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# Managerial Strategies to Sustain Small Auto Repair Businesses

Osaka Kugblenu Tetteh-Odonkor  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Osaka Kugblenu Tetteh-Odonkor

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

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Walden University

2018

Abstract  
Managerial Strategies to Sustain Small Auto Repair Businesses

by

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MBA, Keller Graduate School of Management, 2014

BBA, University of Cape Coast, 2008

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

May 2018

## Abstract

Small auto repair business owners need strong operational skills; however, some lack expertise in managerial strategy. The purpose of this multiple case study was to identify managerial strategies small auto repair business owners use to sustain businesses in Columbus, Ohio with respect to strategy, time management, and alteration of value chain services. Based on the Vroom expectancy theory of motivation, small auto repair business owners may use effectiveness and efficiency of business performance with particular emphasis on managerial strategic development and execution to enhance financial results and rewards. Data collection involved face-to-face, semistructured interviews with 5 small auto repair business owners. Analysis of the interview transcripts involved coding data to identify key themes. Themes that emerged from the study included effective managerial strategies for small auto repair business owners, business plans, initial challenges and addressing subsequent changes, education and certification, customer satisfaction and business knowledge, and financial analysis and reporting. Recommendations for enhanced small auto repair business ownership focus included adequate access to resources to achieve operational competence and achieve managerial success. Findings from this study might engender positive social change by providing owners of small auto repair businesses ways to improve planning processes and make prudent investments to ensure long-term, viable, and sustainable businesses.

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## Dedication

I dedicate my research to my extraordinary family. To my wife and best friend, Naa Dedei, my strongest support, for encouraging my thirst for knowledge and adding humor during stressful times along the way. To my two sons, Nartey and Djormoh, and two daughters, Narki and Narkuor. To the memory of my late mother who, even though she ended her education at third grade, found a way to push me up the educational ladder. To my sisters and brothers for their support. To my late mother who served as my mentor and hero and a role model igniting my passion to succeed. The inspiration derived from my family was second to the divine inspiration I subtly rely upon from the almighty God.

## Acknowledgments

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I appreciate all my excellent instructors at Walden University. I thank my doctoral colleagues and classmates with whom I shared this extraordinary journey. I particularly appreciate my classmates in the doctoral study completion course for their advice, counsel, and motivational words of encouragement throughout this lonely journey. Thank you to my family, the Tetteh-Odonkor family, especially my wife Naa Dedei, for their unwavering support. Also, thank you, Dr. Solomon Aborbie and Dr. Elliot Masocha, for encouraging and inspiring me.

Small auto repair business owners are a national asset. I gratefully acknowledge the participating small auto repair business owners who work tirelessly to improve their lives, the lives of their families, and the communities they serve. I am indeed grateful that my life's work involves helping small auto repair businesses find workable managerial strategies for their business needs.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Jobs created by small business owners stimulate job growth in the United States economy, yet small business owners are failing at an alarming rate (Obi, 2013). The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA, 2014) noted that small business owners create 63% of net new private-sector jobs in the United States; however, the U.S. Department of Commerce (as cited in SBA, 2014) reported that 50% of new small business startups fail within the first 5 years of operation. Thomas, Gudmundson, Turner, and Suhr (2014) explained that small business owners produce half of all private gross domestic product and employ half of the private sector workforce. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore what managerial strategies small auto repair business owners used to sustain business beyond 5 years. Factors that minimize small auto repair owners' failure rate might result in increased job opportunity.

### **Background of the Problem**

The United States has not recovered from the recession and economic downsizing that began in 2007, affecting businesses in the United States (Brixy, Sternberg, & Stuber, 2013). The United States federal government has stepped in to help small business industries. Finding the key success factors might help stabilize small businesses in the U.S. economy to drive future economic growth as new strategies are implemented (Brixy et al., 2013). Small- and medium-scale businesses are considered a large part of U.S. economy. Small businesses are referred to as the vehicle for economic growth and development. Small businesses are further classified as a vital building block of any market economy. Wagner (2013) reported that entrepreneurs are more innovative than employees and managers. Entrepreneurial activity is the match between the enterprise

and the opportunity, which may or may not lead to a firm's growth trajectory (Cumming, Pandes, & Robinson, 2015). One goal of small business owners is the development of products and services for the intended customer or market (Miettinen & Littunen, 2013).

The gross underperformance of some small auto repair businesses undermines their contribution to a nation's growth and development. The small auto repair business owner is an entrepreneur who starts their own new small business (Cumming et al., 2015). In the United States, the federal government has a policy that is centered on assistance to support small businesses to reduce the risk of failure and to improve the average performance of new firms (Brixy et al., 2013). Owners of small auto repair businesses in a competitive market will need to possess strong managerial strategies to sustain their business operations (Brixy et al., 2013). Small business start-ups within the United States have a failure rate range between 70% to 80% in the first 5 years of business (Mason, 2014). The SBA (2013a) reported that over 50% of small businesses fail within the first 5 years of operation. Thus, small business failure continues to affect the United States economy.

### **Problem Statement**

Twenty-eight percent of small auto repair business owners use broad differentiation and managerial strategies in their business operations (Alstete, 2014). As of 2014, 50% of new businesses did not survive beyond 5 years, and 67% did not survive beyond 10 years as a direct consequence of business bankruptcies (SBA, 2016a). The general business problem was some individuals embark on small business initiatives without adequate preparation in understanding sustainability and managerial strategies such as accounting, marketing, decision-making, and personnel management. The

specific business problem was some small auto repair business owners lack managerial strategies to sustain their business operation beyond 5 years.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore what managerial strategies small auto repair business owners use to sustain their business operation beyond 5 years. The target population for this study was five auto repair small business owners in Franklin County, Ohio who have sustained their businesses for a minimum of 5 years. The results of this study could contribute to positive social change by reducing small business failure rates. A lower business failure rate may reduce unemployment and help achieve a higher quality of living for employees. Furthermore, the findings could help business and government leaders formulate assistance programs for owners of small businesses and assist new entrepreneurs promote their self-worth, dignity, and development of individuals in the community.

### **Nature of the Study**

Qualitative researchers seek to explore an understanding of a specific process based on the experiences and perceptions of those experiencing the process (Allwood, 2012). Cottrell and Donaldson (2013) reported that using a qualitative method gives more iterative and dramatic views about individual experiences, relationships, perceptions, and norm as a matter of convention. Researchers employing the quantitative research methods examine and explain relationships and differences among variables (Prowse & Camfield, 2013). However, the explorative nature of this study made the quantitative research method inappropriate. Integrating both qualitative and quantitative research (mixed method) techniques can maximize the strength and minimize the

weakness of each method (Starr, 2014). However, the additional cost and time involved in conducting a mixed method made a mixed method inappropriate to use for this study.

Childers (2014) suggested that the specific needs of case study research arise out of the edge to understand complex organizational and managerial processes. Antwerpen and Curtis (2016) suggested that using a case study design enables comparison among the observed practices by subjects studied to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of these practices. I selected a multiple case study design over a phenomenological and ethnographic design. The phenomenological design is an idiographic research approach that explores in-depth individual subjective experiences and how the individuals make sense of their personal and social world (Hudson, Duncan, Pattison, & Shaw, 2015). Exploring the unique essence of a participant's knowledge through a phenomenological design did not fit my research question. Researchers who implement the ethnographic design seek to explore the belief and culture of individuals who had shared behavioral patterns in their natural settings (Carpenter-Song, Holcombe, Torrey, Hipolito, & Peterson, 2014). I was not studying the organizational culture, so an ethnographic research design was not appropriate.

### **Research Question**

What managerial strategies do small auto repair business owners use to sustain their business operation beyond 5 years?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What managerial strategies have you successfully used to sustain your business within a changing environment?
2. What managerial strategies do you employ to resolve financial pitfalls?

3. What alternative managerial strategies do you use to achieve financial sustainability?
4. What metrics, if any, do you use to measure the success of your managerial strategies?
5. How do you determine the success of your managerial strategies?
6. Describe challenges you had with your managerial strategies and how you addressed the challenges.
7. What additional managerial strategy information would you like to provide?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation was the framework for this study. Expectancy theory explains why an individual will act in a certain way based on the expectation for a given outcome. Vroom developed expectancy motivational theory in 1964 (Vroom, 1964). Researchers use the expectancy motivational theory to explain work output. Key propositions underlying Vroom's expectancy theory were (a) expectancy, (b) valence, and (c) instrumentality. Expectancy is the probability that effort will lead to performance, valence is the reward adequate to attract people to achieve results, and instrumentality is the confirmation that a particular performance level will result in a specific outcome (Manolova, Brush, Edelman, & Shaver, 2012).

Expectancy theory and personality traits act together as the driving force for action, discipline, and development for small businesses (Magidson, Roberts, Collado-Rodriguez, & Lejuez, 2014). Small business owners combine both discipline and developmental attitude to succeed in their entrepreneurial venture (Renko, Kroeck, & Bullough, 2012). The influence of personality traits may be stronger in an entrepreneur



than in any other professional, and personality traits link to expectations (Judge & Zapata, 2015). Expectancy and achievement are favorable both for business formation and business success (Sloka, Kantane, Avotins, & Jermolajeva, 2014). As entrepreneurial success is dependent on effort, performance, and motivation to succeed, Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation was appropriate for this study.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Accountability:* This concept is the obligation of businesses to account for their operations and disclose their results to stakeholders (Leyden, Link, & Siegel, 2014).

*Business performance:* This may be observed directly from the financial statements or indirectly by obtaining views of the management or from financial performance areas such as sales level, market shares, and profits (Aydin & Ulengin, 2015).

*Constraints:* The triggers that emanate from internal and external conditions imposed on a team and are uneasy for team members to manipulate (Toma, Grigore, & Marinescu, 2014).

*Entrepreneurial failure:* Entrepreneurial failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently after a business failure (Yamakawa & Cardon, 2015).

*Entrepreneurial success:* Entrepreneurs doing well have low negative and high positive emotions (Byrne & Shephard, 2015).

*Exploitative:* Management control activities focus on cost reduction, refinement, remodeling, efficiency, and improvement of quality (Schermann, Wiesche, & Kremer, 2012).

*Family business:* A firm is considered a family business if a family has more than 50% of the shares in the firm, two or more shareholders have the same surname, and at

least one member is a director (Wilson, Wright, & Scholes, 2015).

*Information asymmetry:* Information asymmetry is the concept of one party to a transaction who has either more or better information than the other party and is most commonly studied within the context of principal and agent relationship (Newman, Borgia, & Deng, 2013).

*Performance:* Performance is the ability to work on something that is achieved, and it is an objective reality than can be known and can be observed (Obi, 2013).

*Sustainability:* The concept of sustainability can and must be linked to business activities and environments in terms of socioeconomic, ideological, and political trends (Bouten & Hoozee, 2015; Melissen, 2013).

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

Theoretical assumptions determine the scope and implications of theories (Foss & Hallberg, 2013). Decisions are based on valid assumptions, and researchers must check the validity of these assumptions to proactively address possible problems that might be caused by erroneous assumptions (Gao, Ergan, Akinci, & Garrett, 2013). In a research study, limitations must be stated in three basic ways to give confidence in the research study such as disclosing the limitations, describing the limitations, and describing the directions for future research (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013). Unlike limitations, which take its source from implicit characteristics of method and design of a research, delimitations result from specific choices made by the researcher.

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are facts considered true, but not verified, and they support a clear, logical rationale for a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Assumptions are an

embodiment of model premise on four basic scientific theories, namely consistency, broad scope, simplicity, and being fruitful to new research findings (Foss & Hallberg, 2014). In this study, the main assumption was that the interview questions were adequate for the purpose of the study. Secondly, the participants' information was accurate and yielded pragmatic results. Thirdly, participants' knowledge level helped in providing direction for the research. A fourth assumption was that participants have maintained all necessary records to support managerial decision-making. Finally, it was assumed that the participants told me the truth about their operation with a goal of helping answer the research question.

### **Limitations**

Limitations indicate the potential shortcomings of a study that could twist the credibility of the research findings (Brutus et al., 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Limitations are constraints that are beyond the researcher's control that have the potential of affecting a research outcome. The principal limitation of this study was the perception of participants and the fact that the study was limited to small auto repair businesses that have made profit. Another limitation was the sample size, which may not be a true representation of the small auto repair business population throughout the study area. With the above limitation in mind, I made efforts to verify some of the facts and assertions. The inability or inaction to verify all data provided and claims within the specified period of the study may have posed a limitation. Even though the study may be beneficial to owners of small auto repair businesses that make profit, it can also be helpful to nonprofit organizations. The in-depth nature of this multiple case study might

be applicable directly to similar businesses with same characteristics but not all kinds of small enterprises.

### **Delimitations**

The concept of delimitation helps define the boundaries of the research and propositions (Yin, 2014). The delimitations of a study are all the features that stem from the limitations of the study. The boundaries as specified in this study of small auto repair businesses in Franklin County, Ohio operating for over 5 years with fewer than 200 employees and less than \$2 million in annual revenue narrowed the study's boundaries. Furthermore, the scope of this study of managerial strategies used to sustain business beyond 5 years did not include sustainability plans beyond managerial strategies. Long term growth objectives, marketing initiatives, and financial engineering plans are outside the scope of this study.

### **Significance of the Study**

U.S. small business survival depends on reliable managerial skills (Ejermo & Xiao, 2014). This multiple case study involved exploring small auto repair shop owners' managerial strategies for business survival beyond 5 years. Small businesses provide 63% of net new private-sector jobs in the United States (SBA, 2014). U.S. small businesses employed 48% of the private workforce in 2013 alone (SBA, 2016b). An increased understanding of small business owners' strategies for survival beyond 5 years was important for catalyzing auto repair shop's sustainability and new job creation.

Unlike large firms, small auto repair business owners do not have adequate managerial strategies to survive and attain financial stability beyond 5 years (Lekhanya & Mason, 2014). Small business owners lack managerial strategies because they do not

seek knowledge in management (Wardayati, 2016). Despite this vulnerability, little research exists on how small business owners survive and attain financial stability beyond 5 years. Successful small auto repair business owners have a goal to achieve sustainability and growth (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013).

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

By completing this study, I may draw the attention of small business owners to the effectiveness of managerial-entrepreneurial and financial management strategies to attain financial sustainability. Brixy et al. (2013) stated that only 50% of entrepreneurs seek professional assistance because the other half are overconfident and overestimate their abilities. Owners of small auto repair businesses may misjudge the risk involved in starting a business or do not know the availability of professional assistance. Although there were prior studies about financial sustainability from the perspective of academic research and economic performance, a managerial perspective is lacking. Financial sustainability goes well beyond financial performance. Financial sustainability includes financial management, managerial skills, and developmental attitudes; they are the cardinal points upon which businesses survive (Karadag, 2015). Financial sustainability can help small auto repair business owners maintain their role as partners of growth in the economic development and create more jobs for families.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The concept of social change can be meaningful and beneficial to business owners who use the concept of social change as a corporate social responsibility by giving back to society. A social change implication for this doctoral study was that its findings could catalyze a culture of corporate social responsibility. Small auto repair

business owners have the potential to improve the quality of life (Hayes, Chawla, & Kathawala, 2015). Equally important, the findings and recommendations from this study can enable owners of small auto repair businesses to increase and promote the benefit of consumers, employees, suppliers, and local communities.

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

The study of managerial strategies on small auto repair businesses in Franklin County, Ohio necessitated the review of scholarly and peer-reviewed journals. A review of these peer-reviewed journals enabled me to research and articulate the different schools of thought on issues of managerial strategies and how managerial strategies affect profitability of small auto repair business owners. A comprehensive literature review involved identifying, summarizing, and synthesizing studies within a large body of research on the particular research topic or subject matter, and it was dependent on good alignment of the problem statement through the methodology (Neumann & Covrig, 2013). The literature review provided me the opportunity to present reviews on previously published findings on the subject matter under consideration.

