data (Wilson, 2014). Carter et al. (2014) noted qualitative researchers frequently use observations, field notes, or interviews to ensure triangulation. I obtained methodological triangulation using semistructured interviews, member checking, company documents, archival records, or physical artifacts such as books or any item used in a participant's daily routine or ritual.

After data collection, I canvassed the interview transcripts, handwritten notes, and audio recordings to transcribe and interpret the data. I identified and develop a coding scheme with the

use of manual coding. I adopted and used Yin's (2018) five-phased cycle to bring structure to the data analysis process. Yin's five-phased cycle involves the following steps: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling and arraying, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. Compiling begins the analysis process and requires researchers to start with sorting handwritten notes obtained from field interviews (Yin, 2018). Yin's second phase, disassembling, requires researchers to begin breaking down data into pieces or fragments. In the reassembling phase, researchers start rearranging and depicting data graphically in tabular form (Yin, 2018). In Yin's interpreting phase, researchers conduct their initial interpretation. In the final phase, the researchers begin developing conclusions derived from descriptions revealed in the fourth phase (Yin, 2018).

After manual analysis, I used NVivo 12 software to (a) validate manual coded themes, (b) sort and arrange data, (c) confirm themes, and (d) obtain new knowledge. NVivo 12 is a data analysis software produced by QSR International designed for qualitative researchers needing to analyze unstructured or non-numerical data (Brandao & Brandao, 2015). Qualitative researchers use NVivo 12 software for textual indexing of documents, to search key terms or phrases, and to confirm themes and categories (Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Le, 2014). Malone and Coyne (2016) found qualitative researchers use software to support data analysis, data management, and when working with various modes of data. I purchased NVivo 12 software to analyze non-numerical data and validate themes arrived through manual analysis and to provide a concise interpretation of the research findings.

I connected the key themes to the research literature and the conceptual framework for this qualitative research study. Qualitative researchers are required to conduct rigorous research for the development of thematic categories (Ennis, 2018). Ennis (2018) noted the development of

themes substantiates data analysis and allow effective communication of the research findings. Ennis found researchers use themes for application to the literature and inform future research. Researchers start with the collection of data and begin transforming the data into clear, recognizable, insightful, and trustworthy data (Gibbs, 2018). As the researcher, I used a manual data analysis process to establish key themes and validated with NVivo 12 software to obtain an overview of how the key themes related to the literature, incorporated newly published studies, and presented findings in a clear manner to inform and advance future research.

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative researchers use research designs and data collection to address a research topic; however, reliability and validity establish the truth and accuracy of a study (Yin, 2018). Researchers use reliability and validity to confirm repeatability, consistency, and dependability (Morse, 2015a). Noble and Smith (2015) noted researchers should use reliability and validity to assure the accuracy of research findings. Connelly (2016) found researchers use reliability and validity to confirm integrity and trustworthiness of the research findings.

Reliability

Reliability involves the methods researchers use to describe and confirm the consistency during the data analysis process (Noble & Smith, 2015). Leung (2015) defined reliability as the process researchers use to validate the accuracy of research data as compared to the original source. Yin (2018) noted researchers use reliability to confirm the coherence of their research study. Noble and Smith (2015) noted researchers use reliability to establish credibility and integrity of the research findings. Kihn and Ihantola (2015) explained that reliability is not measurable, and researchers should use additional measures to confirm reliability. Kihn and

Ihantola found researchers use additional methods such as member checking and data interpretation to ensure the reliability and dependability of the research findings.

Dependability. Researchers defined dependability as the audit trail (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Connelly (2016) defined dependability as the stability of research data based on the nature of the study. Researchers use dependability to describe the research method process from the beginning to reporting of the research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers use dependability to display and document the consistency within the research findings, allowing readers to follow, audit, or critique the research findings (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams, & Blackman, 2016).

Researchers use member checks to solicit participant's insight and confirm research findings mirror the participant's expected meaning (Kornbluh, 2015). Birt et al. (2016) defined member checking as the method researchers use to obtain participants' validation of findings to ensure accuracy. Thomas (2017) found member checks are effective for obtaining participant's feedback and approved use in research findings. To ensure dependability and reliability, I conducted member checking by providing participants a summary of the research findings and requested feedback to confirm accuracy. I used member checks to verify the research findings mirror the participant's expected meaning.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research refers to the researcher's approach to confirm the steps taken to ensure integrity of the research findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). Researchers use validity to confirm studies are appropriate and to address the following: (a) a valid research question for the expected outcome, (b) research question can be answered by methodology selection, (c) research design supports methodology, (d) the data analysis and data sampling is appropriate, and

(e) the research conclusions and findings are suitable for the sample (Leung, 2015). Researchers use validity to enhance data analysis and to ensure triangulation (Leung, 2015). Qualitative researchers use validity to confirm data analysis results are accurate, consistent, and repeatable (Morse, 2015b). Researchers can obtain validity by presenting the transferability and credibility of the research study (Barber, Everard, Holland, Tipping, Bradley, & Hodgson, 2015). To ensure validity, I established credibility, transferability, and confirmability for this qualitative research study.

Credibility. Researchers use credibility as a method to present the research findings as credible based on the participant's review and feedback (MacRae et al., 2015). Researchers use credibility to describe a phenomenon through the lens of the study participants (Yin, 2018). Cope (2014) defined credibility as steps researchers take to explain a phenomenon that can become recognizable by others experiencing the same. Castillo-Montoya (2016) suggested qualitative researchers can enhance the credibility of research by establishing a reliable interview protocol that contributes to the credibility of their research study. To ensure credibility, I used an interview protocol (Appendix A), conduct member checking and triangulation to establish research credibility and ensure research findings become recognizable by others.

Thomas (2017) found member checking strengthen the credibility of the research findings and considered essential for qualitative research. Researchers use member checks to eliminate personal bias (Noble & Smith, 2015). Connelly (2016) noted the following techniques are useful for establishing credibility: (a) peer-debriefing, (b) reflective journaling, (c) extended engagement with research participants, (d) persistent observation, and (e) member checking. As the researcher, I used member checking to establish credibility, to remove personal bias, and to

enhance the research findings. In addition to member checking and data interpretation, researchers use triangulation to establish research credibility.

Researchers use triangulation as a method to develop and validate the research findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). Triangulation occurs when researchers use multiple methods or sources to ensure study findings are reliable and dependable (Carter et al., 2014). Hussein (2015) noted triangulation allows researchers to connect research findings using multiple sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. Joslin and Muller (2016) noted researchers use multiple data sources to confirm the credibility, reliability, and accuracy of their research. I used methodological triangulation to enhance the credibility and validity of this qualitative research study.

Transferability. Researchers guarantee transferability by briefing the reader on the characteristics of the population and passing information about the boundaries (Piskur et al., 2017). Cope (2014) defined transferability as steps researchers take to ensure research findings can become transferable to others. Researchers assure a research study is transferable to ensure research findings are a fit for others experiencing the same phenomenon (Piskur et al., 2017). Noble and Smith (2015) defined transferability as the extent research findings become applicable to other studies or contexts. To ensure transferability, I provided a copy of the interview protocol (Appendix A) and data used to assist future researchers; to apply the findings from this study to other contexts.

Confirmability. Researchers use confirmability to remove biases and demonstrate research findings reflect the participants' responses (Cope, 2014). Cope noted researchers could show confirmability by explaining research findings, explaining data interpretations, and ensuring outcomes originated from the research data. In addition, confirmability requires researchers to

authenticate research findings by using data to validate results (Brott, 2015). Researchers can present confirmability by ensuring research findings are clear with concrete data solidifying the study is valid, credible, and transferable (Amankwaa, 2016). To ensure confirmability, I used methodological triangulation to mitigate biases and used the experiences of the participants to present the research findings.

Data saturation. Data saturation has turned into the gold standard for identifying quality research (Hancock, Amankwaa, Revell, & Mueller, 2016). Nelson (2017) defined data saturation as the instance when researchers are unable to find new data and able to begin development of categories. Lowe, Norris, Farris, and Babbage (2018) found reaching saturation occurs when obtaining more data will not point to discovery of new information relevant to the research questions. To enhance trustworthiness, researchers use three distinct methods to confirm data saturation (Hancock et al., 2016). I used member checking, company artifacts, and methodological triangulation to reach data saturation. I extended the data collection and analysis process until I was unable to discover new information related to the research question.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included a summary of the project and purpose statement. I included details regarding my role as the researcher, elaborated on the process to obtain study participants, and rehashed the research method and design. I further expounded on population, sampling, and data saturation. Next, I provided acknowledgment of ethical research and discuss data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, and data analysis. Section 2 contained information on reliability, validity, and steps to ensure this research study has credibility, confirmability, and transferability. In Section 3, I provide the (a) presentation of findings, (b) application to professional practice, (c) implications for social change, (d)

recommendations for action, (e) recommendations for further research, (f) summarization of my experience during the DBA process, and (g) conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

In Section 3, I provide the purpose of the study, state the overarching research question, and the research findings. I give my research application to professional practice, implications for social change, my recommendations for action, and suggestions for future research. Finally, I provide my reflections and conclusion.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies and knowledge of resources small business owners use to sustain business operations. I conducted face-to-face interviews with five minority small business owners with successful experience and knowledge related to small business operations for more than 5 years. Other data came from reviewing company artifacts and archival documents, conducting member checking, and writing field notes. Data analysis resulted in three themes, which are effective management of the business environment, effective planning, and business owner's skills and knowledge. All three themes encompassed subthemes, which demonstrates the complexity of the data and themes.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this qualitative multiple case study was, What strategies and knowledge of resources do small business owners use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years? To answer the overarching research question, I conducted semistructured interviews with five minority small business owners in Texas. After coding and conducting triangulation during the data analysis process, three themes emerged:

- Effective management of the business environment
- Effective planning

- Business owner's skills and knowledge

Theme 1: Effective Management of the Business Environment

The first theme that emerged during data analysis was the effective management of the business environment facilitated business success and sustainability. After analyzing the data collected, I identified three comprehensive subthemes related to the effective management of a business environment: competitive pricing, customer and community relations, and skilled staff.

Competitive pricing. Competitive pricing, as a strategy that improves small business success, consisted of (a) customer acquisition, (b) customer retention, and (c) optimal pricing for products or services. P2, P3, and P4 expressed that competitive pricing is pivotal for the success of small businesses. All five participants ascertained pricing is a critical component for a small business to achieve profitability. P3 stated, “profitability starts with pricing.” Similarly, P4 expressed, “if you don’t price your product or services correctly . . . it is really difficult to make a profit.” P2 commented that leaders regularly have to negotiate the best price for the products they sell. Lastly, P3 shared,

I had to come to the conclusion that in order to make money in business . . . you have to maximize your margins. What I mean, you have to do the task, or have a product that gives you the most profitability.

Miettinen and Stenbacka (2018) found customer acquisition and retention strategies are key components for small business success. From an analysis of the data collected, it became apparent that small business pricing affects customer acquisition and retention. P1 stated, “one of the key ingredients of profitability is retention.” P2 noted something similar, “you want to hear people say . . . I’m going to continue working with you.” P4 mentioned, “when you first start out

in business . . . profitability really has to do with your ability to get customers or clients.” Finally, P1 commented, “retention is critical.”

My review of company documents, entitled *Churn Report* (P3) and *Monthly Recap* (P1), supported the significance of competitive pricing on small business profitability and sustainability. The company document titled *Churn Report* highlighted P3’s profit and loss trends based on varied price structures. I noticed P3’s customer retention numbers fluctuated as the price changed. Alternatively, I noticed P3’s retention numbers remained constant at the perceived optimal price. In addition, I noticed an increase in customers when P3 added new products and services and that the new products yield higher margins. I found the *Churn Report* to be consistent with what P3 noted, which was that maximizing product margins facilitates business profitability and success.

