FIGURING IT OUT: HOW IMMIGRANT WOMEN LEARN TO BE ENTREPRENEURS IN THE UNITED STATES

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was to understand how immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs in the United States through a socio-cultural and transnational feminist conceptual framework. This framework connects culture and learning with the material reality and knowledge production that encompasses business ownership. Immigrant women entrepreneurs construct knowledge based on experiences in the home and host countries. Using a basic qualitative approach, this dissertation explores how participants interpret their experiences, construct their worlds in their home and host countries, and make meaning of their experiences in different environments.

Each study participant came to the United States for different reasons. Some came without concrete plans and started out working in another person's business while figuring out how to survive here. Others came to the United States to move forward in a professional career. Some immigrated with family as pre-teens. The varied reasons for immigrating intersected with common experiences of learning the language, building a support system, negotiating competing cultural expectations, discovering how to create and manage a business.

Results of the open-ended interviews with the ten women revealed that family is the key driver on the road to entrepreneurship. All were pulled into business ownership as a means to support, nurture, and be available for their children, an action propelled by the cultural assumption of woman as primary homemakers and caregivers. Moreover, many were pushed out by the failure of traditional, masculine-normed businesses to meet

the needs of young families in terms of workplace accommodations and flexible schedules.

The ways immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs, as well as the driving forces behind their decisions, is valuable information for adult educators. While the research reported here reveals the challenges faced by women like the participants, there also are opportunities for future partnerships and research to develop strategies addressing these learning needs. This study further illuminates differences between home and host culture and the influence of material reality and the production of knowledge for immigrant women entrepreneurs.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends. I also want to dedicate my dissertation to my dog, Eve; she is clueless but very sweet. Also, she forced me to get up in the mornings. She slept by my desk when I was working from home, thanks to the COVID-19 Pandemic, while I made the final push during the last semester of my doctoral program.

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Contributors

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I grew up in an immigrant neighborhood. I just knew the rule was you're going to have to work twice as hard.

Lin-Manuel Miranda

Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good.

Charlotte Whitton

Working "twice as hard" and performing "twice as well" are encapsulated in popular culture as part of the immigrant experience. Many immigrants come to the United States after being educated in their home country. Despite education and skills gained there, some may find that, once they enter the United States, their foreign credentials are useless, and they must leverage other skills and cultural knowledge to make money to support their families through entrepreneurial endeavors (DebBurman, 2005; Semyonov, Lewin-Epstein, & Bridges, 2011).

Economic gains for personal survival are left out of the dialogue around entrepreneurs, especially for immigrant entrepreneurs. Kallick (2012) notes that immigrants own one in six small businesses in the United States, making financial contributions of immigrant entrepreneurs valuable to the economic development of communities. In part, the glamour of being an entrepreneur is at odds with ideas of what it means to be an immigrant in the United States. Gerken (2013) said that immigration is

value-laden with ideas, assumptions, and dichotomies of deserving/undeserving, good/bad, legal/illegal, and alien/citizen. Starting and running a business, however, has no negative attributes, as it contributes to the economic growth and development of a capitalist country that views engagement in work activities for self-sufficiency as a marker of value.

Immigrants in the United States can be esteemed for their entrepreneurial spirit, while also being ostracized for their immigration status. Unpacking value-laden ideas about immigrants and entrepreneurs requires an examination of aspects of personal identity (Wang, 2019). These aspects include gender and racio-ethnic characteristics and are perceived differently within immigrant enclave communities and in the larger society. Ndofor and Priem (2011) discuss enclave strategies to run a business. Enclave communities' function is the same way as an immigrant's home community, while the larger society is more reflective of the majority culture of the host nation where an immigrant settles.

The settlement and circumstances of immigration are scrutinized and judged by the majority culture. Immigration policy decisions made by the American government are based on ideas of who is self-sufficient and who is perceived as looking for a handout. Decisions about who may immigrate and why are based on this type of value judgment. Gerken (2013) said that these value judgments are tied to ideas about morality and legality. Carens (2014) points out that the democratic state can restrict entry and citizenship based on perceived threats to national security determined by the immigrant's home county, or by the perceived need to relocate. These policy decisions are subjective,

and they change based on circumstances. Immigration is legal or illegal, depending on the various policies and politics of countries (Carens, 2014; Gerken 2013; Nagel & Ehrkamp, 2016). The change of policies over time is mirrored in the flow of non-Western immigrants into Western countries.

People who leave their country to settle in another do so for various reasons. Non-Western immigrants moving to a Western country may be seeking refugee status or asylum. In addition, people may come as skilled professionals seeking employment, or they may be hoping to join family members.

The Western and non-Western world is divided by cultural values and norms. Western countries' politics and policies are influenced by Western ideals and culture. These cultural ideals also referred to as Euro-American or White culture. They relate to countries that have stable economies, value individualism and competition, and profess rational thinking and decision making (Katz, 1985). There is no set template or definition of the East and the West; however, according to Meriç (2009), "the East is heart and poetry; while the West is mind and prose" (p. 346). This means that, in Western cultures, we see a specific and rigid way of doing things, whereas, in Eastern and other non-Eurocentric cultures, there may be various ways and reasons to accomplish a task (Ataria, 2017; Ryan & Louie, 2007). This is a very simplified description of a difference in perspective based on culture, but also a useful one when considering the various ways people learn or are expected to learn, in different contexts.

Meriç (2009) poetically identifies different value systems with dichotomous viewpoints of culture and regional values. For example, the financial necessity of

immigrant entrepreneurship is overshadowed by the romance of the self-made success story, or ideas about the "American Dream." An example of this ideal combines concepts of immigrant and entrepreneur to convey romantic notions of immigrants as a "super-entrepreneurs" (Naudél, Siegel, & Marchand, 2017, p.2). A super-entrepreneur is defined as a person who travels to a new place and is predisposed to and intrinsically capable of being able to achieve economic stability and gains through building a business (Naudé1, Siegel, & Marchand, 2017).

The super entrepreneur, however, is not representative of many people who come to the United States for a better life. This is particularly true for women, who are marginalized because of their class, immigration status, and gender (Wang, 2019). Immigration policy espouses "family values," evidenced in granting of family unification visas that allow relatives of foreign-born United States citizens to settle in this country (Gerken, 2013). Family values and the ability of immigrants to work are devalued by the neoliberal ideology that influences the American immigration policy. It has a negative effect on women because of the perception and expectation that women should focus on home and family.

Gerken (2013) discusses the economic and morality framing of immigration as part of the neoliberal ideological direction of immigration that emerged in the 1990s. This philosophy emphasized that "free trade, open markets, and personal merit were not only inherently race and gender neutral but were designed to further antiracist and antisexist politics" (p.76). Race and gender neutrality upend intentional efforts to ensure that policies affect people equitably. Calls for equality are questioned because neoliberal

ideology depicts the human experience as being neutral and the same for everyone, an inherently untrue assumption (Gerken, 2013). This depiction downplays and conceals racial and gender inequalities in American society while also reinforcing traditional masculine norms (Bierema, 2009; Wang, 2019).

The perpetuation of these ideals is damaging to immigrant entrepreneurs and communities in the United States. Gendered experiences impact learning and the entrepreneurial efforts of immigrant women, who are navigating a new social environment, while also dealing with the reality of cultural differences and economic limitations (Wang, 2019). Building a business as an immigrant woman entrepreneur depends on the circumstances and context of migration within the confines of American neoliberal policies. Immigrants in the United States carry with them different cultural knowledge and reasons for migrating (Carens, 2014; Martin & Orrenius, 2014). Immigrating to the United States as a woman and starting a business requires creating new meaning in the ways people live, learn, and work.

Problem and Purpose

Women immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States must navigate what it means to be a non-American woman, as well as someone who contributes to the overall economy in both formal and informal ways. This experience includes having close connections to the home culture while also learning to live and work in the United States. Having both a home and host cultural identity, otherwise known as a transnational identity, requires adjustments to cultural beliefs. Cultural beliefs are not singular in the same way that gender identity is not singular. Cultural beliefs change as

populations, and social expectations shift. Social expectations about women and work play pervasive roles in the economic and social lives of immigrant families. Despite all of these factors, we still do not understand how Immigrant women with transnational identities grapple with culture and expectations of both their home country (where they were born and identify as their home) and host country (where they currently live and work) when starting a business in the United States.

Starting a business and being an entrepreneur is perceived by some as a strength in the American economic system. Yet, immigrant women are marginalized based on nationality and gender, and it is challenging for them to access and navigate the labor market. Despite these difficulties, immigrant women learn and persist in entrepreneurial endeavors, making their experience a compelling and timely research topic. Thus, the purpose of this study is to understand how immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs in the United States.

Research Questions

The main question that guides this study is: How do immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs? Within the primary research question, I propose the following secondary questions for exploration in this study. The secondary questions guide the study while also keeping the primary research question at the forefront of the investigation.

SQ1 How do cultural values and prior experience from the home country inform learning and skill development in the host country?

SQ2 What drives an immigrant woman to become an entrepreneur in a foreign country?

SQ3 What are the challenges and opportunities for immigrant women who engage in entrepreneurial activities in the United States?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual frameworks guiding this study includes two theories: socio-cultural theory and transnational feminist theory. The combination of these theories create a unique lens through which to explore the practice of entrepreneurship and the influence of culture for women with transnational identities in the United States. These frameworks and the key tenets gleaned from the body of literature, inform this research. The socio-cultural theory considers what, why, and how things occur and develop, but does not critique, deconstruct, or challenge power differentials that result in social inequality (Alfred, 2002; Esmonde, 2016; Guy, 2005). Feminist theories do deal with these issues and provide various critical approaches to deconstruct the environment in which people work and live (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

The applications of socio-cultural theory and feminist theory are critical to adult education and contribute to a broader understanding of adult learning. Adult educators are contributing to work on culture, ethnicity, and gender in academic and community learning settings (Alfred, 2003; Guy, 1999; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Furthering the work of adult education scholars by using a socio-cultural and transnational feminist lens allows for the examination of how place and space impact learning, as well as of the material reality for immigrant women who start their own businesses in the United States. In the following sections, I describe

socio-cultural theory and transnational feminist theory and discuss their application for the proposed study.

Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky (1978) applied socio-cultural theory, the learning process described in his seminal work with children. Later, researchers expanded the theory to include other learners. According to Wertsch (1991), socio-cultural theory creates “an account of human mental processes that recognizes the essential relationship between these processes and their cultural, historical, and institutional settings" (p.6). These three themes, or basic tenets, must be considered during the learning process and throughout our lives: (1) the forces of nature, culture and/or society interact to create changes; (2) mental functioning can be applied to social and individual forms of activity; (3) tools and sign systems include language, diagrams, and arithmetic, and are used in social and individual activities. These three concepts dictate that what we learn and internalize begins with what we see and how we interact within the social world.

John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) discuss the Vygotsky framework for socio-cultural theory and connect the framework to beliefs and behaviors. Human behaviors are shaped by social, cultural, structural, and personal factors. They are mediated by symbolic systems and connected to adult learning (Alfred, 2003; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Transnational Feminist Theory

The influence of globalization and immigration has changed the focus of feminism and feminist research. Transnational feminism developed out of post-colonial and women of color feminisms that critique the idea that “sisterhood is global” (Morgan, 1984). The assumption that women, by nature of gender, are aligned under common ideas and beliefs does not consider that individuals have different experiences based on national affiliation, geopolitical circumstances, and cultural and religious views. Fernandes (2013) posits that "transnational feminist research has sought to develop critical analyses of the nation and has sought to explore the linkages between the local, national, and transnational realms of analysis" (p. 102). These linkages are reflected in the lives and experiences of women in their home and host countries. To further explore the ideas of transnational feminist theory, Fernandes discusses two key tenets: the material world and knowledge production.

The material world and cultural identity for immigrant women include expectations to learn about and fit into their host country. Material conditions of women's lives in various locations, based on different cultural norms, must be part of the feminist political and ideological framework (Grewal & Kaplan, 2006). Next, the practices of producing knowledge are different in both home and host countries for women immigrating from a non-Western nation into a Western context. Yet, the historical construction of knowledge extends into feminist theoretical development. Intellectual spaces of early feminist thought exist within places of power and domination. The ethics around thought and knowledge production are considerations for

transnational feminist theorists because of the influence of dominant narratives on the world (Alexander & Mohanty, 2010).

In sum, the application of socio-cultural theory and feminist theory is critical to adult education and contribute to a broader understanding of adult learning. Work on culture, ethnicity, and gender in academic and community learning settings continues to be fundamental in developing and contributing to the field of adult education. Furthering the work of adult education scholars through a socio-cultural and transnational feminist lens examines how place and space impact learning and the material reality for immigrant women who start their own businesses in the United States

Methodology

A qualitative research design is the best approach to exploring this phenomenon. Qualitative research is social constructivism because it builds an understanding of the world with a complexity of views from their historical and cultural environment (Creswell, 2014). Creswell discusses five approaches to qualitative research design: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Merriam and Grenier (2019) added to the Creswell work. They documented eight approaches to conducting qualitative research, basic interpretive, phenomenology, grounded theory, case study, ethnography, narrative analysis, critical, and postmodern-post structural analysis. The approach for this study is a basic interpretive qualitative research design. Other key contributors to constructivism include Lincoln and Guba (1985), Mertens (2010), Crotty (1998); and Schwandt, (2007).

Significance

How immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs and navigate their personal and professional circumstances in the process is significant for the field of adult education. This work has potential to situate the field within the context of training future entrepreneurs in the United States. In addition to future training opportunities for entrepreneurs, connecting existing adult education policies to skill development for entrepreneurs is a natural fix within the overarching goals of adult educators and adult education programs.

Community educations is a key aspect of adult education and immigrant women entrepreneurs are invested in the areas in which they live. Local community adult education programs should be tailored to their needs. Immigrant women in the United States, who have a desire for economic security and education, must be considered when making important policy decisions in organizations and at the various levels of government. Employers also should consider these factors as they endeavor to keep highly skilled immigrant women and women in general in their organizations. To insure the ongoing development of local communities and economic opportunities for all citizens, immigrant women entrepreneurs must have an audible voice in the conversation.

Definitions of Key Terms

This section provides a helpful overview of key terms used and conceptualized in this study. The terms and their operation definitions are as follows:

Entrepreneur

The terms entrepreneur and self-employed are used interchangeably in this study and refer to an individual who has created and/or operates an organization or business.

Home country

This is the country in which an individual was born and identifies as his/her home.

Host Country

This is the country to which an individual migrated and now lives and works.

Immigrant

An immigrant is defined as a citizen of another country who settles in the United States.

Immigrant Entrepreneur

This is operationalized as an immigrant who is a self-employed business owner.

Western and Non-Western

The Western and non-Western worlds are divided by cultural values and norms, rather than solely by geography. Western cultural ideals, referred to as Euro-American or White culture, relate to countries that have stable economies, value individualism and competition, and profess rational thinking and decision making. There is no set distinction between Western and Non-Western, but Non-Western cultures tend to be those that do not align with Euro-centric White cultural ideals.

Neoliberal Ideology

Neoliberal political ideology emphasizes free trade, open markets, and personal merit. Neoliberal ideology depicts the human experience as being neutral and the same for everyone. Neoliberal ideology builds on dominant ideas that further marginalize the experiences of immigrant women, regardless of the home nation, by upholding White, middle-class, masculine standards as the norm.

Transnational Feminism

Transnational feminism asserts that national affiliation, geopolitical circumstances, and cultural and religious views influence how women experience their daily lives. It rejects the notion that womanhood is a common experience. Women's experiences reflect their lives in their home and host countries.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand how immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs in the United States. Immigrant women who move to the United States grapple with the culture and expectations of both their home and host countries. The complexity of immigration status, gender, and employment in the United States is a result of historical policy, legal action, and social adaptations that impact how immigrants live, work, and learn. Learning is not an end goal; instead, it is a process that is continually evolving, shifting, and sometimes conflicting (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

Transnational identities of immigrant women entrepreneurs are explored further in this chapter. The sections that frame this chapter are: (a) Migration and Immigration to the United States; (b) Adult Education, Immigrants, Popular Culture, and Entrepreneurship; c) Entrepreneurship and Immigration; (d) Studies of Non-Western entrepreneurs in a North American Context; and (e) Conceptual Framework: Sociocultural Theory and Transnational Feminist Theory.

I begin with a discussion of the migration to the United States, looking at the racio-ethnic identities of the immigrants. I explore entrepreneurship, using examples from empirical studies of immigrants who start businesses in the United States and Canada and discuss the barriers faced by women in their education and learning

experiences. I pay particular attention to the gap in the literature dealing with how immigrant women entrepreneurs learn to start their businesses and the circumstances around their decision to pursue self-employment. Finally, I connect transnational women entrepreneurs to adult learning and explore the applications of socio-cultural learning theory and transnational feminist theory to frame the study.

Adult Education, Immigrants, Popular Culture, and Entrepreneurship

Adults who immigrate to the United States may not have the necessary skills or knowledge to navigate the labor market. They need to learn these skills after they have migrated to make a living in their new homeland. Since adult education is often the first stop in an immigrant's search for new knowledge, educators must address that need among the demographic diversity of the foreign-born. However, Guo (2015) indicates that "adult education has failed to respond positively to the changing needs of adult immigrants and failed to embrace cultural diversity and difference that recent immigrant learners bring to adult education settings" (p.14). Diminishing the experiences and knowledge of immigrants is a missed opportunity for a rich knowledge exchange and cultural sharing (Collins, 2008).

Experiences of immigrants in popular culture include depictions of "people who have come to stay, having uprooted themselves from their old society in order to make themselves a new home and adopt a country to which they will pledge allegiance" (Basch, Schiller, & Blanc, 1994, p. 3). Allegiance to a single cultural identity is not a common practice in our modern world. Immigrants' lives are not sharply divided between home cultural practices and assimilation expectations because globalization

gives people the ability to maintain a connection with multiple cultures over space and time (Guo, 2015; Tisdell, 1995).

Globalization enables the connection of culture with learning. Upon arrival in the United States, immigrants seek ways to connect with the world of work. This connection takes many forms. Many people do this by becoming entrepreneurs or starting a small business. Starting a business in the United States as an immigrant requires the navigation of nationality, culture, language, gender, and labor market differences (Wang, 2018).

Immigrant experiences are based in place and space, with aspects of identity shifting with the location. Location for many immigrants means having roots in both a host and home country and maintaining a transnational identity (Collins, 2008). Roberge (2009) describes this experience of transnationals only as a back-and-forth migration between the home country and the United States, as a host country. The back and forth can be explained as physical travel between different countries, as well as maintenance of cultural identity in both spaces.

Where someone grows up and what they experience is influenced by dominant cultural narratives (Guo, 2015). The learning process is influenced by culture, family, media, and the environment in which a person lives (Alfred, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). Changes in the population and shifts in social expectations about women and work play pervasive roles in the economic and social lives of immigrant families (Johnson, 2016).

Migration and Immigration in the United States

Decisions about who can immigrate and stay in the United States incorporate worthiness, deservingness, and merit narratives, which are value-laden judgments tied to moral ideals (Gerken, 2013). A deserving or worthy immigrant is judged according to economic contribution to the labor market and overall wealth accumulation. Nagel and Ehrkamp (2016) discuss the role of Christian faith communities in helping immigrants assimilate. The authors indicate that "assimilation and integration must be understood as politics--as an active negotiation of asymmetrical power relationships that unfolds in the spaces of everyday life" (p. 1055). These power dynamics are political. The political actions of nations minimize the cultural experience and knowledge possessed by immigrants from their home country and replace it with host country culture, knowledge, and values.

Hollifield, Martin, and Orrenius (2014) discuss immigrants in three categories: front-door immigrants (legal, permanent), side-door visitors (temporary), and back door (unauthorized). Immigrants are defined as "citizens of other countries who receive visas that allow them to settle in the United States" (p. 48). Yet this definition does not acknowledge the “back door” immigrants. Unauthorized immigrants are those who did not receive a visa, or who have outstayed a temporary or short-term visa. Regardless of the category, however, immigration is the movement of people from one country to another.

Movement or immigration for people can be prompted by various reasons, that are encumbered by different restrictions. Castles, De Haas, and Miller (2013) contend

that an immigrant's status is related to the person's skill level, family status, and reason for migration (for example, refugee or entrepreneur). Immigrants are considered unworthy by the nature of their non-native status and valuable because of their entrepreneurial pursuits and economic benefit.

Economic growth through entrepreneurial efforts generally is supported as a worthy endeavor. Business start-up and operation contribute to growth and development in a capitalist country that views economic striving and gainful employment as valuable (Wornell, Jensen, & Tickamyer, 2017). Immigrants come to the United States in pursuit of economic opportunity (Hollifield, Martin, & Orrenius, 2014). People also migrate to seek refugee status or asylum (Gerken, 2013). They may come as skilled professionals, labor migrants, or they may be seeking to join family members. The various reasons for immigration result in legal and illegal movements across borders, depending on the various policies and politics of countries (Gerken, 2013; Nagel & Ehrkamp, 2016).

Immigrants in the United States often are perceived as a monolithic population, or as regionally organized groups. Refugees and asylees immigrate to the United States under special circumstances. They have different levels of educational and economic attainment and unique needs. A refugee is defined as a "person outside his or her country of citizenship and unwilling to return because of a well-founded fear of prosecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion" (Hollifield, Martin, & Orrenius, 2014). An asylee is a person who meets the definition of refugee and is in the United States or is seeking admission at a port of entry (Homeland Security, 2018).

Impact of Immigration Policy

Gerken (2013) said that the economic and moral framing of immigration was based on the neoliberal ideological philosophy that emerged in the 1990s. The focus of neoliberal political ideology emphasized that "free trade, open markets, and personal merit [were] not only inherently race and gender neutral, but [were] actually designed to further antiracist and antisexist politics" (Gerken, p.76). Yet, race and gender neutrality are suspect because neoliberal ideology depicts the human experience as being neutral and the same for everyone. This depiction downplays and conceals racial and gender inequities in American society, while also reinforcing traditional Euro-centric, masculine norms.

Neoliberalism set a status quo based on ideals of morality, citizenship, family, and religion that are White, heterosexual, American, Christian, and traditional (Gerken, 2013). These ideas are set within the historical context of immigration policy in the United States. The discussion about desirable and undesirable immigrants is notable and influential. The reasons for this include changes in immigration policy and the role of racio-ethnic identity in policymaking. Desirability, policy, and identity also include religion and religious practice. For many immigrants, religious institutions serve as a place of refuge, cultural engagement, learning, and assimilation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Yet, types of religion and religious practice are also subject to dominant ideas of acceptability.

Neoliberal ideology builds on dominant ideas that further marginalize the experiences of immigrant women, regardless of the home nation, by normalizing White,

middle-class, masculine standards (Gerken, 2013). These ideas are not reflective of the experience of women and immigrant women's cultural identity and experiences. Hollifield, Martin, and Orrenius (2014) identify the tension between immigrants who find themselves trapped between two worlds in terms of their cultural identity. The cultural norms in the United States and the desire to maintain aspects of her cultural identity present complicated challenges for an immigrant woman entrepreneur.

The American approach to immigration policy combines economic growth and the traditional view of the family. "Family values" are evidenced in the family unification part of the immigration policy that allows relatives of foreign-born American citizens to settle in the United States. Yet, family values are deteriorating in exchange for bank value.

Educational Attainment and Racio-ethnic Identities of Immigrant in America

Educational attainment for adult immigrants to the United States varies by home country. Mexico has the largest number of adults who immigrate to the United States with less than a high school education (57%). Immigrants from South and East Asia (51%) and the Middle East (48%) outpace the number of American-born individuals who have at least a bachelor's degree. Additionally, Asian immigrants have a higher rate of graduation and degree attainment, while Latin(x) populations are at the lower end of the scale (Everett, Rogers, Hummer, & Kuger, 2011; Harris, Jamison, & Trujillo, 2008). The level of education in the immigrant population is related to an immigrant's home country.

Immigrants who live in the United States, regardless of their education level and home country, are classified into different racio-ethnic categories by the American government. Schor (2017) noted that the first question used to classify an individual as a "foreigner" appeared in the 1820 census. Before that, census classification was based on color and "non-Whiteness." These classifications persist two centuries later, despite the variation in individual circumstances of immigration, authorization, and length of stay.

In a Pew Research Center Report, Radford (2019) provided a snapshot of immigration data and the legal status of immigrants in the United States. Currently, 76% of the immigrants to the United States live here legally, with the remaining percentage identified as unauthorized. The report also highlighted that, in 2015, 44% of the immigrants are naturalized American citizens, 27% had permanent resident status, 5% had temporary resident status, and 24% were identified as unauthorized immigrants (Lopez & Bialik, 2017). Unauthorized immigrants do not have the same security as those who are in the United States legally.

Despite the precarious nature of citizenship and safety experienced even by people with legal status, immigration grew rapidly until 2007. Radford (2019) said the number increased from 3.5 million to a record high of 12.2 million between 1990 and 2007, with a decline after 2007 attributed to the recession. The growth occurred in different regions of the United States and varied by sending countries or racio-ethnic groups. Over time, there has been a shift in countries of origin. The shift, between 1960 and 2013, from the Americas (main contributors: Mexico and South America) and Asia (main contributors: China and India) is pronounced. Asian immigration is beginning to

outpace immigration from South America. Between 2001 and 2016, immigrant arrivals from Asian countries increased from approximately 20% to 37%, while Hispanic immigration decreased from 55% to 31% (Radford, 2019).

The number of immigrants is informative and helps connect the changing demographics to pervasive social issues of discrimination and sexism in the United States (Calvo & Sarkisian, 2015). In the following sections, I discuss the ways that entrepreneurship, immigration, and gender relate to employment and economic opportunity. These factors further complicate the process of immigrant entrepreneurial endeavors.

Entrepreneurship and Immigration

> "Immigration itself is an entrepreneurial act, as one leaves one's home culture to "invest" skills and human capital in another"
>
> (DelCampo, Jacobson, Van Buren, & Blancero, 2011, p. 331).

Entrepreneurship is broad and encompasses various activities, including the creation of small businesses, tech start-ups, and different forms of commerce. Constant, Shachmurove, and Zimmermann (2007) said that all entrepreneurs have an "attitude to undertake risk, make one's own decisions, be creative and responsible, and a sense of independence" (p. 74). The terms entrepreneur and self-employed are used interchangeably in the literature (Razin & Langlois, 1996). An individual's involvement in the creation of an organization or business often is defined as a key component of entrepreneurship. However, there are many definitions of an entrepreneur (Gartner, 1990; Robertson & Grant 2016).

Adding the experience of being immigrant nuances the characteristics of an entrepreneur. Chaganti and Greene (2002) listed three categories of entrepreneurs: immigrants, migrants, and minorities. Immigrant entrepreneurs start their own business for economic survival, share socio-cultural connections and common patterns of interaction, often based on a common national background or common migration experiences (Waldinger, Aldrich, & Ward, 1990); Immigrant and minority entrepreneurs belong to ethnic groups that do not represent the majority of the population.

Understanding immigrant entrepreneurs is a priority for many scholars. Carter and Ram (2003) created a theoretical framework for immigrant entrepreneurs. Allali (2010) examined individual aspects of an immigrant entrepreneur, defined as "someone who identifies, assesses, and exploits opportunities through a business he or she starts, acquires or inherits, and that has tight relationships with an ethnic community they belong to" (p. 23). For this study, the term immigrant entrepreneur is operationalized as a foreign-born, self-employed business owner (Gartner, 1990; Robertson & Grant, 2016), who has settled permanently in the United States. I use the terms self-employed and entrepreneur interchangeably (Razin & Langlois, 1996). Additionally, an immigrant entrepreneur also identifies someone who starts his or her own business for economic survival (Chaganti & Greene, 2002).

Entrepreneurism is perceived by some as a benefit for the American labor market. Yet women, whose work is not always part of the formal economy, must navigate different challenges. The strength and formality of a nation's economy are characterized by the labor market. Wornell, Jensen, and Tickamyer (2017) identify work

that is part of the informal economy as small endeavors to make money to support a family and generally is confined to individuals in developing nations. The informal economy does not comprise the same quantifying mechanisms as does the formal economy, despite being a way for people to generate income to buy goods and services. The formal economy is based on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that is generated by taking the market value of all goods and services produced (Bureau of Economic Analysis, n. d.). This mechanism does not account for small, informal entrepreneurial endeavors.

