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# Women in Entrepreneurship and Corporate Business: A Qualitative Study of First Generation Businesswomen

Margaret McAlister

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Women in Entrepreneurship and Corporate Business: A Qualitative Study of First  
Generation Businesswomen

by

Margaret McAlister

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Of

Executive Doctorate in Business

In the Robinson College of Business

Of

Georgia State University

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

ROBINSON COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

2017

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## ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the *MARGARET MCALISTER* Dissertation Committee. It has been approved and accepted by all members of that committee, and it has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration in the J. Mack Robinson College of Business of Georgia State University.

Richard Phillips, Dean

## DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

*Dr. Danny Bellenger (Chair)*

*Dr. Karen Loch*

*Dr. Wesley Johnson*

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## ABSTRACT

Women in Entrepreneurship and Corporate Business: A Qualitative Study of First  
Generation Businesswomen

by

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May 2017

Chair: Danny Bellenger

Major Academic Unit: Executive Doctorate in Business

Recent studies have revealed that students are ambivalent about contemplating entrepreneurship as a career, and that only a few anticipate following a career in entrepreneurship after graduation. Moreover, within the start-up industry, the gender gap is still evident. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how and why women choose to pursue a career in either entrepreneurship or the corporate world, through the framing theory of Eagly's Social Role Theory of Gender Difference. The researcher explored this phenomenon through a qualitative research method and a multiple case study design. The target population for this study was composed of first generation female entrepreneurs and corporate employees. The study sample consisted of 18 women; nine of these participants were first generation female entrepreneurs and nine participants were first generation corporate businesswomen. The key instrument of data collection in the study was open-ended interviews, with the collection of field notes during the interviews for triangulation purposes. The researcher subsequently analyzed the collected data with the help of Nvivo software.

INDEX WORDS: Gender Roles, Business, Corporate, Entrepreneurship

## I CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### I.1 Introduction

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2013), the United States unfailingly has one of the highest entrepreneurship percentages between developed countries, including Asia, Europe, and North America. Within the United States, 51 percent of employees have declared that they would choose to work alone, while 58 percent of Europeans disagreed, saying they would rather work as an employee rather than risk starting their own business. Moreover, 60 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds in the U.S. say that they want to have their own businesses (Kuratko, 2007). According to 2015 Kauffman Index of Startup Activity, startup activity in the United States increased in 2015, overturning a 5-year downward trend. The report also noted that the return is still tepid and remains below historical trends.

Regardless of these high numbers, certain researchers have revealed that students are ambivalent about contemplating entrepreneurship as a career, and that only a few anticipate following a career in entrepreneurship after graduation (Bae et al., 2014). Indeed, only a small percentage of the working population normally participates in entrepreneurship (Bosma et al., 2008). There are many different reasons why people decide to become entrepreneurs versus the established path of becoming employees. Although greater freedom and accountability comes with entrepreneurship, uncertainty plays into it also. High performers may seek entrepreneurship when they are blocked from advancing in their careers, not only with their current employer, but also with another employer that would be better than their current one (Snyder, 2014).

The Kauffman Index (2015) also found that a significant driver of the 2015 uptick is the growth of male opportunity entrepreneurship, accompanied by the continued strength of immigrant entrepreneurship. Most new entrepreneurs were male in the 2015 Index, with male entrepreneurs making up 63.2 percent of all new entrepreneurs (Fairlie et al., 2015). In addition, since 1997, the share of new entrepreneurs who were females fell from 43.7 percent to 36.8 percent, which is close to the 2-decade low of 36.3 percent female entrepreneurs in 2008 (Fairlie et al., 2015).

Similarly, women are a minority within the corporate business world. Women make up 49% of the U.S. workforce, but they account for only 4% of corporate chief executive officers (CEOs), 14% of executive officers, and 20% of government officials (Galagan, 2013). Integration of work and life is challenging for individual women in an executive capacity because the responsibilities of full-time jobs conflict with the conventional roles of family life (Tajlili, 2014). One of the most cited reasons for women's reduced participation in executive and positions is the intense pressure to balance family roles and work demands (Johnsrud, 1995; Setiadarma, 1993).

### I.2 Background of the Study

An increasing number of researchers have acknowledged, recognized, and examined the gender gap in entrepreneurship (Hughes, Jennings, Brush, Carter, & Welter, 2012; Minniti, 2010). There are several factors that may impact the differences among women in terms of entrepreneurship. One factor is risk tolerance; a person's risk attitude is a critical variable in choosing between self-employment and a salaried job. A lower

willingness to accept risk tends to lower a person's interest in becoming an entrepreneur. The cognitive methods of risk perception that leads to taking a chance differs in individuals. Entrepreneurs are required to make risky decisions in incalculable environments and hence, the highly risk-averse individuals are not as likely to become entrepreneurs (Fourati & Affes, 2014). The second type of risk is missing out on a good opportunity, which focuses on the potential gains driving the entrepreneurs to act (Fourati & Affes 2014). High-risk takers put more focus on the opportunity and they play down possible loss financially or personally. Risk perception has a significant impact on the decision of creating a new business (Keh, Foo, and Lim 2002).

Yet, at the same time, female entrepreneurs have been identified as the new instruments of growth and the new luminaries of developing countries' economies, promising affluence and well-being. An assortment of stakeholders has recognized women as an imperative 'untapped source' of economic growth and development (Minniti & Naudé, 2010). The World Economic Forum identified women entrepreneurs as "the way forward" at their annual meeting in 2012 (WEF, 2012). Others have referred to women entrepreneurs as the New Women's Movement, asserting, "Forget aid, focus on foreign investment in women entrepreneurs as key drivers for growth and development" (Forbes, 2011, p. 208).

The same gender disparities exist within the corporate business arena. Globally, only 24% of senior management positions are held by women, a figure that has not improved at all from 2007 to 2014 (Grant Thornton International, 2014). In the United States, 23% of C-suite leaders are women (Grant Thornton International, 2014). Within the United States, Barta et al. (2012) found that women still struggle to climb the career ladder. While women make up 37% of the workforce but constitute 22% of middle managers, 14% of senior managers and vice presidents, 9% of executive committee members, and 2% of CEOs.

Despite these inequalities, female executives are important for business for several reasons. Companies with diverse senior leadership have better financial results than those with less diverse senior teams (Barta, Kleiner, & Neumann, 2012); women's experiences and perspectives are often different from those of men, which can lead to higher levels of innovation in companies. A recent McKinsey study of 366 publicly traded companies in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Mexico, Brazil, and Chile "found a statistically significant relationship between companies with women and minorities in the upper ranks and better financial performance as measured by earnings before interest and tax, or [earnings before interest and taxes]" (Lublin, 2015).

### **I.3 Problem Statement**

Gender disparities are rampant within the arena of entrepreneurship and corporate business, including inequities in entrepreneurial intention (Haus et al., 2013; Lindsay et al., 2014), inequalities in funding for and investment (Marom, Robb, & Sade, 2015; Thébaud & Sharkey, 2016), lack of females in leadership positions (Artigas, Callegaro, & Novales-Flamarique, 2013; Barta et al., 2013) and stereotypes that persist within the industry (Balachandra, Briggs, Eddleston, & Brush, 2013; Fuentes-Fuentes, Bojica, Ruiz-Arroyo, & Welter, 2013). The problem to be studied is the dearth of women in both entrepreneurship and the corporate business world. These gender biases can systematically influence social interactions and ultimately impact the perception of

effectiveness of female leadership (Patterson, Mavin, & Turner, 2012), the performance of businesses (Lublin, 2015; Thébaud, 2015), and bolster patriarchal, gender-biased economies and societies (Vossenber, 2013).

The researcher will use Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2010; 2012), which recognizes the historical division in labor between the sexes, leading to a divergence in the social and cultural expectations of men and women (Eagly, 1987). These expectancies are transmitted to future generations and, in turn, impinge on the social behavior of each gender (Eagly, 1987, 1997 & Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000) and represent sexual stereotypes (Williams & Best, 1982). Consequently, the behavior of men and women is governed by the stereotypes of their social roles. There are two processes that fortify the connection between expectations and behavior. First is the socialization processes, whereby each gender learns different skills or acquires disparate qualities through socialization processes. Second, gender roles might more directly affect the courses of action that individuals choose in a specific setting. This theory is an appropriate lens for this study as it offers a nuanced and comprehensive way to evaluate why women choose either entrepreneurship or the corporate business world. This study will examine the way in which gender roles and expectations, as described by Social Role Theory, affects women's decisions and experiences in either the corporate business field or entrepreneurship. While researchers have examined the gender gap within certain industries (Reimer, 2016; Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015), there are no such studies that explore how those gaps formulated. Researchers have called for a systematic analysis of the motivations, constraints, and issues that affect female entrepreneurs and businesswomen (Minniti & Naudé, 2010; Nicolás & Rubio, 2016; Vossenber, 2013). The goal of this study is to explore how and why women choose to enter either the corporate business or entrepreneurship realm.

#### **I.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this exploratory multi-case study is to explore how gender roles and expectations influence the choice of women to enter certain sectors of business.. Researchers have been inconsistent in their definitions of entrepreneurship (Brockhaus & Horwitz, 1986, Gartner, 1988). Definitions have emphasized a broad range of activities including the creation of organizations (Gartner, 1988), the carrying out of new combinations (Schumpeter, 1934), the exploration of opportunities (Kirzner, 1973), the bearing of uncertainty (Knight 1921), and the bringing together of factors of production (Say, 1803). Therefore, entrepreneurship can be understood as the process of finding and evaluating opportunities and risks, and developing and executing plans for translating those opportunities into financial self-sufficiency. Using a multiple case study methodology, the researcher used semi-structured interviews of 18 first generation businesswomen (nine entrepreneurs and nine corporate employees).

#### **I.5 Research Questions**

Based on the problem and the purpose of the study, the researcher developed the following research questions:

**RQ1.** How do gender roles and expectations influence a woman's choice to become an entrepreneur?

**RQ2.** How do gender roles and expectations influence a woman's choice to enter the corporate arena

1. What are the gender roles and expectations for women?
2. How do these gender roles and expectations affect *personal attitudes*?

*Perceived behavioral control? Personal, demographic,*  
*and environmental factors?*

#### **I.6 Advancing Scientific Knowledge**

There are several ways that the results of this paper will contribute to the literature. First is the understanding of what factors influence female entrepreneurs and corporate businesswomen. Second is the significance of how societal perceptions affect women's decisions to start their own company or enter the corporate arena. Previous scholars have not discussed these specific factors and the strong influence societal perceptions affect women becoming entrepreneurs or entering the corporate world. Women must overcome significant obstacles created by societal perceptions if they aspire to certain positions. Eagly (2002) stated that males have traditionally been more generally accepted in leadership roles within the corporate, political, and military societal sectors. This study will add to the literature on gender expectations, business career paths, and the intersection of the two fields of study.

## **I.7 Significance of the Study**

Based on the problem identified, this study is significant because the researcher aims to identify and understand [perceived ] gender disparities that exist in certain areas of the business world. Such a study is important given the inequalities that exist within entrepreneurship and corporate business (Fairlie et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2012; Minniti, 2010). The results of the study may provide a more comprehensive understanding of what difficulties or barriers women face in entering specific sectors of business. This study may also offer insight into if and how specific types of business arenas are gendered according to societal constructions of gender roles and expectations.

The results of the study are significant for business schools. Identifying the specific gendered expectations and barriers to specific realms within the business world may help formulate the best practices of and for business students of both genders, including training and education. By pinpointing and recognizing the specific set of gendered variables within business arena preference , professors and administrators may be able to develop a critical set of skills for both genders to not only be competent, but to also flourish personally and professionally in any area of business.

Finally, this study is significant for businesswomen themselves. While startup activity in the United States increased in 2015 (Fairlie et al., 2015) there is still a wide gender gap; moreover, women still constitute a reduced share of key leadership roles in business and government compared with their male counterparts. These women may not be aware of the unconscious or societally-constructed and internalized gender expectations that influence their choices. By raising awareness of how choices to enter the entrepreneurial or corporate world are influenced by gender expectations, current and

future female business leaders can make better informed and mindful decisions. This may ultimately lead to a more gender balanced business field within a multitude of industries.

### **I.8 Rationale for Methodology**

The researcher used qualitative methods for the study, which provided a more complete and manifold approach, principally by permitting for the understandings, perceptions, and subjective, contextualized lived experiences of the participants in the study (Tracy, 2013). When topics happen in a specific context, such as the role and behaviors of individuals, qualitative research methods are the best choice (Lodico et al., 2010). As a subject-oriented approach, a qualitative study was valuable in examining the distinctions and details of how gender affects women's choices to enter certain areas of the business world.

Furthermore, qualitative research was more suitable for this study than a quantitative method. By focusing on a smaller qualitative case study, the researcher could amass direct accounts and descriptions, which helped in clarifying and explicating the larger context in which this study was entrenched (Carreiras & Castro, 2012). Moreover, a qualitative research method allowed the researcher to concentrate on implications and significances that are not easy to recognize with mere mathematical data (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 2009).

### **I.9 Nature of the Research Design for the Study**

More specifically, the researcher used a case study method, which allowed her to investigate the typical setting and circumstances of gender and business career choices, which helped to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Moreover, the case study methodology is best when used to probe questions of "how" and "why" related to research (Rowley, 2002), which researchers ask in descriptive, explanatory, or exploratory research. This method is useful for contemporary events when manipulation of variables is not a viable option to study relevant behaviors; the advantage of using case study methodology is to add detail that has otherwise not been revealed within previous research studies on similar topics in the literature (Yin, 2014). The ability to use multiple sources of information such as interviews, observations, documents, artifacts, and/or other sources relevant data allowed for the researcher to develop themes that can contribute to the lack of research studies reflecting the voice of concerns of nurse educators in their natural environment (Yin, 2014). The case study methodology also allowed the researcher to determine meaning through description and the experiences and views of the participants, which is particularly useful in research with social and cultural dimensions (Al-Busaidi, 2008).

Case study was the best choice of methodology for the current study, as it allowed for a focused sampling of a specific population (i.e., first generation female entrepreneurs and corporate businesswomen). Moreover, case study allowed for a greater in-depth analysis than an ethnography, which would focus on the rituals and ideas of a broader, cultural group. Case studies provided a more comprehensive, adaptable, and flexible methodology.

This study sample included 18 entrepreneurs. Nine of these participants were first generation female entrepreneurs and nine participants were first generation female corporate businesswomen. . The participants were of any age, race, or ethnicity. The inclusion criterion for selection was that these participants are female, first generation entrepreneurs or corporate businesswomen, and have between 5 to 10 years of experience. The 18 participants for this study corresponded to the average number of participants that researchers in the social sciences have suggested (Bernard, 2000; Charmaz, 2006; Morse, 1994), as well as the mean sample sizes in qualitative studies in dissertations (Mason, 2010). Eighteen participants similarly offered saturation in sampling (Guest, 2006; Green & Thorogood, 2009). Moreover, the researcher performed purposive sampling, which limited the sample to individuals who have directly experienced the phenomenon under examination (Groenwald, 2004).