P1 shared a document titled *Monthly Recap* depicting customer acquisition and retention numbers. I noticed P1’s *Monthly Recap* report captured business data on the total number of customers, count of new acquisitions, and expired customers. P1 discussed using the report to identify month over month retention numbers, which is the primary focal point for P1’s business. After reviewing the *Monthly Recap* report, I understood the reason P1 stated, “it’s a whole lot cheaper for me to retain business versus acquiring new customers.” According to the *Monthly Recap* report, P1 has a 3-month delay before receiving revenue from new acquisitions. I found that P1’s *Monthly Recap* report contradicted Miettinen and Stenbacka’s (2018) recommendation that business owners should focus on customer acquisition to achieve business success. I found the *Monthly Recap* report to be consistent with what P1 stated during the semistructured interviews, which was that customer retention is a key factor to obtain profitability and business success.

P4 shared a company artifact that illustrated B4's profitability projections based on varied pricing for B4's services. I found the company artifact, unnamed Excel file, to be consistent with what P4 suggested that profitability starts with pricing. After reviewing the unnamed Excel file, I gained a greater understanding of the need for competitive pricing and how competitive pricing facilitates business success or failure. I found that many small business have excellent products or services that do not generate sufficient revenue to sustain the business. I found that P4's company artifact assisted P4 in making strategic adjustments that appeared to prevent adverse business outcomes. Lastly, I found P4's company artifact, supported Miettinen and Stenbacka's (2018) research on the benefits of using pricing as a strategic instrument to create business success.

Customer and community relations. Customer and community relations, as a strategy that improves small business success, consisted of the small business owner's ability to implement strategies that (a) retained customers, (b) developed relationships, and (c) delivered exceptional customer service. All five participants corroborated customer and community relations are key contributing factors for small business success and growth. Overall, I gained a deeper understanding of the significance of customer and community relations, as it relates to small business profitability and sustainability.

The participants' articulation of customer and community relations emphasized the significance of these concepts. P1 stated, "customer retention is a result of impeccable customer service. We're about customer service." P5 affirmed, "I wanted to give optimum service and optimum quality of the product that I was providing." P1 noted, "to retain clients . . . we do . . . I do a lot of community stuff. I'm pretty actively engaged in

the community at large.” The participants’ statements supported Turner and Endres’ (2017) work in which they affirmed the local community and customer service are vital components in small business sustainability.

Lans et al. (2016) noted leaders using opportunities to build new relationships increase the probability for business success. P4 noted, “if you don’t develop really good relationships with people . . . it’s really hard to have a good business . . . for you to be successful in anything, you have to have really good relationships.” Similarly, P3 stated, “the strategy that has really done me the most service . . . client service and being truthful.” P4 stated, “you’re not going to survive in business if you don’t have good relationships with people.” P1 stated, “I know that people buy from people they trust and people they believe in . . . that they fill a perceived value.”

P3 discussed the feelings received while giving back to the community. P3 reflected on growing up where the local business owners embraced customers and treated customers like family. P3 discussed how the behaviors made customers want to do business, despite the price of the product or service. P3 described how that feeling resonated during the start-up phase. During P3’s response, I observed P3’s facial expressions changed to the appearance of happiness and excitement from discussing the value of customer and community relations. I gained a deeper understanding of the significance of customer and community relations for small businesses and that P3’s passion for customers and community relation lead to implementing strategies that translated into business success.

From the analysis of the data collected, I found that business owners can use customer and community relations to generate new business referrals. P4 commented, “just keep those relationships good and people will refer you business.” P1 noted, “the community piece has been critical . . . I’ve got a lot of referrals from my church and from people in the community.” P4 stated,

I keep a good reputation out there in the community and that has been one of the main things that have really helped me . . . It helps me get a lot of referrals . . .

The referral side of it is very critical . . . in terms of being successful.

P1 discussed a strategy of being resourceful to people in the community and the correlation to business success. P1 stated, “it is a referral strategy . . . if you refer to them, they will refer to you.” P5 discussed encouraging staff to embrace a referral model. P5 commented, “one of the ways I have grown in my practice . . . I told my staff that if we can get each of our patients to refer one patient . . . our practice doubles every year.”

Ajayi (2016) found external forces such as technology and social media influence small business success. My review of P1, P2, and P4’s website and various social media platforms supported P1, P2, and P4’s commitment to customer and community relations. P1, P2, and P4 discussed their use of social media platforms and websites to market O1, O2, and O4’s products and services, influence customers, and enhance community relations. P1 stated, “you have to advertise . . . you know . . . marketing . . . people cannot buy from you if they don’t know who you are.” Similarly, P2 stated, “another key

strategy has been our marketing efforts done on the company's website and social media outlets." P4 commented, "the marketing pieces is extremely important."

I reviewed P1's website and found effective marketing of products and services offered by O1. I found P1's website easy to use with several self-service functions, available to P1's customers, that enhanced the customer experience. I reviewed P1's Facebook and Instagram pages and found pictures of P1 and staff at various community service events and award programs. P1 shared stories and photographs of special awards received from specific community-based organizations for charitable donations. I noticed those special awards hanging on the wall in P1's office. These findings support what P1 stated during the semistructured interviews because P1's website focused on giving potential and existing customers a simple platform to do business with O1. P1's website provided clear details for customers to understand O1 and the products and services offered. These findings support what P1 stated because of the number of pictures and community awards received from various community-based organizations over the years reflect P1's commitment to giving back to the community.

P2 discussed implementing several strategies that foster community and customer relations. P2 stated,

Having a web presence . . . having a web site where people can actually identify who we are . . . locate where we are and have the ability to identify some of the services and products we have to offer.

I reviewed P2's website and found an inspiring summary of the O2's history and detail descriptions of the business. I found P2's website offered unique tools for potential customers to obtain pricing and quotes. I found, on P2's Facebook page, the FAQ and customer review section supported P2's focus on customer and community relations. These findings support what P1 stated during the semistructured interviews because P2's website and social media marketing increased P2's customer base and facilitated business success.

P4 commented, "I needed another strategy that would help drive business. For the first time I got on Yelp . . . I literally got a couple of clients through Yelp. So, Yelp actually drove some business." I reviewed P4's Yelp page and found several positive reviews for B4 business. These findings support what P4 stated during the semistructured interviews because the customer reviews highlighted P4's effort to build relationships and not just to do business with clients. Kuépié et al. (2016) ascertained that using social media to build networks and the relationships increase productivity and generates new business, creating business success.

My observations provided credence that P1, P2, and P4's community and customer relations strategies facilitated O1, O2, and O4's business success and sustainability. I used field notes to capture my observations of P1, P2, and P4's community awards, industry certificates, and plaques the participants received over the years.

Skilled employees. Skilled employees, as a strategy that enhances the business environment, consisted of (a) hiring, (b) training, and (c) developing employees. Mazzei et al. (2016) suggested using selective hiring practices by focusing on the potential employee's ability at the time of hiring. P1 shared, "that has probably, hands down, been the most challenging piece for me . . . that Achilles heel . . . is finding the right people." P1 commented,

You have to have the right human resources too . . . that's probably the major thing with my small business . . . having the right people in the right chairs to train . . . to develop . . . and to lead them.

P1 discussed several methods used to identify skilled prospects. I found P1 consistently observed individuals in the community and classified individuals as either a prospect or suspect. As an example, P1 described a time at dinner when he noticed a sharp individual waiting tables. P1 approached that individual and presented a business card while discussing job opportunities. P1 discussed having the belief that talent is available everywhere and that small business owners should take advantage of every opportunity. In contrast, P2 elected to acquire individuals that with the required set industry skills. P2 commented, "when it comes to employees . . . we try to hire individuals that we don't necessarily have to train or bring up to speed . . . we want them to be able to understand our business systems." I found P5 used a unique hiring technique where P5 allows several team members to conduct interviews, give feedback, and make decisions on potential staff. P5 stated,

I realized that sometimes, the inner office relationships could create an aura or a vibe that customers can pick up . . . so, your front desk is not talking to your back staff . . . those produce things that are palpable to the person being served. It has nothing to do with

them, but it can be interpreted as having to do with them when actually it's a combat between different factions in the office.

P5 commented, "I invested very heavily in my staff." P5 comments support Mazzei et al.'s (2016) assumption that greater autonomy with the team leads to business success. P5 discussed taking staff to personal interaction courses to develop employees and help them understand how their jobs fit into the overall scheme of the business. Similarly, P1 noted the importance of hiring, training, and developing the right people and getting employees to understand the company's mission and goals related to serving customers effectively. P5 commented, "I'm a firm believer that you can hire someone . . . but you have to earn their dedication."

After reviewing several company documents, entitled *The Importance of You* (P1), *Business Acumen Training* (P5), and *Connecting With People* (P5), I gained a greater understanding of a small business owner's need for skilled employees. For example, P1's document titled, *The Importance of You*, connected employees to the company's mission and vision statements. Specifically, the document emphasized the way the new hires' daily actions generate business success or facilitate failure. Also, the document outlined the employee responsibilities and performance objectives. I noticed the document required the new hires to place their name on a blank puzzle piece, on the last page of the document, that P1 suggested enhanced the new hire's commitment. I found P1's company document supports Ajayi's (2016) findings that future success is based on current actions and success requires providing employees with a clear understanding and distinct set of business performance objectives. Also, I observed that P1's staff had various training certification and customer service course completion certificates visibly present on their desk. These findings support what P1 stated during the

semistructured interviews because P1 implemented strategies to hire, train, and develop employees while ensuring the new hires understood O1's mission and goals to achieve business success.

Similarly, P5 shared a document titled *Business Acumen Training*, from a training class that taught employees to think identically to a business owner by making smart day-to-day decisions. Specifically, the document outlined steps and general reminders to help employees avoid adverse decisions. I found the document encouraged and empowered employees to make critical and strategic decisions in the same manner as a business owner. I found the document support what P5 stated in the semistructured interviews because P5 noted the importance of employees having a full understanding of the operations and business objectives.

P5 shared a second document and workbook, titled *Connecting With People*, received from a personal interaction course. I found the document and workbook supported several role-playing scenarios that encouraged P5's employees to open their mind and think strategic. For example, P5 discussed a situation where an employee refused to revert pride and apologize to a customer and that interaction created an adverse impact to the O5. P5 discussed having a good, as a result of the personal interaction course, staff that is now able to effectively interact with people. After reviewing P5's document, I obtained a better understanding of the significance of positive employee interactions with customers and the implications negative interactions have on business operations. These findings supported what P5 discussed during the semistructured interviews because P5 implemented strategies that enhanced the business environment by investing in skilled employees and their development to advance business success.

Correlation to the literature. The findings noted in Theme 1 aligned with the findings of Ajayi (2016) in that business environments consist of internal and external systems

that uniquely work together to create positive influences on business operations. Furthermore, Ajayi found that business environments are critical to small business performance and success. Ajayi suggested small business owners understand the impact internal and external forces have on business operations, which contributes to business success. Mazzei, Flynn, and Haynie (2016) found successful business owners can create a high-performance team with selective hiring, encouraging autonomy, incorporating an onboarding process, and hiring committed candidates. Researchers (Ajayi, 2016; Ibrahim & Shariff, 2017) asserted that business environments are multidimensional and play a crucial role in small businesses achieving success, growth, and sustainability. Barrena, López, and Romero (2018) ascertained that employees are the most significant group of stakeholders because their daily activities represent intangible resources, such as contributing their skills, engaging business relationships, and providing social strength that contributes to business success.

Correlation to the conceptual framework. Theme 1 relates to Lorenz's (1963) chaos theory because small business success is reliant on the small business owner's ability to effectively management of the business environment. In the context of this study, the systems within the business environments are competitive pricing, customer and community relations, and skilled employees. Chaos within these systems can significantly affect the performance, growth, and sustainability of a small business. Lorenz (1963) noted that chaotic systems operate in a ubiquitous pattern that resembles the wings of a butterfly. Small business owners could create business success by having the knowledge to understanding and identify chaotic systems. McWilliams (2019) noted that chaotic systems exhibit dependence on the originating condition and will magnify over time. Li and Ye (2015) claimed that chaos naturally begins with negative

occurrences impacting the business environment. Ajayi (2016) suggested that challenges with business profitability and sustainability might indicate a business system in chaos.