Until more recently, scholarship has ignored the informal economy in the United States. Scholars assume that developed nations do not rely on a low wage, unregulated labor because of a thriving formal economy (Horodnic, Rodgers, Williams, & Momtazian, 2017; Wornell, Jensen, & Tickamyer, 2017). Yet, informal forms of work are prevalent in the United States. "Not only is informal work a staple in the United States economy, but households use it as a mechanism to meet basic household expenses" (Wornell, Jensen, & Tickamyer, 2017, p.125). Dominant ideas about work and the formal economy further marginalize the experiences of immigrant women, regardless of the home nation, by normalizing the ideals of a Western, White, middle-class, masculine system (Gerken, 2013) and marginalizing certain types of work in the service industry (Naidu & Chand, 2017).

Women and Entrepreneurship

Women immigrant entrepreneurs are embedded in local communities. They leverage their multiple identities of motherhood, immigrant, and entrepreneur to help

shape their home and work life (Wang, 2018). Western ideals do not reflect the experience of many women, and this especially is true of immigrants. Hollifield, Martin, and Orrenius (2014) identify the tension between immigrants to keep remnants of cultural identity while wanting to adapt to new cultural identity, which is at the core of the way people learn to work within different contexts.

Learning occurs within communities and societies; it is part of everyday life. Carens (2013) shares that learning local languages, history, and culture can advance an immigrant's ability to take part in a democratic nation's market and knowledge economy. Yet, for immigrant women in the United States, with a desire for economic security, policy and access affect the ability to participate in the market economy. Immigrant women's entrepreneurship is not always planned; instead, it becomes necessary when confronting a new cultural and economic environment. Despite the many challenges of being an immigrant woman entrepreneur in the United States, some are successful in their efforts (Piperopoulos, 2012). They succeed by learning and finding innovative ways to support themselves and their families.

Studies of Non-Western Entrepreneurs in a North American Context

Studies of non-Western entrepreneurs in North America explore a diverse array of immigrant populations, with some representations of women. The literature review is organized to demonstrate the evidence from studies related to Western countries with non-Western immigrants. The following sections highlight the primary focus of each study and the methodologies used for research. Table 1 shows the North American

location of the study, the Non-Western immigrant population studied, and the number of studies from each country.

Table 1

A Sample of Dataset Publication by Location, Immigrant Population, and Number of Studies.

Country	Immigrants Population(s)	# of Studies
Canada	Asian, African, Afro-Caribbean, Chinese, Taiwanese, Maghrebian	6
United States	Mexican, Hispanic, and Peruvian	4
Total		10

This table highlights the immigrant populations in each country that were the focus of previous empirical studies. It looks at immigrants from various countries and classifications who started businesses in Western countries (Canada and the United States). The needs of each group of immigrant entrepreneurs are different, and there is variation within each ethnic group.

Canadian studies included in this review employed various methodologies: two qualitative studies, two quantitative studies, and two studies that use mixed methods. In the United States, three studies utilize quantitative methodology, with one study using mixed methods. Information regarding Title/Author/Year, Purpose, Limitation, Findings, and Methodology/Conceptual Framework of North American Studies can be found in Appendix A. Additional details of findings, organized according to region, are presented below.

Findings in Canada and the United States

The articles summarized in Appendix A provide a snapshot of current empirical studies about the state of immigrant entrepreneurship in the United States. The studies are summarized below, and the limitations are identified. The following findings are discussed by North American countries of Canada and the United States, in that order.

Canada

I explore six studies from Canada. These have varying foci: patterns in the entrepreneur experience, the entrepreneur experience of immigrants and non-immigrants in large and medium-sized cities, entrepreneur start-ups in the suburbs, labor market constraints, reasons for and processes of migration, lived experiences, and self-identity. The studies highlight the ways that being an immigrant and an entrepreneur impact the labor market, as well as an individual's experience within that market.

Robertson and Grant (2016) studied immigrant entrepreneurship through a social psychology perspective. Their quantitative study included immigrants from Asian and African nations who had settled in Western Canada, Maritime and Quebec. The measures for analysis are the intention of immigrants to stay in the country, whether the business was ethnic or not, reasons for pursuing entrepreneurship, and social capital. The results show that social psychological variables play an important role in acquiring resources, the type of business opened, and their intention to remain in Canada. The authors examine the experience of immigrant entrepreneurs generally but do not consider gender differences.

In addition to education, the geography and location of entrepreneurial endeavors

are important factors related to settlement and business success. Lo and Teixeira (2015) studied the differences and similarities between the immigrant and non-immigrant populations, and business growth in small and medium-sized cities. Through semi-structured interviews and surveys, the authors identified the role and impact of immigrant businesses, the barriers they face, and programs and initiatives that enhance new immigrant business development in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada. Findings indicate that geographic location matters for immigrant entrepreneurs. Small and medium-sized cities often are perceived as less welcoming than large cities. Immigrant entrepreneurs experience more challenges when establishing their business than their non-immigrant counterparts.

Zhuang and Chen (2017) agree that the size and composition of a community are related to an immigrant entrepreneur's success. They studied retail establishments gentrified by Chinese entrepreneurs in Canadian suburbs near major cities, investigating the development of three Chinese malls. Zhuang and Chen used a mixed-methods approach, including primary data from surveys and semi-structured interviews, and secondary documents, including demographics, business profiles, and site observations, business activities, and layouts. The findings identified opportunities for increased investment in ethnic entrepreneurs and retail establishments as a means for the economic growth and development of once declining suburban areas. Limitations of this study are the absence of a clear focus on the sociodemographic information of business owners and a conceptual framework to guide the research.

Women entrepreneurs are the focus of a qualitative study that examines the

structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains that influence the efforts of Afro-Caribbean women entrepreneurs in Ontario, Canada. In this study, Knight (2016) highlights the power dynamics that impact women who often are left out of entrepreneurial conversations. Labor market constraints are experienced differently by women in general, and specifically for women of Afro-Caribbean descent (Knight, 2016). Findings indicate that Afro-Caribbean women often do not have access to funding and mentorship. Additionally, they are racially gendered and excluded from daily interactions through hegemonic practices and dominant structures of power. While women's experiences are central to this study, the authors do not provide an in-depth explanation of how women learn to become entrepreneurs.

Chiang (2012) focused on the sociological factors of entrepreneurship. Through ethnographic research, the author explored the lived experiences of Taiwanese-Chinese immigrants in Canada and Guam. That study addressed the reasons for, and processes of migration lived experiences and the self-identity of Taiwanese-Chinese immigrants. Findings indicate the immigrant entrepreneurs migrated for various reasons, including political, family, friends, visa status change, and employment. These experiences are informative but geographically limited to Canada and Guam.

United States

I examined four studies of non-Western entrepreneurs in the United States These studies analyzed business formation and success for individuals with low education and language proficiency, the resultant lower earnings, rural and urban business location, as well as skill development as a way to increase upward mobility. The studies highlight

the ways that being an immigrant and an entrepreneur in the United States are shaped by education, language proficiency, and location.

Education and language proficiency are related to entrepreneur success, as identified by Fairlie and Woodruff (2010). They examine business ownership for Mexican immigrants in the United States. The authors conducted a quantitative study using large-scale American census data, which do provide a breadth of information to analyze. The aim was to offer a comprehensive analysis of the causes of low rates of business formation among Mexican Americans and the underperformance of their businesses. The findings show that low education levels and limited language skills impact income from business ventures. However, this study does not use a theoretical framework. It does identify gender differences in business ownership but does not explain what caused the differences.

Suarez (2016) also utilizes census data to examine the growth and performance of Hispanic-owned businesses in the United States. The authors conducted a holistic review of Hispanic entrepreneurs and owned businesses using the 2007 census data. Findings reveal that Hispanic entrepreneurs in the United States are central to the economy and are more likely than natives to become entrepreneurs. Also, the authors point out that these entrepreneurs earn less than their African-American and White counterparts because of lower education levels.

The year 2007 is significant in the American economy, as it reflects post-recession economic changes. Women are discussed in this study, but there is no theory to explain the differences between ethnicity and gender. These social and economic

factors impact different aspects of entrepreneurial endeavors.

In another study, Moon, Farmer, Abreo, and Miller (2013) examined the human capital, education, and motivation of Hispanic immigrant small business owners in the United States. Using a survey as a means of data collection, the authors distinguished between the experiences of business owners in rural and urban areas. Urban entrepreneurs may have more access to support networks, while rural entrepreneurs may feel more isolated. Yet, they share a common interest in opportunities to expand knowledge and attain education. Business start-up decisions can be wrapped up in societal challenges that result in subtle discrimination in the marketplace.

Societal challenges are context specific. Takenaka and Paerregaard (2012) employ a mixed-methods approach to study immigrant entrepreneurs from Peru in two cultural contexts, that of the United States and Japan. Peruvians immigrated to these countries for similar reasons, yet they achieved more economic mobility in the United States They were able to make their way into the labor market by obtaining skills, including language proficiency, which were indicators of economic mobility in the United States

The authors noted that occupational mobility shapes migrant aspirations in the labor market. The experience of Peruvians in the United States is varied, with a wide range of outcomes and little security, while, in Japan, economic options were limited, but immigrants experienced more security there. However, the authors did not explore the role of Peruvian women in business and their experiences within the different labor markets. Takenaka and Paerregaard discuss two different cultural contexts, but the study

does not examine gender differences, other than earning disparities.

When addressing the limitations of each study, it is evident that immigrant entrepreneurs are affected by access to the labor market and education, as well as by discrimination in North America. The following discussion of the findings identifies how these aspects are apparent in the literature while noting that women are marginalized through underrepresentation in research data. These studies also lack the application of critical theories that help explore the power dynamics many immigrant women encounter when trying to access the labor market in a new country. I discuss the findings of the previous research using the following themes; (a) education and the labor market, (b) discrimination in the labor market, and (c) learning to be an entrepreneur.

Education, Discrimination, and Learning to be an Entrepreneur

According to Fairlie and Woodruff (2010), low education levels and limited language skills impact business ventures and earnings of Mexican immigrants in the United States. These findings are supported in Suarez (2016), who describes Hispanic entrepreneurs in the United States as being central to the nation's economy. Yet, motives behind the creation of businesses, as well as discrimination in the broader labor market, impact the decision to become an entrepreneur. The authors discuss the characteristics and skills that both encourage and discourage entrepreneurship, focusing particularly on language proficiency (Fairlie & Woodruff, 2010; Suarez, 2016).

Discrimination is another barrier to running a business for immigrant entrepreneurs (Knight 2016; Robertson & Grant, 2016; Teixeira, Lo, & Truelove, 2007). Immigrant women described personal barriers to entrepreneurial endeavors in a Western

context (Chiang, 2012; Webster & Haandrikman, 2017), which create a propensity to cling to home cultural identity. Knight (2016) discusses Afro-Caribbean women entrepreneurs in Canada, within the context of personal identity, and noted that holding on to ethnic and cultural identity serves as a way for these women to deal with stressful negative experiences, such as discrimination. However, innovative development within an ethnic community helps alleviate social barriers to the labor market for immigrant entrepreneurs (Zhuang & Chen, 2016).

Learning is a key consideration on the journey to entrepreneurship. There is insufficient evidence from the aforementioned studies about how immigrant women learn to become entrepreneurs. The reason might be that becoming an entrepreneur is not a planned process, but rather a survival mechanism. The literature provides evidence that non-Western immigrants are moving to Western countries and starting businesses. The literature presents ideas about why and how the individuals are successful, but questions persist as to how individuals learn to be entrepreneurs in a new cultural context. Learning and education are forms of global consumption that are socially situated and culturally diverse. Guy (1999) said that “every aspect of adult life is shaped by culture, and education has served as a vehicle for defining cultural values that people hold or that they view as being successful in their society" (p. 5).

I have reviewed immigrant entrepreneur research, discussed the implications for learning and education, and, in the process, identified the ways adult educators can contribute to this work. Along the way, I have discovered deficiencies in three areas: (a) women are present, but not explored in studies of immigrant entrepreneurs (Knight,

2016; Robertson & Grant, 2016; Teixeira, Lo, & Truelove, 2007); (b) these studies review surveys or existing datasets, but do not fully explore the lived experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs (Fairlie & Woodruff, 2010; Moon, Farmer, Abreo, & Miller, 2013); and (c) formal education and language learning are discussed (Bolton & Lane, 2017; Hussain & Matlay, 2007; Hussain, Scott, & Matlay, 2010), but there is no exploration of the process of learning how to be a business owner. These three areas are suited for exploration within the field of adult education through a socio-cultural and feminist conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework: Sociocultural Theory and Transnational Feminist Theory

The applications of socio-cultural learning theory and transnational feminist theory are important concepts in adult education. Adult educators continue to contribute to work on culture, ethnicity, and gender in academic and community learning settings (Alfred, 2003; Guy, 1999; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Further, the concept of learning resides within the tension between globalization and traditional ways of knowing that exist in American society (Guo, 2015). A socio-cultural and transnational feminist theoretical framework serves as a valuable tool in examining how the physical location (place) and social location (space) impact learning. This frame centers the lived experiences and learning (material reality) for immigrant women who start businesses in the United States.

It is important to remember that learning requires "full participation in the socio-cultural practices of a community" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29) when exploring the application of socio-cultural learning theory and transnational feminist theory for

immigrant women entrepreneurs. Community is something that can be found in a host country or the home country of immigrant women. Individual perspectives in adult education include understanding the behavioral, self-directed approach to new learning projects for adults in pursuit of knowledge (Knowles, 1980; Tough, 1971). An adult's current and relevant circumstances dictate knowledge that is deemed necessary to learn within societies.

According to Dewey (1916), a society is joined through a commitment to individual and collective growth and development. Dewey described this as a democratic society. Jarvis added (2008) that democracy is the practice of participation in learning and society. How and what people want to learn determines how teachers should teach, how programs are planned, and what stakeholders are necessary to accomplish personal learning goals.

The applications of socio-cultural learning theory and transnational feminist theory are critical to adult education and contribute to a broader understanding of adult learning. The socio-cultural and transnational feminist lens focuses on the actual learning experiences (material reality) for immigrant women who start their own businesses in the United States. In the following sections, I discuss socio-cultural theory and transnational feminist theory and their combined application in this study.

Sociocultural Theory

Dewey (1960) said that adults are social and grow up in shared communities. The self, he said, is part of the mind that holds the knowledge gained with others. It "achieves mind in the degree in which knowledge of things is incarnate in the life about

him; the self is not a separate mind building up knowledge anew on its own account" (p. 134). The mind and the body are connected and shaped by the environment in which they live and grow and create relationships. Learning in society and in institutions continues to change and evolve based on family, society, history, and culture (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky connects learning to social life and the social world in his early work in childhood development and psychological aspects of learning (Wertsch, 1991). The leaning that occurs in social communities includes family, history, and culture from childhood and into adulthood.

Wertsch (1991) describes this learning, noting that the "basic goal of a socio-cultural approach to mind is to create an account of human mental processes that recognizes the essential relationship between these processes and their cultural, historical, and institutional settings" (p. 6). An incorporation of the mind, body, and culture is the formative aspect of the socio-cultural theory. These ideas are summed up in three core tenets: (a) the forces of nature, culture and/or society interact to create changes; (b) mental functioning can be applied to social and individual forms of activity; and (c) tools and sign systems include language, diagrams, and arithmetic, and are used in social and individual activities (Wertsch, 1991).

Applications for socio-cultural theory extend into tertiary institutions and community education. Alfred (2003) applies socio-cultural theory in adult learning to better understand Afro-Caribbean women's experiences in the United States. The author found that early learning and socialization in an individual's home culture creates a structure that enhances learning in a host culture. In addition, different aspects of identity

facilitate the acculturation for women into a host country's mainstream culture, while, on the other hand, marginalized standing for women in the host community hinders full participation.

From a socio-cultural perspective, Alfred (2003) notes that, as these individuals "navigate foreign cultures, they bring a view of the world that has been shaped by British colonialism, early socialization, and prior learning experiences. As they cross cultural and national boundaries," she continues, "they are forced to participate in the activities of new cultures and meet cultural expectations" (p. 247). These early influences and current experiences cannot be viewed in isolation, but instead affect the individual throughout life.

Strengths and Limitations of Sociocultural Theory

Identity and its development are key aspects of socio-cultural learning theory. Esmonde, Brodie, Dookie, and Takeuchi (2009) said that people are influenced by others in the social context. Identities also are fluid within the socio-cultural theory, depending on "setting, salience, and local definitions and opportunities" (Nasir, 2011, p. 17). People develop multiple identities because they also take part in multiple communities.

The aspect of multiple identities includes a sense of self influenced by society and culture. Alfred (2002) discussed the challenge of creating responsible learning environments that do not require learners to sacrifice their personal and cultural identity. Tisdell (1995) noted the impact of a person's life circumstances and identity on how he or she relates to the environment. She illustrates this difference by describing the experiences of a Black, working-class mother of two and a White working-class single

male. The two individuals can be in the same setting, yet each has distinctly different experiences of a learning activity. The socio-cultural experiences of these individuals relate to how they learn and how the internal and external environments perceive and contribute to their learning.

The power dynamics at play in the social world also are present in learning environments. Demonstrating the power differential through socio-cultural theory is ongoing in empirical work. Wickline, Bailey, and Nowicki (2009) conducted a quantitative study with African-American, European-American, African, and European individuals that examined the recognition of facial emotional cues. The study utilized a socio-cultural approach to look for evidence of possible cultural in-group advantage in emotion recognition. Findings suggest that Africans living in the United States for three or fewer years were less accurate in identifying American facial and vocal expressions than their European-American, African-American, and European international peers, regardless of whether the stimuli came from European-American or African-American individuals. The authors suggest that these responses to facial recognition relate to the larger experiences of people as members of the majority or minority population, with both the majority and minority members more accurately perceiving majority group members. Socio-cultural learning theory links the social, cultural, and historical aspects of learning, but falls short when considering how to address the power dynamics of learners (Alfred, 2002; Esmonde & Booker, 2016; Guy, 2005).

Power is not deconstructed fully through the application of socio-cultural theory. The application of transnational feminist theory offers opportunities for deconstruction

and makes space for divergent experiences and identities. A feminist theoretical lens allows the analysis of power and oppression in the interplay of various aspects of identity. Feminist theory, however, is not a monolithic theory, or a singular point of view that is important when considering the experiences of immigrant women in the United States. The process by which immigrant women navigate the road to business ownership is not explored in the current literature, but it is particularly suited for investigation within adult education through a socio-cultural and transnational feminist conceptual framework.

Transnational Feminist Theory

As a movement, feminism deconstructs barriers to gender equality. Yet, the concept is broad and diverse in practice and epistemology. There is no single platform to serve the views and needs of all women, regardless of racio-ethnic or gender identity. Collins (1989) and hooks (1984) identify shared ideas around feminist thought that include the value of a person's story and the recognition that knowledge production and validation are dictated by the dominant culture. Prominent African-American activists, academics, and role-models, like Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde, Kimberlé Crenshaw, bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida Wells Barnett, and Fannie Lou Hamer (Collins; 1989; Jackson, 2016; Thompson, 2002), along with many others, advocate the inclusion of Americans who experience gender, race, and/or class oppression in institutions of higher education and society.

However, feminist ideas and theories are monopolized by Western and White narratives. Though space is carved out for other women of color, more space should be

cleared for migration and diaspora idea development (Fernandes, 2013). The emergence of transnational feminist theory creates the opportunity to explore experiences of immigrant women in Western cultures. Transnational feminism (Mohanty, Rousso, & Torres, 1991), from a post-colonial perspective, adds another dimension to the discourse.

Strengths and Limitations of Transnational Feminist Theory

The inclusion of various aspects of identity is a strength of feminist theory. Crenshaw (1989) said that different aspects of identity function as interlocking systems of oppression. They work in ways that examine gender, race, and class in relation to the dominant cultural environment. The dominant culture upholds power by White, male, heterosexual, middle-class, Christian norms (Collins & Bilge, 2016) that are not reflective of immigrant women. Black and transnational feminist theories are credited with helping to further nuance women's experiences and move away from notions of a common gender identity (Mendel, 2009). Lo (2016) examined the experiences of transnational women entrepreneurs from Senegal living and working in New York. These experiences included the adoption of negotiation strategies in both economic and social spheres. The study illuminates the need to navigate "asymmetrical power structures" based on work status and gender (p. 515).

Globalization and immigration have changed the focus of feminism, and feminist research Fernandes (2013) explained, "Transnational feminist research has sought to develop critical analyses of the nation and has sought to explore the linkages between the local, national, and transnational realms of analysis" (p. 102). These linkages are reflected in the lives and experiences of women in their home and host countries.

Transnational feminism is borderless, anchored in a discussion of power. It incorporates aspects of identity within current imperial and colonial conceptualizations. According to Grewal and Kaplan (1994), transnational feminism is useful as a tool to counter Western hegemony, as it requires the collapse of various forms of hierarchy within racio-ethnic systems of power (Few, 2009).

Feminism from the contexts of home and host country is further understood within the exploration of place and space. Place and space in communities are useful when conceptualizing transnational feminist theory. Women's experiences of power in the home and host countries are different, affected by the larger community and political environment. As Fernandes (2013) explained, “This geographic imagination of a transnational political space did not seek to reproduce a static racialized identity; rather, it stemmed from a deeper political and theoretical attempt to de-center the hegemony of both Eurocentric worldviews of the former colonial powers and the nation-centric conception of dominant understandings of American feminism" (p.182). Studies of immigrant women expand the discourse of feminism beyond the Euro-centric world view.

Diverging from American understandings of feminism provides opportunities to encompass the standpoint of immigrant women. It does so by imagining the experiences in the home and host country as interrelated. They cannot be divorced from each other, nor should one have priority over the other (Few, 2009). Scholars in this field connect globalization to transnational feminism and believe an analysis of a university

curriculum paves the way to understanding hierarchies of place and space (Alexander & Mohanty, 2010).

To further explore the ideas of transnational feminist theory, Fernandes (2013) discusses two key tenets: the material world and the production of knowledge. An immigrant woman, whose cultural identity from the home country must be adapted to fit the norms of the host country, has a distinctly different experience of the material world. Material conditions of women's lives, in various locations and based on cultural flows, must be part of the feminist political and ideological framework (Grewal & Kaplan, 2006).

The material conditions of a woman's life depend on location and power position. Webster and Haandrikman (2017) conducted a mixed-methods study of Thai migrant businesses that reveals the duality of entrepreneurship and gendered approaches and practices. They found that entrepreneurial activities are "sites of social negotiation" (p. 24) and that, within power hierarchies, women can make personal gains in their economic circumstances. Charrad (2010) and González Ramos and Martín-Palomino (2015) describe the impact of entrepreneurism on single mothers, but this economic gain is evident when a woman fits the social expectations of what work should be performed by women, especially women of color.

The practices of producing knowledge are different in both home and host countries for women immigrating from a non-Western to a Western context. Cruz (2001) discusses her brown body and her queerness as being central to how she develops and evaluates her Chicana thought and culture. Similarly, the historical construction of

knowledge extends into feminist theoretical development, in addition to aspects of identity.

The ethics around thought and knowledge production are a consideration for transnational feminist theorists because of the influence of dominant narratives on the world (Alexander & Mohanty, 2010). Nagar (2013) notes that feminist ethics are deeply collectivist. She emphasizes the necessity of transnational activists to embed their lives in the societies for which they advocate. A woman's experience within various cultures may be one of social power in her home country and one of social oppression in the host country. Embracing cultural practices as part of the lives of immigrant women is a strength of transnational feminist theory (Dill & Kohlman, 2012). A person coming to live and start a business in the United States does not slough off her cultural identity upon entry to the country, although that is the expectation.

Learning within a cultural context and understanding the material realities of immigrant women entrepreneurs through sociocultural and feminist theories adds value to adult education literature. Through an examination of how physical location (place) and social location (space) impact learning, researchers can generate and test a more in-depth understanding of effective program development measures. When combined, the three key tenets depicted in Appendix B strengthen the context through which this study is constructed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify the ways in which immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs in the United States. In Chapter II, I highlighted three major gaps in the existing literature on immigrant women entrepreneurs: (a) women are present, but their role is not explored in the literature (Knight 2016; Robertson & Grant, 2016; Teixeira, Lo, & Truelove, 2007); (b) these studies review surveys of existing datasets, but do not fully explore the lived experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs (Fairlie & Woodruff, 2010; Moon, Farmer, Abreo & Miller, 2013); (c) scholars discuss formal education and language learning (Bolton & Lane, 2017; Hussain & Matlay, 2007; Hussain, Scott, & Matlay, 2010), but not the process of learning how to become a business owner.

This phenomenon of immigrant women entrepreneurs is particularly suited for further investigation to inform workforce development and community education programs that support these individuals at the local and national level. After reviewing immigrant entrepreneur literature and identifying the deficits in the literature, I identified the overarching research question: How do immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs?

Within the primary research question, the following secondary questions for exploration in this study. These questions guided the study protocol while also keeping the primary research question at the forefront of the investigation.

SQ1 How do cultural values and prior experience from the home country inform learning and skill development in the host country?

SQ2 What drives an immigrant woman to become an entrepreneur in a foreign country?

SQ3 What are the challenges and opportunities for immigrant women who engage in entrepreneurial activities in the United States?

The framework that guided this study consists of sociocultural theory and transnational feminist theory. Together these contribute to a broader understanding of immigrant women's learning to become business owners. This particular frame and questions help explore the phenomenon. They make visible the experiences of women who were socialized in their country of origin, migrate to a foreign country, engage in entrepreneurial endeavors, and become small business owners. This study applies a basic qualitative approach to answer the research questions.

Considerations for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research developed out of fields such as anthropology and sociology to answer questions about people's lives. It is used in other disciplines, like counseling, health professions, and education (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Seminal qualitative social scientists have developed various tenets and practices for conducting qualitative studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed five axioms, or general truths, of naturalistic inquiry, also known as qualitative research. These axioms are multiple reality, knower-known interaction, time, and context-dependent, mutual, and simultaneous shaping, and value-dependent (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These foundational elements are evidence of other

qualitative perspectives. Schram (2003) said that the qualitative investigator must "acknowledge the quintessentially interactive and intersubjective nature of constructing knowledge" (p. 7). This means that the construction of knowledge is an ongoing and interactive process between the researcher and study participants. Knowledge takes shape in the natural world; it is subjective and situated within specific circumstances. Yet, it is also about making meaning through how people situate themselves within their own stories because meaning is "anchored in the stories persons tell about themselves" (Denzen, 2001, p.80).

Creswell (2014) also discussed the factors that are generally accepted as core characteristics of qualitative research. From his perspective, the key tenets of qualitative research are: (a) data collection takes place where participants live or experience the problem, (b) the researcher is a key part of the process as an instrument, (c) data are collected through multiple sources, (d) qualitative data analysis is both inductive and deductive, (e) the researcher must maintain focus on participants' meaning, (f) qualitative research is an emergent design, (g) qualitative research requires reflexivity, and (h) researchers develop a holistic account of the problem being studied.

The characteristics of qualitative research align with the data on immigrant women entrepreneurs and the research question that guides this study. Qualitative research allows the stories and experiences of individuals to shape a narrative and become the data. Words, rather than numbers, construct the story and develop new meaning based on individual experiences and stories (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that outcomes depend on the individuals being engaged in the

process together. The collaborative approach emerges when the investigator and participants meet to co-create knowledge through interactions and observations.

Approaches to Qualitative Research

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research develops meaning and understanding about the world with a complexity of views that are informed by the historical and cultural environment. Creswell discusses five approaches to qualitative research design: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) added another approach that they called basic qualitative research. Various qualitative methodologies can be utilized when constructing a study. Each qualitative approach can be employed with different purposes and with variations in the researcher and participant relationship. Specifically, the type of qualitative approach guides the decision about the most appropriate method for answering the research question. What follows is a brief account of each design and then, in more detail, the selected approach for this study.

Ethnography

A key aspect of ethnography is identifying a phenomenon within a specific cultural context. Creswell (2008) said that "ethnographic designs are qualitative procedures for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a cultural group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time" (p. 61). Cultural and group behaviors are essential components of this qualitative approach.

Grounded theory

The intended outcome of this approach is to develop a theory (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Theory emerges by identifying recurring themes regarding a specific topic (Schram, 2003). Investigators look for patterns in behavior, thinking, or processes based on participant interviews (Creswell, 2008), with the intention of theory building.

Narrative

The narrative approach is storytelling. Research participants talk about one or more events that have impacted their life in the form of a story. The event and its impact could be singular and recent or one evolving over the course of a lifetime (Riessman, 2008). A narrative approach also can refer to a variety of "stories" that are expressed through multiple means. These include text, video, social media, and other types of information portrayal that create knowledge about a topic (Riessman, 2008).