The researcher used open-ended interviews as the primary source of data collection. The researcher created a generalized interview guide, with the essential questions and/or themes that will help answer the research questions. This interview guide served as a benchmark to assure consistency in the phrasing of questions and consequent credibility of the interview and its questions. Questions were culled from the literature review, as well as the theoretical framework. For a full list of questions, see Appendix A. In addition, the researcher used field notes in order to chronicle and describe remarks and observations during participant interviews (Mruck & Breuer, 2003; Ortlipp, 2008). The researcher also used the questions to ask the same information in different ways to achieve triangulation, depth, and completeness. Follow-up questions were included to allow the researcher to probe deeper into the experiences of the participants. The main purpose of using these sources of data was for triangulation purposes, as this is one of the greatest strengths of case studies (Rowley, 2002).

Data collection involved IRB-approved, individual interviews which were approximately 45-60 minutes in length. Interviews are one of the most important sources of data for a case study (Yin, 2014). Prior to the interview sessions, participants signed informed consent forms to delineate the scope of their participation and to apprise them of the study's goals. In order to protect the researcher's subjects, they were required to fill out a consent form; in addition, subjects were identified in the dissertation by pseudonyms, allowing for anonymity. Participants were free to end the interviews at any time, or to rescind their offer of consent as they saw fit. The researcher recorded interviews using a tape recorder to maintain the accuracy of their words and preserve their anonymity. The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim for accuracy. The participants received monetary incentives for participation. After the interview, the researcher provided an email address and telephone number to the participants to reach the researcher in instances where questions or concerns arise. Interviewees were also asked if they are willing to participate in a shorter, follow up interview at a future date.

Data analysis began when the researcher transformed the collected data into codable units for analysis. During this process, the real names of the participants were not indicated in the data analysis. Each participant was assigned a unique code to protect her identity. After all the data was transformed into codes, the process of data analysis commenced. Nvivo software, which is a software used in qualitative studies, aided in the analysis of the open-ended responses (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). All data was loaded in the Nvivo software for the organization and storage of data. The software allowed the researcher to

store all data in one area, giving the researcher easy access to all available data. The software also helped in the organization of data because the researcher can highlight certain texts, compare the responses of one participant to another, compile texts that are thematically similar, and organize data based on emergent themes. The data analysis was performed by the researcher; however, the Nvivo software increased proper and accurate handling of data.

The researcher analyzed data using a constant comparative analysis method, which was consistent with a case study methodology. The researcher determined emergent themes from the data through the use of codes (Kolb, 2012). The first step in the constant comparative method was to reduce excess data (Kolb, 2012). Data reduction involved the selection, simplification, abstraction, and transformation of raw data gathered (Kolb, 2012). The next step after reduction was to code the data. Hewitt-Taylor (2001) proposed that in the coding process, a code will be attributed to sentences, paragraphs or sections while the researcher reads the documents of the data gathered. In order to gain consistency, each code must have a definition and an abbreviation (Kolb, 2012). For this study, the researcher generated codes from the data instead of pre-conceived since pre-determined outcomes are not present based on literature. These codes were assigned to the data gathered, or to the answers of the respondents in the questionnaire that will be administered. Strauss and Corbin (2008) mentioned three phases of coding: (a) open coding, (b) axial coding, and (c) selective coding. Open coding involves comparison of data and filtering out information that are clear and unclear; the researcher then tags codes for relevant information and determine emerging categories (Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

The next phase was where the researcher combines the data and groups emerging categories together (Kolb, 2012). Sub-categories were further determined through this phase (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The final phase involved identification and selection of the core categories and these core categories were systematically connected to related core categories. The researcher related core themes, and their relationships to each other, to each research question (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001).

### **I.10 Definition of Terms**

Based on the problem and purpose of the study, the researcher defined the following key terms:

**Entrepreneurship.** Entrepreneurship is *the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled; in this way, entrepreneurship is a distinctive approach to managing* rather than a specific stage in an organization's life cycle, a specific role for an individual, or an assemblage of personality attributes (Stevenson, 1991).

***Perceived behavioral control.*** Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's belief and confidence in his/her capability in performing as an entrepreneur and realizing control and success in entrepreneurial activity (Ajzen, 2002).

***Perceived desirability.*** Perceived desirability is described by as “the degree to which one finds the prospects of starting a business to be attractive; in essence, it reflects one's affection toward entrepreneurship” (Krueger, 1993).

***Perceived feasibility.*** This term defines the degree to which individuals consider themselves personally capable of performing entrepreneurial activity, perceived feasibility can be influenced by the presence of role models or partners, obstacles, financial and social support, education, confidence in one's ability to perform entrepreneurial tasks, or perceived availability of resources needed to create a business (Gasse & Tremblay, 2011).

**Social roles.** Social roles as norms of behavior that a special social group has to follow. Norms of behavior are a set of behaviors that have become typical among group members; in case of deviance, negative sanctions follow (Popitz, 1972).

***Subjective norms.*** As it relates to entrepreneurial intentions, subjective norms refer to the perception of what a person's family, friends or significant others would think about performing entrepreneurial behavior, or whether they approve or disapprove of the entrepreneurial decision (Armitage & Conner, 2001).

## **I.11 Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

The researcher based the present study on the following assumptions:

1. The researcher assumed that participants will be honest about their responses to the interview questions. The researcher emphasized confidentiality of all the information divulged.
2. The researcher assumed Social Role Theory (Eagly, 2010; 2012) provided a theoretical foundation in understanding the relationship between gender

dynamics and social expectations that influence women's choices in entering certain areas in business.

Certain limitations and delimitations were also identified for the study. The limitations were as follows:

1. For the purposes of the type of business choice by women, the researcher based the results of the analysis on the actual words and ideas that the participants used in the interviews. As such, the results may not identify terms as used in academic and research literature; rather, results may be versed in the vernacular or using ordinary terms. Provided this limitation, the researcher may not be able to directly link the results of the study to theory.
2. Due to the use of a small sample size, the results may not be generalized to all entrepreneurs in all industries or to all entrepreneurs in the same industry as those represented in the interviews. Case studies, however, do not aim at statistical generalization where results are generalizable to populations; rather, they represent an example of analytic generalization (Yin, 2009).

The following delimitations were identified:

1. This study will be delimited to first generation female businesswomen who are either entrepreneurs or in the corporate arena with 5-10 years' experience.
2. This study will be delimited to the experiences of the subjects. No experiments will be done in acquiring data. Methods of the research will be gathering data through interviews and analyzing through comparative case study.

## **I.12 Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

The problem under study is the dearth of women in entrepreneurship and the corporate realm. Gender disparities are rampant within both of these arenas, including inequities in entrepreneurial intention (Haus et al., 2013; Lindsay et al., 2014), inequalities in funding for and investment (Marom, Robb, & Sade, 2015; Thébaud & Sharkey, 2016), lack of females in leadership positions (Artigas, Callegaro, & Novales-Flamarique, 2013; Barta

et al., 2013) and stereotypes that persist within the industry (Balachandra, Briggs, Eddleston, & Brush, 2013; Fuentes-Fuentes, Bojica, Ruiz-Arroyo, & Welter, 2013). The purpose of these multiple case studies is to explore how and why women choose to enter either the corporate business or entrepreneurship realm. The researcher will use open-ended interviews as the primary source of data collection. Data collection for entrepreneurs and corporate businesswomen will involve IRB-approved, individual interviews, which will be approximately 45-60 minutes in length. The researcher will analyze data using a constant comparative analysis method, which is consistent with a case study methodology.

In the second chapter, the researcher will provide a discussion of recent peer-reviewed articles on studies related to the identified problem. The third chapter will involve the methodological plan of the study, including the research methods and design, sampling procedure, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and validity and reliability.

## II CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In terms of potential and abilities, both men and women have the same levels of capabilities to contribute to generation of wealth employment through the conceptualization, development, and implementation of their own businesses (Sospeter, Rwelamila, Nchimbi, & Masoud, 2014). Gender disparities are rampant within entrepreneurship and the corporate world, including inequities in entrepreneurial intention (Haus et al., 2013; Lindsay et al., 2014), inequalities in funding for and investment (Marom, Robb, & Sade, 2015; Thébaud & Sharkey, 2016), lack of females in leadership positions (Artigas, Callegaro, & Novales-Flamarique, 2013; Barta et al., 2013) and stereotypes that persist within the industry (Balachandra, Briggs, Eddleston, & Brush, 2013; Fuentes-Fuentes, Bojica, Ruiz-Arroyo, & Welter, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how and why women choose to enter either the corporate business or entrepreneurship realm. Researchers have shown that gender biases can have systematic effects to social interactions, which ultimately affect the perceived effectiveness of female leadership (Patterson, Mavin, & Turner, 2012), the overall performance of businesses, especially small ones (Thébaud, 2015), and promote patriarchal values in different economies and societies (Vossenber, 2013). While researchers have examined the gender gap within certain industries (Reimer, 2016; Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015), there are no such studies that explore how those gaps formulated. Researchers have called for a systematic analysis of the motivations, constraints, and issues that affect female entrepreneurs and businesswomen (Minniti & Naudé, 2010; Nicolás & Rubio, 2016; Vossenber, 2013). In line with the problem, the purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how and why women choose to enter either the corporate business or entrepreneurship realm.

### II.1 Literature Search strategy

Based on the purpose and objectives of the study, the researcher conducted a comprehensive literature review in order to (a) facilitate the exploration of existing academic evidence related to the topic of the study, (b) help in the development of different methodological strategies for the study, and (c) identify the existing gap in the literature. The researcher performed an electronic search of the literature. The literatures that the researcher included in this review are primarily from the following EBSCO databases: Academic Search Premier, MasterFILE Premier, PsycINFO, and PsycARTICLES. Aside from EBSCO, the researcher also used JSTOR and ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis Global for searching relevant literature to be included in this review. The researcher did not restrict the searches to peer-reviewed scholarly journals

and magazines, but deemed research reports to be valuable sources of information as well.

Keywords used either individually or in conjunction include: entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurship, corporate, women, female, gender, funding, industry, business, stereotypes, leadership, and performance. As the researcher performed the literature reviewed, it became evident that despite having the main focus of this study on gender-based entrepreneurial intention, the multifaceted nature of gender and entrepreneurship cannot be understood without examining a theoretical basis for the study.

Using the relevant keywords in various combinations, significant studies were generated from database searches. Those that the researcher deemed relevant to this study were included in the literature review. The inclusion or exclusion of the literature to this review was based on the criteria that: (a) is related to the topic of the study, (b) provides support for the claims related to the development of the problem and its background, (c) from recognized academic journals, proceedings from respected associations and organizations, be originally published in English to avoid potential translation errors, and (d) 85% must be published from 2012 to 2016. In summary, 95% of sources from 2012-2016, and 5% vary in years from 2002-2012.

**Organization of the chapter.** As previously mentioned, this chapter includes the discussion of relevant literature that is needed to establish the research gap and problem to be addressed in this study. To develop this chapter, the researcher will first discuss the theoretical framework. The theory to be used as the analytical lens for the study is Eagly's (1987; 2012) Social Role Theory. After the theoretical framework, the researcher will review the relevant literature. The researcher will group the different studies into logical and relevant categories. There will be the following subsections: (a) Gender and Entrepreneurship Intention, (b) Gender and Investment/Funding in Entrepreneurship, (c) Gender and Industries of Business, (d) Gender Stereotypes and Entrepreneurship, (e)

Gender and Leadership/Management, and (f) Gender and Business Performance. Finally, the researcher will provide a conclusion and discuss where research gaps still exist.

## **II.2 Theoretical Framework**

The theory framing this study is Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2010; 2012), which recognizes the historical division in labor between the sexes, leading to a divergence in the social and cultural expectations of men and women (Eagly, 1987). These expectancies are transmitted to future generations and, in turn, impinge on the social behavior of each gender (Eagly, 1987, 1997 & Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000) and represent sexual stereotypes (Williams & Best, 1982). Consequently, the behavior of men and women is governed by the stereotypes of their social roles. There are two processes that fortify the connection between expectations and behavior. First is the socialization processes, whereby each gender learns different skills or acquires disparate qualities through socialization processes. Second, gender roles might more directly affect the courses of action that individuals choose in a specific setting.

Social Role Theory uses a structural approach to sex differences, rather than a cultural approach, in that structural pressures (family, organizations, and communities) have caused men and women to behave in different ways. The perception is that people have a social role based solely on their gender. These stereotypic gender roles are formed by social norms that apply to people of a certain category or social position. See Figure 1 for a representation of the theory.

# Social Role Theory



Eagly and Wood (1999)

**Figure 1 Social Role Theory**

This theory does imply, however, that gender differences are flexible, because they are dependent on the immediate social role of individuals. For example, individuals occupy many roles simultaneously, all of which impinge on their behavior. Work roles, such as leadership positions for instance, might override their gender roles and reduce gender differences (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Eagly proposed that division of labor designated the differences between males and females. Division of labor induces gender role expectations and sex-typed skills and beliefs, therefore, producing sex differences in social behavior. For example, young people learn and emulate the roles they see played out by the adults in their lives. They deduce that males are more agentic and females are more communal and, in order to be successful, each conforms to the appropriate roles. Social roles are dictated by division of labor, and gender roles tend to reinforce the status quo. Eagly and Steffen (1984) tested the correlation between gender stereotype and division of labor and found that occupational role was a strong determinant of judgments of communal and agentic qualities. Results indicated that, when people did not know the job status (employee or homemaker), women were perceived as more communal and men as more agentic. However, when job status was known, employed men and women were perceived as more agentic and homemakers, both male and female, were perceived as communal. So, those who are in domestic roles were rated as more communal and less agentic than those in the employee role. With more and more women in the labor market

since the 1970s and the feminist movement, it is surprising that studies continue to show that there is a tendency to view women with communal qualities and males with agentic qualities (Eagly & Steffen, 1984).

Social requirements and characteristics of certain social roles and specific characteristics of social group members can lead to prejudiced perceptions. Views of gender roles, especially widely shared beliefs about the actual and ideal characteristics of women, produce prejudice toward female leaders because women are considered to have less leadership ability than men and their leadership is evaluated less favorably (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Moreover, the perceived incongruity between the female gender role and the typical leader role is likely to create prejudice toward female leaders and potential leaders in two significant ways: (a) less favorable assessment of women's potential for leadership, as leadership ability is more stereotypically assigned to men than women; and (b) less favorable assessment of the actual leadership of women and men because behavior commonly associated with leadership is perceived as less desirable in women than men.

Contrary to social role theory, gender differences in personality, self-construal, values, and emotions is more pronounced in North American or European nations relative to Asian and African countries (Guimond, 2008). Furthermore, social role theory cannot explain all gender differences, especially in relation to mate choice and sexual jealousy. For example, unlike men, women tend to prefer mates who demonstrate the potential to earn an considerable money (Wiederman & Allgeier, 1992). Social role theory might predict that women who assume a low status role might exhibit this preference, perhaps to overcome her own limitations in power. However this preference persists even when the women themselves earn hefty wages (Wiederman & Allgeier, 1992)

Through the use of the theory, the researcher may gain a better understanding of the how socially constructed expectations of womanhood influenced the choice of business career for women. Moreover, this theory was essential in formulating the interview questions, as well as acting as a benchmark to evaluate the results and implications of this study.