Theme 2: Effective Planning

The second theme that emerged during data analysis was that effective planning facilitated small business success. After analyzing the semistructured interview data, I identified two comprehensive subthemes associated with effective planning. All five participants articulated the significance of effective planning to start, grow, and maintain a successful business. The effective planning theme was comprised of two subthemes, financial resources and financial and resource management.

Financial resources. Effective planning of financial resources contributes to small business success and involves the small business owner's ability to secure or obtain access to (a) lines of credit, (b) personal savings, or (c) owner financing. A critical factor for small business success is having access to financial resources or capital (Rahman et al., 2017). All five participants expressed challenges with acquiring capital or funding from banks. The participants discussed having to consider other measures that required varied stages of planning that facilitated securing of financial resources to start and maintain their business. I gained a better understanding of the fact that effective planning can facilitate business success. P4 commented, "I can't express planning enough." P2 stated, "a lot of times financing is redlined in our industry." P5 commented, "banks use to lend based on your earning potential . . . those days are over." P4 stated,

Now in order to get financing, a critical part of that is to have a plan because if you go to a bank . . . you ask them for \$500,000 . . . they are going to ask you for a business plan. So, again, it starts with the plan.

P2, P3, and P4 articulated having to use personal savings to start their businesses. P2 stated, “so, we ended up using savings that we built up . . . when we needed supportive financial resources . . . and various owner financing projects.” P3 stated,

I started as an employee first, and then I transitioned to my own practice. So, I had already been saving money . . . I put together a plan of how I was going to transition from being an employee to a business owner . . . so, I saved my money.

Similarly, P4 stated, “I started out part-time with my business . . . which a lot of business owners do . . . I think it’s a great way to start . . . I used the money from my job to start my business.” P4 noted, “I keep saying this word . . . but the first thing is really planning.” Yeboah and Koffie’s (2016) ascertained that some small business owners are forced into using varied forms of funding to support business operations and growth.

P1, P2, P3, and P4 articulated having to secure lines of credit to facilitate business success. P1 stated, “I was told you need to have a good solid line of credit to fall back on . . . that way you can do the things you need to do . . . and that’s critical.” P1 noted, “I got a line of credit from a local bank for \$100,00 that helped me do what I needed to do . . . but having that access to capital is critical.”

Similarly, P2 discussed having to use options such as a line of credit, signature loans, and owner financing to help sustain the business over some time. P3 commented, "I was able to open up lines of credit . . . I put myself in the position to start out with very low expenses . . . very low expenses . . . and did more with little." P4 affirmed, "It's like getting ahead of things . . . knowing that you may need credit . . . before you need it . . . go out and get it." I obtained a greater understanding of the significance of effective planning, attached to financial resources, that contributes to business growth and sustainability. I found that what the participants stated in the semistructured interviews support Kersten et al.'s (2017) findings that banks are reluctant to provide financing to financially constrained small business owners.

Financial and resource management. All five participants emphasized the significance of financial and resource management strategies. Bendickson and Chandler (2019) suggested that the use of resources is a common topic in the area of strategic management because of the positive impact resources have on small business profitability and competitiveness. Specifically, Bendickson and Chandler noted the need for strategic strategies that prevent negative business outcomes. P4 stated, "I develop a specific operating plan . . . and then I model out my expenses." P1 stated, "you have to monitor that spending . . . ask yourself what's my return on my investment." Similarly, P3 stated, "the financial side is always a difficult side because you always have a lot of ideas of things you want to do . . . but it's always a limited source of money."

The participants provided several examples of effective financial and resource management strategies. For example, P1 stated, "I was very conservative in my approach to

everything I did on the front end . . . to make sure I didn't get head over heels in debt before I made sure this thing was going to work." P1 discussed implementing strategies that required P1's staff to capture marketing data from customers. P1 stated, "that lets me know where the business is coming from . . . that way I can focus my spending efforts in those categories." A company document entitled *Monthly Recap* supported what P1 stated during the semistructured interviews because the *Monthly Recap* document included several coded fields with data obtained from P1's customer base. I found P1 used the *Monthly Recap* document as a strategy to manage and allocate financial resources.

P5 discussed using nontraditional strategies to manage financial resources. Prior to launching the business, P5 described the process, benefits, and results of conducting a demographic study. P5 aspired to establish a business in an area where there would be a demonstrated need or high demand for O5 services. I observed how P5's body and facial expressions changed to signify success, as P5 articulated the way P5 used the results from the demographic study to launch a business with limited resources. P5 stated, "the study was self-evident . . . again it all leads to your demographic and the need for your services . . . which I think immensely contributes to your success." I obtained a better understanding of the benefits a business owner could gain from using a demographic study, including business success and sustainability. P5's use of a demographic study enabled the start and growth of a business strategically in an area where there was a high demand and demonstrated need for O5's services.

Similarly, P3 stated, "I was not in a hurry to grow fast . . . I had to stay true to the basic concept of managing money." For example, P3 stated, "I didn't start out with the best stuff . . . I upgraded as my business could pay for it." I found P3's financial management strategies effective and contributed to P3's business success and sustainability. P2 focused on resource management

strategies that reduced overhead and operating cost. P2 discussed implementing strategies to reduce fuel and insurance cost. P2 noted,

In our business fuel is a very expensive cost . . . versus paying for fuel at the pump . . . we moved to purchasing large quantities of fuel . . . now we're saving somewhere around maybe ten cents to fifteen cents a gallon.

P2 discussed the benefits of purchasing used or preowned equipment. The shift to purchase used or pre-owned equipment lowered P2's insurance cost and P2 used the savings to invest in other critical areas of the business. Finally, P2 discussed controlling human resource cost by negotiating reduced labor rates for new employees. I found P2's resource management strategies allowed O2 to adjust during turbulent times and continue business operations. I obtained greater insight into the significance and need for financial and resource management strategies that facilitates business success and sustainability.

Lastly, P4 and P5 articulated the essential need for proper accounting, audited documents, and a good credit rating. P4 and P5 noted proper accounting, audited documents, and credit ratings are key factors that banks and lenders use to measure a small business owner's ability to manage financial resources. Rahman et al. (2017) affirmed many small business owners are unable to produce audited documents nor able to pass credit requirements imposed by banks. P5 commented, "you just got to pay your bills on time . . . get a good credit rating." Similarly, P4 stated, "I learned what is needed are good accounting records . . . at minimum."

Correlation to the literature. The findings noted in Theme 2 aligned with the findings of Bendickson and Chandler (2019) that effective use of resources are important to strategic management and to small business survival. Wong, Holmes, and Schaper (2018)

suggested small business owners lack solid business plans and resources to achieve business profitability and growth. Calopa (2017) suggested strategies, such as planning and strategic management, are vital to small business performance and success. Yeboa and Koffie (2016) found business owners that acquire capital or additional financial resources have a higher success rate. Kersten, Harms, Liket, and Maas (2017) revealed 39% of small business owners confirmed limited financial resources are the primary hindrance to business growth and success. Similarly, McDowell et al. (2016) suggested small business survival requires a strategic focus on cost containment and operational efficiency.

Correlation to the conceptual framework. Theme 2 relates to Lorenz (1963) chaos theory. Financial and resource management are vital business systems and effective planning of business resources can enable business success. Turner and Endres (2017) affirmed exploring and understanding business systems could contribute to a business owner's knowledge of system interactions and the manner in which business systems facilitate business success. In addition, small business owners are able to reduce chaotic interactions with effective planning (Bland & Roberts-Pittman, 2013). Researchers found effective planning reduce chaotic behaviors within business systems to improve operations (Tacha, Volos, Stouboulos, & Kyprianidis, 2016). Overall, chaos theory relates to implementing small meaningful changes between business systems that, over time, reduce negative interactions and create business success.

Theme 3: Business Owner's Skills and Knowledge

The third theme that emerged during data analysis was that a business owner's skill and knowledge facilitated small business success. After analyzing the data collected, I identified two comprehensive subthemes associated with a business owner's skill and knowledge. All five participants corroborated that business skills and knowledge are indispensable qualities that

contribute to business success, growth, and sustainability. The business owner's skill and knowledge theme encompassed two subthemes, establishing support systems and personal development.

Establishing support systems. Establishing support systems as a strategy to increase a business owner's skills and knowledge consists of (a) utilizing mentors, (b) networking, and (c) engaging critical family members. All five participants articulated that mentors and networking were significant factors that contributed to the growth, success, and sustainability of their small business. Researchers Csillag, Csizmadia, Kerekes, and Zaharie (2017) noted that business owners should rely on mentors for guidance on business plans and support in order to remain focused on the critical areas of improvement. P1 stated, "I think a critical piece . . . maybe not a strategy . . . but having mentors are paramount." Similarly, P3 stated, "I think one of the strategies I use a lot is mentorship." In addition, P5 commented, "find the right person to mentor you . . . that shares with you."

Chouksey and Karmarkar (2017) found that, by increasing business knowledge, a business owner can minimize risk and avoid failure. P1, P3, and P5 discussed the contributions from their mentors that fostered business success. P1 stated,

I'm blessed with people that were doing the business . . . that was mentors of mine that had a living experience of the needs . . . that gentleman opened up a small business, which is one of the reasons that I am a small business owner today. He would guide me . . . say, this is what you want to do . . . this is what you don't want to do . . . and I still have that today . . . I know a critical piece is having people . . . mentors that have done what you are trying to do.

P3 stated,

I think the knowledge obtained from mentorship . . . knowledge from reading books . . . the knowledge from advisors . . . I've been around the right people who were pulling me up and pushing me to see opportunities.

I found all five participants' statements supported Csillag et al.'s (2017) findings that mentors should have the desire to improve a business owner's business competence by sharing their subject matter expertise. P3 commented, "a mentor once asked why would you let someone talk over your head . . . why don't you go take a class . . . and how that challenged me to improve my skills." P3 stated, "my mentors are people that taught me . . . that's why mentorship is very important." I gained a better understanding of the significant role of mentors and that mentorship advance a business owner's skills and knowledge.

Wynn and Jones (2018) noted that support systems consist of dedicated people that provide empirical support to business owners that positively influence the dynamics and performance of business environments. Arsic (2017) suggested support systems are critical to the business environment and directly support business operations. P3 stated, "I think as you build your business plan and get into business . . . you really need to make sure that your support system understands what you are getting into . . . what the expectations should be." Arsic suggested that owners can achieve business success by developing specific action plans and effectively communicating business objectives to acquire family support. P3 commented, "I've had friends start a business . . . and everyone got out for the same reason . . . no support system." P3 commented,

The thing you don't hear a lot about when people ask why a lot of business go out of business in the first 5 year . . . it is a lack of support at home . . . lack of family support.

In addition, P3 stated,

The family support and your support system . . . as I think about it . . . has probably been the biggest thing that kept me in business . . . because I involved my wife and my family in my business.

Mohamad and Chin (2018) found business networking is an effective tool to positively impact small business success and sustainability. P3 stated, “go find a banker and become his friend.” Similarly, P4 discussed the benefits of networking, which led to meetings with potential clients. In addition, P4 discussed the benefits of joining several community-based organizations to network and the fact that networking generated new business. I obtained a greater understanding of the vital importance of support systems to small business success and networking, which is a critical strategy that enables small business success.

Personal development. Personal development as a strategy that increases a business owner’s skills and knowledge consists of participation in (a) traditional education programs, (b) industry conferences or seminars, (c) community training programs, (d) reading books, and (e) real-life experiences. All five participants corroborated personal development is an essential factor that facilitates small business growth and sustainability. All five participants discussed the benefits of business knowledge and how the skills contributed to their business success. Fletcher (2016) noted personal development is critical to a business owner’s human capital and enables creativity, creates a competitive advantage, and sustained business performance.

All five participants noted the significance of personal development and outlined the strategies used to enhance personal development. P3 stated, “I guess the first resource was really starting with me . . . I buy books . . . I read about four books a month . . . you got to own your personal development.” P1 stated, “you have to be a student of your business.” P4 commented,

“as a business owner you have to know your limitations . . . you have to know what you know . . . but you also have to know what you don’t know.” Similarly, P5 stated, “you have to see how you can accentuate your business knowledge . . . and that distinguishes you.” P1 shared the importance of excellent communication skills and that in P1’s industry bad communication skills negatively impacts the business. For example, P1 stated, “you have to know how to communicate . . . that way a customer can understand what you’re talking about . . . they can make an informed decision.”