Phenomenology

Different from the other approaches, phenomenology "portrays the qualities, meanings, and essences of universally unique experiences" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13). The researcher describes and interprets a specific phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this type of research, individuals describe their experiences within the context of particular life experiences (Creswell, 2003; Moustakas, 1990).

Basic Qualitative

While a phenomenology describes a universally unique experience, a basic qualitative study adheres to the characteristics that are shared by all forms of qualitative research, without the added dimensions of the aforementioned types. The essence of the

experience of being and immigrant woman entrepreneurs is not shared because of the rich culturally and geographic locations held by each participant. Using a basic qualitative study uncovers and interprets how immigrant women entrepreneurs make meaning of their experiences in starting and running businesses based on knowledge and skills learned in their home and host countries. The desire to understand the different experiences of women in their social locations is one reason for choosing a basic qualitative approach to this study.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note that, through a basic qualitative study, investigators seek to understand "(a) how people interpret their experiences, (b) how they construct their worlds, and (c) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 24). Interviews, observations, and document analysis are used to collect data in a basic qualitative study. "Findings are a mix of description and analysis – an analysis that uses concepts from the theoretical framework of the study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 11).

Merriam (1998) said that investigators should attempt to observe phenomena with as little interference as possible; yet, their presence inherently affects the data collection process. Schram (2003) posited that "qualitative inquiry is fundamentally interpretive" (p. 9). A researcher cannot remain neutral or totally objective in qualitative exploration. Maintaining a relationship and building rapport with participants is vital to the data collection process. Tracy (2013) describes this process as a relational ethic. "A relational ethic means being aware of one's own role and impact on relationships and treating participants as whole people, rather than as just subjects from which to wrench a good story" (p. 245). A relational ethic in my study requires establishing a respectful

partnership with participants. My ability to partner with participants while also developing an understanding of their worldview affects the research questions, interpretation, and implications for the study process and results. To best relate to others, I must also understand myself and how my own experiences shape my worldview.

Researcher Positionality

The lived experiences that influence my worldview do not provide a fixed perspective, but rather reflect ongoing evolution and personal development. Growing up as a child of public-school educators in Texas, with two brothers and a sister, for me, meant moving from school to school in rural parts of the state. My father was a high school coach, and my mother was a music teacher. Coaching in Texas can be a volatile position that often creates enmity with people who are very serious about high school sports. So, we had to move several times. I learned to shift my perspective and take in new information in new environments quickly to adapt to my ever-changing home place. My shifting identity occurred as a person born an American citizen and raised in one state my entire life.

My early influences and experiences are immersed in evangelical Christianity, with clear racial boundaries and subtle messages about race, gender, and work. I realized my Whiteness when I was in elementary school. My family moved to a small town in West Texas, where the main industry was oil, and the population was small and transient. Most people living in my small town were Latin(x) and predominantly from Mexico. I was educated by other students about my Whiteness, who saw me as wealthy based on my race. When I was 13, my family moved again to another small town in the

Panhandle of Texas. The population changed, and I learned about gender and gender performance. I remember making sure that no one was walking behind me when I went up the stairs at my school to protect myself from the roaming hands of boys who would touch girls inappropriately as they passed. It was an experience of wanting attention, but also knowing that the attention meant providing access to my body in ways that were uncomfortable and infringed on my autonomy. These are aspects that shaped my early development, filtered through my status as a privileged White female.

My Whiteness makes me an outsider to the experiences of racism known to Black, Brown, and other minoritized individuals. As a woman, I understand the position and expectations I am expected to hold because of my gender. Oppression experienced with my gender intersects with my racial identity (Crenshaw, 1991). Though I understand the social exclusion that occurs when I do not act according to gender norms, I have options to perform in ways that protect myself from social exclusion, and I experience privilege because of my race.

I am a divorced woman in my mid-thirties. I experienced feelings of social exclusion as a married woman, who did not change her name, and then again, when I was going through my divorce as a third-year graduate student. My academic friends, mentors, and colleagues supported me, but I felt ostracized by Christian ideology that crept its way into conversations with family, friends, and acquaintances about marriage and divorce. Yet, as a woman in academia, I am privileged to be working towards achieving my educational goals and with opportunities available because of my education.

My understanding is limited to my own worldview and personal experiences. I cannot fully understand or feel the burden of being an immigrant in the United States, or of being a woman with limited access to education. As I continue to consider and reflect on my position within feminist and critical scholarship as a White woman, I know I cannot speak for women of color and transnational identities because I am not one of them. However, I hope the work reported here work amplifies their voices and allows them to be heard by the broader community.

Researcher's Philosophical Perspective

My personal experiences also shape who I am as a developing social scientist and researcher. As a researcher, my philosophical perspective shapes my approach to qualitative research. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) summarize philosophical perspectives as (a) positivist/post-positivism (reality exists and can be found; knowledge is relative), (b) constructivist (reality is socially constructed, and there are multiple realities), (c) critical (understand, critique and challenge), (d) postmodern/poststructuralism (accept diversity and plurality by rejecting the existing narrative). These philosophical perspectives inform my personal views about reality.

I adhere to a critical perspective as a pragmatic facilitator with a core commitment to transformation through research. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted, this perspective is constructivist in nature. Further, my philosophical perspective is informed by what Mertens (2010) describes as a transformative research paradigm that is grounded in social justice. Mertens considers the transformative research paradigm as

the recognition that people experience things differently based on their race, economic status, and other aspects of personal and social identity.

A constructivist perspective is a transformative research structure grounded in pragmatic ways of knowing about the world and approaching a problem. Pragmatic approaches focus on addressing or resolving a problem with all available resources and knowledge; they are not confined to one research paradigm (Creswell, 2014). Cherryholmes (1992) charts various arguments and perspectives of early pragmatists and concludes:

> For pragmatists, values, and visions of human action and interaction precede a search for descriptions, theories, explanations, and narratives. Pragmatic research is driven by anticipated consequences. Pragmatic choices about what to research and how to go about it are conditioned by where we want to go in the broadest of senses (p. 13).

This research appeals to a practice-based audience in the field of adult education. A pragmatist approach asserts that research is conducted in the world. Working with people in an authentic environment is central to my perspective.

Connecting practice and people through my work is important to me as an investigator. Maintaining relationships with participants to look at a problem critically influences my decisions. My approach to problem solving as a pragmatist is both critical and feminist. Feminist theories are significant, as they critique and deconstruct social norms that are oppressive to women and gender non-conforming people (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Feminist pragmatism adds a layer of activism to my critical approach. I

do not idealize the outcomes of my investigations but, instead, believe "that when action is guided by theory, a meaningful activism might emerge among an engaged citizenry" (Hamington & Bardwell-Jones, 2012, p. 5). I am approaching this qualitative study through a feminist pragmatic perspective.

My feminist pragmatic perspective is situated within circumstances and desired outcomes, rather than with predetermined settings and results (Creswell, 2014). Flexibility and responsiveness to the place, or actual physical location, of the problem, is a key part of the feminist pragmatic worldview. The concept of "place" is discussed by Dewey (1916) as a connection between learning and the environment. The framing of problem solving connects to ideas of place and standpoint, social location, and perspective. Pratt (2002) further notes that the environment where learning occurs is part of where people live and develop ideas about family, work, and the nature of home.

Exploring standpoint as a part of my research philosophy requires me to state my own place within the problem under study. Whipps (2014) discusses pragmatic feminist education as being grounded in "private/public schism we see so often in theoretical thought, bringing in the particularities of one's standpoint as a starting place for philosophy" (p. 34). For my own standpoint, I discuss my personal philosophy, grounded in feminist pragmatism through ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological frames (Pratt, 2002).

Ontological

There are multiple socially constructed realities and aspects of identity that influence a person's experience in the world (Crenshaw, 1989; Dill & Kohlman, 2012;

Grewal & Kaplan, 2006;). Life is experienced differently based on where a person is born, where they currently live, how they make money, and how they are perceived by others. This experience results in different realities, applicable to both the researcher and research participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Martens, 2007). I approached this research project with an understanding that my identity and worldviews are different from those of the research participants.

Epistemological

Researchers and participants must have an interactive link in a study. Knowledge is socially and historically located within different cultures (Alfred, 2003; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Rogoff, 1995;). Cultural awareness and respect must be key aspects of the investigative process (Mertens, 2010). I continually educate myself about the social, historical, and cultural differences between myself and the participants, while also respecting those differences.

Methodological

Qualitative data are collected to affirm and empower participants through hearing and honoring their voices and experiences. I act ethically and practice reflexivity in the research process by adhering to trustworthiness standards of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

Axiological

The foundation, grounded in feminist pragmatism, for this study was guided by ethics of respect, kindness, and justice in my investigation efforts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I deeply respect the communities with which I engage, and I consistently reflect

on my personal privileges when connecting with and learning from community members.

The knowledge gained and produced should be useful in developing a more advanced understanding of people and me, as well as working collaboratively toward a shared goal (Gillberg, 2011). These are key aspects of my personal research philosophy that influence my approach to the study with immigrant women who are self-employed in the United States. The experiences of women are rich sources of knowledge and information that are best explored through a qualitative research approach.

Research Methods

Immigrant women entrepreneurs construct knowledge based on experiences in the home and host countries. Knowledge also is socially situated within an existing power dynamic and is explored through a feminist pragmatic perspective. A basic qualitative approach illuminates how participants interpret their experiences as immigrant women and entrepreneurs, how they construct their worlds in their home and host countries, and how they make meaning of their experiences in these different social locations. The collection and subsequent analysis of the interview data reveal how transnational experiences of navigating the transition between countries impact the process of learning to become an entrepreneur in the United States.

Recruitment and Informed Consent

Participant confidentiality is critical to maintaining the relational ethic (Tracy, 2013). It ensures that participants are protected during the research process. Confidentiality for participants, their businesses, and their families is vital to this study

(Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Schram, 2003). To maintain confidentiality, I constructed and used a consent form that explained the key aspects of the study, including the use of audio recordings of the interviews. To ensure confidentiality, the signature line was removed from the form.

The decision to eliminate the signature line was made during the recruitment process. I received feedback from people in my recruitment pool, who said that a signed informed consent could be a barrier to participation, especially if a person were not secure in her immigration status in the United States. Immigrants working in the United States without citizenship, or working with visa restrictions, may be hesitant to sign documents or disclose their information. So, the form was changed to secure verbal consent to participate in the study.

After receiving this feedback, I contacted the office of the Texas A&M University Institutional Board (IRB), revised the form, and then resubmitted my IRB papers. The request was approved on August 15, 2019 (See Appendix C). Approved documents were used to recruit and communicate with participants. After participants verbally consented to participate in the study, I assigned each participant a pseudonym based on their country of origin.

Process and Procedure Plan

For the data collection process, I begin by acknowledging that I am an outsider to the foreign-born, immigrant, and entrepreneurial communities (Merriam & Tindell, 2016). I am an insider to the experiences of being a woman, and, as a native-born American, I am unaffected by the potential power dynamics presented by the security of

citizenship. With my insider and outsider status in mind, I designed a process and procedure plan. The plan comprised site selection, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, as well as ethics and trustworthiness measures. I discuss these areas in detail and provide examples to offer additional insight.

Site Selection

The site selection was made based on data, feasibility, and proximity. Lopez and Bialik (2017) report that nearly half of all immigrants live in three states: California (25%), Texas (11%), and New York (10%). In addition, the largest number of immigrants settle in coastal areas. I am a resident of Central Texas. Therefore, I sought to recruit participants within a 150-mile radius of the Bryan-College Station area, which includes the Upper Gulf Coast.

The primary cities in this radius are Houston, San Antonio, Austin, and Dallas-Fort Worth, with the closest being Houston. Houston is the largest city in Texas. Its immigrant population grew at a much higher rate (59%) than the national average (33%) between 2000 and 2013 (Capps, Fix & Nwosu, 2015). Participants in the study were from the San Antonio, Katy (a Houston suburb), and Bryan/College Station, as detailed in Appendix D.

Participant Selection

Various methods were used to recruit study participants. These methods included contacting friends, colleagues, and professional contacts, and through engagement in a local women's entrepreneur group.

Using purposive sampling, initial recommendations for participation were made by dissertation committee members, and through personal connections with other Texas A&M graduate students, the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) members of the School of Public Health (SPH) and the sociology faculty at the Texas A&M University, and the Women's Entrepreneur group in Bryan/College Station.

A wide net was cast by contacting local and state-wide organizations that serve refugees and provide immigrant services in the community and surrounding areas. A sociology professor, who worked with a local refugee organization, put me in contact with an individual at the Houston Chamber of Commerce. She told me about other chambers in the area that might help with recruitment. The process of recruiting participants began in July 2019. I had my first interview in September 2019, and my final interview that November. I developed a comprehensive list of contacts in collaboration with personal and professional networks and disseminated recruitment materials through these networks.

Potential study participants, who were willing to be interviewed, responded by email, messaging correspondence, or phone. Each individual chose the mode of future communication she found to be most comfortable. For example, Rosalie preferred to be contacted through text message, while Ximena preferred to receive all pre- and post-interview information through her email account. As an added participant selection measure, purposive snowball sampling was employed, with a request for referrals added at the end of each interview (Creswell, 2003; Merriam & Tindell, 2016). No participants were added because of such referrals.

Sample Size and Inclusion Criteria

Sample size in qualitative research is not predetermined. A qualitative research sample can be in any number range. It entirely depends on the needs of the study and how much information is required to answer the research questions (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). As the research process continued, I arrived at data saturation, and there was no new information to be gained from further interviews (Merriam & Tindell, 2016). I began to reach saturation after eight interviews but continued with an additional two interviews to ensure saturation was met and to follow through on plans that I made with the two women for interviews. There were ten participants in the sample.

The inclusion criteria for this study were broad but specific. To be selected for the study, individuals had to:

a) Be foreign-born. The participant must have been born and lived outside of the United States.
b) Be self-employed/primary operator in a family business in the United States, or have recent experience being self-employed/primary operator in a family business in the United States; that is, the participant must play or have played an active role in the small or family business.
c) Identify as female; gender is not a binary, yet, for this study, a participant must self-identify as a woman.
d) Participants must have lived in the United States long enough to be acculturated.

e) Identify as a business owner and/or entrepreneur; has experience managing and running a business.

The inclusion criteria did not include factors such as country of origin or age. Yet, it was important for the participants to be first-generation immigrants and old enough to have experiences and salient memories of living outside the United States and immigrating to the country. Additionally, participants must be acculturated (Berry, 2003). The reason behind this decision is informed by Gunder (2000), who identified the loss of culture and language, with memories that stayed from youth into adulthood, after migrating to the United States. The participants were ten immigrant women: four aged 30-40, four aged 40-50, one aged 50-60, and one aged 60-70. Their businesses were in child and elder care, massage therapy, retail, cooking school, a commercial driver's license school, marketing, restaurant, cleaning services, and photography. Countries of origin were Mexico, Venezuela, Nigeria, India, Canada, Lebanon, and South Africa. Participants now live in Houston, San Antonio, and the Bryan/College Station area. See chapters IV and V for additional participant details.

Data Collection

Interviews were used to collect data to capture the way knowledge takes shape in the natural world within the specific circumstances (Schram, 2003). Once participants were selected, I scheduled an initial interview with each, to be conducted at a mutually agreed upon location. Most of the interview locations were local coffee shops, but two of the interviews occurred in participants' homes; one occurred via Skype, and one other interview was conducted over the phone.

This was followed by a second interview. It was conducted as needed to help provide additional clarity and to develop further any themes that emerged from the first round of interviews. Second interviews for six of the ten participants were held asynchronously through email messages. Three second interviews occurred face to face, and one second interview occurred on the phone.

Interview Protocol

Interviews went into depth about the experiences of each participant utilizing the interview protocol as a guide (See Appendix E). Using the protocol, participants were asked to share their experiences (Creswell, 2008; Merriam & Tindell, 2016; Patton, 1990). The interview was a dialogue with semi-structured, open-ended interview questions from the protocol (Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tindell, 2016). The interview protocol was based on the analysis of the literature and the theoretical framework. For the first round of interviews, the protocol was created in advance and served as a guide. After the first round of interviews, I conducted a preliminary analysis of the data. This early analysis identified areas that required further explanation. For example, the first round of interviews brought up questions about language learning, but a few participants did not discuss their early experiences. I asked them about this in the second round of interviews.

The topic areas explored in the interview protocol included basic demographic information and sociocultural experiences in their home nation. The participants discussed how being an immigrant influenced their experiences, how their early

education in the home country affected acculturation and experiences of learning and working in the United States.

I recorded the interview with the participants' consent and transcribed the tapes within a week of the interview. One interview participant did not want her interview recorded, so, instead, I took detailed notes by hand, and this served as her transcript. Transcripts were sent to each participant for a member check. Member checking was used to ensure participants were comfortable with the responses they provided in the interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis

I subjected the interviews, as well as my written reflections and participant descriptions, to content analysis. This is the process of breaking down the data into the smallest pieces of information, called units that contain meaning when standing alone (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Merriam & Tindell, 2016). I first read the transcripts multiple times each to gather an overall sense of the data (Creswell, Shope, Plano Clark, & Green, 2006). I wrote a case story for each participant interview to describe the setting and create a picture of the participant. I created a chart of early themes to capture the main ideas. All interviews were then manually coded and analyzed for categories or themes.

Next, the transcripts were uploaded into NVivo, and a case was developed for each transcript. Each participant case included the transcript, case story, and participant information in an NVivo case folder. Once all the transcripts and participant cases were organized, word frequency queries were used and tracked to identify the most common

words that occurred in all interviews. One of the most frequent words was the seed word "know," which included all varieties of the work know (knowledge, knowing, etc.). This first step in data analysis led to connections between keywords and interviews. After running frequencies, the keywords identified all passages from all interviews related to the words. I coded and assigned these key sentences to participant case files. I also constructed a mind map, tree maps, and word trees at different stages of analysis to further identify themes (See Appendix F for examples).

Each interview was coded again, using the software, and then compared to the manual coding completed during the interview collection. This process helped with consistency and emphasizing key points during coding. Appendix G. includes a summary of the data and the analysis process.

Reliability

Ethical behavior in qualitative research is essential to the honest outcome of a study. The ethics and trustworthiness measures, namely reflexivity, respondent validation, and peer review, were utilized as measures of trustworthiness. They are presented in Appendix H.

The first reliability measure, respondent validation, also known as member checking, requires each participant to review her interview transcription for accuracy. I sent the transcribed copy of her interview to each participant for feedback. Three of the participants made adjustments to their transcripts and sent them back to me. I then replaced their original transcript with the revised version. Respondent validation was an

opportunity for participants to explain further, edit, or elaborate on their thoughts (Merriam & Tindell, 2016).

To enhance the participant and researcher relationship, I also put together a flyer that provided an overview of findings and shared this with each participant (See Appendix I for an example of the flyer). Participants were then able to provide feedback or any additional information related to the study. An example of comment came from Olivia, who said, "Thank you so much! It was amazing participating and chatting with you," and from Elinor, "Thanks for sharing your findings! It was my pleasure to help you."

Secondly, peer debriefing is a valuable trustworthiness measure used in my research process. Peer debriefing requires working with an individual who does not have a stake in the research, but who knows both the related literature and qualitative methods (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I partnered with multiple peer reviewers for various stages of the data and analysis process. They included a work colleague who is an immigrant, a peer who is a qualitative researcher, and a peer who knows about entrepreneurship. I asked my debriefers to share any opinions regarding the findings and point out any opposing viewpoints.

I met with peer debriefers periodically as I conducted my research to discuss interviews and emerging themes. The meetings with the qualitative researcher occurred on Thursdays during a scheduled meeting time. I met every other week with my work colleague, and I reached out to the peer with knowledge about entrepreneurship four

different times through email. I took notes during and after these peer debriefing sessions and complied written summaries (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

Finally, reflexivity is key to the conceptualization phase of my study. Reflexivity ensured that I stay aware of my own responses to the information gained through interviews and not project them onto participants (Probst & Berenson, 2014). I maintained a reflexivity journal as a word document in which I wrote my thoughts. I recorded a voice memo to myself after each interview. I transcribed the recording and added more information as needed.

These three ethics and trustworthiness measures were vital to my interview process and conducting a reliable study. Reliability is concerned with demonstrating that the researcher has not invented or misrepresented data or been careless in data recording or analysis (Mason, 2002). Lewis (2003) suggests that reliability is enhanced by transparent reflection and outlining procedures that lead to the research findings. Using reflexivity, respondent validation, and peer review in my study was tedious but necessary. Merriam and Tindell (2016) said that a study requires painstaking work at the conceptualization phase to ensure reliability and validity. Trustworthiness is achieved through rigor and truthfulness (Berg, 2001; Yin, 2009).

Interviewer Processes and Audit Trail

As further evidence of rigor and trustworthiness, I documented an account of my decisions and activities throughout the study, which included theoretical, methodological, and analytic choices (Koch, 2006). I maintained a log of research activities on an excel spreadsheet, developed memos, maintained a research journal, and

documented data collection and analysis procedures throughout my study (Creswell & Millar, 2000). I was guided by six categories of information in my audit process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These six categories are listed with the process followed for my data collection.

1. Raw data - Interviews audio-recorded, transcribed, documented participant descriptions.

2. Data reduction and analysis notes – transcribe, read, re-read with initial notes on perceived themes.

3. Data reconstruction and synthesis products – code transcripts in NVIVO, compare to initially perceived themes, recoded through NVivo.

4. Process notes – maintained before, during, and after each interview in handwritten, typed, and voice memo form.

5. Materials related to intentions and dispositions – indicated in IRB documents and through reflexivity.

6. Preliminary development information – each version with notes is backed up in files in a study folder.

I used a physical audit trail to document the stages of the research. After each interview, I recorded a voice memo with my initial responses and reflections. These voice memos were transcribed and added to a file, along with any reflections related to the research process.

Chapter Summary

Using a basic qualitative approach for the study was the best way to situate learning within a cultural context and to understand the material realities of immigrant women entrepreneurs. The process of how an immigrant woman entrepreneur learns to navigate the road to business ownership is not explored by previous researchers. The topic is particularly suited for examination within the field of adult education. By providing an overview of qualitative research, identifying my personal philosophy, and explaining my methodological approach, I am prepared to answer the following question: How do immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs?

CHAPTER IV

IMMIGRANT WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS' CASE STORIES

Introduction

In this chapter, I present a case profile of the participants, highlighting key aspects of their journey to entrepreneurship as immigrant women in the United States. Participant stories include family histories, educational experiences, relationships, successes, and challenges they faced in their home and host countries. Each story is unique, and qualitative inquiry is an excellent way to approach it, as this method "involves the investigation of uniqueness – of unique individuals, groups, and phenomenon – each situated within unique contextual settings" (Carlson, 2010, p. 1104). A broad contextual understanding of each woman's journey is developed through her personal story.

Thick and rich description situates each story within its setting. A detailed description of the procedures provides further understanding of how the study was conducted (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Creswell & Miller, 2000) and how the participant experienced being a business owner in the United States. I begin this chapter with Table 1 that identifies each of the participants in alphabetical order by their pseudonyms, with some relevant demographic information. This is followed by the case stories that provide an overview of each woman's journey, which began in her country of origin, and documents her pathway to entrepreneurship as an immigrant in the United States.

Table 2

Participant Information

Pseudonym	Business	Age	Location	Previous Job / Other Training	Home Nation	Time in the U.S.
Chitra	Photography	30-40	Bryan / College Station	Electrical Engineer	India	11 yr.
Dina	Arts and Crafts	50-60	Katy	Cafeteria worker, Day-care worker	Lebanon	35 yr.
Elinor	Marketing	30-40	Bryan / College Station	Chemical Engineer	Venezuela	13 yr.
Jol	Home Health Care	40-50	Houston	Nursing	Nigeria	29 yr.
Lesedi	CDL Education Center	40-50	Bryan / College Station	Education Administrator	South Africa	10 yr.
Letizia	Cooking School	40-50	Katy and Bryan / College Station	Architect	Mexico	25 yr.
Olivia	Day Care	30-40	Bryan / College Station	IT Manager	Montreal, Canada	22 yr.
Rosalie	Home Cleaning and Personal Assistant	60-70	Bryan / College Station	Missionary	Montreal, Canada	4 yr.
Thalia	Massage Therapy	40-50	Bryan / College Station	Teacher	Mexico	13 yr.
Ximena	Retail	30-40	San Antonio	Early Childhood Education	Mexico	25 yr.

Demographically, the ten participants ranged in ages from 30 to 60, with varying educational attainments. Three of the participants held graduate degrees, four completed bachelor's degree programs, and the remaining three graduated high school. Among the three high school completers, one had some college and completed a certificate of training in her chosen field. The women originated from Canada, India, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, and Venezuela, with the length of stay in the United States ranging from 4 to 29 years. Specific information, experiences, and histories of each participant are included in their case narrative below.

Participant Stories

Case narratives for Chitra, Dina, Elinor, Jol Lesedi, Letizia, Olivia, Rosalie, Thalia, and Ximena are presented. Each participant shared her thoughts in a way that highlights the history of her experience. In the case narrative, I highlight the essence of that experience for each of the participants from my understanding of their stories. In the next chapter, I will present the results of the thematic analysis of the data and provide space for the voices of the participants in thick, rich descriptions as evidence of the findings.

Chitra

I met Chitra through the WE Group I introduced in Chapter III. My first series of conversations with the group took place through messenger, very similar to how I first interacted with Chitra. We set a time to meet at a local coffee shop for a face-to-face interview. On the morning of our interview, I messaged Chitra to make sure we were still confirmed to meet, and she asked me if I would be willing to come to her house

instead of meeting at the coffee shop because she had painters working at her house. I agreed, and she sent me her address.

As I drove into Chitra's neighborhood, I passed by a nice park and a school. The area was newly developed with a community pool, well-manicured landscape, and sidewalks. She lives in a two-story brick home with neighbors on both sides of the home. Chitra greeted me warmly and welcomed me into her kitchen, where we settled in for the interview. She offered me water and had a few snacks prepared. We met for just over two hours, and I audio recorded our interview. I looked through photo albums and toured her photography studio on the second floor of her house. I told Chitra about the interview process, and that she could expect to receive a transcription of the interview to review.

Chitra's Story

Chitra was born and raised in southern India in the state of Andhra Pradesh. She said the place was like her current town because it is not a big city, and it has a rural feel with animals around. Her father, now retired, worked as a teacher in a government school. She grew up with her brother and two cousins, whom her mother helped raise. She lived in the same town, in the same home, until she completed her undergraduate degree in engineering.

She married her husband when she was 21 years old during her final year of undergraduate school. Chitra's marriage was arranged by her parents and the parents of her now husband. She said that arranged marriage is common in India. She knew her husband's parents casually but had never met her husband. The families arranged for

them to meet. They spent two hours together before they both agreed to the marriage. Then they were engaged and had an engagement party on the day of their first meeting before she could tell her friends.

Once she completed her degree, Chitra moved with her new husband to Arizona, where he was working at Arizona State University (ASU). She began adjusting to the new environment, which included speaking English. While at ASU, she completed her master's degree in electrical engineering. Shortly after, she became pregnant with her son. The next year, she had her daughter. Not having family nearby and not wanting to send the children to daycare, Chitra decided to stay home with them. This means she never held a full-time job in engineering.

During that time, she remained a stay-at-home mother. Once her daughter was about eight or nine months old, Chitra began taking pictures of her children with her cell phone. She discovered that she really liked it. Her husband got her a nicer camera. She believed she was good at taking pictures and started thinking about doing professional photography. With her husband's financial and emotional support, Chitra started her photography business in 2014, and runs it out or her home with her studio set up on the second floor.

Chitra' Experiences Becoming an Entrepreneur

She expanded her knowledge and skills by reading books and photography websites. This initially presented Chitra with a steep learning curve. As a trained engineer, she never thought she would be running her own business as a photographer. Yet, she truly enjoys what she does, and has the full support of her husband. Chitra said

that, on days when she feels overwhelmed with too much to do, her husband is a great source of help and encouragement.

Chitra said she feels most unprepared in the marketing and finance aspects of the business. While Chitra is a highly trained electrical engineer, she is teaching herself how to run a business. She said that, if she did decide to go back to school, she would do something in business because it would help her run her photography studio.

Her family in India does not understand her work. In India, acceptable professions are medicine and engineering. While she was trained to be an engineer, she does something entirely different as a professional photographer in the United States. Her family does not see this type of work as an actual job, but Chitra is committed to building her business.

