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Exploring Business Planning Strategies of Women-Owned Small Businesses in the Construction Trades

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Diana Fay-Spina

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Exploring Business Planning Strategies of Women-Owned Small Businesses in the

Construction Trades

by

Diana Fay-Spina

MS, Walden University, 2010

BS, Walden University, 2008

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

April 2017

Abstract

Many small businesses fail to survive past 5 years, listing the primary reason given for failure as inadequate business planning strategies. The construction industry provides the building and upkeep of physical infrastructure (buildings and roadways) in developed societies and is a major contributor to the gross domestic product for many nations. In the United States, the construction trades primarily consist of small businesses, with a smaller portion of the sector classified as women-owned. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the business planning strategies that successful women-owned small business (WOSB) construction leaders in New Jersey use for sustainability and growth. Contingency theory and expectancy theory of motivation served as the conceptual framework for this study. The sample was comprised of 3 women small business owners in the construction trade in New Jersey. Data collection included semistructured face-to-face interviews, a review of organization documents, business website review, and field notes. Member checking strengthened credibility and trustworthiness. Based on Rowley's 3-step data analysis plan and a thematic analysis of the data, 5 themes emerged: constant review of goals and plans, communication and teamwork, reliance on expertise, networking, and continuous education. The findings in this study may contribute to social change by providing knowledge for sustainability and growth of women owned businesses (WOBs). By putting the findings to practical use, WOBS could sustain beyond 5 years, which would positively influence society by enhancing the local economy, promoting job development and fostering positive community relations.

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Dedication

It is with sincere pride that I dedicate this doctoral study to my mother Arleen and my father Robert S., United States Navy Retired, who always believed in me. I would also like to dedicate this work to my husband and my family. I thank all of you for your patience, support, and understanding in my desire to fulfill my academic goals. I further dedicate this work to all the small business leaders who work relentlessly to create opportunity and livelihood for others. Above all, I give my thanks to God who makes all things possible.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my Committee Chairs, Dr. Patricia Fusch and Dr. Gregory Banks who have been the motivational force throughout this doctoral process. I thank you for your guidance and inspiration. I would like to acknowledge my committee members, Dr. Romuel (Roy) Nafarrete and Dr. Patsy Kasen as well as Walden dean Dr. Freda Turner. Thank you for all your support and encouragement. Importantly as well, I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the individuals that agreed to participate in my study. Without your passion, insight, and desire to share your experiences and add to the body of knowledge, this study would not be possible.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

In the United States in the year 2015, the construction trades affected 4% of the gross national product (GNP) and influenced the national economy (Simonson, 2016). In 2012, the construction industry employed 10.1% of the nation's workforce (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2016), and 83.3% of the construction industry were classified as small business enterprises (U.S. Small Business Administration [SBA], 2015b). In 2007, men owned 74.6% of the construction sector in the United States (SBA, 2015b). The rate of construction business failure is on the increase, and this failure will have a serious impact on a nation's economic stability (Abd-Hamid, Azizan, & Sorooshian, 2015).

Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013b), Roberson-Saunders, Smith, and Goel (2014), and Ruiz-Arroyo, Fuentes-Fuentes, Bojica, and Rodriguez-Ariza (2012) noted that female business entrepreneurship is experiencing incremental growth. Perry (2002) conducted a study in 2002 to explore the failure rate of businesses, focusing on the gender of the business owner and success rates. Perry concluded that there was not a significant difference in business failure rates between genders; however, planning initiatives from either gender had an influence on business success, noting that planning was essential to business growth. Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013b) indicated the need to understand the strategic planning that women entrepreneurs employ, the projected time horizons for strategic business planning, and the potential for the success of their businesses.

Changes in the financial, environmental, and social elements are inevitable in business (Masood, Weston, & Rahimifard, 2013). Preparing for change is essential to ensure a competitive advantage (Masood et al., 2013). In this study, I explored the business planning strategies that women-owned small business (WOSB) owners engage in to achieve sustainability and growth.

Background of the Problem

The success of any firm, large or small, depends on the ability of the organizational leaders to anticipate and plan for a changing environment (Cordeiro, 2013). Small business in the United States accounts for 99.7% of employers, 63% of private job generation, and 33% exporting value (Hyder & Lussier, 2016). The individual and collective networks associated with the organization may influence the success or failure of a WOSB (Bullough, Renko, & Abdelzaher, 2014). The gender in business leadership has an effect on the implementation of business strategies with women demonstrating the least participation in human resources training and growth in an organization (Cesaroni, Sentuti, & Buratti, 2015).

Business planning provides direction for the firm's operations and supports the decision process for stability and growth (Mazzarol, Clark, & Reboud, 2014). Effective business planning assists the owner in decreasing costs of vital resources (Kotey, Sharma, & Gao, 2013). Enhancing the knowledge and understanding of the business planning strategies of New Jersey-based WOSBs in the construction trades was the motivation for conducting this multiple case exploratory study. The findings of this empirical research

can serve as a mentoring tool for women who are starting their venture and can function as a foundation for further research in business planning strategies for women-owned enterprises.

Problem Statement

Many business-planning strategies created by WOSBs are inadequate in time horizons, and thereby negatively affect the overall growth and performance of the organization (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013b). Small businesses support 99.7% of employing organizations in the United States and are responsible for 63% of new job creation, but only half of the new establishments survive 5 years or more (SBA, 2014). The general business problem is that WOSBs initiate operations without adequate planning strategies (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013a). The specific business problem is that some WOSBs in the construction trades lack business-planning strategies for sustainability and growth.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore what business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth. The population for this study was three WOSB owners in the construction trades in New Jersey who have been in operation for 5 years or more and have successfully created business-planning strategies. The requirement of 5 years ensured that the participant group demonstrated a sufficient proficiency and understanding of the construction trade in comparison to an inexperienced, nascent organization. Additionally, the participants

could demonstrate the impact that business-planning strategies have had on their operations. The outcome of the study may be of benefit to the community and provide social change by offering strategies for female small business owners to develop and grow their small business venture through effective business planning strategies. An increase in the viability of WOSBs could improve the economy, employment and the standard of living in local communities.

Nature of the Study

In conducting the research study, consideration of the phenomena to study, the desired knowledge, and the interpretive framework is mandatory before selection of a methodological approach (Landrum & Garza, 2015; Svensson & Doumas, 2013). There are three research methods in contemporary research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The qualitative research method requires the use of open-ended questions that provide rich research data in text that translates into codes and themes (Yin, 2014). Researchers use the quantitative method to measure data in the numerical and statistical form (Landrum & Garza, 2015). Mixed-methods are both quantitative and qualitative, and the combination of the data from both approaches is the criterion that determines the mixed-method approach (Dworkin, 2012; Landrum & Garza, 2015; Lee, 2014; Svensson & Doumas, 2013). The use of mixed methods is significant when a single method does not provide an understanding of the topic of study (Lee, 2014).

Qualitative research methodology includes several designs with different procedures based on the particular need of the researcher and the foundation of the

research questions (Lee, 2014). Qualitative research designs include grounded theory, narrative, case study, ethnography, and phenomenology. Grounded theory research design involves the development of emerging theory through the interaction of data collection and analysis from the perspective of the participants (Wu & Beaunae, 2014). The analysis of the data employs the method of induction, and once analyzed, develops into theory creation (El Hussein, Hirst, Salyers, & Osuji, 2014). The narrative research design concerns the use of life history or stories that provide identification and meaning to the researcher of the individual's circumstances and life experiences (McMahon & McGannon, 2016; Suárez-Ortega, 2013). The narrative process involves reiteration of the participant's life stories, can be in the form of oral or written presentation, and typically involves retrospection from the main participant of the story (Suárez-Ortega, 2013). Ethnographic research involves extensive fieldwork and the in-depth observation of the participants in their environment to explain the member's culture and way of life (Hallett & Barber, 2014). Phenomenological research is the exploration of the lived experiences of the participants or the subjective view of phenomena from the individual (Finlay, 2013; Roberts, 2013).

The research method chosen for this study was a qualitative research method with an exploratory multiple case study design, as opposed to employing the quantitative or mixed method research. The use of the exploratory design assists the researcher in answering questions about what the participant experienced and involves the process of data collection through direct observation, interviews of participants, document

collection, and focus groups (Yin, 2014). Exploratory case studies allow researchers to study phenomena in real time and to link events over time (Yin, 2014). Choosing a qualitative method reflected my desire to understand the business planning strategies that affect the viability of a WOSB in the construction trades in New Jersey. Interviewing WOSB owners provided an intuitive and deductive understanding of the company conditions that the participants encounter. Employing inductive qualitative research enhanced the participants' comprehension of the phenomena and the conditions that influenced their opinions (Lee, 2014). The case study research design provided the most comprehensive information and data relating to the topic of study.

Research Question

The central research question that guided this research study was: What business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth?

Interview Questions

The creation of interview questions to align with the research question assists in the production of data about the topic of study (Rowley, 2014). The following interview questions aided in the exploration of business planning strategies used by successful WOSBs that participated in this study.

1. What planning strategies do you use to sustain and grow your business?
2. What obstacles did you face in developing and implementing planning strategies?
3. What factors motivate your strategies in goal planning?

4. How do you update planning strategies based on changing conditions?
5. What are your business strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT)?
6. What differentiates your organization from others in the same industry that avails the organization a competitive advantage?
7. What business strategies did you use to start up your business?
8. What goals and strategic elements did your business plan contain when you initially established your business?
9. How have the goals and business plan changed since business start-up?
10. How have you increased your knowledge in business planning strategies over the years of operation?
11. What additional information would you like to communicate in regards to your business planning strategies?

Conceptual Framework

In this study of the exploration of business planning strategies that WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth, two theories provided understanding: the contingency theory (CT) and expectancy theory (ET). The perspectives found in CT are a focus on the ability of a manager to lead in a changing external and internal environment (Grotsch, Blome, & Schleper, 2013) and to incorporate change initiatives in the business planning process. The business environment is ever changing and to stay competitive, managers and leaders need to modify their actions

based on situational factors (Marín-Idárraga & Cuartas-Marín, 2013). Fiedler (1967) was a leading advocate for the CT of leadership effectiveness. Fiedler (2006) indicated that shifts in the environment (internal and external) influence the way leaders manage. The concept of best fit in CT is an organization's ability to adapt their strategies to the contingencies experienced in the business environment (Frigotto, Coller, & Collini, 2013).

The motivations of individuals are the guiding constructs of ET (Purvis, Zagencyk, & McCray, 2015) and the primary consideration for the use of ET in this study. The factors of valence, instrumentality, and expectancy are the attributes of ET that influence business goals (Purvis et al., 2015). In 1964, Vroom developed ET with a focus on the motivations of individuals, particularly in the work environment (Vroom, 1995). Using ET serves as a lens in viewing the inspiration of the development of business planning strategies of WOSBs. In this study, there was an exploration of the planning strategies used by WOSB leaders. I focused this study on the strategies used by WOSBs that influence growth of the organization through change and the motivations behind the development of business planning strategies.

Operational Definitions

The definitions of terms in this study originate on the topic of WOSB and the business planning strategies used to strengthen and build their organizations. The explanation of critical terms enables the reader to have a clearer understanding of the

subject matter of the study. Defining the key terms utilized in the study provides clarity of the topic content for the reader. The definitions of terms are as follows:

Business plan: A business plan is a documented analysis of the factors affecting the business including the steps in the operation of the business (Cavico, Orta, Muffler, & Mujtaba, 2014).

NAICS: The acronym NAICS stands for the North American Industry Classification System that the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics uses for classification of industries (SBA, 2015d).

Small business: The classification of small business is determined by the number of employees and average annual receipts; for nonmanufacturing industries, the established standard is 500 or fewer employees and \$7.5 million or less in annual revenues (SBA, 2015b).

Women-owned business: A woman-owned business is a business whose primary owner is a woman, meaning she owns 51% or more of the organization and is responsible for overseeing daily operations (SBA, 2015c).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

An assumption is an individual's learned belief, a readily acceptable truth, that assists in the interpretation of surroundings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The research method employed can have an impact on the conclusions and assumptions derived by the researcher (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). The intent of conducting this study was to explore

what business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth in New Jersey. Areas of exploration included the influence that business-planning strategies had on the success of the company and the trade knowledge WOSBs possess to sustain business growth. The first assumption was that the small business organizations would not change the critical core of the enterprise during the study process. Any shifts in the foundation or core practice of the firm could alter the validity of the outcome of the study and analysis of the data collected. While using a multiple case study approach, a second assumption was that the interview questions were appropriate for addressing the problem. A key supposition was that the research participants would answer the interview questions truthfully and without bias or prejudice and would provide adequate information to benefit the findings of the study. The last assumption was that the sample size selected for the study appropriately represented the WOSB community for the contemporary event analyzed.

Limitations

Limitations are barriers that can impede the research study and fall under three categories: real, imaginary, and psychological limitations (Singh, 2015). Understanding the limitations within a research study encourages further research (Singh, 2015). The first limitation in this study was the narrow selection of the participant pool, which only included WOSB enterprises within the construction trades located in New Jersey. My concentrated focus was on the factors inhibiting the growth of WOSBs as well as the challenges the business owners' faced related to business planning strategies.

Additionally, the participants are required to agree to participate in the study. The second limitation was that the participants of the study would only include individuals from organizations classified as a WOSB; therefore, the findings of this study may not apply to all business groups unless defined as a small business and woman-owned. The third limitation was the use of only a small sample size that restricted the application of the findings to other conditions; however, this aspect provided a more comprehensive understanding of the topic of study (Farquhar, 2012). A fourth limitation was the researcher's personal experience attained as a WOSB owner within the construction trades. Due to knowledge I possessed within the construction trades, this position could have had an influence on the limitations of this research.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries the researcher sets to include or exclude in the study and provide clarity for the reader in understanding the limitations (Kromidha & Kristo, 2014). There are many viable small construction businesses owned by women in New Jersey that I could have pursued in this study; however, I chose a defined class and vocation. The limitations of this study included the participant criteria: (a) only owners of a WOSB as identified by the SBA who are, (b) in the construction trades, (c) geographically located in New Jersey, and (d) have been in operation for over 5 years.

Significance of the Study

Ruiz-Arroyo et al. (2012) demonstrated that WOBs experienced substantial growth and played a considerable role in regional development. Most research conducted

on WOB involved the analysis of gender differences and motivation (Ruiz-Arroyo et al., 2012). There has been little research on women in the traditionally male-dominated blue-collar work of the construction trade (Duke, Bergmann, Cunradi, & Ames, 2013).

The intent in conducting this study was to contribute to the body of knowledge of the impact of business planning strategies and how a WOSB in the construction trade can benefit from the learned planning processes of industry leaders. The findings of this study may help fill a gap in the literature by providing insight into business planning strategies of women business owners. Organizations such as the SBA, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), Women Business Enterprise National Council (WBNEC), Professional Women in Construction (PWC), and countless women trade organizations that assist WOSBs may also benefit from the information in this study to direct business owners in small business growth.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

A literature review is a critical analysis and summary of the academic writings and written work on a particular topic of research (Kowalczyk & Truluck, 2013; Ozmutaf, Aktekin, Ergani, & Cita, 2015.) A literature review includes an introduction to the subject of study, research questions and objectives (Kowalczyk & Truluck, 2013). The stages of a literature review are (a) identifying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, (b) selecting the databases for the search, and (c) reconstructing and synthesizing content (Smith, & Noble, 2016). The following literature review is an analysis of the planning strategies that influence the success of WOSBs in the United States, focusing on New

Jersey enterprises. Small companies are a valued asset to society and are responsible for the creation of employment for many individuals above the rate that many larger organizations can provide (Bates & Robb, 2014). The success of any business enterprise depends on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the employees and leaders. In small firms, many times the owners (or leaders) may have the technical competencies for the particular work but may lack skills and knowledge in administrative applications that can compromise business sustainability (Massey & Campbell, 2013). Factors that influence the longevity of a small business enterprise include social, financial, and human resources (Omri, Ayadi Frikha, & Amine Bouraoui, 2015). Information obtained in research studies defines business success as greater access to the social, financial, and human factors that in turn promote innovation (Omri, Ayadi Frikha, & Amine Bouraoui, 2015).

Application to Applied Business Problem

The research question is the basis for the literature review, and the study should align with the theory and be interesting to the reader (Lili, Zi, Youchun, & Chao, 2013; Okimoto, 2014). The research question for this study was as follows: What business planning strategies do women-owned construction trade small businesses use to achieve sustainability and growth?

The role of a self-employed business owner can enhance the work-life balance for women in contrast to employment in an external or public organization (Swarnalatha & Vasantha, 2013). Work-life balance enables an individual to allow time for work as well as for family and friends. Work-life balance is a prime motivator for women to initiate

their business ventures (Belwal, Belwal, & Al Saidi, 2014). For women, the absence of education in business is a weakness (Ha & Kim, 2013); therefore, to encourage female entrepreneurship or ownership, training and teaching of business planning strategies will enhance existing and emerging WOBs in the development of gender-based business operations (Swarnalatha & Vasantha, 2013).