Visser et al. (2016) opined that business schools and enhanced training develop a business owner’s knowledge, conceptual skills, and facilitate business growth and success. P4 discussed having a Master’s in business and having worked for one of the largest consulting firms prepared P4 for business success. P4 stated,

That’s part of the reason I started my own business . . . I was like these guys hired me to help these other companies . . . I can do it for myself now because . . . now I’ve learned it.

Similarly, P5 discussed the value of having worked in the industry because it translated into business success. P5 noted working as an employee in the industry allowed P5 to obtain an understanding of managing an office and the fact that knowledge paid dividends when P5 became a small business owner. P5 stated, “I think to work in the industry having a knowledge of it helped.” P5 confirmed participation in continuing education classes are required to keep P5’s industry license active.

P1 noted personal development stemmed from business education and participation in several annual professional study group style training conferences for minority small business owners. P1 stated, “we come in . . . dissect . . . talk business . . . best practices . . . what’s working for you . . . what’s not working for you.” P1 commented, “business owners should constantly

seek opportunities to hone skills and acquire business knowledge.” I gained a greater understanding of the fact that participation in professional conferences enhances a business owner’s personal development and facilitates business growth and success.

P3 discussed attaining a business degree, participating in industry workshops, and attending continuing education training contributed to P3’s personal development. In addition, P3 noted the benefits of reading personal development books. P3 noted, “as a business owner . . . you have to put money back into yourself . . . keep the knife sharp.” All five participants articulated that small business owners are responsible for personal development and revealed several methods that contributed to their business success. I found that obtaining a business education, attending professional conferences, and reading books are successful strategies small business owners can use to increase their knowledge and skills to advance business operations.

P1, P3, and P5 discussed life and the manner in which their experiences immensely contributed to business growth and success. P5 commented, “all the things I’ve told you that I learned about business knowledge . . . it’s nothing that is written in a book.” Similarly, P4 noted,

I think one big thing is to know . . . and it takes time as a business owner to get this . . . is to know you’re going to have these peaks and valleys in business . . . you have to be okay with that . . . some years are going to be good years . . . some years you are going to have different challenges . . . you have to understand that at least . . . and not allow those valleys to destroy you.

P3 discussed the importance of being honest with oneself and working as if every day is the first day. P3 stated,

The biggest resource that really kept me going the last 5 years is just being scared to fail . . . what I mean by that is . . . I'm not scared to fail . . . because I think for you to be successful, you have to fail . . . I also think . . . when you stop failing, you stop growing.

P1 discussed the relevance of having grit and tenacity as a business owner. P1 stated, "when the money is low . . . you need to have that grit to keep going . . . if you want to be successful." P3 shared,

I've always tried to find business people who have been in business for over 15 years and sit down and just talk about all their failures . . . I learn from their failures . . . that has kept me from making a lot of mistakes.

I found the participants' responses provided greater insight into the hard times many small business owners may encounter while running a business. If a business owner desires to achieve success and growth, the business owner should incorporate strategies that focus on personal development in order to obtain business success and sustainability.

After reviewing P5's documents, I gained an understanding of P5's commitment to personal development. I reviewed P5's doctoral degree and continuing education certificates over the past several years. I found P5's educational documents and training certificates support what P5 stated during the semistructured interviews because a small business owner's success requires knowledge and skills.

P2 shared a certificate of completion from the Small Business Administration's 8(a) program. I also reviewed several industry training certificates in P2's office. P2 noted the Small Business Administration's 8(a) program is designed for economically and socially disadvantaged businesses. In addition, P2 noted the 8(a) business development program offers executive

development and marketing strategies, technical, and business opportunity assistance. These findings support what P2 stated during the semistructured interviews because P2 noted participation in the Small Business Administration's training program increased P2's business knowledge and skills.

Using field notes, I documented that P1 had several books on leadership and customer service that supported what P1 stated during the semistructured interviews because P1 expressed the importance of leadership and customer service. I noticed P1's business degree hanging on the wall that supported P1's comments on the benefits of having a business education. I reviewed a 2018 conference booklet from an industry conference that offered various breakout sessions for the minority business owners in attendance. I found the breakout sessions outlined in the conference booklet provided training relevant to P1's business and advanced P1's knowledge and skills. These findings support what P1 stated during the semistructured interviews because P1 noted the importance of being a student of the business and having a passion for customer service.

In P3's office, I documented various quotes posted on the walls that P3 noted are principles used as motivation and tools to educate customers. P3 commented, "I find knowledge in everything." P3 shared a company artifact, titled *Our Motto for Today*, that was strategically placed in several locations throughout P3's office. P3's *Our Motto for Today* artifact outlined eleven principles that P3 uses to promote daily success. Lastly, P3 shared an article from Black Enterprise magazine from 2017, titled *Modern Man: 100 Men of Distinction*, and a certificate of completion from *Leadership Fort Worth*, a development program for emerging leaders. I found the artifacts, articles, and training certificates confirmed P3's commitment to personal development. These findings support what P3 stated during the semistructured interviews because

P3 articulated that learning from support systems, business knowledge, and life skills contributed to P3's business success.

Correlation to the literature. The findings noted in Theme 3 aligned with Visser et al.'s (2016) study that recommended small business owners participate in enhanced training to develop business skills. McDowell et al. (2016) found successful small business owners possess a high level of business skills and knowledge. Similarly, Mohamad and Chin (2018) suggested small business owners can use networking to acquire knowledge and new business partners. Researchers noted that mentors assist business owners become experts in critical business areas such as management, strategic planning, sales, marketing, and finance (Csillag et al., 2017). Rakicevic et al. (2016) found that successful business owners use support services, such as (a) mentoring, (b) consulting services, (c) networking, and (d) training seminars to facilitate business success.

Correlation to the conceptual framework. Theme 3 relates to Lorenz (1963) chaos theory. Small business owners adopting the chaos theory framework can identify apparent pattern changes occurring within the systems (Burke, 2017). Understanding Lorenz's (1963) butterfly effect, small business owners are equipped with knowledgeable steps to identify chaotic occurrences to improve business performance (Burke, 2017). Öztürk and Kızılkaya (2017) found small business owners can use chaos theory framework to evaluate business systems that are essential to business operations and success.

Applications to Professional Practice

I explored strategies and knowledge of resources minority small business owners use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years. The research findings include three major themes and seven subthemes. The applicability of the findings from this study may positively

influence minority small business owners seeking requisite strategies that enable small business success. Turner and Endres (2017) found that business environments, customer service, and community relations contribute to small business sustainability. The application to professional practice could include influencing small business owners to adopt new strategies that facilitate improved management of business environments, encourage effective planning, and encourage personal development. Anning-Dorson (2017) found small business owners can improve business survival by obtaining new knowledge.

Successful small business owners recognize the need to improve their skills and are receptive to change (Herlina, Syarifudin, & Kartika, 2019). The practical application of the research findings may encourage small business owners to consider the value and benefit of developing a support system and personal development. Calopa (2017) suggested many business owners lack financial literacy skills to manage business operations. Kersten et al. (2017) noted business owners that lack financial literacy skills face the challenge of securing funding from banks and lenders. A subtheme revealed the benefits of financial and resource management strategies and the positive impact to business success. Small business owners may apply the findings to improve their financial and resource management skills and knowledge to improve business operations and create sustainability.

Implications for Social Change

The primary implications for positive social change may be accomplished through minority small business owners applying strategies that improve small business success that enable the potential for new of job creation. Positive social change may involve advancing a small business owner's knowledge of the potential benefits of effective management of the business environment, effective planning, and a business owner's skills and knowledge that

facilitate small business success. The research findings could bring awareness to small business owners of the potential benefits of customer and community relations, competitive pricing, skilled employees, support systems, and personal development that promote small business success. With small business success, the employees and local communities thrive, with the potential of increased local spending and additional charitable donations.

Implications for positive social change may include increased awareness of sustainable strategies for leaders and members of the following organizations: (a) Small Business Administration, (b) Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce, (c) Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, (d) City of Fort Worth Office of Small Business, (e) Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and (f) Minority Business Enterprise. These organizations offer free classes and training seminars for potential and existing small business owners, which could increase competence level for existing and potential minority small business owners. The findings from this study may support business classes conducted at local community colleges that may prompt more students to become a small business owner.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies and knowledge of resources small business owners use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years. The research findings include three major themes and seven subthemes. The recommendations for action include small business owners implementing strategies that enable competitive pricing, improved customer and community relations, and securing skilled employees, which are forces that advance business success and sustainability. Williams and Aaron (2018) found, with a limited staff, small business owners are responsible for all management activities, such as operations, strategic planning, human resources, financial

analysis, and sales. Furthermore, my findings may reinforce the concepts of Williams and Aaron that small business owners should increase their knowledge of strategic management functions to create business success.

The second recommendation is to educate minority small business owners on the benefits of securing capital and effective management of financial resources. My findings reinforce Yeboa and Koffie's (2016) findings that small business owners face the challenge of obtaining financial resources from banks. With the inability to obtain capital, small business owners have to use personal savings. Wong, Holmes, and Schaper (2018) claimed small business failure originates because small business owners purposefully model business finances based on their personal objectives. Financial institutions should revise guidelines and policies to ensure that minority small business owners can obtain capital and financial resources to start, grow, and maintain business operations.

The third recommendation is for the development of specialized curriculum on the gravity of support systems and the small business owner's personal development relevant to small business success. The study participants confirmed their business success stems from having support systems. My findings could encourage more business owners to participate in support opportunities to become more successful. The findings may persuade new and existing small business owners to take action by committing to ongoing personal development.

I plan on disseminating the findings of my study by presenting them at academic conferences, such as the Institute of Behavioral and Applied Management (IBAM) and business practitioner seminars. I plan on conducting presentations at specialized training sessions with topics relevant to small businesses. I aim to publish the findings in various business and scholarly

journals, ProQuest, and books. The findings of this study will be available to business classes at community colleges and higher learning institutions.

Recommendations for Further Research

Due to the significant contributions of small businesses to the U.S. economy, the findings of this study warrant further research. I limited my study to minority small business owners in Texas. I only interviewed small business owners. The key limitations of this study are the geographical focus and sample size. Greener (2018) suggested limitations allow researchers to identify and recommend future research topics. Recommendations for further research include: (a) expanding the geographical area, (b) increasing the sample size, (c) applying a different conceptual framework, or (d) applying a different methodology. The transferability of the findings may potentially increase with an expansion of the geographical area and sample size.

With a vast group of small business owners, researchers may obtain additional strategies that facilitate small business success. Expanding the geographical location beyond Texas may amend the research findings and themes, resulting in new knowledge. Increasing the sample size may strengthen the transferability of the research findings. Further researchers exploring small business sustainability could apply a different framework, such as Greiner's (1972) growth phases or resource-dependence theory, as a framework to understand small business sustainability. Finally, researchers can use the quantitative or mix-methods research methodologies to identify strategies that advance small business success and sustainability beyond the first 5 years.

Reflections

The Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program at Walden University has prepared me for a rewarding future. I have obtained transferable skills that complement a career

in professional consulting, higher education, or as an independent business practitioner. The research process and extensive writings have strengthened my writing aptitude; I will use these skills to publish scholarly articles and books on business, management, and varied finance topics. My doctoral journey was profoundly humbling, challenging, frustrating, exhaustive, and uplifting.

In 2016, I was deployed on an emergency work assignment that required, at minimum, fourteen-hour work days in the field. After working long hours, I retired to a hotel room with a bad internet connection to do research and write this doctoral study, ending with only three hours of sleep. Tired situations found me a delightful treat. In 2018, I encountered two major life events that *knocked the wind out of me*, unknown to my committee, that reflected in my work. I made the appropriate adjustments, refocused, and got back on track. My dream of obtaining a doctoral degree and mental fortitude gave me the strength to endure. In the end, I remained optimistic that I would reach the end. As I reflect, I can corroborate that this doctoral study is the result of dedication and hard work.