Dina

I met Dina through her son. He told me that his mother had run many different businesses since she arrived in the United States. I asked him for permission to contact his mother. He asked her the following week at a family dinner, and she agreed. We had a short conversation on the phone, and we arranged to meet for coffee at a small restaurant near her home.

We met at 11:00 on a weekday, and the small restaurant quickly became a bustling lunch spot for people in the area. I explained the study before we launched into our conversation. We talked for just less than two hours, and I audio recorded our interview at the restaurant. After we finished, I told Dina about the interview process and

that she could expect to receive a transcription of the interview from that day for her to review.

Dina's Story

Dina and her husband came to the United States with two young children in 1989, fleeing the war in Lebanon. Initially, they went to France but were unhappy and isolated; so, they decided to go to the United States, where her husband had extended family. She and her husband came to the United States with two small children. They had another child 13 years later. When Dina arrived in the United States, she did not have a green card, but she was able to secure one eventually, although she had a difficult time navigating the American legal system. She worked in Houston in her family businesses and was able to secure her legal documents to stay in the United States. The family settled in the Houston area.

Dina described her upbringing as traditional, in a moderate Catholic family in a small Lebanese town. She said that her family expected her to go to school and then get married. Her family thought school was not as important as it was for her to find a husband. She was married in Lebanon at 20 and has been married for 34 years. This was the life she thought she was going to have for herself in Lebanon.

Her father ran a grocery store before the war, and her mother took care of the house and children. She described her childhood as being very peaceful, with a close connection to the community until the war. During the war, everyone left the village. They either fled the country or went to the city. She spent the first years in the United States without much contact with family in Lebanon because of the civil war.

Transplanted into a different culture, with no connection to home, Dina built a family and community in her new country.

Dina describes living in Lebanon as being easy. In the United States, she said, she must work much harder. The experiences Dina had in the United States, and as a woman, have affected how she parents her own children, especially her daughters. She believes her daughters must make their own choices about education and marriage. She said she teaches her daughters to develop a strong sense of self, so they do not end up living someone else's dreams. These are things that Dina discovered for herself, as she dealt with the cultural expectations in the United States, and by managing relationships here with her spouse's family.

Now, however, Dina sees things differently than she did in her early years in the United States. She said that she is stronger now and that she trusts her judgment more. She describes a personal transition from being dependent on her husband and other people to be independent and empowered. This strength is evident in the way Dina talks about her experiences as a business owner and entrepreneur.

Dina's Experiences Becoming an Entrepreneur

Dina's journey led her to have the flexibility to do the things she enjoys, like art and crafting. She is currently making small art projects and selling these items and taking care of her grandchildren while her daughter works. Her entrepreneurial journey started with her first family business in 1990-1991. Dina and her husband opened a sandwich shop and sold American cold cuts. This was unfamiliar territory for Dina, a woman who did not speak English and who had young children. She said that when she

was alone working in the shop without her husband, she would pray that no customers would come in because of her inability to communicate with them in English. For the first six months or so, she felt uncomfortable using the language, but she learned a lot of English and developed a relationship with their regular customers.

She and her husband then decided to close the shop in Houston and move to Florida so that her husband could start a taxi business. Dina helped with the paperwork and bookkeeping. After four months, they decided to move back to Houston. Propelling this decision was a desire to stay close to family in the United States. After coming back to Houston, the family decided to try their hand at another business venture by opening a Lebanese food restaurant. Dina said that this was her favorite business because she knew the food and felt like this business was meaningful to her. She said they decided to sell their business, even though she loved it because the needs of the family shifted when she found out that she was pregnant with her third child.

Her children and her role as their primary caregiver are key factors in the decision- making process about the family business. When Dina's youngest daughter turned three, Dina made some changes to be with the child; Dina began working in the same daycare that her daughter attended. Eventually, another opportunity presented itself to open a pizza place. She said that this venture was more about her trying to help her husband realize his dream. Personally, she did not want to run a pizza place. They opened that restaurant with zero information about pizza and how to make it. An added challenge was her husband's back problems, which limited his ability to help. She would go to the restaurant at four o'clock in the morning and leave the restaurant at 11 pm. The

pizza place became her business to run, but she preferred working in the Lebanese restaurant.

After selling the pizza restaurant, Dina worked in a school cafeteria where she quickly moved up in job responsibility. Dina's business ideas continue to emerge in various ways, as she creates and seeks out new opportunities. While she is still selling items she has made, she sees her bigger "business" as investing in the future of her grandchildren and her daughter.

Elinor

Elinor is a member of the Women's Entrepreneur group who responded to my request for study participants that I sent to its members. After our initial conversation, we planned to meet for coffee for our interview. On the day of the interview, Elinor's daughter was sick, and she could not leave the house. I offered to set up a video chat for us to meet, and she agreed.

When we both logged on to Zoom, she shared with me that she has many meetings with clients using Zoom; so, she was very comfortable with this meeting method. I explained how the interview would proceed, and we got to know each other. She was in her home office. Her daughter was nearby, lying on the floor.

Our interview lasted about an hour and a half, which surprised Elinor because she said she did not feel that she had much to say. I explained the next steps in the interview process and that I would send her a copy of the interview transcript and later an overview of findings. Elinor said she was willing to provide additional information for the study as needed.

Elinor's Story

Elinor grew up in Venezuela with college-educated parents. She described her life as being very good, with many opportunities for education. Her father was a chemical engineer and worked at a large national plant in town. Elinor's mother worked in a bank until the bank crisis in 1994. She described this as being a turning point for her mother and her family. Her mother started working for herself selling cleaning supplies.

Elinor's father lost his position at the national company due to the downturn in the Venezuelan economy. This was a big shift for her family. Her mother never went back into banking after the slump in that sector, and now was the primary earner for the family through her sales business. Elinor remembers, as a teenager, the family had to adjust their lifestyle. She felt responsible for helping the family. They moved into a smaller house, and she no longer had the same things as her friends. When all her friends started to drive, they got cars. Elinor did not.

Growing up, Elinor knew she wanted to be an engineer like her father. It was her dream to work for the national oil company of Venezuela, even after her father lost his job. Elinor did become an engineer in Venezuela, and she met her husband, who also is a chemical engineer. They went to work together and would have lunch together every day. However, she and her husband knew that things in Venezuela were changing, and not for the better. They decided to leave to come to the United States and were able to avoid the Venezuelan economic collapse in 2015.

Her husband got a job in the Bryan/College Station area, and Elinor came as a dependent on a worker visa. She described this as an "awful visa" because it does not

allow the spouse to work. She used this time to pursue an advanced degree and ended up in a master's program. She eventually was hired by her husband's company, and they worked together until she decided to make some career changes when they began having children.

Elinor's Experiences Becoming an Entrepreneur

Elinor began working as a chemical engineer while also finishing a chemical engineering Master of Science degree in the United States At the same time, she had her daughter, and then, a few years later, her son. She found that the engineering company would not accommodate flexible schedules or time off, which presented challenges. She worked part-time briefly before realizing she needed to make some different decisions for herself and her family.

Elinor began a marketing company, in which she relies on her experience in customer service. As a chemical engineer, she worked with customers and helped provide training and customer support. Deciding to go out on her own and start a business was a challenge for Elinor because all her life, she had wanted to be a chemical engineer. She said that she had to come to terms with herself. While she uses her training and liked her experience in her previous job, it has been a difficult transition. She saw marketing as a skill that will benefit her now and, in the future, if she decides to go back to work in engineering.

Elinor is strategic in her approach to her new business. She works with clients who are trying to build their business presence through online advertising. This is a business that Elinor can run from her home, and she can meet with clients and potential

clients as needed. Yet, she encounters challenges working for herself, including the loss of stable income and professional identity. She is now a former chemical engineer, which still feels like a loss for her, even as she continues to build her marketing business.

She finds inspiration through her mother in building her business. Elinor's mother now lives in the United States with Elinor and her family. She is very supportive of Elinor's business pursuits and helps with childcare when Elinor has a meeting. Elinor appreciates this support, especially as her mother encourages her to keep growing her business.

Jol

I was introduced to Jol by her daughter. Her daughter is in a program at the university, and we met through our mutual connections. Jol's daughter arranged the interview for a Saturday morning. I met with Jol at her home. When I arrived, one of her younger daughters answered the door. Jol was on the couch in her living room on the phone with a stack of papers on the table in front of her. She finished the call and then got up to greet me. I settled in on the couch next to her, and we discussed my study and a little about how she was doing. Her youngest daughter brought each of us a bottle of ginger ale.

After a brief social chat to make her feel comfortable moving forward, we launched into the first part of the interview. Jol discussed her life in Nigeria and the United States and talked about her business. After we finished the interview, I met Jol's

husband and had a brief conversation with her oldest daughter. I told Jol I would transcribe the interview and send a copy for her to review.

Jol's Story

Jol came to the United States in 1990 as a young adult and worked with a cousin in an African store at the mall. This helped her adapt to the language and culture. She started her own African store in 1994. Her store focused more on formal clothing and shoes. Her first store was named after her daughter, who started to help her in the store as a five-year-old. Jol said this experience taught her daughter the value of hard work, which she learned from her parents growing up.

She described her childhood in Nigeria as a good one. She was one of nine children, five boys, and four girls. Many of them are now entrepreneurs. She remembers the girls going to the market with her mother and the boys learning pharmacy with her father. Her family all knew that when she came to the United States that she could handle things.

In the United States, Jol trained to become a nurse. While she did well in her studies, she did not enjoy the patient and family care aspect of the work. She knew she was better suited to manage her own business. She was trained in business in Nigeria. After she became a certified nurse assistant (CNA), she decided to stop working as a nurse and go back to business. When she first started a business in the United States, she was a member of African organizations and Chambers of Commerce but stopped attending meetings because she said she knew what she was doing.

Jol's Experiences Becoming an Entrepreneur

Becoming a business owner was a journey for Jol once she came to the United States. She said there was an excellent opportunity to make money and be independent in America. The ability to make money, however, comes with a price tag of sacrificing time to do other things. Yet, being a business owner is an ongoing pursuit for Jol, one that has evolved over time.

Early business ventures in fashion and cosmetics remain in Jol's life. Currently, her primary business is Personal Attendant Services (PAS), a company that pairs caregivers with people in need of help. This is her main business right now and the one in which she invests most of her time and resources. As a secondary business, Jol continues to sell and ship make-up, clothing, and other fashion-related items to Nigeria.

Jol describes the Personal Attendant Services (PAS) as a completely new business for her. She discussed doing research and learning how to complete government papers. This aspect presents many challenges for Jol, as she contemplates how to grow her business. One of the government's restrictions on PAS is that companies cannot advertise; marketing is limited to word of mouth. She also must recruit and maintain a low-wage workforce. Finding responsible, reliable employees is a particular challenge, and one she struggles to overcome.

Jol said that her management skills have served her well in this business. With the PAS, she values professionalism. She requires her attendants to wear scrubs and demonstrate a professional identity through the uniform. The uniform also helps clients

identify the attendants. Jol said that she values professionalism because her primary mode of generating new clients is by personal recommendation.

Lesedi

Lesedi agreed to let me interview her after we had a few back and forth emails. She and her partner are very busy trying to keep up with the demands of the industry and making their Commercial Driver's License (CDL) school profitable. When I scheduled an interview with Lesedi, she asked me if we could meet at her school in between students.

I walked into a clean, welcoming waiting area of the CDL education and training center, located in a shopping center behind a gas station. I was greeted by Lesedi's brother, who was visiting from South Africa. Lesedi led me to a training room where students gather to learn the skills they need to complete the CDL exam. We would complete the interview here.

I covered the informed consent agreement form. Lesedi is very familiar with the research process because she has over 20 years as an educator, and recently completed a master’s degree in Educational Human Resource Development at Texas A&M University. This is where I initially met Lesedi. She was willing to share her experiences with me about how she and her partner, Amy, decided to open a CDL school based on a project from one of the research classes in her master's program.

After the first 20 minutes of the interview, Lesedi's brother knocked on the door. We stopped the interview so she could and help a student who wanted to log some time on the simulator. One of the requirements for receiving a CDL is a certain number of

practice hours. After she helped the student, our interview resumed. Upon completion, we had a casual discussion about life in general.

I then described the transcription and communication process to Lesedi to let her know what to expect. I said that I would transcribe our interview and then let her review it for content. At that point, she would be able to add or subtract anything to her words. She wrote back to me a few days later and said she was fine with the transcript content. I told her about the WE group as a way to connect with other business-owning women in the community.

Lesedi's Story

Lesedi described her story of starting the CDL school as a long winding road. She was born and raised in South Africa, where she completed her education and early teaching experience. She was a qualified teacher, and, at 26, was the youngest vice principal in her country. She worked at a squatter camp school subsidized by the state. Squatter camp schools always were at risk of being burned down or destroyed because of social unrest. In South Africa, squatter camps were in Black communities, and the education that the teachers received was of low quality.

Nelson Mandela, the leader of the protest South Africa's all-White government was released from prison, and it was a very politically charged time. Lesedi lost her job. She tried to apply for other jobs in South Africa, but because of the volatility, she could not get work in a different area. The education department lost all permanent positions for newer educators, and jobs became very scarce for Black professionally trained teachers in traditionally White schools, called model schools.

She eventually decided to leave South Africa and applied for a job in England, based on the recommendation of a fellow teacher. Lesedi had a phone interview, and the recruiter offered her a job immediately, with a five-year contract. Within a few months, Lesedi was in England.

England presented its own set of difficulties. Lesedi said her family was quite poor, and it was challenging for her to make it financially to travel to London and to sustain herself while she was there. She described living in poverty for probably five of the 14 years spent in London. After those 14 years, Lesedi immigrated to the United States.

Although Lesedi had spent her professional life in K-12 education settings, she had to requalify to teach in the United States. She decided that, instead of requalifying, she would pursue a graduate degree in educational administration. Lesedi completed a class project in which she interviewed women truck drivers. What she learned from these women eventually led her to start a commercial driver's license (CDL) school.

Lesedi's Experiences Becoming an Entrepreneur

Lesedi discussed the project with her partner, Amy, who had to be convinced to undertake this new business venture. She said that her academic know-how, as well as the focus on women specifically, could give them an advantage in the industry. She said that they received a lot of really positive feedback, but no financial help. Lesedi and Amy looked for almost a year for money to start the business, but financial institutions turned down their loan applications.

Eventually, Amy agreed to cash in her 401k, which was about $45,000. This gave them the ability to get their business off the ground. This is a risk that both Lesedi and Amy took to pursue their business goals. They hope a successful CDL will give them financial freedom in the future, as well as provide a service to the community by educating women in a traditionally masculine field. However, the risk came with a discovery about the limited financial resources available to business start-ups, which, she said, do not get much support from the government. She said that people have to jump through so many "bureaucratic hoops" to run their business legally, she can see why so many would instead run a business "sort of under the table," rather than do it legally and upfront. Despite these and other challenges to starting up, Lesedi and Amy are currently running a CDL school.

Letizia

I met Letizia through the WE group that I joined in August. Letizia and I interacted through messenger and eventually were able to coordinate a suitable meeting time. Her schedule has her driving between two different locations, as well as taking care of her children and dogs. When we were setting up an interview, we chose a spot with an outdoor area in case she needed to bring the dogs with her.

I messaged Letizia the morning of our interview to make sure everything was still on track. She confirmed and let me know she was not bringing the dogs. I arrived at the coffee shop and set up my computer while I waited for Letizia. When she arrived, we took our coffee to a small table inside the shop. She shared her story in an enjoyable interview of more than an hour.

After we concluded the interview, I let her know I would send the completed transcript for her to review for content. I sent her the transcript, and she made no changes.

Letizia's Story

Letizia comes from a large extended Mexican family. Her father was one of 21 children, and her mother was one of ten children. She said that her family owned several businesses and that her father ran a food processing plant and winery that were parts of the larger family businesses. She said that she always knew that she was going to have her own businesses. She is one of seven siblings, five brothers, and one sister. She and her siblings worked with her mother and learned how to cook; all her brothers are now chefs. Her mother introduced Letizia to people who taught her baking and candy making.

As she got older, she began to teach young children in town how to cook, bake, and make candy. She said that she had a client who wanted many different Christmas theme chocolates to use as decorations for their family tree. Letizia made 200 edible ornaments and loved it so much that she said it felt less like a job and more like fun.

Having fun with business is part of Letizia's childhood and family life; yet, she pursued a career as an architect through her formal training in Mexico. She was hired as an architect and gained respect for her work as a young professional at a firm in Mexico. Eventually, she moved to the United States on a working visa to design and build a house for her brother. Then she was offered a position at a local architectural firm.

While living and working locally, she met her husband, who is a veterinary researcher at the university. Her husband is from Colombia, and they met through mutual friends. They were married, and each of them worked in their professions until they had their first and second children. Having her children led her thoughts back to starting her own business.

Letizia's Experiences Becoming an Entrepreneur

Starting a business for Letizia was a dream; yet, while she worked for the architect firm, it was a difficult dream to pursue. The firm was sponsoring her visa, and she felt very dependent on them for her work. She knew if she left the firm, her ability to work in the United States would be in jeopardy. Her work at the firm became difficult when she was given more responsibilities and offered no more compensation or help. She and her husband decided she could leave her job, and they could start a family. It was at that point that Letizia saw the opportunity also to birth her cooking school.

Letizia had two young children who kept her busy, but she was working on developing ideas for her cooking business, including branding and a marketing plan. The development of the business became important to her, especially with children of her own. She reconnected with her early passion for teaching others to cook, especially making chocolates and sweets.

Letizia said during her pregnancies, and the early days of raising her children, she was working on the computer, writing recipes, designing her logo, and branding. She worked on the legal aspects of starting her business. She did this while also was doing

playgroups and being around other mothers. She said her days were hectic but said it was a good time in her life.

Eventually, she began teaching children to cook in her home or small rented spaces. Her business grew, and she developed a following. She runs a camp and has many requests from local organizations to teach people how to cook. She said she really enjoyed being an entrepreneur and managing her own time. In summer, she works up to 18 hours a day. Letizia opened her first brick and mortar building in the city, and she just opened a new studio in the local area. Her cooking school is expanding, and she is always looking for new opportunities and ways to enhance what she is doing.

Olivia

When I first interacted with Olivia, it was through the local entrepreneur group. She is a leader in the group, and we began our conversation online. Our first face-to-face interview took place in a casual coffee shop that would be the location of the upcoming WE luncheon. I explained my project and the research process. We quickly launched into an hour-long conversation about her current business. I audio recorded our interview at the coffee shop. Olivia had to pick up her daughter; so, we continued to communicate through messages after we left our interview. We met next at the entrepreneur luncheon, where Olivia was leading the networking group. About 80 women gathered for lunch and to meet others in the area who are running their own businesses. I finished transcribing the interview and then sent her the full version to review.

Olivia's Story

Olivia shared her story of coming to the United States when she was 10 years old from Montreal, Quebec. Her father worked and still works for a large multinational oil company. He frequently flew between San Antonio, Texas, and Montreal. It was her father's dream to come to the United States because he hated the cold and taxes in Canada. At work, he taught himself English and eventually got a promotion. She said that, at the time, she thought the move was the end of the world, but she adjusted eventually.

In Montreal, she did not speak any English and did not need to learn the language because Quebec is a Francophone province. So, when they were relocating, her father's company hired a service to teach English to her, her brother, and her mother. They had a few English lessons before they left Montreal. After resettling in San Antonio, the family had lessons six days a week, five days in school, and, on Saturdays, through the service.

Olivia learned the language quickly. She was in ESL for two years and then went into AP English. She said that both of her parents have strong accents, but she has lost her accent and married an American. Now she does not even have a French last name. People do not identify her as French Canadian unless she tells them about her background.

She described growing up in Canada as always playing sports and wanting to be one of the boys. She talked about playing football in the United States and hockey in Canada. She said she hated being a girl, and I wanted to be a boy's boy. Both of her parents were athletic; her mother is an avid tennis player. Unlike her father, who worked

for the same company for a long time, her mother has had a different path. She has a certificate in mechanical engineering. She travels to different places for work providing translation services to convert software from French to English.

This also is something that Olivia did as a secondary job. After graduating from college, she was hired in IT to work with databases. The company has a French-Canadian client; so, Olivia was asked to provide translation services. At that time, she was the primary earner for her family. Olivia's husband did not have a degree yet. She convinced him to quit work, so he could finish his degree faster and get advanced more quickly.

Once he completed his degree, he got a better job. Olivia became pregnant and began to think differently about her career and her family's future. Seven months after she had her daughter, she bought a day-care business and quit her job in IT.

Olivia's Experiences Becoming an Entrepreneur

Olivia currently owns and operates daycare that her daughter attends. She describes her journey into this business as being a big challenge. She said that she did not have the emotional support she wanted and that she was terrified. She knew the previous owner and believed that the business was not being run properly. Olivia said she knew she was getting herself into a mess, but it was a mess she could make better. She saw the opportunity of taking on a business that was already running and had employees, which was less frightening than starting from scratch. This also was true from a financial perspective. The daycare had customers and cash flow.

Her current life circumstances shaped the type of business she started, and while owning a business was a goal, this type of business was not part of the plan. Olivia said she studied business and then MIS in school, but whenever she has a business question, she calls her father. Her father, she said, is risk averse because he has worked for the same company for 30 years, and he was not very supportive of her idea to open the daycare. Because of this lack of support, Olivia felt like she could not talk to her family about her plans. Yet, she felt the risk was worth it.

She purchased the daycare when it came up for sale, knowing that it was a good opportunity. The reason for that decision included her desire to run her own business. Moreover, she found IT to be an inhospitable environment for a new mother. Running a daycare is not her dream, but owning a business is a goal that she is achieving.

Rosalie

One of her clients connected me to Rosalie, who cleans house and acts as a personal assistant for a woman in town who knows my father. Rosalie's client gave her permission to share her information with me. I then sent Rosalie a message asking her if we could speak on the phone. I gave her more information about the project and answered questions. She agreed to meet with me for an interview at a local coffee shop on a Saturday morning. Rosalie works a lot during the week, and her schedule is very busy with clients.

I arrived at the coffee shop and set up my computer while I waited for Rosalie to arrive. We met and secured our cups of coffee before settling into a small table. We had an enjoyable interview that lasted over an hour. After we concluded the interview, I let

her know I would be in touch with the completed transcript for her to review for content. In between our first interaction and the completion of the transcript, I called Rosalie and invited her to the WE group meeting and luncheon. After finishing the interview transcription, I sent her the full version. I asked her to make sure she was comfortable with the stories she shared about herself.

Rosalie's Story

Rosalie is from Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Montreal is a French-speaking city where English is not a necessary part of daily life. She did not speak English until she was 22. Rosalie learned English and came to the United States as an adult. Rosalie had many experiences traveling as a missionary in her early adult life. She said that a commitment to her faith through ministry led her to travel and eventually learn English. She said that she married an American man and they had nine children. She homeschooled most of them until high school because the family often traveled with their ministry, and it was more convenient for them to home school their children during these transitions. It was through being involved in homeschooling, raising her children, and doing volunteer ministry work, that Rosalie said she developed many of the skills she now uses in the home cleaning and personal assistant business she now runs.

When Rosalie’s children were growing up, she was involved in missionary work. She helped support the mission by soliciting donations. She said she had to overcome her insecurities to request donations. She would tell herself that the worst thing that can happen is that people will say no; so, she does not take it personally. She was able to

learn from these experiences. Rosalie describes herself as someone who always wants to learn new things and says that there always are new things to learn.

The willingness to learn is evident in Rosalie's ability to reinvent herself as an entrepreneur later in life. As her children grew, she and her family started doing different activities. Some of the children were not interested in missionary work. The family moved back to Canada and stopped traveling. It was then that Rosalie began to consider various career opportunities for herself. Many of her career choices or ventures required flexibility so that she could be available for her children.

Our interview was derailed slightly when Rosalie shared that she recently had lost one of her children. This fresh wound brought the family together. Two of her sons served in the military. One of them passed away after coming back from his deployment. This tragedy has further influenced her decision to maintain a flexible work schedule to be present for her children, which has driven her interest in pursuing more entrepreneurial endeavors.

Rosalie's Experiences Becoming an Entrepreneur

Rosalie's path into entrepreneurship opened up during her work in the mission field. She gained skills in face painting and making balloon animals. She and another woman would go to orphanages and hospitals to engage with children and make them happy. They also would go to drug rehabilitation centers to entertain parents and children. She did this on a volunteer basis, but after she left the mission field, she was able to leverage this into a way to make money.

Rosalie worked as a retail store manager, but she also offered her face painting and balloon art services for birthday parties for $100 an hour. She did this in Canada, and the business went very well. However, it was necessary to be stable to build up customers. Moving around made this difficult. She tried to replicate this business when she came to the United States, but it was challenging to build a client base. Eventually, she put that idea on hold.

Another business idea was to grow and sell microgreens to local businesses. Much like the balloons and face painting, she tried it, and it did not work. Ever optimistic, Rosalie concluded by saying it did not work "right now," but it might work later. Her positive attitude is a state of mind she brings to her ventures. She said she learned that nothing is impossible and that she is the only one who can limit herself. This is something she said she has learned with experience.

Rosalie created a business in which she could apply some of her organizational and interpersonal skills. When she came to the United States, she went to work for her spouse's boss at a tax office. This was a woman who needed help with house cleaning and other personal services. Rosalie worked for $20 an hour. Eventually, she was able to gain more clients, and, what was more important to her, maintain the flexible hours required to raise a large family.

Thalia

I met Thalia through the WE Group that I joined in August. This allowed me to engage with other members. I shared my research recruitment information on the group's communication page. Thalia was the first person in the group to reach out about

participating in the study. Our first conversations took place through messenger. We set a time to meet at a local coffee shop for a face-to-face interview.

We met at a nice local spot that stays relatively quiet during the day. Upon arrival, we had a casual conversation. I eventually transitioned into explaining more about the project. We then moved into the interview portion of our meeting. The interview lasted about an hour and a half, and was audio recorded. I told Thalia about the process and what she could expect from me. After transcribing the interview, I sent it for her to review.

Thalia's Story

Thalia is from Monterrey, Mexico. Monterey is a big, industrial city where her extended family still lives. Talia recently returned to Monterrey when her mother passed away, Talia found the city to be busy and crowded. Yet, in her early memories, the city was eventful and fun. Her mother worked at a corporate job until she retired, but she always had side businesses. Additionally, her three brothers live and work in Monterey, and two of them have their own businesses. Her sister lives in Germany and is a social work professional.

Thalia has three children, two from the previous marriage, and one from her current marriage. Before Thalia met her current husband, she became interested in teaching because it allowed her some flexibility, along with income, and she could do massage therapy as secondary employment. She met her husband while she was taking an English composition class in Mexico, and three months later, they were married. Her

youngest son is nearly 15, and he is homeschooled. Her other two children live nearby; at 26 and 24, they are independent.

After they had their youngest son, Thalia and her husband decided to move to the United States. They ended up in Marshall, Texas, where her in-laws lived. She began working as a teacher's aide for a bilingual class. She had to start from the beginning of the educational process, receiving her GED, and taking remedial math. She said that it was easier to start over than to translate papers from her previous schools in Mexico. She started college in East Texas and completed her associate degree in two years, thinking she wanted to become a teacher. At the same time, her husband finished his master's degree online.

Thalia said that East Texas was not the best fit for her and her family. She and her spouse were not happy, and they knew they needed a change. The family moved to the local area where they had friends and a more supportive community. One thing that she said she remembered is that there were bookstores in the new town, and her family no longer would have to drive far to get to things they enjoyed.

Thalia's Experiences Becoming an Entrepreneur

Thalia became a massage therapist while she was in Monterey, just as the field was starting to become regulated. When she started, a person could just become a massage therapist without much training; now, there are required hours of training and a licensing process. Yet message therapy also was something that allowed her to make money and still have the flexibility to care for her young children.

When Thalia decided to become licensed in the United States, she had to go through rigorous training. The licensing process included completing 500 hours of training in the health business, as well as completing courses in anatomy, physiology, and pathology. She then passed an exam called the MBLEx. The license must be renewed every two years, and she must complete 12 continuing education units (CEU) in 24 months.

Despite being a teaching aide when she came to the United States, she still maintained her massage therapy practice. After struggling to get through the algebra and math requirements in her college program, she decided to put school on the back burner and focus on her massage therapy practice. She began working for a massage studio in town where she was able to balance work with time for her family. Once her children were older and began moving out of the house, she set up added a shop in her home to her space at a studio. Currently, Thalia is thinking about becoming a massage therapist instructor so that she can teach continuing education units. She also is thinking about ways to incorporate more healing elements into her practice.