### **II.3 Review of Literature Related to Women in Business**

The role of women in society has evolved significantly within the past decades (Haus et al., 2013; Katz, 2003; Minniti & Naudé, 2010; The World Bank, 2013). This evolution of women's roles has been evident in the presence and involvement of women in business, politics, and other sectors in the public sphere (Haus et al., 2013). More specifically, the percentage of women in the United States Labor Force rose from 44.8% in 1991 to 46.4% in 2011 (The World Bank, 2013). In contrast, female representation in entrepreneurship is still significantly lower than the male representation in the business world (Haus et al.,

2013). In this section, the researcher will discuss the relevant literature about the topic of women entrepreneurial intentions and leadership. The relevant themes in the discussion are: (a) gender and entrepreneurship intention, (b) gender investment/funding in entrepreneurship, (c) gender and industries of business, (d) gender stereotypes and entrepreneurship, (e) gender and leadership/management, and (f) gender and business performance.

**Gender and entrepreneurship intention.** Although the percentage of female entrepreneurs has increased over the past several years, it is far below the level of males (Haus et al., 2013). Different researchers have aimed to show that there is indeed a gender gap in the entrepreneurial intentions of different individuals (Haus et al., 2013; Hisrich & Peters, 2002; Lindsay, Lindsay, Balan, & Balan-Vnuk, 2014; Santos, Roomi, & Liñan, 2016). Entrepreneurs, both men and women, usually exist in an environment with patriarchal societies and economies, which favor men and are biased against women (Kaushal, Negi, & Singhal, 2014). The existence of such gender bias may be either subtle or explicit, depending on the situation or context. In most cases, these biases tend to result in a situation wherein society values men over women, which may be evident in the privileges and oppression, and which people may attribute to either of the two genders (Kaushal et al., 2014).

Haus et al. (2013) reinforced the gender gap in entrepreneurial intentions through the exploration and critical analysis of 30 relevant articles, based on the theory of planned behavior and role congruity theory. Haus et al. (2013) explored how the relationship between gender and entrepreneurial intention is mediated by motivational constructs. These motivational constructs include: attitude toward starting a business, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Fini, Grimaldi, Marzocchi, & Sobrero, 2009; Haus et al., 2013). Haus et al. (2013) learned that there are indeed higher levels of intent to enter entrepreneurial ventures among men as compared to women. The mediating impact of the three motivational constructs between the two genders were not strong enough to provide evidence of difference in the motivation of actually starting a business between men and women.

Similarly, Maes, Leroy, and Sels (2014) established the existence of gender gap in entrepreneurial intentions. Unlike Haus et al. (2013), Maes et al. (2014) established perceived behavioral control as a significant mediator for the gender gap in entrepreneurial intentions. Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's perception of ease or difficulty of a specific behavior (Maes et al., 2014). The findings of Maes et al. (2014) implied that women are less driven toward entrepreneurship as compared to their male counterparts in their light of beliefs of internal control, which are more dominant in predicting perceived behavioral control. In the light of this study, Maes et al. (2014) and Haus et al. (2013) provided evidence for the existence of a gender gap in entrepreneurial intentions. These researchers, however, have not explored how or why these gender gaps exist.

Lindsay et al. (2014) explored the unique nature of entrepreneurship. Lindsay et al. (2014) claimed that the need for venture creation, which refers to the generation of value that may exist in different forms, to benefit an entrepreneur and the venture's stakeholders (Williams & Shepherd, 2016). Such need for venture creation is innate in the development of a new business, (Lindsay et al., 2014; Williams & Shepherd, 2016) and may be stressful for budding entrepreneurs because of the need to deal with uncertainty

associated with the accrual of the relevant resources to begin their business ventures. Such nature of entrepreneurship can lead to poor well-being, which may adversely affect their entrepreneurial intention and start-up behavior (Lindsay et al., 2014). In a related study, Dawson and Henley (2015) claimed that males are more likely to prefer high-risk and high-return ventures, as compared to their female counterparts. Because of the uncertain nature of entrepreneurship, male novice entrepreneurs are more likely to become actual entrepreneurs as compared to their female counterparts, who are risk-averse or less likely to side with uncertainty (Dawson & Henley, 2015).

Nascent entrepreneurs face even greater stress and poorer well-being levels, because starting a business may be an imperative (Lindsay et al., 2014). Living under the circumstance wherein a meaningful employment is not available, entrepreneurship may be the only legal means for elevating one's standard of living, which will translate to the possible elevation of the lifestyle of their families beyond their poverty-related circumstances (Lindsay et al., 2014). In such situations, women often face additional pressures, particularly where their entrepreneurial exploits may be linked to survival of the family unit. Lindsay et al. examined the extent to which there are subjective well-being differences in women versus men nascent entrepreneurs, and whether changes in well-being are associated with changes in entrepreneurial intention.

In a related study, Yang and Aldrich (2014) have claimed that gender-based biases of leadership are commonly referred to when considering women's access to power positions, which are constrained because of stereotypes. The constraints against women's access to leadership roles are intensified when the family and spousal relationships are involved, which is the case for the findings of Lindsay et al. (2014). Yang and Aldrich (2014) claimed that women have lower chances to be in charge if their husbands co-found a business with them, or when family conditions restrict women's chances of leading, venturing, and succeeding in the field of entrepreneurship, even when their initial intent to do so is present. Yang and Aldrich (2014) further claimed that the normative expectations of family roles include having the male/husband as the breadwinner while the female/wife remains as the supportive arm to the career of the husband through the household management needs and hands-on childcare. Because of these social expectations that are present in most families, women tend to be less aggressive in entertaining pursuing entrepreneurial intentions, especially when these intentions may be a hindrance to the fulfillment of their primary responsibility of taking care of the household.

Santos et al. (2016) explored and analyzed the interaction between gender differences and the social environment of individuals within the context of entrepreneurial intentions formation. Unlike the findings for most scholars (Dawson & Henley, 2015; Haus et al., 2013; Lindsay et al., 2014; Yang & Aldrich, 2014), Santos et al. (2016) found that the formation of entrepreneurial intentions is similar for men and women. At the same time, men consistently exhibit more favorable intentions than women do (Santos et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the findings of Santos et al. (2016) highlighted that the perception of the social legitimation of entrepreneurship only serves to reinforce male entrepreneurial intentions, and not women entrepreneurial intentions, possibly because most women feel that entrepreneurship is not an acceptable career option for them. Santos et al. did not explore further into the perceptions of women as they assess and evaluate entrepreneurial

intentions to better understand the manner and justification of arriving at possible gender-based decisions related to pursuing entrepreneurship.

Family businesses also reflect the gender gap, wherein men are favored to lead over women (Al-Dajani, Bika, Collins, & Swail, 2012; Gherardi & Perrotta, 2016; Gundry, Kickul, Iakovleva, & Carsrud, 2014). In most family businesses, women family members are also underrepresented in leadership positions (Gundry et al., 2014). Byrne and Fattoum (2014) claimed that women do not usually assume high managerial positions in family businesses because of the priority given to male members of the family to assume leadership positions. Women or daughters in a family-owned business usually assume subordinate organizational roles to the men in the family (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2016; Gundry et al., 2014). Such bias against women in leadership of family businesses have existed despite the usual need for family businesses to consider and make use of contribution and assistance of all members of the family members, including women members (Gundry et al., 2014). Women family members are often given roles that are non-managerial and non-strategic in nature (Byrne & Fattoum, 2014; Gherardi & Perrotta, 2016). The distinct roles in family businesses that women members usually assume include: invisibles, anchors, and professionals. Invisible female family members are often found in families wherein the sons significantly outnumber the daughters (Barrett & Moores, 2009). These distinct roles of women in family businesses imply that there are boundaries that limit women's abilities to contribution to the organization through leadership positions (Al-Dajani et al., 2012; Gundry et al., 2014; Gupta & Levenburg, 2013).

Entrepreneurship may be a venue for developing women leaders in an organization in order to balance the representation of men and women in leadership positions in different industries (Bullough, de Luque, Abdelzaher, & Heim, 2015). Despite the growing number of businesses with women leaders or owners, together with a significant increase of initiatives, policies, and resources designed to promote and develop women's entrepreneurship, the gender gap in entrepreneurship persists (Vossenbergh, 2013). Based on a feminist perspective, Vossenbergh contended that current women entrepreneurship promotion policies undoubtedly benefit individual women, but when the gender bias in the context in which entrepreneurship is embedded is left intact, efforts may remain in vain and without any significant macroeconomic or social impact.

Scholars have claimed that there are several important aspects of entrepreneurship promotion that has to be pushed in order to increase intentions of women toward entrepreneurship (Kaushal et al., 2014). Kaushal et al. (2014) claimed that entrepreneurship among women may be promoted through the advocacy for improving the position of women in society. Moreover, policies that are centered on promoting the growth of women entrepreneur networks is also a positive move that may be developed and implemented in order to empower women in becoming open to entrepreneurial tendencies (Kaushal et al., 2014). With the right network of experts, contemporaries, and partners, women may experience ease and efficiency in choosing and pushing for creative ventures for entrepreneurship. Kaushal et al. (2014) and Vossenbergh (2013) both focused on policy interventions as recommendation to address gender gap in entrepreneurial intentions. These researchers did not include the exploration of the actual implementation of these policies or the justification of the existence of a gender gap within the phenomenon in the first place.

However, it is important to note that entrepreneurial intent differs between the United States and other countries. While this study did not take a global approach to gender choices, exploring how women from other countries make the decision to enter specific business fields offers context for the decisions of first-generation American businesswomen. The decision or intent to go into entrepreneurship for women is said to differ from those from developing and developed countries (Kaushal et al., 2014). In developing countries, majority of the women are engaged in entrepreneurial activities are motivated to do so because of survival, rather than a choice after a formal education (Kaushal et al., 2014). Rather than applying for a job, which is difficult in their countries with high unemployment rates, they are forced to be self-employed and consider themselves as entrepreneurs (Kaushal et al., 2014). Because the lack of jobs available or there are no other options for income generation, women start up their own businesses (Kaushal et al., 2014). Therefore, women dominate the informal economy of self-employment in developing countries, but only less than 25% of formal sector businesses are owned and run by women (Kaushal et al., 2014). In the contrary, majority (at least 65%) of women entrepreneurs in developed and high-income countries go into business because of seeing better financial opportunities in the sector or wanting to be independent in earning for a living (Kaushal et al., 2014). In relation to the difference in women entrepreneurs in developing and developed countries, Adkins and Samaras (2013) claimed that women business owners from developing countries tend to perceive themselves as exposed to greater challenges as compared to their developed country counterparts. Such perceived discrepancy in difficulty of running a business has been found true when factors such as the size of the business and the owner's age and education were statistically controlled (Adkins & Samaras, 2013). Adkins and Samaras focused on race of women and access to business funding instead of gender-based gap in access to financial resource from possible investors.

Women entrepreneurship promotion undoubtedly benefits individual women (Kaushal et al., 2014; Vossenber, 2013), while leaving the main problem, the persistence of the gender gap, unchallenged. In more specific terms, entrepreneurs of both genders operate in patriarchal and gender biased societies; therefore, efforts remain in vain and without any significant macroeconomic and social change (Kaushal et al., 2014). Having a better understanding the factors that inhibit or enhance entrepreneurial intention and venture start-up behavior in necessity contexts is an essential step toward alleviating poverty. Women are often subjugated to lower societal positions in developing economies. Hence, understanding gender-related differences as they pertain to creating new ventures can help to facilitate the success of women and men necessity nascent entrepreneurs. Aside from entrepreneurial intentions, looking into and exploring existing literature about the tendencies for investing and funding a business across different genders may also provide a better understanding of intentions of individuals to venture into entrepreneurship.

**Gender and investment/funding in entrepreneurship.** There are several sources where entrepreneurs obtain funding for the start-up of a new venture or the expansion of an existing business (Staniewski, Szopiński, & Awruk, 2016). For women business owners to be successful and sustainable in the entrepreneurial path they are on they are required to have the correct type of business funding and adequate financial resources fund their assets and working capital (Derera, Chitakunye, O'Neill, & Tarkhar-Lail, 2014). Scholars have claimed that women entrepreneurs experience gender-based biases in relation to

accessing funds from investors, whether they be business entities as well or individuals (Alsos & Ljunggren, 2016; Jayawarna, Woodhams, & Jones, 2012; Marom et al., 2015; Welsh, Kaciak, & Minialai, 2015). Jayawarna et al. (2012) provided evidence that women entrepreneurs tend to experience significant disadvantages in their acquiring resources from orthodox funding channels (e.g., banks and financial institutions), as compared to their male counterparts in the field of entrepreneurship. There is gender skewness related to risk capital investments, and this skewness is a result of a combination of demand and supply side issues (Alsos & Ljunggren, 2016).

The low chances of women for acquiring funding from external financiers can lead to consequence that may be detrimental to the survival of the business, especially during the start-up phase, which may lead to underperformance or failure of the business (Jayawarna et al., 2012). Alsos and Ljunggren (2016) took a gender-based perspective in analyzing the decisions of funding for a venture capital fund. By applying a signaling theory approach, Alsos and Ljunggren looked at the interface between demand and supply side to understand gender biases related to risk capital investments for venture capitalists. Using decision documents from a regional investment fund in Norway, specifically four investment cases, the authors showed that gender plays a role in the signals that is communicated in an investor-entrepreneur relationship prior to funding, and that this may influence the investment decision (Alsos & Ljunggren, 2016).

Women are said to be associated with traits of weakness and lack in terms of leading a business; hence, investors tend to have reservations when granting financial help to women-led businesses (Marlow & Swail, 2014; Welsh et al., 2015). Moreover, investors perceive women to have poor management skills, which is the main source of bias against women when it comes to obtaining funding for business start-up or expansion (Welsh et al., 2015). Finding for a businesses' start-up phase is one the biggest monetary resource that an entrepreneur needs (Alonso-Almeda, 2013). For women, the financial source for the initial or start-up fund is one the biggest hurdles that must be faced when beginning a business (Alonso-Almeda, 2013). In a different perspective, women have high chances of acquiring wide networks of support when pursuing venture creation and new business concepts (Little, 2016). A wide network for support, however, may not always translate to productivity in accessing business funding or advice for these well-connected women (Little, 2016).

Aside from external business funding from institutions or separate individuals, Marom et al. (2015) investigated on a new form of venture financing: crowdfunding. Crowdfunding is a kind of external business funding wherein consumers directly invest in a proposed undertaking (e.g., women-owned and women-run businesses) (Kaplan, 2013; Marom et al., 2015). Marom et al. (2015) explored crowdfunding through social media, wherein the authors have found that such kind of funding reduces the barriers of women entrepreneurs to acquire the monetary resources they need to support their business. In contrast, Fourati (2016) claimed that female business owners have less access to crowdfunding than male business owners. Moreover, even with crowdfunding as an external source for capital, women are more likely to wait to apply for funding until they have established a profitable history for their business plan and have a longer profitable track record as compared to men business owners (Fourati, 2016). In effect, a lack of access to this type of funding still adds limitations to the funding options of women entrepreneurs.

Marom et al. (2015) investigated gender dynamics and biases in the process of raising funding to new projects via the leading crowdfunding platform – Kickstarter. Women made up about 35% of the project leaders and 44% of the investors on the platform. In relation to men, women are less likely to ask for significantly high levels of capital as compared to men, who most likely would seek for significantly higher levels of funding for their entrepreneurial projects (Marom et al., 2015). Moreover, not only are men more likely to ask for higher funding, but they are also more likely to raise more funds when compared to their women counterparts (Marom et al., 2015). Nevertheless, women enjoy higher rates of success in funding their projects, even after controlling for category and goal amount (Marom et al., 2015).