My dream of starting a financial consulting business inspired me to research the small business model. My research topic originated from an assignment at Residency I and I followed the topic to the end. With no experience in the area of small business, I had no preconceived ideas or values that would translate into personal biases. I found the research process intriguing and very thought-provoking activity. The research process is never ending and can create challenges for an analytical individual. I discovered my analytical way of thinking created long days while writing the literature review section, yet invaluable during the data collection and analysis process.

The study participants were five successful minority small business owners with strategies that enable small business sustainability. The participants were not impacted by the possibility of personal biases or preconceived values. The participants were excited to take part in this research study. Understanding the gaps in the literature has furthered my desire to extend my research on small businesses after completion of this program.

Conclusion

I aimed to decipher the specific business problem that some small business owners lack strategies and knowledge of resources for sustaining business operations beyond the first 5 years. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to answer the overarching research question: What strategies and knowledge of resources do small business owners use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years? The sample included five successful minority small business owners in Texas, and chaos theory formed the conceptual framework.

The collection process included semistructured interviews, member checks, field notes, company artifacts, and reviews of company documents. I used two recording devices to audiotape the interview sessions and notebooks to capture field notes. I disguise the participants' names during the manual analysis process. Three themes emerged from the analysis: (a) effective management of the business environment, (b) effective planning, (c) and business owner's skills and knowledge. Also, the findings included seven subthemes: (a) competitive pricing, (b) customer and community relations, (c) skilled employees, (d) financial resources, (e) financial and resource management, (f) support systems, and (g) personal development strategies that facilitated small business success. Minority small business owners that incorporate these strategies can improve business performance. In this study, I provided practical strategies that minority small business owners can use to sustain business operations beyond 5 years.

References

- Abro, M. M. Q., Khurshid, M. A., & Aamir, A. (2015). The use of mixed methods in management research. *Journal of Applied Finance and Banking*, 5, 103-108.
Retrieved from https://www.scienpress.com/journal_focus.asp?Main_Id=56
- Ajayi, A. (2016). Impact of external business environment on organizational performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Osun State, Nigeria. *Scholedge International Journal of Business Policy & Governance*, 3, 155-166.
doi:10.19085/journal.sjibpg031002
- Albano, G. L., Antellini Russo, F., Castaldi, G., & Zampino, R. (2015). Evaluating small businesses' performance in public e-procurement: Evidence from the Italian government's e-marketplace. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 53, 229-250. doi:10.1111/jsbm.12190
- Alby, F., & Fatigante, M. (2014). Preserving the respondent's standpoint in a research interview: Different strategies of 'doing' the interviewer. *Human Studies*, 37, 239-256. doi:1007/s10746-013-9292-y
- Andrasik, M. P., Chandler, C., Powell, B., Humes, D., Wakefield, S., Kripke, K., & Eckstein, D. (2014). Bridging the divide: HIV prevention research and Black men who have sex with men. *American Journal of Public Health*, 104, 708-714.
doi:10.2105/AJPH.2013.301653
- Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational*

Research and Policy Studies, 5, 272-281. Retrieved from
<http://jeteraps.scholarlinkresearch.com/>

Anning-Dorson, T. (2017). How much and when to innovate: The nexus of environmental pressures, innovation and service firm performance. *European Journal of Innovation Management*, 20, 599-619. doi:10.1108/EJIM-05-2016-0050

Anyan, F. (2013). The influence of power shifts in data collection and analysis stages: A focus on qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Report*, 18(36), 1-9. Retrieved from <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/>

Arsic, S. (2017). Key factors of project success in family small and medium-sized companies: The theoretical review. *Journal of Sustainable Business and Management Solutions in Emerging Economies*, 23, 33-40.
doi:10.7595/management.fon.2017.0013

Barber, E. A., Everard, T., Holland, A. E., Tipping, C., Bradley, S. J., & Hodgson, C. L. (2015). Barriers and facilitators to early mobilization in intensive care: A qualitative study. *Australian Critical Care*, 28, 177-182.
doi:10.1016/j.aucc.2014.11.001

Barlow, C. (2016). Documents as “risky” sources of data: A reflection on social and emotional positioning: A research note. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 19, 377-384. doi:10.1080/13645579.2015.1051797

- Barnham, C. (2016). Quantitative and qualitative research: Perceptual foundations. *International Journal of Market Research*, 57, 837-854. doi:10.2501/ijmr-2015-070
- Barrena, J., López, M., & Romero, P. M. (2018). The link between socially responsible human resource management and intellectual capital. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 26, 71-81. doi:10.1002/csr.1658
- Bartz, W., & Winkler, A. (2016). Flexible or fragile? The growth performance of small and young businesses during the global financial crisis: Evidence from Germany. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 31, 196-215. doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2015.10.002
- Bendickson, J. S., & Chandler, T. D. (2019). Operational performance: The mediator between human capital developmental programs and financial performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 94, 162-171. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.10.049
- Bennett, R. (2016). Factors contributing to the early failure of small new charity start-ups. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 23, 333-348. doi:10.1108/jsbed-11-2013-0173
- Berkovich, I. (2016). School leaders and transformational leadership theory: Time to part ways? *Journal of Educational Administration*, 54, 609-622. doi:10.1108/jea-11-2015-0100
- Bewayo, E. D. (2015). The overemphasis on business plans in entrepreneurship education: Why does it persist? *Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship Development*, 3(1), 1-7. doi:10.15640/jsbed.v3n1a1

- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research, 26*, 1802-1811. doi:10.1177/1049732316654870
- Bland, A. M., & Roberts-Pittman, B. J. (2013). Existential and chaos theory: "Calling" for adaptability and responsibility in career decision making. *Journal of Career Development, 41*, 382-401. doi:10.1177/0894845313498303
- Boddy, C. R. (2016). Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 19*, 426-432. doi:10.1108/qmr-06-2016-0053
- Bowden, C., & Galindo-Gonzalez, S. (2015). Interviewing when you're not face-to-face: The use of email interviews in a phenomenological study. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 10*, 79-92. doi:10.28945/2104
- Brandao, C., & Brandao, C. (2015). Qualitative data analysis with NVivo. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 12*, 492-494. doi:10.1080/14780887.2014.992750
- Brett, J., Staniszewska, S., Mockford, C., Herron-Marx, S., Hughes, J., Tysall, C., & Suleman, R. (2014). Mapping the impact of patient and public involvement on health and social care research: A systematic review. *Health Expectations, 17*, 637-650. doi:10.1111/j.1369-7625.2012.00795.x
- Brezinova, M., & Prusova, J. (2014). Small and medium-sized enterprises in terms of their goals. *Megatrend Review, 11*, 145-154. doi:10.5937/megrev1403145b
- Brink, P. J. (2015). Issues of reliability and validity. *Qualitative Nursing Research: A Contemporary Dialogue, 7*, 164-186. doi:10.4135/9781483349015.n20

- Broman, K. W., & Woo, K. H. (2017). Data organization in spreadsheets. *American Statistician*, 72, 2-10. doi:10.1080/00031305.2017.1375989
- Brott, P. E. (2015). Qualitative career assessment processes. *Career Assessment*, 1, 31-39. doi:10.1007/978-94-6300-034-5_4
- Bryman, A. (2015). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Bublitz, E., & Noseleit, F. (2014). The skill balancing act: When does broad expertise pay off? *Small Business Economics*, 42, 17-32. doi:10.1007/s11187-013-9474-z
- Burke, W. W. (2017). *Organization change: Theory and practice* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Byrne, O., & Shepherd, D. A. (2015). Different strokes for different folks: Entrepreneurial narratives of emotion, cognition, and making sense of business failure. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 39, 375-405. doi:10.1111/etap.12046
- Calopa, M. K. (2017). Business owner and manager's attitudes towards financial decision-making and strategic planning: Evidence from Croatian SMEs. *Management: Journal of Contemporary Management Issues*, 22, 103-116. doi:10.30924/mjcmi/2017.22.1.103
- Cant, M., & van Niekerk, C. (2013). Survival or ethically correct? Small business owners' attitude towards ethical concerns. *Business Strategy & Organizational Behaviour*, 2(1), 1-7. doi:10.5176/2251-2098_EMG13.01

- Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *Qualitative Report, 21*, 811-831. Retrieved from <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/>
- Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A. J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum, 41*, 545-547. Retrieved from <https://onf.ons.org>
- Chan, T., Gountas, S., Zhang, L., & Handley, B. (2016). Western firms' successful and unsuccessful business models in China. *Journal of Business Research, 69*, 4150-4160. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.03.036
- Chouksey, A., & Karmarkar, Y. (2017). Sustainability of microbusinesses and success of microfinance. *Paradigm, 21*, 91-105. doi:10.1177/0971890717700527
- Cicmil, C., Cooke-Davies, T., Crawford, L. & Richardson, K. (2017). *Exploring the complexity of projects: Implications of complexity theory for project management practice*. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute, Inc.
- Connelly, L. M. (2014). Ethical considerations in research studies. *Medsurg Nursing, 23*, 54-55. Retrieved from <http://www.medsurnursing.net/cgi-bin/WebObjects/MSNJournal.woa>
- Connelly, L. M. (2016). Understanding research. Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg Nursing, 25*, 435-436. Retrieved from <http://www.medsurnursing.net/cgi-bin/WebObjects/MSNJournal.woa>

- Cooper, J. A., & McNair, L. (2017). Are the criteria for approval sufficient to protect research participants?. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*, *12*, 383-385. doi:10.1177/1556264617737915
- Cope, D. G. (2014). Methods and meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, *41*, 89-91. doi:10.1188/14.ONF.89-91
- Cordeiro, W. P. (2013). Small businesses ignore strategic planning at their peril. *Academy of Business Research Journal*, *3*, 322-30. Retrieved from <https://www.aobronline.com/abrj>
- Chambers, J. (2018). *Graphical methods for data analysis*. Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press.
- Chen, S. C. (2016). Fair participant selection: A negative obligation not to exclude. *American Journal of Bioethics*, *16*, 71-72. doi:10.1080/15265161.2016.1145297
- Chrisman, J. J., & McMullan, W. (1996). Static economic theory, empirical evidence, and the evaluation of small business assistance programs. *Journal of Small Business Management*, *34*, 56-95. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/1540627x>
- Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Clark Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation. *Counseling Psychologist*, *35*, 236-264. doi:10.1177/0011000006287390
- Cridland, E. K., Jones, S. C., Caputi, P., & Magee, C. A. (2015). Qualitative research with families living with autism spectrum disorder: Recommendations for

- conducting semistructured interviews. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability*, 40, 78-91. doi:10.3109/13668250.2014.964191
- Csillag, S., Csizmadia, P., Kerekes, K., & Zaharie, M. (2017). Business mentors' competences in intensive learning environments: Lessons from an empirical research. *Managerial Challenges of the Contemporary Society*, 10, 102-107. Retrieved from <https://econ.ubbcluj.ro/jmccs/index.php>
- Dahmen, P., & Rodríguez, E. (2014). Financial literacy and the success of small businesses: An observation from a small business development center. *Numeracy*, 7(1), 1-14. doi:10.5038/1936-4660.7.1.3
- Davies, B. (2018). *Exploring chaos* (1st ed.). Boca Raton, LA: CRC Press.
- Deakin, H., & Wakefield, K. (2014). Skype interviewing: Reflections of two PhD researchers. *Qualitative Research*, 14, 603-616. doi:10.1177/1468794113488126
- Decker, R., Haltiwanger, J., Jarmin, R., & Miranda, J. (2014). The role of entrepreneurship in U.S. job creation and economic dynamism. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 28, 3-24. doi:10.1257/jep.28.3.3
- Decker, R. A., Haltiwanger, J., Jarmin, R. S., & Miranda, J. (2016). Where has all the skewness gone? The decline in high-growth (young) firms in the U.S. *European Economic Review*, 86, 4-23. doi:10.1016/j.euroecorev.2015.12.013
- De Leeuw, E., Green, G., Dyakova, M., Spanswick, L., & Palmer, N. (2015). European Healthy Cities evaluation: conceptual framework and methodology. *Health Promotion International*, 30, 8-17. doi:10.1093/heapro/dav036