To gain an insight on what constitutes and causes small auto repair businesses and businesses in general to fail, I conducted a case study with a detailed review of how researchers examined small business success. The review of the literature increased my understanding of how other scholars explored the concept of small auto repair business failure as a result of inadequate managerial strategies and financial sustainability strategies. Daigneault, Jacob, and Quimet (2014) noted that a literature review provides a new interpretation and understanding of existing research, procedures, and strategies on how owners of small auto repair businesses are motivated to adapt financially to aid

profitability of their businesses. In order to accomplish the above objectives, my literature review covered the following key elements: (a) definition, meaning, and causative factors of small business failure; (b) discussion on the genealogy of motivational theories; (c) the classical and theorist approaches to motivation; (d) components of expectancy motivational theories; (e) motivation for one to start his or her own business; (f) literature review on research methods and designs; (g) application of expectancy theory to business owner's success; (h) strategic business planning; (i) themes emerging from the literature review; and (j) gaps in the literature.

Analysis of these thematic areas enhanced my understanding of how factors that cause small business failure have evolved over time. In addition, the in-depth review of the literature included, but was not limited to, exploration, analysis, and discussion of information about the research question: What are the managerial strategies small auto repair business owners use to sustain business beyond 5 years? I searched various sources, including the following: scholarly and peer-reviewed articles, publications in line with the research topic, industry reports and articles, government reports, and data found in the following databases: Google Scholar, Ebscohost, ProQuest, Science Direct, Business Source Complete, LexisNexis, Academic Source Complete, Emerald Management Journal, Management and Organizational Studies Journal, and government websites. The database used in the literature research included both scholarly and timely information written within the time frame prescribed by Walden University and IRB. Ulrich's Periodical Directory served as the mechanism to verify peer-reviewed articles.

Key research words included *small business owners, types of small business owners, characteristics of successful small business owners, failures and challenges of*

*small business owners, small business financing, entrepreneurs, small business startup and planning, small business marketing, small business customer satisfaction, and small business sustainability.* I selected these words as to why some small business owners are successful when many others fail. I used 245 references in the study. Two hundred and thirty-two (91%) references are peer reviewed, and 238 (96%) references are less than 5 years old from the anticipated date of chief academic officer's approval.

Motivation is an internal dynamism based on people's need that inspires them to accomplish a set task (Ferris et al., 2012). To receive the benefit of motivation, one must consider motivators like value, work, environment, passion for the job, and opportunity for advancement and needs (Ferris et al., 2012). In this doctoral study, Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation was the framework to enhance motivation and how the expectancy theory affects owners of small auto repair businesses in sustaining their business beyond 5 years (Ferris et al., 2012). If owners of small auto repair businesses believe that putting more efforts into managing their businesses would lead to better performance, then it is logical to assume that the theory will lead to an increase in owner motivation that positively impacted their business sustainability (Lai & Lin, 2015). Drawing on the affect-expectancy theory, the experiential emotions on satisfaction depends on consumer expectation in relation to these emotions (Mazzietto & Koenig, 2014).

Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation was the conceptual framework for this study. The applicable concept relevant to organization is for owners of small auto repair businesses to be motivated enough to strategically relate their efforts to expectation (Hema-Malini & Anthea, 2014). The effort and performance factors are seen and viewed



from the perspective of various work-related issues such as the work environment, resources employed, and other amenities used for work. Scholars have assumed that based on expectancy theory, people will normally put in maximum effort on the assumption that their efforts will lead to good performance and that effective performance will result in obtaining positive rewards (Hema-Malini & Anthea, 2014). Researchers have applied the subject of motivation in the field of applied sciences. Motivation is increasingly applied in entrepreneurship research, but outside entrepreneurial studies knowledge in motivation has revived interest, in particular theories like expectancy theory as it relates to self-goals, training, turnover, productivity, goal commitment, and goal level (Vroom, 1964). Even though expectancy theory is applied in other social sciences, expectancy theory has not been applied to entrepreneurial motivation to start a business. Traditionally, people start businesses with economic intent and maximization of profit (Malik, Butt, & Choi, 2014), but it is also clear that other noneconomic reasons, such as fulfillment and prestige, are the reasons for individuals to start their own business (Renko et al., 2012). Establishment is one of the most important outcomes of an entrepreneurial effort, and individual motivation is directly linked with effort exerted (Yamakawa & Cardon, 2015). The factors that motivate entrepreneurs to start their business creation expedition include intended efforts, task performance, and time spent on task (Renko et al., 2012). Drawing upon expectancy theory of motivation, both reinforcement and self-determination pathways reveal the informational and controlling functions of creativity-related extrinsic rewards (Malik et al., 2014).

### **Definition, Meaning, and Causative Factors of Small Business Failure**

The literature review provided a vivid analysis of reviews on the doctoral study topic. Researchers of entrepreneurship have contended that an individual's decision to behave entrepreneurially is influenced by his personal characteristics, but more important is the business environment, individual personal goal sets, a viable business idea, individual perception of the probable outcomes, and the personal expectation (Klotz & Neubaum, 2016). The field of entrepreneurship is in a unique position to bridge the gap between the macro and micro divide in the organizational science. Small business is defined as an independent business having fewer than 500 employees (SBA, 2014). Business failure occurs when a fall in revenue and a rise in expense is of greater magnitude where the firm becomes insolvent and is unable to attract new debt or equity funding, and for that matter can be a business with a growing concern. Moreover, given the high uncertainty associated with the pursuit of opportunity, failure is a frequent occurrence (Byrne & Shepherd, 2015).

Failure is another form of learning or making sense out of poor performance. Business failure generates both negative and positive emotions that play a valuable role in prompting reflection and analysis in the aftermath (Byrne & Shepherd, 2015). The reason why some small businesses fail while only a few survive is attributed to a lack of seeking professional assistance. Some entrepreneurs feel self-sufficient and well informed about how to start up a business. However, others are overconfident in themselves and might misjudge the risk involved in the start-up. Small business owners may also not be aware of the availability of professional assistance (Brixy et al., 2013). The challenges impacting owners of small auto repair businesses in the United States are

critical to their survival. Key participants among a complex set of interrelated factors include (a) availability of capital, (b) adequate human resources, (c) governmental organization and relations, and (d) strategic planning. All the above, are pertinent to the United States and Mexico, who happen to be in the same market proximity, but budgeting and planning, training, and development are more important in Mexico than in the United States. Some business owners depend on their own intelligence and do not seek to know what goes on around their environment (Hayes et al., 2015). An entrepreneur's failure in small business is attributed to limited resources, access to finance, and lack of skills. The managerial implication is that owners of small auto repair businesses must pay attention to and improve their funding strategies and the source of income for the sustainability of their business (Lekhanya & Mason, 2014). The costly nature of a two-stage ensemble model to predict the performance and failure of businesses hinders an entrepreneur's success. The failure of the firm causes financial and emotional stress. The use of a two-ensemble model may result in making entrepreneurs proactive, rather than reactive, since the model is helpful for practitioners to control risk in their decisions (Li, Sun, Li, & Yan, 2013).

### **Discussion on Genealogy of Motivational Theories**

The development of motivational theories is seen in three major classifications such as earlier theories that focuses on individual needs, behaviors, values, and expectations acting as sources of motivation. Among the first group of theorists are (a) Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, (b) McClelland's (1961) achievement motivation, (c) Vroom's (1964) expectancy valence theory, and (d) Lock's (1975) goal setting theory (Hewapathirana, 2012). The first generation of theorists considered the individual as the

primary unit of analysis to generate motivation. The second generation of theorists thought of intrinsic and individual factors and the surrounding contextual factors that affect motivation. Among them are Adams' (1963) equity theory and Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959) hygiene motivation theory (Hewapathirana, 2012). The third generation of theorists believes motivation is an influence not by internal issues, but rather by social and environmental factors. Among the third generation of motivational theorists is Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory and Tajfel's (1975) social identity theory (SIT). The SIT added macro-level perspectives by boosting employees' motivation (Hewapathirana, 2012).

There are five sources of motivation namely (a) intrinsic process motivation, (b) instrumental motivation, (c) self-concept external motivation, (d) self-concept internal motivation, and (e) goal internalization motivation (Bugenhagen & Barbuto, 2012). Individuals develop from one order to the next with increasing aptitude for sense making of the increasing complexities of life (Bugenhagen & Barbuto, 2012). The constructive-development theory is relevant to motivation in the sense that it predicts the leaders' sources of motivation. By implication, most people view motivational sources as relating to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that have compensation systems in providing instrumental incentives for a more complex leadership position (Bugenhagen & Barbuto, 2012). It is a well-documented fact that on the individual, organizational, and national level, productivity has extremely important contributions for the spirit of competitive advantage, and this is achieved through the efforts and directions of the owner towards motivation and satisfaction of his employees (Bugenhagen & Barbuto, 2012).

The social categorization is the tendency of an individual to change the perception about himself or herself as well as others in a group (Hewapathirana, 2012). Nicole (2015) suggested that the classification of motivational theories is grouped as content theories, referring to factors that incite or trigger the motivational behavior through money, social status, and accomplishments. Process theories are factors that direct the behavior through the inner urge of the individual towards work, performance, and recognition. The final classification is strengthening theories, and it is referring to factors that determine the repetition of a behavior through rewarding a certain behavior. That motivational process is based on a series of deficit at the individual level. The owner of a business needs to find a strategy to reach the inner state of his employees, making them motivated to act according to their own feelings indicating that people are motivated or demotivated according to their inner state of mind (Nicole, 2015).

### **Classical and Theorist Approaches to Motivation**

Theories of motivation are linked with decision-making and suggest that goal-directed behavior is governed by computations of the value of potential actions in a particular situation (Suri, Sheppes, & Gross, 2015). The principal vehicle of human behavior is the valuation of action. This study was grounded in Vroom's expectancy theory. Vroom's expectancy theory draws its heritage from an organismic perspective of human nature and motivation (Aryee, Walumbwa, Mondejar, & Chu, 2015). Central to the expectancy theory is work motivation, which is classified as autonomous and controlled motivation. Classical and humanistic psychologists proposed human motivation to encompass identity formation, moral development, and the emergence of values. The human needs are fivefold, namely (a) physiological needs, (b) safety needs,

(c) love and belonging needs, (d) esteem needs, and (e) self-actualization needs (Winston, 2016). Winston refers to these five folds of human needs as growth or being needs.

The particular area of interest that affects small auto repair business owners is the self-actualization or the growth segment of the human motivation. Owners of small auto repair businesses, and businesses in general, aim in life to be fulfilled and realize their full potential. Even though scholars criticize the human needs of Maslow, the practical implication of the growth component of his theory still remains positive especially in industry. The expectancy theory has a direct relationship with the self-actualization (growth needs). Maslow's self-actualization is characterized by the best human qualities, rather than normative values, collectively as collectivistic-individualistic, masculine-feminine, agentic-communal, and autonomic-homonomic; that the essence of self-actualization is all that one can be, while fulfilling his greatest potential is a common theme that transcends gender, culture, race, or any other thing (Winston, 2016). Seligman view is that fulfillment comes through three basic means as pleasant life, good life, and meaningful life. Seligman postulated individuals who follow the pleasant life seek to maximize pleasure and minimize pain or loss, good life seekers seek to use one's skills and abilities to engage with various activities, and those seeking meaningful life seek to use one's personal skills to contribute to a cause that is greater than the self (Winston, 2016).

The expectancy theory is based on the motive of strength comprising needs, incentive value, and outcome expectancy. Wright, Agtarap, and Mynski (2015) suggested that need is established by traditional reactance including confidence.

Incentive value perceived, characteristics of the relevant outcome that can be secured, and outcome expectancy perceive likelihood that purpose will be accomplished if the required behavior is successfully executed. The concept of strength of reactance motive is critical to the success of organizations both on a micro and macro levels. The expectancy theory is directly linked with self-determination theory that is all based on motivation and integrates personality, development, and situational factors in solving critical problems in an organization (Wright et al., 2015). It is surmised that both expectancy and other motivational theories are operational on the proper functioning of commitment. To avoid the confusion surrounding commitment, one can explain commitment to mean the extent to persist and that the intent to persist is better and more than qualitative value. Commitment is informed by what expectancy theory seeks to achieve (Hadden, DiBello, & Rodriguez, 2015). Motivation plays a role in fulfilling commitment to executing a duty to the extent that people are more self-determined to achieve their potential given a far and favorable environment.

### **Component of Expectancy Motivational Theories**

Vroom (1964) expectancy theory seeks to explain that the strength of a tendency to act in a certain way is dependent on the strength of the expectation that the outcome and output will give a positive result and effect (Wardayati, 2016). Wardayati further suggested that the achievement of performance is based on the expectation of the stakeholder, and that is a function of capability and motivation factors. Aurier and Guitcheva (2014) used affect-expectation theory to explain that before a consumption experience, individuals expect specific experiential emotion called valence. That consumption expectation has a distinct positive impact on perceived performance and a

direct negative impact on disconfirmation but a direct positive impact on satisfaction. The researcher began by detailing key components of expectancy theory, past empirical research, and this current study's conceptual framework. To examine how well, expectancy theory is used to explain managerial and entrepreneurial strategies of small auto repair business owners, I collected qualitative data from five owners of small auto repair businesses and their business records to examine and explore.

Both Vroom (1964) and Porter and Lawler (1968) reported that the interaction among three different beliefs determine motivation, namely expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. One can use the instance of job performance to explain expectancy and motivation theories in general. Expectancy theory is criticized as not distinguishing between certainty and uncertainty (Lambright, 2010), but its popularity is attributed to logical appeal of the underlying assumption that the consequences of rational action results in the human behavior (Manolova, Brush, Eldelman, & Shaver, 2012). Expectancy theory is used in the organizational behavior literature to predict intentions such as intent to start a business and turnover in job.

**Expectancy.** Manolova et al. (2012) explained that expectancy is the probability that effort will lead to an outcome or performance. By implication, the assumption on the expectancy component assumes that exerting a certain level of effort will end up in a particular level of performance, and that performance level will, in turn, result in a specific outcome. Ellingson and McFarland (2012) suggested that expectancy refers to the extent to which an individual believes he can accomplish a first level outcome hereby called performance. Renko, Kroeck, and Bullough (2012) suggested that expectancy



theory has a multiplicative effect, and that start-up-specific expectancy is positively related to the intent to make the start-up a primary source of income.

**Instrumentality.** Aurier and Guitcheva (2014) suggested that the linkage between performance and outcomes is called instrumentality. Ellingson and McFarland (2012) posit that instrumentality is the degree to which an individual believes that task performed will lead to second level outcomes, and that high instrumentality motivates behavior that facilitates performance. This performance is valued as the targeted outcome. Manolova (2012) confirmed that a particular performance level will result in a specific desired outcome called instrumentality.

**Valence.** The concept of valence is the condition needed for an individual to be motivated enough that he or she will receive positive value for his or her outcome on performance. Ellingson and McFarland (2012) reported that valence is the affective orientation that an individual has with regards to given outcome. By extension, preference is derived from an anticipated level of satisfaction associated with an outcome. Manolova (2012) asserted that the reward or desired outcome is adequately attractive for people to be motivated to achieve their best, and that is valence-personal goal relationship.

It is worth noting that in expectancy theory, motivation is the product of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Magidson, Roberts, Collado-Godriguez, and Lejuez (2014) asserted that motivation and expectancy theories are directly linked to the decision-making process, and they use it as a validation of personal identity. Thus, decision of how to spend time and energy are based on expectancy or expectation of and values placed on behavioral choices, which eventually results in experiences that drive

identity development. Aurier and Guitcheva (2014) suggested that expectancy theory helps owners of small auto repair businesses and services in general to believe that if the system is used properly, it will be able to generate appropriate results. Also, owners believe that the proper use of this system or tool will demonstrate greater satisfaction of performance. In extension, Aurier and Guitcheva (2014) further stated that reward and penalties will be based on satisfaction of the performance. Manolova et al. (2012) posited that entrepreneurial expectancy would be positively and greatly associated with starting business, which will in turn result in the desired outcome from the entrepreneurial process.