Aside from crowdfunding, microcredit or microfinancing is another means of sourcing funds for businesses (Brana, 2013). According to Brana (2013), the total amount of project of women that are financed through microcredit are lower than that of men. Hence, women tend to obtain multiple microcredits to finance the needed funds for a specific businesses endeavor. Nevertheless, women can obtain these multiple credits because women are generally evaluated to be of better credit risks in microfinancing than men (Brana, 2013). Obtaining microcredit does not come easy for women, as they tend to have a higher interest rate than men, who benefit from interest-free loans (Brana, 2013). Moreover, microfinancing institutions also have more sophisticated screening process for women than men. This procedure for screening has its benefits because women have high repayment rates than men; hence they are given higher preference for the loans they request. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that, because of the lower amount of loans that they get, women can also more likely to repay the loan as compared to men, who have higher loan amounts. Brana provided a detailed explanation for microcredit as an alternative for women to obtain the funding necessary for their business projects. However, researchers have not explained the justification of the different rates, policies, and the nature of such loans.

In terms of gender-based intention to invest in businesses, Marom et al. (2015) compared male investors with female investors. Only about 23% of projects that men invested in had female project leads (Marom et al., 2015). On the other hand, more than 40% of projects that women invested in had female project leads. Hansen and Kosiara-Pedersen (2015) found that female evaluators tend to report more positive perceptions of female applicants, while male evaluators reported more positive perceptions of male applicants. Therefore, Marom et al. (2015) claimed that the gender of the project leader and the percentage of the same gender investors are positively and significantly related to each other (Marom et al., 2015). A limitation of the study of Marom et al. was the lack of detailed justification to explain the fact that women investors predominantly choose to finance female-led projects.

In relation to the findings of Marom et al. (2015), there is mixed evidence of gender bias in lenders' willingness to approve loans to entrepreneurs during normal macroeconomic conditions. Thébaud and Sharkey (2016) explored various theories that predict that gender bias is more likely to be evident when the decision involves higher levels of investor perceived uncertainty or when the options and final decision of investors or financial advisers is under great scrutiny from other entities or individuals. Using an analysis of panel data from the Kauffman Firm Survey (Fairlie, Morelix, Reedy, & Russell, 2015), Thébaud and Sharkey (2016) explored the Great Recession and its

implications on the gender gap when it comes entrepreneurs' access to funding or monetary sources. As expected from forecasts, Thébaud and Sharkey found that women-owned and women-run businesses firms were significantly more likely to encounter challenges when obtaining funding as compared to men-owned and men-run businesses during 2009 and 2010, which was characterized as part of the peak of the impact of the financial crisis.

Similar to Thébaud and Sharkey (2016), Tinkler, Whittington, Ku, and Davies (2015) explored the funding supply side of the decision-making process related to gender and workplace, with focus on the gender-based disparities between men's and women's human and social capital. Moreover, Tinkler et al. assessed demand-side differences in the status expectations of women and men workers. Tinkler et al. showed that educational attainment and work history credentials of investors, together with gender-related cultural beliefs, are all influential when evaluating a possible request for financial support or when making decisions related to venture capitalization within the context of entrepreneurship. One unique aspect of the investigation of Tinkler et al. was that they used experimental designs to simulate venture capitalists' decision process when evaluating funding requests from men and women entrepreneurs. Investors tend to look into the technical background and the presence of important social ties of the entrepreneurs. Moreover, there are two distinct aspects that venture capitalists look into or consider evaluation for funding a project: the evaluation of the project or business entity and the evaluation of the entrepreneur.

The main discovery of Thébaud and Sharkey (2016), as well as Tinkler et al. (2015), was that the gender of the entrepreneur has a significant influence on the evaluations. Tinkler et al. added that technical background qualifications are significant moderators to the influence of gender-based expectations of investors to their decisions. Unlike Thébaud and Sharkey (2016), Tinkler et al. (2015) found that female received more positive and higher payoff as compared to male counterparts when there is a close interaction with the venture capitalist that is evaluating their request. In relation to Little (2016), the findings of Tinkler et al. (2015) may show how women's advantage of forming good and wide networks may be beneficial to generating funds for an entrepreneurial venture through the creation of close contact with venture capitalists or investors. Nicolás and Rubio (2016) claimed that having greater involvement in social activities with different networks can lead women to become a significant part in promoting needed initiatives that aims to minimize the problems encountered in public institutions.

Thébaud and Sharkey (2016) and Tinkler et al. (2015) have provided enlightenment and clarity about the disadvantages for women entrepreneurs within the context of the effects of status characteristics (e.g., gender) on investors' decision-making. The existence of the gender gap in entrepreneurial decisions and undertakings, however, was not the focus of either study. Instead, Thébaud and Sharkey (2016) focused on the intentions and decisions of investors in relation to the gender of the business or entity owner. Nevertheless, the findings can be used as guide or basis for understanding the challenges that women face in relation to their gender when it comes to entrepreneurial undertakings.

**Gender and Corporate Leadership.** Returning to the United States, women still constitute a reduced share of key leadership roles in business and government compared with their male counterparts. Despite the fact that fifty years have passed since the

beginning of the feminist movement in the US, women make up 49% of the U.S. workforce, but they account for only 4% of corporate chief executive officers (CEOs), 14% of executive officers, and 20% of government officials (Galagan, 2013). C-suite leadership has traditionally been a masculine activity (Gedney, 1999). Views of gender roles, especially widely shared beliefs about the actual and ideal characteristics of women, have led to prejudice against female leaders because women are viewed as having less leadership capabilities than men and their leadership is evaluated less favorably (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Although evidence suggests that the proportion of women in management is increasing, doubts remain about women's C-suite leadership skills (Still, 1997), and male managers continue to define management in masculine terms (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schein, 1989; Schein & Mueller, 1992).

Eagly and Karau (2007) use the word "labyrinth" to describe the difficult paths that women have traveled to reach executive and C-suite positions. She argues that many women have been able to overcome the challenges and reach the top positions. On the flip side, this means that the path to senior positions does exist; however, it is difficult to achieve for most women. A recent study shows that the persistent gender domination of men in C-suite positions can be partly attributed to discrimination (Reuben, Rey-Biel, Sapienza, Zingales, & McCormack, 2011). According to Reuben et al. (2011), the different ways that men and women think of themselves and act with regard to incentives may create gender differences that lead to leadership disparity between the sexes, rather than a disparity caused by discrimination alone during the selection process. Reuben et al. also state that the tendency of men to exhibit overconfidence in their past achievements may lead to a reduced number of female representation in executive and C-suite positions. The question is, why is diversity necessary in the workforce? According to a report by Russell Reynolds Associates (2009), demographic attributes such as gender, race, generation cohort, and region are important for achieving success in boardrooms. Several internal limitations were found in studies on women's career/professional advancement in higher education worldwide. Most women do not attain higher executive C-suite positions because they lack self-confidence both in themselves (i.e., the ability to maintain a professional image; (Lam, 2006; Luke, 1997) and in their ability to lead (Lam, 2006; Omar, 1993; Setiadarma, 1993). Setiadarma (1993) argues that these types of internal limitations have an adverse effect on women's career/professional advancement aspirations. Women who do not show a high level of self-confidence or self-esteem have a lesser chance of overcoming these limitations and challenges.

Integration of work and life is challenging for individual women in an executive capacity because the responsibilities of full-time jobs conflict with the conventional roles of family life (Tajlili, 2014). One of the most cited reasons for women's reduced participation in executive and C-suite positions is the intense pressure to balance academic roles, if any, family roles, and work demands. For example, prior research has found that the pressure to balance academic work and family roles dominates as the main limiting factor for career/professional advancement (Johnsrud, 1995; Setiadarma, 1993).

**Gender stereotypes and business.** Eagly and Karau (2002) elucidated this potential prejudice towards women in the workplace through the role congruity theory. One major cause of bias against women as entrepreneurs is the existing stereotypical woman that is depicted in the minds of majority of the members of society and different organizations (Dixit & Moid, 2015; Gupta & Levenburg, 2013; Gundry et al., 2013). Such stereotypes

generally align with the perceived lack of skills of women to properly embody a leader's role in an organization. As previously explained, gender biases that relates to the challenges that women face as entrepreneurs is based on the perceptions of investors (Adkins & Samaras, 2013; Balachandra et al., 2013; Kaushal et al., 2014). Balachandra et al. (2013) explained that investors' perceptions of early-stage ventures are dependent on the entrepreneur's age, gender, and gendered-behavior (feminine or masculine). These perceptions make up the stereotypes attributed to the role of an entrepreneur.

According to Balachandra et al. (2013), using gender alone will not hinder the success of entrepreneurs in progressing forward through the process of investor evaluation and favorable decision making. Gendered expectations are the distinct discriminating factor that distinguishes women entrepreneurs from men entrepreneurs. Perceptions of authority based on gender, and the acceptance of stereotypes may be affected based on the gender dissimilarities when contrasting one group from another (Bruckmüller, Hegarty, & Abele, 2012). Bruckmüller et al. (2012) suggested that these perceptions could be a significant factor in the endurance of stereotypes that are associated with status of the leaders.

In relation to culture, a society is said to have a set of culture-based stereotypes about men and women (Christo-Baker et al., 2012; Thébaud, 2015; Tinkler et al., 2015). In relation to the role congruity concept and theory, Christo-Baker et al. (2012) claimed that culture is relevant when evaluating the alignment of the traits of an individual (male or female) to its preconceived role idea. In relation to entrepreneurship, Thébaud (2015) explored the different stereotypes about men and women in terms of their entrepreneurial skills and abilities. Thébaud claimed that gender status beliefs are generally not in the favor of women entrepreneurs when compared to their men entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, witnessing or knowing about an innovation in a business model attributed to a woman entrepreneur will have more positive implications as compared to men in terms of the level of entrepreneurial ability and overall support for their business ideas (Thébaud, 2015).

In terms of leadership style, Vincent-Haper, Muser, and Janneck (2012) found a significant difference between men and women in their style of leadership. Gender differences exist in transformational leadership, which has a direct positive effect on the success of the company. Vincent-Harper et al. highlighted that women are more likely to promote and implement transformational leadership as compared to men. The higher level of tendencies for women to use transformational leadership can be used to counterbalance the under-representation of women in entrepreneurship ventures (Vincent-Harper et al., 2012). Vincent-Harper et al. also focused on the relationship between leadership style and skills to the success of the organization, and did not perform deeper exploration of the existence of such leadership style stereotype about women and its association to balancing the entrepreneurial gender gap.

Through another perspective, Fuentes-Fuentes et al. (2015) studied gender roles—specifically, the role of women entrepreneurs' perception of gender stereotypes in the innovativeness of the business. Having a stronger perception of stereotypes that diverges from the masculine profile among women entrepreneurs' leads to having stronger influence of close contact with managers and the entrepreneurs to their personal business innovativeness. In another study, Marlow and McAdams (2013) explored the truth to the stereotype that women-owned businesses are often considered as underperforming on the basis that majority of the business remain small and marginal even after the start-up

phase. Marlow and McAdams used a feminist perspective to claim that considering femininity and deficit (in any way) as coterminous is not based on facts and actual data. The idea that women-owned firms will underperform is based on the stereotype that women are weak, while men are strong and superior (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). The gendered socio-economic positioning of women within society may lead to constrained-performance of women-owned businesses. Such constrained performance, however, does not automatically mean that women-owned businesses under-perform (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). In a similar manner, a constrained performance due to an unrelated factor has nothing to do with the capacity of a woman entrepreneur to lead and manage a business (Dixit & Moid, 2015; Knörr, 2011).

**Gender and leadership/management.** The leadership playing field is still tilted in favor of men, including the perceptions of masculine behaviors among different social groups and genders (Powell, 2012). Such a phenomenon of favoring men in leadership positions occurs despite the claims in leadership theories that women are also capable of being effective leaders (Powell, 2012; Vincent-Harper et al., 2012). In the labor force in industrialized countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, European Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States) employment of women have been increasing both public and private sectors, wherein women occupy roles that were historically occupied by men (Pfau-Effinger, 2012). Although 50% of all management and professional positions, and almost 50% of the total labor force in the United States are composed of women, the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is still prevalent in most of the country's top firms (Knörr, 2011).

There are increasingly more women in management and entrepreneurship in the different industries in recent years (Knörr, 2011). The number of women owners and top managers of businesses remain lower compared to men, even in industrialized countries such as the United States (Gupta & Levenburg, 2013; Gundry et al., 2013; Knörr, 2011). In the United States, only 43% of senior managers, 14% of executive officers, 18% of senior financial officers, and 4% of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) are women (Hymowitz, 2013). To justify the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, Esa and Leong (2013) explored the gender-based differences in individuals, specifically in leadership positions in schools. Based on an evolutionary psychology perspective, Esa and Leong predicted that individuals who are taller in height are perceived as more leader-like as they exude a more dominant and intelligent aura as compared to shorter individuals. Since men are generally taller than women because of their biological makeup, they are perceived to be more leader-like.

In the field of education, for example, Brinia (2012) explored and investigated on the pressing issues related to gender inequities in teachers' professional development that prevent women from reaching higher levels of educational administration. Brinia revealed that several factors encourage women to stay in the classroom as teachers rather than seek leadership positions that will take them away from the classroom set-up. In a similar manner, women in other industries may choose to stay within their ranks for personal or work-related reasons. Moreover, in terms of comparing men and women as leaders of educational institutions (e.g., principals), Kochan, Spencer, and Mathews (2014) found that even though both genders agree on several aspects of their roles, challenges, and skill as principals, there are significant differences in the way that men and women perceive their responsibilities as principals. Women are more global in terms

of handling responsibilities and view themselves as leaders of the team, while men approach responsibilities as managers of the team (Kochan et al., 2014). In South Africa, Lumby and Azaola (2014) claimed that members of the educational institution perceive women principals or head teachers as a mother figure. Such trait is considered as an asset in conducting their responsibilities associated with their leadership roles. The participants claimed that their experiences with motherhood positively shaped their development as leaders (Lumby & Azaola, 2014). Nevertheless, a little less than half (46%) expressed that the use of a mothering style of leadership is not aligned with their prevailing perception of the superiority of male leadership styles (Lumby & Azaola, 2014). Gender bias and leader evaluation have been explored in different studies (Chizema, Kamuriwo, & Shinozawa, 2015; Bark et al., 2014; Hoyt & Burnette, 2013) through the merging of role congruity and implicit theory perspectives (Hoyt & Burnette, 2013; Koenig & Eagly, 2014). Bark et al. (2014) observed that followers tend to judge women leaders negatively when they display behavior that is typically perceived as a positive trait among male leaders. Tzinerr and Barsheshet-Picke (2014) also claimed that followers expressed more positive perceptions towards female leaders when these followers viewed their leader's behavior as gender-consistent with social expectations associated with women.