Ximena

I first spoke with Ximena on the phone during her lunch break. This was the only phone interview I conducted in this study. Ximena's schedule did not allow for us to meet face to face, and she said she preferred to talk on the phone during her lunch break. For the interview, I sat in my office with the door closed and the phone on speaker mode. Ximena sat in her car outside of her office. We had a conversation about her life in general and her business. I went through the informed consent form and talked

about the process of the interview. She said we could start the interview, but she did not have very much time; so, we might have to end early. I then began the audio recording to capture our discussion.

At the beginning of the interview, the overall tone was very formal. Yet, as she began to share her story, Ximena became much more relaxed and open. We discussed her life and experiences for about 45 minutes before she indicated she needed to return to work. She agreed to talk the following day again during her lunch break. We wrapped up, and I gave her a general idea of what we would be talking about the following day, such as lessons learned by being in the United States and running a business.

During our second interview, Ximena was again in her car during her lunch break. I, however, was in a different location. I was working out of my brother's home office because I was also helping my sister-in-law with her two small children. So, I had crying children in the background of the interview recording. I mentioned this to Ximena on our call. She discussed having to navigate similar circumstances. During this interview, we talked about her mother and different generations of women entrepreneurs in her family. After we concluded the second interview, I let her know I would be in touch with the completed transcript for her to review for content. She approved the content and was comfortable with the stories she shared about herself.

Ximena's Story

During our time on the phone, Ximena shared her life and experiences growing up in Mexico and then transitioning to life in the United States. She has memories of

living in both countries and of visiting the United States before moving. These memories include the active entrepreneurial efforts of the women in her family.

Ximena's journey to the United States started when she was a small child and visited family in the San Antonio area. She was 12 years old when her parents moved her and her 3-year-old brother to the United States. English language learning was a key memory of her immigrant experience. She said it took her three years to fully learn the language and transition out of ESL classes within the public school system. For her parents, moving to the United States represented educational and economic opportunities for the children and their family.

Ximena’s uncle and family already lived in the United States, and Ximena, her parents, and sibling moved in with them. It was a large house, but things were a little tight with two families of five living under one roof. After a year of everyone living together, Ximena and her family moved into a small house. They lived there for five years.

Relatives in the United States supported Ximena's family in the transition process and helped shape her ideas about starting a business. A significant barrier for Ximena was her lack of confidence in her English proficiency. Ximena said that she was self-conscious, even after she was fluent, because of her accent. It was a process for her to gain confidence and embrace her accent as part of her identity. It was a challenge to let go of her worries that people would view her negatively because she came from Mexico or had an accent. As time went on, she embraced being a Mexican American.

Now, Ximena reflects that the entrepreneurial spirit runs through multiple generations of the women in her family, starting with her grandmother, who lives in Mexico. The women entrepreneurs in her family buy and re-sell used goods that they source from various locations. Her father always had a business in the United States. He started out selling grocery bags to stores and eventually started his own landscaping business. Her mom also provides childcare. She picked up house cleaning work and does other odd jobs to support the family. These memories are part of Ximena's American experience.

Ximena is now a mother with two young children and a full-time job, as well as a side business. For the past 12 years, Ximena has worked for the dean of academics at a university in San Antonio. She has multiple duties with varying levels of responsibility, including keeping schedules for the dean and the executive vice president. This means she schedules meetings and classes and manages the academic calendar cycle. This requires her to work with different committees within the school to create the calendar and the catalog. She makes sure that everything is communicated to the different parties. Her full-time job keeps her very busy.

Ximena expresses gratitude when she talks about how her mother supports her by caring for her children at home. This also aids in her efforts to supplement her family's income, while also trying to maintain a certain level of flexibility with her schedule. She said she brought in additional income in the past through catering, food service, and other administrative work, on top of having a family and a structured work schedule.

Ximena is thinking about ways to gain flexibility in her work and in her schedule to be more available for her children in the future.

Ximena's Experiences Becoming an Entrepreneur

For the last year and a half, Ximena has been operating an eBay business, while also working full time at the university. She operates an eBay store online and at home where it can be scaled up or down according to her availability. She says this business has room to adjust and grow, or even put on pause for a little while if needed.

She described this as a very customer service heavy business that requires keeping close track of inventory. Ximena leverages technology in her eBay business to help accommodate her traditional work hours of 7:30 -5. Having a side job, she can do at home allows her to be available for her family. She learned about setting up an eBay business from a friend who was doing the same thing and having success. She was able to talk to her friend and ask questions before beginning to invest in equipment.

Additionally, she found that her frugal shopping skills contribute to running her business. When she was young, Ximena's father would give her $10 to go to the mall. He would tell her not to spend the money, but to see how much she could get for the $10 if she were going to spend it. Ximena uses these experiences and skills, along with knowledge shared by family members, to operate her eBay business.

Ximena is a mother with young children. Having an at-home business requires more time and work. She runs her business in the hours when she is not at her full-time job, but the money she makes is not enough to justify leaving her university employment. Also, leaving her full-time position means losing the benefits that her

family needs. Flexible work provides additional income, but not enough to fully support a family.

Chapter Summary

Each participant traveled a different road to immigration. The material reality shifted based on location and exposure to new environments and ideas. The home country of participants still is present in their lives, but their day-to-day experiences have changed since they arrived in the United States. Personal change was necessary to be able to survive and adapt to a new environment. While each woman's experience is different, commonalities are revealed by the interviews. The following chapter identifies themes from the data and provides additional support from each participant about the alignment of her experience with each theme.

The case narrative of each participant highlights key aspects of their entrepreneurial experiences as an immigrant woman in the United States. Each case includes family histories, educational experiences, relationships, successes, and challenges experienced in the home and host countries. These case stories provide a rich tapestry of information that weaves through the findings of the study. Past, current, and location-based experiences are valuable factors moving forward to answer the research questions in chapters V and VI.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand how immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs in the United States. The study furthers the work of adult education scholars by using a sociocultural and transnational feminist lens to examine the physical location, cultural beliefs, and personal identity of immigrant women who start their own businesses in the United States. The research was grounded in the three key tenets from sociocultural and transnational feminist theory: (a) material reality - personal experiences in the home and host country (Crenshaw, 1989; Grewal & Kaplan, 2006; Dill & Kohlman, 2012); (b) beliefs and behaviors - culture, society and family structures in various contexts (Alfred, 2003; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Rogoff, 1995); (c) production of knowledge – education, language, status (Alexander & Mohanty, 2010). The primary question developed through an extensive literature search and conceptual framework are:

How do immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs?

The following secondary questions also are explored in this study:

SQ1 How do cultural values and prior experience from the home country inform learning and skill development in the host country?

SQ2 What drives an immigrant woman to become an entrepreneur in a foreign country?

SQ3 - What are the challenges and opportunities for immigrant women who engage in entrepreneurial activities in the United States?

I revisit the research questions and themes in Chapter VI and categorize and discuss findings in the context of each question.

Findings of the Study

In this chapter, I present the findings from the interviews with ten immigrant women entrepreneurs who participated in the study. From these findings, I discuss four themes with subsequent subthemes that emerged from the analysis of data. The following themes identify how these ten immigrant women, who became entrepreneurs in the United States, navigate and negotiate their experiences. Results show that culture and learning influence how immigrant women enter into and make choices about the type of businesses they start and run. The themes are discussed in the following sections: (a) English language learning in the United States, (b) support systems, (c) family and cultural perceptions, and (d) learning the business.

Language Learning in the United States

Each participant has a unique story of how language learning and proficiency impacted her journey into American culture and business. Each participant had a unique relationship with the English language, informed by early learning experiences in the home and host country school, and there was the on-the-job experience with English. Language proficiency affected their personal and professional lives. Each of these aspects of language learning in the United States impacted how the participants learned to create and run their businesses. Therefore, the supporting subthemes include the

following: (a) early English learning, (b) early English formal learning (c) accented English, (d) on the job English learning.

Early English Learning

Participants' experiences include early language learning in schools in their home countries before they moved to the United States. Their families encouraged early English learning, as it was seen as a way to survive and have more opportunities. Chitra, Elinor, Thalia, and Letizia learned English as a second language as children before coming to the United States. Growing up in Monterey, Mexico, Thalia was introduced to multiple languages from a young age. As she said,

> Every summer, I would be at the Cultural Relationships Institute, taking English classes. Growing up with another language, my dad was like if you're not bilingual, you're dead. So, you have to know English and, if you can [learn] other languages, great, but for sure English.

She took this to heart and pursued English language learning into adulthood as a secondary option to leverage her career. She was trained to teach English to adult learners while she was in Mexico. In the United States, she pursued a degree in education. The English language skills were foundational to her professional pursuits and now support her massage therapy business.

English language skills also were a crucial part of Chitra's up-bringing. She attended a Christian school in a medium-sized village in India. Her mother tongue is Telugu. Her second language is Hindi, the national language of India, and her third language is English. She said she is confident in writing English and reading it, but it

was difficult to speak English after moving to the United States. She said, “You can't remember that exact word that you want to use, and you're not used to talking so fast in English. In Telugu, I can talk as fast as you can imagine.” Knowing two other languages helped her build her English language proficiency once she was in the United States.

English language learning requires developing a sense of confidence in the language. Elinor noted that when she worked for a chemical engineering company before she started her own business in the United States, she was charged with communicating with people from Latin America. She said she was hired, in part, for her Spanish speaking abilities. Working at a multinational engineering company, Elinor found that being bilingual was a valuable skill. Now that she works for herself as an entrepreneur, Elinor has a new cultural perspective. She associates American culture with speaking English. She said,

> I can, you know, speak [English] with you fluently, but I still feel myself sometimes, like, I'm not doing it totally fine. You know, I cannot communicate perfectly. I don't know. I feel I don't have enough confidence in myself when I'm speaking in English.

This lack of confidence became evident to her once she began her own business. She said she is developing her confidence by doing good work and proving to herself that she is capable by building up her clientele.

This sentiment was confirmed by Letizia, who came from Central Mexico as a young adult. She views a command of the English language as a marker of respect and a

confidence builder. She knows that people perceive her and her business in different ways based on how she sounds. She said,

> English is my second language. Yeah, ... there are still people that have an issue with my accent. Well, this is my area, and if I have, you know, someone who does not have the respect for me, then I don't want their business.

She has developed confidence in her ability to run her business and not let people's perceptions of her accent bother her professionally. Yet, this confidence has developed over time and with building a base of customers who do accept her and her business. Letizia has been working for herself longer than Elinor has been running her own business. The confidence gained through English language attainment and proficiency is an ongoing experience for Letizia and the other participants.

Early English Formal Learning

The English language learning experience of some of the women was structured in a way that was not accessible to the women who came to the United States as adults, ineligible for free public education. Because they were of school age, the young arrivals had access to English language instruction. The English language learning experience was different for each of them because of their age and home country. Olivia and Ximena both came to the United States when they were transitioning into middle school. Olivia is French Canadian, and Ximena is Mexican. Now they are both in their 30s with immigrant parents. Both sets of parents were educated in their respective countries, with their fathers having higher levels of education than their mothers.

Ximena now sees her bilingual abilities as a strength, although, when she was in public school, she experienced teasing and prejudice from other students. She explained she had to learn English very fast, and "there was a lot of tension back then and a lot of racism. So even though I was only 12, I had my peers that would be very discriminating, especially because I did not speak any English at all." Ximena eventually caught up to her peers and went into advanced placement English classes and is fully bilingual.

This is like Olivia's early education experience. She came to the United States in middle school and had to learn English. She had access to private English tutoring through her father's company and was in ESL for two years before moving into advanced placement English classes. She described her French as being "a valuable asset in IT, especially when translating software into English. That's how I got my first job." Olivia does not use her French very much as an entrepreneur, as she mostly works with American-born employees and parents as a day-care owner. Both Olivia and Ximena have come to appreciate and embrace their bilingual abilities despite struggling to learn English when they first came to the United States

Accented English

While speaking with an accent is common for people who speak English as a second language, an accent is a salient barrier even for English language speakers from locations where English was a commonly spoken language, such as South Africa and Nigeria. In these countries, English is learned and spoken along with many other languages. English is Nigeria's official language, and, for a long time, European languages were official in many African nations. Lesedi and Jol had to develop an ear

for American English, but both knew English in their native accents. They each developed an advanced understanding of English in the United States and how others perceived them when they spoke. Lesedi and Jol both have stories about having been seen as different because of their accents. Lesedi said,

> The other thing is that I really struggled with in terms of being coming from overseas as a businesswoman was to know all the Texas Nice… You know Amy [Lesedi's partner] is from another state. I'm from another country. I speak with a different accent. You know, it's a foreigner coming here wanting to start a business, but that's not your place…so that was that was a bit difficult as well.

The disadvantage based on accent was exacerbated, Lesedi said because she did not understand Southern mannerisms when she started her business. Jol said she experienced the same thing as she worked in various businesses, including the company she currently runs, which provides personal health assistants for people who need in-home care.

Despite knowing and speaking English, Jol struggled with being understood in the United States. In Nigeria, there are many different languages that people use to communicate with each other. Despite the diversity, English is the state language in Nigeria. Jol said,

> I find out, people here, they're not exposed. We Africans, even if they don't understand you, even if you are from a different village, they will try to understand you, but Americans, they don't even want to [try]. They don't have

> patience, maybe because they don't travel. If you see somebody from Africa in America, they have probably gone all over the world.

A strategy that Jol uses for these types of interactions is to ask people to text her their name and number. This helps to avoid misunderstandings because of her accent. She learned this technique from someone who had a difficult time comprehending what her nurses were saying in a hospital setting.

On the Job English Language Learning

Formal English language learning is not an option for many adults who immigrate to the United States. English is often learned incidentally or by chance. Frequent practice through engagement with other English speakers supports this type of learning. Dina and Rosalie became comfortable with the English language through daily interactions in the United States.

For Dina, this happened when she worked in her restaurant, while Rosalie learned English when she worked as a Christian missionary. Rosalie joined the ministry fulltime when she was 22 years old. Rosalie traveled to many different countries where she used her French and eventually learned English. She said,

> I was a missionary, which brought me to travel. That's where I learned English. I lived in Mexico for many years. I had a couple of kids born there…, but I did the volunteer programs at the border of the United States and Mexico, where we got the supplies to send out. So that's where I learned a lot.

Rosalie also met and married an American man, which supported her English language learning. Her language abilities led to private French tutoring opportunities as a personal assistant and nanny before she came to the United States

Dina also shared about her early days in the United States before she had a grasp of the language. This included relying on her husband and sympathetic customers:

> When my husband would leave me by myself in the store to buy supplies, I would start praying for no customers to come in. I can say hi, and bye, and how are you? It was hard, I had a hard time you know, but after the first six, seven months, I got a helper that spoke only Spanish: so, I have to speak with the customer….I did it for three years and a half. I learned a lot of English; the customers were really nice.

Dina learned English through interactions with people at the restaurant while she was there with her children. She already knew Arabic, which was as her national language, and French, which was taught in schools. She noted that it was easy to learn English since she already knew French. However, it was still a difficult journey in navigating a new country, a new language, and a new business with two young children.

Summary

This section highlights language learning for participants in schools, at work, and in-home and host countries. In addition to language differences, how participants were understood and perceived because of their accent affected their personal and professional lives. English language learning through experience was a reality for participants. These varied language-learning experiences identify the difference in access to formal

language learning for adults and children. Language learning early in life is consistent and supported through financial and educational resources. For adults outside of the formal school system, English language learning in the United States is haphazard, driven by necessity, and acquired without understanding the rules. Each of these aspects of language learning in the United States impacts how the participants learned to run their businesses.

Support Systems

Support systems are valuable to the participants as they navigate being entrepreneurs. Participants have various types of support, but their primary support system helped them fill the functional and emotional needs they encountered as entrepreneurs. Support systems are both formal and informal forms and come from many places. Two types of support systems are discussed here, formal support systems, including the women's entrepreneur group (WE) and other professional groups and services, and informal support systems, which include family members, friends, partners, and spouses.

Formal Support Systems

The formal support system includes the women's entrepreneurs' group and other professional organizations. Chitra, Elinor, Letizia, Olivia, and Thalia are in the WE group, and they each have a different type of relationship with the organization. In addition to WE, each participant has other professional support systems and networks.

Formal support was necessary for Chitra as she began to transition from photography as a hobby to a professional business. Her husband encouraged her early in

her entrepreneurial journey. Yet, she found professional support through the WE and her membership with the Professional Photography Association. She describes the process of becoming a professional:

> You become a member of the main group, the Professional Photography Association, and then you become a member of the local guild. There are separate fees, but it's not too much. The professional association and WE [supported me in] everything else, I mean, I just knew how to take pictures, but I did not know how to get clients. So marketing, advertising, all the business components to, I did not think I knew, but I did not think I should be doing those.

Chitra said the WE group helped her develop skills beyond photography. She said she seeks information from the group about new technology, business tips, and marketing.

Elinor talked about being a chemical engineer and working with Spanish speaking clients. She said she felt more capable of helping people using her Spanish than she does using her English. Yet, she has had to make the switch into using primarily English as an entrepreneur. She has sought out support at WE to develop her "professional persona." She said,

> I'm going to the Women Entrepreneurs network, and I'm trying to do things differently. You know that's what you do as an engineer. So, my husband is, like, 'how do you like things,' and I think that I like it.

WE, she said, gave her a platform to find her identity as an entrepreneur, while her husband provides emotional support through encouragement.

Transitioning from being an architect to an entrepreneur brought Letizia in contact with her passions of teaching and food. But it was really her children and her husband who spurred her decisions to start her cooking school finally. She said, “We decided to have kids, I got pregnant the first time… so, now that I'm going to have kids and stuff, I want to be a full-time mom and get ready for my business.” The shift in her identity to become a mother also led her into entrepreneurship. WE helped her connect with other local area entrepreneurs, even though she was building her business before she became part of the group.

Letizia’s participation in WE has led to the development of relationships with other entrepreneurs. Her marketing work has been fruitful. It has put her in a position where people admire her, “So now I have my, I call it, my followers. [They ask] can I see your place and take pictures? It’s just flattering.” Others recognize Letizia’s contributions to the community through her business, and she serves as a role model to other women entrepreneurs in the group.

For Olivia and Thalia, WE has served a more central role as their entrepreneurial support system, both emotionally and professionally. They both discussed being lonely working on their own and feeling cut off from others. Despite seeking their identity outside of tradiation roles, their main focus was on the community formed by WE and the personal connections with other group members.

This is evident when talking to Olivia, who is a young mother of a toddler and the founder of a new business. She discusses the various relationships and stressors of leaving a well-paying career in IT, dealing with her father’s perceptions of her

endeavors, losing work-based friends, trying to maintain a non-supportive marriage, and running a new business. The overwhelming transition and lack of support left Olivia feeling isolated and alone during this life transition.

> I thought I saw myself more in my dad because he's an IT. He has been [at the same company] for 30 plus years now.... He never really supported me if I had an idea. [My parents] were never the ones to like, go talk to about it. And then whenever I was like, hey, I'm going to buy this daycare, they were very hesitant, and they are people that don't normally ever say anything. They were like we're not sure this is the right thing for you.

This response from her parents was disappointing, and she was terrified to start this business by herself. Yet she decided to move forward on her own. This felt like a big step. It was a low point in Olivia's transition into entrepreneurship, but the WE group became what she needed, and it helped her find ways to meet her needs outside of her family relationships.

The WE is a major supporter of Thalia's entrepreneurial efforts. As a massage therapist, she works mainly from home, and, on a regular day, she may not see more than two or three clients. She has the women's entrepreneur group and participates in online social and professional groups, such as Massage Therapists of Central Texas, Bryan-College Station Therapists, Massage Nerd, and others. Being open to learning new things has helped Thalia not feel as lonely now that her older children have moved out of town. She currently wants to connect with other women, with similar interests, through the WE group to develop resources.

Informal Support System

Informal support comes from family members. Five of the women were not part of the formal support networks but had various supportive resources or personal ways. They find the means necessary to run their businesses. Dina, Jol, Lesedi, Rosalie, and Ximena find assistance and support from family and/or friends. These experiences are varied and shift much of the entrepreneurial focus on the role that the family plays in the success or failure of the business. The family is the core, and the business is a vehicle to help take care of the family.

Dina reflected that the support systems in her life were created out of difficult times. She noted that she had to learn the hard way that she must stand up for herself and meet her own needs. Dina has run many businesses over the years but notes she was not always doing what was best for her. Her Lebanese family in the United States often took advantage of her generosity by leaving their children with her while they went out. Dina said she sees that, had she been stronger, things could have been different. Yet her upbringing and moving to a new country impacted her personal goals.

Dina's children are now older and are constant supports in her life. She also provides support to them by taking care of their children and tells them to stand up for themselves. She said that her son encourages her to learn new things. She finds it gratifying to take care of her grandchildren while thinking about future opportunities and her "next thing." She said, "My children support me... very encouraging. Yeah. Like if I do some art and my kids. They are like mom, it's so beautiful… put it on Facebook and sell it…".

Children as a support system is also part of Jol's experience as an entrepreneur. Jol discussed how her oldest daughter stands behind her. This mother-daughter relationship was developed during Jol's early years in the United States in her first business selling shoes. Her daughter, Lari, helped her in the store that was named after her. Jol said,

> And Lari has been helping me like that; she started [in the store] when she was five years old. Helping me shop, I'd take her to the mall and stuff like that, like on weekends. So, I've always been doing my own business, but the only thing I can tell you is that business is not easy in this country.

As a young mother, Jol found the difficulty of running a business was exacerbated by also having to navigate a new country. She had one daughter when she came to the United States but did not continue to build her family until the girl was nine years old. Family has been part of the business since Jol arrived in the United States.

Lesedi's immediate family is still in South Africa. She lives in the United States with her partner of over a decade. Financial concerns were at the forefront of my discussion with Lesedi. She said that her partner, Amy, was the key financial source, and she helped make the business happen.

> So, the amount of no's that we got through the banks and the circular, you know, [naming companies], was really devastating for us. We privately looked for almost a year to get financially off the ground. Amy had to cash in a 401k, which is which was about $45,000…. Otherwise, nothing would have happened.

Without a supportive partner, Lesedi would not have been able to fulfill her mission of opening and running a commercial driver's license school.

Family is at the core of Rosalie and her various business ideas. She talked about moving to a new country and having to start fresh as an older adult. Every business idea or avenue she has pursued allowed her to be available and flexible for her family. She said,

> It has been our [Rosalie and her husband] goals and, and we keep reminding ourselves family first, and it's not easy. It's not easy because now they [the children] all have their own vision of what their life is. We have to be supportive even if we don't agree with the choices they make, but we're there, and they know it.

Rosalie kept her current business small and has several people whose homes she cleans and for whom she provides personal assistant services. Her family is a core support system for her, and it is a priority for her to be available for them. She and her husband have nine children. They have experienced many transitions together, and these transitions are part of the reason she has gravitated towards a flexible business. Her entrepreneurial endeavors, she said, have been in service to her family. Rosalie believes in family first and in finding support, not for work, but, instead, finding work to support the family.

Ximena similarly works to support her family, but also has ambitions to run her own business as a primary source of income. She is the only participant in the study who has a full-time job and runs her own business on the side. She is influenced and

supported by multiple generations of women entrepreneurs in her family, including her grandmother and aunts who buy and sell items to make money in Mexico. Also, her father has a thriving landscaping business in Texas and backs Ximena in her efforts to learn and develop business ideas. She said,

> I even talked to my dad and told him if there is something you would be interested in. He said, let's figure something out. Find a location, and, of course, you have to have a good product to sell, so it's something we talked about…. My kids are young, and I need to have enough time to give to them.

Her children are her immediate concern, and she must have flexible time to meet their needs. Her mother provides childcare so that Ximena can pursue her career and business ideas.

Summary

Support systems are valuable to the participants as they navigate their entrepreneurial journeys. Support systems are formal and informal and give the women help in meeting the functional and emotional needs they encounter as entrepreneurs Help comes from many places. The formal support system is in the form of the women's entrepreneur group and other professional organizations. Informal support comes from family, partners, and spouses. This is evident in the business choices and decisions made by each woman. Support systems also are influenced by the culture and extended family in home and host countries.

Family and Cultural Influences

Family members can serve as role models for entrepreneurs through sharing knowledge and experiences. For each of the ten participants, the interrelationship between family and culture play out in career and business choices. Participants are influenced by their perceptions of home and host cultures. These influences are discussed through their rejection or maintenance of cultural/family ideals. Family and cultural influences are embraced by participants in varied ways, specifically connecting to their cultural roots through families back home. Not all participants adhere to the expectations of their family and their culture. In fact, for some, their entrepreneurial endeavors put them in opposition to cultural and family expectations. The subthemes identified support of family, and cultural influences are (a) role models, (b) strong family and cultural influence, (c) shifting beliefs and values.

Role Models

Family is meaningful for participants, personally and professionally, as they develop their businesses. Elinor, Olivia, Ximena, and Letizia all identify as immigrant women entrepreneurs; yet, their home countries, family relationships, and cultural identities are different. Their particular stories describe family/cultural perceptions of their businesses, as well as attitudes toward what they do as business owners.

In Venezuela, Elinor had to change her ideas about meeting family expectations when she shifted from being an engineer to running her own marketing firm in the United States. She reflects on her time in Venezuela, growing up as being

> a very, very good life. My father was college-educated. My mom got a college degree, and I always wanted to be an engineer, mechanical engineer [in Venezuela]. I wanted to be an engineer like my dad, and I chose to be a chemical engineer because I wanted to work in [the national company of Venezuela]. It was a, you know, was like a dream. So, I went to this school, which is the best in Venezuela, and then everything crashed.

The crash impacted sectors of Venezuela's economy at different times. Elinor remembers that it affected her mother's job in the banking sector before it affected her father's job as an engineer.

Elinor said that her mother started selling cleaning products after the banking sector collapsed in Venezuela. Her father eventually lost his job at the national company of Venezuela, and her mother was able to support her family with her cleaning product sales. Changes in her family had a big impact on Elinor's life and the family's lifestyle. This shift in family employment and the opening of her mother's business did not change Elinor's desire to be a chemical engineer. But, then, Elinor had children of her own, she remembered that her mother was able to make her own schedule and be more available when she was no longer working at the bank. Also, her mother became the primary breadwinner in the home. These are things that influenced Elinor's decisions before and after she became a parent and an entrepreneur.

Becoming a parent was also a turning point for Olivia. She said that she wanted to run a business. Even at a young age, she was looking for things to sell and ways to make extra money. She jumped at the chance to be an entrepreneur when it presented

itself because her job in IT did not accommodate her needs after she had a baby. She said, “I wanted to be one of the boys ….in Canada they did not have a lot of sports for girls….” She described this within the context of feeling left out and knowing that she could do anything that boys could do. Olivia grew up thinking that she was more like her dad than her mother, but her perception has shifted.

Olivia now sees that she is a lot like her mother and that it is difficult to be one of the guys. She said that her mother received a certificate in mechanical engineering and began translating software from English to French for French Canadian clients. Olivia said this was something she also did when she first began her career in IT. The venture into IT was a choice that made Olivia was happy until her daughter was born. Then her new life as a mother was challenged by the work culture.

> I had to pump twice a day with an all-male crew, and I only got an office after begging for one. There was no maternity leave…. It made me realize the disparity between men and women, and so it started…clicking and I started like, admitting to myself that I am a minority, I am going to have to do more to get the same result as a man.

This was a difficult admission for Olivia. She had always strived to be one of the boys. And it became apparent to her that she was not, and that the workplace culture and policies would not accommodate a young woman’s needs.

Ximena operates a buying and selling business on eBay as a “side gig.” In her primary job, she is a coordinator at a university. She likes her job, but the traditional schedule makes it difficult for her to be available for her children and meet the needs of

the family. She started her buying and selling business as an opportunity to make extra money in a way that is flexible with her schedule. She also saw this as something that she can maybe turn into a full-time opportunity. She said,

> I was alone. The main thing is I don't fit in to being an American, but I would have to fit in with Mexicans because my family requires for you not to lose who you are, where you came from, you know, your mentality, at the same time, you have to relate to people here.

Adding a new culture to her birth culture was a struggle when Ximena was young in the United States, especially because she was with her family. Yet, as she learned the language, she grew up and gained independence. Ximena also developed confidence in who she is.

> I'm older now, and I feel that I no longer struggle because I know who I am…. I am Mexican, and I am American, and that means that you can have an extra additional culture to navigate. I can relate to family back in Mexico, and I can come here and relate to the people here.