### **Motivation for One to Start His or Her Own Business**

Expectancy theory framework consists of effort, performance, and outcome or result; entrepreneurial expectancy will result in performance on two different levels such as starting a business, and the growth of the business that will give a desired outcome in the form of self-actualization, financial success, recognition, role modeling, innovation, and independence (Manolova et al., 2012). The expected consequence is seen from two perspectives, which are expected consequences of growth and the overall attitude towards growth. Expectancy theory has turned out to be a better predictor of attitudinal variables, such as intentions and preferences, rather than behavioral outcomes. The expectancy theory is emerging as one of the most popular frameworks for the study of entrepreneurial studies (Renko et al., 2012). By implication, if an entrepreneur's motivation is driven by financial success and performance (value), the intended effort level remains higher regardless of expectancy level. In order for entrepreneurs to achieve their intended dreams, they need to develop their abilities and skills. Sevincer, Kluge,

and Oettingen (2013) reported that entrepreneurs must use both the concept of incremental and entity theories to realize their potential.

Incremental theorists are concerned with developing their abilities for future, whereas entity theorists are concerned with demonstrating their abilities in the present. Based on the incremental and entity theories, entrepreneurs will be better served if they adapt the theory of ability, or growth mindset (Sevincer et al., 2013). The benefit of the growth mindset includes: better performance, greater preference for challenges, and self-enhancing attributes. Both Sevincer et al. (2013) and Bugenhagen et al. (2012) reported that incremental theorist use setbacks as a source of information in that more effort is needed to overcome a problem whereas entity theorist avoid behavior, negative affect, and decreased performance when confronted with setbacks. The entity theorist takes the future as the starting point of wish fulfillment and goal pursuit (Sevincer et al., 2013). Bugenhagen and Barbuto (2012) suggested five sources of motivation. These sources of motivation are in concert with expectancy theory of motivation in that they intertwined. The five sources of work motivation include the following, but not limited to, intrinsic process motivation, instrumental motivation, self-concept internal motivation, self-concept external motivation, and goal internalization motivation. Researchers in growth motivation focus on how specific cognitive beliefs about the consequences of growth and entrepreneur's human capital and social networks (Manolova et al., 2012). Suri, Sheppes, and Gross (2015) reported that the principal driver in the concept of motivation and decision-making in human behavior is expectancy level of performance. Action value is computed as the difference between stimulus value benefits and cost inherent in the stimulus that is the target of the action (Suri et al., 2015).

Winston (2016) reported that individuals start their business as a result of human motivation based on the theory of self-actualization which states: becoming all that one can be while fulfilling his greatest potential. This gives rise to a good and meaningful life. Winston (2016) further clarified that a good life involves using one's skills and abilities to engage with the different domains of life such as work, love, and play, irrespective of whether the action is inherently pleasurable or not. Entrepreneurs start their own business because they want to have a meaningful life. Winston (2016) expresses the meaning of meaningful life as using one's strength to contribute to a meaningful cause that is larger than himself. Entrepreneurs in their quest to undertake their dreams or vision, seek to achieve both a good life and meaningful life, hence they engage in certain activities that yield maximum result. This maximum result is in fulfillment of the supremacy of the economic order of entrepreneurship. By extension, the maximization of wealth and minimization of cost result in a profitable venture. Mazzietti and Koenig (2014) asserted that the valence-specific component of expectancy theory is consistent with the motivational theory of emotions. The emotional theory of motivation states: the owner relevance stimuli trigger value valence-specific attention, whereas high relevance stimuli triggers value specific action tendencies. Based on this explanation, motivational theories of expectancy, personality, emotion, work, self-determination, constructive development incremental, and entity have a common application to the field of entrepreneurship. Hadden, DiBello, and Rodriguez (2015) posited that investment in any activity is a function of the strength of satisfaction, attraction, and investment as predictors of commitment. Hadden et al. (2015) further defines the investment model on commitment as the intent to prevent and maintain

psychological attachment, which emerges as a function of dependency. The function of dependency of commitment is critical to the success of entrepreneurship (Baryniene, & Dauknyte, 2015). Entrepreneurs must commit their whole life and resources to ensure that whatever their business dream is will come to pass. Carsrud and Branback (2011) reported that it is important for individuals to engage in entrepreneurship and that for a good understanding of the entrepreneurial process, it is good to explore the entrepreneur's motivation to start and sustain their business.

Entrepreneurial motivational factors are both internal and external, and there is a link between intention and action of entrepreneurs, which gives rise to the relationship between motivation and performance. The motivational factors for starting one's own business include, but are not limited to, the following: to be his or her own boss, past experiences and training, increased income, public recognition, family security, and satisfaction and growth. Wealth creation is critical to the performance of entrepreneurial firms. Yu and Huarng (2013) suggested that one of the major motivational factors of starting one's own business is to have financial freedom and growth. Jayawarna, Rouse, and Kitching (2011) asserted that the entrepreneur's motivation to start his or her own business includes the following: economic gain, desire for achievement, independence and control, personal development, improved social status, opportunity to innovate and create new products, and contribute to community welfare. Estay, Durrien, and Ahhter (2013) defined motivation as the link between the activation of internal energy and its channeling towards business creation. Following this definition, Estay et al. (2013) classified entrepreneur's motivation to start a business into three major classes. These major classes of motivation are need for achievement, locus of control, and risk-taking

propensity. Motivation to behave entrepreneurially will be stronger if there is a strong relationship between action taken and firm's outcome and between action taken and expectation. Sloka, Kantane, Avotins, and Jermolajeva (2014) asserted that the start of a business is important from the government policy's side, as well as for academic researchers worldwide. Sloka et al. (2014) used a five-point Likert scale to analyze entrepreneurs' motivation to start their own business in Latvia as follows: make my own decisions, increase my income, maintain my financial freedom, maximize business growth, have fun, acquire a comfortable living, increase sales and profits, be my own boss, create my own job, have job security, be closer to my family, gain public recognition, and provide job for my family.

### **Literature Review on Research Methods and Designs**

A qualitative method of inquiry is suitable for conducting an in-depth examination of phenomenon (Hlady-Rispal & Jouison-Laffitte, 2014). The use of qualitative research methods helps to understand individuals' lived-in experiences in an effort to understand and give meaning to thematic concepts that emerge (Turner, Kim, & Anderson, 2013). Turner et al. (2013) further stated that the study of individuals' perception of a phenomenon is done by systematically collecting and analyzing narrative materials using methods that ensure credibility of both the data and the results. Findings in Karadag's (2015) study suggest that management cannot ignore the value of their employees, and that satisfaction and work commitment is crucial in sustaining a business. Researchers such as Irwin (2013) and Voughn and Turner (2016) conducted qualitative studies using interviews to obtain first-hand information from their respective study populations. Robinson (2014) used open-ended interview sessions to examine the business practices

and the effect of theoretical and practical guides to conducting research in general. I interviewed five entrepreneurs in Franklin County, Ohio and evaluated the results of the data collected to examine if adequate financing contributed to their business success.

Miller (2016) conducted a qualitative study to understand why small businesses fail and how the dark side of personality traits in entrepreneurs affects business decisions. Miller used interviews in the form of open-ended questionnaires to collect data, and the findings suggested that personality traits and financial constraints impeded the growth of small businesses. To understand entrepreneurs' perception of small auto repair business failure in the United States, a qualitative research method was used to obtain a detailed understanding of the issue. Given the contribution entrepreneurs and owners of small auto repair businesses do to the economic and societal development of a country, Miller's (2016) study provided data on entrepreneurs' life experiences, personalities, evolution, and deeds. The systematic collection and data analysis may lead to better themes regarding the dimension that characterized healthy, positive, and socially constructive entrepreneurs from those having a darker side. By extension, qualitative researchers have the opportunity to offer a broad and in-depth perspective of the phenomenon being explored. There is no universal consensus to what causes small business success or failure, rather the circumstances unique to the entrepreneur. Scherger and Vigier (2014) stated the definition of small business failure would depend on where the business phenomenon occurred and who defined the phenomenon. A qualitative method provides an understanding of individuals' perception of the phenomena, without limiting the researcher to rigidly definable variables (Flick, 2014). In explaining the phenomenological design, VanScoy and Evenstad (2014) stated that divulging

information about personal life experiences and realities of a situation is a philosophical method called phenomenology, also referred to as the science of pure phenomena. The aim of phenomenological design is to describe the phenomenon accurately without referring to any preset guidelines, but sticking to the facts (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2014).

A phenomenological study describes and interprets the experiences of participants to understand their perspectives (Woodard, 2012). Bendersky and McGinn (2010) explained that phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved. Phenomenological design enables participants to share their experiences and articulate their feelings (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2014). The researcher is also able to select participants who have experienced the phenomenon being investigated. In a phenomenological design, the shared meanings and consciousness of the participants might be revealed on the completion of data analysis.

### **Application of Expectancy Theory to a Business Owner's Success**

Vroom (1964) described the expectancy theory of motivation contains three components namely (a) perceived linkage between one's effort and performance, (b) perceived linkage between one's performance and outcomes, and (c) the value of the outcomes. Expectancy theory is based on behavioral alternatives, and the acts will choose the act that gives a higher positive result or lower negative motivational force. Like decision theory, expectancy theory holds that people choose in a way that maximizes expected utility (Vroom, 1964). Expectancy theory is a process that attempts to identify relationships among variables in a dynamic state as they affect individual behavior (Lawson, Krause, & Potter, 2014). By implication, individuals are viewed as



thinking, reasoning beings that have beliefs and anticipations concerning future events in their lives. Expectancy theory has an assigned goal. The assigned goal level affects valence as it motivates and regulates behavior to achieve a result (Liang, Scott, Ellis, & Suresh, 2016). Liang et al. (2016) reported that competence affects expectancy because it represents the ability to effectively manage the environment and to accomplish goals, since goal orientation affects valence as a result of skills and ability to give greater achievement.

As process theory, expectancy theory provides insights into how decisions involving behavioral and managerial alternatives are made. In the same manner, as a cognitive theory, expectancy theory facilitates the understanding of thought processes and anticipations that drive decisions. Based on the two above assumptions, expectancy theory can help explain how small auto repair business owners can use managerial-entrepreneurial strategies to achieve results. Expectancy theory is used to explain employee behavior, job satisfaction, and job performance. Grant and Shin (2011) reported that expectancy motivational processes are particularly necessary to understand work group and team interferences.

### **Strategic Business Planning**

Business planning is an essential competency for small business owners (Ibrahim, 2012). The process of business planning and implementing includes skills relating to strategic planning, financial analysis, market analysis, and business development (Chwolka & Raith, 2012). The plan of activities provided a means by which owners communicate the firm's mission, vision, operations, and strategy to stakeholders who may have limited knowledge of the firm's business model (Prajogo, McDermott, &

McDermott, 2013). Planning is a function that owners may use to help prepare for uncertainty and unforeseen changes in the business environment (Blackburn et al., 2013). While business planning is a valuable skill for business owners, there is inconclusive evidence regarding the relationship between planning and company performance and profitability (Chwolk & Raith, 2012). Peltier et al. (2012) conducted a study that agreed with the assertion of Chwolk and Raith. Regardless of how planning is done and influenced business performance, the main take away from numerous studies on this topic has been that planning is useful for organizational development, decision making, resource planning and allocation, and future planning (Eisenberg et al., 2015). Scholars in the field of entrepreneurship and small business development have indicated the importance of business planning in small business (Lawless, 2014). Uddin and Bose (2013) also suggested that business planning is critical in the survival of businesses irrespective of the size. Prajogo et al. (2013) noted inadequate strategic and business planning are the most common mistakes owners of businesses make that contribute to their firm failure. Uddin and Bose (2013) investigated the successful managerial strategies of small businesses and realized that business planning is one of the factors critical to the success of small businesses. Uddin and Bose argued that a business plan serves as the foundation for business success and organizational effectiveness. Business planning and development is vital to a firm, as owners of businesses who adopt business planning as one of their strategies can make strategic plans for the future, rather than focus on short term solutions to business problems. Kozan and Akdeniz (2014) noted that business stagnation and failure are mostly due to inadequate business planning.

The role of strategic business planning helps to avoid business stagnation and

failure (Heinze, 2013). It is worth noting that the formulation of a business plan does not constitute a significant predictor of business survival, rather business plans may be the start of a strategic process followed by implementation, usage, review, and making changes based on conditions within the business environment (Owens, Kirwan, Lounsbury, Levy, & Gibson, 2013). Strategic business planning emerged from the literature as a critical factor for small auto repair business success. One of the qualities of a strategic planner is to maintain good accounting and financial records. Glaub (2014) noted that firms that keep good and reliable accounting and financial records, as well as control cost, have a greater probability to succeed than businesses that do not. Other studies suggested that poor record keeping and lack of a good accounting information system were among the reasons businesses failed (Hai, Jing, & Jintong, 2013). Most owners of small auto repair businesses do not use adequate accounting and financial information because they have little knowledge or no knowledge about it (Amoako, 2013). It is a must for owners of small auto repair businesses to understand and maintain a proper accounting information system if they want to survive to the future (Mohammed, 2013). Good and adequate accounting systems are ideal for business growth and survival (Liu & Shao, 2013). Proper accounting records provide guidance for (a) preparing financial statements, (b) planning and decision making, (c) tracking and controlling inflow and outflow of cash, and (d) measuring employees' performance (Adom, Amakye, Doh, & Anku, 2014). Existing literature relating to small business success and failure is relative. The literature review pertained to managerial-entrepreneurial strategies that may affect small business success or failure.

Small auto repair business owners who work with a mentor and participate in a

business program to incubate their businesses have a better opportunity to succeed than those who do not. Eddleston, Kellermanns, Floyd, Crittenden, and Crittenden (2013) asserted that business owners who develop, continuously refine, and update their strategic business plans are less likely to experience business failure than business owners who have weak or insufficient knowledge about a business plan. Small auto repair business owners who engage in strategic business planning outperform their competitors when faced with unfavorable demands and limited resources (Cordeiro, 2013). Strategic planning is the bedrock of successful businesses, in that the strategizing will provide direction and forecast needed resources ahead of time (Abdalkrim, 2013).

### **Small Business Motivation and Its Sustainability**

In trying to assess the importance of economic sustainability of small auto repair businesses throughout the state of Ohio, small auto repair business owners may use checks and balances included in the Small Business Administration (SBA) and subsidiary websites for assistance towards stability and sustenance. It is worth noting that the information on the website is mainly on effective business management through annual training programs, follow-ups, and assistance (Ritala, 2014). There is always a weaker economic market associated with small business start-ups, operations, and entrepreneurial ideology in the remote areas that leads to a lack of professional services, or inadequate professional services, in the form of affordable legal services by qualified lawyers, accurate accounting data, and information by qualified accountants, as well as managerial training (Doris & Kusce, 2013). Another factor worth considering in the process of developing small business is relevant market research that must take place prior to starting a viable new business (Navissa, Sridharan, Khedmati, Lim, &

Evdokimov, 2017). Small auto repair business owners contribute greatly towards the economic prosperity of a city, and for that matter a state and a nation.

Competition is the foundation of the United States economic policies. Promoting competition is one of the most widely used tools for promoting consumer's wellbeing (White, 2012). Competitive business environment is a changing external structure that businesses compete for growth, survival, and profitability (Predic & Stosic, 2014). Some firms succeed, and others fail as a result of uncertain business environments that affect small businesses more than larger ones. The competitive environment in any organization consists of elements that directly affect the organization (Grigorescu, 2013). The more providers of similar services, the more competitive the environment in which those firms operate. The condition of a business environment limits or promotes the flexibility of the business entity. A firm's direct competitor provides similar services or goods for which little market exists (Lustigman, 2015). For instance, a small auto repair business owner competes with other local small auto business owners for fairly small market. Small auto repair business owners lack the ability to compete against bigger auto repair companies with enhanced economy of scale and scope (Armstrong, 2012).

Most small auto repair business owners adapt different strategic resources within their scope of operation in order not to disadvantage their organizations, and this may be distinct from how larger organizations operates (Armstrong, 2012). Small auto repair business owners have less room for experimentation with their operations either financially or socially than larger companies. Small auto repair business owners who use business strategy mostly concern themselves with how their business will achieve a competitive advantage through market differentiation (Armstrong, 2012). Competition

results in discovery and development of managerial skills in diverse ways depending on the network of support at any given time or moment (Thomas et al., 2014). To survive in a highly competitive business environment, small auto repair business owners require good managerial strategies necessary to gain a competitive advantage over other competitors. Owners of small auto repair businesses may plan a business strategy (both operational and exit plans) through innovation to win at both local and national levels. For managerial strategies to remain effective and further the competitive advantage to achieve profitability, owners of small auto repair businesses may exploit and expand on their strengths and reduce their weaknesses. Small auto repair business owner's competencies may include, but are not limited to, resources and capabilities the business owner uses to differentiate his or her services from other competitors in order to reduce and manage cost compared to other competitors. Resources are valuable to businesses in that they add value to the services provided to customers and satisfies the customer's need for effective and efficiency and repeated business.