The purpose of this proposed qualitative multiple case study was to explore what business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth. The application of CT for organizational change and ET in motivations of the small business owner identified the conceptual framework constructs within the body of the literature review. The relevant literature review provided a focus on the challenges WOSBs face in the application of business planning strategies to the organization. The literature review process highlighted the following concepts: (a) theoretical motivation for research, (b) identification of small business and classification of WOSB, (c) business plan, models, and strategies, (d) business success factors, (e) human resource factors, (f) assessment of gender in business and, (g) review of women in construction trade

Synthesis of Literature

Various sources of literature including peer-reviewed journal articles, government and trade websites, books, and dissertations developed the foundation of this study. The following list highlighted the source summary. The year 2013 established the criteria to evaluate the compliance of literature sources for the Walden Chief Academic Officer (CAO). In the entire study, there are a total of 308 references used and 114 in the

literature review. Of the total references (308) 91% are refereed or peer reviewed and 95% are contemporary sources.

Table 1

Reference Sources

Entire study		
Number of references	Type	Percentage
281	Peer-reviewed Journal Articles	91%
2	Non-peer reviewed	1%
2	Dissertations dated after 2012	1%
7	Government websites	2%
16	Books	5%
308	Total sources	
Literature review		
Number of references	Type	Percentage
102	Peer-reviewed Journal Articles after 2012	90%
4	Articles prior 2012	3%
3	Government websites	3%
5	Books	4%
114	Total sources	

In the commission of this research study, exploration of several resources on the topic included previous research and academic writings. The resources included online library databases such as EBSCO, Thoreau, ProQuest, Sage, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Questia, and Emerald as well as government Internet website searches and local brick and mortar library access. Keywords used for searching included *small business, enterprise, entrepreneurship, small business success, business planning,*

women-owned business, minority business, business plan, construction and gender. The concentration of the study was on business planning strategies that WOSB leaders engaged in to promote organizational success.

Theoretical Motivation for Research

There were two main theories chosen as the foundation for the conceptual framework of this study. The two theories complemented the research question in regard to my desire to understand the business planning strategies of WOSBs. In the revised version (1995) of the original book by Vroom (1995), *Work and Motivation*, the author identified the similarities of CT and ET. Vroom (1995) explained the similarity of ET and CT in the process of assessing alternatives in business. Alternatives are inevitable in a changing environment. It was, therefore, reasonable and rational to pair the two theories to analyze the business planning strategies of WOSBs.

Expectancy theory (ET). Individuals and organizations engage in work through motivation. Motivation is an activity of choice made in place of alternate options. People are motivated to work for many reasons such as the sense of power, wealth, satisfaction, or security. Vroom (1995) was the founder of ET in 1964 and based the theory on motivation, identified as an individual's capacity to choose alternate options. The structure of ET is the decision model of valence, instrumentality, and expectancy, otherwise known as the VIE model (Ernest, 2014; Purvis et al., 2015).

Valence is the scale of measure that individuals' display towards an outcome, or value (Ernest, 2014; Vroom, 1995). Instrumentality is the correlation of duty performed

and the effect achieved (Ernest, 2014; Vroom, 1995). In the process of understanding the planning strategies of WOSB owners, it is important to comprehend the motivation that inspires women to embark in employment in a typically male dominated field. Vroom (1995) used ET to address three questions of individual motivation about career choice, work satisfaction, and effective job performance. The philosophies presented in ET within this study were to understand the motivation of WOSB owners in developing business planning strategies and expectations outlined in their goals. Through the guidelines of the ET model of VIE, one understands the motivations that inspire the intentions of an individual to embark on a business venture, how they outline the tasks performed towards the intended goal, and the choices made in the process. Internal and external factors drive an individual's motivation and consequently can affect overall productivity (Yeheyis, Reza, Hewage, Ruwanpura, & Sadiq, 2016). In construction, labor accounts from 25-40% of the overall costs, so understanding the motivation factors is paramount to the growth and success of the organization (Yeheyis et al., 2016).

Contingency theory (CT). The motivation of business research is the desire to understand the pressures and constraints the business as a whole may encounter (Bitektine & Miller, 2015). Ganescu (2012) outlined the description of the CT as a focus on a leader's ability to adapt their motivational and leadership behavior to the internal and external situations and constraints. The foundation of Fiedler's (1967) concept in the CT focuses on the fundamentals of change in situation variables, the leader/follower relationship, manager/subordinate relationship, the least preferred coworker (LPC), task,

position, and power (Saha, 1979). The framework of contingency theory holds that business undergoes a continuous change; efficient organizations adapt and lead change (Ganescu, 2012). The contingency theory aligns the constructs of the environment and the internal administrative functions with the understanding that absolutes do not exist in the business sector (Urquidi & Ripoll, 2013).

The alignment or fit of the internal and external factors are essential for effectiveness and organizational success (Kim, Lee, Chun, & Benbasat, 2014; Urquidi & Ripoll, 2013) as well as high performance (Taylor & Taylor, 2014). Millar (1978) postulated the aspect of business constraints related to CT. Millar (1978) illustrated the need for cohesiveness in organizational structure, referred to as the *best fit*, which later developed aspects of the CT. Best fit also aligns with many strategic human resource management initiatives that are vital to the success of the small business (Fox, 2013). Similar to strategic planning, researchers should consider contingency factors in the process of product development and implementation. Eling, Griffin, and Langerak (2014) outlined that the process in product development starts with the identification of a problem or need with the final solution in development or commercialization of the product. Understanding and considering the shifting external and internal factors and challenges work favorably in successful product development as well as organizational planning strategies.

Related theoretical motivation. The constraint-philosophy proposed by Millar (1978) led to a new theory of consideration to the business enterprise: the theory of

constraints. The theory of constraints is a management philosophy developed by Goldratt with the central theme focusing on the bottlenecks, or constraints affecting the organization that limits efficient operations (Goldratt & Cox, 2004). Although the original concept of the theory of constraints targeted manufacturing firms, the application of the theory over time applied to other concentrations such as retail, production, and product marketing where the constraints force a utilization of product mix (Cannon, Cannon, & Low, 2013). The primary goal of the theory of constraints is the implementation of ongoing improvement through a process of throughput (Goldratt & Cox, 2004). To achieve continuous improvement, business leaders must: (a) identify potential bottlenecks within the system, (b) exploit the bottleneck, (c) subordinate the bottleneck, (d) elevate the system bottleneck, and (e) repeat the process continually (Goldratt & Cox, 2004).

Considering constraints in an organization is to understand how an organization operates, otherwise referred to as a system. The philosophies in the general systems theory provides principals for analysis. The general systems theory developed by von Bertalanffy in 1950 examined the wholeness of an organization without looking at the elements of the firm independently from each other (von Bertalanffy, 1968). Aspects of the systems theory provided insight and definition in social sciences in viewpoints such as wholeness, directives, differentiation, and organization (von Bertalanffy, 1968). The characteristics of the adaptation, purpose, and goal seeking are aspects of human nature that require consideration when assessing organizational system structure (von

Bertalanffy, 1968). The use of general systems theory is the synthesis of relationships within an organization and analysis of how the system operates collectively in a complex system in a nonlinear fashion (Montgomery & Oladapo, 2014; Sturmberg, Martin, & Katerndahl, 2014; von Bertalanffy, 1968). Communication and information transmission is vital to the success of general systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968). Further development of systems theory addressed the characteristics of uncertain systems where there was incomplete information. Elements of uncertainty included incomplete parameters or elements of the system, structure of the system, and boundaries for the behavior of the system (Liu, Forrest, & Yang, 2012). Commonly known as grey system theory, established in 1982 by Deng, the application of this conceptual framework focused on studying problems where the researcher only has access to small sample size and the presence of limited information (Liu et al., 2012; Omidvari & Lashgary, 2014). Concepts of the grey system theory are applicable in social system research where the external and internal relationships are not clear and are hard to define (Liu et al., 2012).

In construction, a major concern for any manager is the performance of the applied safety processes. Omidvari and Lashgary (2014) posited the grey system theory with the utilization of quantitative research method to analyze the positive impacts and performance evaluation of a safety program. According to Omidvari and Lashgary, the judgment of the decision makers carries uncertainty not explained with exactness; precisely the criteria of grey system theory. The standards evaluated in the study consisted of optimization of parameters and performance assessment of safety units in

determining performance indicators in a subway system in Tehran, Iran (Omidvari & Lashgary, 2014).

The subway system in Omidvari and Lashgary's (2014) study divides into two units and the information on 22 main criteria was gathered then divided into three categories and weighted; white for the complete certainty of information, grey insufficient, and entirely unknown information in black. The researchers indicated safety implementation and continuous improvement at a certain point of performance within the units; even in environments where some standards measured was unknown or uncertain (Omidvari & Lashgary, 2014).

A further application of theory was the segmented labor market theory indicated by Wagner (2014) in the study of the impact of tradeswomen organizations to the population of women in construction. Segmented labor market theory came from the economist view of the inconsistencies in labor market practices for earnings, discrimination, and unemployment (Leontaridi, 1998). Segmented labor market theory originates from the classical labor market theory but approaches further into the institutional and social influences that affect the labor market (Leontaridi, 1998). Wagner (2014) expanded the research on segmented market view to understand why the representation of women in the construction trade remains underweighted. While focusing on the stratification of relationships in work practice and theory, Cox (2015) concluded that the use of the feminist theory contributed to the development in studies of labor, job satisfaction, and women experience in society. The feminist theory developed

out of the need to expand upon the female experience to social issues (Cox, 2015). The development of the feminist theory opened up avenues of research normally only based on the male gender (Cox, 2015) and helped researchers rethink gender, class, and policies (Bezanson, Doucet, & Albanese, 2015). As outlined by Kalnins and Williams (2014), gender expectations by the external environment influence industry and geographic locations so the consideration of gender factors affect business survival.

Implicit leadership theory was essential when discussing the various leadership styles about gender, and leadership perception. Implicit (implied) stereotypes targeted to a certain gender or industry could lead to obstacles to success (Burnette, Pollack, & Hoyt, 2010). Bauer (2015) posited that the tenets of implicit leadership theory include individual personal beliefs, values, and perceptions that enable their judgment of an effective or ineffective leader. Additionally, changes in environment and culture can alter the perception of the members towards the leader's capability (Bauer, 2015). In the quest to understand the acceptance of women in a male-dominated industry, the importance lies in the ability to review underlying perceptions. Gender or biological differences can have an influence on leadership success; masculinity is favored over the feminine, contributed from the ancient belief in the role of hunters and gathers in a dominant male role (Junker & Van Dick, 2014). Understanding the stereotypes encountered by individual female employees and clients can inspire women entrepreneurs to analyze if the perceptions of others are weaknesses or perceptions that can enable opportunities for the organization.

Identifying Small Business Enterprise and Classification of WOSB

Rodríguez Gutiérrez, Fuentes Fuentes, and Rodríguez Ariza (2014) postulated that there is little research about women-owned enterprises. Increased exploration on the topic is imperative to gain a versed understanding. Foremost, it is important to understand the structure in the classification of a WOB status to provide clarity to the scope of the study topic. In addition, a review of the standards for classification of a small business in the United States establishes a foundation in the creation of WOSBs.

The title of entrepreneur and small-business owner appears reciprocally in this study; however, the primary focus of the topic pertains to WOSBs. Although many characteristics of small business owner and entrepreneur overlap, a significant difference is that an entrepreneur may preside over a small or large enterprise, as opposed to a small business owner that only presides over a small organization (Volery & Mazzarol, 2015). Two main differences between an entrepreneur and small business owner are in market growth and strategic objectives. Entrepreneurs tend to target the market on a global level with the primary purpose of profit and growth in contrast to a small business owner whose target market is usually local, and the profit is for personal gain (Volery & Mazzarol, 2015).

The SBA (2015b) determines the criteria for a small business in the United States. There are two main criteria for the determination of a small business: annual receipts over 3 years and the average number of employees over a 12-month period (SBA, 2015b). The type of industry, (manufacturing, service, professional), impacts small business size

standards along with annual receipts and coincides with the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) (SBA, 2015d). The NAICS is a standard system that the Federal Statistical Agency uses for classification of industries in the United States and enables the collection of statistics on that industry (SBA, 2015d). Industry sector classifies the vocations for small business and determines the ranking by the number of employees and average annual receipts in that vocation. In non-manufacturing industries, the established standard for small business is 500 employees or less and \$7.5 million in annual receipts or less (SBA, 2015b). Additional standards for small business classification include that the (a) organization is for profit, (b) independently owned and operated, (c) has an operation located in the United States and, (d) the operation of the business contributes to the U.S. national economy (SBA, 2015b).

WOB was the second characteristic of discussion for this study, and therefore, necessary to describe the elements that determine a WOB status in the United States. As outlined by the SBA (2015c), a definition of a WOSB is a small business in which one or more women own at least 51% of the organization demonstrated through the shares held or as listed in the articles of a corporation if incorporated and the women owners control daily operations of the business (SBA, 2015c). Organizations that desire recognition as a WOB can self-certify, certify on a state level, or federally through third-party certifiers. WOBs wishing to obtain recognition for federal contracts should complete the national certification process for women-owned status by proving through documentation and work history that the company is woman owned and operated (SBA, 2015c). Awarding

of national women-owned certification empowers the enterprise to further their status as a WOB with federal contracts. Third party certifiers handle the national WOSB certification process for the United States (SBA, 2015c). In 2016, the SBA accepted four organizations as third party national certifiers for minority/WOB; El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, National Women Business Owners Corporation, U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce and the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (SBA, 2015c).

The certification process through the four third party SBA certifiers is similar, so in this study I only included an overview of the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) certification process. The certification process for the WOB enterprise through the WBENC involves the submittal and processing of organizational documents, interviews, and site visits. The first step is the completion of an application and required corporate documents. The organizational documentation includes financial records of the organization, evidence of gender status through photo identification and U.S. residency and citizenship, a resume for the women owner, a list of employees of the enterprise, and W-2 for all compensated officers-directors-owners (WBENC, 2015). After review and acceptance of the documentation, a council representative conducts a site visit and interview with the WBO. After careful examination from the Regional Partner Organization (RPO) of the WBENC, the enterprise application is accepted or rejected depending on the qualifications of the proprietor and the supporting documentation (WBNEC, 2015). The certification for WBENC is valid for 1 year, and

recertification on an annual basis is required (WBENC, 2015). State certifications follow a similar format; however, the expiration of certification may be longer in duration.

The combination of the classification of a small business enterprise and women-owned certification were the characteristics of the participants of this proposed study. The concentration of the research was on the analysis of the preparation or absence of business planning strategies in their operations. Further investigation of the business plan, model, and strategy follow, outlining the definition of a business plan and the strategies incorporated in developing a business plan.

Business Plan, Models, and Strategies

Business plans and models. Business plans are thought to be a necessity for firms, especially small businesses to gain support for finances, counseling, assistance in establishing a new venture (Fernández-Guerrero, Revuelto-Taboada, & Simón-Moya, 2012), and exploiting new opportunities (Botha & Robertson, 2014). The business plan provides insight on the viability of the prospective business to investors, funding agencies, and the principals involved in the enterprise (Alstete, 2014; Fernández-Guerrero et al., 2012) and is a crucial tool for the progression of a forming organization (Chang & Lee, 2013). The development of a business plan can assist the business owner to answer what and how questions in the purpose of the organization. Issues that business owners address in business planning strategies are: (a) what is the business all about, (b) what are the goals or main purpose of the organization and, (c) what are the key activities regarding how to achieve the goal (Cordeiro, 2013). There are many resources available

for business owners to create the business plan document. There are professional organizations that will prepare a business plan for a fee, government agencies such as the SBA that provide business planning tools on the agency website (SBA, 2016b), as well as numerous templates on the Internet that can aid the business proprietor in plan preparation. As a general guideline, the individual sections outlined in most business plans are financial, marketing, and human resource intentions. Factors such as economic viability, financial capabilities, and organizational competence are indicators of the quality of a business plan (Fernández-Guerrero et al., 2012). In developing a business plan, it is necessary to understand the objectives of the organization.

Determining a course of action based on the established goals (Miles & Snow, 1978) as well as cohesiveness between opportunity and the actions performed by the individuals in the organization to benefit from the prospect is the foundation of a business plan (Švárová & Vrchota, 2014). Talonen and Hakkarainen (2014) postulated the need for organizational resilience in strategic decisions in the fulfillment of the expectations of their customers through quality product and services outlined in the business plan. Understanding objections and means to overcome them is the basis for the development of a business plan and outlines business strategy. The business model formation focuses on the creation of value in conjunction with the financial and business objectives of the operation and enables the enterprise owner to outline the business strategies.

Business strategies. The characterization of a business strategy has evolved since the 1950s and academics argued about the proper naming conventions for business

strategies (Steensen, 2014). Popular terminologies used to identify business strategies are policymaking, organizational goals, objectives, organizational behavior, business model, strategic management, and strategic thinking (Steensen, 2014). Shivakumar (2014) identified planning strategies as decision-making, and the overall influence of the strategic decision depends on the degree of commitment of the organization and reversibility of the decision. Decision classifications are strategic, non-strategic, tactical, and operational (Shivakumar, 2014). The development of business strategies describes the competitive advantage of the organization that includes the position of the firm in the industry and separates the organization from competitors (Švárová & Vrchota, 2014).

The classic method of composing a business strategy is the conception of how to compete, the intended goal of the organization, and policies to carry out the goal (Porter, 1980). Each business owner executes business strategies to match objectives and intentions (Steensen, 2014). They incorporate their developmental theory, assumptions, organizational change, and approach to the business idea in a descriptive or prescriptive manner (Steensen, 2014). In the creation of a business plan, a business leader should incorporate a strategic structure for the assessment of goals and appropriate actions. Two popular frameworks used for business strategies are Porters five forces model (Alstete, 2014), and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) analysis (Addams & Allfred, 2013). An overview of the two frameworks as mentioned is essential in understanding the importance of evaluation tools in building organizational strategies.