She does not think she has to choose between two different cultures. Ximena learned over time to accept both cultural identities and sees her duality as a strength.

Dual cultural experiences are also part of Letizia's experience. Letizia talked about her family and being raised with brothers in Mexico. She said that her father, despite his machismo (strong masculine pride), instilled in her independence and confidence. Her father told her, "I don't want you to ever depend on anyone being your husband one day; you're going to do everything, and you don't need a man." The

independence led her into a career in architecture, and eventually to leave Mexico, start a family and a business.

Letizia describes her upbringing and navigation of multiple cultures as being more evident after moving to the United States and marrying her husband, who is from Colombia. She explained, “We speak Spanish, but it's totally a different culture. It's less conservative, I guess.” Letizia’s Mexican family initially did not approve of her life in the United States, but they met her husband and liked him. Now the couple has two children who “don't have a passport from either of our countries.”

Strong Family and Cultural Influence

Dina and Jol came to the United States and had to find ways to help support themselves and their families. Both women have had different businesses in the United States, and both have a strong cultural identity and connection to their roots. The experiences of Dina and Jol show that they are driven to maintain connections to family and culture. A very stark contrast to the host country’s expectations grounded in thinking that they all want to be as “American” as possible, and have no troubles throwing out their old world identities.

Dina said she did not feel prepared for her life in the United States. She said things were different in Lebanon when she was young,

> I was just supposed to go to school and then get married, this... in our day. This is the girl’s role to finish high school, find the right husband to get married…. The United States has made me stronger because life here is harder.

The life of a young woman was to find a husband and have a family; so, it was difficult to come to the United States and work hard to earn money. Dina said that her family in the home country does not understand her choice of this more challenging life. Her time in Lebanon did not prepare her for life in the United States. For example, Dina said,

> Here you have to deal on your own. After I got married in Lebanon, I stayed for four years, and I did not cook. My mom would cook for me. I did not know how to cook. I spent time with my babies. … So, when I came here, I was angry. I didn't know how to cook.

These basic things were taken for granted before coming to the United States. Not having the same support from her husband's family left Dina feeling lost.

Family is essential for Lebanese people, Dina said. Yet, in the United States, her husband's family was not available and helpful, like her family in Lebanon. Despite this, she stayed connected to them. Many Lebanese businesses only hire family members, which is why Dina felt comfortable running her restaurant with her relative's help.

When Jol arrived in the United States, she found similar challenges of adapting to the language as she worked in her cousin's African clothing store. Her family in Houston helped her when she first came to the United States. This area of Texas has an active Nigerian community. Jol said she often engaged with the group at the beginning of her stay in the United States, but she sees them less now that she is settled here. Jol modeled her early entrepreneurial activities on how she was raised. She explained that, in Nigeria, she and her sisters would go with their mother to the market to buy items to

sell, and the boys would go with her father to his pharmacy. The children learned from their parents. Jol said that she and her siblings are in close contact and have a text chain where they maintain their communication.

Jol's relationship with her children is a similar form of apprenticeship, but with additional encouragement to pursue higher education and have more options. Jol said she teaches her daughter, Lari, how to be disciplined and understand the business. Lari started when she was five years old. So Lari knows management. "She has it, and she learned all those things from me," Jol said. Now Jol wants her daughters to have many different types of opportunities beyond running their own businesses. Jol sees business ownership as more of a necessity than an option. When she came to the United States, she was not able to work for a company because of her education background and visa status. After starting her own business she described the experience saying,

> We can go without a vacation for years and years and years just to see the business work, but…people here in this country, they don't do that. When you start a business, you work all day, every day, and you have to do that for years and years by yourself. No vacation, nothing, and, so, it's really difficult. So, from there, you find out that in our culture, you say your own business, but that's not your own business. You're a slave there.

She saw herself as being fully tied to her business because if she didn't work, she didn't make any money. Jol's priority is for her children to have the freedom to choose a career beyond business ownership so they don't have to be a "slave" to a business. She also

wants to instill the African value of hard work as part of their identity in the United States.

Shifting Beliefs and Values

Chitra, Lesedi, Thalia, and Rosalie are close to their families in their home countries. Each of their stories indicates the value of maintaining relationships. Yet, when it came to business pursuits, they each chose paths different from those taken and expected by their families. In some ways, they pushed back against cultural expectations.

Chitra diverged from family values and cultural concepts of what is considered "real" work. She maintains close ties with her family members despite making different career choices. Her professional photography business is not fully understood by her family in India when she told them about her business,

> they were surprised. They thought it's just like a hobby, but they never expected me to go in full gear like this is my business. Yeah, even now, whenever we go to India, people ask me, 'Do you work?' And I say, yes, I have my own photography business....No. Do you have a job?

This understanding of work is shaped by family expectations for each child to be trained to become either an engineer or a physician. Chitra was on the path to being an engineer, and she is highly educated and trained. With the support of her husband, she decided, instead, to create a business in professional photography.

Photography and pictures had a different meaning in the community where Chitra was born and raised. Within her culture and the Hindu religion, pictures are not hung on the wall, unless they are of gods framed in garlands. She said, "I'm okay with

putting pictures on the wall, but my husband has a strong sentiment that if you put pictures on the wall, something bad might happen." So, as a compromise, they hang shelves on the wall and then set pictures on the shelves. This belief captures a difference between Chitra's business and her home culture.

Home is a loaded term for Lesedi. She has been away for decades now, and her memories of living in South Africa are traumatic reminders of disruptions to her safety and way of life. She lived in England for 14 years before moving to the United States. Lesedi said,

> It was a huge culture shock, and my family all stayed in South Africa. My dad would never leave. It doesn't matter how dangerous it is. And so, it was the first year that was difficult because it was a new culture. It was a new school, new rules.

She moved to the United States, where she lost her career and had to start over. This was difficult, she said, but it also was a jumping-off point for a new business venture in the new country.

While Lesedi may not have been prepared to give up her career and take on a new opportunity in America, she was ready for it because of her history of disruption and transition. The challenges in her early career, during apartheid in South Africa, pushed her into more risky situations that also enabled her to see herself as capable of surviving difficult things. She continues to visit her family and supports them financially when possible; however, she has taken the path to business ownership in the United States.

Thalia grew up in a family that was very involved in their community in Mexico. She talked about her mother, who had recently passed away. She said that her mother was very busy with work when the children were growing up. Her mother had a corporate job and would work all day. Then she would be busy with other things after work. Thalia said that she does carry resentment about her mother's absence; so, she does want to be around for her own children.

Thalia's desire to be there for her children influenced the type of work she wanted to do. Early on, when her children were young, this meant massage therapy. "So, going through the school and getting my license kind of made up the plans for me. I just don't want the nine to five. But also knowing that I needed to, to work and make money." This was the reason she continued to do massage therapy after coming to the United States in her mid-30s. At first, she thought she would become a teacher, but, after struggling with classes at a community college, and having to explain the gaps between education jobs on her transcripts, she decided to continue her work in massage therapy and be her own boss.

Rosalie turned to mission work as a very young woman living in Montreal. In early adulthood, she converted from Catholicism and became a Christian missionary. She said, growing up, she was active in the Catholic Church and sports, but started to get into trouble. She joined a group of young missionaries and did that for about 35 years. She noted that she is the only one from her siblings to leave Montreal.

> They just still all live in the same city. They've never moved…. I'm more all over the place. But I've liked it, and I think my kids enjoyed it too, learning different

> cultures. You know we have friends that live, never move out of [the same place], and never even been on a plane, you know? So, it's like, they've [her children] experienced real-life culture.

This was a meaningful change for Rosalie. It led her down a different path than the one taken by her parents and siblings. Her path turned again when she had a family of her own. She discussed how doing mission work with young children was easier, but, as they grew up, they were less interested and wanted a change.

Summary

Family members serve as role models for participants through modeling entrepreneurship and sharing knowledge and experiences. Cultural influences are also part of participants' lives, and family serves as a conduit to culture. Family and cultural influences are embraced by participants in varied ways. These ways include connections to their cultural roots through family back home. While not all participants meet cultural expectations, family remains a touchstone for them. The participants demonstrate appreciation and care for relatives. Yet many of their entrepreneurial endeavors do not align with the outlook of culture and family.

Learning the Business

Learning to start and run a business for participants is multifaceted. Learning is influenced and connected to early family interactions and cultural experiences. Learning also occurs as they settled into life in the United States. Immigrating to the United States presents many new learning opportunities and experiences, and so does becoming an entrepreneur. Each participant started a business after moving to the United States. In

this section, I discuss Learning the Business as a theme. The subthemes are (a) trade-offs and new learning; (b) leveraging skills and fueling ambition; and (c) meeting family needs.

Trade-offs and New Learning

Trade-offs are driven by shifts in priorities, as well as the environment. Shifts in the environment for three of the participants relate to being trained in a specific STEM field but then having to rethink the future after having children. Chitra, Elinor, and Olivia worked in science-based professions before their lives changed in ways that led to business ownership. These changes included becoming parents and recognizing that they wanted to accommodate the needs of their children. They learned to start a business and become entrepreneurs because they wanted to gain flexibility. Gaining flexibility required a trade-off based on gaining new knowledge, rather than using what they knew to work in a field connected to their training.

Chitra is now a professional photographer. After finishing her master's degree in electrical engineering, she and her husband had their first baby. This changed things for Chitra. She did not want to leave her baby with a stranger, and she wanted to have her children close together in age; so, she decided to stay home. This career pause led to Chitra's exploration of what started as a hobby -- photography. The new learning for Chitra came from a book she purchased written by famous photographers, which allowed her to post pictures to get critiqued. "And they will tell you points on where you can improve, and what you did good, what you did bad things like that. Yeah, that was really helpful for me," she said. She was able to get feedback and learn from the

feedback to improve her skills. This new skill set was on a different path than her training in electrical engineering,

Chitra's interest and skills advanced when she met other professional photographers in the area and joined the local national and local Professional Photographer Association Guild. She worked her way through the levels of being a student, hobbyist, budding photographer, and professional. These levels helped Chitra progress in her skill development from seeking out new learning. She is now thinking about these aspects of the business so that she can expand her studio.

Working as an entrepreneur and for WE helps Olivia achieve her goals as a mother and as a business owner. For Olivia, the rationale for becoming an entrepreneur was about the opportunity to run her own business, as well as to escape an unaccommodating work environment. Working in a male-dominated workplace forced Olivia to make a decision, she may not have made if the workplace was more welcoming to parents.

The daycare she owns, however, is just the first step in Olivia's journey to being an entrepreneur; she sees this as a way to ease into owning and running a business. Eventually, she said, she will let it go, but not until her daughter can go to public school. Olivia realized her passion for supporting other women entrepreneurs. Through WE, she has been able to help other women develop their skills, as she was developing hers. She pointed out that she has done a lot personally to support new learning:

> Since I left IT and started the daycare, I listen to podcasts and books. I read tons of books, but mostly from podcasters when I was about to open up, but I also

> read some of the classics, you know, Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, that's a great one.… So, I just tried to learn so that I can teach and help. I apply this to all the things in my life.

Through this, Olivia gained new opportunities for learning that she lost when she left her professional position. They were ways for her to gain information in areas in which she has less experience. Leaving a position she once loved and was good at was difficult for Olivia, but the trade-off was something she knew she wanted to do to take more control of her schedule.

Elinor is a trained engineer and spent most of her working life in an engineering firm. Elinor began her own marketing firm in spring, 2019, after leaving that company. She describes the transition as difficult because she had no formal training in running a business. “It's very difficult for me to be, you know, doing something that I'm not completely trained. Being trained so much academically to be an engineer, and now I have to learn the ropes by myself.”

She left an environment where she was working with other people, speaking Spanish with customers from Latin America, and driving to work with her husband every day. Elinor now spends most of her days on the computer at home or holding meetings with clients. She said,

> That kind of thing scared me a little bit. I thought I would be more uncomfortable, but I'm kind of comfortable talking to people. I was always selling being on the customer side of engineering, but now that I have to sell my

own thing. I'm kind of enjoying it because I like to speak to people about different things and learn.

She noted that she was communicating with people in her past job, but now she must talk knowledgeably in an entirely new area. To gain this knowledge and confidence, Elinor has talked with many different people about their experiences to gain perspective on running a business. Being an engineer, she is used to having a clear, linear path to finding the answer to a problem. “Problems are complex and different when you are working for yourself,” Elinor said and has had to let go of a lot of the things she used to do, “There are no plans; there's just some guidelines. It's different. So, I thought that being methodical could be helpful, but sometimes I have to be more impromptu.” Despite the difficulty, Elinor is working to build her skills in the areas in which she feels less confident.

Leveraging Skills and Fueling Ambition

Leveraging an existing skill into a business is another way that participants entered into entrepreneurship. The existing skill, coupled with ambition, led four participants into starting their own businesses. Lesedi, Jol, Ximena, and Letizia are all women driven to personal and financial achievement, through entrepreneurship. The desire to be an entrepreneur is not unique to these women, but their learning is grounded in the motivation to grow their business based on existing skills.

Lesedi began her journey into the world of commercial truck driving education through a class project in her master’s degree program that required her to interview people in a profession. Her professor recommended that she interview people involved

in something out of her area of expertise. She decided to look for women who are commercial truck drivers. To do this, she got her own Commercial Driver's License. Once she enrolled in the CDL program, she realized that the training program was not what she expected:

> I had a horrible, horrible, horrible training experience at a local college. I came into the class one day, and the instructor was lying on the table teaching because his back was hurt. I was also the only woman in the group with four other men.

From her interviews and her own personal experience, she realized that what happened to her was not unique. Lesedi's partner, Amy, was one of the many of the women she interviewed who went through much the same thing. Lesedi said she was inspired by her partner, who became a commercial truck driver for an oil company just after the recession. Amy also plays a central role in the business.

Deciding to start school was the easy part, but learning how to take the next steps was more difficult. The learning process for Lesedi included searching for information on her own and being persistent even in the face of objection and rejection.

Getting her CDL school operational required more business acumen for Lesedi, but Jol was confident in her management skills and knew how to run a business. She received a business management degree in Nigeria before coming to the United States. Once here, she completed a nursing program but realized that she was not interested in working with patients or their families. This led her back to the idea of running her own businesses and building her management skills.

The confidence she describes comes from her experience with people, particularly from Nigeria, who come to the United States ready to work really hard to make money. She said this was why she was successful in starting a business. “With coming, come over here, we work and work, We work three jobs, but typical Americans are not ready to work at three jobs at all.” The willingness to sacrifice time and put in many hours to build a business is something that Jol remembers as being part of her experience.

Also, she attributed her knowledge to hands-on experiences when she was growing up and going to the market with her mother in Nigeria. She learned about sales and business from a very early age. That is something she also instills in her own daughters.

> Just like I am [with my daughter] bringing her to my shop, to know that the sense of business is different from education. You have to put your hand on that practice for you to understand what business is like.

The hands-on experience is how Jol learned to run her own businesses early on and translates into her current business endeavor. She began to run her own business for personal attendant services in which she could combine her knowledge about healthcare with her business expertise.

The skills she had running and managing a company made a smoother transition to creating a new business. Jol continues to research opportunities in the fashion world, thinking that one day she may open another store.

Being an entrepreneur runs in the family for Ximena. Her father owns his own business; her aunts and grandmother run their own businesses, and even her mother has side jobs that allow her to work for herself. Yet, her family's relationship with entrepreneurship is precarious. Her family started their own businesses in the United States out of necessity, unable to find employment through other means. They were successful in these endeavors. As she noted,

> My family has always been excited about entrepreneurship. They have always had businesses and in different industries. There are different jobs that they do, and I'm hoping to get influenced by in terms of just taking that extra money and having flexible time. Especially when you have children, you have to figure out a job that provides financially for them.

She eased into an entrepreneurial endeavor that she controls, while also managing a full-time job working as a coordinator at a local university. She was introduced to the business as a way to make money on the side. With the eBay store, Ximena's route to becoming an entrepreneur is different from that taken by other family members. While this is Ximena's first step into entrepreneurship, she dreams of one day owning her own restaurant. Ximena's current approach to her business is one of caution and risk avoidance, but she is trying to become a little more of a risk-taker. She said,

> I am very picky [about what I buy to sell at my store] because I am not a big risk-taker. I think having to buy items was a big thing. I thought, well, I'm going to invest in this so I became more of a risk-taker for me to make some money.

In addition to trying to take risks to make more money, Ximena is learning how to further optimize her business by adding personal touches for customers. As she becomes more competent and better understands what she is doing, she gains more confidence. With that confidence, she is willing to do and learn more to grow her business.

Letizia dreamed of running her own business one day, and like Ximena, her family had several different businesses when she was growing up, including a winery and a catering business. Letizia learned from her family, as well as from different women, how to be a good baker, and she started selling her treats to family and friends. She then began to teach other girls the same skills other women had taught her.

These early experiences and memories were the start of Letizia's current entrepreneurial endeavor of running her cooking school. On her way to starting her business, she took a detour and studied architecture. She still maintained the desire to start her cooking school, but really enjoyed architecture and was quite successful. She quit architecture to start a family. While at home with her children, she realized that it was the right time to start her business. She said,

> My days were filled with me doing stuff on the computer, writing recipes, designing my logo, and deciding on my name. All the legal stuff, I did all that. And I became a mom; so, my days were like story times too.

Being at home with the kids was Letizia's time to dive into research about cooking schools, develop plans and recipes, and research target areas and potential customers. This time also served as an incubator for her business ideas.

Meeting Family Needs

Cultural attachment to family is supportive, but can also be restrictive. Working to support a family, while also being available to meet the needs of children, is a reason that three of the participants chose to become entrepreneurs. Learning to balance motherhood and being the family's financial support influenced Thalia, Dina, and Rosalie, as they made their career and entrepreneurial choices. Money and personal satisfaction are part of their rationale, but the desire to learn and develop skills is connected to a need to gain control over the day's schedule.

Thalia began her career as a massage therapist in Monterey, Mexico, as a young woman with small children. After moving to the United States and enrolling in a community college, she eventually decided to transition back to massage therapy. Thalia had to be certified to become a massage therapist in the United States. There are many different rules and regulations. She was required to go through 500 hours of training and many hours practicing on people in clinics. She explained,

> I would do massage school on weekends…it was anatomy, physiology, pathology, together with algebra, government, sociology. I don't know how I went through that, but I decided just to go back to massage therapy.

After this, she took the exam, passed it, and now must obtain continuing education credits each year. Becoming a certified massage therapist provided her the ability to be at her children's activities. "I worked for years at a massage company, and it was awesome. I was able to be a color guard, mom." Being available to her children is what made Thalia begin her own massage therapy business. While she started out

working at a massage studio, once her two oldest (24 and 26) children left, and her 15-year-old son was the only child at home, she started her own massage studio. Thalia continues to think of ways to enhance her experience in the field. One of the ways she is doing this is by becoming a massage therapy instructor and teaching CEUs in the United States. Learning is a big part of Thalia's practice.

Dina's adult life included working, learning, and running various businesses, mainly restaurants. Dina has run a sandwich shop, pizza place, and a Lebanese restaurant. These were not necessarily her idea, but she supported her family and husband by running their family businesses. She became the primary operator and manager of each business because of her management ability and to help meet her family's needs. Dina had become a cook. Even though, when she came to the United States from Lebanon, she had very few cooking skills.

Because of the variety of experiences, Dina is quite flexible in the types of opportunities she pursues and how she contributes to the wellbeing of her family. For example, Dina took a job in a daycare when she needed to work, but also wanted to be with her young daughter. She took a school cafeteria job when her daughter was old enough to go to kindergarten. Through these jobs, she gained skills and the respect of her colleagues. She was a leader in the daycare center when she left. She took these jobs and transitioned in and out of business ventures in support of her family and to ensure that her children were receiving good care. Transitioning from one family business to the next, took a toll on Dina and taught her what she really valued in life. She knows that her experiences taught her who she is as a mother and an entrepreneur. She now looks for

opportunities to learn new things and sells arts and crafts that she makes on the side while watching her granddaughter. She talked about how she learned to make arts and crafts saying,

> my mom, she taught us an art, like crochet. You know, all this stuff when we are kids.… I knit… and I teach [daughters] and my granddaughter. I'll go to [the craft store] and get her some crafts when she comes home…we have to do a couple of crafts… like now, we start doing things for Christmas decorations.

Rosalie has an entrepreneurial spirit and has had various business ventures over the years. She said that she has a storage unit of ideas that she has tried at different points in her life. Rather than describing them as failures, she said it was just not the "right time" for these ventures. She was not discouraged when things did not work out because she can keep the experiences separate from her own self-worth. This quality was learned through experiences as a volunteer seeking fundraising support. One of her early activities included balloon making. She would make balloons for children in hospitals during the week and then would work private events or birthday parties in her own time. Now she runs a cleaning and personal assistant business to allow her flexibility to be available for her family.

> I want to keep coming home and be able to relax, enjoy my family, my husband, here with my kids and my grandkids. So, I can control that. I mean, my husband sometimes has mentioned that other people want to hire someone to work with you and make it a bigger company….But if I was younger, maybe if I were in my 40s or 30s, but I am over 60. I'm 63. And to start something like that, when you

> hire people… to go in people's homes….They [clients] don't like those big companies, because they never know who's in their home.

Ambition is not a key driver of Rosalie's business, but instead, she is motivated by developing personal relationships with her clients and being available for her family. These are things she has learned in all her varied entrepreneurial ventures and that she has attained in her cleaning and personal assistant business.

Summary

Participants learned to be entrepreneurs through various methods that contain similarities and differences. Three participants changed from STEM careers to and business ownership. This decision was propelled by holding jobs that did not accommodate the needs of mothers, and the desire to find a more flexible occupation. Four of the women had the ambition and skills to create their own businesses to achieve their personal and financial goals. Three participants made their career and entrepreneurial choices in service to their families. The ability to meet the needs of their children is front and center in their discussions about the work they do. Their desire to learn and develop their skills is about having flexibility and achieving that through a business. In a harsh context that made very little room for them, they learned how to make room for themselves.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided the findings from the interviews with ten immigrant women entrepreneurs who participated in the study. From these findings, I discussed four themes with subsequent subthemes that emerged from the analysis of data.

The first theme addressed was Language Learning in the United States. English language learning is a key theme. Yet, each participant had a different personal relationship with the language. Some learned at a young age in schools in their home and host country. Those who came to the United States as adults mainly had to learn on the street and the job. Participants also said that an accent affects interactions in their personal and professional lives. Each of these aspects of English language learning in the United States impacted how the participants learned to run a business.

The next theme discussed was Existing and Cultivation of Support System. It addresses the primary support systems that are valuable to the participants as they worked to establish and run businesses. Within this theme are subthemes that discuss formal support systems, like the Women's Entrepreneur group, as well as the informal network of friends and relatives. The availability of these types of assistance is evident in the business choices made by each of the ten participants. Support systems also are interrelated with family and culture in home and host countries.

Theme three was Family and Cultural Expectations. Culture is important to participants, who either rejected or acceded to expectations coming from culture and family. The support systems for participants may include family members but are further discussed within the theme of family and culture perceptions to include interpersonal influences. Subthemes that surfaced were having family members who serve as role models, as well as the strength of family and cultural influences in the lives of participants.

Family members served as role models for entrepreneurs through modeling entrepreneurship and sharing knowledge and experiences. Family and cultural influences are embraced by participants in varied ways, including maintaining connections to their cultural roots through family back home. Not all participants followed expectations of their family or community. Although these women appreciate and care for their relatives, they went their own way in their entrepreneurial choices

The Final theme is Learning the Business. Entrepreneurial endeavors for participants are connected to family and culture. Being an entrepreneur and starting a business presents many new things to learn. This is reflected in the fourth theme, Learning the Business. Each participant started a business after moving to the United States. This theme discusses how participants learned to be entrepreneurs. Each subtheme explores changes in career, need for flexibility, how participants leveraged skills, ambition to own a business, financial necessity, and family obligations. These four subthemes were identified as making trade-offs, leveraging skills, and fueling ambition, and working on behalf of the family.-In Chapter VI, I will expand the discussion of findings from this research.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore how immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs in the United States. Immigrant women move to the United States and navigate expectations of both their home country (where they were born and identify as their home) and host country (where they currently live and work) as they learn to start their own businesses. These expectations are influenced by early learning experiences and cultural expectations. These expectations influence how immigrant women entrepreneurs in the United States navigate what it means to be a non-American woman, as well as someone who contributes to the overall economy in both formal and informal ways.

Having a home and host cultural identity, otherwise known as transnational, requires adjustments to the cultural beliefs of both. Cultural beliefs change as people, and social expectations shift based on location and circumstance. Social expectations about women and work play pervasive roles in the economic and social lives of immigrant families (Johnson, 2016). Starting a business is perceived by some as a strength in the American labor market (Wornell, Jensen, & Tickamyer, 2017), as entrepreneurship is valued as the engine that drives financial success. Yet, immigrant women are marginalized based on nationality and gender, making it a challenge to access and navigate the labor market (Gerken, 2013). Despite challenges, the immigrant

women studied here acquire the knowledge and skills needed to achieve their business goals.

I used a basic qualitative approach for this study to situate the acquisition of skills and knowledge, leading to business ownership within a cultural context. I conducted semi-structured interviews with ten immigrant women entrepreneurs in Texas to understand how and why an immigrant woman starts down the road to business ownership in the United States. The inclusion criteria for this study were: a participant must (a) be foreign-born and lived outside of the United States; (b) have worked in the United States and be acculturated; (c) be currently or recently be self-employed, or the primary operator in a family business in the United States, or have played an active role in the business; (d) participants must self-identify as a woman. While I recognize that gender is not binary, for purposes of this study, a participant also must identify as female. The inclusion criteria did not include factors such as country of origin or age. The following overarching research question guided the exploration of this phenomenon:

How do immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs?

Within the primary research question, the following secondary questions informed the discussion:

SQ1 How do cultural values and prior experience from the home country inform learning and skill development in the host country?

SQ2 What drives an immigrant woman to become an entrepreneur in a foreign country?

SQ3 What are the challenges and opportunities for immigrant women who engage in entrepreneurial activities in the United States?

These immigrant women entrepreneurs' stories are compelling and timely within the broader national discussions about immigration, and about which of the new arrivals are most valued in the United States. This study furthers the work of adult education scholars by using a sociocultural and transnational feminist lens to examine the physical location, cultural beliefs, and personal identity of immigrant women who start their own businesses in the United States (Alfred, 2003; Guy, 1999; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

This study was grounded in the three key tenets from sociocultural and transnational feminist theory: (a) material reality - personal experiences in the home and host country (Crenshaw, 1989; Dill & Kohlman, 2012; Grewal & Kaplan, 2006); (b) beliefs and behaviors - culture, society and family structures in various contexts (Alfred, 2003; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Rogoff, 1995); (c) production of knowledge – education, language, status (Alexander & Mohanty, 2010). This conceptual framework grounds the experiences of participants through a critical lens that offers theoretical approaches that address social issues, starting with how people live and learn.

General Findings Across the Study

The ways in which people live and learn to be entrepreneurs happen within culture and community. The findings from this study indicate that the road to business ownership for these immigrant women is long and winding. Their learning was evident in the findings and was organized according to the following themes: (a) English

language learning in the United States, (b) support systems, (c) family and cultural perceptions, and (d) learning the business. The participants identified that these four factors played a significant part in their entrepreneurial choices.

The first finding is that English language proficiency in the United States is necessary to run a business. Each participant had a different personal relationship with the English language. Some learned at a young age in schools in their home and host country. Those who came to the United States as adults mainly had to learn on the street and the job. Participants also said that an accent affects interactions in their personal and professional lives. Each of these aspects of English language learning in the United States impacted how the participants learned and managed to run a business in their new home.

Secondly, support systems also were valuable to the participants as they established and ran businesses. Some of these support systems are formal, like the Women's Entrepreneur group, and others are informal, such as the network of friends and relatives. These support systems scaffolded the women as they created businesses. The availability of these types of support networks to give advice, encouragement, and knowledge is evident in the business choices made by each of the ten participants. Support systems also are interrelated with family and culture in the home and host countries.

The third finding is that participants either reject or accede to expectations coming from family and by proxy, culture. Family members served as role models for novice business owners through engaging in entrepreneurship and sharing knowledge

and experiences. Family and cultural influences are embraced by participants in varied ways. Those who strived to meet cultural expectations did so by maintaining connections to their roots through family back home. Not all participants followed expectations of their family or community. Other participants, while appreciating and respecting relatives, went their own way in making business choices.