Hoyt and Burnette (2013) claimed that there is a significant relationship between people's attitudes regarding women in authority" and their perceptions on gender-based role congruity. The lower representation of women in managerial or leadership positions as compared to men is evident in the difference in career paths between the two genders. Such difference in career paths is explained by differences in traditional gender roles of men and women. Women's roles, apart from having and performing a job in accordance with the context of employment, include childbearing, child-rearing, caring for family members, and caring for elder family members (McEachern et al., 2013; Umemura, Jacobvitz, Messina, & Hazen, 2013). These responsibilities take considerable amounts of time resources away from women, often resulting in them losing track of professional career advancements and pursuance of a leadership or managerial position at work (Pfau-Effinger, 2012).

As for women in law enforcement agencies and offices, barriers to career advancement or leadership role attainment exist, because they are often sidelined to lower ranks and smaller agencies (Castelhano, Lacomblez, Santos, & Valverde, 2012; Silvestri, Tong, & Brown, 2013). Young and Nauta (2013) also identified four ways by which women encounter sexism in the military, thus hindering their progress to higher positions. The first is *old-fashioned sexism* or the belief that women are inferior to men and that they should only be relegated to feminine responsibilities. *Modern sexism* is a more subtle form, which includes the denial of the existence of sex discrimination, as well as an aversion to policies designed to help women. *Hostile sexism* involves feeling resentment for women because of preconceived notions against them. Finally, *benevolent sexism* is also a result of stereotypes, but the reaction towards women stems from the need to protect them due to their innocence and fragile nature.

Patterson et al. (2012) claimed that female entrepreneur leader experience social role incongruity. Despite having the abilities to becoming a good leader, followers often perceive them to lack the proper leadership skills (Patterson et al., 2012). In order to be perceived by their followers as credible and legitimate entrepreneurial leaders, women

are expected to manage their dual presence across the symbolic spaces of femininity and masculinity, doing gender well and doing gender differently to meet social role expectations of being a woman, while also meeting dominant masculine constructions of leadership and entrepreneurship (Patterson et al., 2012).

In recent years, there has been a trend for women to assume entrepreneurial roles, either when they start new ventures or when they act entrepreneurially in an existing organization (Dixit & Moid, 2015). Women, even those who are in top management position in the corporate field, are inclined towards entrepreneurship for strong and various causes (e.g., flexibility, independence, self-employment, and personal growth) (Kaushal et al., 2014). More specifically, to prevent having to deal with barriers for career advancement in bigger organizations, women choose entrepreneurship over employment in the corporate field (Kaushal et al., 2014; Knörr, 2011). Nevertheless, many private and public organizations offer women's development programs (Racene & Dislere, 2013).

Through feminist ethics literature and social role theory, Boulouta (2013) explored the possible contribution of women members of the board of directors to the overall corporate social performance (CSP). Boards with greater gender diversity exercised further influence on CSP metrics, which focused on the negative business practices because of the capability of those CSP ratings in influencing the elevated levels of empathic caring, which appeal to female board members or directors (Boulouta, 2013). Moreover, women leadership qualities can also have an effect on the mental health and wellness of subordinates; therefore, with respectful and supportive leadership, the levels of anxiety, depression and burnout of employees will decrease (Kane, 2014). The situation will lead to positive performance for the organizations.

In connection with the study of Boulouta (2013), Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, and Woehr (2014) explored the possibility of a female leadership advantage over male when it comes to promoting organizational success. When evaluated by followers, results imply that women leaders were regarded to be appreciably more effective than men leaders (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). On the basis of self-reports or self-evaluations, men evaluate themselves as considerably more effective than the how women evaluate themselves (Paustian-Underdahl et al. 2014).

Frustration with demanding, inflexible, and male-dominated work environments and failure to reach top managerial positions because of structural barriers in the organization are the two most-cited reasons women leave organizations and move toward entrepreneurial ventures (Knörr, 2011). While entrepreneurship is perceived as more advantageous for women, research indicated that economies, industries, and organizations may suffer when skilled and talented women leave their jobs (Knörr, 2011). Despite actively choosing entrepreneurship, women are still underrepresented in leadership roles in various industries of business. Because leadership roles are dominantly masculine, the decisions made in most patriarchal organizations tend to express implicit masculine bias (Ho, Li, & Tam, 2015). Because of the high tolerance and inclination of males to risk and uncertainty (Dawson & Henley, 2015; Lindsay et al., 2014), business decisions in most patriarchal organizations may be categorized as high risk with potentially high return. Moreover, Ho et al. (2015) showed that risk aversion and ethical sensitivity have a positive and significant association with conservatism in financial reporting and strong opposition to fraud conservatism. With high-risk

tendencies of the nature of male leaders, male-led organizations may sacrifice a certain level of conservatism in accounting practices (Ho et al., 2015).

For family businesses, women in leadership positions have not been common even in recent years (Robinson & Stubberud, 2012; Spector, 2013). A survey of entrepreneurs and business entities by Robinson and Stubberud revealed that the head of the family (e.g., patriarch, usually the father) has the biggest influence on the decisions related to the operations, succession, and sustenance of the family business. Moreover, more than 25% of family-owned businesses are lacking female membership or representation in their board of directors (Spector, 2013). Administrative work is often assigned to female family members: thus, preventing them from advancing in the business. Nevertheless, in employment settings, the presence of other women in decision-making positions was associated with more positive perceptions of women's leadership abilities and a higher likelihood of promotion to leadership positions (Cook & Glass, 2014; Ko, Kotrba, & Roebuck, 2015).

Entrepreneurs face different challenges related to the need to attract possible employees and the requirement of managing these employees (Gupta, Javadian, & Jalili, 2014). As leaders, women entrepreneurs tend to react less negatively in situations at work. Moreover, women tend to be more effective when using directive management style (Gupta et al., 2014). Through a directive style of leadership, women entrepreneurs are able to evoke superior performance from new employees (Gupta et al., 2014). In relation to this, Vincent-Harper et al. (2012) claimed that women are more likely to be effective leaders as compared to men as they are also inclined to promote and implement transformational leadership, which is an effective style for encouraging and empowering employees to perform better at work.

Despite the existence of different studies that show how women are lagging in terms of skills and competency as leaders compared to their male counterparts, Cheung and Halpern (2010) claimed that women are close to surpassing men in their employment rate, and leadership successes in different industries, including male-dominated sectors, such as manufacturing, construction, and finance. Cheung and Halpern (2010) described the characteristics of successful women leaders, including: (a) relationship-oriented leadership traits, (b) the importance of teamwork and consensus building, and (c) an effective work–family interface that women with family care responsibilities create and use to break through the glass ceiling (Cheung & Halpern, 2010).

Women have reported that they become limited in terms of capabilities to become an effective and abilities to succeed because of gender stereotypes and social expectations that are focused on home and family (Archard, 2013). Other women have considered that traditional female gender roles, such as child-bearing, child-rearing, and caring for family (Lumby & Azaola, 2014) are not beneficial to their effectiveness in promoting success for the organization (Mäkelä, 2012). Nevertheless, the key for the advantages of women in potentially becoming effective as leaders is their relational orientation and work–family integration in collectivistic cultures, which supplements models of leadership (Cheung & Halpern, 2010).

**Gender and business performance.** Profitability and success is one of the main goals of any business or entrepreneurial endeavor. Business or entrepreneurial success may be attributed to the resilience of entrepreneurs (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). Focusing on Spanish tourism sector, Ayala and Manzano (2014) explored resilience of entrepreneurs

and success of businesses. Hardiness, resourcefulness, and optimism are the significant dimensions of resilience that predict entrepreneurial success (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). Moreover, resourcefulness of the entrepreneur is also another trait that is a significant predictor of business success (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). Women and men entrepreneurs are similar in level in terms of resourcefulness. Entrepreneurial success based on those who have hardiness and optimism was different for men and women (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). Women exhibit greater influence of optimism on personal and entrepreneurial success of their businesses as compared to male counterparts (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). Ayala and Manzano focused on the traits that lead to business success, without exploring the potential of women leaders to lead a business to its success in comparison to men, in order to identify a possible gap in this aspect of entrepreneurship.

Gender diversity in the workplace is a common situation nowadays because of the internationalization of work and globalization (Badal & Harter, 2014). Employee engagement and gender diversity have been found to individually and significantly predict financial performance of a certain business (Badal & Harter, 2014). Researchers have supported the findings that the gender composition of the working environment did affect women's leadership opportunities (Cook & Glass, 2014). Based on the claim, Badal and Harter (2014) suggested that prioritizing diversity in an organizational priority and developing a culture of engagement in the workforce may result in cumulative financial benefits. Riccò and Guerci (2014) also suggested that diversity in the workplace can aid in the promotion of innovation and overall success of an entrepreneurial venture. These scholars, however, have only focused on identifying the different factors that predict the success of a business, without considering gender-based abilities of entrepreneurs to lead a business towards success.

To explore gender-based difference in the performance of an organization or a business, Hsu, Kuo, and Chang (2013) used 1992-2008 data from a small public accounting practice in Taiwan. The findings revealed that the significant difference in profit performance exists between male-owned and female-owned firms in sample (Hsu et al., 2013); however, the authors were not able to present in-depth analysis of the significant relationship. Businesses that women started have higher possibilities of underperforming as compared to those that men started (Lee & Marvel, 2014; Marlow & McAdam, 2013). Lee and Marvel (2014) tried to explain the gender gap in performance of businesses. Male-started firms were more competitive in the field of high-technology manufacturing and were more likely to locate in clustered regions as compared to female-started businesses (Lee & Marvel, 2014). In conclusion, Lee and Marvel claimed that firm resource and context characteristics mediated the relationship between entrepreneur's gender and overall firm performance. In the study of Kaushal et al. (2014), the authors claimed that women generate relatively lower revenues than men from entrepreneurial activity. Moreover, the exit-rate for start-ups is about 40% to 50% (Kaushal et al., 2014). As for women, the rate is even higher. Nevertheless, both men and women are equipped with enough skills to lead an entrepreneurial entity, especially a start-up to its success. The reason for having lower figures for women-owned businesses in terms of key performance measures include a variety of possible factors: difficulty of accessing external financing, inadequate profitability, and personal or family-related responsibilities (Kaushal et al., 2014). All these factors were also identified as main aspects of

entrepreneurship that hinder women to pursue business ventures or succeed in business ventures.

Loscocco and Bird (2012) explained that the difference in the performance of men from women in starting and managing a business have structural constraints. The difference exists in the labor markets, where men and women develop different skills and work values, which are carried through the development, implementation, and operation of a business (Loscocco & Bird, 2012). Women tend to choose business ownership as a way to achieve more work–family balance and how much time and effort to put into growing their businesses. In some cases, such drive to begin a business may lead to problems when work-life conflict overpowers work-life balance (Loscocco & Bird, 2012).

Moreover, women tend to face more challenges and barriers when dealing with business ownership (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013).

## **II.4 Summary and Conclusion**

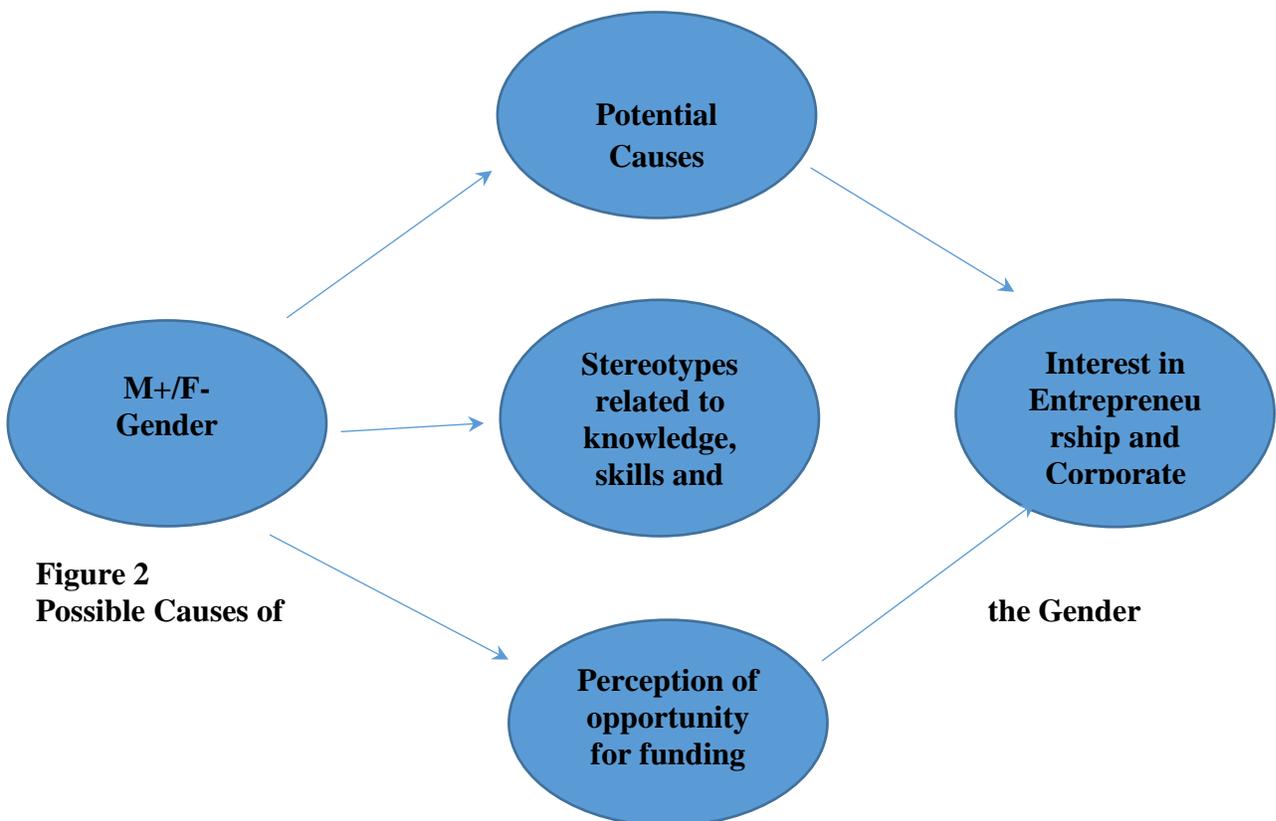
In summary, an increasing number of academics have acknowledged the gender gap in entrepreneurship and the corporate arena (Hughes et al., 2012; Minniti & Naudé, 2010). The existence of a gender gap is evident in the employment, leadership, and ownership across different industries of business (Elliott et al., 2016; Kaushal et al., 2014; Ko et al., 2015). There is a gender gap in terms of entrepreneurial intentions of women and men, wherein women have lesser tendencies of exploring and considering a career in business because of other challenges and hindrances that may be places in her path (Haus et al., 2013; Hisrich & Peters, 2002; Kaushal et al., 2014; Lindsay et al., 2014; Santos et al., 2016). A gender gap also exists in obtaining external funding for business investment because of perception biases of investors or venture capitalists against women and their appropriateness to the field of entrepreneurship (Alsos & Ljunggren, 2016; Jayawarna et al., 2012; Marom et al., 2015; Staniewski et al., 2016; Welsh et al., 2015). There is also a gender gap in gender in corporate leadership, as women are stereotyped as too family-centric and not self-confident for roles that have been traditionally defined as masculine (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schein, 1989; Johnsrud, 1995; Lam, 2006; Luke, 1997; Schein & Mueller, 1992; Setiadarma, 1993). ). This gap exists in the aspect of employment, education, leadership, and entrepreneurship (Olivetti & Petrongolo, 2014; Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015; Shiralashetti, 2013).