Porter's five forces. The first tool that could be beneficial for the formation of a business plan, developing business strategies, and assessing environmental change is Porter's (1980) five forces model. Porter's five forces model originated in 1979 by economist Porter and based the framework on five key forces (Sumpio, 2013). Two central questions serve as the basis of Porter's five forces framework: (a) what factors determine the industry (organization) profitability, sustainability and return on investment (ROI), and (b) what variations does the organization possess; i.e., what defensible position can the organization hold for the target market (Miles & Snow, 1978). The model structure of Porter's five forces is a cross formation each containing an individual heading of (a) industry competitors, (b) buyers, (c) suppliers, (d) substitutions, and (e) threat of new entrants (Grigore, 2014; Sumpio, 2013; Yetkin, 2013). Organizational leaders must understand which force has the most influence to devise a strategy to gain a competitive advantage over competitors (Grigore, 2014; Ostapenko, 2014; Sumpio, 2013; Yetkin, 2013).

The configuration of the forces is different for each industry (Grigore, 2014). Grigore (2014) provided a comparison of industries to illustrate the differences, for example, an airline business may not encounter a substantial threat of new entrants, and substitutions, yet, the same forces can have a profound effect on a food service organization. The collaboration of the five forces that support industry profitability is high entry barriers, weak suppliers and buyers, few substitutes and little competitive rivalry (Ostapenko, 2014). The use of the model facilitates the ability to determine how

an organization can differentiate their skills to the external forces that affect the whole industry to gain a competitive advantage (Porter, 1980).

Since Porter's (1980) initial development of the five forces framework, there were advancements to the structure. Grigore (2014) indicated the development of a sixth force defined as complementor, added to explain reciprocal relationships between industries within the government or the public. Porter refused the sixth force, referring to the entity simply as factors in the environment that affect the five forces (as cited in Grigore, 2014). In the review of scholarly literature, Porter's framework has been used to understand the strategies of various industries such as maritime security (Yetkin, 2013), book publishing (Grigore, 2014), research and development (Gobble, Petrick, & Wright, 2012), E-commerce (Donici, Maha, Ignat, & Maha, 2012), surface mount technology (Chen, Wee, & Lee, 2014), and farming (Ostapenko, 2014). The versatility of the framework and the application to various industries proves that Porter's five forces framework can be a useful tool for developing business-planning strategies.

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) analysis. The usefulness in SWOT analysis and Porter's five forces for business planning strategy is apparent through existing research in various industries. For example, in the work of Chen et al., (2014), the researchers presented an examination of SWOT analysis and Porter's five forces in regards to logistics of suppliers in a technology manufacturing company located in Taiwan. Donici et al. (2012) conducted a similar evaluation on the E-commerce growth for Amazon.com. In a third study Lu, Ye, Flanagan, and Jewell (2013) evaluated

the construction industry and organizational assessment in China based on the theories of Porter's framework and the SWOT approach. Chen et al. (2014) in addition to Donici et al. (2012) focused on the role of suppliers, demonstrating the importance of the supply force in Porter's framework for production management and the cross-relationship to SWOT analysis.

Factors that influence industries are legal, political, economic, social, technology, and environmental (Donici et al., 2012). In conducting a literature review on the subject of SWOT analysis, the results uphold the extensive utilization of SWOT analysis in qualitative and quantitative research. Differences in industries using SWOT analysis globally are composed, but not limited to construction in China (Gao & Low Sui, 2014; Lu et al., 2013), vocational training in Uganda (Tukundane, Minnaert, Zeelen, & Kanyandago, 2015), and counterterrorism compliance in Europe and the United States (Prezelj, 2015).

The background of the origination of SWOT analysis remains inconsistent and unclear (Everett, 2014). It was not imperative for the historical explanation within this study. The concept of the SWOT analysis; however, contributes to the overall success of strategy implementation within an organization in regards to quality management, taking into consideration the environmental (internal and external) factors that implicate change and development based on the four pillars of SWOT (Boca Gratiela, 2012). Gao and Low Sui (2014) paired SWOT analysis with the concept of last planner system (LPS). The construction trade uses the LPS system as a method of action planning that reserves the

judgment and decisions of the project to the foreperson or last planner of the project (Gao & Low Sui, 2014).

Business leaders who used the SWOT framework in building business-planning strategies gained a robust analysis of the internal and external elements of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that affect an organization. Strengths and weaknesses are the internal factors of an organization. Opportunities and threats are external factors. Strengths are the attributes an organization possesses such as image, competitive pricing, financial standing; weaknesses are opposite of strengths and include low sales volume (Boca Gratiela, 2012). Opportunities provide the possibility of growth circumstances for an organization and an avenue for improvement (Prezelj, 2015). The evaluation of an opportunity is a combination of knowledge, desire, and environmental factors (Hunter, 2013). An essential component of opportunity is identifying prospects and acting upon them before competitors (Hunter, 2013). Threats and weaknesses are the negative factors that affected the success of an organization. In the construction trades, the inability to market a talent into a service can be a weakness for an organization (Lu et al., 2013).

The value of SWOT analysis had fallen under scrutiny in recent years; researchers stated the inflexibility of the tool to real-time applications in a changing environment (Ayub, Razzaq, Aslam, & Iftexhar, 2013). Inflexibility would be in conflict to the CT and the application of business planning in an environment of change. Although there are

critiques in the inspection of SWOT analysis, the value of the model as a vital tool in strategy is recognized (Al-Araki, 2013).

Business Success Factors

Factors that can affect a small business enterprise start-up, success, and survival include the entrepreneur's character (Surdez Pérez, Aguilar-Morales, Sandoval-Caraveo, López-Parra, & Corral-Coronado, 2014) the nature of the organization, and external factors that include location and industry type (Fernández-Guerrero et al., 2012). Aspects that promote business success are financial, social, and human factors; and the indirect influence of such factors enable owners to discover opportunities that create innovation that fosters business success (Omri, Ayadi- Frikha, & Amine-Bouraoui, 2015). Success factors relate to the economic, human talent, and social growth elements of the organization (Hibbler-Britt & Sussan, 2015). Another critical success factor in addition to financial, human and social are the planning strategies business owners engage in (Hayes, Chawla, & Kathawala, 2015).

Change and innovation replace the previously held thought of stability and scale as success factors of an organization (van de Ven, Ganco, & Hinnings, 2013). Small businesses that incorporate planning strategies as a tool show positive performance over businesses that do not (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013a). Larger firms have the resources that include time and talent and effectively assist in creating a strategic business plan. Small business owners often are involved with daily operations and are unable to devote time for strategic planning (Botha & Robertson, 2014; Cordeiro, 2013; Skokan,

Pawliczek, & Piszczur, 2013) in addition to not having the knowledge to develop a business plan (Alstete, 2014). Incorporating business-planning strategies should enable the organization leader to address the changing business environment and help answer the question of the fundamental undertaking of the company and the operational purpose. Theories related to business planning hold two general assumptions; that the business owner has the necessary knowledge to develop a business plan and to plan, and they have the insight to anticipate the future (Honig & Samuelsson, 2012). Business plans assist the entrepreneurs to differentiate between ideas and opportunity and serves as a roadmap to expand on the opportunity (Botha & Robertson, 2014).

Skokan et al. (2013) conducted a quantitative study on small and medium enterprises in Czech and Slovak Republic to analyze if a documented business plan created with the concentration on the structure and goals of the business created a competitive advantage for an organization. The data in the study originated from business plans generated from 677 participants and included the division of the structure of the plan into categories of (a) business strategy of written detailed, (b) written concise, (c) not written, (d) detailed-not written, and (e) concise-not written (Skokan et al., 2013). Six elements served as criteria for the measurement of the performance of the organization. The criteria included turnover, costs, profit, economic value added (EVA), investments, and period of arranged contracts. Skokan et al. demonstrated that organizations that prepared a detailed strategic written business plan led to an 80% competitive advantage as measured by the six criteria of turnover, cost, profit, EVA investments, and future

arranged contracts. The organizations that prepared a brief or partial written strategic plan benefitted from a 40% increase in competitive advantage (Skokan et al., 2013). In a related study conducted in 2014 by researchers from the Financial Planning Association titled *The Drivers of Business Growth* determined that in the financial analysis industry, only 28% of advisors stated they developed a business plan and 9% of that estimate did not set organizational goals (Shortcomings, 2015). Of the participants that did realize growth, the researchers revealed by the data collected that the success criteria rely on a definite value position; the ability to communicate the value (elevator pitch), a *defined business plan*, and a focus on niche markets (Shortcomings, 2015).

In contrast to Skokan's et al. (2013) findings, Honig and Samuelsson (2012) conducted a longitudinal study on nascent entrepreneurs in Sweden and offered a different conclusion of the benefit of business planning. Honig and Samuelsson (2012) determined that business planning does not have an overall impact on business success or failure. The method of obtaining participants for the field depended on carrying on the study on gestational enterprises, not emerging, or existing jobs. Honig and Samuelsson's survey endured for 6 years and enabled the researchers to examine several life cycles of the endeavor and the impact of the business plan. Honig and Samuelsson indicated a significant gap in the literature in the inefficiency of the academic community in assessing if the courses in business planning are effective for business growth. Scholars further debated the value, advantage, or disadvantage in business planning (Honig & Samuelsson, 2012). Principals of legitimation theory served as a lens for the study, and

the researchers analyzed if business planning helps the nascent entrepreneur in the preparation of the activities of the business, access to resources, and increase the venture-level performance (Honig & Samuelsson, 2012). Legitimation theory is society's assumption and evaluation that the behaviors and actions of an organization are suitable (Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Turcan, 2013; Turcan & Norman, 2016). Because of the heterogeneous nature of the life cycle of business, the goals and resources indicated in the plan can diverge over time (Honig & Samuelsson, 2012). Honig and Samuelsson's findings determined no formal association of business planning and successful business operations.

In contrast to Honig and Samuelsson (2012) and aligning with Skokan et al. (2013), Cordeiro (2013) celebrated the planning process, emphasizing planning enables the business owner to address the changes and answer the questions of their present status, where they would like to be (goals) and what strategies will help achieve the goals, thus providing direction. The value of business planning to a nascent entrepreneur utilizing the decision-theoretic approach and the value of a business plan was contingent on the quality of the plan, in addition to the quality of the venture pursued. Assessing both aspects ultimately enables the business leader to evaluate the opportunity and enter into the prospect or decline. Developing a quality plan through the understanding of the venture provides the business leader the rational decision-making process, facilitating optimal choices in the business enterprise. The development of a business plan enables the small business owner to anticipate the changing factors of finance, human resources

(talent), and the environment. For organizations that use employees, human talent is an influential factor that requires prudent consideration within the planning process.

Human Relations and Small Business

Human talent in service industries is crucial to the overall operations and survival of the organization. Appropriate human resource (HR) allocation in an organization is vital to organizational growth (Hayes et al., 2015). Several HR factors can influence the success of an organization; however, I identified three factors in this study: labor turnover, performance management systems, and development training. The three factors of turnover, performance management, and knowledge management in association to training are essential to small business success and a necessity of consideration in business planning strategies.

Labor turnover. The presence of labor turnover is a key measure that can indicate business failure or success (Mitchelmore, Rowley, & Shiu, 2014) and achievements of the organization links to the attributes of the employees (Gialuisi & Coetzer, 2013). Small businesses must compete with large organizations for human talent, and in many instances; the smaller organization cannot offer the compensation packages offered by the larger organizations, creating a disadvantage (Gialuisi & Coetzer, 2013; Massey & Campbell, 2013). An organization that does not provide competitive compensation and benefits experienced employee turnover 26.2% higher than organizations that do (Massey & Campbell, 2013). Individuals are motivated to work because of the intrinsic desire to fulfill an expectation or need (Vroom, 1995). For a

small business to be competitive, it is imperative that the organization include the initiatives for their personnel in their strategic planning process (Fox, 2013).

Strategic resource management plays a significant role in the success of a firm (Hartman & Elahee, 2013). There is a gap in the research on the study of human resource functions in small business compared to large enterprises (Allen, Erickson, & Collins, 2013). The positive relationship of high-commitment human resource (HCHR) practices and organizational performance (Allen et al., 2013). HCHR practices consist of (a) pay structure reflective of performance, (b) autonomy, (c) work teams, (d) training, and (e) employee fit to the organization (Allen et al., 2013). A small business that uses HCHR practices experienced lower turnover rates of employees (Allen et al., 2013). Employees of small business do not receive the benefit of training and development (Gialuisi & Coetzer, 2013). Additionally, because of the flat structure of small organizations, employees experience fewer opportunities for career growth (Gialuisi & Coetzer, 2013).

Masta and Miller (2014) conducted a quantitative study to compare the relationship of gender and employee turnover; measuring the results by the profits that the organization demonstrated over the years. Using the Dun & Bradstreet data source, Masta and Miller assessed year-to-year turnover rates of women-owned enterprises in the United States compared to male organizations with similar characteristics (age, size, NAICS codes) in manufacturing and service trades. Notable differences occur in employee retention and turnover in relation to the gender of the business owner (Matsa & Miller, 2014). The authors demonstrated that WOB leaders retain employees at a much

higher rate of 13.9% in comparison to male-led organizations at 5.9% (Matsa & Miller, 2014). Attributes for the lower turnover rate was the propensity of women to nurture and care for the employees (Matsa & Miller, 2014), as opposed to men whose attitude was to dominate and take charge (Hoyt & Murphy, 2015). Detection and prevention of the reasons why employees exit employment and incorporate planning strategies to prevent turnover are essential to the success of a small business enterprise (Long, Ajagbe, & Kowang, 2014). Detection can be conducted through a performance management system.

Performance management system. The performance management (PM) system is a tool that organizational leaders use to evaluate individual and organizational performance. Cohen and Olsen (2015), Wadongo and Abdel-Kader (2014), and Taylor and Taylor (2014) each conducted an analysis of performance management systems and the relationship to contingency perspective. Cohen and Olsen evaluated the link between knowledge management, firm performance, and the contingency view; Taylor and Taylor assessed the differences in performance management of the firm in relation to firm size and the contingency prospect, and Wadongo and Abdel-Kader considered performance management with a contingency perspective for not-for-profit or third sector industry. Factors that influence organization PM is leadership, organizational resources, competition, size, and funding (Wadongo & Abdel-Kader, 2014). In a PM system, the owner makes an investment in human capital with an expectation of return (Wadongo & Abdel-Kader, 2014). The measurement of the return is the basis of the PM system.

A key indicator of developing business success is the ability of the organization to embrace and engage in a performance measurement system (PMS). A contributing factor in the PMS process is strategy formulation and implementation (Taylor & Taylor, 2014) that ultimately affects business planning strategies. Four main differences distinguish the small and large firms (Taylor & Taylor, 2014). The characteristics of a smaller company are (a) ability to react quicker to change, (b) the owner determines the decisions, (c) learning is by doing, and (d) owners possess time only for functional or operating tasks of the business (Taylor & Taylor, 2014). The authors posited that due to the four indicators, small enterprises have less structure and formal procedures with limited resources that ultimately becomes a constraint (Taylor & Taylor, 2014). Taylor and Taylor also identified a link between strategy formation and PM, declaring the more strategically aligned the organization is the greater the potential for PM application. Incorporating PM and key performance indicators (KPI) is necessary for effective strategic planning (Taylor & Taylor, 2014).

Wadongo and Abdel-Kader (2014) studied the consequences of PM and organization effectiveness based on a contingency perspective and variables. The authors posited that PM system and the contingency variables, both internal and external, require a fit within the system for organizational effectiveness (Wadongo & Abdel-Kader, 2014). Internal contingency factors include organization size, strategy, culture, technology, and leadership (Wadongo & Abdel-Kader, 2014). External variables include competition and turbulence the organization encounter (Wadongo & Abdel-Kader, 2014). A positive

relationship in the internal and external factors results in progressive networking, environmental responsiveness, and constructive organizational management (Wadongo & Abdel-Kader, 2014).

Cohen and Olsen (2015) evaluated knowledge management (KM) in food service in a quantitative study, analyzing both tacit and explicit knowledge, and the effect of KM on performance. Tacit knowledge is the comprehension and experience an individual possesses and not the explicit or common knowledge known by all (Cohen & Olsen, 2015). Per Cohen and Olsen, codified explicit knowledge (CEK) is unlike tacit KM because CEK is an element that an organization could own. Cohen and Olsen concluded that the synergy of explicit and tacit KM working together in alignment provided the most favorable factors in performance and reinforced a positive measurement of performance.

A common thread found in the works of Cohen and Olsen (2015) and Wadongo and Adbel-Kader (2014) was the typology of Miles and Snow (1978) outlining the four strategic contingencies of an individual as a defender, reactor, analyzer, and prospector. Cohen and Olsen fortified the alignment of the four strategies and PM with organizational effectiveness. Wadongo and Adbel-Kader were not as complimentary that the strategic contingencies had any influence on PM and organizational effectiveness.

A PM system aids in the fulfillment of outlining the goals and expectations of the organization. As indicated in the expectancy theory, motivation for work remains contingent on the value (valence) an individual feels they will receive for the actions

performed (Sun, Vancouver, & Weinhardt, 2014; Vroom, 1995). The incentive to achieve goals depends on the individual's ability to perform the tasks associated with the goal (Sun et al., 2014). The measurement of this ability and the desire of the individual to expend resources is the foundation of PM application (Sun et al., 2014).