- Denscombe, M. (2013). The role of research proposals in business and management education. *International Journal of Management Education, 11*, 142-149.
doi:10.1016/j.ijme.2013.03.001
- Dragnic, D. (2014). Impact of internal and external factors on the performance of fast-growing small and medium business. *Journal of Contemporary Management Issues, 19*, 119-159. Retrieved from <https://hrcak.srce.hr/management>
- Edgar, D. A., & Nisbet, L. (1996). A matter of chaos - Some issues for hospitality businesses. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 8*, 6-9. doi:10.1108/09596119610111659
- Ennis, C. (2018). *Finding the themes related to designing learning for post-experience management professionals: How to conduct qualitative research*. Paper presented at the 3rd World Conference on Qualitative Research, Portugal, 1, 136-143.
Retrieved from <http://www.proceedings.wcqr.info>
- Ejmalian, M., & Syed, A. A. (2015). Chaos theory approach as remedial strategy for financial crisis in Indian SMEs. *Journal of Finance & Management, 7*, 107-120.
doi:10.5958/2229-4503.2015.00009.0
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5*(1), 1-4. doi:10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11
- Everett, J., & Watson, J. (1998). Small business failure and external risk factors. *Small Business Economics, 11*, 371-390. Retrieved from <https://www.springer.com/business+&+management/journal/11187>

- Fletcher, L. (2016). How can personal development lead to increased engagement? The roles of meaningfulness and perceived line manager relations. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 30, 1203-1226.
doi:10.1080/09585192.2016.1184177
- Flick, U. (2014). *The sage handbook of qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fugard, A., & Potts, H. (2015). Supporting thinking on sample sizes for thematic analysis: A quantitative tool. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 18, 669-684. doi:10.1080/13645579.2015.1005453
- Fusch, P., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *Qualitative Report*, 20, 1408-1416. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/>
- Galope, R. V. (2014). What types of start-ups receive funding from the small business innovation research (SBIR) program? evidence from the Kauffman firm survey. *Journal of Technology Management & Innovation*, 9, 17-28. doi:10.4067/s0718-27242014000200002
- Ghasabeh, M. S., Soosay, C., & Reaiche, C. (2015). The emerging role of transformational leadership. *Journal of Developing Areas*, 49, 459-467.
doi:10.1353/jda.2015.0090
- Gibbs, G. R. (2018). *Analyzing qualitative data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gill, A., & Biger, N. (2012). Barriers to small business growth in Canada. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 19, 656-668.
doi:10.1108/14626001211277451

- Glaub, M. E., Frese, M., Fischer, S., & Hoppe, M. (2014). Increasing personal initiative in small business managers or owners leads to entrepreneurial success: A theory-based controlled randomized field intervention for evidence-based management. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 13*, 354-379.
doi:10.5465/amle.2013.0234
- Gleick, J. (1987). *Chaos: Making a new science*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Goodman, J. S., Gary, M. S., & Wood, R. E. (2014). Bibliographic search training for evidence-based management education: A review of relevant literatures. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 13*, 322-353. doi:10.5465/amle.2013.0188
- Greener, S. (2018). Research limitations: the need for honesty and common sense. *Interactive Learning Environments, 26*, 567-568.
doi:10.1080/10494820.2018.1486785
- Greenfield, B. H., & Jensen, G. M. (2016). Understanding the lived experiences of patients: Application of a phenomenological approach to ethics. *Physical Therapy, 90*, 1185-1197. doi:10.2522/ptj.20090348
- Grossoehme, D. H. (2014). Overview of qualitative research. *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy, 20*, 109-122. doi:10.1080/08854726.2014.925660
- Gunter, H. (1995). Jurassic management. *Journal of Educational Administration, 33*, 5-20. doi:10.1108/09578239510147333
- Haahr, A., Norlyk, A., & Hall, E. O. (2014). Ethical challenges embedded in qualitative research interviews with close relatives. *Nursing Ethics, 21*, 6-15.
doi:10.1177/0969733013486370

- Hancock, M. E., Amankwaa, L., Revell, M. A., & Mueller, D. (2016). Focus group data saturation: A new approach to data analysis. *Qualitative Report, 21*, 2124-2130.
Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/>
- Hailer, N. P. (2015). Orthopedic registry research - limitations and future perspectives. *Acta Orthopaedica, 86*, 1-2. doi:10.3109/17453674.2014.1002183
- Hannigan, S. (2014). *Narrative inquiry and auto-ethnography: Interpretive approaches to research*. London, England: Sage Publications.
- Harriss, D., & Atkinson, G. (2015). Ethical standards in sport and exercise science research: 2016 update. *International Journal of Sports Medicine, 36*, 1121-1124.
doi:10.1055/s-0035-1565186
- Hayes, J. P., Chawla, S. K., & Kathawala, Y. (2015). A comparative study of problems encountered in the development of small businesses in the U.S. and Mexico. *Journal of Developing Areas, 49*, 395-406. doi:10.1353/jda.2015.0175
- Herlina, E., Syarifudin, D., & Kartika, R. (2019). The local knowledge transfer based on continuous improvement implementation at SMEs group. *Journal of Management Review, 3*, 958-966. doi:10.25157/jmr.v3i1.1805
- Hideaki, Y. (2018). Chaos theory and nurses' perspectives on child abuse within the family. *Asian Journal of Nursing Education & Research, 8*, 137-141.
doi:10.5958/2349-2996.2018.00028.9
- Horta, I. M., & Camanho, A. S. (2013). Company failure prediction in the construction industry. *Expert Systems with Applications, 40*, 6253-6257.
doi:10.1016/j.eswa.2013.05.045

- Horsley, J. S. (2014). The method in their madness: Chaos, communication, and the D.C. snipers. *Journal of Communication Management*, 18, 295-318.
doi:10.1108/JCOM-01-2010-0003
- Hoyland, S., Hollund, J. G., & Olsen, O. E. (2015). Gaining access to a research site and participants in medical and nursing research: A synthesis of accounts. *Medical Education*, 49, 224-232. doi:10.1111/medu.12622
- Hufford, J. R. (2013). A review of the literature on assessment in academic and research libraries, 2005 to August 2011. *Libraries and the Academy*, 13, 5-35.
doi:10.1353/pla.2013.0005
- Hunsaker, S. (2014). *Training interpersonal skills-tips for managing people at work* (6th ed.). Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Huu, L., & Kock, S. (2011). Managing SMEs' survival from financial crisis in a transition economy: A chaos theory approach. *Journal of General Management*, 37, 31-45. doi:10.1177/030630701103700103
- Hyder, S., & Lussier, R. N. (2016). Why businesses succeed or fail: A study on small businesses in Pakistan. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 8, 82-100. doi:10.1108/jeee-03-2015-0020
- Ibrahim, M. A., & Shariff, M. M. (2017). Mediating role of access to finance on the relationship between strategic orientation attributes and SMEs performance in Nigeria. *International Journal of Business & Society*, 17, 473-496.
doi:10.33736/ijbs.537.2016

- Imran, M. K., Ilyas, M., & Aslam, U. (2016). Organizational learning through transformational leadership. *Learning Organization, 23*, 232-248.
doi:10.1108/tlo-09-2015-0053
- Jack, S., DiCenso, A., & Lohfeld, L. (2016). Opening doors: Factors influencing the establishment of a working relationship between paraprofessional home visitors and at-risk families. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research Archive, 34*, 59-69.
Retrieved from <http://cjr.archive.mcgill.ca/index>
- Jahanshahi, A. A., Nawaser, K., Eizi, N., & Etemadi, M. (2015). The role of real options thinking in achieving sustainable competitive advantage for SMEs. *Global Business & Organizational Excellence, 35*, 35-44. doi:10.1002/joe.21643
- Joslin, R., & Muller, R. (2016). Identifying interesting project phenomena using philosophical and methodological triangulation. *International Journal of Project Management, 34*, 1043-1056. doi:10.1016/j.ijproman.2016.05.005
- Kalkhouran, A. N., Rasid, S. A., Sofian, S., & Nedaei, B. N. (2015). A conceptual framework for assessing the use of strategic management accounting in small and medium enterprises. *Global Business & Organizational Excellence, 35*, 45-54.
doi:10.1002/joe.21644
- Karadag, H. (2015). Financial management challenges in small and medium-sized enterprises: A strategic management approach. *Emerging Markets Journal, 5*, 26-40. doi:10.5195/emaj.2015.67

- Katona, F. (2014). Examination of marketing planning of Hungarian small businesses. *Managerial Challenges of The Contemporary Society*, 7, 131-135. Retrieved from <https://econ.ubbcluj.ro/mccs/>
- Kennickell, A. B., Kwast, M. L., & Pogach, J. (2017). Small businesses and small business finance during the financial crisis and the great recession: New evidence from the survey of consumer finances. *Finance and Economics Discussion Series* 39, 291-350. doi:10.17016/feds.2015.039
- Kersten, R., Harms, J., Liket, K., & Maas, K. (2017). Small Firms, large Impact? A systematic review of the SME finance literature. *World Development*, 97, 330-348. doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.04.012
- Khanal, A. R., & Mishra, A. K. (2016). Financial performance of small farm business households: The role of internet. *China Agricultural Economic Review*, 8, 553-571. doi:10.1108/CAER-12-2014-0147
- Kihn, L. A., & Ihantola, E. M. (2015). Approaches to validation and evaluation in qualitative studies of management accounting. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 12, 230-255. doi:10.1108/qram-03-2013-0012
- Kirkwood, A., & Price, L. (2013). Examining some assumptions and limitations of research on the effects of emerging technologies for teaching and learning in higher education. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 44, 536-543. doi:10.1111/bjet.12049

- Kornbluh, M. (2015). Combatting challenges to establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 12*, 397-414.
doi:10.1080/14780887.2015.1021941
- Korstjens, I. & Moser, A. (2018) Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice, 24*, 120-124. doi:10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092
- Krishnan, K., Nandy, D. K., & Puri, M. (2015). Does financing spur small business productivity: Evidence from a natural experiment. *Review of Financial Studies, 28*, 1768-1809. doi:10.1093/rfs/hhu087
- Kuépié, M., Tenikue, M., & Walther, O. J. (2016). Social networks and small business performance in West African border regions. *Oxford Development Studies, 44*, 202-219. doi:10.1080/13600818.2015.1082540
- Lans, T., Verhees, F., & Verstegen, J. (2016). Social competence in small firms-fostering workplace learning and performance. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 27*, 321-348. doi:10.1002/hrdq.21254
- Lawlor, M. C., & Solomon, O. (2017). A phenomenological approach to the cultivation of expertise: Emergent understandings of autism. *Ethos, 45*, 232-249.
doi:10.1111/etho.12162
- Leedy, D., & Ormrod, J. (2015). *Practical research: Planning and design*. New York, NY: Pearson Education.
- Leonidou, L., Christodoulides, P., Kyrgidou, L., & Palihawadana, D. (2017). Internal drivers and performance consequences of small firm green business strategy: The

moderating role of external forces. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 140, 585-606.

doi:10.1007/s10551-015-2670-9

Lester, D. L., Parnell, J. A., & Carraher, S. (2003). Organizational life cycle: A five-stage empirical scale. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 11, 339-354.

doi:10.1108/eb028979

Leung, L. (2015). Validity, reliability, and generalizability in qualitative research.

Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care, 4, 324-327. doi:10.4103/2249-4863.161306

Levy, D. (2007). Chaos theory and strategy: Theory, application, and managerial implications. *Strategic Management Journal*, 15, 167-178.

doi:10.1002/smj.4250151011

Lewis, S. (2015). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. *Health Promotion Practice*, 16, 473-475.

doi:10.1177/1524839915580941

Li, N., & Dimitratos, P. (2014). How do business-level strategies affect multiple market servicing modes in the foreign country? *International Marketing Review*, 31, 526-

546. doi:10.1108/imr-05-2013-0106

Li, J., & Ye, X. D. (2015). Recent development of chaos theory in topological dynamics.