A study in which business owners undertake to identify the internal and external strengths, weaknesses and threats, as well as opportunities is called (SWOT) analysis. Brook, Heffner, and Henderson (2014) identified SWOT analysis as the method of analyzing a business, the resources available, and its environment. Brooks et al. (2014) further asserted that SWOT analysis is a vital tool that owners of small businesses must extract qualitatively. Strengths are the action of a firm's owner that enhances efficiency that competitors cannot easily copy, whereas weaknesses are the low points of a business. Opportunities may be identified in the business environment, competition, industry, and government, whereas threats prevent a business from surviving (Brooks et

al., 2014). Customers seeking to service their cars or trucks have diverse options, and because of economic competition that promotes efficiency, businesses are continually finding ways of improving service processes. Nikolovska and Mamucevska (2014) asserted that the effect of market competition is a positive reflection on the economy. Notwithstanding all the benefits that come with economic and market competition, there are significant drawbacks associated with economic and market competitiveness. Nikolovska and Mamucevska (2014) further reported that politicians might invest wealth disproportionately in investment instruments that earn the highest profit and leave less money for social services such as public schools, police departments, and emergency aid. Most political-minded scholars may also argue that a disadvantage of economic and market competition is the reduction of human labor required to produce services and goods as machinery replaces assembly jobs once filled by human labor (Nikolovska & Mamucevska, 2014). Owners of small auto repair businesses must compete against other owners of similar businesses to survive and grow because small auto businesses are strategically not managed from a vacuum. Armstrong (2012) reported that one small business owner's strategic growth management might be another small business owner's strategic survival management that may be dependent on direct competition. Larger business owners who may focus on both growth and survival strategies simultaneously are likely to do better than those that focus only on one aspect of the two developmental strategies (Armstrong, 2012). Fadahunsi (2012) investigated small business growth with the main aim of discovering key factors that influence small business growth and development. Fadahunsi in his investigation reported that (a) founder's growth motivation, (b) willingness to team up with other businesses both small and big alike, (c)

the entrepreneur's characteristics, (d) previous experience on managerial decision making, and (e) the personal educational level of the small business owner are the key factors that may influence small business growth. Turner and Pennington (2015) suggested that a good business managerial strategy must link either directly or indirectly to organizational performance and job satisfaction. As part of the broad business strategy, problem-solving skills must be central to any business operation (Briggs, 2013). Sustainability is a critical component of any business planning strategy (Briggs, 2013). A business owner addresses sustainability problems through the following mechanisms: (a) defining the problem at hand, (b) brainstorming with colleagues, (c) choose a solution from various alternatives, (d) implement the solution(s), and (e) review the effectiveness and efficiency of the plan of action. Sustainable small auto repair business owners are individuals who think about issues in terms of development, creativity, and changes the outcome for the benefit of the business' perpetual existence, stakeholders, and the environment (Tideman et al., 2013).

### **Emerging Themes From Literature Review**

Potential themes and insights that will emanate from the research problem as a result of evaluating the relevant literature regarding small businesses managerial-entrepreneurial strategies, and in some circumstances small business sustainability strategies. Each theme linked the concept of what small business owners need to succeed while many other business owners fail. Additional themes included lack of business knowledge and training on the part of the owners, inability to obtain favorable financing and capital, lack of personal motivation to embark upon business ventures, sustainability options, and lack of needed technology to boost service, goods, deliveries, and processes.



In view of the above, potential exploration may include the role of monitoring, networking knowledge, and business owner's self-confidence and personal motivation.

### **Transition**

Section 1 introduced the critical components of the study on managerial strategies that small auto repair business owners can use to survive beyond 5 years of business operation. The purpose of this multiple case study was to develop an understanding and appreciation of managerial strategies needed for small auto repair business owners to attain financial and managerial strategies in order to sustain their business operations beyond 5 years. A sample of five small auto repair owners who had operated business profitably were the participants in open ended, semistructured interview questions. In section 1, I provided an overview of the study through the research problem, research question, and conceptual framework and link it to the development and managerial strategies small auto repair owners can adapt to achieve financial sustainability. In this study, the effect of small auto repair businesses failure had both economic and social under-tones. This study contributed to a better understanding of the processes, standards, and managerial strategies required for small auto repair businesses to survive beyond 5 years, while providing a blueprint of the specific character traits and motivation that small auto business owners require to attain financial sustainability. Expectancy theory in the form of how both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation propels decision-making is the conceptual framework that grounded this multiple case study (Majda, 2016).

The literature review provided systematic analysis of how expectancy theory affects the overall performance of a business venture through the application of managerial strategies to achieve expected results. My review of the academic and

professional literature included an analysis of alternative methods used by different scholars to articulate the implication of managerial strategies in a business decision-making process, the application of classical and theorist approach to motivation in relation to work performance, the situational motivational factors that compels an individual to start his own business, the business application of the components of expectancy theory, the definition and causes of small business failure and critical success factors, and finally, the emerging themes. The review of the literature also included the various theories including economic and social exchange theories. The scope of this study was limited in breadth and design to understanding and appreciating how small auto repair business owners use entrepreneurial-managerial strategies to enhance their business profitability in Columbus, Ohio. The particularity of this qualitative case study described in Section 1 developed into Section 2.

In the next Section, I provide my role as a researcher (instrument), detailed profile of the participants, ethics of the research considerations, expansion of the research methods and design and analysis of data, and finally, validity and reliability. The final section of the study consisted of the results of the research study.

## Section 2: The Project

In this section, I describe in detail the subsections that comprise the study of managerial strategies that small auto repair business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years, including why and how this study was conducted. I conclude this section with an explanation of the study's reliability and validity. The subsections are (a) the purpose statement, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) the participants, (d) research method, (e) research design, (f) population and sampling, (g) data collection procedure and protocols, (h) data analysis, and (i) reliability and validity.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore what managerial strategies small auto repair business owners use to sustain their business operation beyond 5 years. The target population for this study was five auto repair small business owners in Franklin County, Ohio who had sustained their businesses for a minimum of 5 years. The results of this study could contribute to positive social change by reducing small business failure rates. A lower failure rate may reduce unemployment and help achieve a higher quality of living for employees. Furthermore, the findings could help business and government leaders formulate assistance programs for owners of small auto repair businesses and assist new entrepreneurs promote their self-worth, dignity, and development of individuals in the community.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the main instrument for data collection (Goldberg & Allen, 2015). Researchers use multiple case studies to collect, analyze, interpret data, and report results received from participants (Yin, 2014). I was the main

instrument for the data collection. My role as the researcher was to complete an interpretive case study to gain a deeper understanding of the managerial strategies owners of small auto repair businesses used for their business survival beyond 5 years. My previous experience in financial reporting and organizational restructuring facilitated the data collection process. My role was to ask participants relevant questions on the research question with the aim of understanding what their managerial processes were (see Teusner, 2016).

My role involved complete control over the empirical work and the processes used by researchers who design research, carry out the research, analyze the data, write the report, and disseminate the findings (see Teusner, 2016). Irwin (2013) suggested that researchers require recognition of bias and unfair reporting or preconceived notions of the problem under investigation. Therefore, my role as a researcher was to minimize my personal beliefs and biases with regards to (a) documentation of protocols, policies, and procedures and (b) placing sanctions that lowered the frequency of violation of policies. I identified these personal beliefs and biases ahead of the data collection and processing.

Multiple case study design is appropriate for researchers interested in capturing situations and processes (Yin, 2014). I, therefore, aimed to formulate innovative ideas and themes from the interviews with the participants. The role of a researcher is to gather material from observations and attempt to comprehend the phenomenon of interest based on the meanings participants provided (Sinibaldi, Trappmann, & Kreuter, 2014). I had no relationship with the participants or the topic I investigated in this study. I did not and do not own a business or practice financial reporting, and as such, my career experience did not affect my research outcome. I maintained all ethical standards before, during, and

after this study by adhering to the protocols set forth in the Belmont Report. I also adhered to Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) process by conforming to ethical standards compliance before conducting any protocol.

This study involved a sustained and continuous relationship with the participants, and I disclosed my professional experience as a 15-year accounting professional and my personal experience as a former small business owner. To transition from my professional role into a researcher, I safeguarded my openness to contrary evidence. Marshall and Rossman (2014) asserted that a researcher must present to the reader the contextual perspective of the study. I also safeguarded my openness by not interviewing participants with whom I have had personal and business relationships. Yin (2014) reported that for avoidance of bias, a researcher must exclude participants with whom the researcher has direct dealing. I used the bracketing technique by asking participants the same open-ended questions in the same order. I bracketed my personal bias by writing memos during data collection and analysis. A researcher, in order to avoid personal bias, must maintain a journal for reflection during the data collection stage (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). One of my roles as a researcher was to maintain the highest standard of research and to test my tolerance for adverse findings. I allowed participants to read transcripts of their personal interview. I also used member checking techniques in the form of making my preliminary findings available to participants to ensure an accurate interpretation of their intent. Carter et al. (2015) suggested that triangulation of data is critical for data collection and analysis. Based on Carter et al.'s assertion, I triangulated data by comparing data from multiple sources like interviews, archival documentations, and empirical data from peer-reviewed articles.

My interaction with the participants was in a professional manner in all respects. I listened attentively to each of the participants during the interviews and any other communication between the participants and myself. It was discretion of each participant responds. Participants responded to the interview questions and expressed emotions, attitudes, and perceptions on their managerial processes within the firm. The process to collect data for this study was direct between the participants and myself. To obtain effective and sufficient data, a researcher must collect his data direct from the participants (Yin, 2014). Based on Kennedy-Macfoy's (2013) and Yin's (2014) assertions, I formulated seven open interview questions so I could obtain quality information from the participants to formulate the themes for this study to achieve the desired results. Because I collected sensitive information from participants through observation and open-ended interviews from small auto repair business owners in their everyday operating life and environment, I followed an explicit and well-planned interview protocol with data collection guidance.

### **Participants**

The population of this study was five small auto repair business owners who had used managerial strategies to maintain their business beyond 5 years. Managerial strategy is an open innovation that gives rise to strategic planning and brings innovation to add value to companies and customers (Krstevski & Mancheski, 2016; Vitolla, Rubino, & Garzoni, 2017). The strategy for analyzing data from the participants in this study included analysis of responses from a sample of five small auto repair business owners who shared their experiences and perceptions of the managerial processes and strategies used to achieve their goals. Purposive sampling is suitable for qualitative

studies in which a participant's knowledge is essential to gain an in-depth understanding of the question under study (Elo et al., 2014). Purposive sampling requires random selection of individuals within a population with the most understanding and experience on the research topic (Bhuiyan, Siwar, & Ismail, 2013).

Strategies for gaining access to the prospective small auto repair owner participants for this doctoral study was contacting the chamber of commerce in Columbus, Ohio and some financial service business owners and managers. I solicited and secured participants through purposive sampling from five small auto repair owners in the auto service industry from Central Ohio that aligned with overarching research questions regarding managerial strategies small auto repair business owners used to sustain business beyond 5 years. I first contacted the prospective participant by a telephone, requested a meeting to help establish a working relationship and assessed the participant's interest in the research. All five prospective participants signed an informed consent form. The consent form indicated that participation in this study was voluntary and without any endorsements or compensation. There were no penalties or incentives for this exercise. The form had the following features: (a) researcher's name, (b) telephone and email contacts, (c) Walden University email information, and (d) the participant's selection criteria. Both the researcher and the participants signed the consent form, and each got a copy prior to the start of the interview. The research question was linked to managerial strategies for small auto repair businesses and the effects on business profitability. My sample included only owners of small auto repair enterprises who had operated small auto repair business for at least 5 years because the SBA (2014) reported that only about half of new businesses survive beyond 5 years.

Beadle (2013) used purposive sampling to explore how British and Irish circus owners and managers manage their businesses. Beadle's research design was applicable to my research design. Based on Beadle's suggestion, I selected knowledgeable participants to explore the managerial strategies used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years and the effect managerial strategies had on financial sustainability and profitability on small auto repair business owners. Cachia and Millward (2011) suggested that consistency is critical to an interview. I limited the eligibility criteria to small auto repair business owners who had at least 10 employees and had an operating revenue base of \$2.5 million and made financial decisions. There is no commonly acceptable sample size for qualitative studies, but the optimal sample depends on the aim and goal of the study, research question(s), and the quality of data (Elo et al., 2014).

Whereas there was a debate between the effect of face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews, Cachia and Millward (2011) reported that the primary goal or aim of interviews was consistency in procedure and question, and this was achieved by both face-to-face and telephone interviews. I analyzed public documents on small auto businesses and passively observed participants during the interview. Observation of participants was optional and did not compromise participation in the study. Yin (2014) suggested that knowledge and experience of the population influences the researcher's sample decision for data saturation. My sample population was aimed at achieving data saturation and sufficiency by interviewing the five participants in the exploration process.



### **Research Method and Design**

The selection of the design in this study was dependent on the nature and objectives of the study. I selected a qualitative multiple case study for this doctoral study. A researcher seeking to understand a phenomenon or process and the behavior of individuals is likely to favor a qualitative research method over quantitative, as quantitative research seeks to explain the issues rather than explore the processes of *how* (Frydrych, Boch, & Koeck, 2014). Mixed methods provide a significant overview of the topic under investigation and uses both a qualitative and quantitative approach to research (Abowitz & Toole, 2010). Thus, each method was subject to a particular problem of validity and reliability, and each had a generalizability problem. The research method comprises data collection, coding, analysis, and interpretation that scholars or professionals in the field propose for various studies as stipulated among qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Zohrabi, 2013). The research method for this study on managerial strategies was a qualitative multiple case study because there was little multiple case study on the research question and how the research question affects the overall profitability of the business. A qualitative case study enabled effective data collection and involves emerging questions, processes, and procedures (Zohrabi, 2013).

#### **Research Method**

The concept of a qualitative technique in research study enables a researcher to determine or understand a particular event from the lens of those experiencing it (Charter et al., 2014). I employed a qualitative method to conduct an in-depth inquiry on managerial strategies to sustain a small auto repair business. A qualitative approach was useful in understanding the participants' experiences and managerial processes and

provided a meaningful insight to thematic concepts including, but not limited to, (a) managerial strategies and sustainability, (b) financial planning, (c) profitability, and (d) budgeting techniques. Qualitative research was essential for documenting the adaptations necessary for application of interventions to real-life contexts and for identifying core intervention components, which are related to desired outcomes (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). A qualitative research method was extremely useful for gathering insights into regular experiences of individuals. A qualitative research method can help researchers to describe various manifestations of intentions or intended outcomes that may not be reflected in standardized instruments and to identify unintended positive or negative outcomes for the individual, institution, and community (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). One of the reasons researchers choose qualitative method is to avoid the use of difficulty measuring metrics.

A qualitative case study was an optimal approach since the feedback of five small auto repair owners' managerial strategies in sustaining business operation beyond 5 years forms the basis for the data collection and analysis. Starke (2013) reported that qualitative researchers should try to dig into distinction by tracing change in the beliefs and preferences of central decision makers over time due to learning. In my study, I used a qualitative method because qualitative researchers use process tracing to study the unfolding processes within and between different units of analysis, and the intent of this study is to study the managerial strategies in managing a small auto repair business. Bahari (2012) suggested that the basis of qualitative research versus quantitative research is comparing and contrasting participants' views under each of the methods in different circumstances. A quantitative research method focuses on examining relationships and

differences between two or more variables and the ability to map very specific patterns (Starke, 2013). A quantitative research method was not appropriate for this study. A quantitative method is deductive, inflexible, and provides absolute responses through mathematical and statistical medium (Zohrabi, 2013). My intent in this study was to come up with small auto repair owners' managerial strategies and not to quantify their effectiveness.