Use of PM in an organization, regardless of size, is a useful tool to enhance organizational growth. The development of a PM system and program is essential for an organization to understand the expectations, goals, and needs of the organization. A key element of a PM system is the understanding of the knowledge base of the human talent as well as the soft and hard skills the employee possesses. If there is a lack of the hard skills required for the position, the organization must provide the necessary training to improve employee performance (bin Atan, Raghavan, & Nik Mahmood, 2015).

Training of talent in small business. In an organization, the description of training is the efforts expended to complete a short-termed goal in contrast to development, described as the extension of the existing skills and knowledge for future duties (Massey & Campbell, 2013). A substantial factor in the failure of a small business is the lack of skill and expertise of the business owner and the employees (Chinomona, 2013). Two types of knowledge pertain to commercial enterprises; general business knowledge and industry specific knowledge (Soriano & Castrogiovanni, 2012).

Understanding the contribution of knowledge development for organization talent enables and inspires the business owner to increase efforts for business success by expanding knowledge development (Soriano & Castrogiovanni, 2012). Specifically

outlined in the study of Soriano and Castrogiovanni (2012) was the timing of knowledge development; before the onset of the business or on the job development in small enterprises and the effect knowledge development has on performance and productivity. In the study, the three factors assessed were the type of knowledge (general business or industry specific), mode of learning (education or experience) and timing (before or during business activity) of education (Soriano & Castrogiovanni, 2012). Soriano and Castrogiovanni incorporated institutional theory in the study, emphasizing that within this social perspective the small business environment emulates the behavior in the norms of society and society factors (Soriano & Castrogiovanni, 2012; Wang, Tseng, & Yen, 2014), and the creation of legitimacy for the organization (Bruton, Ahlstrom, & Han-Lin, 2010; Wang et al., 2014). Soriano and Castrogiovanni (2012) identified that knowledge development acquired when the business was running produced a positive effect on the productivity, performance, and profitability greater than if the owner previously worked in the same industry. Continuous employee training within an organization keeps employees updated on work related status as well as serving as a benefit for employees that helps attract and retain human talent (Hartman & Elahee, 2013).

Additional research conducted on the value of training and development of a business plan for entrepreneurs is in conflict; some researchers are in favor of coaching and advisement for business plan development (Lahti, 2014) while others do not perceive value (Colin & Penaluna, 2013). Jackson (2015) conducted a global review of entrepreneur business training, not specifically on a business plan, but interactive training

in the area of strategic planning for competitive advantage, finance, and opportunities. Jackson demonstrated a positive impact on the success of the student's progress in business development. Lahti (2014) indicated the importance of the business plan in the acquisition of venture capital and posited the value added in counseling and advisement on the development of a business plan. Haag (2013) succinctly listed the structure and elements of a business plan to serve as a guideline for the development. Haag noted that many business owners do not prepare business plans because of the failure to see the value of such a plan in a changing environment. The creation of a business plan enables the entrepreneur to become more aware of the business environment and the ability to adjust for change (Haag, 2013).

In contrast to Jackson (2015), Haag (2013), and Lahti (2014) researchers Colin and Penaluna (2013) postulated training for business plan development is of little value to entrepreneurs; stating that a business plan does not offer the insight for opportunities as popularly indicated. The findings of Colin and Penaluna through their vast analysis of literature and research reflected the obsolete nature of education in the preparation of a business plan. They further noted that a budding entrepreneur would benefit in receiving instruction in creative thinking as opposed to creating a document of forecasts of the future that are presented in a business plan (Colin & Penaluna, 2013).

Assessment of Gender in Business

In assessing the similarities and differences of gender owned business, it is important to understand the primary motivators that inspire women to be a business

owner and self-employed. What motivates women to become small business owners are similar to the reasoning for minorities; primarily inadequate opportunities to earn a decent wage pushes the individual to seek personal ownership of a company in hopes of better opportunities (Bates & Robb, 2014). Furthermore, is the desire to accommodate the family and domestic commitments (Akehurst, Simarro, & Mas-Tur, 2012; Allen & Curington, 2014; Carter, Mwaura, Ram, Trean, & Jones, 2015; McGowan, Redeker, Cooper, & Greenan, 2012). Accommodating domestic commitments is a primary and most frequently found reason for self-employment among women.

McGowan et al. (2012) discovered in established organizations, the balance of work-life was not apparent. McGowan et al. (2012) along with Adkins et al. (2013) further documented that women business owners may stifle the growth of their business to maintain the work-family balance. Akehurst et al. (2012) referenced the three motivators for self-proprietorship for both genders. The motivators are extrinsic, intrinsic, and transcendental reasons, where women predominately are motivated by intrinsic (desire for independence) and transcendental (flexibility to balance work and home) (Akehurst et al., 2012). A less beneficial characteristic of women entrepreneurs is that women are limited risk takers compared to men (Akehurst et al., 2012; Le & Raven, 2015).

In the process of understanding the determinants of small business success, it is essential to identify the characteristics of the owners and the organization (Blackburn, Hart, & Wainwright, 2013). In an entrepreneurial enterprise, a male stereotype provides

precedence to the masculine over the feminine owned company (Díaz García, & Welter, 2013; Yazdanfar & Abbasian, 2015). Female gender bias can decrease access for a women-owned organization to finance (Wang, 2013; Yazdanfar & Abbasian, 2015), and increase barriers in management skills that are a formula for success (Carter et al., 2015). Adkins and Samaras (2013) indicated that organizations owned by women face greater challenges than the male counterparts.

Adkins and Samaras (2013) compared the perceived challenges that women business owners face in comparison to minority women business owners. Although the findings of the authors are beyond the scope of this proposed study, it is interesting to note that the researchers claim that non-minority WBOs did not experience difficulties obtaining financing in comparison to non-minority male enterprise owners (Adkins & Samaras, 2013). The findings of Adkins and Samaras contradict the results of Carter et al. (2015), Wang (2013), and Yazdanfar and Abbasian (2015) in their claim of decreased access to finance for women-owned enterprises. Adkins and Samaras (2013) indicated that decreased admission to social capital and networks are similar in non-minority and minority WOBs.

Leadership and gender. Leadership is a fundamental component of any organization, and the absence of analysis of the role of gender in leadership can inhibit business advancement (Bullough & de Luque, 2015). The cornerstone of implicit leadership theory bases the concept that leader's characteristics develop from individual experiences, values (Williams, 2014), qualities, and sociocultural exposure (Bullough &

de Luque, 2015). Williams (2014) related competencies as the early-learned traits and skills that serve as personality identifiers. Developing leadership through sociocultural exposure incorporates various contexts. The gender of a leader and the individual's perception of leadership is the background of the implicit leadership theory and can describe effective and ineffective leadership (Bullough & de Luque, 2015). Bullough and de Luque (2015) identified five leadership styles recognized as culturally endorsed and conducive to women based leadership; charismatic/value based, team-orientated, participative, autonomous, and self-protective.

Common characteristics of women are gentleness, social, kind, and sensitive; so when a woman demonstrates the leadership behavior of decisiveness and drive, they face problems of respect and legitimacy (Bullough & de Luque, 2015). Bullough and de Luque (2015) indicated that women perform better as leaders in the charismatic/value or team-orientated leadership environment due to their sensitive qualities and interactions with others. This position indicated in the findings of Lanaj and Hollenbeck (2015) as related to the gender role theory; women are helpful, nurturing, and kind, as opposed to their male counterpart, viewed as assertive, confident, and independent. In a further description of gender role theory, Bear, Weingart, and Todorova (2014) concluded that there is a distinction of position; a communal or feminine distinction for the female role and agentic or masculine for the male role. The manner in which the communal role (described as caring and relationship building) as opposed to masculine (assertive and

independence), has an influence on the impressions individuals form, and the stereotypes building on how a particular gender should behave (Bear et al., 2014).

In a similar study, Williams (2014) conducted a comparison study of the leadership qualities, competencies, and skills of an even number of men versus women. Notably, women scored consistently higher in all categories in the competency as well as the behavioral profiles (Williams, 2014). In the category of skill, the three largest fields of significance were a high performer, trainer/developer, and value maker; and for the behavior area consciousness, and openness (Williams, 2014). The qualities of women leaders listed in the findings of Williams (2014) coincide with the traits found by Bullough and de Luque (2015) as well as Lanaj and Hollenbeck (2015).

As organizations change, the leader must adapt their motivation style that is contingent on the external and internal input business leaders' face in the strategic planning of the firm operations. Sometimes the input can result in conflict, which is inevitable in changing environments. Weidenfeller (2012) indicated that women leaders add diversity to the executive level and are a positive resource for organizational vitality. This observation of the researcher considered the advantages of women-led small business and the potential asset for the small business community.

Review of Women in the Construction Trades

Women in the construction trades in the United States felt the element of change as the global financial environment changed. The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) listed that the number of women in construction trades in 2007

to 2010 declined considerably in the United States from 1.2 million to 818 thousand, representing 300,000 female workers exiting from the profession (U.S. Department of Labor, (OSHA), 2016). Of the remaining 800,000 female workers in the construction trade in 2010, approximately 200,000 were working in support positions such as administrative, not in the production capacity (OSHA, 2015). In many global communities, the construction trades are largely male dominated (Arditi, Gluch, & Holmdahl, 2013; Ness, 2012; Powell & Sang, 2013; Smith, 2013). The revelation of the lower representation of women in the construction trades inspires the continued research of the current literature in attempts to understand underrepresentation of women. Furthermore, questions arise if this lack of representation has an impact on the success of WOSBs in the construction trades in New Jersey.

To understand the potential viability of women in the construction trades the qualitative multiple case study method was the appropriate method to explore the potential factors that influence growth and the factors that impede or constrain growth to women-owned small construction businesses in New Jersey. In contrast to the intent of this proposed qualitative study, Kalnins and Williams (2014) conducted a quantitative study on the analysis of gender success (female versus male) in business. The intentions of the researchers were to contrast existing studies where the scholars focused on the macro level of success, basing the constructs on gender traits, skills or preferences (Kalnins & Williams, 2014). Kalnins and Williams instead focused on the micro level of the business entity, considering the industry and geographic location of the participants.

Basing their conceptual framework on social constructionism and feminist theory, Kalnins and Williams concluded that geographic location and industry is a predictor of WOB success. The four-digit Standard Industrial Code (SIC) and zip code generated the participant pool. In 2004, the SIC code was modified to six digits and renamed to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) (Kalnins & Williams, 2014). Review of the study illustrates gaps in the research that exist because of the limited industries studied and the narrow geographic location.

Wagner (2014) explored the effect that tradeswomen advocacy and training organizations have on the success of women in the construction trades. The research was a comparison of participation of women in construction trades within several geographic areas in the United States that supported a tradeswomen organization in relation to a location that did not. The researchers expanded their explanation of the study with a history of tradeswomen organizations and the relationship to equal rights, Title VII, and the legal filings brought against the construction trades in the United States by women as early as the 1970s (Wagner, 2014). Elaboration on this aspect is beyond the scope of this proposed study. Nevertheless, mention of this inequality represents the stigma that women face for inclusion in the construction trades. In conclusion, in a quantitative comparison study, the researchers established that no evidence indicates that tradeswomen organization presence encourages participation of women in the construction trades (Wagner, 2014). Segmented labor market theory implies barriers to practice to selected groups, which may influence the failure or success of tradeswomen

organizations (Wagner, 2014). In conclusion, Wagner did not condemn the trade organizations for failed practices, but rather that the exhaustive efforts that they endured may be in line for an overhaul to overcome existing barriers to inclusion.

Summary

The purpose of the literature review was to provide an in-depth view of the elements of business planning strategies of WOSBs in the construction trades. A primary concentration in this study centered on WOSB's business planning strategies viewed through the lens of the theories of ET and CT. A review of the contemporary literature revealed a synthesis on the topic of WOB in the construction trades and a need for further study and development in business planning strategies for WOSBs. Gandy (2015) and Haag (2013) advocated for business owners to use the resources available for business planning such as the SBA and other federal programs that offer insight and training on business planning strategies.

Transition

In section 1, I introduced the topic of this study and included the core elements of the presentation of the study of business planning of WOSB owners. The Problem and Purpose statement involved the outline of the intention of the proposed research and the motivation for change for WOSB success. Other key elements in Section 1 included the Background of the Problem, Nature of Study, Research Questions, Conceptual Framework, and Literature Review sections. In this study, the focus was on the exploration of what business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use

for sustainability and growth. In Section 2 I covered the role of the researcher, the participants, selection criteria, data collection and analysis, and ethical concerns. Section 3 contained the presentation of the findings from the interviews, implications for social change, and recommendation for further research.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 1 the foundation, background, and current literature about WOSBs and business planning provided a basis for this study. Section 2 reemphasizes the purpose of the study, the methods of research, the participants involved in the research and the role of the researcher. I concentrated on business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth. My intentions were to collect and organize data that would ensure validity and reliability. The goal was to provide a description of the data collection techniques, the means of data collection, and data analysis. A thorough outline of the process of the data collection provided could ensure transferability in future research (Yin, 2014); however, transferability is always left up to the reader to decide. The description of the study provided to the participants complied with the research standards outlined in the Belmont Report (1979).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this proposed qualitative multiple case study was to explore what business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth. The population for this study was three WOSB owners in the construction trades in New Jersey whose companies have been in operation for 5 years or more and have successfully created business planning strategies. The requirement of 5 years ensured that the participant group demonstrated a sufficient proficiency and understanding of the construction trade in comparison to an inexperienced nascent organization. Additionally,

the participants could demonstrate the impact that business-planning strategies have had on their operations. The outcome of the study may be of benefit to the community and provide social change by offering strategies for female small business owners to develop and grow their small business ventures through effective business planning strategies. An increase in the viability of WOSBs could improve the economy, provide employment, and raise the standard of living in local communities.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the main data collection instrument (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). I was the primary data collection instrument for this study. The insight, judgment, knowledge, and skills of the researcher establish the platform in which to analyze the data and interpret the findings into useful insights of participant experience (Moon, 2015). The objectivity of the researcher and varied data assure rigor in qualitative research (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). The role of a researcher is to choose a topic of study, adopt a conceptual framework, select a methodology, select the participants, conduct the interviews, collect and analyze the data, verify and report the results. I conducted this study while adhering to the boundaries and principles outlined in the Belmont Report (1979) for ethical research methods in biomedical and behavioral research of human subjects. This strategy included limiting the harm to participants by choosing an appropriate sample and obtaining informed consent (Opsal et al., 2015). The influence of the researcher's judgment is paramount in selecting pertinent interview questions to shape the data collected (Moon, 2015). In qualitative

research, interview questions are essential in assisting the researcher in obtaining knowledge from the participants (Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins, & Peng, 2014). In this multiple case study, the intent was to conduct face-to-face, semistructured interviews asking open-ended questions to WOSB owners in the construction trade and to review organizational documents to assist in building knowledge regarding business planning strategies. Using a written interview protocol (Appendix A), I ensured consistency and reliability with each participant in the interview process as proposed by Foley and O'Connor (2013). An interview protocol is a written script of procedures and processes that assist the researcher to achieve quality collection of data (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

In 2006, I initiated a family owned small business enterprise in the construction trades that was located in New Jersey. The company is a small organization with fewer than 10 employees. The organization is a certified WOB on a national level and is a self-certified small business enterprise. The labor personally performed entails physical site work, administrative duties, and decision-making. The NAICS code chosen for the organization is 238220, specializing in Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC). The organization is a certified WOB within the construction trades. Bernard (2013) stated that the experience and values of the researcher should not demonstrate bias in research analysis.

Realizing the personal experience and knowledge I possess of the topic of study, using self-reflection through reflexivity generated awareness of my personal perceptions in research analysis and help mitigate bias. Reflexivity is a process of self-reflection that

ensured transparency of the research process, which provided trustworthiness to the data analysis and research project (Darawsheh, 2014). In summary, the researcher's experience and familiarity with the research topic may create bias. This characteristic may also provide the researcher with an ability to understand more deeply the participant's experience (Galletta, 2013). Trust and integrity are vital to ethical research implementation (Guillemin et al., 2016). Wolgemuth et al. (2015) noted that participants trust researchers experienced in their topic of study, which provides the participants with an increased sense of community.

Participants

The participants for this case study included three owners of WOSBs who had a main specialization in the construction trade, were located in New Jersey, and were not viewed as a protected class. To locate appropriate participants, I conducted an exploration of small business databases with a focus on WOBs. Further narrowing of likely candidates channeled the selection to organizations in the construction trades. The databases may not have held current business status information, and this volatility could have risked the participant selection. I identified the initial participants through the WBENC or System for Award Management (SAM) website, and then inquired about references or personal contacts within the industry to grow the participant pool. Commonly known as the snowball sampling approach, this method of recruiting participants obtains referrals from existing participants of similar characteristics to grow the participant pool (Rowley, 2012). The process of hand delivering an introduction with

the description of the study, along with communicating with the participant and answering any questions about the study provided familiarity to the business owner. The sample size of participants depended on the element of saturation, which is the point where the data collected does not elicit any new information (Dworkin, 2012; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013).