Acta Mathematica Sinica, English Series, 32, 83-114. doi:10.1007/s10114-015-4574-0

Li, T.Y., & Yorke, J. A. (1975). Period three implies chaos. *American Mathematical*

Monthly, 82, 985-992. doi:10.2307/2318254

- Lipi, R. (2013). The growth performance of small business under the view of life-cycle model. *Management Research and Practice*, 5, 58-67. Retrieved from <http://mrp.ase.ro/>
- Lips-Wiersman, M., & Mills, A.J. (2013) Understanding the basic assumptions about human nature in workplace spirituality: Beyond the critical versus positive divide. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 23,148-161. doi:10.1177/1056492613501227
- Lopez-Dicastillo, O., & Belintxon, M. (2014). The challenges of participant observations of cultural encounters within an ethnographic study. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 132, 522–526. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.04.347
- Lougui, M., Nystrom, K. (2014). What obstacles do entrepreneurs encounter? *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy*, 3, 275-291. doi:10.1108/jep-08-2012-0041.
- Lowe, A., Norris, A. C., Farris, A. J., & Babbage, D. R. (2018). Quantifying thematic saturation in qualitative data analysis. *Field Methods*, 30, 191-207. doi:10.1177/1525822x17749386
- Ly, C. T. M., Vickers, M. H., & Fernandez, S. (2015). Master of Business Administration (MBA) student outcomes in Vietnam. *Education + Training*, 57, 88-107. doi:10.1108/et-08-2013-0104
- MacRae, S., Brown, M., Karatzias, T., Taggart, L., Truesdale-Kennedy, M., Walley, R., & Davies, M. (2015). Diabetes in people with intellectual disabilities: A systematic review of the literature. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 47, 352-374. doi:10.1016/j.ridd.2015.10.003

- Malone, H. E., & Coyne, I. (2016). A review of software applications and non-software approaches in JAN. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *73*, 2785-2791.
doi:10.1111/jan.13150
- Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies. *Qualitative Health Research*, *26*, 1753-1760.
doi:10.1177/1049732315617444
- Mas-Verdú, F., Ribeiro-Soriano, D., & Roig-Tierno, N. (2015). Firm survival: The role of incubators and business characteristics. *Journal of Business Research*, *68*, 793-796. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.11.030
- Mayer, I. (2015). Qualitative research with a focus on qualitative data analysis. *International Journal of Sales, Retailing & Marketing*, *4*, 53-67. Retrieved from <http://www.ijstrm.com/IJSRM/Home.html>
- Mazzarol, T., Clark, D. N., & Reboud, S. (2014). Strategy in action: Case studies of strategy, planning and innovation in Australian SMEs. *Small Enterprise Research*, *21*, 54-71. doi:10.5172/ser.2014.21.1.54
- Mazzei, M. J., Flynn, C. B., & Haynie, J. J. (2016). Moving beyond initial success: Promoting innovation in small businesses through high-performance work practices. *Business Horizons*, *59*, 51-60. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2015.08.004
- McBride, N. (2005). Chaos theory as a model for interpreting information systems in organizations. *Information Systems Journal*, *15*, 233-254. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2575.2005.00192.x

- McDowell, W. C., Harris, M. L., & Geho, P. R. (2016). Longevity in small business: The effect of maturity on strategic focus and business performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 69, 1904-1908. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.10.077
- McElroy, M. W. (2000). Integrating complexity theory, knowledge management and organizational learning. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 4, 195-203. doi:10.1108/13673270010377652
- McIntosh, M. J., & Morse, J. M. (2015). Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, 2(1), 1-12. doi:10.1177/2333393615597674
- McWilliams, J. C. (2019). A perspective on the legacy of Edward Lorenz. *Earth and Space Science*, 6, 336-350. doi:10.1029/2018ea000434
- Merten, D. M. (2015) *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miettinen, T., & Stenbacka, R. (2018). Strategic short-termism: Implications for the management and acquisition of customer relationships. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 153, 200-222. doi:10.1016/j.jebo.2018.07.006
- Miller, C. (2017). *Muddy boots and smart suits: Researching Asia-Pacific affairs*. Heng Mui Kenk Terrace, Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.
- Milutinovic, R., Stosic, B., & Mihic, M. (2015). Concepts and importance of strategic innovation in SMEs: Evidence from Serbia. *Management*, 20, 35-42. doi:10.7595/management.fon.2015.0030

- Mikic, M., Novoselec, T., & Primorac, D. (2016). Influence of financing source on the small business performance. *International Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 10, 62-72. Retrieved from <https://www.scimagojr.com/journalsearch.php?q=19700177302&tip=sid&clean=0>
- Mohamad, M. & Chin, O. (2018). The effects of business networking and entrepreneurial munificence on the business sustainability of small rural business. *Global Business & Management Research*, 10, 890-899. Retrieved from <http://www.gbmrjournal.com>
- Mok, H. L. I. (2014). The chaos theory of careers: A new perspective on working in the twenty-first century. *Australian Journal of Rehabilitation Counselling*, 20, 67-68. doi:10.1017/jrc.2014.1
- Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *Qualitative Report*, 21, 811-831. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/>
- Moon, C. (2015). The (un)changing role of the researcher. *International Journal of Market Research*, 57, 15-16. doi:10.2501/ijmr-2015-002
- Moon, K., Brewer, T. D., Januchowski-Hartley, S. R., Adams, V. M., & Blackman, D. A. (2016). A guideline to improve qualitative social science publishing in ecology and conservation journals. *Ecology and Society*, 21, 133-152. doi:10.5751/es-08663-210317
- Morgan, G. (2006). *Images of organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Morse, J. M. (2015a). Data were saturated. *Qualitative Health Research, 25*, 587-588.
doi:10.1177/1049732315576699
- Morse, J. M. (2015b). Critical analysis of strategies for determining rigor in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Health Research, 25*, 1212-1222.
doi:10.1177/1049732315588501
- Mutoko, W. R. (2014). Challenges of access to markets and opportunities for small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in Botswana. *European Scientific Journal, 1*, 28-38. Retrieved from <http://www.ejournal.org/index.php/esj>
- Mutandwa, E., Taremwa, N. K., & Tubanambazi, T. (2015). Determinants of business performance of small and medium size enterprises in Rwanda. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship, 20*, 1550001-1550013.
doi:10.1142/s1084946715500016
- Narh, A. T., Thorpe, N., Bell, M. C., & Hill, G. A. (2016). Do new sources of traffic data make the application of chaos theory to traffic management a realistic possibility? *Transport Reviews, 36*, 635-658. doi:10.1080/01441647.2016.1140687
- Nelson, J. (2017). Using conceptual depth criteria: Addressing the challenge of reaching saturation in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 17*, 554-570.
doi:10.1177/1468794116679873
- Nielsen, K., & Daniels, K. (2016). The relationship between transformational leadership and follower sickness absence: the role of presenteeism. *Work & Stress, 30*, 193-208. doi:10.1080/02678373.2016.1170736

- Nigh, S. (2017). *The managerial impact on small business global supply chain* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 10257041)
- Nitescu, D. C. (2015). A new beginning for SMEs development? *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Economics*, 22, 39-52. Retrieved from <http://escipub.com/journal-of-theoretical-applied-economics/>
- Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence Based Nursing*, 18, 34-35. doi:10.1136/eb-2015-102054
- Noohi, E., Peyrovi, H., Goghary, Z.I., & Kazemi, M. (2016). Perception of social support among family caregivers of vegetative patients: A qualitative study. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 41, 150-158. doi:10.1016/j.concog.2016.02.015
- Northouse, P.G. (2018). *Leadership theory and practice* (8th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nwabueze, U. (2013). It is a question of survival: The case of TQM for small business. *Review of Management Innovation & Creativity*, 6, 21-29. Retrieved from <https://www.worldcat.org/title/review-of-management-innovation-creativity-rmic/oclc/180187801>
- Oertel, S., & Walgenbach, P. (2012). The effect of partner exits on survival chances of SMEs. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 25, 462-482. doi:10.1108/09534811211228166
- Osiyevskyy, O., Hayes, L., Krueger, N. F., & Madill, C. (2013) Planning to Grow? Exploring the effect of business planning on the growth of small and medium

- enterprises (SMEs). *Journal of Entrepreneurship Review*, 2, 36-56. Retrieved from <https://ssrn.com/> <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/joe>
- Owen, G. T. (2014). Qualitative methods in higher education policy analysis: Using interviews and document analysis. *Qualitative Report*, 19(3), 1-19. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/>
- Öztürk, Z., & Kızılkaya, S. (2017). Chaos-complexity theory at management. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching*, 4, 259-264. Retrieved from <http://www.iojet.org>
- Paradis, E., O'Brien, B., Nimmon, L., Bandiera, G., & Martimianakis, M. A. (2016). Design: Selection of data collection methods. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 8, 263-264. Retrieved from <https://www.jgme.org>
- Parker, L. (2014). Qualitative perspectives: Through a methodological lens. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 11, 13-28. doi:10.1108/QRAM-02-2014-0013
- Perrault, E. K., & Keating, D. M. (2017). Seeking ways to inform the uninformed: Improving the informed consent process in online social science research. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*, 13, 50-60. doi:10.1177/1556264617738846
- Peyrefitte, M., & Lazar, G. (2018). Student-centered pedagogy and real-world research: Using documents as sources of data in teaching social science skills and methods. *Teaching Sociology*, 46, 62-74. doi:10.1177/0092055x17727835

- Pickering, C., & Byrne, J. (2013). The benefits of publishing systematic quantitative literature reviews for PhD candidates and other early-career researchers. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 33, 534-548.
doi:10.1080/07294360.2013.841651
- Piskur, B., Beurskens, A. J., Ketelaar, M., Jongmans, M. J., Casparie, B. M., & Smeets, R. J. (2017). Daily actions, challenges, and needs among Dutch parents while supporting the participation of their child with a physical disability at home, at school, and in the community: A qualitative diary study. *BMC Pediatrics*, 17(1), 1-11. doi:10.1186/s12887-016-0768-6
- Pollack, J., & Adler, D. (2016). Skills that improve profitability: The relationship between project management, IT skills, and small to medium enterprise profitability. *International Journal of Project Management*, 34, 831-838.
doi:10.1016/j.ijproman.2016.03.004
- Prajogo, D. I. (2016). The strategic fit between innovation strategies and business environment in delivering business performance. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 171, 241-249. doi:10.1016/j.ijpe.2015.07.037
- Price, J. H., & Murnan, J. (2004). Research limitations and the necessity of reporting them. *American Journal of Health Education*, 35, 66-67.
doi:10.1080/19325037.2004.10603611
- Rahman, A., Belas, J., Kliestik, T., & Tyll, L. (2017). Collateral requirements for SME loans: Empirical evidence from the visegrad countries. *Journal of Business Economics & Management*, 18, 650-675. doi:10.3846/16111699.2017.1357050

- Rakicevic, Z., Omerbegovic-Bijelovic, J., & Lecic-Cvetkovic, D. (2016). A model for effective planning of SME support services. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 54, 30-40. doi:10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2015.09.004
- Reilly, T. M., & Jones, R. (2017). Mixed methodology in family business research: Past accomplishments and perspectives for the future. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 8, 185-195. doi:10.1016/j.jfbs.2017.08.003
- Renz, S. M., Carrington, J. M., & Badger, T. A. (2018). Two strategies for qualitative content analysis: An intramethod approach to triangulation. *Qualitative Health Research*, 28, 824-831. doi:10.1177/1049732317753586
- Rimando, M., Brace, A., Namageyo-Funa, A., Parr, T., Sealy, D., Teaniese, L., & Christiana, R. (2015). Data collection challenges and recommendations for early career researchers. *Qualitative Report*, 20, 2025-2036. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/>
- Rostamkalaei, A., & Freel, M. (2016). The cost of growth: Small firms and the pricing of bank loans. *Small Business Economics*, 46, 255-272. doi:10.1007/s11187-015-9681-x
- Rupeika-Apoga, R. (2014). Financing in SMEs: Case of the Baltic states. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 150, 116-125. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.09.013
- Sanial, G. (2014). Exploring U.S. Coast Guard organizational preparedness through chaos and complexity theories. *Emergence: Complexity and Organization*, 16(4), 1-16. doi:10.17357.9919d403ac7986cc852f13fac5def0f0