The final finding directly addresses learning to start a business. Being an entrepreneur requires learning new things and reflecting on the old. Each participant learned to start a business after moving to the United States, building knowledge and skills leveraging and negotiating ambitions for business ownership, meeting financial needs and family obligations. In this final chapter, I expand on the key findings from the research and answer the research questions guiding the study. I also draw conclusions from the study and offer suggestions for future research.

Discussion of Research Questions

Each study participant came to the United States for different reasons, but becoming an entrepreneur initially was not one of them. Some came without concrete plans and started out working in another person's business while figuring out how to survive here (Jol, Rosalie, Dina). Others had goals and came to the United States to move forward in a professional career (Thalia, Elinor, Chitra, Lesedi) and some immigrated with family as pre-teens (Ximena and Olivia). The various entry points intersected with several common experiences: learning the language, building a support system, negotiating competing cultural expectations, discovering how to create and manage a business. These experiences were shared by the immigrant women in the study

in the process of becoming entrepreneurs in the United States. The following section uses these findings to discuss the primary and secondary research questions.

Primary Research Question: How do Immigrant Women Learn to Be Entrepreneurs

To address the overarching research question, how immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs, I highlight the ways that a person's life circumstances, referred to here as material reality, inform learning. Material reality shifts according to personal experiences of power in the home and host country (Dill & Kohlman, 2012; Grewal & Kaplan, 2006). Immigrating to the United States and becoming an entrepreneur is an experience that occurs in the world and around others. The engagement occurs in different physical locations (home country and host country), with different people, and different cultures. These external factors dictate the way that the world is experienced, interpreted, and navigated. Major life events, starting a family, parenting, immigration, citizenship, and starting a business, are external factors that shift and change. Internal factors include family and cultural influences and beliefs. While these all contribute to general learning, there is learning specific to entrepreneurship, such as gaining new knowledge and experiences, making trade-offs, leveraging existing skills, tapping into ambition, and putting family at the center of decision making.

Learning to be an Entrepreneur

Learning to be an entrepreneur includes stories of internal and external shifts. A woman may start in a high-intensity profession, working in a respected company with a job she likes, but her priorities may change once she has a child. Many industries and

organizations do not have cultures that support working parents and do not provide them with the flexibility that childbearing and rearing demands (Naidu1 & Chand, 2015). They are also learning how to perform as mothers in another culture, which is also very demanding. Being a mother can change the relationship between a woman and her professional environment (Wang, 2019), whether she is the United States or foreign-born.

Shifting to a new opportunity for Chitra, Elinor and Olivia meant leaving behind their STEM jobs and moving into new careers that allowed them to be flexible with their schedules and available for their children. They traded in a high paid position to learn a new skill and move into different fields. This represents a loss of financial and job security for the women, as well as a loss to the companies who no longer benefit from their innovation and ingenuity. The transition from employed to self-employed is facilitated by adapting to new social and cultural situations through observation and acculturation (Alfred, 2009) and by being away from extended family.

Making decisions on behalf of the family, while also still needing to contribute financially, are experiences shared by Thalia, Dina, and Rosalie. For these women, learning to be an entrepreneur came in the form of finding ways to work outside a company setting to maintain flexibility to meet the needs of their children. Learning on the job and trying things out to see if they fit, and then shifting back to entrepreneurial endeavors when necessary, was a learned ability for these participants.

For Lesedi, Jol, Ximena, and Letizia learning to start a business was spurred by connecting to a passion or interest that sparked ambition to do something that leveraged

their skills. Lesedi had skills in administration and a passion for teaching; so, she found her place in administrating a CDL school and teaching people, especially women, to become truck drivers.

Immigrant women business owners learn to be entrepreneurs by being good at listening. While other learners must be listeners, the skill especially is vital for those whose fortunes will be determined by the business they create. They must learn to listen and listen to learn, connecting memories to current experiences (Eraut, 2000). Quitting a professional position with a company is akin to leaving the home country (DelCampo, Jacobson, Van Buren, & Blancero, 2011) because it entails leaving the known for the unknown. Both transitional experiences are made easier by the presence of support systems

Formal and Informal Support and Learning

While being motivated and ready to learn helps immigrant women entrepreneurs as they start a business, learning is ongoing and requires the attainment of new skills. Learning also occurs in and varies with context and location. Skills are attained within these different places and are promoted by various individuals with the help of scaffolding provided by formal and informal support systems.

Support systems are avenues for development and learning for the immigrant women in this study. Formal groups proved beneficial to these women by providing knowledge and resource exchanges and personal and professional support (Besser & Miller, 2011). They help women overcome obstacles in starting a business. These types of support networks develop trust among members. Through their participation in

networks and professional communities, members can move from a view of self in isolation to self as a member of a group (Roccas & Brewer, 2002), thus gaining the psychosocial support necessary for business entrepreneurship.

The WE group is an example of a network that was developed to support women who are starting their own businesses. It is not tied to a cultural identity, but rather to the shared experience of being a woman entrepreneur, which can bring people together with the intent of learning new things. Networks and relationships, developed around shared experiences, are necessary for accessing knowledge that exists outside of institutional learning settings (Lo & Teixeira, 2015).

Accessing this knowledge is not easy for women entrepreneurs who are not affiliated with educational institutions in their host country. Building multi-tiered social support promotes access to insulating factors. These insulating factors include learning opportunities, skill-building support, and a personal network, which help create a structure that makes taking a business risk easier to manage (Harris, 2019). While taking and managing risks is not discussed by all participants explicitly, it is part of being a business owner. Having formal support systems to prepare for risk-taking is a benefit to immigrant women entrepreneurs who may otherwise have limited support resources in a new country and away from family.

Learning can be formal, but it also occurs informally and is a product of information shared by family, friends, community members, acquaintances, and institutions, such as the media, government, social service, and religious organizations. The support systems in various locations can be beneficial or detrimental for women

immigrants who are starting their own businesses. Having some type of learning-oriented support system is a vital part of the equation for women entrepreneurs. Having a support system that extends beyond the family and is directly connected to the local community also is beneficial for acculturation and connecting to a broad base of customers. Keeping things in the family is common outside the United States, yet it can be a limiting factor for a woman trying to start and grow a business (Yadav & Unni, 2016).

Learning is a key consideration for immigrant women entrepreneurs, especially because, for study participants, it was not a planned process. So, they were not prepared to create and run their own businesses in their new country. Expectations from the home country and culture included motherhood, maybe a job, but not running a business.

SQ 1 How do cultural values and prior experience from the home country inform learning and skill development in the host country?

An individual's culture runs deep and is not something that can be shed quickly or easily, but, away from the home country, its influence wanes over time. The loosening of cultural attachment is evident in the stories of the immigrant women in the study (Berry, 2008). The connection may be affected by the degree to which each participant was exposed to different cultures before coming to the United States. For example, Thalia, Letizia, Rosalie, Jol, Dina, and Chitra each speak more than two languages and experienced the influences of other cultures either in their home countries or through travel. As a result, the ties that bound them to the home culture had weakened before

they arrived in the United States and gave them the learning they would need to acculturate to their new home.

Cultural identity surfaces in the participants' discussion of how they adjusted to American life. Family lives and values from home influenced their decisions, but they did not hesitate to forge a new path. Letizia said that when she decided to leave Mexico to practice architecture in the United States, she left many comforts of home. In her new life in the United States, she met her husband. He is from Columbia, which displeased her Mexican family. However, Letizia stood her ground and married him anyway. Her new family incorporates multiple national identities and different material realities, depending on the physical locations and social values at each location.

National identity, physical and social location, and the influences of these factors have shaped the global landscape (Gou, 2015; Tisdell, 1995). For people who are trying to find economic stability and physical safety, moving to the United States feels like a good choice. For example, Dina came to the United States with her husband and small children during the civil war in Lebanon. They left because their home country was no longer safe. Once in the United States, they pursued business ownership to gain economic stability.

The mix of potential outcomes based on location can lead to multiple material realities for immigrant women whose culture has visible (appearance) and audible (accent) markers. Because the language separates them from native-born Americans, immigrant women must meet personal and social expectations that are learned to fit into the host country. Elinor, for example, discussed how her business requires her to market

and sell services that are closely identified with who she is. She uses her face in her marketing materials and the Americanized version of her name. These choices are intentional, so people do not subconsciously question her identity until she speaks to them. She speaks with accented English, and this surprises her clients.

All aspects of her business are designed to help her blend into the community. Being perceived as a "White" American is how Elinor embraces national power as an entrepreneur in the United States. Through this experience, she is learning that being White in the United States helps gain access to economic opportunities (Closson, 2010). Leveraging the expectations of Whiteness, Elinor said, leads to clients.

Another set of expectations comes from immediate family members who live near the women immigrant entrepreneurs. The families provide support, but they also lay out guidelines for behavior. Those guidelines fade with distance from the home country, relaxing attachment to cultural expectations (Berry, 2008). Moreover, individual agency and decision making at the personal or family level drive the participants' ambitions.

Each participant has a unique story of how she related to cultural expectations and family relationships, as well as to learning new things, including a new language -- English. Thought and knowledge production are impacted by dominant narratives in the world (Alexander & Mohanty, 2010), which, in turn, are guided and conquered by national power and by ideas about who is important and what is valuable to know (Swindle, Doris, & Melegh, 2019). National identity ranking systems are employed worldwide. They are unavoidable influences on the ways people are socialized and

engage with the world, which occurs through language and an agreement that English is the key to economic success.

English language teaching and learning are described by Lopez (2012) as being a consistent part of the Americanization process for immigrant adults, also with components of learning to be a "good citizen." She acknowledges that the classification of being an adult and an immigrant has been part of early adult education policy decisions in the United States. These educational policies currently emphasize control through state offices with limited resources and guidance at the federal level. Yet skill development for adults is promoted through the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. Despite the emphasis on adult education, immigration and entrepreneurship are tangled with issues of discrimination, gender, and race, and that is particularly true for new arrivals in the United States (Calvo, & Sarkisian, 2015).

SQ 2: What are the Driving forces for Immigrant Woman Entrepreneurs

The experiences of immigrant women of learning and negotiation around culture do not offer a template for what it means to be an entrepreneur, or what it means to be successful. The driving forces for each person were fueled by their individual circumstances. The driving forces include flexibility for family, early ambition, and fitting into the United States culture.

Flexibility for Family

The parental, emotional, and financial needs of the immediate and extended family affected the participants' entrepreneurial decision making. Some of the women felt that their mothers' job responsibilities kept them away from the family when the

participants were growing up. So, the women wanted to make sure their work allowed them the flexibility to be there for their children. Business ownership would do that.

Creating a successful business also is a way to take care of extended family back home, at least in the economic sense. Lesedi feels responsible for caring for her parents and brother, even though they are thousands of miles away because she knows that they struggle financially. Families in the home country rely on their children who are working in the United States and perceive that they have a better life. Jol said that life in the United States is not easy, but there is an opportunity if a person is willing to work hard and find it. The United States, as the land of opportunity, remains a dominant narrative, despite the struggles experienced by women once they are here, trying to work professionally or run a business.

Early Ambition

The needs of the family are part of the decision-making process, as are the women's strengths and ambitions. Jol, who sees herself as a manager and a businesswoman, talked about the organizational skills that she brought to her business. Letizia had learned to bake and cook at a very young age. Her love for the culinary arts led her to start a food business after leaving architecture and having children. Lesedi, on the other hand, was driven by opportunity, coupled with a greater social good. When she and her partner started the CDL school, their goal was to provide a high-quality learning experience, while also enabling women to go into highly paid truck driving jobs. Each woman's ambitions are unique. Yet, their desire to start a business was a result of life circumstances.

Fitting into United States Culture

Life circumstances are what brought them to the United States in the first place. America is the land of opportunity, but only for a certain type of immigrant entrepreneur. The "certain type" is male, English speaking, and White (Gerken, 2013), and it is a myth because many domestic entrepreneurs also do not fit those criteria. Domestic and foreign-born immigrant entrepreneurs share some factors, but only the native-born have the safety of citizenship. Citizenship is connected to certain support systems and resources for native-born Americans, as well as an overarching entrepreneurial identity within the United States.

Safety of citizenship is an example of how power and privilege can shift based on location. Women entrepreneurs confront shared challenges created by prevailing patriarchal values within the economic system of both their home and host country. Yet citizenship is a prevailing difference that separates domestic women entrepreneurs from immigrant women entrepreneurs.

The forces behind their professional choices are individual and are connected to the passions and skills of each woman (Thorgren & Wincent, 2015). As lives and immigration status changed, so did each woman. The safety of citizenship offers opportunities to make decisions to work, not work, or work for yourself. The options for work and access to various types of jobs at a company were related to the circumstances of immigration. These circumstances can include the type of visa each secured (Kerr, 2013). Becoming an entrepreneur required a change in identity, access to resources and labor, and the type of challenges and opportunities.

SQ 3: What are the Challenges and Opportunities for Immigrant Woman Entrepreneurs

Challenges and opportunities to support immigrant women entrepreneurs are multifaceted (Lo and Teixeira, 2015; Wang 2019). The challenges include aspects of United States society that can be difficult to navigate, such as being a woman in a male-dominated work setting, having to take on family responsibilities and the limitations imposed by visa requirements (Bierema, 2009; Wang, 2019; Gerken, 2013). The complexity of these challenges depended largely on the home country and life circumstances of each woman.

Life circumstances, like navigating a new profession, are part of the narrative for participants. With changes in professional identity, shifts also occur in personal expectations and decisions for immigrant women. A particular challenge for Elinor was working in the United States for a multinational engineering firm. In this position, her bilingual skills and nationality were strengths she leveraged to work with South American customers. However, once she left the company to start her own marketing business, she found that her national identity could be perceived as a weakness. The negotiation of who she is and how she displays herself to others are decisions she must make to grow her business.

Some aspects of an immigrant woman's identity may be seen as a strength in one setting and a challenge in another setting. These changes can feel risky at times and rightly so. Immigrating to a new country and starting a business both can be risks. Yet, for many immigrants, this is a risk that pays off. Jol said that, regardless of how hard she

had to work, America offered more opportunities than Nigeria, despite the potential downsides of relocation and precarious immigration policies.

Language Learning

Language learning and confidence are developed over time through exposure, practice, and necessity (Lin and Tao (2012). Dina discussed her fear of being left alone at the family business when she was new in the United States because she could not communicate in English. Chitra said she would watch re-runs of the TV show "Friends," with the English subtitles so that she could become more familiar with conversational English. Learning language, history, and culture bolster an individual's ability to participate in a new country. This is also true for an immigrant's ability to take part in a nation's market and knowledge economy (Carens, 2013).

Language proficiency and education are desirable and beneficial goals for immigrants in the United States, particularly for women. Economic opportunities for immigrants increase when education is obtained in the destination country. (Semyonov, Lewin-Epstein, & Bridges, 2011). Educational attainment was part of the immigration experience for Elinor, Chitra, Lesedi, Jol, Thalia, Ximena, and Olivia. It was not necessarily the reason they migrated, but certainly something they pursued once in the United States. Educational achievement in the United States is possible only if someone can speak, learn, and communicate in English. Mastery over the language opens many opportunities for women in the community, as well as in business.

Thalia said that, when she was young in Mexico, her father emphasized the importance of learning multiple languages, but especially English. Ximena talked about

how she did not develop confidence in herself until she became comfortable speaking English. In addition to English mastery, she needed to be understood when speaking. Ximena talked about her insecurities with her accent and not saying all words correctly at first. Jol said that she is still misunderstood when she is speaking to people; so, she learned to text important information to them to put her words are in writing. Lesedi said that, because of her accent, people who talk to her know immediately that she is not from the local community. Language and accent are gatekeepers to full immersion in the United States. The desire to obtain English language skills and education in the United States are priorities for the participants because of the importance of the United States in the production of knowledge worldwide.

Education

Higher education was not as important for the participants once they became entrepreneurs. The skills gained through formal education were not necessarily useful in entrepreneurship. Lesedi, who pursued a degree in Educational Administration, used her administrative skills to direct learning in her new business, but she does not work with children in a formal school setting. Elinor walked away from chemical engineering to become a marketing consultant, and Chitra, who traded her ambitions to be an electrical engineer for ownership of a photography studio, is more comfortable behind a camera.

Formal education became less of a concern once each woman decided to start her business. Immigrant women's entrepreneurship is not always planned but instead becomes necessary when confronting a new familial, cultural, and economic

environment. For each participant, entrepreneurship was the result of economic need, complicated by family responsibilities, and/or immigration status.

In addition to navigating immigration policies is the dearth of flexible work arrangements and family-friendly workplaces in the United States (Calvo & Sarkisian, 2015). Many American companies do not accommodate women employees who have children. Elinor and Olivia, for example, found it challenging to pursue their careers in male-dominated professions after starting a family. This was exacerbated by the expectations coming from their still-influential home culture, in which it was assumed that they would perform the duties of wife and mother. These onerous responsibilities, piled on top of demanding professional positions, redirected their ambitions towards entrepreneurship.

The ideas about motherhood are deeply entrenched and connect to early family experiences and cultural expectations (Wang 2017). The participants did not discuss womanhood and motherhood explicitly, but rather linked these topics to gendered ideas about a woman being the primary family caregiver. Nine of the ten participants embraced motherhood, and the desire for family-directed their career choices (Radai, 2019). Additionally, being partnered is a benefit to the women in this study. Participants also have partners who are highly skilled and working in a well-paid field or working directly in the business. This type of support is unique to women with partners. The circumstances would be very different, and the challenges almost insurmountable for someone trying to navigate entrepreneurship as a single parent without family support.

Child and family care are discussed by Calvo and Sarkisian (2015), who identify the barriers that limit access to the labor market for professional women once they have children. The belief that a woman is the primary caregiver in the family continues to be a barrier to professional growth, one that is maintained in the workplace through social conditioning and national policies. The influence of these dominant narratives is felt in home and host countries (Alexander & Mohanty, 2010). It is not surprising, then, that taking care of family and children was part of the larger narrative for most participants.

Staying in a professional position, or leaving to care for family, is a false choice. Some firms are willing to accommodate workers with children, but workplaces create an environment that can be so punishing and demoralizing that highly effective and productive women leave and start their own businesses. Alfred, Ray, and Johnson (2019) discuss these issues and note that academia, business, and industry have similar issues with retaining diverse talent, especially in STEM professions. This "leaky pipeline" for diverse STEM talent creates unhappiness for women in the workplace, while also driving employees away from the company and toward the local economy through entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurs produce value to communities, but their contribution is not given the respect it deserves.

Challenges for immigrant women entrepreneurs include discrimination, which creates problems for them (Knight 2016; Robertson & Grant, 2016; Teixeira, Lo, & Truelove, 2007). Discrimination is fueled by stereotypes that are held and perpetuated in Western countries about immigrants from non-Western countries (Barret, Jones, & McEvoy, 1996). These experiences are not limited to cultural differences and are

compounded when an immigrant entrepreneur is a woman (Knight, 2016; Naidu & Chand, 2017; Pio, 2007).

Respect and professionalism as an entrepreneur can be gained through organizing and embracing supportive communities. Such communities are a pillar for many women-run businesses. Women can find tangible and immediate reinforcement in the commoditized groups for women. An example of this is the "Boss Babe" culture (The Société: Supporting Ambitious Women in Business, n.d.). Boss Babe is a blog run by women for women. Users must pay a membership fee to receive access to resources and training. This model is similarly applied by the WE group. This is the creation of multiple ecosystems that influence the culture of entrepreneurialism and thrive on cultivating social support networks. Examples exist in other cities. They have names like The Hub or The Wing. The adoption of an entrepreneurial persona, through group membership, can aid acculturation and learning.

Implications

The ways immigrant women learn to be entrepreneurs, as well as the driving forces behind their decisions, have implications for key stakeholders that are focused on the growth and development of the economy. While the research reported here reveals the challenges faced by women like the participants, there also are opportunities for future partnerships and research to develop strategies addressing these learning needs. With these needs in mind, this study provides implications for practice, policy, theory development and research.

Implications for Practice and Policy

This study provides valuable insights and guidance affecting adult education. Immigrant women entrepreneurs are connected to communities (Wang, 2019), and are well suited for adult education programs that help develop small business owners. Adult education programs conducted through community colleges and small business development centers have an opportunity to support these individuals through programming such as Career Pathways, Certified Nurse Aides (C.N.A.), and Massage Therapy Certification. Yet, the experience for immigrants is also dependent on the country of origin and the circumstances of relocation. Guo (2015) indicates that the knowledge and skills needed to navigate a host society, including citizenship, are prime opportunities for adult education programs. They can be conduits to citizenship.

Adult education policies at the state and federal levels exist for adult education and literacy programs. However, the available funding is subject to congressional and state approval (Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, 2020). This process makes this type of funding, both unstable and political, based on political party beliefs and experiences around immigration. Instability and politics do not offer support to immigrant women entrepreneurs, yet there is potential for the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education to support workplace adult education preparation activities that also include entrepreneurial efforts. For example, the entrepreneurship programs at many institutions, like Babson College, work with clients around the world to start their businesses. Babson emphasized a global focus and was recognized by the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program, 10,000 Small Businesses UK, and

10,000 Women, which are focused on the "combination of education, capital, and support services [that] best addresses barriers to growth for small businesses" (Babson College, n.d.). This program specifically addresses the needs of women globally. The 10,000 Women program is a prime example of how to address women entrepreneurs explicitly. However, immigration status can impact access to these programs. Governments and institutions can help or hinder entrepreneurial endeavors for immigrant women (Calvo, & Sarkisian, 2015) that impact the adult population in the United States.

Policy decisions also are made at the corporate level. It may be beneficial to consider what happens when organizations and workplaces do not change to become more family-friendly and stop the talent drain. When smart and ambitious women, like the participants in this study, are not accommodated in a professional workplace, they will leave and continue to develop their skill sets to benefit themselves (Wang, 2019). Traditionally masculine workplaces have been called on to adjust the culture to better suit the personal and career development needs of women (Collins, McFadden, Rocco, & Mathis, 2015; Khilji & Pumroy, 2018). The disaffected women, foreign or domestic born, will create and generate new businesses and ideas, but companies will not be the beneficiaries of their evolving skills.

Implications for Research and Theory

With the potential for programs and organizations to lose out on talent, it is important to point out that the social space occupied by immigrant entrepreneurs is not neutral. Theoretical approaches to addressing social problems start with understanding

how people live and learn. This is true through the global policies and geographical divisions of place in our shared economic and educational landscape. Some people have power, while others do not. Some people have influence and resources; others struggle to survive. Learning and feminist theories combine to provide an understanding of knowledge attainment while also exposing power dynamics.

From this study this conceptual framework informs what, why, and how things are learned within the context of precarious power dynamics for immigrant women who become entrepreneurs in the United States. The sociocultural theory does not critique, deconstruct, or challenge power differentials that result in social inequality (Alfred, 2002; Esmond 2016; Guy, 2005;). Transnational feminist theory deconstructs the environment further within the home and host country of individuals (Alexander & Mohanty, 2010; Fernandes, 2013; Grewal & Kaplan, 2006).

Relating to this study, participants prioritize appearing and sounding "American" to be an entrepreneur. Additionally, the struggles of women to move into entrepreneurship because of failures in the workplace to accommodate motherhood and caregiving are further contributing to feminist scholarship and human resource development scholarship that examines organizational development. Immigrant women respond to the lack of access to resources by organizing their own support systems. These aspects of the experiences of immigrant women entrepreneurs are understood through sociocultural and transnational feminist theories.

The conceptual theory using sociocultural and transnational feminist theories move the research forward to uncover learning through internal negotiation and

individual development within an entrepreneurial system that was not supportive of immigrants or women. While feminist theories are not situated as learning theories, conceptualizing learning within a feminist frame is useful for feminist pedagogy.

Feminist pedagogy brings to the forefront how thought influences of dominant narratives on the world (Alexander & Mohanty, 2010) and feminist ethics are deeply collectivist (Nagar, 2013). A woman's experience within various cultures may be one of social power in her home country and one of social oppression in the host country or vice versa. This duality represents a paradox within the identities of women. Embracing cultural practices as part of the lives of immigrant women is a strength of transnational feminist theory (Dill & Kohlman, 2012). A person coming to live and start a business in the United States does not slough off her cultural identity upon entry to the country, although that is the expectation and a survival mechanism. Educators who practice transnational feminist pedagogy employ a teaching approach that not only minimizes power dynamics in the classroom but also confronts feminist hegemony (Eveline & Todd, 2002; Peake & De Souza, 2010).

For researchers, this study contributes to a broader understanding of learning about business ownership for immigrant women in the United States and connects daily lives to the fluidity of culture and learning. This current study further illuminated differences between home and host culture and the influence of material reality and production of knowledge for immigrant women entrepreneurs. Centering culture and learning within the sociocultural theory is an interesting approach to studying immigrant women entrepreneurs' experience. Examining the mediating factors to learning is an

opportunity to explore further the social tools used to learn for immigrant entrepreneurs. This is relevant because of the shared experience of English language learning.

Opportunities and Limitations for Future Research

Entrepreneurship within this study identified a departure from family expectations based on culture. For example, Dina is the only participant from a Middle Eastern country; she now has adopted a different approach to work and business operation. In the Middle East, family plays a meaningful role in businesses. This is also evidenced in how Dina and her husband ran their restaurants. For their Lebanese restaurant, they hired their cousins to help them run the business. But she also shared that her family often disappointed her. She now works for herself and does things that she wants to do. These aspects of entrepreneurship are cultural. This is a limitation of this study because participants geographical and cultural experiences in their home country were not explored in this study.

Exploring the ways culture influences entrepreneurialism for immigrant women presents a compelling opportunity for further research because of the intersectionality between within entrepreneurship, gender, and being an immigrant. These intersections and contradictions are discussed by Naudél, Siegel, and Marchand (2017) who deconstructed the idea of immigrants as being uniquely equipped to be successful entrepreneurs. Yet women, regardless of physical and social location, continue to figure out how to take care of their families when organizations and governments make policies that directly impact them without their input.

Understanding the intersections of the lives of participants is a contribution of this study, yet there is a limitation based on the data collection process. For example, with this qualitative study, ideally, I would have physically met with each interview participant for our interview. It was not, however, possible to meet with every participant face to face physically. Participants were interviewed according to their availability and willingness to share and commit to ongoing communication. Ideally, every participant would have had a face-to-face interview, but due to the participants' preferences, one interview was through a Zoom call and one through phone calls. These aspects of the study are often part of the qualitative research process because dealing with people is often unpredictable and requires flexibility.

Currently the research and data collection process are being reimagined with the need for people to socially distance because of the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic. Future research should include the engagement of participants through online forums and social networks. Additionally, expanding the way research is conducted to include and recruit participants from throughout the United States by leveraging technology is not only beneficial, it is necessary. These opportunities present the ability to explore the impact of location and culture further.

This study has implications for the American economic future as we consider rebuilding after the COVID 19 pandemic. While we are home to many large corporations, small businesses -- the restaurants, daycare centers, bakers -- provide essential services. These services currently are being upended, and immigrant women entrepreneurs are poised to be partners in rebuilding the local and global economy.

Additionally, this study contributes to material and economic stability for mothers as well as the generations to come. Stability contributes to the health and the vibrancy of their communities.

Community stability include education and learning which are evident in this study, further exploring the ways formal education interplays for women immigrant entrepreneurs is prime for further investigation. A particular limitation of this study was not exploring the role of social class differences among participants and how that impacted their entrepreneurial trajectories. Examining social class provides an opportunity to probe more deeply into the ways that access education and cultural beliefs about class before immigration impacts how someone finds work and achieves additional education in the United States after immigration.

In addition to education and cultural beliefs delving further into learning is another opportunity for future research on this topic may. Researchers can apply Jarvis's (2006) model of learning -- non-learning, non-reflective learning, and reflective learning -- to an examination of the participants' lived experiences. This model was applied by Erichsen (2011) for international adult student learners which identified similar findings. Erichsen found that international students practice reflective learning and change their self-concept through an ongoing shaping and expanding understanding of the world. This study of how learning occurred has implications for immigrant women entrepreneurs in further understanding the types of learning through Jarvis's model, rather than identifying learning at the individual level.

Conclusions

The research reported here benefits multiple stakeholders and advances the work of adult educators. Gou (2015) calls on adult education programs to better serve transnational immigrant women, saying that "community-based, informal learning indicates that adult education has created important spaces for emancipatory learning and social action. In this view, adult education remains an enabler" (p. 14). Various facets of entrepreneurial education and community development intersect to allow entrepreneurs to contribute to local economies. Support systems are widely known to be important. Women develop these systems as a means of survival and emotional sustenance.