After receiving the approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the study, I delivered a consent form to the selected business owners for acceptance. The consent form included the reason for the research study, the age criteria of the participants (18 years of age or older), acknowledgment of the voluntary status of participation, and the length of participation (Hersh, 2014). Verification of the status of women-owned included a review of the organization's women-owned certification. The use of the snowballing technique assisted in finding additional participants through the referral from individuals already participating in the study, as recommended by Rowley (2012). The relationship between the participant and the researcher has a significant impact on the contextual reality and assists in understanding the information the participant provides (Bell, 2013; Condit, Korngiebel, & Pfeifer, 2015; Hersh, 2014). In qualitative research, the participant is an active element of the research process, and their similarities and differences can mold the direction of the research (Hersh, 2014). In the process of face-to-face interviews, the participation of the researcher became more vividly apparent which aided in a more open collaboration of data from the participant.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

The research method chosen for the study was the qualitative research method. The qualitative research method enables a researcher to explore the lived experiences of the participants (Koch, Niesz, & McCarthy, 2014; Lee, 2014; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015; Tufford & Newman, 2012). Quantitative research methods are used to measure data numerically in the form of how many or how much, whereas in qualitative study, researchers aim to understand the outcome of text by answering the questions of what, how, or why of a lived experience, (Lee, 2014; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Opposed to the statistical generalizations of quantitative studies where researchers use a larger participant pool, smaller participant pools are often the basis of qualitative studies. Many critics contend that qualitative studies generate a poor sample size as opposed to the larger sample size of quantitative studies (Yin, 2014). Researchers who are inexperienced with qualitative research do not fully understand the parameters of effective sample size and its association with validity and data saturation (Marshall et al., 2013). The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is the mixed-methods approach.

The qualitative research method enables an inductive, exploratory process supporting an ongoing search for context and meaning (Galletta, 2013). Some researchers attest that there may be perspectives or truth that may affect the validity of the study, and the qualitative method could assist to uncover the various prospects (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Data retrieved within the qualitative research process often renders words and

themes as opposed to numbers within a quantitative study. Researchers who wish to understand lived experience from the participants of their topic as opposed to measuring an aspect would use the qualitative research method (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The intent of conducting this study was to explore what business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth. The best method in which to gain new insight and understand multiple perspectives was through the qualitative research method.

Research Design

The research design is a structured plan providing the procedures for the research project (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Consideration of the research problem and the data collected is vital in determining the research design (Lee, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Yin, 2014). Grounded theory method design involves the creation of new theory (Wu & Beaunae, 2014; Yin, 2014). Case study design enables the analysis of existing theory (Ulriksen & Dadalauri, 2016). A researcher using case study design desires to understand the how, why, or what of contemporary phenomena (Dasgupta, 2015; Yin, 2014) and to enable exploratory research in real-life settings (Cronin, 2014). In multiple case study research, researchers study two or more cases to understand a situation similar to all groups (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The boundaries of this study included the type of business (WOSB), time (2016), industry (construction), location (New Jersey), and size (30 or fewer employees).

Assessing the quality of the chosen research design at various stages of the research phase is essential in appraising the trustworthiness of the study (Yin, 2014). There are four quality tests; construct validity, internal validity, reliability, and external validity (Hersh, 2014; Yin, 2014). Conducting external validity assessment at the design stage of the research study is a notable concern in case study because of the possible generalization of findings, which creates an obstacle for case study research (Yin, 2014); qualitative case study design uses transferability as the standard.

Researchers who use a smaller sample size and interview questions as a primary data source need to ensure the reliability of the study through data saturation (Marshall et al., 2013). Other factors that can affect data saturation include researcher experience, sampling procedures, quality of the interview, and the number of interviews conducted (Marshall et al., 2013). Three methods in which to determine the appropriate sample size for a qualitative study refer to (a) the guidelines from qualitative methodologists, (b) cite the practices of similar studies, and (c) provide internal statistical justification of saturation within the dataset (Marshall et al., 2013). Including information on the sample size, the number of interviewees, interviews and sampling strategy provides the understanding of the limitations and conclusions of the study (Lee, 2014; Marshall et al., 2013). In a case study design, participants often represent criterion-based sampling because of the bounding of the study in time and space with relevant and pre-determined participants (Patton, 2014).

Some qualitative research designs include (a) narrative, (b) ethnography, (c) phenomenology, and (d) case study (Yin, 2014). A narrative study reads like a story with a beginning, middle and an end that is a representation of a personal life story told to the researcher (Lohuis, Sools, van Vuuren, & Bohlmeijer, 2016). The ethnographic design is the study of persons in their social setting and culture with the use of field observation; the primary mode of data collection can be field notes, participant observation, direct observation, and interviews while noting changes within the context of the setting (Balestrery, 2016). In the phenomenological design, researchers endeavor to understand the lived experiences of the participants who have experienced a common event (Oxley, 2016). Case study research design is an in-depth study of a phenomenon found in real life episodes bounded in time and space (Runfola, Perna, Baraldi, & Gregori, 2016). Using case study design in academic instruction has benefited the academic community due to the reinforcing capabilities of concepts through examples that are characteristic of this research design (McFarlane, 2015).

Applying case study examples to the instruction of students expanded the students' understanding of the phenomena and channels for discovery and application of innovation to the general topic or concern (McFarlane, 2015). In the role of researcher, my intent was to understand the phenomena within the foundation of the study and, in turn, share this understanding with others for increased awareness. Using an exploratory multiple case study accomplished the goal of creating an understanding of the WOSB business planning strategies and may encourage positive social change.

Population and Sampling

The underlining purpose of this study was to investigate and understand business-planning strategies of three WOSBs in the construction trade geographically located in New Jersey. My intention for this proposed qualitative study was to understand and explore what business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth. As such, the primary participants in this study were women business owners in a predominantly male industry.

Non-probability sampling was the sampling method used to select the population for this study. In qualitative research, there are two methods of sampling: probability and non-probability (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Probability sampling assures that each member of the population has a chance of inclusion and is a primarily random selection (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Raina, 2014). In contrast, choosing non-probability sampling includes the researcher's understanding of the population and has a specific purpose for the study that cannot include a random population (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Purposive sampling enables the researcher to obtain the best fit for the topic of study based on the lived experience of the participant, and the researcher selects the population for the inclusion and exclusion criteria (Emerson, 2016). Previous multiple case small business studies established a precedent in purposeful sampling based on the desire to obtain participants that possess knowledge about the phenomena (Gandy, 2015; Perreault, 2014) to answer the research question (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013).

Assessing the number of participants involved in the study is vital to producing a quality research study and reaching data saturation. A study can reach data saturation when the interviews yield no new information, no new themes, no new coding, and a ability to replicate the study (Bowen, 2008; Charlesworth & Foëx, 2015; Fusch & Ness, 2015; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). The most important element regarding data saturation is the explanation by the researcher of the process of how saturation was reached (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013).

Ethical Research

The foundation of ethical research includes the assertion that the results derived from the research create value to society and do not cause harm to individuals (Doody & Noonan, 2016). Due to the social nature of qualitative research, the qualitative researcher creates knowledge through the research and must follow ethical guidelines for the safety of participants (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012). An analysis of the risks and benefits of the participants in the research is essential in conducting the study.

I adhered to the guidelines set forth by the IRB to assure ethical compliance in research. In covert research, the findings listed within the study may be difficult to validate or repeat due to the guarded anonymity of the participant (Israel, 2015). Ethical behavior and integrity are vital for the reliability of research (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; Israel, 2015; Opsall et al., 2015). Developments in technology affected the ethical practices of Internet-based research (Teitcher et al., 2015). Teitcher et al. (2015) indicated an increase of the instance of fraudulent and repetitive responses detected in Internet

research because of the lack of sound monitoring. This activity can skew the results of the data, and damage the reliability of the results (Teitcher et al., 2015). Internet-based research is more cost effective over face-to-face interviews; however, researchers must be aware of the potential for fraud in Internet research and learn how to prevent instances of fraud (Teitcher et al., 2015). Conducting face-to-face interviews prevents any possibility of repetitive answers associated with Internet research (Teitcher et al., 2015).

Receiving prior approval from the participants for their involvement is outlined in an informed consent form as well as the explanation of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Names and other identifiable information of the individuals in the study remain confidential. Stored data obtained in the research process remain in a lock box for 5 years. After 5 years, I will destroy the data by shredding. During the interview process, provision of food and beverages was available but not provided due to participant preference. As outlined in the participant consent form, I did not promise monetary incentives as an enticement for participation. The designated Walden University review number for this study is 09-26-16-0034245 assuring ethical and responsible research process.

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher can be the main data collection instrument in a study and can use several methods in which to gather data (Tufford & Newman, 2012). The methods of data collection in a case study design can include interviews, review of past records, collection of organization documentation, and the researcher's interaction with participants (Leedy

& Ormrod, 2013). Incorporating open-ended interview questions can stimulate detailed and accurate answers from participants (Yii, Powell, & Guadagno, 2014). Data collection methods should be consistent across the cases evaluated to assure similarity in data sources and streams (Farquhar, 2012). In this study, I conducted semistructured face-to-face interviews with the participants at their work location. I attended a networking event hosted by two of the participants, took notes, collected and reviewed organizational documents, and reviewed the organizational website. I incorporated member checking into the data collection process as a means of verification to the participants of the interpretation of the interviews and of the data extracted. The process of member checking included sending a typed document of my interpretations of the interview answers by email and in person for the participant to review. After allowing time for the participant to review the document, I met and called the participants to verify my interpretations. Each participant verified the accuracy of my interpretation.

The data collection methods should align with the research philosophy the researcher has chosen. Research philosophies are positivism, interpretivism, or critical realism (Farquhar, 2012). The choice of interpretivism explains the interpretation of human meaning, associated with the comprehension of the value of phenomena in case study such as idiographic concentration (Farquhar, 2012). Using interpretivism in this study aided my understanding of what business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth.

The first step in the data collection process was conducting the interview with the participants. The format of the study included semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to gain feedback from the participants regarding business-planning strategies. Each interview took a little over 30 minutes to complete. I used the LiveScribe Echo pen for the recording of each participant interview. Using recording devices assists in the capture of data (Sinden et al., 2013). This form of recording was acceptable and approved by each participant. The recording device enabled me to capture and review with accuracy all the data provided by the participant. Upon the completion of the interviews, I reviewed the transcripts, field notes, organizational documents provided (sample of contract and goal projection worksheet) and organizational websites.

The use of software was a secondary process after manual data collection. The use of technology provides a streamlined management system for the data collected (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012; Yu, Abdullah, & Saat, 2014). Technology included computers, recorders, and software application. The use of technology of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis system (CAQDAS) aided in the management of data following the regiment of manual analysis (Yu et al., 2014). In this study, I imported into the MAXQDA software program the transcriptions from the interviews, website data, and company documents. I developed codes that were detected within the documents and applied the codes to the data. The summation of the codes within the data led to emergent themes about the research question.

Data Collection Technique

Communication between interviewer and participant is a part of the data collection process (Drew, 2014). The researcher uses several methods of data collection that serve as primary and secondary data sources (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014). Semistructured interviews are one primary data source (Oltmann, 2016) with observation and the review of organizational documents as other secondary sources (Xu & Storr, 2012). The secondary data sources I used in this study were the review of company contracts and planning strategy worksheets (uncompleted due to privacy), examination of organizational websites, and personal attendance of a networking event. While waiting to meet the participant for the interview, I viewed in the main lobby of the headquarters the various awards and trade publications displayed on the wall. Using several data collection methods can assist with study accuracy (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Open-ended interview questions allow flexibility for the participant to answer and enable the researcher to probe deeper into the topic (Farquhar, 2012). A clear statement of the data collection technique and method is important to assure the ability to reproduce the study and transferability (Charlesworth & Foëx, 2015).

There are two forms of interviews: structured and unstructured (Rowley, 2012). Structured interview questions require simple yes or no answers in contrast to open-ended questions that require in-depth answers and flexibility in the respondent's answers (Ottmann & Crosbie, 2013). Establishing trust and understanding of the roles between the researcher and the participant ensures validity in communication (Call-Cummings, 2016).

Face-to-face interviews and observation are intimate data collection processes that require trust (von Unger, 2016). A strong feature of case study research is the ability for methodological triangulation of data from multiple sources through several collection techniques such as interviews, observations, and reviews of documents (Archibald, 2016; Kern, 2016; Teshuva, Borowski, & Wells, 2016; Yin, 2014; Yu et al., 2014). Yu et al. (2014) posited the importance of researchers understanding the complexities of data collection in the area of ethics, security, and time constraints. There are four types of common tools of organization within a qualitative study: (a) field notes, (b) baseline qualitative protocol, (c) follow-up protocol, and (d) focus group protocols (Johnson, Dunlap, & Benoit, 2010). Additional data collection technique can include a review of organizational documents, websites, attendance in networking meeting, and a location site visit. The interview process facilitated the discussion from the participants in explanation of what they do as opposed to observation where the researcher views the actions of what the participant does (Walshe, Ewing, & Griffiths, 2012). Participants of case study research interviews indicated that their participation provided a sense of healing, self-worth, awareness, a sense of purpose, and knowledge of a topic of interest (Wolgemuth et al., 2015).

The qualitative interview process followed a paradigm approach and outlined the interview process, member checking, and final analysis of data. Participants received a specially prepared packet including two copies of the consent form, a list of the research and interview questions, an overview of the interview process, and the projected duration

of the interview. Conducting in-person interviews in a private location and at a time convenient to the participant invited increased participation. Locations of the participants varied statewide, and, therefore, travel was necessary to their location. After data collection, I locked all hard copies, paper notes, and thumb drives with electronic notes and data for 5 years to assure the promise of confidentiality.

Data Organization Technique

The main research question was: What business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth? The primary data collection technique was in-depth interviews. Recording of the interviews utilizing the recording device LiveScribe SmartPen provided clarity. The use of computer-aided recorded interviewing (CARI) enhances the quality of the data collected and assures reliability (Thissen, 2015). All recordings were stored electronically on a peripheral device that is password protected and locked in a secure file. I transcribed the interviews and field notes after completion of the interviews. Kowal and O'Connell (2014) reasoned that there is a greater understanding and benefit of the study content if one individual collects, transcribes (Skukauskaite, 2012), and analyzes all data. Kowal and O'Connell further asserted the need to specify non-verbal indicators involved in the interview process to emphasize behavior.

Dagobert (2015) stressed that knowledge organization facilitates learning and can enhance the understanding of the real world by containing the information in an orderly fashion. Organization of the data assists in the identification of entity relationship and

authority relationship of the data (Dagobert, 2015). After reviewing the interviews and transcripts I retrieved from the interviews, field notes, company documents and websites I organized the documents by participant. Field notes contained my general acknowledgement of the awards and industry publications posted on the headquarter walls as well as notations in the EchoPen notebook taken at the time of the interview that was part of the recording process. I did not conduct observations on any company individuals or processes except for my consenting participant. Importation of the written transcripts, field notes, websites, and company documents were imported into MAXQDA for coding and analyzing. Maintenance of a research log includes the documentation of the details of the dates, time, and place of the interviews. Storing all data in a locked cabinet for 5 years and shredding after expiration assures confidentiality. The use of technology such as hardware and software in qualitative research has increased the ability to organize and manage data successfully (Johnson et al., 2010; Moylan, Derr, & Lindhorst, 2015; Paulus, Lester, & Britt, 2013). The researcher must exhibit careful diligence in the use of technology in the research process to assure the privacy of the participants, the best fit of technology for the method chosen, and the dissemination of data collected (Moylan et al., 2015). Moylan et al. (2015) posited that new technologies such as mobile devices enable the researcher to access otherwise inaccessible data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis process varies and aligns to the research method and the classification of data (Moylan et al., 2015). Assuring a more accurate analysis of data, the

use of triangulation is used (Kern, 2016; van Dijk, Vervoort, van Wijck, Kalkman, & Schuurmans, 2016). There are four triangulation methods (a) data triangulation collecting data through different times, different sources, in different places, (b) investigator triangulation using multiple investigators, (c) methodological triangulation with multiple data collection methods, and (d) theory triangulation where different theories are used to understand data (Yu et al., 2014). Using methodological triangulation includes incorporating interview questions and a review of organizational documentation for verification of data (Kern, 2016). To collect data, I conducted semistructured interviews using open-ended questions, review of organizational documents, review of websites, incorporating my research notes, and networking participation to demonstrate methodological triangulation.

Data analysis includes examining, combining, recombining, and testing the evidence to achieve empirical findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Rowley, 2012; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) outlined data analysis into five steps (a) arrange the facts in order, (b) categorize the data, (c) interpret single occurrences, (d) identify patterns, and (f) synthesize and conclude. Rowley (2012) indicated a similar method of analysis of (a) organization of the data, (b) gaining familiarity with the data, (c) coding and interpreting the data, (d) writing the results and indicating the positive elements by using software to assist in the coding process. I incorporated the same process for my study in the four steps outlined by Rowley (2012) in addition to using MAXQDA software. The conventional content analysis uses the researcher's in-depth examination of the data,

forming themes and codes to identify trends without preconception of the data (Piazza-Bonin, Neimeyer, Burke, McDevitt-Murphy, & Young, 2015). After becoming familiar with the data through review and transcription, I used the MAXQDA software to code the data collected. The coding process is the application of labels to important information in the dataset to gather patterns of meaning and the development of themes. As the themes are developed, I used an inductive and deductive analysis technique to systematically apply the knowledge retrieved from data to the research question.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity help to identify the trustworthiness of the data, and that the sourced data conveys reality (Reilly, 2013). Trustworthiness includes transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Houghton et al., 2013; Reilly, 2013; Yin, 2014). Reliability associates with dependability, credibility associates with internal validity, and transferability relates to external validity (Reilly, 2013). To assure the authenticity of the data, researchers use member checking otherwise known as respondent validation to test the data, interpretations, and conclusions of the investigator (Reilly, 2013).