- Satalkar, P., Elger, B. S., & Shaw, D. M. (2016). Stakeholder views on participant selection for first-in-human trials in cancer nanomedicine. *Current Oncology*, *23*, 530-540. doi:10.3747/co.23.3214
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, *52*, 1893-1907. doi:10.1007/s11135-017-0574
- Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2016). *Research methods for business: A skill building approach* (7th ed). Chichester, West Sussex, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons.
- Scheibe, M., Reichelt, J., Bellmann, M., & Kirch, W. (2015). Acceptance factors of mobile apps for diabetes by patients aged 50 or older: A qualitative study. *Medicine 2.0*, *4*(1), 1-20. doi:10.2196/med20.3912
- Sharma, A., & Dave, S. (2014). Goals and performance of small scale family business-A study of select SMEs. *BVIMR Management Edge*, *7*, 115-127. Retrieved from http://www.bvimr.com/bvimr_journal.aspx
- Sherlock, A., & Brownie, S. (2014). Patients' recollection and understanding of informed consent: A literature review. *ANZ Journal of Surgery*, *84*, 207-210. doi:10.1111/ans.12555
- Siddique, C. M. (2015). A comparative study of strategic planning practices of SMEs and large-sized business organizations in emerging economies: The case of UAE. *Strategic Change*, *24*, 553-567. doi:10.1002/jsc.2039

- Simmons, S. A., Wiklund, J., & Levie, J. (2014). Stigma and business failure: Implications for entrepreneurs' career choices. *Small Business Economics*, 42, 485-505. doi:10.1007/s11187-013-9519-3
- Sims, J. M. (2018). A Brief Review of the Belmont Report. *Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing*, 29, 173-74. doi:10.1097/dcc.0b013e3181de9ec5
- Singh, A. S., & Masuku, M. B. (2014). Sampling techniques & determination of sample size in applied statistics research: An overview. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce, and Management*, 2(11),1-22 Retrieved from <http://ijecm.co.uk/>
- Singh, H., & Singh, A. (2002). Principles of complexity and chaos theory in project execution: A new approach to management. *Cost Engineering*, 44, 23-33. Retrieved from https://online.aacei.org/aaccessa/ecssashop.show_category?p_category_id=CEJ&p_cust_id=&p_order_sereno=&p_promo_cd=&p_price_cd=&p_session_sereno=1328825&p_trans_ty=
- Smith, J. A. (2015). *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Smith, T. A. (2014). Testing theory and related factors for influencing proficiency in quantitative research. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, 18, 117-128. Retrieved from <https://www.abacademies.org/journals/academy-of-educational-leadership-journal-home.html>

- Sotiriadou, P., Brouwers, J. & Le, T. (2014). Choosing a qualitative data analysis tool: A comparison of NVivo and Leximancer. *Annals of Leisure Research, 17*, 218-234.
doi:10.1080/11745398.2014.902292
- Sorsa, M. A., Kiikkala, I., & Åstedt-Kurki, P. (2015). Bracketing as a skill in conducting unstructured qualitative interviews. *Nurse Researcher, 22*, 8-12.
doi:10.7748/nr.22.4.8.e1317
- Sserwanga, A., & Rooks, G. (2014). Cognitive consequences of business shut down. The case of Ugandan repeat entrepreneurs. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research, 20*, 263-277. doi:10.1108/ijebr-10-2012-0120
- Stuetzer, M., Obschonka, M., & Schmitt-Rodermund, E. (2013). Balanced skills among nascent entrepreneurs. *Small Business Economics, 41*, 93-114.
doi:10.1007/s11187-012-9423-2
- Tacha, O. I., Volos, C. K., Stouboulos, I. N., & Kyprianidis, I. M. (2016). Analysis, adaptive control and circuit simulation of a novel finance system with dissaving. *Archives of Control Sciences, 26*, 95-115. doi:10.1515/acsc-2016-0006
- Taneja, S., Pryor, M., Humphreys, J., & Singleton, L. (2013) Strategic management in an era of paradigmatic chaos: Lessons for managers. *International Journal of Management, 30*, 112-129. Retrieved from <http://www.ijm-apm.com/Home.aspx>
- Thomas, D. R. (2017). Feedback from research participants: Are member checks useful in qualitative research? *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 14*, 23-41.
doi:10.1080/14780887.2016.1219435

- Turner, S., & Endres, A. (2017). Strategies for enhancing small-business owners' success rates. *International Journal of Applied Management & Technology*, 16, 34-49.
doi:10.5590/IJAMT.2017.16.1.03
- U.S. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. (1979). *The Belmont report: Ethical guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). (2016). *Frequently asked questions*. Retrieved from https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/SB-FAQ-2016_WEB.pdf
- U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). (2018). *Frequently asked questions*. Retrieved from <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/Frequently-Asked-Questions-Small-Business-2018.pdf>
- Van Praag, M. (2014). Business survival and success of young small business owners: An empirical analysis. *Small Business Economics*, 21(1), 1-17.
doi:10.2139/ssrn.289202
- Visser, T., Chodokufa, K., Amadi-Echendu, A., & Phillips, M. (2016). An analysis of small business skills in the City of Tshwane, Gauteng Province. *African Journal of Business & Economic Research*, 11, 93-115. Retrieved from https://journals.co.za/content/journal/aa_ajber

- Vohra, V. (2014). Using the multiple case study design to decipher contextual leadership behaviors in Indian organizations. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 12, 54-65. Retrieved from <http://www.ejbrm.com/main.html>
- Walther, O. J. (2015). Business, brokers and borders: The structure of West African trade networks. *Journal of Development Studies*, 51, 603-620.
doi:10.1080/00220388.2015.1010152
- Watts, A. R., Williams, B., Kim, S. W., Bramwell, D. C., & Krishnan, J. (2017). Shoulder impingement syndrome: A systematic review of clinical trial participant selection criteria. *Shoulder & Elbow*, 9, 31-41. doi:10.1177/1758573216663201
- Weber, P., Geneste, L. A., & Connell, J. (2015). Small business growth: Strategic goals and owner preparedness. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 36, 30-36.
doi:10.1108/jbs-03-2014-0036
- Weidinger, C., Fischler, F., & Schmidpeter, R. (2013). *Sustainable entrepreneurship: Business success through sustainability*. Springer Science & Business Media. New York, NY.
- Wiles, R. (2013). *What are qualitative research ethics?* New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Williams, R., & Aaron, J. (2018). Specialization as a small business strategic approach. *Small Business Institute Journal*, 14(2), 1-15. Retrieved from <https://sbij.org/index.php/SBIJ>

- Wilson, V. (2014). Research methods: Triangulation. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 9, 74-75. Retrieved from <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/EBLIP>
- Wong, A., Holmes, S., & Schaper, M. T. (2018). How do small business owners actually make their financial decisions? Understanding SME financial behavior using a case-based approach. *Small Enterprise Research*, 25, 36-51. doi:10.1080/13215906.2018.1428909
- Wu, N., Bacon, N., & Hoque, K. (2014). The adoption of high performance work practices in small businesses: The influence of markets, business characteristics and HR expertise. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25, 1149-1169. doi:10.1080/09585192.2013.816865
- Wynn, M., & Jones, P. (2018). Context and entrepreneurship in knowledge transfer partnerships with small business enterprises. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 20, 8-20. doi:10.1177/1465750318771319
- Yates, J., & Leggett, T. (2016). Qualitative research: An introduction. *Radiologic Technology*, 88, 225-231. Retrieved from <https://www.asrt.org/main/news-publications/publications>
- Yeboah, A. M., & Koffie, F. (2016). Does the legal form of small and medium enterprises determine their access to capital? *International Journal of Management, Accounting & Economics*, 3, 520-533. Retrieved from <http://www.ijmae.com>.

- Yeong, M. L., Ismail, R., Ismail, N. H., & Hamzah, M. (2018). Interview protocol refinement: Fine-tuning qualitative research interview questions for multi-racial populations in Malaysia. *Qualitative Report, 23*, 2700-2713. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yusuf, J. E. (2014). Impact of start-up support through guided preparation. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy, 3*, 72-95. doi:10.1108/jep-01-2012-0004

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

I will use the following interview protocol:

1. Upon obtaining the names and contact information of small business owners who have launched and maintained a small business for at least 5 years, I will email a request for an interview. The email request follows:

Dear <Participant>,

As a small business owner who has launched and maintained a small business for a minimum of 5 years, I am requesting your participation in a doctoral study regarding strategies and knowledge of available resources that contribute to small business success.

I invite you to participate in my doctoral study because of your professional success, experience, and knowledge. Your participation in this doctoral study is strictly voluntary.

If you agree to participate in this study, I ask you to allow me to interview you for no longer than one hour as well as one follow-up interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. The interview will be transcribed, and audio recorded to ensure accuracy. I will hold the interview at a location of your choice, or I can arrange a private conference room at the Public library. After the interviews, I will ask participants to review, verify, and provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the information to ensure the validity of my analysis.

The purpose of this study is to explore experiences of small business owners who have launched and maintained a business operation for at least 5 years in Texas. I have attached the consent form that outlines the procedures I will follow for this study as well as the interview questions for your review.

To ensure confidentiality, I will replace your name with a participant ID number. In accordance with Walden University guidelines, any information that you share will remain in a secure location for 5 years. I plan to conduct my interviews from XXX to XXX and if you would provide me a good time and phone number to call you, I would be grateful.

You are free to contact me directly by email me if you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tywon Guy
Doctor of Business Administration Candidate
Walden University

2. Upon receipt of acknowledgement of the volunteers willing to participate, I will ensure that I obtain the signed Consent to Participate documentation from each participant prior to the interview. I will store all materials relating to this study in a locked file cabinet for a minimum of 5 years. No one else will have access to the data other than me.

3. I will meet with each participant at the date/time that the volunteer designates. I will remind each participant that he/she may withdraw from the study at any time and that all data will remain confidential. I will thank each participant for volunteering his or her insights. I will remind each participant that the focus of the interview will relate to success strategies and knowledge of resources available to small business owners. I will ask the following questions as well as probing questions as needed to get more in-depth information:

1. What strategies have you used to develop a profitable business?
2. Based on your experience, what key strategies do you believe have contributed the most to your business success?
3. What strategies have you used to maximize your resources?
4. What strategies did you use to obtain financial resources to start, grow, and maintain your business beyond the first 5 years?
5. How did your business knowledge or skills contribute to your success?
6. How did you obtain knowledge of available resources to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years?
7. How did knowledge of outside assistance or government programs contribute to your success?
8. What, if any, strategies did you use to obtain resources from outside assistance or

government programs to contribute to your success?

9. What else can you share about the benefit of strategies and how knowledge of resources assisted you in sustaining your business beyond the first 5 years?

4. Upon the completion of the initial face-to-face interview and follow-up interviews, I will send the following thank you letter to each participant:

Dear <Participant>:

I want to take the opportunity to say thank you for participating in my research study on success strategies to improve small business sustainability. I recognize you are very busy and truly appreciate your time and effort. I am currently assembling and exploring the data and looking for themes. I will provide you with a summary of the results of my findings upon completion of the research and final approval of the study.

Thank you again for sharing your insights.

Sincerely,

Tywon Guy
Doctor of Business Administration Candidate
Walden University

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used to develop a profitable business?
2. Based on your experience, what key strategies do you believe have contributed the most to your business success?
3. What strategies have you used to maximize your resources?
4. What strategies did you use to obtain financial resources to start, grow, and maintain your business beyond the first 5 years?
5. How did your business knowledge or skills contribute to your success?
6. How did you obtain knowledge of available resources to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years?
7. How did knowledge of outside assistance or government programs contribute to your success?
8. What, if any, strategies did you use to obtain resources from outside assistance or government programs to contribute to your success?
9. What else can you share about the benefit of strategies and how knowledge of resources assisted you in sustaining your business beyond the first 5 years?