The field of adult education is well suited to explore further the impact of adult education, immigration, and entrepreneur policies in the United States. Adult education programs support skill development and local economic endeavors through various entities, including small business development centers, vocational education programs, and community education courses. Adult educators offer skills (program development and design, expertise in adult learning principles) that are useful to support entities for marginalized citizens as well as non-citizens.

Living and learning do not stop despite the challenges of broken and unfair systems. Life is hard, but people learn and figure things out anyway. Figuring things out for the immigrant women entrepreneurs in this study was determining how to be successful in their own ways and to shape their work according to what was most important to them. Yet, figuring out through the negotiation of values is not unique to

immigrant women entrepreneurs. All women face such problems in traditional societies and workplaces, in which long-held masculine ideas about gender roles, work, and life prevail (Bierema, 2009; Collins, 2012).

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APPENDIX A

TITLE/AUTHOR/YEAR, PURPOSE, LIMITATION, FINDINGS, AND METHODOLOGY/ FRAMEWORK OF NORTH AMERICAN STUDIES

Title/Author/ Year	**Purpose**	**Limitation**	**Findings**	**Methodology / Framework**
Maghrebian Entrepreneurs in Quebec: An Exploratory Study and a Conceptual Framework - Allali (2010)	Identify entrepreneurship as an alternative to finding a "convenient job" in Canada.	Gender differences are not discussed in the findings or analysis.	Entrepreneurship for Maghrebian immigrants is a direct consequence of their failure to find a suitable job. -Entrepreneurship is a reaction to or disappointment with a previous job. -Professional experience and education are critical criteria in the process of their selection as immigrants to Canada yet are irrelevant when they started looking for a job in Quebec. -Canadian experience and education are required to be considered for a job.	Qualitative / No Theory

Title/Author/ Year	Purpose	Limitation	Findings	Methodology / Framework
Mexican-American Entrepreneurship - Fairlie and Woodruff (2010)	Analyze business ownership as the main alternative for wage and salary employment for Mexicans in the United States.	Does not use a theoretical framework and identifies gender differences in business ownership without explaining potential reasons for the difference	- Low levels of education and wealth between Mexican immigrants and non-Latino Whites in business formation. -Limited language ability explains the gap in business income. -Legal status represents an additional barrier for Mexican immigrants. - Human and financial capital deficiencies limit business ownership and business success among second and third-generation Mexican-Americans to a lesser extent than first-generation immigrants.	Quantitative / No Theory
Early Taiwanese-Chinese Immigrants in Canada and Guam - Chiang (2012)	Probe Taiwan immigrants' early experiences and reasons for migrating to Canada and Guam.	Focus of participants in Canada and Guam does not extend into the United States.	-Reasons for emigration include political situations, family or friends, fate, change from student to immigrant status, work reasons. -Findings include stories of lived experiences and success. Ideas around -Home and Belonging influence entrepreneurial decisions.	Qualitative / Grounded Theory

Title/Author/ Year	Purpose	Limitation	Findings	Methodology / Framework
How Contexts of Reception Matter: Comparing Peruvian Migrants' Economic Trajectories in Japan and the United States - Takenaka and Paerregaard (2012)	Examine the economic outcomes for Peruvian migrants in the United States and Japan.	Discusses two different cultural contexts and does not fully explore gender differences beyond earning disparities.	-Peruvians make it by obtaining skills in the host labor market, or through community support.	Mixed / Human Capital Theory
Human Capital Attributes of Hispanic Immigrant Entrepreneurs in a New Destination State - Moon, Farmer, Abreo, and Miller (2013)	Look into human capital attributes, educational aspirations, and motivations for establishing a small business among Hispanic immigrants in the United States.	The findings do not discuss that start-up decisions can be wrapped up in societal challenges that result in subtle discrimination in the marketplace. This is missing from the analysis.	-Findings challenge the idea that immigrants opened a business because of discrimination or limited opportunity. - Little difference exists between rural and urban business owners' motivation to become entrepreneurs. -Rural owners are more likely to leave a job and begin a business than are urban owners.	Quantitative / Human Capital Theory

Title/Author/ Year	Purpose	Limitation	Findings	Methodology / Framework
Immigrants Doing Business in a Mid-sized Canadian City: Challenges, Opportunities, and Local Strategies in Kelowna, British Columbia - Lo & Teixeira (2015)	Profile the differences and similarities between the immigrant and non-immigrant populations, and business growth in small- and medium-sized cities.	This study is limited by its focus on one city.	Immigrant entrepreneurs are more likely than non-immigrant counterparts to encounter barriers when establishing their business. -Little difference between immigrant and non-immigrant entrepreneurs in information and advice-seeking behaviors, or in considering co-ethnic employees as important. -Optimistic about the future of business. -Non-metropolitan areas are less welcoming to immigrant entrepreneurs.	Qualitative / Geography in a General Theory (Immigrant business ownership is location bound)
Race-ing, Classing and Gendering Racialized Women's Participation in Entrepreneurship - Knight (2016)	Explore Afro-Caribbean women's experiences of oppression in the labor market in Canada	While women's experiences are central to this study, an in-depth explanation of how the experiences shaped learning to be an entrepreneur is not evident in the findings or analysis.	- Women's labor market participation is racialized. - Struggles and resistance are demonstrated.	Qualitative/ Intersectionality

Title/Author/ Year	Purpose	Limitation	Findings	Methodology / Framework
An Assessment of Hispanic Entrepreneurship in the United States - Suarez (2016)	Explore Hispanic business owners and businesses in the United States, and the likelihood Hispanics will become entrepreneurs and comparison of the labor market and employment forces and earnings.	Data analyzed is from 2007 and not necessarily reflective of economic changes post-recession.	-Immigrants are more likely than natives to become entrepreneurs. -Discrimination in the labor market and place of employment force minorities to enter self-employment. -Hispanics earn significantly less than their African- American and White counterparts.	Quantitative / No Theory
Immigrant entrepreneurship from a social psychological perspective - Robertson and Grant (2016)	Understand the immigrant entrepreneur's use of social capital, cultural identity, and acculturation in entrepreneurial endeavors in Canada.	Gender differences are not discussed or analyzed in the findings.	-Perceived disadvantage influences an immigrant to become an entrepreneur -Disadvantage is felt among the well-educated.	Quantitative / Social Identity Theory
The role of ethnic retailing in retrofitting suburbia: case studies from Toronto, Canada -	Understand how Chinese business owners successfully revived suburban	Does not use a theoretical framework, and women are only evident in the	-Immigrants are bypassing traditional ports of entry in the inner city and settling in suburban areas.	Quantitative/ No Theory

Title/Author/ Year	Purpose	Limitation	Findings	Methodology / Framework
Zhuang, and Chen (2016)	retail establishments in Canada.	findings but missing from the analysis.	-Ethnic places readapt, creating a sense of community and place. -Suburban immigrant communities should be considered in retrofitting schemes.	

APPENDIX B

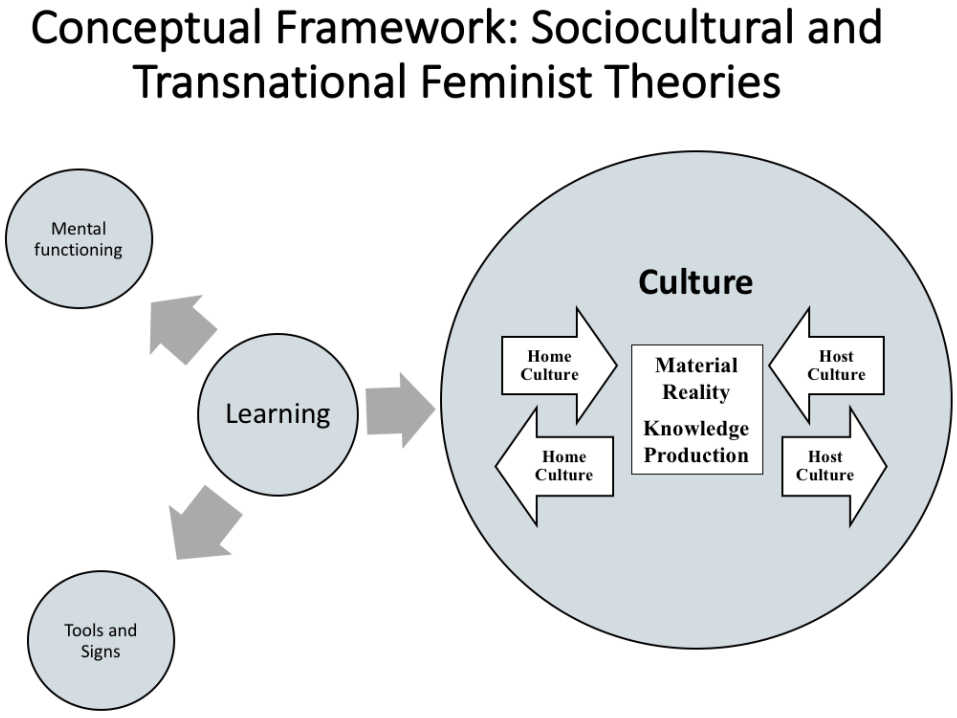
SOCIOCULTURAL LEARNING (SLT)/ TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST THEORIES (TFT)

Key Tenets: Sociocultural Learning / Transnational Feminist Theory

Material Reality shifts according to personal experiences of power and oppression in the home and host country (Crenshaw, 1989; Grewal & Kaplan, 2006; Dill & Kohlman, 2012).

Beliefs and Behaviors shaped by culture, society, and family structures in various contexts (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Rogoff, 1995; Alfred, 2003)

Thought and knowledge production are influenced by dominant narratives in the world (home and host culture) (Alexander and Mohanty, 2010).



APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL AND CONSENT FORM

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

(Common Rule –Effective January, 2018)

May 31, 2019

Type of Review:	Submission Response for Initial Review Submission Form
Title:	Immigrant Women Entrepreneurs in the United States: A Qualitative Study
Investigator:	Mary Alfred
IRB ID:	IRB2019-0495
Reference Number:	090646
Funding:	Internal
Documents Reviewed:	• IRB Application (Human Research) - (Version 1.2) • Informed Consent (English) - (Version 3.0) • Dissertation Flyer 522 - (Version 3.0) • Protocol - (Version 2.0)
Review Category	Category 2: Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: i. The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or ii. Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation.

Dear Mary Alfred:

The HRPP determined on 05/31/2019 that this research meets the criteria for Exemption in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b).

This determination applies only to the activities described in this IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made you must immediately contact the IRB. You may be required to submit a new request to the IRB.

Your exemption is good for three (3) years from the Approval Start Date. Thirty days prior to that time, you will be sent an Administrative Check-In Notice to provide an update on the status of your study.

750 Agronomy Road, Suite 2701
1186 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-1186

Tel. 979.458.1467 Fax. 979.862.3176
http://rcb.tamu.edu

APPROVAL
MODIFICATION OF PROTOCOL
Using Expedited Procedures

August 15, 2019

Type of Review:	Submission Response for IRB Amendment
Title:	Immigrant Women Entrepreneurs in the United States: A Qualitative Study
Investigator:	Mary Alfred
IRB ID:	IRB2019-0495D
Reference Number:	093634
Funding:	Internal
Documents Approved: *copies of stamped approved documents are downloadable from iRIS	• Informed Consent Doc without signatures (English) - (Version 4.0)
Special Determinations:	Waiver of documentation of consent approved under 45 CFR 46.117 (c) 1 or 2/ 21 CFR 56.109 (c)1
Risk Level of Study:	Not Greater than Minimal Risk under 45 CFR 46 / 21 CFR 56
Review Category:	Category 6: Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes Category 7: Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

Dear Mary Alfred:

On 07/29/2019 the IRB approved the modification(s) described below:

- Update of application section 12.1 to add legal risks for undocumented immigrants.
- Removal of signatures from consent instrument; waiver of documentation of consent granted.

Project Title: Immigrant Women Entrepreneurs in the United States: A Qualitative Study

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by researchers at Texas A&M University. The information in this form will help you decide whether to take part. If you decide you do not want to participate, you can stop at any time. We ask for your participation in an interview conducted by Study Protocol Director and Texas A&M University doctoral student Sarah M. Ray (sarahmray@tamu.edu).

Why Is This Study Being Done?
Starting a business is a strength in the labor market in the US. Immigrant women have different experiences running a small business. Immigrant women learn and become successful business runners. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of immigrant, women learning to run a business in the US.

What will I receive for my participation?
Participants will receive a $20 gift card at the completion of the interview process. The interview process includes the interview, review of interview notes, response to follow-up questions and additional discussion with interviewer. The gift card will be mailed or emailed to the participant within 1 week of completion of the interview process.

Why Am I Being Asked to Be in This Study?
You are being asked to be in this study because you are a woman entrepreneur that immigrated to the US as an adult.

How Many People Will Be Asked to Be in This Study?
Approximately 20 people (participants) will be invited to be in this study.

What Are the Alternatives to being in this study?
The alternative to being in the study is not to participate.

What Will I Be Asked to Do in This Study?
Participates will be asked to participate in a 1hour interview and a follow-up discussion based on the initial interview to clarify or further explain topics or experiences. A copy of the interview will be sent to each participant through email for them to review as after it is over. Participants can add or change anything from the interview. Also, I will ask to talk to you again after you review the interview notes.
In summary, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an interview
- Review of notes from interview
- Respond to follow-up questions and discussion with interviewer
- Allow researcher to audio record to aid with data analysis. The researcher will not share these recordings with anyone outside of the immediate study team or TAMU Compliance.

Are There Any Risks to Me?
Although the researchers have tried to avoid risks, you may feel that some questions/procedures that are asked of you will be stressful or upsetting. To minimize legal risk to you we will not collect the signed consent forms. You do not have to answer anything you do not want to.

Will Information from This Study Be Kept Private?

The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and will not be shared with anyone outside of the immediate study team or TAMU Compliance. Information about you will be stored in locked file cabinet; computer files protected with a password.

Audio Recording This interview will be audio record to help with data analysis. The researcher will not share these recordings with anyone outside of the immediate study team or TAMU Compliance and the recordings will be deleted once the interview has been transcribed. The researcher will ask whether you will consent to audio recording at the beginning of the interview and if at any point you would like to discontinue audio recording you can notify the researcher.

People who have access to your information include the Protocol Director (Sarah M. Ray) and the Principle Investigator, Dr. Mary Alfred. Information about you and related to this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law. And all records of your participation will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

Who may I Contact for More Information?
For additional information you may contact Principal Investigator: Dr. Mary Alfred, PhD: 979.845.2718 / malfred@tamu.edu. You may also contact the Protocol Director, Sarah M. Ray at sarahmray@tamu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, to provide input regarding research, or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) by phone at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636, or by email at irb@tamu.edu. The informed consent form and all study materials should include the IRB number and approval date. Please contact the HRPP if they do not.

What if I Change My Mind About Participating?
Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you have the choice whether to be in this research study. You may decide to not begin or to stop participating at any time. If you choose not to be in this study or stop being in the study, there will be no effect on your academic standing as a student, medical care, employment, evaluation, relationship with Texas A&M University, etc.

STATEMENT OF VERBAL CONSENT: I agree to be in this study. The procedures, risks, and benefits have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered. I know that new information about this research study will be provided to me as it becomes available and that the researcher will tell me if I must be removed from the study. I can ask more questions if I want.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

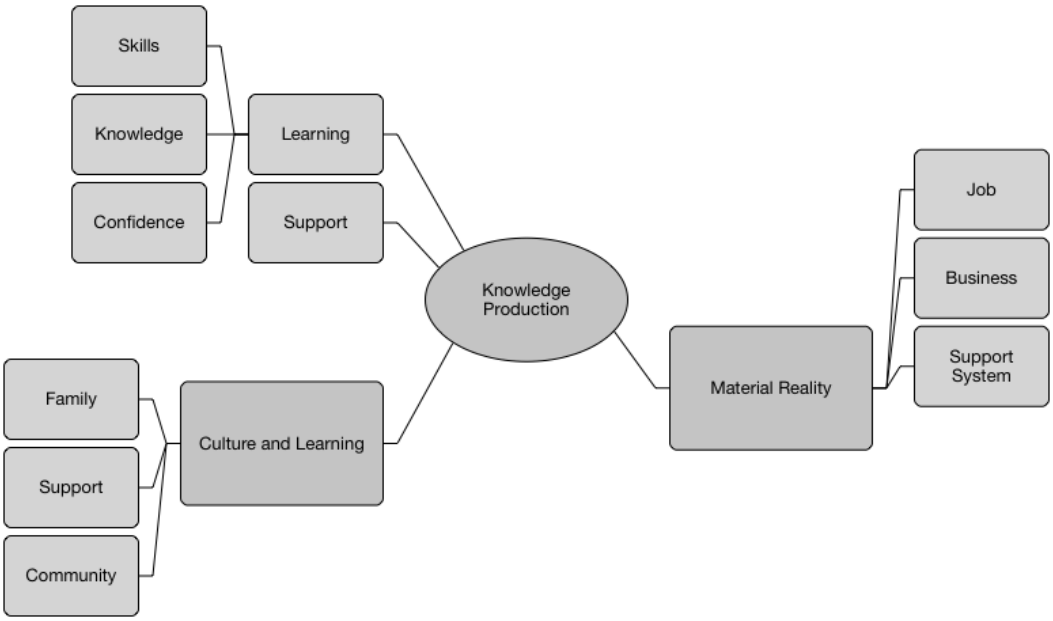
The interview protocol for the initial interview includes questions developed to open a dialogue about the experiences of being an immigrant woman entrepreneur.

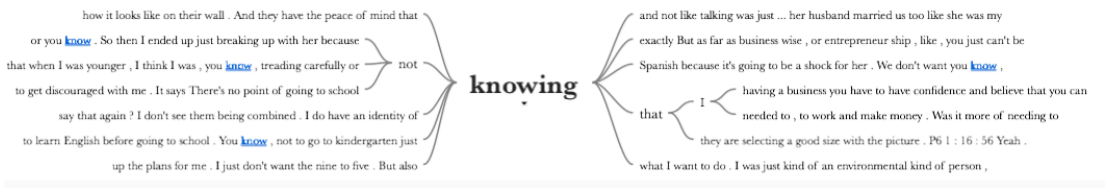
1. Tell me what life was like for you growing up (in your home country)?
2. What brought you to the United States and what it has been like for you living here (dreams/goals/purpose)?
3. How have you seen your changes in your life and work in the United States compared to being in your home country?
4. Tell me about your experience of starting a business in the United States and the interactions you have found challenging?
5. What are the ways your family history has influenced how you see yourself as a business owner?
6. What are some things you have learned about yourself?
7. What are some things you thought you knew before coming here and working about which now think differently?
8. What would you say are some key skills you have that contribute to your ability to run your business in the United States? What about in your home country?

9. If you had to describe how you have changed, since coming to the United States, to someone you knew before you left your home country, what would you tell them?

APPENDIX E

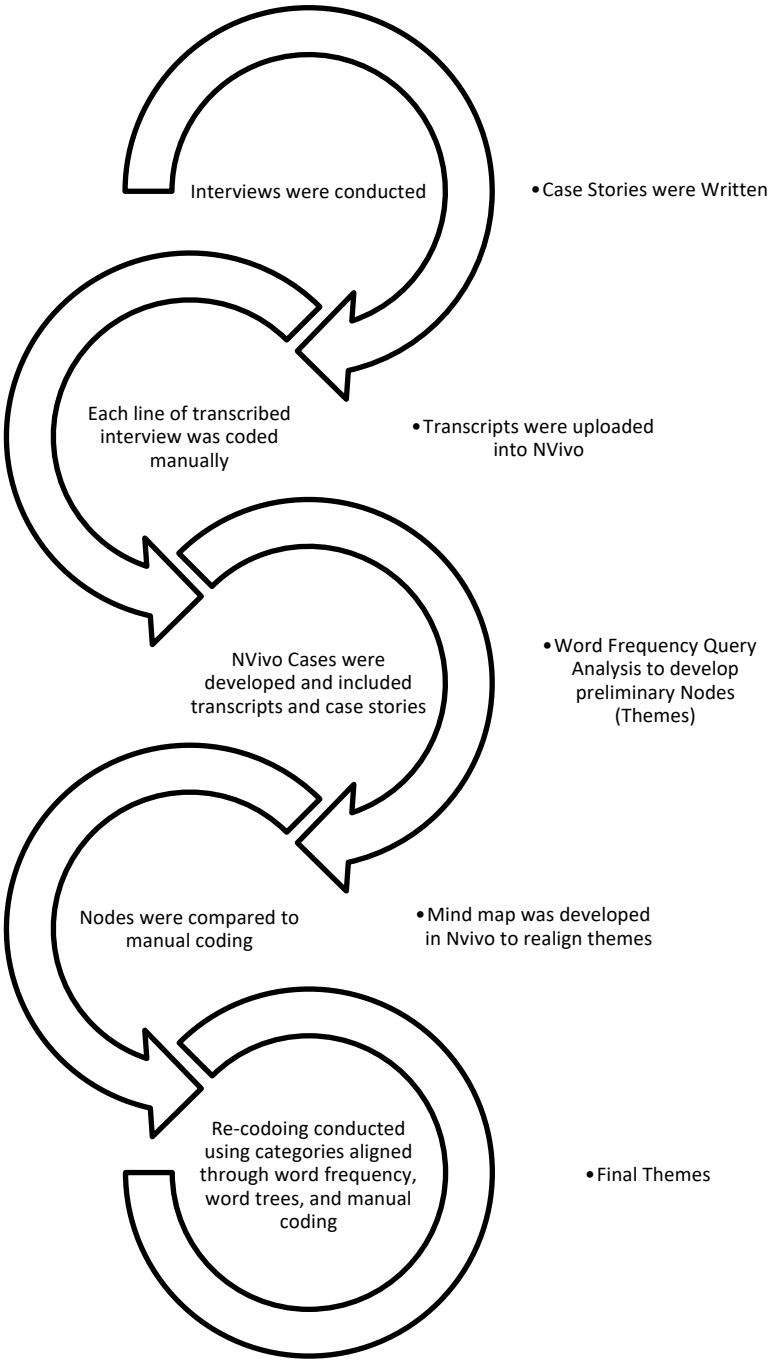
NVIVO MIND MAP, TREE MAP, AND WORD TREE





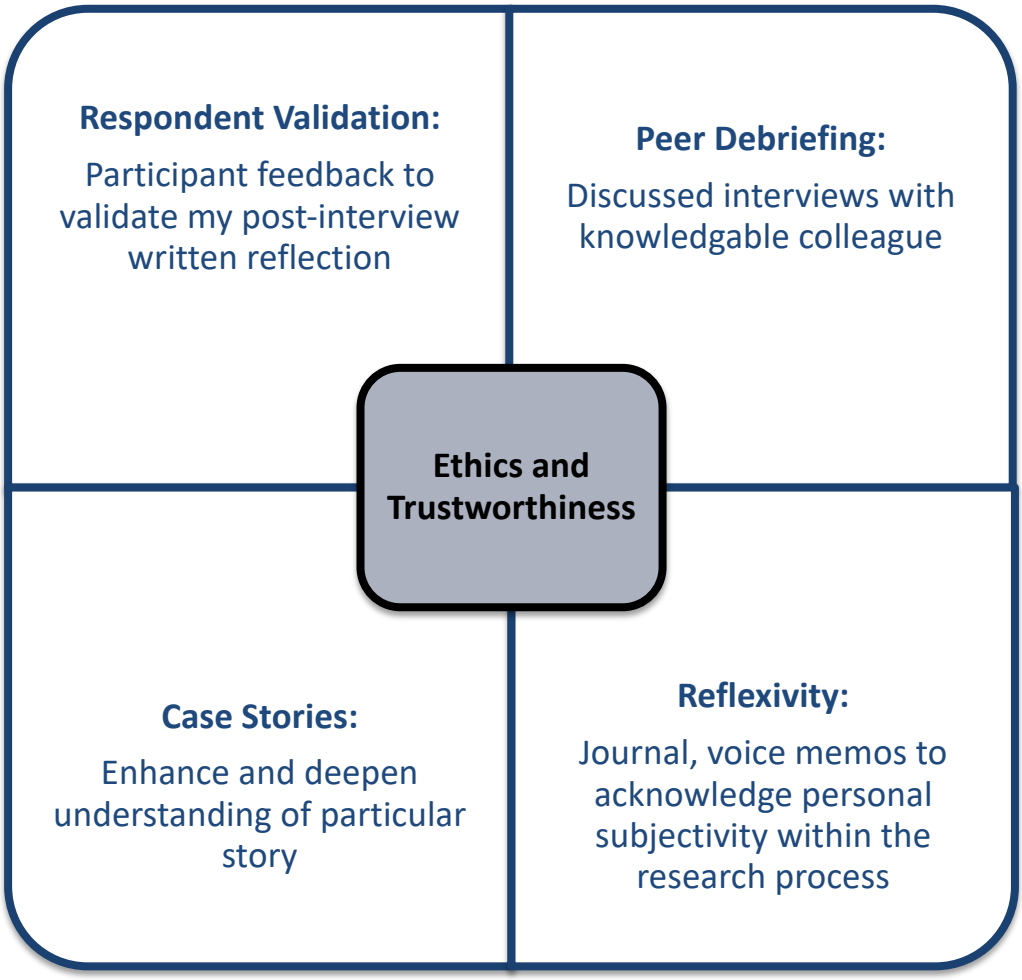
APPENDIX F

SUMMARY OF THE DATA AND ANALYSIS PROCESS



APPENDIX G

ETHICS AND TRUSTWORTHINESS



APPENDIX H

EXAMPLE OF FLYER

WOMEN IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS FOSTER GROWTH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Greater gender equity, as well as, a favorable environment that supports female entrepreneurship worldwide benefits everyone!

INCREASED LEVELS OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Contribute to a higher quality of entrepreneurship through greater diversity:

- gender
- products
- processes
- forms of organization
- targeted market

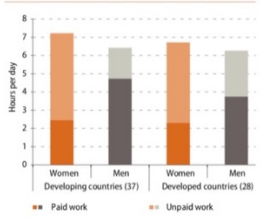
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AROUND THE WORLD BENEFITS EVERYONE

Women define success differently and often on their own terms.

Women offer a broader set of benefits to local communities.

The support of female entrepreneurship is often driven by policies that support gender equity as well as affordable childcare.

Time spent on paid and unpaid work by sex, developing and developed countries, 2005–2013 *(latest available)*



This information is adapted from the following sources:

De Vita, L., Mari, M., & Poggesi, S. (2014). Women entrepreneurs in and from developing countries: Evidences from the literature. European Management Journal, 32(3), 451-460.

Kupferberg, F. (2003). The Established and the Newcomers: What Makes Immigrant and Women Entrepreneurs so Special? International Review of Sociology, 13(1), 89. https://doi-org.srv-proxy2.library.tamu.edu/10.1080/0390670032000087005

Nations, United. (2015). The World's women 2015: trends and statistics. Affairs DoEaS, New York.Chicago

Women often balance both paid and unpaid labor in order to support their families. The education, location and support systems in a woman's life impact her choice to become an entrepreneur. The flexibility and accessibility of resources and learning opportunities are influential in the types of business that is feasible.

WOMEN IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS : KEY FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN WHO IMMIGRATED TO THE US AND STARTED THEIR OWN BUSINESSES

Ten immigrant women entrepreneurs from Bryan/College Station, Houston, and San Antonio were interviewed about their road to business ownership.

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION:

How do transnational women learn to be small business owners and operators?

Transnational linkages are reflected in the lives and experiences of women in their home and host countries.

FINDING 1 - LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE US

- English language learning in the US is required for economic survival.
- English speaking and accented english are considerations for women immigrant entrepreneurs.
- Many women immigrant entrepreneurs are skilled speakers in more than 1 language.
- Language skills are gained in formal and informal ways including through daily life activities.

FINDING 2-EXISTING AND CULTIVATION OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- Support systems are not all the same, but there are commonalities and shared needs of having support.
- Support systems, like family, children, spouses, as well as a more formal support systems like online and community groups.

FINDING 3 - FAMILY & CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS

- Home culture and the host culture influence individual choices.
- Family members may serve as a role model for future business ideas.
- Participants either rejected or maintained cultural/family ideas, while also maintaining family relationships.
- The new life and business is not always understood by family back home.

FINDING 4 - LEARNING THE BUSINESS

- Becoming parent for some leads to learning how to become an entrepreneur after being trained in a specific field.
- Learning out of the desire to maintain a business that allows flexibility is priority.
- Learning is also grounded in ambition to grow a business and necessity to make an income.