Reliability

Reliability in research defines the consistency in the procedures in the research study (Yin, 2014) by achieving the same answer when using the same instrument (Bernard, 2013). Four aspects to ensure reliability are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Houghton et al., 2013). In this proposed study, I

achieved credibility through member checking and methodological triangulation. Reflexivity assures dependability and confirmability in data. Reflexivity is the ongoing process of the researcher analyzing their subjective role and being aware of their perceptions and feelings (Darawsheh, 2014). On a participant level, reflexivity in qualitative research involves the participant providing an oral history of their experience that provides context aiding in social transformation (Suárez-Ortega, 2013). The reflexive nature of the voice of the participant promotes the knowledge and awareness by the participant. Member checking is the review of the researcher's interpretation of the interview conducted with the participants. This process ensures the awareness of the content collected in the interview process. Outlining the data collection process and procedures achieves transferability. Data saturation is when (a) no new information comes from ongoing data collection, (b) adequate information is available to replicate the study providing enough information to repeat the study, (c) no new themes are identified, and (d) no new coding is possible (Bowen, 2008; Charlesworth & Foëx, 2015; Fusch & Ness, 2015; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013).

Validity

Validity is the accuracy and trustworthiness of the research study. One can find validity in the data, instruments, and analysis and is the most important aspect of the study (Bernard, 2013; Elo et al., 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The quality of the questions asked will frame the data or answers provided by the participants. If the questions do not apply to the level of accuracy expected from the data then the instrument

or questions are not valid (Bernard, 2013). The four principles used to assess validity and quality throughout the study are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Yilmaz, 2013).

In construct validity, researchers use three methods to confirm validity such as using several sources of data, establishing a chain of evidence, and drafting a report for review (Yin, 2014). In qualitative research, it is vital to outline the steps in the concept creation to assure validity (Elo et al., 2014). An example of the use of internal validity is an explanatory case study, where the researcher attempts to define a cause and effect of the phenomena (Yin, 2014). External validity in qualitative research is known as transferability and relates to the ability of future researchers to repeat the study process and achieve similar results (Yin, 2014). This relates to the ability of future researchers to repeat the study process and achieve similar results (Yin, 2014); however, transferability is always left up to the reader to decide. Rodham, Fox, and Doran (2015) proposed researchers should retain curiosity in their research to enhance the comprehension of the data and boost validity in data content. In the preparation phase of the data collection process, the sampling strategy employed can affect the trustworthiness of the research (Elo et al., 2014). In the organization phase, the development of constructs and the checking and rechecking of the interpretation of data could affect validity (Elo et al., 2014).

Transition and Summary

The focus in this study was concentrated on the business planning strategies that successful WOSB owners use for sustainability and growth. CT and ET were the conceptual frameworks used as a lens to explore the business planning strategies. In section 2, I explained the elements of this research project. The elements included the role of the researcher, the selected participants, research method and design and ethical research. Also, written descriptions provided information on (a) data collection, (b) data organization and, (c) data analysis as well as the factors of reliability and validity in research.

Section 3 contained the research question and provided the application to professional practice and (a) implications for social change, (b) recommendations for action, (c) recommendations for further research, (d) reflections, and (e) conclusion. The results in the findings from the participants provided insight to effective business planning strategies that could be beneficial to the success and sustainability of similar enterprises. The correlation of the findings of the importance of continual planning and review of plans are considered pivotal to the successful maintenance and growth of an changing and evolving industry such as construction.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

In this study, Section 2 provided an explanation of the techniques used in conducting the study, including the population and sampling, the role of researcher, ethical research, data collection, and data organization techniques. My focus in this multiple case study was to explore what business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth. The overarching research question, document analysis, and interview questions inspired interest and insight from the participants in regard to their organization and their business planning strategies for growth. In Section 3, I introduce the study and present the findings of the data collection. Additionally, I discuss the applications to professional practice, including the implications for social change and the recommendations for action and further research. I close by providing my personal reflections and conclusions from the research study. The information in this study provided knowledge shared by successful women entrepreneurs regarding the measures that assist in the growth and sustainability of their organizations.

Introduction

The purpose of conducting this qualitative multiple case research study was to explore what business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth. Small businesses contribute to local employment and economic growth; however, there is an increase in small business failure on a global basis (Hyder & Lussier, 2016). Increasing the knowledge of the business planning strategies

used by successful small business owners is paramount in assisting and understanding the skills that promote small business survival.

In this study, I conducted semistructured face-to-face interviews with three successful female owners of small construction businesses in New Jersey to learn their business-planning strategies. I chose businesses who demonstrated their success by sustaining through changing environments and remaining active in business as evidenced in their years of operation and ownership. Each participant has been an active business owner for over 10 years at the same organization.

After conducting the initial interviews, I transcribed the interviews, documented my interpretations, and reviewed my interpretations with the participants for accuracy and for discovery of new information. The process of member checking provided no new information. Methodological triangulation included the use of interviews and interpretations, notes of my observation of company location and networking meeting, information of organizational websites, and a review of company contracts and planning forecast worksheets. I learned through the organizational documentation about the participants' business planning strategies with a concentration on goals, SWOT analysis, and safety initiatives. The planning forecast from P2 had a projected timeframe of 3 years. The format listed financial goals (dollar figures retracted for privacy), action plans that illustrated the process of contract bidding, and workflow listing the actions of associated work team members. The sample contract listed the schedule of work (SOW) separated by headings of articles. Examples of headings included the outline of the duties

and requirements of the contractor and subcontractor, articles of safety including required OSHA training for managers and labor, and articles of recourse. The participants' organizational websites hosted between six to 10 linked pages of information including history of the organization, lists of completed projects, specialties, careers, safety, association memberships, contact information, and customer referrals.

In the study process, I assured confidentiality of the participants by assigning a naming convention (P1, P2, etc.) to each of the participants for the presentation of the findings. After personal transcription of all data, I developed groups of codes, developed themes from the codes, and assessed the information obtained. Within the data analysis, five emergent themes became apparent that consisted of (a) constant review of goals and planning, (b) communication and teamwork, (c) reliance on expertise, (d) continuous education and, (e) networking.

Presentation of the Findings

The empirical data collection process included semistructured face-to-face interviews with three WOSB owners, nonparticipant observations, participation in a networking meeting, and review of company documents and websites. I conducted this work to answer the following overarching research question: What business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth? Each participant interviewed was a female business owner in construction and had been in business for over 10 years. I verified the status of women ownership of the business through their WBO certifications from a state-run or association affiliation such as the

WBENC. The participants' main headquarters were in different locations in New Jersey: one mid-South New Jersey, one Central New Jersey, and one Northern New Jersey. After reaching out to the participants by email and telephone, I conducted the interviews with the participants at their primary work location. I offered to meet at an offsite location; however, the participants were more comfortable at their headquarters. After reviewing the consent form and obtaining the signed consent, I conducted the interviews using the LiveScribe Echo pen recording device for accuracy and transcription. I transcribed all the interviews personally and emailed in an MSWord document (password protected) my interpretation of the findings to the participants. I then telephoned or met with the participants at which time they affirmed the interpretations and revealed no new information. After review of the interpretations, I entered the data from the interviews, company documents, field notes, and organizational websites into the MAXQDA 12 software program to assess the codes and themes.

In reflection of this study, a major focus of my literature review was the use of business planning strategies and the benefits of a business plan; focusing on the potential of growth for the organization through business planning strategies. After the data collection, I discovered that all the participants had expressed that they did not start their organization with a business plan or a clear business planning strategy. In further review of the data, the critical findings in the study did not apply directly to a business plan, but towards how each participant strongly advocated the need for constant review of the

activities and processes toward the outlined goals, the courses of action, and the strategies present in their business planning processes.

In the course of business planning, the entrepreneur endeavors to attain their goal or reach their opportunity through effectuation, which is a strategic direction based on the intrinsic understanding of their own expertise (education), who they know (networking) and their personal values and traits (Watson, McGowan, & Smith, 2015). Each participant in this multiple case study advocated a strong need for continual education, networking, and reliance on expertise. The emergent theme that was most important to the participants was the process of constant planning and the review of goals and plans within their organizations.

Emergent Theme One: Constant Review of Goals and Plans

Planning is a necessity for any size organization and enables a firm to adjust and revise the allocation of resources in a changing environment (Cordeiro, 2013).

Organizations that analyze the internal and external contingencies through constant evaluation of their strengths and weakness while adjusting the organizational strategies to *best fit* to the changes will gain a competitive advantage in their industry (Mirzakhani, Parsaamal, & Golzar, 2014). Planning enables the placement of key resources in the proper timeframe to meet the objectives and goals of the organization (Mirzakhani et al., 2014).

Constant review of goals and plans was the first prevalent theme presented within the MAXQDA 12 evaluation process and elaborated on in length with all participants in

the interview process. In goal planning, the motivational force involves the fulfillment of expectancy that an individual anticipates in the course of an action and the attainment of value (valance) for the action (Sun et al., 2014). Motivations that entice the cognitive activity in information seeking align with the expectancy theory in assessing work-task relationships (Ankli & Palliam, 2012; Sigaard & Skov, 2015). Work-task relationship is part of the goal planning process when assessing the allocation of resources. Self-efficacy is an aspect that governs the incentive of information seeking in the work-task relationship (Ankli & Palliam, 2012; Sigaard & Skov, 2015). Self-efficacy is the confidence in decisions that individuals hold (Kim et al., 2016). Goal planning and goal-choice processes help an individual establish the objectives the individual (or organization) would like to attain, the intensity of the desire to attain the goals, and the necessary resources to allocate to the process (Sun et al., 2014). Effective business planning can help promote the legitimacy of the organization, provide insight to ventures, and deter misappropriation of assets (Long, Geng, & Shakeel, 2016).

Planning in the construction trades is vital due to the inconsistencies and uniqueness of each project. There are known and unknown risks associated with a construction project, so it is imperative for business leaders to plan for an allocated and unallocated resource fund to control the contingencies (Salah & Moselhi, 2015). Salah and Moselhi (2015) postulated the importance for continual contingency model estimating using fuzzy numbers in planning throughout the duration of construction projects. Fuzzy numbers or fuzzy sets are a tool that construction industry experts use to

account for unknown or contingent circumstances encountered in a construction project (Salah & Moselhi, 2015). Similar methods of estimating contingencies in construction projects aside from the fuzzy number are the deterministic and probabilistic methods (Salah & Moselhi, 2015). Salah and Moselhi posited that the deterministic method is composed of two sectors, overall estimated value and itemized estimated value, and geared to reflect the estimator's *gut feeling*. The probabilistic method is an estimation tool based on Monte Carlo simulation and hinged on historical data (Salah & Moselhi, 2015). An alternative to the deterministic and probabilistic method is the fuzzy number method. In the fuzzy number method, the use of expert calculations in information along with linguistic risk judgment assists in forecasting contingencies in project planning to determine resource allocation (Salah & Moselhi, 2015).

The goal in the planning process is to reduce the alternatives in order to maximize the time, cost, and quality expectancies of the project (Monghasemi, Nikoo, Khaksar Fasaee, & Adamowski, 2015). Strategic planning is essential for adaptation to changing markets and for organizational leaders to recognize their competitive advantage to achieve their long-term goals (Švárová & Vrchota, 2014). A crucial factor in the construction trades is the element of change in the external environment. I assert this element in this study through the contingency theory. To illustrate the methods used for updating planning strategies in a changing environment, P2 attested to conducting bimonthly meetings that included her teams from estimating, project management, and finance to update the status of projects and to detect trends. P3 indicated a constant

monitoring of projects and resources by collaborating with her operations team on a weekly basis to contemplate and review the immediate project goals, the project duration, the financial investment in the project, and the estimated labor projection. The results derived from the meetings assist in forecasting future resource allocation and estimating accuracies.

Of the three participants interviewed, two had stated they had incorporated into their operations a formalized policy and procedure manual and employee handbook. Only one participant did not have this formal documentation and did not feel the need for it. Two participants also elicited outside advisors (business coaches) for the creation of formal documentation and business development. Organizations use outside advisors to offer technical assistance in the preparation of business plans, assist in obtaining capital, or serve as a mentor (Lahti, 2014). One participant in this study had expressed the use of a business evaluator to address employee morale through crisis and change. Another participant expressed the use of an advisor to facilitate her employee training initiatives. The intent of the participants was to open up channels of communication with the team and to gain a better perspective of the business as a whole.

The key points that I had learned from the participants were the importance of planning and the review and revision of the plan to accommodate for change. Breznik and Lahovnik (2016) indicated that in order for organizations to retain a competitive advantage they must anticipate change and organize the resources to respond to the current market expectations. Breznik and Lahovnik stressed six points related to the

dynamic capabilities view (DCV) for competitive advantage for organizations. The six concepts of DCV are: (a) role of management in appropriation of organization resources, (b) marketing aptitude, (c) technology ability, (d) knowledge utilization, (e) acquisition of new knowledge or education, and (f) human resource strength. Although the DCV concept primarily targeted information technology industries, the findings of this study revealed a correlation between the six points of the DCV and the business planning strategies of successful WOSBs.

The process of effective business planning is designing, implementing, and assessing the strategies with the incorporation of constant evaluation (Mirzakhani et al., 2014). It is through the adaptability of the organization in revising the goals to align with the changing environment that will promote business success (Skokan et al., 2013). Successful strategic planning includes the analysis of the internal and external contingencies, the expectations and collective ideals of the shareholders and employees, and the objectives and goals of the organization (Mazzarol et al., 2014).

Wood, Logar, and Riley (2015) conducted a research study on the limited exporting activities of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the United States. Less than one percent of SMEs export, and of the companies that do, they only export to one country (Wood et al., 2015). Despite the incentives provided by the government to export, motivation of the managers of the SME had the greatest influence on exporting initiatives (Wood et al., 2015). The variable of motivation instilled by the manager in the planning process bolsters the activities outlined in the goals and objectives.

Emergent Theme Two: Communication and Teamwork

Communication within a team builds trust among the team members and promotes successful execution of a project (Gross, 2016). Trust within a team is crucial when facing elements of change of people or process (Gross, 2016). Teamwork enables an organization to adapt to changes to meet the outlined objectives and goals, lending the firm a competitive advantage (Nadal, Mañas, Bernadó, & Mora, 2015). The symbiotic relationship between the leader and the team promotes organizational success (Matthews & McLees, 2015).

The definition of teamwork is the interdependent actions of individuals performed to achieve an objective (Salas, Shuffler, Thayer, Bedwell, & Lazzara, 2015). The construction environment is composed of many teams from various niches of the industry. When isolated or stand-alone teams (e.g., niches or trades) converge to work on a universal objective, the merging of the teams creates a multiteam system (MTS). Rico, Hinsz, Burke, and Salas (2016) focused on the aspect of poor communication and lack of cohesiveness in teamwork that resulted in a tragic oilrig explosion on a construction project in the Gulf of Mexico. The explosion was the result of last minute plan changes in the concrete pouring to save time and cost, combined with failures in communication amongst the three companies in the MTS (Rico et al., 2016). This working example demonstrates the volatile and dangerous environment of a construction project and the ultimate need for teamwork and communication.

Lanaj, Hollenbeck, Ilgen, Barnes, and Harmon (2013) provided insight into planning processes and communication methods used in an MTS and concluded that a decentralized planning process could ultimately hurt production. A decentralized planning approach shifts the decision making to the team, as opposed to centralized planning that relies on the leadership for the final determination (Lanaj et al., 2013; Moore, 2016). Lanaj et al. (2013) advocated for leaders to assess the situational planning process due to the complexities and differences of planning *within* isolated (stand-alone) teams in comparison to *between* teams. Planning in and for an MTS is critical due to the combined objectives component team.

The participants involved in a MTS have a set of goals and objectives to accomplish, just as isolated teams have individual goals and objectives. A MTS demonstrates functional independence but interdependence on the shared goals toward the project objectives (Rico et al., 2016). Communication between the ladders of the network of teams promotes productivity, cost-effectiveness, safety, and overall success of the project. Leaders need to assess the project and the members operating within the project with the goals and objectives to establish the proper communication channels and planning processes for mission success.

The leader is the individual(s) responsible for orchestrating the actions of the team to attain the organizational goal (Boykins et al., 2015). There must be a group to have a leader, and the leader's responsibility is to motivate, influence, provide direction, and intervene with the processes to reach the determined goals (Boykins et al., 2015; Tabassi,

Ramli, Bakar, & Pakir, 2014). The participants interviewed in this study represented the leadership of their organization. They are responsible for the actions and interactions as well as the decisions made with the assistance of and on behalf of their organization's team. In a reflection of business planning strategies used by the participants, the element of teamwork was a vital tool for planning strategies for each of the participants of the study. P3 asserted;

I like to hear the collaboration and I just feel that I have been so fortunate to attract solid, intelligent, ambitious people and they are all different but they bring so many perspectives and experiences together so it makes us an awesome team.

Strategies and goal planning is basically communication.

Teamwork and leadership is part of a system driven by communication and collaboration to accomplish a common goal (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016). Regarding the organization's strength in teamwork, P1 stated;

Our strength make(s) the organization grow by forming and hiring a good team that will fit into the organization . . . to listen to our employees and take their point of view. (I) do not micro-manage, I coach and delegate. Everyone does not work the same here (implying to give the employees space to make decisions).