A mixed methods approach is typically difficult to implement during scholarly research as a result of time constraints (Abowitz & Toole, 2010). Mixed method combines both quantitative and qualitative methods in one research design; however, the cost and time made a mixed methods design inappropriate. The justification for using a qualitative case study research method over other research methods also included capturing and addressing the central research question from a general perspective and various circumstances (Starke, 2013). Addressing the research question from a quantitative perspective would utilize deduction, generalize assumptions, and not answer the research question.

### **Research Design**

Qualitative methods consist of both intangible and tangible determinants including: socio-economic status, cultural status, ethnicity, gender role, and belief that are relevant in supporting the study of managerial processes involved in managing small businesses (Burr, King, & Butt, 2012). The explorative nature of small auto repair business operation and the impact owners have on the managerial process dictated the use of qualitative case study. Case study design allows researchers to examine and debate specific cases in real-life situations in an attempt to develop and explore difficulties

within a given life situation or scenario (Yin, 2014).

There are various types of qualitative design, namely ethnography, phenomenological, case study, and narrative (Kisely & Kendall, 2011). Ethnography design permits the exploration of social interactions and relationships that impact daily life and activity. Ethnography encompasses the collection of data through field notes and observation and because of this, ethnography design allows for more efficacy in describing and analyzing, rather than explaining (Allwood, 2012). Ethnography is an expensive and costly design and requires excessive and prolonged access to the research site and participants (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). For this reason, ethnography was not appropriate for this study.

Phenomenological design involves the attempt to understand human experiences from the perspective of the respondent (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenological design consists of exploring the importance of participants' knowledge through interviews and observations (Kafle, 2013). By extension, since phenomenological design is used to explain complex and dynamic consequences of processes or problems, it was not appropriate for this study due to time and cost.

Narrative design researchers gather data by observing, documenting, questioning, interviewing, and photographing to illustrate participants' experiences (Petty et al., 2014). In a narrative design, researchers explore in greater detail a participant's life experiences to demonstrate the understanding of the problem under consideration, it breeds friction between the participant(s) and researcher(s) and can have a negative connotation for the research study (Creswell, 2014). Due to this, a narrative design was not appropriate for this study.

Case study design either single or multiple employs techniques that support an in-depth investigation of a social phenomenon or managerial process. Case study has the potential of gathering data from multiple sources (Charter et al., 2014). Researchers use case study technique to investigate and analyze success and failure in social behavior (Starke, 2013). Researchers utilizing observation and documentation coupled with interviews seek to identify what worked and what did not. The study of managerial strategies to sustain small auto repair businesses required an in-depth exploration of the current managerial processes with the view of obtaining evidence about what did work or not. I selected a multiple case study design because the process of exploring managerial strategies requires systematic and iterative procedures.

The two critical guidelines in qualitative research are appropriateness and adequacy or sufficiency (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Achievement of data saturation was important and occurs when continuing data collection adds no new meaning or implication for the same study (Carter et al., 2015). Quality of participants had more value than the number of participants (Dworkin, 2012). In view of that, I determined that for the data saturation point additional data must add no value or benefit, hence five participants generated the quality needed to support the purpose of this study.

### **Population and Sampling**

Lipstein, Brinkman, Sage, Lannon, and DeWitt (2013) suggested that purposeful sampling involves the selection of participants who had experienced the phenomenon under investigation and could also address the research problem and the research question. Purposive sampling is a method of understanding unseen populations and it has a long history (Barrat, Ferris, & Lenton, 2015). Petty, Thompson, and Stew (2012)

recognized that researchers select purposive sampling based on relevance to the study. A purposive sampling approach offered the best way to explore how small auto repair business owners used managerial strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Researchers use purposive sampling in qualitative research to solicit participants' response and have rapport with their target population (Petty et al., 2012). In contrast, simple random sampling was not suitable for the study because it addressed a general population without certain specific characteristics (Barrat, Ferris, & Lenton, 2015). Snowball sampling builds upon a convenience sample by asking respondents to suggest others to participate (Hyysalo, et al., 2015). Hyysalo et al. reported that snowball sampling might lead to potential participants that do not meet the study requirement. I used purposive sampling technique to select participants.

A sample of five interview participants for this study included owners of small auto repair businesses and examination of archival data from the U.S. Small Business Administration. The sample selection design targeted a population that possessed the professional auto repair certification. A review of the literature revealed that owners of small auto repair businesses face the problem of a lack of managerial strategies adequate to sustain profit generation opportunities (Hayes, Chawla, & Kathawala, 2015). The operation of small auto repair business provided a sizeable contribution to a nation's economic development (Mollick & Robb, 2016). I investigated the managerial strategies of small auto repair businesses and the effect on financial sustainability. The research included extended interview questions. This multiple case study had the same context as experimental research in order to achieve analytic generation (Lipstein, Brinkman, Sage, Lannon, & DeWitt, 2013). As such, the purposive sampling description of this multiple

case study was not to imply that the sample cases came from a large population of similar cases or data, so I can generalize statistically the findings of the research. Data saturation occurred during the fifth interview. To have a good validation, I did member checking on the data to justify that the study encompasses all themes and ideas. Estimating a sufficient number of participants to achieve data saturation depended on characteristics such as the participants' eligibility criteria, the background of the problem, research method and design, nature of the study, and the conceptual framework of the study (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Saturation of data ensured replication in categories that enabled verification and assurance of the comprehension and completeness of the study (Elo et al., 2014). Data saturation was critical in the analysis stage of the data to eliminate problems. Researchers begin to analyze their preliminary analysis after a few interviews (Elo et al., 2014). Without a provisional sample target to work with at the initial design stage, resource allocation and determination of duration is impossible which can make research and planning difficult, if not impossible (Robin, 2014). The anticipated data saturation point, where no additional benefit occurred, was achieved with five participants.

Experience and technical know-how were factors for consideration during the selection of the participants in this study. Marais and Van Wyk (2014) suggested that purposive sampling allows a researcher to maximize the depth of the collected data for analysis. Andorfer and Lieber (2012) reported that the techniques associated with purposive sampling may affect the selection process of participants with respect to wider knowledge base and more experience on the subject matter. I used purposive sampling approach to obtain the data, and that allowed me (researcher) to gather relevant subject

matter.

Sampling is central to the practice of qualitative methods, and the type of sampling that is selected has a huge implication for the coherence, transparency, impact, and trustworthiness for the study (Robinson, 2014). The sample selection design targeted experienced owners of small auto repair businesses who possessed managerial qualification. Flick (2015) reported that a rich and insightful description of a situation in the form of qualitative case study design depended on small purposive selected sample size. The main criteria for selecting respondents included, but was not limited to, the following: readiness to participate in the world view, an ability to explain and narrate their experiences relating to the research question, willing and voluntary individual over the age of 18 years. Cannella (2015) suggested that the advantages of using a small purposeful selective design included the ability to apply certain characteristics, such as successful return rate on the interview, minimal cost, limited commuting time, and desire criterion. I contacted the participants by telephone, email, and in person prior, during, and post interview process. I also explored the possibility of using open-ended questionnaires in an electronic format. This allowed the respondents time to write their ideas, feelings, and perspectives instead of speaking.

### **Ethical Research**

Researchers are accountable for ensuring appropriate ethical standards evident in their research work as they seek to limit the exposure of their respondents (Moore, 2015). Ethical research practices ensure respect, beneficence, and justice (Manasanch et al., 2014). The researcher made sure the research design and implementation of this study was done effectively and maintained the highest standards in the field with



particular regards to the protection of the participants. The ethical consideration of this study was not limited to the appropriateness of the design of this study but also covered the protection of the rights of the respondents. There was minimal risk level involved in the interview. Before starting my study, I completed the National Institute of Health (NIH) Protecting Human Research Participants course (see Appendix D). Voluntary participant consent is an essential principle of ethical research (McShane et al., 2015).

I looked out for variations in the respondent's tone of voice, facial expression, or restlessness in the processing of the interview. No data collection occurred before receiving IRB approval of the research plan. I was knowledgeable of the ethical standards associated with human participation in the research and did everything possible to protect the participants in the study. My success in completing the National Institute of Health (NIH) web-based training course pertaining to the protection of human subjects during the conduct of the research enabled my ability to properly protect the participants. McShane, Davey, Rouse, Usher, and Sullivan (2015) suggested that tailoring messages depending on the audience is an important part of knowledge uptake that supports traditional research in psychology. Researcher's ethical awareness entailed knowing and acknowledging one's own vulnerability, which comes apparent in the research-participant relationship and in difficult interview setting where being a human always overrules the researcher's role in ethical dilemmas (Haahr, Norlyk, & Hall, 2014).

Before the start of the interview, the participants and I signed a consent form with particular references to the following: explanation of the extent, nature and purpose of the study. Debriefing and the potential benefits of the study to both the participants and society was also referenced. I also assured the participants my willingness to be as

truthful as possible in the process. The inclusion of Walden University IRB e-mail address in the form enabled the participants to seek any clarification the participants needed during and after the interview process. Additionally, participants received the interview questions prior to the actual interviews. There were no penalties or conditions associated with withdrawal from the program. This afforded participants' freedom and liberty if they decided to walk away from the interview. I again explained to the participant that they could withdraw from participating in the study at any time without consequences.

Bishop (2012) explained data archiving as the process of securing, preserving, and storing research data and resources for future re-use and to be consistent, the respect for participants' autonomy must be extended to their preferences about archiving their data. The technique of coding enabled the protection of the participants' identities in the study. The identity of a participant was not disclosed. Details of participants were kept in a password-protected journal note file. The interview questions were semi-structured and did enable participants to determine their responses. The storage of the study data was in a fire proof safe with a combination code known to only the researcher. The study data will remain in the safe for 5 years. Data shredding of all documents will occur at the end of the 5 years.

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) examination is critical for the approval of research involving human participation. The IRB approval number for this study was 12-15-17-0548925. Irwin (2015) indicated that displaying respect, following through on commitments with respect to interview start time, and ensuring that participants are not stressed are essential. All data including the consent form, electronic data, and

manuscript relating to the individuals and their organizations participating in the study will be kept password protected on an external hard drive in a secure, location for 5 years. I also explained to the participants that the information will be shredded and the external hard drive destroyed after 5 years.

A review of the literature revealed that owners of small auto repair businesses face the problem of acquiring managerial-entrepreneurial strategies adequate to sustain profit-generation opportunities (Hayes, Chawla, & Kathawala, 2015). The operation of small businesses provided a sizeable contribution to a nation's economic development (Mollick & Robb, 2016). As part of investigating the managerial-entrepreneurial strategies of small auto repair businesses and the effect on financial sustainability, the researcher included extended interview questions. Saturation occurred during the fifth interview.

The experience and technical know-how were factors for consideration during the selection of the participants in this study. Marais and Van Wyk (2014) suggested that purposive sampling allows a researcher to maximize the depth of the collected data for analysis. Andorfer and Lieber (2012) reported that the techniques associated with purposive sampling may affect the selection process of participants with respect to a wider knowledge based and more experience on the subject matter. I used purposive sampling approach to obtain the data and that allowed the researcher to gather relevant subject matter.

Sampling is central to the practice of qualitative methods and the types of sampling that are selected have a huge implication for the coherence, transparency, impact, and trustworthiness for the study (Robinson, 2014). The sample selection design targeted

experience and knowledgeable small auto repair owners that possessed entrepreneurial qualification. Flick (2015) reported that a rich and insightful description of a situation in the form of qualitative case study design depended on small purposive selected sample size. The main criteria for selecting respondents included, but was not limited to, the following: readiness to participate in the world view, an ability to explain and narrate their experiences relating to the research question, willing and voluntary individual over the age of 18 years. Cannella (2015) suggested that the advantages of using a small purposeful selective design includes the ability to apply certain characteristics, such as successful return rate on the interview, minimal cost, limited commuting time, and desire criterion. I contacted the participants by telephone, email, and in person prior to, during, and post the interview process. I also explored the possibility of using open-ended questionnaires in an electronic format. This allowed the respondents to write their ideas, feelings, and perspectives instead of speaking.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

One of the cardinal features of a case study is to get evidence through interviews (Fielding, 2014). I used interviews in the form of semistructured questions to gather data. Interviews may take the form of face-to-face, over the telephone, or in a group setting (Robinson, 2014). Data collection is the process of gathering and preparing data evidence in a study. The most relevant purpose of data collection was to obtain information for records, decision-making process, or transmission (Marshall & Rossman 2011). In qualitative research the main instruments used may include, but are not limited to, interviews, observations, archival documents, and audio-visual materials. Qualitative inquiry is unique because it requires both emotional maturity and strong interpersonal

strategies to gather data (Novekskaite & Pucetaite, 2014). O’Cathian et al. (2015) suggested that because interpretative abilities are difficult to evaluate, qualitative researchers had done much to encourage the full description of the researcher’s role in the research process. To get reliable data, I triangulated data from two sources, namely interviews and archival documents. It is imperative for a face-to-face interview for the researcher to make the participants feel comfortable as the researcher observes the process (Sinibaldi, Trappmann, & Kreuter, 2015).

Semistructured interview questions and analysis based on the strategies and financial sustainability of small auto repair business owners was the main data collection source for the research. All interviews are unique (Littig, 2014). Sinibaldi et al. (2015) proposed that structured interviews include questions prepared in advance provided the investigator room to probe based on participant’s answer. Semistructured interviews include questions discussed with participants (Littig, 2014). I used semistructured face-to-face interview questions to explore and gain understanding of small auto repair business owners’ managerial strategies for sustaining business operations. Face-to-face interview provide the advantage of including the researcher in the interviewee’s contextual surrounding (Neuman, 2011). To get the most from the interview, the researcher must make the interviewee more comfortable. Providing and ensuring a comfortable and free flow of participants’ responses was key to a successful interview (Littig, 2014). Semistructured interviews provide a vivid account of events in terms of flexibility (Schatz, 2012). Littig (2014) suggested that researchers must use individual interviews as data collection instrument to get the most out of the participants.

I observed, collected, and documented the responses of participants to have reliable

and valid data and aim to minimize my bias in the interview process. Hartman (2015) reported that interviews are one of the valuable instruments of a case study and that interviews enable researchers to explore and exploit participants' experience. Sinibaldi et al. (2014) proposed that an alternative to commercial data is interviewer's observation of the area, site, and personal characteristics recorded during the interview and the collecting of the data. How readily the researcher observes and correctly interpret what they see can make a difference in the data collecting procedure (Sinibaldi et al., 2014). I permitted the participants to choose a location of their choice between as hotel meeting room or public library meeting room. I made the reservation for the meeting place after the interviewee had confirmed the date and time of the interview. Participants were given invitation letters indicating an introduction and purpose of the study before tackling the interview questions. The participants signed the consent form prior to the start of the interview. The consent form had an option for withdrawing from the interviews at any point without fear or favor. The estimated time for the interview was approximately 35 minutes. The intention of these interview questions was designed to determine the appropriate action for achieving managerial-entrepreneurial strategies and financial sustainability for small auto repair businesses. The data collection instrument is in the list of appendices and table of contents.

Defining a protocol to ensure a common approach before starting the actual interview process in a qualitative study is critical (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Rubin and Rubin (2012) asserted that the prudent thing to do to achieve a research target on a specific topic was to have a research protocol and follow the protocol vividly. Researchers undertake a feasibility study to examine the viability and applicability of a

main study design. DeCoster, Sparks, Sparks, Sparks, and Sparks (2015) proposed that researchers justify the purpose of additional data collection to clarify the marginally significant finding so that it is moved either past the threshold for significance.

Researchers believe that collecting more data produce significant result (DeCoster et al., 2015). A feasibility study improves the validity and reliability of research questions and data collection method and design respectively (O’Cathian et al. 2015). To enhance the reliability and validity of the data collection process, the researcher will conduct an in-depth feasibility study before the actual interviews that involved one small auto repair business owner in Central Ohio.

For coherency and understanding of participants’ response, researchers use integrated solutions for conducting research free from opportunistic biases (Coster et al., 2015). I based the theories on research that was not affected by opportunistic biases, conducted research in ways that limit the influence of opportunistic biases, draw conclusion that did not overstate the results of my study, and receive valuable critique from other researchers about the research. Based on Coster et al. (2015), I used member checking to allow participants to clarify responses and affirm the accuracy of the study finding. Coster et al. (2015) suggested that offering interview participants the chance to reject or accept the validity of codes, emerging themes, and study findings is a critical factor in ensuring that the research is credible and dependable. I, therefore, conducted member checking and a transcript review to increase the validity and reliability of the data collected for the research study.