Stereotypes about men and women, especially in leadership positions, have led to having lesser women in the field of entrepreneurship and the corporate arena as compared to men (Balachandra et al., 2013; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Kaushal et al., 2014; Thébaud, 2015).

Because of the stereotypes, women are perceived as less effective leaders as compared to men. Others have shown that women may be effective leaders (Esa & Leong, 2013; Marlow & McAdam, 2013; Vincent-Harper et al., 2012). In terms of business performance, women are perceived to be less likely to lead a business towards success because of the several hindrances and challenges that are uniquely encountered by women (Cook & Glass, 2014; Hsu et al., 2013; Lee & Marvel, 2014). Such lack of association to business success has been refuted in other studies that showed women as successful leaders because of their unique traits of being caring and motherly (Ayala & Manzano, 2014; Mäkelä, 2012). Based on the different aspects of entrepreneurship, the corporate world, and the gender gaps that are associated with each aspect, there is a need to better understand gender biases and preferences within the context of these career

choices, These gender gaps occur simultaneously with each other or as consequence or in relation to one another. In order to understand gender-based gaps in entrepreneurship and the corporate world, researchers must explore and understand the stereotypes related to gender within these arenas, and how those stereotypes affect career choices.

There are several factors that may impact the differences among women and men in terms of entrepreneurship and the corporate world. Three of these are highlighted in Figure 1. While researchers have examined the gender gap within certain industries (Reimer, 2016; Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015), none have explored how those gaps came into existence. Researchers have called for a systematic analysis of the motivations, constraints, and issues that affect female entrepreneurs and those in the corporate world (Minniti & Naudé, 2010; Nicolás & Rubio, 2016; Vossenber, 2013). When reviewing research on women in business, it becomes apparent that although the available data and studies on the topic are growing, there is lack of reliable and consistent data on women's motivation to enter specific sectors in business (Vossenber, 2013). Despite progress in understanding the motivations, constraints and issues that confront female businesswomen, there is still substantial scope for further research (Nicolás & Rubio, 2016). In Chapter 3, the researcher will provide details of the method on how to achieve the purpose and address the gap established in this chapter.



**Figure 2**  
Possible Causes of

the Gender

### III CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### III.1 Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how gender roles and expectations influence women's decisions to enter the entrepreneur or corporate realm of business. An increasing number of researchers have identified and acknowledged the gender gap in entrepreneurship and the corporate world (Galagan, 2013; Hughes et al., 2012; Minniti, 2010). Women make up 49% of the U.S. workforce, but they account for only 4% of corporate chief executive officers (CEOs), 14% of executive officers, and 20% of government officials (Galagan, 2013). While scholars have documented the existing gender gap within business (Reimer, 2016; Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015), there are no such studies in which the authors explored how those gaps formulated, such as the role of societal factors in affecting women's decisions to start their own company or enter the corporate world.

Against this background, the present researcher explored the influence of perceptions and gender stereotypes on women's decisions to enter the corporate arena or become an entrepreneur. The researcher employed a qualitative case study research design. To achieve the goals of the study, the researcher developed the following research questions and sub-questions:

**RQ1.** How do gender roles and expectations influence a woman's choice to become an entrepreneur?

**RQ2.** How do gender roles and expectations influence a woman's choice to enter the corporate arena?

Sub-questions:

1. What are the gender roles and expectations for women?
2. How do these gender roles and expectations affect *personal attitudes? Perceived behavioral control? Personal, demographic, and environmental factors?*

The theoretical framework guiding this study was Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2010; 2012), which recognizes the historical division in labor between the sexes, leading to a divergence in the social and cultural expectations of men and women (Eagly, 1987). These expectancies are transmitted to future generations and, in turn, impinge on the social behavior of each gender (Eagly, 1987, 1997 & Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000) and represent sexual stereotypes (Williams & Best, 1982). Consequently, the behavior of men and women is governed by the stereotypes of their social roles. The theory guided the researcher answering the research questions by highlighting the prevalent societal perceptions on gender roles that also influences women's decisions to become entrepreneurs or enter the corporate arena.

The research will contribute to the existing body of academic literature on the topic by examining the factors that influence female entrepreneurs and corporate employees. Particularly, extending an understanding of the role of societal perceptions in affecting women's decision to become entrepreneurs or enter the corporate arena would be a major contribution of this study. By advancing knowledge in the field, the results of this study may be of significance to business schools. Identifying the specific gendered expectations

and barriers to arena-specific careers may help formulate the best practices of and for business students of both genders, including training and education. Businesswomen themselves might benefit from the study by becoming aware of the societal factors such as perceived gender roles that affect their career decisions and thus take informed decisions in the future.

### **III.2 Research Method**

The researcher employed a qualitative design. Qualitative research methods enable an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013). A detailed investigation of the study problem is facilitated by an extensive exploration of the beliefs, experiences and perceptions of the study subjects in a particular process or phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Thus, as an independent research method, the defining feature of qualitative mode of inquiry is that it allows for the assimilation of individual philosophies and opinions (Van Baren, 2013). Qualitative research methods are used to study things in their natural settings in order to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). By capturing the understandings, perceptions and subjective, contextualized lived experiences of the study subjects, qualitative methods provide a more complete approach (Tracy, 2013). When topics happen in a specific context, such as the role and behaviors of individuals, qualitative research methods are the best choice (Lodico et al., 2010).

In the context of this study, the researcher deemed a qualitative approach to be the most appropriate, as it facilitated an in-depth understanding of the influence of gender roles and expectations on women's career choices within the business arena. By adopting a qualitative mode of inquiry, the researcher was able to explore in-depth how female businesswomen perceive gender roles (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013). Most significantly, the differences among the perceptions of female businesswomen in the context of gender roles and expectations that hold the key to the study problem were adequately revealed through a qualitative mode of research (Creswell, 2013; Van Baren, 2013). Additionally, qualitative research methods facilitate the investigation of the characteristics of a phenomenon in its natural setting (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). By employing the qualitative mode of inquiry, researchers are able to investigate the experiences and perceptions of the female and male entrepreneurs within their natural settings.

The researcher deemed the quantitative research method as inappropriate for the current study for several reasons. First, the objective of the study is not to generate statistical analysis or conduct controlled environment experiments. Rather than analyzing data through numbers and statistics as done in quantitative research, the researcher aimed to explore the influence of gender roles and expectations on women's career choices elicited from the study participants who are businesswomen themselves (Creswell, 2011). Moreover, by focusing on a smaller qualitative study, the researcher was able to amass direct accounts and descriptions, which helped in clarifying and explicating the larger context in which this study is entrenched (Carreiras, & Castro, 2012). Again, a qualitative research method allows researchers to concentrate on implications and significances that are not easy to recognize with mere mathematical data (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 2009).

Qualitative researchers have often been criticized for employing small sample sizes that prevent generalizability of study findings (Taylor, Dossick, & Garvin, 2011). In order to assess generalizability of qualitative studies, Leung (2015) suggested that systematic sampling and multidimensional theory be used, in addition to appropriate documentation and audit, and triangulation (p. 325).

### **III.3 Research Design**

The qualitative mode of inquiry enables a researcher to select among several research designs such as narrative, grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, or case study (Creswell, 2009, p. 176). The researcher employed a multiple case study research design in the proposed study. In the opinion of Yin (2013), “Case studies have been a time-honored research method for multiple disciplines” (p. 73). Researchers in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology, and community planning have extensively used case studies to contribute to our knowledge of individuals, groups, organizations, and political and social phenomena (Yin, 2009).

Yin (2009) defined a case study as an “empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (p. 18). Similarly, Stake (1995) emphasized that case studies capture the essence of the phenomenon by exploring the subject of study deeply, irrespective of the methods employed. In addition to facilitating in-depth analysis, case studies also enable holistic investigation of complex social phenomenon wherein researchers observe the intrinsic characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2009). By attempting to understand the phenomenon in its natural context, unlike experiments, case studies do not separate the phenomenon from its real context (Yin, 2009). This, in turn, facilitates a close cooperation between the researcher and the participants, while allowing the subjects to express their views (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In the context of the present study, the case study research design will enable the researcher to explore the typical settings and circumstances of gender and business career choices, which will reveal a deeper and holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2014). By facilitating a detailed analysis of the study problem, the case study method may provide new aspects that researchers have otherwise not revealed within research studies on similar topics in the literature (Yin, 2014).

Yin (2009; 2014) provided a guideline for researchers to determine the suitability of using case study as compared to other research methods. First, research questions posed in a study need to be appropriately classified in order to determine the most suitable research design (Yin, 2009). Case studies are particularly suitable when the research questions in a study seek to ask “how” or “why” questions (Yin, 2014). The objective of the proposed study is to understand how gender roles and expectations influence women’s choices to enter a specific business arena. A case study research design is thus appropriate to explore and answer the “how” questions guiding the present study. Second, when the behavioral events being studied are beyond manipulation by the researcher, case study would be the preferred research design (Yin, 2009; 2014). In the present study, the researcher explored the influence of gender roles and expectations on women’s decisions to enter a specific business arena which, being a behavioral event, cannot be controlled by the researcher (Yin, 2014). Third, a case study is an appropriate research design when the study focuses on a contemporary phenomenon in contrast to a historical phenomenon (Yin, 2009; 2014). The researcher identifies the research problem

as a contemporary event that examines current gender dynamics in understanding career choices; therefore, the objectives of this study aligned with the logic of case study research, making it the most appropriate research design for the current study.

The researcher considered other qualitative research designs for the present study, but ruled these out in favor of case study research design. Ethnography, which typically requires long periods of time in the “field,” was inappropriate for the present study (Yin, 2009). Limited resources and time constraint would prevent the researcher from developing the necessary familiarity with the subjects that is a key in ethnographic studies.

The researcher also rejected phenomenology, as it does not align well with the purpose of the present study. Phenomenological researchers focus on the “essence” of experience of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). It seeks to produce a thematic description of the core, “essence,” or structures of experiences (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1373). The objective of this study, in contrast to the purpose of phenomenology, was to explore the influence of gender roles on business career choices through the perceptions of female businesswomen. The researcher did not merely focus on the individual lived experiences of the businesswomen, but captured their views regarding societal gender roles and expectations and how that influences career choices.

The researcher also considered that grounded theory was not suitable to serve the goal of the present study. Glasser and Strauss (1967) defined grounded theory method as “the discovery of theory from data—systematically obtained and analyzed in social research” (p. 1). Thus, the clear aim of grounded theory is to generate or discover a theory from the available data (Urquhart, 2013). The objective of the present study is not to generate any theory, but to provide causal explanation about the role of gender in influencing career choices. The researcher did not intend to formulate any new theory on the basis of real-world experiences captured in the data.

Although the researcher selected case study as the most preferred research design for the present study, it is pertinent to mention that research investigators have often viewed case study research with skepticism (Yin, 2009). Lack of generalization is one of the most common criticisms brought against this method (Tellis, 2007). Yin (2009), in response to this criticism, argued that case studies represent an example of *analytic generalization* in contrast to *statistical generalization*. The purpose of conducting a case study is to add to the body of theoretical knowledge, which has been termed as analytic generalization as opposed to statistical generalization, where the focus is on computing frequencies. The generalizability of case studies is specifically in the context of theoretical assertions rather than populations or universe (Yin, 2009).

Scholars have criticized case study research for the substantial amount of time needed for its completion that often results in lengthy, verbose documents (Yin, 2009). This criticism is often the result of confusing case study method with ethnography or participant observation that requires the researcher to spend considerable amount of time in the field. In response to this criticism, Yin posited that case studies necessarily do not have to be lengthy as they can be written alternatively eliminating extensive narratives. Furthermore, case studies do not rely solely on collecting data from the field, often using various other sources of data. Case study as a research method has also been held in suspicion over claims that it lacks rigor compared to other research methods (Yin, 2009; 2014). This is reflected in non-adherence to methodical procedures and inability to

eliminate bias resulting in inconsistent study outcomes. The dearth of adequate methodological resources, necessary to guide researchers in conducting case study research, has primarily resulted in a lack of rigor.

Yin (2003) identified three key types of case studies: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. In an exploratory case study, the researcher aims to define the research questions and hypotheses of a subsequent study or to decide the appropriateness of selected research procedures (Yin, 2003). In a descriptive case study, the researcher intends to provide an exhaustive descriptive of the study subject within its context. In an explanatory case study, the researcher aims to explain causal links, or to provide an explanation of how things happened (*ibid*). In the context of the present study, the researcher deemed the explanatory case study to be appropriate, as the objective of the study is to explain the impact of gender roles and expectations on career choices. The researcher aimed to explain links between gender roles and expectations and arenas of business that women enter.

Yin (2009) furthermore identified several variations within case study research designs: single-case study design and multiple-case study design. Within these two types there are holistic and embedded designs (Yin, 2009, p. 46). The current researcher considered the multiple-case study as the most suitable for the present research, as the evidence collected in multiple case studies are more robust, which adds rigor to the study in general (Yin, 2009). By enabling the analysis of commonalities and differences among the cases, the use of multiple case study design strengthens the study findings (Stake, 2010). In this study, the researcher compared and contrasted data gathered from first generation female businesswomen to discover commonalities and differences among the cases, which would further buttress research outcomes. Furthermore, the researcher deemed a multiple case study design as appropriate for this study as it enabled the investigation of a bounded group or system (Creswell, 2013). In this case study, the bounded system consisted of the female businesswomen whose career choices in business have been influenced by gender roles and expectations. In the opinion of Yin (2013), the bounded system is an effective instrument that enables the researcher to investigate more bounded cases over time.

While conducting a multiple-case study, the researcher needs to be cautious about certain cross-case issues (Yin, 2004). Thus, for the present study, the researcher decided whether the cases indicate presumed replication of the same phenomenon (confirmatory cases) or represent contrasting cases. Additionally, since case study researchers do not seek to control real-life events, the current researcher was cautious not to consider the multiples cases as controls for each other (Yin, 2004,). Each case represented a complete study in itself, where the researcher gathered data from various sources and drew conclusions on the basis of the data collected (Willis, 2007).

Prior to the commencement of the case study, the researcher was adequately acquainted with the distinction between conducting a case study and data collection activities involved in a case study. This required thorough preparation on the part of the researcher (Yin, 2009). For this study, the researcher prepared by undergoing necessary training for the particular case study, developing the case study protocol, and screening the case study participants to determine eligibility to participate in the study and conduct a pilot case study (Yin, 2009). Establishing case study procedures is of paramount importance in conducting a multiple case study such as the proposed study (*ibid*).

**Components of case study research design.** In a case study research design, five key components are integral (Yin, 2009). These are: (a) a study's questions, (b) its propositions, if any, (c) its unit(s) of analysis, (d) the logic linking the data to the propositions, and (e) the criteria for interpreting the findings. Research questions play a significant role in a case study as it helps to determine the appropriateness of the method. In the present study, the nature of the research questions ("how" gender roles and expectations influence business arena choices by women) was precisely defined to ensure suitability of case study research method and also logically proceed with the study (Yin, 2009). The second component of case study design, study propositions, direct the attention of the researcher towards an aspect that should be examined within the parameters of the study (ibid). Propositions help to reflect on crucial theoretical issues that may be pertinent for the study. They also guide the researcher and provide necessary directions while looking for relevant evidence.