Communicating the organizational vision, establishing credibility, and providing feedback are key elements in maintaining stability within the team (Matthews & McLees, 2015). P2 expressed that her team meets annually to establish the goals and objectives for the year.

After establishing the yearly goals, each department meets on various schedules; financing and sales bi-monthly for cost reporting, field supervisors meeting quarterly for customer support and field operations, and operations weekly to discuss the progress of each project. Finally, at the end of the year the objectives and goals are reviewed to assess the jobs bid, the estimating accuracy, the project completion timeline compared to the beginning year estimation.

The continual planning process reiterates the participants' need to continue to communicate as a team, to assess and re-assess the objectives and goals that the team as a whole has projected, and collectively agree on the path and direction of the organization. In the review of the data contained in the company documents, the goals and objectives worksheet provided a concise communication tool of the projections and expectations of the organization. The worksheets contained questionnaires on projections for projects, budgets, team flow chart, risk assessment, competition as well as other pertinent topics related to the organization. The worksheets enabled the team to communicate and plan the goals and objectives of the organization.

In the analysis of the expectancy theory and business, the reason to plan is to create value for the organization through opportunity (Holland & Garrett, 2015). Each individual in the planning process possesses his or her values that serve as a motivator in decision-making. In a team-based organization, it is imperative for the leaders to choose members that are multi-functional to create a collection of necessary and diverse talent (Resick, Murse, Randall, & DeChurch, 2014). In a multiteam system, collaboration is a

gathering of various talents organized to achieve a predetermined goal (Lanaj et al., 2013). It is through strategically planning for the use of the creativity and knowledge in a team that innovation and opportunity occurs (Georgiev, Panayotova, & Georgieva, 2016).

Business planning strategy incorporates thought and action in the use of resources to achieve a goal. In a team setting, in order to put thought into action, communication of the strategy is necessary for the participants to understand and execute their perspective roles (Sołoducho-Pelc, 2013). Although technical knowledge is important in the performance of work related tasks, in a team based environment the elements of trust, task coordination, and knowledge sharing is essential for project success (Salas et al., 2015). Terry (2013) indicated the importance in the mastery of the *softer communication* skills of relationship building within the construction project to ensure quality, safety, and cooperation. Within the team structure, conflict can arise, identified in two categories: task conflict and relationship conflict (Sharma & Bajpai, 2014). Sharma and Bajpai (2014) indicated that relationship conflict creates a negative work environment, as opposed to task conflict that motivates creativity. It is important that organizational leaders align task groups that are compatible and possess similar talent and aptitude to assure synergy and cohesiveness in the work environment. Work project success is contingent on the careful alignment of tasks, task groups and the role of interdependence. Including the implementation of tasks, teams, and communication within is an essential element of business planning process.

Teamwork is a typical element of a manual labor industry (such as construction) and considered by employees less distressing compared to independent (autonomous) work (Crowley, Payne, & Kennedy, 2013). Teams and collaboration through teamwork help support the organization in adapting to change (Crowley et al., 2013). The source of motivation within a team sometimes derives from peer influence and pressure. The panopticon perspective is the interrelationship of the team's influence and normative control over the members of the team in the fulfillment of the team and organization's expectations (Crowley et al., 2013). The fundamentals of environmental contingencies and the motivation of employees to facilitate change through communication and teamwork are vital to the sustainability and growth of an organization.

Emergent Theme Three: Reliance on Expertise

Effective planning includes aligning people with the proper skills to complete the tasks that support the goals and objectives (Cordeiro, 2013). Labor costs account for 40% of the budget in a construction project (Nasirzadeh & Nojedehi, 2013; Yeheyis et al., 2016). Due to the significance of this cost, it is imperative for the organization to employ competent workers with the expertise necessary to complete the task in a timely and cost effective manner.

Expertise is built on *deliberate* practice and training within a particular field coupled with influencing environmental factors (Ullén, Hambrick, & Mosing, 2016). As represented through the expert performance framework, expertise is measured through the achievement of standard goals specified for a particular task (Ullén et al., 2016).

Expertise is the knowledge, intuition, and aptitude of an individual in a specific category or field (Chan, 2016).

Organizational leaders need to align their goals and objectives with the necessary human talent necessary to produce the goals effectively. Workforce planning is a two-step process used by business leaders to project the number of employees needed, with a *particular set of skills*, to produce an expected business result (Mayo, 2015). The first step in the workforce planning process is the assessment of the talent needed: what expertise is necessary, the skills, and the number of individuals needed (Mayo, 2015). Financial planning and capital expenditure is the second step in the workforce planning process. Constant review of workforce planning enables the organization to determine gaps in the plan, reassess employee retraining, hiring, productivity levels, and performance (Mayo, 2015). Understanding the levels of expertise needed for production in addition to the supply and demand of the organization's goods and services is the foundation of workforce planning.

Expertise in the construction field includes professional workers such as engineers and managers who design and supervise the project and skilled labor (Chan, 2016). Chan (2016) attributes success or breakdown of a construction project to the extent of the expertise. The participants involved in the study filled a unique niche or expertise within their field. Construction trades classify under NAICS code 23, then drilled down to a sub-specialization of Construction of Buildings (NAICS code 236), Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction (NAICS code 237), and Specialty Trade Contractors (NAICS

code 238) as listed in the WBENC (2016) website search. The specification of the distinctive niche that the participants of this study fell under is not of consequence; however, it is important to note that each one had their specialty. As such, each participant extolled their expertise within their niche. P2 expressed the confidence in their expertise by stating that; "(our) management really knows our business. We built the business from the ground up and we know what it takes. We have the processes in place and it is regimented." P1 also aligned their expertise to the quality of services that her organization provides. P1 emphasized:

Our organization gives a phenomenal end result. We get jobs because of the minority, because I am a woman and it gets me in that room. But because of our *expertise* we get to stay there. If we didn't perform we wouldn't stay in that room. My motto is built on integrity and I follow that to a *T*.

In evaluation of expertise and the identification of expertise, Joshi (2014) elaborated on the significance of expertise recognition and gender in the science and engineering trades. Viewing the aspect of expertise recognition through the lens of social role theory and self-categorization theory, Joshi contended that women in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields remain underrepresented, underpaid, and unfavorably viewed by their peers in comparison to their male counterparts. This aspect becomes a challenge for WOSB enterprises within an industry such as construction, predominately represented by the male gender. Mogendorff (2016) posited that women expertise is not acknowledged at the forefront in construction.

Women new to a project need to prove their expertise due to the resistance of peers to accept the knowledge and skills a woman may possess (Mogendorff, 2016).

A further defining factor of expertise is the ability of the expert (within the field) to perceive the inherent problem, possible solutions (Addis, Boyd, & Raiden, 2016), and spends a greater time qualitatively assessing the problems encountered (Chan, 2016). Expertise in an organization can be a collective group of knowledge, thinking, action, and training (Addis et al., 2016). In regards to organizational expertise, all three participants of this study emphasized their organizational expertise publicly on their company website. Each participant used words such as *high quality*, *highly trained staff*, and *emphasis on safety* to demonstrate to their customers their expertise in services they provide. Additionally, each participant's website featured a tab that listed previous projects that each organization successfully completed, further attesting their knowledge in the trade.

Tacit knowledge, which is knowledge gained from working experience, must also be included within the realm of expertise in the construction trades. Construction work is not an individual endeavor; the tacit knowledge attained through the work process is attributed to the working relationships with other similar individuals in the field. The interactions and knowledge sharing of the multidisciplinary team inspires problem solving, creativity, and innovation (Sharma & Bajpai, 2014). Age diversity also significantly affects the work pool and the knowledge base. The labor pool in the United States in 2010 consisted of 5% Veterans, 39% Baby Boomers, 33% Generation X, and

23% Generation Y (Sanaei, Javernick-Will, & Chinowsky, 2013). Capturing the tacit knowledge from retiring employees and transferring that knowledge (knowledge sharing) to incoming employees in addition to the recognition of the differences in learning styles is vital to the growth of expertise within the industry (Sanaei et al., 2013). Knowledge management is the sharing of individual knowledge with others and is detrimental to the success of an organization in the changing environment of the construction trades (Zhang & Ng, 2012). Knowledge integration is imperative in building innovation and creativity to face the uncertainties encountered on a construction project (Oh, Nadepajouh, Hastak, & Gokhale, 2016). Zhang and Ng (2012) posited that knowledge sharing is similar to a social exchange, and therefore knowledge sharing relies on the motivation of the individual possessing the knowledge. To share knowledge, the owner must externalize their knowledge, and the receiver must internalize the knowledge received (Zhang & Ng, 2012).

Knowledge sharing and formal training may induce perceived training intensity (PTI) to some employee who demonstrate lower motivation in participation and decrease expectancy in reward (Buch, Dysvik, Kuvaas, & Nerstad, 2015). Means to overcome PTI includes supervisor support and encouraging job autonomy (Buch et al., 2015). The aspect of employee motivation and expectation within the scope for knowledge sharing and training aligns with Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation and the distinction of valance and value. Individuals are motivated in anticipation of the satisfaction (valance) and the actual satisfaction (value) they receive (Vroom, 1995). In a hedonistic view,

people choose actions based on the degree of pleasure or pain they will encounter; however, the perception of satisfaction varies for everyone (Vroom, 1995). If PTI presents a significant threat to the employee, the managers must alleviate this stress through support of the employee, the training initiatives and knowledge sharing (Buch et al., 2015).

Emergent Theme Four: Continuous Education

Learning and training carries different perspectives on an organizational level in contrast to an employee level. On an organizational level, learning denotes the acceptance of change and the ability to learn from prior inaccuracies, whereas the employee perspective is to attain information to gain and maintain the competencies to perform tasks (Nesheim & Gressgård, 2014). Fiedler (1967) indicated organizational leaders are responsible for the satisfactory completion of the tasks. It is essential for the leader to demonstrate the support necessary to facilitate continuous learning to ensure success of a task or project.

In Section 2 of this study, I had indicated that a crucial element in the construction industry is associated with the individuals employed by the organization, otherwise known as the human resources (HR) perspective. I had indicated three viewpoints relative to HR that included labor turnover, performance management systems, and development training. Each element is crucial to the success of a business. The reflections of the participants within this study only uncovered one aspect of the HR equation: education.

Scott (2016) posited that education in construction, as in other industries, has the capability to bring about change, but often offered in a pragmatic, *best-fit* context. Because the industry is constantly evolving and society is becoming more demanding, the engineers, architects, industry professionals, and workers will need to be technically advanced, communicate and collaborate effectively, and engage in continuous learning (Scott, 2016). Education based on the construction industry is complex. There are multiple levels of education or continuous learning that impact the construction industry. Levels of training include administrative education, technical training, and project level training.

For organizational sustainability, training in business planning practice is indispensable for leaders to adapt and adjust to changing internal and external environments. Per Dalton (2015), a pioneer in business planning education, the core of education in planning is enabling the student to address the concerns, adjust the process, and implement execution as part of the planning strategy. Understanding the issues that are critical to the planning progression is vital to the process and execution; indicating that communication is vital in the development of understanding (Dalton, 2015). Teitz (2016) reflected on the growth of planning education from the early 1960s to 2016 and the role of communication and community in the advancement of business planning education. Wachs (2016) advocated the reflective nature in the teaching of planning processes. It is through the analysis of information (data) and the application of the normative principles (morality, equality, justice) that business planning and processes

generate (Wachs, 2016). Wachs warned, however, that in the reflective nature of planning the synthesis of the data with normative principles might not occur: that subjectivity in expectations for either element may overshadow competent decisions. To avert from this subjectivity, Wachs advocated that trust and effective communication are qualities that will influence worthy business planning decisions.

Additional training for project level employees is essential for the improvement of productivity, the containment of costs, and ensures safe work environments. The characteristics of a sound academic program for project managers in this industry should include critical thinking, communication skills and leadership, and real life project based scenarios (Ramazani & Jergeas, 2015). Leaders should view training of personnel as an investment for the organization. To face the technological challenges, retain productivity, and remain competitive, training should be a part of the organization's objectives (Turcuț, 2016). The WOSB participants indicated that the emergent theme of education is a driving force that had helped their organization grow and is an important function of their business planning strategies, unlike the findings in previous research (Cesaroni et al., 2015). Education is a key component in the participant's planning strategies that enables them to adjust to changing conditions. P1 stated in regards to education and changing business environment; "Education does not have to be formal, but (you) should learn something new every day."

P2 also found the importance of education and training of the staff. As part of their organizational objectives, the firm drafted a measurable target of 40 training hours

per employee per year. P3 took an informal approach to learning, stating that reading applicable business literature early on in the start of the organization enabled her to apply the knowledge gained to help grow the company. P3 further commented that she reads for a purpose, commenting that reading should be for learning. In my observations of the participants' corporate headquarters, I noted the emphasis and pride the participants placed on safety initiatives, illustrated by wall plaques of years of participation by the participants in industry sponsored safety training programs.

The categories of training in the industrial sector can reflect the function, task, and responsibilities of the employee. In an industrial environment, collaboration from all departments in the planning of projects is vital for application of necessary resources for the safety and success of the project (Balfe, Leva, Ciarapica-Alumni, & Mahoney, 2016). Inadequate planning in project safety and the analysis of safety risks can have a negative impact on vital organizational resources that include time, talent, finance, and reputation.

Balfe et al. (2016) advocated for an integrated planning process across the organization as a participatory effort to identify risk for the mitigation of safety. For field employees, safety training that includes the overview of the hazards encountered in their area of expertise is essential. Common delivery systems for driving home the dangers of on-site safety presents in many forms that consist of safety posters, reading materials, case study example, teaching in reverse, and through safety inspection reports (Love, 2015). Employees, regulators and customers expect that the firm's leaders will abide by and plan for a safe work environment, or mitigate unsafe working conditions. Although

the entire organization can benefit from safety training, field employees, including laborers, tradespersons, and project managers need to be current on the changes in safety initiatives. Some state and federal projects mandate that all worksite employees receive the necessary OSHA training specific to the trade. OSHA training initiatives were listed on each participant website as an important factor in employee development and the provision of quality of services. Continuous education for employees related to task competencies was also indicated. Additional attention to safety training was illustrated in the articles listed in the company contracts, outlining the mandatory safety training prior to commencement of work on projects. Further training in regards to task specific functions is equally important throughout the hierarchy of the organization.

Unfortunately, there are limited resources for small business in regards to training initiatives (Padachi & Lukea Bhiwajee, 2016). Padachi and Lukea Bhiwajee (2016) further emphasized that training is important, if not vital to the survival of the organization.

Training is considered a significant function of human resource management and promotes the competitive nature of an organization (Hartman & Elahee, 2013). Just as important are the real-time assessments of the training. In the research conducted by Shweiki et al. (2015), the authors noted that frequent and timely assessment of the training programs builds independence and competence because it provides feedback of the expectancies from the training program. Viewing training evaluation through the lens of expectancy theory framework provides insight on what motivates the student to learn

and what is expected from the training (Shweiki et al., 2015). A key element in successful organizational learning is the development of internal trust; interference to establishing trust is the inability of employees to question and fear of self-abasement (Nesheim & Gressgård, 2014). Evaluation of training initiatives can help determine the effectiveness of the training program (Fiedler, 1967). Equally as important is the incorporation of the changes within the organizational climate because of training (Fiedler, 1967). Between the years 2001 to 2009, employers within the United States decreased organizational training to employees by 28% (Waddoups, 2014). Employer led training facilitates the promotion of employees with potential for increased wages and greater competency in the work force for the employer (Waddoups, 2014). The decline in employer led training impacts the socioeconomic group, organizational production, and competitive advantage (Waddoups, 2014).

Emergent Theme Five: Networking

Business networking is a relationship with two or more individuals or businesses who collaborate actions to benefit a shared importance (Freitag, Munksgaard, Clarke, & Damgaard, 2016). Women entrepreneurs are more restricted to business connections, however networking assists in creating greater access for women (Surangi, 2013). Surangi (2013) posits that an industry that relies on the means of subcontracting, partnership, and collaboration benefits from the networking process. There are three categories of networking; social, commercial, and professional (Surangi, 2013). The

association meetings that the participants in this study are members of are considered a professional network.

Networking enables the creation of new opportunities through referrals and introductions from others within the network. Similar to marketing, networking is a route for an organization to gain exposure for the goods and services they provide. Effective use of networking helps build relationships, creates value for an organization, and generates opportunities (Oesterreich, & Teuteberg, 2016; Quinton & Wilson, 2016; Schoonjans, Van Cauwenberge, & Vander Bauwhede, 2013).

Business planning strategies on a functional level must include the consideration of the external environment and the impact this environment has on the sustainability and success of the organization (Zhang, Schmidt, Xie, & Li, 2016). Zhang et al postulated that social connections create value co-creation in an organization. Viewed through the theory of sociocultural constructivism, Doviak (2016) advocated the power of community and the influence the community or connections have on planning and actions. Social connections or networking is the collaboration between two or more agents to provide value to each other and form a competitive advantage over others, not in the network (Darbi & Knott, 2016).