To increase the reliability of my case study and guide the research, I used data cleansing to address threats to validity in addition to member checking. This process

included detecting and removing data that did not conform to the research criteria. Data cleansing included removing all irrelevant data (Terjesen & Sullivan, 2011). The protocol (see Appendix A) had four sections as an overview, data collection procedures, data collection questions, and a guide for the case study report. Prior to the start of the interview at the participant's site, I alerted the participants of the following (a) participation in this study is voluntary, (b) the participant may withdraw at any time, and (c) the participant's identity will remain confidential. I provided a copy of the confidentiality agreement to each participant.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The data collection channel included semi-structured interviews, observations, and document review. The researcher conducted private on-site interviews administering seven semistructured open-ended questions to participants who own small auto repair businesses. Participants freely and openly express their experience and feelings on the subject matter. Data collection technique comprised of visits to university libraries and community libraries to collect data from journal archives, dissertations, and transcripts of investigation protocols. I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A). I interviewed participants on the telephone and face-to-face and analyzed archival documents. Spence, Lachlan, and Rainear (2015) suggest that access to the Internet for research purposes has several advantages such as inexpensive, time efficient, easily accessible, and more convenient. I used an open-ended questionnaire to direct the interview or data gathering process. I used a validator to ensure that all critical aspects of the data were captured appropriately because the validator helped to reduce potential error and loss of time as a result of using confusing questions and inappropriate hypothetical situations or scenarios.



The researcher used telephone calls and on-site visits as validation process.

Similar to other data collection techniques, face-to-face interviews have advantages and disadvantages. These advantages included (a) greater response to the interviews as compared to a mailed questionnaire, (b) the participants had the opportunity to seek clarity during the interviews, and (c) the interviews were private between the participants and myself. The disadvantages included (a) increased cost of travelling to the site to conduct the interviews, (b) the participant potentially becoming uncomfortable and refraining from answering questions, (c) increased personal bias as the participant may not want to offend the researcher, and (d) breach of privacy as the contact was face-to-face.

Participants were allowed to decide their preferred site for the interview. The researcher introduced the purpose of the interview and the study before the interview protocol. The participants signed the consent form to indicate their willingness to complete the interview. The consent form was designed to clarify the ability of participants to withdraw at any time they wish to do so. Spence, Lachlan, and Rainear (2015) observed that an introduction of interview by a question helps the researcher to establish rapport with participants and open participants up to the researcher as well. Qualitative researchers always select from a range of data collection techniques including telephone, face-to-face, focus groups, non-participant observation, paper, audio, video, diaries, case notes, and discussions in online chat rooms and social media (O’Cathain et al., 2015). Smith (2014) supported the assertion that data collection includes telephone, face-to-face and focus groups. The researcher used member checking to increase the detection of potential expertise bias and purposeful sampling to enrich the

extent of cutting through participants' problems.

Robinson (2014) stressed that in-depth interviews requires the researcher to maintain two separate functions throughout the process of interview. Another aspect was conversational questioning in a total unbiased situation in the same manner as investigative questioning. The researcher used the technique of "funneling" where broader and general questions are asked followed by specific and personal questions. Researchers investigate and determine which data collection techniques best map communicative relationships between people (Smith, 2014). Data collection decisions and analysis methods depend on the research questions posed and the context in which data collection takes place (O'Cathain et al., 2015).

The researcher used archival documents as a secondary data collection source. Case study supports multiple sources of data collection including document reviews and observation (Dabic & Stojanov, 2014). Agyemang (2009) utilized document review as a source of data collection to investigate the responsibility and authority effect on direct control. The researcher reviewed archival documents on the U. S. Small Business Administration website since 2010. The researcher passively observed the owners of small auto repair businesses in their work environment. The recording of the interview supported the accuracy of the information gathered. The recording of the interview also enabled the accuracy of transcription of each recorded interview making use of each participant's condition. The researcher allowed all participants to validate the transcripts by reading and affixing their signature to the documents. I analyzed and grouped the data and information in a table form to enable easy reference for the study.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Data organization, handling, selection, and de-selection depended on varying scientific constructs and tools of information management (Pickard & Cokins, 2015). The importance of data organization in qualitative research was very critical to the validity and reliability of the research findings. The data collected was processed. The data included digital recording from the interview, written interview transcript notes, copies of documents from the organization's archives, types and signed transliterated forms, audio tapes, and consent form from the participants. Shaw (2012) suggested the use of an electronic organization system in research to ensure data reliability. The data for this doctoral study will be kept on electronic data systems which included disk file systems, flash file systems, data base file systems, and shared disk file systems for at least a period of 5 years. The process of data organization in this study comprised of collating information acquired during the collection of data in the study and appropriately labeling physical documents by codes rather than name to identify participants. The data organization in this doctoral study enabled comparison between emerging themes and the existing literature on the subject of investigation. Researchers codify so as to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of participants. The design of the code was P1 through P5. Antwerpen and Curtis (2015) underscored the importance of notes in case studies supporting the capturing of information during and after the data collection process; the notes formed the researcher's point of reference. The researcher maintained a journal note file indicating the records of the researcher, participant's interview register, participant's coding details, appointments, and follow-ups. Data

organization was unique to qualitative research because developing a system or process to organize and manage the large amount of data could be overwhelming (Shaw, 2012).

The storage of all information both directly and indirectly related to the investigation of managerial-entrepreneurial strategies that small auto repair business owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The information gathered included (a) newspaper articles, (b) previous research printed articles, (c) interview protocol, and (d) observation protocol filed in a hard box folder. All the electronic files will be kept on a flash drive in a locked location for 5 years. Coding helps researchers manage text data (Odena, 2013). The use of computer programs for qualitative data analysis have a practical edge in comparison to a more traditional method such as sorting data into cardboard boxes (Odena, 2013). By extension an electronic database enabled quick retrieval through cross-references and other classifications. During the data organization stage, I identified and classified emerging themes, trends, and dominant subjects. I further noted conflicting participants' interpretation, alternative perspectives, and critiques to help draw a vivid conclusion.

### **Data Analysis**

One of the key challenges of qualitative data analysis is the transformation of voluminous pages of field notes to a final report by means of advanced and rigorous processes (Pickard & Cokins, 2015). Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) suggested that the technique of data analysis must be through thematic analysis and that analyzing the result of a study is a critical component of scholarly research. Qualitative research analysis of data demands creativity since the researcher takes raw data and organizes it into meaningful and purposeful categories with the view of exploring and exploiting the

interpretations of the information (Vaughn & Turner, 2015). Vaughn and Turner posited that one of the challenging issues on conducting qualitative research is the determination of what data is worth analyzing. Coding along themes and topics was helpful in throwing more light on priorities and provided focus to the process of analyzing qualitative data. Due to the complexity and difficulty involved in qualitative analysis, several different layers of reviews ensured reliability and coherency including but is not limited to proven inductive analysis methods, software analysis and thematic coding systems. Turner, Kim, and Anderson (2014) described qualitative analysis as the most difficult, yet at the same time the least codified part of a case study process.

Merriam-Webster's definition of context is "a discourse that surrounds a word or passage and can throw more light on its meaning." In the context of case studies, data analysis involves the examining, tabulating, testing, categorizing, recombining, and regrouping of data to draw an empirically based conclusion (Turner et al., 2014). Data analysis gave meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations (Irwin, 2013). The thematic analysis of data was a systematic process to draw conclusions based on research findings. Data analysis involves five major stages namely, (a) data collection, (b) the separation of the data into groups, (c) re-grouping the data into themes, (d) evaluating pieces of information, and (e) drawing conclusive reports (Yin, 2014). I analyzed data collected from the open-ended general questions and developed understanding from the information supplied by participants based on Yin's five stages of data analysis and mindful of Turner et al.'s notion of gaining impression and observation from the participant. One strategy for undertaking qualitative data analysis is to follow a case-based analysis (Irwin, 2013). Researchers in their analysis rely heavily

on theoretical propositions or conceptual questions (Irwin, 2013). In qualitative research, it is common to state that data was embedded in the context of their production but equally important was to conceptualize the ways in which context including research design, disciplinary, and methodological assumptions are themselves embedded within the primary data. The data analysis technique involves the application of Nvivo 9 program. Data reduction helped identify relevant information pertaining to the subject matter of managerial-entrepreneurial strategies for small auto repair business owners. Carter, Bryant-Lukosins, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014) reported that the use of triangulation in social science research data analysis utilizing Nvivo 9 platform enhanced the robustness of the collected study data. Carter et al. (2014) proposed four kinds of triangulation: (a) data source triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d), methodological triangulation. Data source triangulation involves the collection of data from two sources for member checking and document examination, whereas investigator triangulation involves the participation of two or more researchers in the same research study (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). Theory triangulation is the use of different theories to analyze and interpret data, whereas methodological triangulation is the use of multiple methods of data collection about the same phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014). Following Carter et al.'s suggested approach to triangulation, I collected data from two other sources, archival documents and business documentations in addition to the primary source of data to corroborate my explorative findings with each section of the literature review. Swanson and Rinehart (2016) reported that case study derives vivid interpretation through challenging focus between parts to give synergy.

A good interpretative and desirable technique involving pattern matching compares predicted outcomes or observed effects to differences in what must be or what shall be (Cavender & Kincade, 2015). It is worth mentioning that an important technique that will enhance the work of researchers is theoretical proposition (Baskarada, 2014). My overall strategy and the analysis of my data were based on the theoretical approach to research. I was guided by the theoretical approach through the literature review that led to my case study research question and data collection plan. Technological advancement in the form of computers and iPads aided the analytic process in this doctoral study

### **Reliability and Validity**

Validity and reliability concepts were in existence since the age of natural sciences and were adopted in quantitative research in the social sciences (Boesch, Schwaninger, Weber, & Scholz, 2013). Validity measures what must be in a study in order for a meaningful capture of the idea contained in the corresponding concept. A researcher's ability or inability to obtain data from a sampled individual (nonresponse) is a constant threat to data quality in all the social sciences (Littvay, Popa, & Fazetas, 2013). Due to conflicting presuppositions and complexity inherent in qualitative case studies, scientific rigor is difficult to demonstrate, and as such any finding will be difficult to justify (Littvay, Popa, & Fazekas, 2013). Ruedic (2015) suggested that due to the confusion and complexities surrounding the presuppositions in qualitative case-based study, scientific rigor is difficult to demonstrate in a study and justify.

Reliability and validity are fundamental concerns in all scientific research or inquiry, including the social sciences, but while these concerns are shared across the scientific community or block, the reality often differs from the ideals and constructs of time, and resources are all too common (Ruedic, 2015). A comparison of this researcher's doctoral study was premised on the participants' interview responses and observations. Previous research supported the validity of data quality and reliability and fulfilled alignment concerns among the research methodology, design, conceptual framework, and the research questionnaires. Littvay, Popa, and Fazekas (2013) reported qualitative researchers focus on credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability as equivalent or similar to the concept of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity procedures in quantitative studies. Reliability and validity in qualitative study are desirable characteristics that give readers' assurance on the quality of the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations (Cook, Sorensen, Hersh, Berger, & Wilkinson, 2013).

**Reliability.** Boesch, Schwaninger, Weber, and Scholz (2013) asserted that demonstrating a study's reliability increases confidence in the study. Boesch et al. (2013) further reported that reliability refers to the degree to which a finding is independent from accidental characteristics of the research, thereby given confidence and transferability of the research procedures. Doody and Noonan (2013) reported that audio recorded interviews ensure the accuracy of data gathering. The fundamental characteristic of reliability is to properly and adequately document the procedures in the study. Noble and Smith (2015) acknowledged that assessing the reliability and integrity of research findings represent the basis for validating the credibility of a study's



procedural protocols, such as the research design, research methodology, and conceptual framework applications. Using the appropriate methodology ensured the quality of data interpretation and adhere to consistency.

**Dependability.** Dependability and transferability relate in that both ensure the clear identification of all research design and operations (Bulloch, 2013). In addition to validity and reliability, data quality ensured the dependability of my case study (Irwin, 2015). Researchers have identified a range of relevant data quality dimensions including accuracy, objectivity, believability, reputation, interpretability, ease of understanding, concise and consistent representation, and relevancy (Baškarada, 2014). The concept of dependability consisted of three parts namely, (a) threat affecting dependability, (b) attributes of dependability, and (c) means by which dependability is achieved (Ardagna, Thawar, & Piuri, 2015). By identifying those steps, a researcher allows for replication of the methodology with a larger population or by future researchers. A researcher must differentiate between the dependability of a method in producing similar interpretations and the reliability of a method of producing identical results (Cha, 2016). To enhance the dependability of my case study, I followed Carter et al.'s methodological triangulation. Finally, to enhance the dependability of my doctoral study, I utilized Charter, et al.'s (2015) strategies for member checking and disclosure of researcher bias.

### **Validity**

Hendrick, Fischer, Tobi, and Frewer (2013) asserted that validity is the accuracy of the measure to which a score truthfully reflects a concept, that is, the instrument's construct validity. Keeley, Al-Janabi, Lorgelly, and Coast (2013) reported that in a study of qualitative case study, the use of appropriate methodology assured validity. Validity

of a case study depends upon the use of precision and correctness of research procedures (Keeley et al., 2013). The researcher's selected methodology provided an insight into the features and characteristics of events in the study.

Instituting measures to guarantee research validity was paramount to the production of actionable research results and legitimate conclusive decisions (Price & Lau, 2013). The two areas that can affect validity in general are internal and external validity threats. Internal threats are distractions that generate from within the study. Internal threats involved situations where participants leave the program after collection of data. The impact of the threat was destructive and may influence the results of the study. The interview questions ensured that post research changes did not affect the determination of appropriate managerial strategies for small auto repair business survival. I included proper documentation, cross-checking documents and facts, and ask the same number and sequence of questions within the same time limit to ensure internal validity.

External threats involve projection of outcomes to the general environment (Boesch, Schwaninger, Weber, & Scholz, 2013). These external threats arise when researchers project the outcomes of their study on the general populace that did not participate in the actual testing. Ali and Yusof (2011) asserted that external validity is an overview of the findings relevant to participants. The purposive sampling of participants is representative of business management and professional identification to business peers in general that enhanced external validity. The construct validity within this study also boosted the determination of appropriate managerial strategies for business survival.

I managed personal ideas, noise, distractions, and bias by complying with the qualitative research methodology and design to eliminate potential external influence.

**Credibility.** Research validity and reliability are common characteristics in quantitative research, but they are also applicable in qualitative research since both groups of researchers must establish credibility using either method (Price & Lau, 2013). To maintain credibility, or authenticity, Cha (2016) recognized that researchers must adhere to methods accepted as scientifically sound in the qualitative and informational sciences. The use of methodological and data source triangulation increased the internal validity and credibility of my case study (Baškarada, 2014).

**Transferability.** External validity deals with ensuring the findings of my case study is generalizable to other cases. Although (Boesch, Schwaninger, Weber, & Scholz, 2013) noted that methodological literature provides little consensus regarding ways to achieve generalization, I reduced the threats to validity. Threats to external validity, included the interaction of the causal relationship with units, the interaction of the causal relationship over treatment variations, interaction of the causal relationship with outcomes, the interaction of the causal relationship with settings, and context dependent mediation (Baškarada, 2014). To ensure other investigators could follow the same procedures and arrive at the same results, I deployed Yin's (2014) two reliability strategies. First, I created a case study protocol to standardize my investigation (Yin, 2014). Second, I developed a case study database with an overview of the project, field procedures, guiding questions, and report outline as suggested by Yin (2014).

**Conformability.** The validity of research depends on the trustworthiness,

conformability, and dependability of the data collected and utilized to derive valid findings or conclusions (Yin, 2014). I ensured conformability through the creation of an audit trail, an internal audit, an external audit, and the writing of the final research report. This final research report highlighted shortcomings of the study in the research report and provide transparent analysis between study results and actual experiences of the participants in the study. Audit trails not only provided a solid methodological reference for other researchers, but also provided an opportunity for reflective reasoning on chosen themes or categories, interpretations, and criticism as the study progresses (Goldberg & Allen, 2015).