The central task of defining the "case" in a case study also implies describing the unit of analysis to be used in the study (Yin, 2009). Defining the unit of analysis is closely related to the ways in which the research questions are defined in the study. In some studies, individuals have been studied as cases, while in others decisions, programs, implementation process and organizational change have been studied as cases (Yin, 2009). The "case" in the present study was defined as gender roles and expectations and their influence on women's choice to enter a specific business arena. In other words, the "case" or the unit of analysis that was examined in the present study is the extent which gender biases and other factors presented barriers to women in choosing certain arenas of business. The perceptions of women in two different arenas – entrepreneurship and the corporate world – were compared. =

The fourth component in case study research design enables the researcher to choose among appropriate analytical techniques that would link the data with the study propositions. Some such analytical techniques are pattern matching, time-series analysis, cross-case synthesis, logic models and explanation building (Yin, 2009, p. 34). Finally, the fifth component of case study research design involves determining the criteria to interpret the study findings. Yin (2009) suggested that one strategy to select criterion is to identify and address opposing explanations. In this present study, questions related to competing explanations were included in the data collection phase.

#### **III.4 Population and Sample Size**

The target population for this study was composed first generation businesswomen who are either entrepreneurs or in the corporate arena. In qualitative research, the emphasis is not on numerous occurrences; a single, unique occurrence can be adequate to capture the essence of the phenomenon being investigated (Mason, 2010). Furthermore, Mason indicated that the concept of saturation should be the key guiding principle in determining the sample size in a qualitative research. This study sample consisted of 18 first generation businesswomen. Nine of these participants were first generation female entrepreneurs and nine were first generation females in the corporate arena. All participants have between 5 and 10 years of experience within their chosen field. Eighteen study participants provided necessary saturation in sampling (Mason, 2010; Guest, 2006; Green & Thorogood, 2009). Data saturation is typically achieved when any further sampling does not generate any new data in the interview or field observation

process (Kisely & Kendall, 2011). Furthermore, a sample size of 18 participants (nine female entrepreneurs and nine females in the corporate arena) also corresponded to the mean sample size in qualitative research as recommended by Mason (2010).

### **III.5 Sampling Technique**

In case study research, the researcher selects participants depending on their personal experience and perception regarding the phenomenon being studied and their capability to effectively communicate their views and experiences (Yin, 2014). The current researcher used purposive sampling in order to restrict the sample to individuals who have directly experienced the phenomenon under examination (Groenwald, 2004). Purposive sampling has been extensively used in qualitative research that facilitates identification and selection of study subjects with extensive knowledge on the research problem, which in turn helps in maximum utilization of limited resources (Patton, 2002). In addition to having first-hand knowledge about the study phenomenon, availability, willingness to participate, and the capacity to share information thoughtfully and articulately are important factors that guide selection of study participants (Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1979). Thus, purposive sampling was the most appropriate method of sampling for the present study, as it would enable selection of first generation businesswomen who have either started their own business or worked in the corporate arena with 5 to 10 years' experience, thus having direct knowledge of the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2014).

The researcher selected the participants by means of invitation. The researcher reached out to women she knew who fit the criteria; from that group, the researcher used snowball sampling, garnering more participants through the network of these women. The inclusion criteria include being a first-generation businesswoman in the corporate world or as an entrepreneur for at least five years. Otherwise, women could be of any age, race, ethnicity, and in any industry. . Subsequently, the researcher sent letters of invitations those who expressed interest to participate in the study. In order to ensure that the participants meet the selection criteria, the researcher attached a prescreening questionnaire to the invitation letter sent out to interested participants. The prescreening questionnaire specifically asked if the person had started her own business, works in the corporate arena, how many years' experience they have, and if their family was in the business realm (to assure they are first generation businesswomen).

### **III.6 Data Collection**

Qualitative surveys are usually the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). Conducting qualitative surveys entail adherence to methodical procedures, a focused research approach and require the researcher to develop an unbiased interpretation of observation, good documentation skills, knowledge of using audio-visual materials, and demonstrate versatility in data coding and analysis (Creswell, 2009, p. 181). Six key data sources typically used in case study research are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 1994). This researcher used interviews as the key data collection instrument. Interviews enable the researcher to gather detailed information on the research problem as reflected through the perceptions and views of study participants (Turner, 2010). Through the creation of study-centric interview questions, the process of

designing interviews enables the researcher to emerge as the instrument in discovery-focused inquiries (Chenail, 2011).

According to Turner (2010), interviews could be conversational, informal, or open-ended. The researcher will employ open-ended interviews. To design and conduct interview effectively, researchers need to follow specific guidelines (Creswell, 2007). In general, the guidelines instruct the researcher to prepare thoroughly before initiating the interview process. Accordingly, for the present study, the researcher created a semi-structured interview script, which, listed the essential questions and/or themes that will help answer the research questions. The questions for this guide were based on the theoretical framework of this study, Social Role Theory, as well as the literature review. A full list of interview questions can be seen in Appendix A. The researcher ensured the incorporation of essential elements that guide successful interviews, by ensuring that questions were as neutral as possible, that questions were asked one at a time, and the researcher was careful in asking “why” questions (Creswell, 2007). The interview guide served as a benchmark to assure consistency in the phrasing of questions and consequent credibility of the interview and its questions. The researcher performed the IRB-approved individual interviews either through emails or conducted face-to-face. Each interview was approximately 45-60 minutes in duration.

In addition, the researcher used field notes in order to chronicle and describe remarks and observations during participant interviews (Mruck & Breuer, 2003; Ortlipp, 2008). . In addition to interviews, the researcher will use document analysis, including existing data on gender, risk, skill, and opportunity in entrepreneurship from The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM). The main purpose of using these sources of data is for triangulation purposes as this is one of the greatest strengths of case studies (Rowley, 2002).

The practice of informed consent was incorporated in this study. Prior to the interview sessions, participants signed informed consent forms that included a detailed description of the study, its objective and the scope of their participation. Furthermore, the researcher referred to the subjects in the dissertation by pseudonyms, allowing for anonymity. The researcher informed the potential participants prior to the commencement of the interviews that they are free to end the interviews at any time, or to rescind their offer of consent as they deem fit, without any consequences. The researcher recorded the interviews using a tape recorder, in order to maintain the accuracy of their words and preserve their anonymity. The researcher transcribed the face-to-face interviews verbatim for accuracy. The participants received monetary incentives, in order to ensure participation. After the interview, the researcher provided an email address and telephone number to the participants to reach the researcher in instances where questions or concerns arise.

### **III.7 Data Analysis**

Data analysis began when the researcher transforms the collected data into codable units for analysis. During this process, the real names of the participants were not visible during data analysis. Each participant received a unique code to protect her identity. After the researcher transformed all data into codes, the process of data analysis commenced. Nvivo software, which is a software used in qualitative studies, aided in the analysis of the open-ended responses (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Using computer software to

process qualitative data is a common practice, and is particularly helpful in processing large quantity of data (Gibbs, 2015). The researcher loaded all data into the Nvivo software for the organization and storage of data. The software allowed the researcher to store all data in one area, giving the researcher easy access to all available data. The software also helped in the organization of data because the researcher could highlight certain texts, compare the responses of one participant to another, compile texts that are thematically similar, and organize data based on emergent themes. The researcher performed the data analysis, using the Nvivo software to improve the proper and accurate handling of data.

The researcher analyzed data using a constant comparative analysis method, which is consistent with a case study methodology. The researcher determined emergent themes from the data through the use of codes (Kolb, 2012). The first step in the constant comparative method is to reduce excess data (Kolb, 2012). Data reduction involves selection, simplification, abstraction, and transformation of raw data gathered (Kolb, 2012).

The next step after reduction was to code the data. Hewitt-Taylor (2001) proposed that in the coding process, a code will be attributed to sentences, paragraphs or sections while the researcher reads the documents of the data gathered. In order to gain consistency, each code must have a definition and an abbreviation (Kolb, 2012). For this study, codes were generated from the data instead of pre-conceived since pre-determined outcomes are not present based on literature. These codes were assigned to the data gathered. Strauss and Corbin (2008) mentioned three phases of coding: (a) open coding, (b) axial coding, and (c) selective coding. Open coding involves comparison of data and filtering out information that are clear and unclear; the researcher then tags codes for relevant information and determine emerging categories (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). In the next phase, the researcher combined the data. This was where related emerging categories were noted and grouped together (Kolb, 2012). Sub-categories were further determined through this phase (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The final phase involved identification and selection of the core categories and these core categories were systematically connected to related core categories.

After the initial draft codes were developed, the researcher had two additional coders used those codes on the raw data. Independently, these coders coded the data, after which the researcher and the additional coders met to discuss problems with applying codes, code definitions, and inclusion/ exclusion criteria and to evaluate intercoder reliability. The researcher used Cohen's kappa (Cohen, 1960), which prevents the inflation of reliability scores by correcting for chance agreement. The kappa measure can range from 1 to negative values no less than -1, with 1 signaling perfect agreement and 0 indicating agreement no better than chance. The intercoder reliability was .085, indicated a near perfect category of reliability.

Core themes, and their relationships to each other, were then related to each research question (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). This process will ultimately led to an explanation of the central research problem.

### **III.8 Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

The researcher based the present study on the following assumptions:

1. The researcher assumed that participants were honest about their responses to the interview questions. The researcher emphasized confidentiality of all the information divulged.
2. The researcher assumed that Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987; 2012) will provide a theoretical foundation in understanding the relationship between gender dynamics and women's choices for certain business arenas. .

Certain limitations and delimitations were also identified for the study. The limitations were as follows:

1. For the purposes of career choices by women, the researcher based the results of the analysis on the actual words and ideas that the participants used in the interviews. As such, the results did not identify terms as used in academic and research literature; rather, results were versed in the vernacular or using ordinary terms. Provided this limitation, the researcher may not be able to directly link the results of the study to theory.
2. Due to the use of a small sample size, as well as the use of convenience sampling, the results may not be generalized to all arenas of business or all businesswomen as those represented in the interviews. Case studies, however, do not aim at statistical generalization where results are generalizable to populations; rather, they represent an example of analytic generalization (Yin, 2009).

The following delimitations are identified:

1. This study was delimited to first generation female entrepreneurs and those in the corporate arena who have 5 to 10 years of experience.

2. This study was delimited to the experiences of the subjects. No experiments were done in acquiring data. Methods of the research were gathering data through interviews and analyzing through comparative case study.

### **III.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher presented a discussion on the research method selected for this study. The aim of present study was to examine the influence of gender roles and expectations on women's choice to become an entrepreneur or enter the corporate arena. To achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher utilized an explanatory multiple-case study design. The researcher recruited 18 participants, nine first generation female entrepreneurs and nine first generation females in the corporate arena. The key instrument of data collection was open-ended interviews. Additionally, the researcher used other sources of data for the purposes of data triangulation. The researcher analyzed the collected data with the help of Nvivo software widely used in qualitative research studies. In the next chapter, the researcher provides a detailed description of the study findings, followed by an analysis of the study results and implications.

## IV CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how gender roles and expectations influence women's decisions to enter the entrepreneur or corporate arena of business. An increasing number of researchers have identified and acknowledged the gender gap in entrepreneurship and the corporate arena (Galagan, 2013; Hughes et al., 2012; Minniti, 2010). While scholars have documented the existing gender gap within business (Reimer, 2016; Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015), there are no such studies in which the authors explored how those gaps formulated, such as the role of societal factors in affecting women's decisions to start their own company or enter the corporate arena. To achieve the goals of the study, the researcher developed the following research questions and sub-questions:

**RQ1.** How do gender roles and expectations influence a woman's choice to become an entrepreneur?

**RQ2.** How do gender roles and expectations influence a woman's choice to enter the corporate arena?

Sub-questions:

1. What are the gender roles and expectations for women?
2. How do these gender roles and expectations affect *personal attitudes? Perceived behavioral control? Personal, demographic, and environmental factors?*

The remainder of this chapter will explore the setting and demographics of the sample used for the study, data collection and analysis techniques used, evidence of trustworthiness for the study, and the results of this data, including major themes and any outliers. The chapter will conclude with a summary.

### IV.1 Setting

All interviews were done via the telephone. The researcher, from her home, audio recorded all interviewees, who were at their home. This setting could limit the responses insofar as the researcher was unable to read any facial cues from the respondents; however, no other conditions affected the results.

### IV.2 Demographics

This study sample consisted of 18 first generation businesswomen. Nine of these participants were first generation female entrepreneurs and nine were first generation females in the corporate arena. All participants had between 5 and 10 years of experience within their chosen industry. Table 1 provides a list of the participants, their ages and their industry for women who are in the corporate realm and Table 2 lists the same information for first-generation entrepreneurs.

**Table 1 Corporate Sample**

| Corporate Businesswoman | Age | Industry           |
|-------------------------|-----|--------------------|
| C1                      | 40  | Finance            |
| C2                      | 45  | Engineering        |
| C3                      | 60  | Beverage           |
| C4                      | 55  | Sports and leisure |
| C5                      | 59  | Automotive         |
| C6                      | 59  | Higher Education   |
| C7                      | 59  | Nursing            |
| C8                      | 45  | Computer           |
| C9                      | 40  | Education          |

**Table 2 Entrepreneur Sample**

| <u>Entrepreneurial Women</u> | <u>Age</u> | <u>Industry</u>        |
|------------------------------|------------|------------------------|
| <u>E1</u>                    | <u>60</u>  | <u>Biotechnology</u>   |
| <u>E2</u>                    | <u>40</u>  | <u>Human Resources</u> |
| <u>E3</u>                    | <u>80</u>  | <u>Pet sitting</u>     |
| <u>E4</u>                    | <u>60</u>  | <u>Restauranteur</u>   |
| <u>E5</u>                    | <u>62</u>  | <u>Real Estate</u>     |
| <u>E6</u>                    | <u>35</u>  | <u>Salon</u>           |
| <u>E7</u>                    | <u>60</u>  | <u>Wine</u>            |
| <u>E8</u>                    | <u>50</u>  | <u>Service</u>         |
| <u>E9</u>                    | <u>40</u>  | <u>Service</u>         |

### **IV.3 Data Collection**

The researcher employed open-ended interviews. For this study, the researcher created a generalized interview guide, listing the essential questions and/or themes that will help answer the research questions. Each interview was approximately 45-60 minutes in duration. In addition, the researcher used field notes in order to chronicle and describe remarks and observations during participant interviews.

### **IV.4 Data Analysis**

Data analysis began when the researcher transforms the collected data into codable units for analysis. During this process, the real names of the participants were not visible

during data analysis. Each participant received a unique code to protect her identity. After the researcher transformed all data into codes, the process of data analysis commenced. The researcher analyzed data using a constant comparative analysis method, which is consistent with a case study methodology. The researcher determined emergent themes from the data through the use of codes (Kolb, 2012). The first step in the constant comparative method was to reduce excess data (Kolb, 2012). The next step after reduction was to code the data. For this study, codes were generated from the data instead of pre-conceived since pre-determined outcomes are not present based on literature. These codes were assigned to the data gathered.

In the next phase, the researcher combined the data. This was where related emerging categories were noted and grouped together (Kolb, 2012). Sub-categories were further determined through this phase (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The final phase involved identification and selection of the core categories; these core categories were systematically connected to related core categories. Core themes, and their relationships to each other, were then related to each research question (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). This process will ultimately lead to an explanation of the central research problem.