There has been a greater drive in the construction trades for the development of relations with project participants to increase performance, quality, and profit margins (Jelodar, Yiu, & Wilkinson, 2016). In the construction industry, most if not all project work hosts a temporary worksite, where various MTS are composed of sub-contractors in

cross-functional industry niche trades. In these temporary scenarios, working relationships form, creating a network of trade alliances and cooperation to face the project challenges (Terry, 2013). The networks or clusters are a conglomeration of organizational representatives and workers in similar or symbiotic industries in close demographics (McIntyre, Mitchell, Boyle, & Ryan, 2013). Networks can include business-to-businesses, trade organizations and associations, and supply chains. A definition of a trade association is a group of individuals in similar lines of work that form an alliance to provide standards and direction to others within the industry (Henczel, 2014). In the formation of networks, trust develops, along with open communication, integrated work practices, task expectations, and similar viewpoints (Pettersen & Rolfsen, 2015). Fulfilled expectations enable the trust within the network that stimulates productivity and a positive working relationship. The element of trust is essential in the relationships built in the supply chain, contractor to sub-contractor, and employees.

Networking and collaboration form a value chain that enhances the probability of project award (Sedita & Apa, 2015). To improve the quality and safety of a project, main contractors readily chose sub-contractors whom they have a positive working relationship with (Manu, Ankrah, Proverbs, & Suresh, 2013). In private projects, partnering formed out of networks can be attained; however, in public projects, price becomes the dominating factor in the selection of a contractor, so the guarantee and use of partnering is limited (Ning, 2014). Ning (2014) posited that in networking, there are two types of relationships: embedded and arms-length. Embedded relationships hinge on social

connections and arms-length relationships rely on calculated, profit-seeking motivators (Ning, 2014). Transactional and relational are concepts related to networking, where relational orientation aligns similar channel organizations in the creation of value for the members (Quinton & Wilson, 2016).

In the process of data collection for this study, I was invited to attend a networking event involving two of the participants. The two participants served on the committee for this association. During the event, I was able to observe the nature of the relationships involving the two participants within the structure of an industry-sponsored seminar and networking event. I witnessed the participants actively involved in embedded relationships with a host of professionals that represented the construction industry and symbiotic industries such as banking, insurance, and legal that specialized in the construction trades. To illustrate the importance of networking, P1 stated, "I never realized the value of networking until I became so involved in so many organizational (association) boards". In our follow-up discussion on the interpretations of the findings, P1 reiterated the importance of networking in her statement; "Becoming part of an organization (association) was *pivotal* in the growth of my organization (firm) because I was learning from peers". Ironically, in the research conducted by Salvador, Villechenon, and Rizzo, (2014) the term *pivotal* was used to express the value of networking in creating value and success for an organization.

Networking appears to have an influence on marketing by increasing opportunities and decreasing costs. Blackburn et al. (2013) affirmed that organizations

that used alliances experience increased opportunity without the increase in the use of assets. P2 recognized the potential of networking early on in the formation of the business. In regards to marketing the firm-P2 stated; "We do not necessarily market, but we network. We use industry outlets". P3 further considered this thought in her statement on networking;

I surround myself with professional organizations. I love to talk with people. My attorneys, my insurance people, my accountant, they all are my team. When my banker comes in I am always asking how other people are doing (in the industry). I love people and that's the way I learn, I am very hands on.

Networking appears to be essential to each participant's operation, not only in project development, but in the administrative activities such as finance, insurance, and legal. Crowe, Foley, and Collier (2016) asserted that this form of collaboration and networking with industry professionals, otherwise known as *trans-disciplinary perspective* enables planning for flexibility and helps build a knowledge base through the sharing of different points of view and expertise.

Talent acquisition through referrals is another aspect generated through the process of networking (Dutta, 2014). Information about an organization passes through the network to a recruit, generally through employee referrals or social media, and if the information creates interest, the organization benefits with new talent (Dutta, 2014). Union affiliated labor is another source in networking for talent acquisition for the construction trades. In construction, project success depends on the use of qualified

talent, most often secured from union affiliation from business agent to the HR recruiter. The participants in this study stated that they do hire union labor, so the networking also extends to the talent acquisition function. Although the aspect of talent acquisition or human resource (HR) function is vital to the operations in the construction industry, the aspect of networking and unions in this study is limited due to the complexity of the subject.

Currently, there is a lack of research on the motivational forces on a psychological and social level as to why individuals form networks (Porter & Woo, 2015). Viewing interpersonal networking through the expectancy theory and relational schema, Porter and Woo (2015) examined the social-cognitive motivators that enable the creation and building of network relationships. Relational schema is the knowledge of one's network partner, oneself, and the motivations which forms foundation of the network (Porter & Woo, 2015). Further explanation of the expectancies that underline networking highlights the *intraindividual psychology* that inspires the creation, building, and maintenance of networks for specific goals with complimentary resources (Porter & Woo, 2015).

Added analysis on business networks indicated the contingent nature of networks in geography, life-cycle stage of the business, and the industrial network in which they belong (Presutti, Boari, & Majocchi, 2013). In relation to business start-ups and networks, a local proximity networking provides greater possibility for knowledge sharing (Presutti, et al., 2013). Presutti et al. (2013) further explained that the assumption of proximity is contingent on the life cycle of the business, i.e., emerging or growing as

well as the industries involved within the network. Although knowledge transfer is a strategic resource of networking, the degree this transfer occurs is contingent on the characteristics of the organizations that form the network.

Application to Professional Practice

Application to professional practice is the action of using the acquired knowledge or talent in a practical setting. The findings in this study provided insight on the business planning strategies of WOSBs in the construction trades. The specific business problem was that some WOSBs in the construction trades lack business-planning strategies for sustainability and growth. In a review of the data in the study and the literature review, I determined that the findings of WOSBs are not unique and apply to the construction profession as a whole due to the generality of the problem. Continuous business planning for goals and objectives and review of the business planning strategies serve as a roadmap for the organization and is fundamental to the growth and sustainability of the firm regardless of owner gender. The participants in the study agreed that teamwork and communication are the key components in the success of their organization. Communication is vital within the team that carries out the actions in support of the business strategies (Van Hove, 2016).

In a service-orientated industry such as construction, teamwork is essential for the completion of projects. Team collaboration is essential in expanding the knowledge base that support the problem solving function (Resick et al., 2014). A further consideration expressed from the participants is the planning of continued education for all employees.

Formal and informal training adds to breathe of knowledge the organization possesses and provides a competitive advantage through the quality provided in product and services. Building on knowledge provides an organization with a competitive advantage by remaining flexible to change. The planning strategies outlined in this study provide insight into the dimensions of thought necessary for a small business owner to use for the forecasting of their own firm's growth.

Essentially, most for-profit business owners will agree that one of the primary goals of operation is to gain a net profit from their investment of time and resources. Using net profit as a benchmark is an indicator of a firm's performance (Mohamad, Ibrahim, & Massoud, 2013). The expectation of business owners to turn a profit in their organization aligns with the measurement of a successful business venture and the fruitfulness of the investment of the owner's time and resources. For an organization to grow and thrive, the leaders must engage in continuous business planning that incorporates the elements of communication to facilitate the successful execution of the goals (Van Hove, 2016).

Implications for Social Change

Small business enterprises add to the economic system, positively affect the employment rate and add to the gross domestic product of a nation (Belás, Bilan, Ključnikov, Vincúrová, & Macháček, 2015). In the United States, 99.7% of employing firms are from small businesses (Hyder & Lussier, 2016). Despite the benefits of the small business on the community, small business owners face risk and uncertainty in

sustainability (Belás et al., 2015; Miles, 2014). Risks are uncertainties that can be desirable or undesirable (Belás et al., 2015). Ascertaining the risks and developing a plan to address the uncertainties is the objective to business planning.

In this study, I explored the business planning strategies that WOSBs used to promote sustainability and growth. The participants involved in this study represented the successful application of business planning strategies in their organization. Success in small business is measured individually and is dependent on personal satisfaction, economic stability, work-life balance, quality products, creativity, and innovation (Hazudin, Kader, Tarmuji, Ishak, & Ali, 2015). The findings and recommendations in this study could be used by new and existing small business owners to assess their current business environment and help them with their planning initiatives. A core element found in the study is the importance of networking within industries. Networking builds the knowledge base through collaboration with others of various learning stages and expertise (Oesterreich & Teuteberg, 2016; Quinton & Wilson, 2016). Continuous education initiatives enhance organizational success through industry awareness and change. The education initiatives used by professional associations, community organizations, and local government groups help strengthen industry intelligence of the small business owners. The use of business planning strategies by industry professionals can help promote social change by building a stronger base for small business owners to facilitate growth and stability of their business. In turn, the development of small businesses will help society by providing economic stability through employment.

Furthermore, through education, the necessary knowledge and tools become accessible for small businesses to build and maintain the local infrastructure through the labor of skilled and qualified talent. The collaboration of the small business owner with trade associations, qualified professionals, and local government has an impact on the social behavior, growth and stability of the local population by creating wealth in knowledge sharing and social participation (Reynoso, Alarcón Osuna, & Ocampo Figueroa, 2014).

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case research study was to explore the business planning strategies WOSBs in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth. The population interviewed for this study consisted of three successful WOSB owners in the construction trades in New Jersey who have been in business for 5 years or more. The criteria of 5 years helped establish the success of the organization through the longevity of the business. The findings in this study, although resourced on the perspective of a WOSB, can apply universally to any small business in the construction trade. As stressed by the study participants, the elements of continuous planning, networking, communication, teamwork, and education are vital to the development of business in an industry such as construction. The construction environment is ever changing as projects are unique in composition and are unpredictable and risky (Keung & Shen, 2013). Through continuous planning and review, the small business owner can project and adapt to elements of change, limiting risks, and creating opportunity for growth.

To plan effectively, it is important for industry leaders to take an active role in understanding and planning for continuous education initiatives, effectively plan for the resources needed for organizational stability, and form alliances with fellow colleagues for support and networking. A small business in an industrial sector such as construction rarely operates in isolation, but in a network of specialties that collaborate to achieve a project goal (Bankvall, 2014). Through the analysis of the data from the participants, I discovered that business-planning strategies are a combination of several strategies and not one single element. Radomska (2016) posited that strategy is contingent on the priorities for planning held by the organizational leaders. It is through the synergy and adaptation of strategies that a small business can grow and sustain.

Upon publication of this study I intend to share the findings with the local WOSB construction association. In my interview process, 2 of my participants informed me of a local professional women in construction association and of their involvement in this association. This particular association provides mentoring and guidance to new or less successful WOSBs, and provides networking and insight for successful organizations. Soon after learning of this association, I became a member. I believe that the findings and recommendations outlined in the study can serve as a roadmap for future development of local WOSB in construction as well as all small business in general.

Recommendations for Further Research

The topic I presented in this study is just a small element in the complex industry of construction. In contemplating my recommendations for further research, I considered

my own industry experience and reflected on my academic research. The ideas I considered for recommendations were vast because of the multiplicity of application within this field. In consideration of my experience and education, I reflected on two significant research topics that will have a positive impact for knowledge and change.

The first recommendation is also a concern indicated by Abd-Hamid et al. (2015). Abd-Hamid et al suggested that there has been little research on success factors in the construction trades on a *corporate level*. Most research about construction organizational success focused on a *project level*, leaving a gap of understanding on the impact in the decisions corporate leaders have on the success of the business. The parameters of this study centered on the business planning strategies from the business owners' perspective which is a corporate and not a project level exploration. The overarching question that I addressed pertains to business planning strategies, and not the combination of corporate level interactions that are factors for organizational success.

The second recommendation I suggest for further research is the application of digitization for logistics and supply chain management in the construction industry. The advantage in advancing the role of technology in construction increases production, provides uniformity in material acquisition, and increases innovation (Oesterreich & Teuteberg, 2016). Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) is an example of innovation that can be advantageous to the construction industry (Hinkka & Tätälä, 2013). RFID is a supply chain tracking system that assists in connecting the materials shipped, to the destination point, to production (Hinkka & Tätälä, 2013). The benefit of a RFID system

stems from the impact tracking has on production. Realizing the products in inventory enables a productive labor force and avoids work interruptions.

My intent in conducting this study was to explore the planning strategies of successful WOSBs to understand what factors promote business success. Although the findings in my study identify corporate level success strategies, it too is limited to only women-owned construction businesses. A recommendation for further research would be to incorporate a broader scope of the population of small business construction firms to help reach a larger aspect of exploration of the success factors within the entire construction community. In addition, further exploration of technology in construction and success on the corporate level will expand the knowledge base and demonstrate social awareness.

Reflections

My academic journey with Walden University originally started with my desire to complete the Bachelor's degree program. In reflection, I never anticipated going as far as I have academically; however, the staff and faculty at Walden has made it a rewarding and triumphant experience. As I look back I am very proud that I have pursued my graduate education and have accomplished this aspiration; satisfying the requirements for this terminal degree. The definition of terminal is so defining but also liberating in knowing that I have accomplished a tremendous goal; one only a minority of individuals can claim.

During the interview and research process, I made a conscious effort to mitigate bias by following interview protocol. Prior to the interviews, I did not know personally or professionally any of the individuals that participated in this study. In my consent form, I disclosed that I am a WOSB in the construction trades, similar to the participants. In hindsight, I believe the participants felt a sense of camaraderie and legitimacy knowing that a fellow professional colleague pursuing a graduate degree found importance to explore their practiced business experiences.

In the process of writing my doctoral study, I had some setbacks and many changes. I believe the setbacks and changes are part of the learning process and if I did not experience these elements, my understanding of the DBA program and research methods would not have been as rich and rewarding. Some of the changes were a result of my change of topic of study and change in committee chair. Duly noted that both changes were necessary and in retrospect enabled me to continue to attain my objective.

The participant interviews that I conducted for this study opened my eyes to the resources available to WOSBs that I was not aware of in the past. As an active member in the construction industry, I became aware, through this study, that planning and projection is vital to an organization's growth and survival. I discovered that it is important to connect and pool resources of knowledge through networking to meet the challenges that all small business owners face.

Conclusion

The construction trade is a volatile, competitive, and changing industry that requires the owners of the businesses that support this market to be flexible, responsive, and diligent in their operations. This project-based environment is continually changing, so the business leader needs to be receptive to change while aligning with the expectations of the customer, the organization's personnel, and industry standards. To facilitate the responsiveness of the organization, business planning to set goals and objectives becomes paramount to support organizational growth.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the business planning strategies that successful WOSB owners in the construction trades use for sustainability and growth. Three WOSB owners participated in this study where they shared their experiences and knowledge of how their organizations had grown and succeeded in the industry. I used semistructured interviews to explore the business planning strategies WOSB owners use to grow and sustain their organization. Five themes emerged from the findings, (a) constant review of goals and plan, (b) communication and teamwork, (c) reliance on experience, (d) education and (e) networking. The themes discovered within the process of the study represent opportunities that small business can employ to grow, sustain, and gain market and competitive advantage. Organized business planning assists in the application of resources that encourages business success (Oleksiy, Costa, & Madill, 2016). By using

the processes outlined in the findings of this study, small businesses can benefit and prosper, adding to the social and economic fabric of the community.

In 2014 in the United States, women only represented 2.5% of the labor force in construction; a significantly lower standard of 6.5% hoped for by the federal government (Arcand, 2016). The stagnation of growth for women in construction can be attributed to the barriers they encounter that includes being paid lower wages than men, possessing less technical skills, termination after gender quota is met, decrease in networks necessary for acquiring work, and sexual harassment (Arcand, 2016). In order for women to increase their representation in the construction industry, greater interest into the factors that inhibit the growth and how to overcome needs to be addressed by researchers, industry organizations, government organizations and the pedagogical community. This interest may have a positive influence on social change by empowering women to contribute their knowledge and talent and aspire to become small business owners in such a diverse industry of the construction trades.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Outlined in this interview protocol is a script of procedures that the researcher uses in the collection of the data in the interview process (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The main research question for this study is: What business planning strategies do women-owned construction trade small businesses use to achieve sustainability and growth? In this qualitative multiple case exploratory study, 11 open-ended interview questions will be asked. The participants of the study are WOSB owners whose primary industry is the construction trades operating in New Jersey.

Contact to Participants

Contact to the participants in the study is via telephone or email by the researcher, and the interview process is face-to-face.

Interview Location

The location for interviews is determined by the researcher and participant, taking into consideration privacy and confidentiality concerns. Public libraries are a recommendation for location.

Purpose and Explanation of Study

The researcher will provide in detail the purpose and intent of the study. The expectations of the participants will be explained by the researcher. A consent form is utilized for the study, and is signed by the participant with a copy returned to the participant.

Interview Process

The researcher will take notes and record all interviews. Following the interview process, the researcher will send a note of appreciation to the participant for their participation.

Transcription and Member Checking

The researcher will transcribe and summarize all recorded interviews, providing a copy to each participant. The researcher will contact the participant by telephone or email to check the summary for accuracy or understanding, otherwise known as member checking.

Interview Questions

The following 11 questions are the interview questions for the study:

1. What planning strategies do you use to sustain and grow your business?
2. What obstacles did you face in developing and implementing planning strategies?
3. What factors motivate your strategies in goal planning?
4. How do you update planning strategies based on changing conditions?
5. What are your business strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT)?
6. What differentiates your organization from others in the same industry that avails the organization a competitive advantage?
7. What business strategies did you use to startup your business?

8. What goals and strategic elements did your business plan contain when you initially established your business?
9. How have the goals and business plan changed since business start-up?
10. How have you increased your knowledge in business planning strategies over the years of operation?
11. What additional information would you like to communicate in regards to your business planning strategies?