**Data saturation.** The ideal standard for a qualitative sample size is to attain redundancy (Petty et al., 2012). Data saturation is the process of conducting interviews sequentially until a researcher repeats all concepts multiple times without new concepts or themes emerging (Goldberg & Allen, 2015). To achieve data saturation, I ensured that participants thoroughly explored all questions in detail and that no new concept or themes emerged (Turner & Danks, 2014).

### **Transition and Summary**

The objective of Section 2 of this qualitative case study was to provide an overview of the plan to understand how auto repair business owners are strategically adapting to survivability within their industry. This study provided for interviews to that conformed with the study's trustworthiness and rigor. The researcher provided assurance of reliability, validity, and transferability of the current study, which detailed the conformity, and refinement of the research instrument and data collection processes. The study detailed the protection of participant identity and confidentiality and integrity of

the research. The researcher presented in Section 2, the process for participant sampling, guideposts to ensure ethical research, and an overview of the plans for data collection, organization plans, and analysis. This section concluded with details of the methods to ensure the study findings were reliable and valid.

In Section 3, I provide an analytical summary and interpretation of the data and study findings in the context of the conceptual framework, a review of the literature, and ontological paradigm. This section included an overview of the main study and the study's findings with interpretations, reflections, and conclusions applicable in professional and business practices. In Section 3, I present my ontological philosophical worldview perspective with implications for social change. My current study's findings, bounded by reflective insights and experiences of participants, offered an application to professional practice with recommendations for further study.

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

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore what managerial strategies small auto repair business owners use to sustain business beyond 5 years of opening their business. Small auto repair business owners contribute greatly to the U.S. economy and have created up to 84% of new jobs in the United States (Bentley-Goode, Newton, & Thompson, 2017). Small auto repair business owners face greater challenges that cause them to fail or be less profitable, and as a result, up to 75% of these businesses fail within the first 5 years (Priem, Wenzel, & Koch, 2018). The study consisted of one central research question: What managerial strategies do small auto repair business owners in Columbus, Ohio use to sustain business beyond 5 years? The participants for this study consisted of five small auto repair business owners in Columbus, with at least three owners who were in business for at least 5 years. This section includes a review of findings from data collected for this multiple case study. The research results connect to both the research question and the conceptual framework of this study.

I conducted semistructured interviews with small auto repair business owners who have been in business for more than 5 years in the Columbus metropolitan area to have them answer the overarching research question. The interviews took place in an environment convenient to the participants who provided detailed information on their experiences after signing a consent form. Participants responded to seven open-ended interview questions. After transcribing the interviews, I used NVivo 9 qualitative analysis software to organize the data into patterns and themes.

The participants suggested their own locations for the face-to-face interview. After completing the interviews, I transcribed the digital recording of each interview into an MS Word document. The study did not involve collecting any personal identification information. I handed participants the transcribed interviews for them to confirm. Based on their reviews, I made all requested corrections to the data and uploaded the transcribed participant interviews into NVivo 9. I reviewed the uploaded data and formed the initial codes. After implementing the codes, I performed axial and theoretical coding to identify emergent themes and their relationship. After that, I reassembled the data around the research question. The results of the data analysis appear in the following subsections according to the seven interview questions.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

I used semistructured interviews to gain access and insight into the managerial strategies that small auto repair business owners use to succeed beyond 5 years. The participants in this study were five small auto repair business owners who were in business for more than 5 years and in Columbus, Ohio. Each participant answered the open-ended-questions in face-to-face meetings and a telephone conversation as part of the data collection. I shared five invitation letters to potential participants through e-mail, and four agreed to participate in the study. I coded the transcribed interview data through the process of open coding, axial coding, categorization, and thematic analysis. The data analysis process ended when data saturation occurred. The result of the data indicated the participants had a commitment to their customers' satisfaction for business success.

**Emergent Theme 1: Effective Managerial Strategies**

The key strategy for small auto repair owners to succeed in business beyond 5 years was effective managerial strategy. The responses from Interview Questions 1, 5, and 6 identified effective managerial strategies small auto repair business owners may implement to have a successful business. Within this theme, there were three other strategies revealed by firm documents, P1, and P3 responses, and confirmed by the literature review. I noticed that prior studies provided quality customer service, niche servicing and marketing, and the technology needed to assist in performing the servicing efficiently as a strategy to a successful business. Further, a review of firm business plans, in conjunction with P1 and P2 responses, revealed quality customer service, niche servicing and marketing, and innovation in the way the business is operated improves business economic strengths with respect to motivation, profit, performance, and competitive advantage.

There were several findings noted in this study. First, the findings revealed that customer service is critical to the success of any existing business entity. Not only that, but the study revealed that small auto repair business owners might need to find their niche in the market to have a strong competitive advantage. Furthermore, the findings revealed how small auto repair business owners could benefit from technological advancement in their working environment. The frequency of the theme customer service indicated that customer services or a customer support system is important to any business sustainability effort. As a result of the above, small auto repair business owners must seek customer feedback on how they will recommend their firm to friends, relatives, and others who need information on specific auto repair businesses. This will



help small auto repair business owners to improve their business operation and provide excellent customer and auto services.

When reviewing the emergent themes from the effective managerial strategies for a successful business, I found strong evidence that Vroom's motivational theory aligned with the strategies. Ellingson and McFarland (2011) noted that an anticipation of positive performance in the form of rewards is depended on the expected effort. Lambright (2010) indicated that for a researcher to use expectancy theory to explain motivation, the individual must be able to assess the likelihood that the effort will result in the required level of performance. On the other hand, Lambright stated that there is a correlation between meeting performance requirements and receiving rewards and the value of these rewards. The strategies in the second theme consisted of providing excellent customer service while seeking customer feedback, niche marketing, and engaging in technology. The findings in this study showed these managerial strategies are the most effective and efficient ways a small auto repair business owner could use to be successful beyond 5 years. It is evident in the business plan that the auto repair business owner applied motivational strategies as a dynamic system to have a successful business beyond 5 years, which aligns with Vroom's motivational theory.

**Customer service.** Interview Question 3 related to effective managerial strategies for successful business through customer service and satisfaction.

Participants' answers helped to address the effectiveness and efficiency of a successful small auto repair business. P1 contributed to the interview by stating that he engaged in excellent customer service in his business to all categories of clients. P2 also agreed with P1's assertion that employing excellent customer service contributed to the growth

and sustainability of his business. In addition, P3 indicated that his auto repair shop is visually appealing and attractive and that clients are received and checked in almost immediately when they arrive for their appointment. Choudhury's (2015) findings aligned with the data from this study. The findings in this study also aligned with Sinfield, Caler, McConnel, and Colson (2012). Small business owners can also reflect whether they are listening to the needs and concerns of customers by implementing customer ideas into their daily operations. I confirmed P3's statement by observation during the interview and reviewing the firm's business plan and other documents. I conducted the interview at P3's office, and my observation of the firm was that it was a clean, organized, and a relaxed environment for doing business. P3 also had customer feedback cards located in the waiting room of the firm for clients to fill out with respect to their experiences on their visit to the firm. The feedback cards showed that the auto repair owner cares about his customers' needs and makes strenuous efforts to address them adequately. Given the vitality of effective communication and customer satisfaction, Celuch, Robinson, and Walsh (2015) also indicated that customers' feedback plays an important role in the success of a business.

**Niche marketing.** Niche marketing emerged as an effective and efficient managerial strategy that business owners can use to succeed. P1 stated, "My 20 years of experience and extensive knowledge in the auto servicing industry and training on client support was a remarkable business exposure." P1's training provided him with a niche in the auto servicing industry that strengthened his skills and attributes in his business location. P1 indicated that he was one of the few technicians to be trained by General Motors on the repair of Chevrolet vehicles in the Columbus (Franklin County) area with

specific attention to engine reconditioning. P1 also noted that his firm was successful because he created a niche in the auto servicing industry. A review of the firm business plan confirmed P1's assertion that small auto repair businesses can focus on specific services by satisfying clients' needs. Amran, Ooi, Wong, and Hashim (2016) confirmed that small auto repair businesses could find unlimited success in niche markets. The participant's managerial strategy aligned with Vroom's motivational theory by offering service to receive a reward in the form of profit through repeated business.

**Technology.** P1 noted during the interview that he uses technology in the fixing of automobile engine and other parts. P1 further indicated that he uses computer technology to diagnose automobile malfunctioning and scheduling of clients' appointments. P1 also discussed how he likes to personally communicate with his clients to assure them that he cares about them and that he is there for their good. P1 asserted that customers want to hear a human voice and not a computer system or the telephone talking to them. P2 expressed that he enjoys the convenience of having a computer system in his business that could call clients and remind them of their appointments by sending them emails, text messages, or automated calls. P2 again stated that this reduced his cost of operation and need to hire a full-time receptionist. This enhances and increases the productivity and growth of the business. Based on the responses of P1 and P2, I realized that the managerial strategies mentioned above go a long way to confirm findings of several researchers, including Amran et al. (2016) and Gumusluoglu et al. (2016). Vroom's motivational theory in its totality work together to achieve the objectives of a firm.

## **Emergent Theme 2: Business Plans, Initial Challenges, and Addressing Subsequent Changes**

All five participants did confirm that they had a business plan when they launched their businesses and that they learned from trial and error, as well as from suggestions from (a) friends, (b) family members, (c) bankers, (d) the SBA, and (e) members of the SCORE Association that the initial plan and managerial strategy needed modifications. Each of the participants revealed a very basic knowledge and understanding of accounting procedures and financial planning in the initial stages of business ownership and sought the help of family and friends who were in the same business to learn how to become more adept in these areas. Two of the participants, P1 and P3, expressed concern over initial low profitability the first 2 years as a challenge mainly resulting from the financial and economic meltdowns. P2 noted a larger issue with maintaining a family business while launching a new venture, which led P2 to close down the first business.

All the participants in the study initially had inadequate financial resources that prevented them from advertising their businesses in the local papers and flyers. They had to rely on walk-in customers who were curious about their performance. P2 had struggled to rebuild the customer base as many of the original customers had stopped frequenting the firm due to “lack of interest and dedication of the previous owner.” Word of mouth was one of the primary sources of initial advertising for all the participants. Each of the participants noted the difficulty of overcoming the challenge of how to attract customers after they established credibility as a legitimate business, built up their brand, and gained the trust of the local community. P1 and P2 indicated that successfully

addressing the challenges of rebuilding the customer base and attracting new customers as a result of using social media boosted their revenue.

Each of the participants mentioned that initial challenges involved a high rate of employee turnover and hiring of the right people. P1 indicated that the auto repair servicing industry is a transient business and tends to attract younger workers or those that do not have commitment to stay for a prolonged period of time. As a result of younger workers not staying for long, there was loss of time and financial resources associated with the recruiting and training effort. Initially P1 employed family members. Martinez and Aldrich (2011) stated that family members typically have higher levels of commitment to the family-owned business than outsiders. All the participants hinted at a need to improve their interview process to make better hiring decisions and get the right caliber of employees for the job as well as the business. P1, P2, and P3 asserted that coaching and mentoring services provided through SCORE and other business entities were of greater help for improving their selection and hiring processes.

Each of the participants noted the importance of the challenge of keeping workers motivated and happy. P2 specifically shared that “open dialogue and clear communications of expectations are important in achieving high employee morale. P2 indicated that getting involved on a personal level and giving support to employees reduces turnover since the employees feel personally involved in the business. P2 gives motivational rewards and performance incentives as well as celebrating holidays with the employees to keep employee morale high. Most of the participants asserted that teamwork is very essential in keeping and maintaining employees motivated and happy. Half of the participants indicated that they spend a great deal of their time working

alongside their workers and sharing the responsibility of everyday duties from loosening nuts on tires and mounting tires to installing engines with power tools. The small auto repair business owners indicated that they spend time conducting ongoing training for employees. Each small auto repair business owner believed that while running an efficient and effective business is important, it must be fun.

During the member checking process, both P1 and P2 related that a business challenge was that they were initially unaware of who their niche customers were. After opening their businesses, they started defining and re-defining their niche market. Small auto repair business owners, P2 and P3 had somewhat similar clientele base including clients from bigger dealerships who wanted competitive pricing. P1 and P2 noted that after a period of time in the business, they were able to capitalize by adjusting the hours and days to when they might expect the most clientele. Parnell, Lester, Zhang, and Mehmet (2012) reported that small auto repair business owners with niche market and customers have the most success. Not only that, another key challenge for P1 and P2 was that their workshops were very small. Each of the participants narrated an increase in customer base after opening their businesses. P3 asserted that since the location of his workshop was in Franklin County (Ohio) many of their customers go shopping to ease the waiting time. P2 upgraded his power tool to take care of bigger engines. Each of these managerial strategies helped the small auto repair shop owners acquire an identity and that attracted customers for the sustainability of the company. The realization of customer types attracted to their business was consistent with Hunter's (2011) study, that business owners need to stay involved, know their customers, and be aware of the trends affecting their business. The theory grounded in this study is Vroom motivational

theory. The motivational theory as described by Vroom (1964) aligned closely to challenges identified by the participants in sustaining a small auto repair business and ensuring that all the parts of running a business were connected. The participants' assessment of the constantly changing market environment also aligned to the literature.

### **Emergent Theme 3: Certification and Education**

Having certification and education for small auto repair owners to succeed in business beyond 5 years was also a theme. Participants' response to the interview questions numbers 1 and 2 indicated the strategies small business owners used to sustain a profitable business. The literature review supported the data collected with respect to this theme. Some of the themes that emerged from the findings showed important strategies small auto repair business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. In some cases, the data gathered was supportive of the literature regarding the emergent themes. Participants P1 and P3 response indicated several themes, confirmed by the research and firm's documents. Firm business plans and participants' responses revealed the importance of having a sustainable business. Bentley-Goode, Newton, and Thompson (2017) noted that education and its associated training is a useful and important asset to developing and growing of small auto repair business. Bentley-Goode et al. (2017) indicated that training increases the success rate of a business, while business failure is connected to poor managerial strategies and skills.

Findings from this study revealed that having in place and executing these simple strategies are essential for a small auto repair business owner to grow and sustain a business beyond 5 years. Subsequently, having a state technician certificate (license) is beneficial in sustaining a small auto repair business. Van Rijn et al. (2013) indicated that

education and practical training in your field of business is vital to small business owners since this helps in strengthening their knowledge and skills. Training on the job and education well beyond high school is necessary for a small auto repair business owner to ensure proper training, skills, and development are acquired to work with various mechanical tools and equipment (Van Rijn et al.,2013). The findings in this study is consistent with the research of Barrett (2015), that training opportunities can assist small auto repair business owners and their employees in maintaining the necessary knowledge and skills that are necessary to grow and sustain a business.

My analysis of participants' responses and company documents revealed the managerial strategies small auto repair business owners needed to succeed in business beyond 5 years. Expanding on the conceptual framework of this study, Vroom motivational theory, the theme showed key managerial strategies that small auto repair business owners might use to grow and sustain their business endeavors. This is an indication that a sole managerial strategy is not enough for the success of a business operation which is in line with Vroom (1964) motivational theory requiring owners to be motivated by the expected result of their undertaken. Not only will they be motivated by the expected result, but other managerial motivational strategies like (a) good compensational payment plan, (b) health benefits for employees, and (c) on the job training and re-training skills for all employees. Hence, education and training in mechanical skills enhance the key strategies to grow and sustain small auto repair business.

Participants' responses showed the basic themes that were generated from the data analysis regarding the managerial strategies small auto repair business owners



needed to succeed in business beyond 5 years. The strategies that generated from the data analysis were (a) education, (b) training, and (c) skills. All participants' responses confirmed and reflected the frequency of basic themes confirming that managerial strategies are beneficial to the growing and sustaining of small auto repair business beyond 5 years. Through the firm's business plan and participants' response, the findings in this study revealed that the above basic strategies are essential to the survival and profitability of small auto repair businesses. Again, these findings confirm a previous research by Ameerq-Ul-Ameerq and Hanif (2013) and Gumusluoglu and Acur (2016).

**Education.** Firm documents and participants' responses indicated that small auto repair business owners' understanding regarding the importance of education in the success of a business is key to business growth and sustainability. P1 discussed the importance of having basic education to obtain an Ohio state technician's license. P2 discussed having at least a high school diploma and some sort of practical training to take and obtain the auto technician license in the state of Ohio. P1 responses confirmed P2 remarks on education requirement in the State of Ohio. Education is important to young inspiring small auto repair owners seeking to enter this growing field (Apostolico et al., 2014). P1 specifically stated that all small auto repair business owners be given the opportunity to attend continuing education courses throughout their working years. Both P1 and P2 responses aligned with the information listed in their business plans. Their firm business plans reflected how they would effectively and efficiently take advantages of auto manufactured sponsorship training on a particular vehicle type and continual education courses to enhance their knowledge in the field of automobile servicing. The

findings in this study were also consistent with the existing body of knowledge on Ulrich and Smallwood (2013) that good leaders find ways and means to invest in themselves.

**Training.** P1 indicated that he attends quarterly training courses organized by vehicle manufacturers on regular bases to gain knowledge on the equipment and tools used to work on specialized car parts. P2 discusses how he teaches multiple tool handling several times in a year educating other small auto repair business owners on the latest technology in the auto industry. P2 also discussed how he liaise with auto dealerships to gain specific knowledge on specialized cars so he can in turn teach his workers on the use of the equipment and tools. He stressed that this training arrangement is semi-annually to stay well informed on the different technologies that are used to service certain specialized vehicles like Chevy brand, GMC brand, Buick brand, Toyota brand, Honda brand, Mercedes-Benz brand, and Audi brand. Both participants mentioned training as a good means to increase their productivity and skills in the industry. Yu, Eshleman, and Soilean (2017) revealed that small auto repair business owners gain close to 25% of their knowledge from training and education, while close to 75% on the job training or work-related experiences. Small auto repair business owners who equip themselves with adequate knowledge through education and training have the potential to capitalize on their skills in other areas to enhance their business success (Alasadi & Alsabbagh, 2015). Both respondents asserted, and their firm business plans confirmed that training is essential for the growth and sustainability of small auto repair business.

**Skills.** Skills showed the least frequency among all three strategies. Both P1 and P2 related skills to be an important strategy to their business. P2 discussed skills as a part of communication and a form of art when providing auto mechanical services to

customers. In addition to the above, P2 expressed his artistic skills on tool handling on both mechanical and manual equipment. In the course of the interview with P2, I noticed pictures of him demonstrating the use of a power tool under a vehicle. All the pictures portrayed how he trained his employees on all kinds of power tools. P1 discussed his evolving skills since being in the auto servicing industry more than 15 years. Wen-Long, We Guu, and Chiang (2014) noted that small auto business owners (entrepreneurs) who found ways to advance their skills were also able to recognize opportunity. Previous research by Alasadi and Alsabbagh (2015) supported this approach.

#### **Emergent Theme 4: Consumer Satisfaction and Business Knowledge**

Reponses for customer satisfaction originated from question numbers 1, 5, and 6 which sought to explore the managerial strategies that contributed to the success of small auto repair business owners. Customer satisfaction is considered as the standard for performance and progress in trading systems (Nazari, Divkolaei, & Sorkhi, 2012). Participants' responses indicated that small auto repair business owners must focus on customer satisfaction, needs, and provide professional and quality customer services when doing business with both existing and new clients. Customer care, building good reputation, capital investment, and right locations are some of the factors of consumer satisfaction that participants mentioned. The participants suggested that small auto repair business owners should put customers first and practice the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently with customers in a friendly way. Each participant offered a different insight into each subtheme. Participant indicated that the best form of advertising is making sure whatever the customer's concerns, they are addressed more efficiently and effectively to their best abilities. Making sure customers who complain

have their problems solved helps ensure there is a steady stream of customers that come to the auto repair shop. Equally important, customers also serve as a point of referral to family members and friends. Bengesi and Roux (2014) stated that business owners who focuses on the needs of customers tend to have most effective and efficient managerial strategy to address the challenges in a competitive business environment.

The theme business knowledge originated from questions 5 and 7 but specifically question 7, in which the researcher explored the participants' insight into improving skills and understanding the strategies in managing small auto repair business successfully in a very dynamic business environment. Participants shared their thoughts about managerial strategies that drive sales, customer satisfaction, and performance for sustained success. Turner and Endres (2017) indicated that knowledge is the most significant organizational resource with unmatched value that a manager regards as a source of sustainable competitive advantage. More than 75% of participants suggested that understanding the business, industry, and customer trending is very critical in growing their business. Customer-based knowledge, service, product-based knowledge, industry-based knowledge, and prior-industry experience are some of the factors of business knowledge that participants mentioned. One participant revealed that, "You need knowledge of what it is that you are interested in doing or selling."

#### **Emergent Theme 5: Financial Analysis and Reporting**

Successful small auto repair business owners develop effective and efficient financial strategies and take corrective actions in response to differences in their overall budgeted cost. Effective financial planning and budgeting enables small auto repair business owners to continue having adequate resources in very difficult times.

Participants revealed that they address financial strategies and budgeting to enable them to address the major concerns of their customers. The participants identified expense control as the major component of the theme. P3 indicated, “showing a trend of revenue and profitability is the key to accessing bank facility to help address most technological and power tool development.” P3 further stated that “I constantly review my progress and success.” P1 confirmed, “I follow my budget and expenditure plan and evaluate weekly differences in the actual performance to the budgeted performance. P1 stated, “the cost of acquiring a major power tool, especially to work on engine installation, constantly threatens my profit margin. Whereas P4 reduced everyday expenses and minimized capital investment, participant 2 tracked investments to reduce cost for customers. Both P2 and P4 stated, “our investment in modern equipment enabled us to perform some labor-intensive tasks and assembly work for customers, thereby increasing our revenue and reducing labor expenses for our clients.” P2 and P4 assertion conforms to Cortimiglia, Ghezzi, and Frank (2016). Cortimiglia et al. (2016) stated that the main purpose of strategic management may be how major decisions made in organizations increase the value of company, taking into account the interest of all stakeholders, which is achieved by using different mechanisms for creating competitive advantage. This competitive advantage must ensure the realization of economic benefit not available to other companies in the industry (Cortimiglia et al., 2016). Further, P2 and P4 responses conforms with Green and Dalton (2016). Geen et al. (2016) stated strategy provides the establishment with a coherent plan to bridge the gap between the realities of today and the desired future, to represent disciplined construction of common objectives and to create more favorable future results than could exist in the organizational development.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The research findings revealed five major themes, which provide the foundation for recommendations for managerial strategic decisions, as well as further research work. Future small auto repair business owners and stakeholders may find the recommendations in this study informative as they attempt to develop and understand small auto repair business managerial success strategies. The major difficulty confronting small auto repair business owners was maintaining their education and acquiring adequate information. Small business owners require adequate access to resources to achieve operational competence and to achieve managerial success (Bates & Robb, 2015). My findings, conclusions, and recommendations could provide possible solutions with the aim of addressing small auto repair business owners' need for integrated business practices and managerial strategies to sustain their businesses while providing revenue for supporting both the local and national economies. Small auto repair business owners could use the applications of this information to advance professional practices in managing a profitable business venture. Good financial planning could help enhance leasing power tools and equipment supplies to sustain the business. Small auto repair business owners may find the themes of customer satisfaction and business skills and knowledge of great value in establishing a small auto repair business in Franklin County (Columbus), Ohio.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The implication for social change from this doctoral study may include the potential to develop managerial strategies that small auto repair business owners could use for business success, growth, and sustenance in dynamic business environments

through effective and efficient business practices. Successful small auto repair business owners may contribute to the strengthening of the United States economy in profitability and growth of private sector. The knowledge offered in this doctoral study could (a) educate aspiring and startup small auto repair business owners in establishing and marketing their services for success, (b) aid small auto repair business owners to compete favorably in ever changing market environment, (c) provide recommendation for education and certification, and (d) suggest potential marketing approaches.

Knowledge would include suggestions on managerial strategies on how small auto repair business owners can increase their bottom-line profitability to create sustainable employment for themselves and the community. The development of managerial strategies for business sustainability by small auto repair business owners via the implementation of recommendations in this study may reduce the unemployment problem in the United States. Small auto repair business owners might change their business practices in a way that could enhance business growth and development. The study could affect social change through reduction in the unemployment rate. Small auto repair business owners may use the findings in this study to expand and improve on their business operations which could increase the availability of jobs. Successful small auto repair business owners could create economic empowerment in the Columbus Metropolitan area in Ohio that could allow residents to achieve their dream of home ownership and financial security. These home ownership and financial security could increase the quality of life for employees.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The intent of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore and provide small auto repair business owners within highly competitive market environments with managerial strategies that improve sustainability beyond 5 years. Small auto repair businesses owners are not adequately benefiting from value creation opportunities associated with their assets. Small auto repair businesses make up about 20% of private sector output, employ more than 15% of private sector workers, and service a large share of new jobs (Byrd, Ross, and Glackin, 2013). Small auto repair business owners can use the information in this study to assist them in their new and existing business ventures. The information provided in this study may contribute to auto repair businesses' success and sustaining them beyond 5 years. Existing and potential small auto repair business owners should focus on the following recommendations from following themes (a) key strategies for successful small auto business owners beyond 5 years; (b) effective managerial strategies for a successful business; (c) business plans, initial challenges, and addressing subsequent changes; (d) consumer satisfaction and business knowledge; and (e) financial analysis and reporting.

Furthermore, I recommend the Ohio Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Administration (SBA) Ohio district branch pay attention to the findings and share the results and findings with potential future and current small auto repair business owners. I will provide the participants with an overview of the results and findings. I will advise the participants that the complete doctoral study will be published and that if it will be of interest to them they can read the full study.



### **Recommendations for Further Research**

In this qualitative multiple case study, one of the major limitations was the sample size of the participants. Recommendation for further study includes a study of the same subject with more participants. My recommendations for future research that could further the discussions pertaining to the success of small auto repair business and limiting failure are as follows:

- Further studies may focus on each of the themes identified in this study as a specific area for additional research.
- Future researchers could use a quantitative approach to the study by examining the relevance of age and education of the small auto repair business owners to the success, growth, and sustainability of their businesses.
- Future research could validate the strength of this study by focusing on different locations. One of the main delimitations of this study was that it focused on small auto repair businesses situated in the Columbus Metropolitan area. Future researchers may improve upon this limitation by focusing on small auto repair businesses in different counties or Metropolitan areas.
- Conducting this research in other industries could help determine if these managerial strategies are industry specific.
- Conducting further research by changing any of the criteria used in this study could provide opportunities for future researchers and small auto repair business owners with a comprehensive analysis of managerial

strategies that are workable and can help sustain business operation beyond 5 years.

### **Reflections**

I have learned much about small auto repair business owners in Columbus, Ohio during my research, the hours that I spent with the participants, and during my time in the Walden DBA program. I initially had difficulty in finding small auto repair business owners who had the time to spend with me, but the five individuals who agreed to participate in the study had tremendous energy and insights. I could see their pride and motivation in launching and sustaining their businesses. As a researcher, I did all I could to minimize error and researcher bias (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). I followed the interview protocol and mitigated any bias and pre-conceived notions I may have had before the interview.

In interviewing and communicating with the participants of this study, my understanding and way of thinking about small auto repair business owners have changed. I never realized the amount of time, energy, and effort small auto repair business owners put into their businesses. Their strong passion, motivation, and dedication was inspiring. Designing and implementing this study has enlightened me in numerous ways: (a) how to conduct interviews, (b) how to use literature to expand my knowledge, and (c) how small auto repair business owners give to society. I am now inclined more than ever to service my car at a small auto repair shop after conducting this study, thereby supporting the owners, their employees, and their families in order to give back to the community and improving the local economy.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop an understanding of managerial strategies to sustain small auto repair business beyond 5 years. The findings revealed in this study that small auto repair businesses are responding to managerial strategies by engaging in education and training and employing the concept of variance analysis to determine prudent financial alternatives. The three data sources were semistructured interviews, documentation, and archival records. I used methodological triangulation to analyze the three data sources until I reached data saturation. Data saturation occurred when no new information emerged, and data became repetitive. After data collection, coding and analysis of five main themes emerged to explain the managerial strategies small auto repair business owners need to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The five themes were (a) effective managerial strategies for successful small auto repair business owners; (b) small auto repair business planning, initial challenges and addressing subsequent challenges; (c) education and certification; (d) customer satisfaction and business skills and knowledge; and (e) financial analysis and reporting. The findings revealed that the first 5 years of a small auto repair business are the most critical period of all the business cycle and small auto repair business owners must be open to change and innovation. Responses from participants indicated that customer satisfaction and financial analysis were pivotal to the success and survival of their small auto repair business operation. Cordial relationships and paying attention to customer needs facilitated the retention of customers and acquisition new customers.

Participants revealed that self-discipline, commitment and focus enabled owners to succeed and continue to survive in the industry. Additional financial strategies which

participants use to remain in business for more than 5 years included service differential and cost management. Participants provided insights into managerial strategies small auto repair business owners need to succeed beyond 5 years. The result of this study may guide small auto repair business owners struggling to survive as they improve on their managerial strategies and practices. The findings relate to Vroom motivational theory (specifically the expectancy theory component of motivation) of the firm from the conceptual framework of the study. The implication for social change included the potential to reduce unemployment rate and crime. The recommendations from this study consisted of managerial strategies that can benefit future small auto repair business owners for sustainability and growth. Conducting the study broadened my understanding of small auto repair business management and practices from the assumption that successful small auto repair businesses only need large capital investment. My understanding changed because of the findings that tangible resources such as customer service and prior industry experience are critical to the survival of small auto repair businesses.

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### Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What managerial strategies have you successfully used to sustain your business within a changing environment?
2. What managerial strategies do you employ to resolve financial pitfalls?
3. What alternative managerial strategies do you use to achieve financial sustainability?
4. What metrics, if any, do you use to measure the success of your managerial strategies?
5. How do you determine the success of your managerial decisions and strategies?
6. Describe challenges you had with your managerial strategies and how you addressed the challenges.
7. What additional managerial strategy information would you like to provide?

## Appendix B: Letter of Invitation

Date: -----

Dear Small Auto Repair Business Owner,

My name is Osaka K. Tetteh-Odonkor, a student at Walden University. I am conducting a study on Managerial Strategies for Small Auto Repair Business Owners to complete my degree. I need your help to identify the strategies used to succeed in small business operation in Columbus.

I am kindly requesting an interview. The interview will take about 45minutes. With your permission and consent, I will ask you questions and record your answers. Your personal information will remain confidential and will not be published nor shared with any individual or organization. The plan is to share the result(s) of the study with you, business agencies, and organizations such as the City of Columbus, for profit and nonprofit agencies, and the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

There will be no compensation for your participation in this study. However, your participation can make a difference in fostering business success and employment for young small business owners in Columbus.

If you decide to participate in this study, contact me by phone at [redacted] or by e-mail at [redacted].

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Osaka Kugblenu Tetteh-Odonkor, MBA, DBA Candidate Walden University [redacted]



### Appendix C: Certificate of Completion

<small>The information on this page is for the use of the certifying authority only. It should not be used to certify the participant.</small>	<small>The information on this page is for the use of the certifying authority only. It should not be used to certify the participant.</small>	<small>The information on this page is for the use of the certifying authority only. It should not be used to certify the participant.</small>
<small>The information on this page is for the use of the certifying authority only. It should not be used to certify the participant.</small>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Certificate of Completion</b></p> <p>The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that <b>Osaka Kugblenu</b> successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".</p> <p>Date of completion: 07/10/2015</p> <p>Certification Number: 1796864</p>	<small>The information on this page is for the use of the certifying authority only. It should not be used to certify the participant.</small>
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#### Appendix D: Institutional Review Board Materials Approval

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the application for the study entitled, “Managerial Strategies for Small Auto Repair Business Owners to Sustain Business Beyond 5 years.”

Approval date: December 15, 2017

Approval number: 12-15-17-0548925

IRB approval expiration: 12-14-2018