## **IV.5 Evidence of Trustworthiness**

### **IV.5.1 *Credibility***

Credibility is achieved when a study provides readers with confidence in the reported strategies used for data collection. This confidence develops trust in the findings and study outcomes. The interview strategies used for data collection are described within the methodology section and participant quotes have been included within the findings that support the thematic interpretations. This allows the reader to draw their own conclusions as to the credibility of the study (Hancock et al., 2007).

### **IV.5.2 *Transferability***

The benefit of qualitative research is in being able to determine if the findings may apply in similar contexts or with a similar group of participants rather than in the generalization of findings across populations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thorough descriptions of the context and the use of detailed and clear descriptions within the findings assists with the transferability of this study (Jeanfreau & Jack, 2010).

### **IV.5.3 *Dependability***

Dependability is achieved when the researcher leaves a clear auditable trail about decisions made from the beginning to the end of the study. This enables a reader to understand and follow the events and logic used. In this study, the researcher's personal viewpoints and the sampling, data collection, and analytic processes have been described within relevant sections of the dissertation. In this way transparency and integrity are demonstrated increasing dependability in the findings.

### **IV.5.4 *Confirmability***

Confirmability is achieved when the participants and the context of inquiry determine the findings. Reflexive practice by the researcher ensures their influence on data analysis and

findings are minimized (Barusch et al., 2011). For this reason, self-monitoring and reflection by the researcher continued throughout the study. This enabled the authentic voices of participants to be more easily heard strengthening confirmability of findings within this study. Moreover, member checking was used in order to confirm that the words and meanings of the participants were correct and properly represented.

## IV.6 Results

**RQ1.** How do gender roles and expectations influence a woman's choice to become an entrepreneur?

There were seven major themes that emerged from this research question: motivation, mentors, choice of business arena, support networks, obstacles, leadership, and success.

**Major theme 1.** The first theme within this research question is motivation. Five participants noted that money was a primary motivating factor in being an entrepreneur, while four cited the freedom offered by becoming an entrepreneur; one participant had an outlying response. As E5 simply stated, becoming an entrepreneur was about "paying the mortgage." However, for E1, the choice to become an entrepreneur was based on her earning potential. As a minority immigrant and a woman, the chance to be an entrepreneur was a choice to make more money than other jobs for which she was qualified:

I do not speak English very well like others, and I cannot write that great either. I know if I find a job, something like ... I have to work in hall labor to own money, because I'm not same as other citizens. This is just in my head, "This is a good opportunity. I gotta grab at this one." Otherwise I'm just gonna be working for minimum wage the whole time.

E8 became an entrepreneur by necessity; her family needed the money: "I did need the money, at first, because my husband is handicapped. Then my daughter, also, after. When he could no longer work, this is when I started doing this." E7 described her choice as primarily motivated by money – though also about freedom – which was grounded in her own childhood: "I would say the number one is that my husband and I both grew up poor, and my dad was burned when I was five, so there was never a lot of income. I think one of my biggest driving factors was that." For E4, her choice was not about minimum wage, but about earning a supplementary income. As she noted:

I first decided to become an entrepreneur because I was looking to make some additional income. I worked for a small non-profit organization initially, and I wasn't making a lot of income, and so I thought, "Okay, if I do something on the side, I can bring in some additional income."

Three other participants, as well as E4 herself, cited the freedom and autonomy that being an entrepreneur offered. While E4 noted that income was her primary motivating force, it was this sense of liberation that was also appealing. As she said, "as I evolved I think the flexibility and the independence that you have being an entrepreneur is what has continued to be appealing to me and is why I continue to pursue it on the side." E7 also noted that her motivation was about both money and freedom. As she explained. "I was tired of working for someone else and just getting a paycheck, and them telling me what I was going to be capped at. That really, for me, and I love being my own boss. I love setting my own schedule." For E2, this freedom was also about working for herself, rather than being beholden to an employer. However, she did note that it was her

husband's idea to start a business, not her own. This fact can complicate the concept of autonomy for women with its direct link to the patriarchal impetus: "My husband had the opportunity...I hadn't really thought about working for myself but when he presented the idea I liked it and I hated working for other people so it was good for me." E3 was unambiguous about the opportunities being an entrepreneur offered her as a woman. She saw the leap to owning her own business both as an emancipatory act and a way to afford the flexibility and autonomy to set her own hours so that she can be there for her family:

I felt kind of liberated. I felt kind of like I was more proud of myself because I wasn't just, I wasn't just staying in something that was so structured, and I had to go out and work for myself, and do things for myself...The biggest thing was my family. I wanted to, I want to be able to set my schedule around my family. I want to be able to be with my daughter when she starts going to school. I want to be able to be there for her. If I need to go pick her up when she's sick, I want to be able to do that. I want to, I just want to have more freedom to make my own schedule around my family.

Moreover, E3 specifically noted that her motivations were not financial: "I could just be able to make my own schedule, take care of myself, take care of my clients. I didn't want everything to be about the dollar."

The outlier was E9. She responded that her primary motivation was neither financial nor about freedom; instead, it was about aversion to the corporate world. She said her motivation as an entrepreneur was "the distaste for corporate America. I feel very strongly about that...Corporate America, we did not chart the course, we carried out orders, in a very specific way with 17 steps. It was stifling."

**Major theme 2.** The second major theme to come from the first research question is mentors. The majority of respondents – seven – said that they did have mentors to assist them in their career path, although four had them during their education and three others within their professional field; however, two participants said they did not have a mentor. E4, E5, and E8 had mentors during their undergraduate education. E5 believed that this mentorship was based on her gender. For E4, the link between gender and mentorship was geographically-premised. During her undergraduate years in the Northeast, she did not see the mentorship as gendered. Her experience was at a "small liberal arts private school for undergrads," where she "had many mentors and advisors through all of my schooling." However, those mentors were not entrepreneurship-based, something E4 regretted. She noted, "I think if I could have talked to somebody who had already tried it and had a mentor specifically to entrepreneurship I would have been more successful and it would have been easier." The mentor she had in the Southeast, which was related to her specific field of business, though, was based in gender. E4 attributed this difference to the ways in which gender is constructed in the North and in the South. E8 noted that her mentorship was based in her undergraduate career, where she "had a great set of professors that served in that capacity;" however, she noted that no such mentors existed in graduate school. For E8, the mentorship was influenced by gender because her professors "flagged [me] for human resources and as you know it's a very female dominated industry, department, whatever you might want to call it. For example, we have 100 clients and I'd say 85-90% of them are female...." Finally, E6 had her mentor during graduate school at Wharton at the University of Pennsylvania, which she did not see as grounded in gender. As she noted,

“There were some people that I met there who were very good at introducing me to people and got me into some of those jobs that helped me get a good enough knowledge base to where I could do something entrepreneurial.”

Three other respondents discussed their mentorships that occurred within their professional life, rather than during their education. However, all three did not view this relationship as gender-based. For E1, her mentorship was in the restaurant business, from other restaurant owners who offered encouragement and advice, saying, “If you open your own restaurant, you'll do really good.” The mentorship for E3 was premised on the demands of her industry; within the beauty industry building a clientele is tantamount, in addition to learning the idiosyncrasies of the occupation. Her mentorship allowed E3 to build a base of clients and ultimately go out on her own, building her confidence:

You need to go somewhere where you can be trained the tricks of the trade and build your clientele. When I got out of school I started doing commission so I could, I trained under a master stylist, and then I built my clientele. Then when I felt like I was stable enough and I had a loyal clientele, that's when I wanted to leave.

For E7, her mentors were culled through “the connections that I've made through networking.” For her, “Pulling out mentors, that has been of huge significance for me.” However, she believed the mentorship was not grounded in gender and instead based on her as an individual “because they had already built a relationship with me and knew my drive.”

The outliers were E2 and E9, who both noted they had no mentorship. E2 vehemently noted that she had “absolutely not” had a mentor during school. This lack of mentorship was directly related to gender, though. As E2 noted. There were only “two paths” for women when she graduated in high school in 1968: “nursing and secretarial or teacher, three components. That was it.” Because of those restraints, she did not have a mentor to help guide her entrepreneurial aspirations. For E9, she had no mentors because, as a woman, when she “was going to school, you're all on your own.”

**Major theme 3.** The third major theme was the choice of business arena. For five of these entrepreneurial women, the choice of specific industry was based on their knowledge, skillset, and desire to be within the industry; four of the participants moved from the corporate arena to the entrepreneurial arena, and three saw their industry and arena as influenced or affected by gender.

The choice to open a Chinese restaurant by E1 was an easy one, she argued, because she “only ha[s] experience in Chinese restaurants,” as that was where she had worked previously. E1 did not see her choice of fields as based on gender; instead, it was premised on personal knowledge. The same was true of E8, who said her business “kind of fell into my lap,” from part-time jobs she was working. For E7, her choice was a reflection of who she was, which is partially a function of gender:

I feel like I've created a business that's wrapped around my personality and who I am. I love to look at the big picture and to brainstorm and to come up with outside-of-the-box ideas, and I'm an idea maker. Then, I can switch, and I can become earth, and I can implement the steps of the plans to make it happen. I'm very fire, which means it gets it done. I have water, so I'm not too harsh with my strikes of getting it done. When I think about it, I'm blending all four of those elements, and that's what I've created my company with.

For E2, however, there was an influence from gender but not a decision based on personal experience. Her choice to go into real estate was based, in part, “because there wasn't a discrimination factor of being a woman in the field.” Yet, she did not have specific knowledge of the field. The lack of educational credentialing, as well as the flexibility and lack of need for startup capital, was appealing to E2:

I didn't have to have a whole lot of background educationally. I just needed to get the license and then be trained within the industry, and so I thought that that was a viable option for me without too much money up front that I would need to have. And my family background was in it, so I was used to being involved around real estate all my life, so that's what made me choose that.

E4, while also agreeing that gender was influential in her business arena choice, picked a field based on her own expertise and skills. Indeed, that was the starting point for her choices and process of becoming an entrepreneur:

When I first started out I didn't really know what I was doing. I simply had an area of expertise, and I just sat down and brainstormed how can I sell this expertise and is there value there, and I had absolutely no business strength...I've worked at non-profits and higher-ed institutions and I'm thinking, "Okay, how can I market this?" My first entrepreneurial experience was providing admissions counseling services to high-school students at private schools. And now it's obviously evolved over time, but that was my first initial experience.

Her area of expertise was, according to E2, part of her gender: “I think because women are naturally drawn to helping professions ...it was a natural progression for me to pursue a venture that was providing help. I think it was natural for me. I wasn't thinking about doing any of the other hard business areas, I was thinking about providing a service which is very traditional for women.”

E3, E5, E6, and E8 worked in the corporate arena before becoming entrepreneurs; however, their decision to change arenas were different: E3 decided to pursue dream, E8 struck out with a colleague, while E5 and E6 were laid off and began their business out of financial necessity. E3 explained that her decision to be in the corporate arena was one of pragmatism, but she switched to entrepreneurship to both follow what she loved and have independence and flexibility. As she explained:

I did work in the corporate world for a little while straight out of college, and I knew quickly that that was not for me. I always wanted to go into hair, and a couple things because I did want to have my own business and make my own hours, and be in charge of me.

For E3, her decision to be in the beauty industry was not necessarily a product of her gender, though she did acknowledge that the sector was primarily female. For E8, she left the corporate world to join a colleague in an industry she was passionate about:

It was six years that I lived in that corporate world and then a fellow colleague who was starting his own company asked me to be a part of the founding team. I knew the person and the values and the qualities and the ethics of this person and so I thought, this is it. I wanted to make the jump immediately.

E8 believed that gender played a minor role in her sector, as the field has conventionally been constructed as a female domain: “From a stereotypical standpoint, the caregiver side of things, says yes. That kind of goes back to the HR side of me also...Our industry is very female dominated.”

E5 had no previous knowledge or experience when she entered into her wine business. She chose to be an entrepreneur after losing her job:

I was a corporate banker for about 26 years and I lost my job in 2008. I never saw it coming. I was devastated for a few days and then picked myself up and said, "Okay, now I need to do something." There was no jobs available for anyone in the finance industry in 2008. I decided to open a small business just to see if it would work or if it would not.

E6 started as an entrepreneur later in life, after being laid off:

I'm a 60-year-old, first time entrepreneur, and the way that happened, I had spent my entire career in medium to large pharmaceutical companies and found myself in June of 2013 being laid off for the first time ever in my life. Part of that experience, they put us into an outplacement service and assigned us a career counselor... The more I started thinking about it, the more I realized that the most fun I had ever had was very early in my career with what was then a very small biotech company....

For E6, the choice was not influenced by being woman, but instead of age: "My first thought was not, "Oh, I'm a woman. I can't do that." It was, "I'm too old," but the more I thought about it, the more it grew on me and I decided, "Hey, you know what? If I'm ever going to do something like this, this would be a good time to do it."

For these participants, there was no unifying reason why they chose their specific field, nor did they agree of the influence of gender on their industry choice. Instead, their decisions were premised on personal circumstances and socioeconomic conditions.

**Major theme 4.** The fourth major theme was support network. Within this theme, there were two subcategories: family and friends and colleagues. The distribution of responses for both of these subcategories are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 3 Support Network**

|    | Family & Friends Support | No Family & Friend Support | Mixed Family & Friend Support | Peer Support | No Peer Support |
|----|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| E1 | Y                        | N/A                        | N/A                           | Y            | N/A             |
| E2 | N/A                      | N/A                        | Y                             | Y            | N/A             |
| E3 | N/A                      | N/A                        | Y                             | Y            | N/A             |
| E4 | Y                        | N/A                        | N/A                           | Y            | N/A             |
| E5 | N/A                      | N/A                        | Y                             | Y            | N/A             |
| E6 | N/A                      | N/A                        | Y                             | Y            | N/A             |
| E7 | N/A                      | N/A                        | Y                             | Y            | N/A             |

|    |     |     |     |         |         |
|----|-----|-----|-----|---------|---------|
| E8 | N/A | N/A | Y   | Y and N | Y and N |
| E9 | Y   | N/A | N/A | Y       | N/A     |

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Three of the participants said they had received positive support from their friends and family in their decision to be an entrepreneur, while six noted that the support was mixed. However, no participants felt unsupported. Moreover, all but one participant said that they felt supported and treated well by their female colleagues in their field.

For the three participants who felt unconditional support, such backing came from their family. For E1, it was encouragement to take a financial chance. While she felt scared to make such a move, her family told her “We have to take a chance... It's almost like gambling, right?” E9 also said her family did not have an issue with her as an entrepreneur: “They had no problem at all. They were happy for it.” E4 explained that both her family and friends were supportive emotionally, in part because they also had their own businesses, but also because she was raised with the mindset of gender equality:

My family and friends were very supportive because I grew up in New Jersey and I'm one of four kids and I have very strong women in my family, and it wouldn't be out of the ordinary for us. I grew up around a lot of entrepreneurs in my life, and so they all didn't even really react because it's not a shock or it wasn't a surprise to them. It's just something that we've always known... I've always had words of encouragement as a woman, like they've always said to me, "Being a woman growing up was never a barrier growing up in urban New Jersey."

For five others, the reaction was more mixed. E2 noted that her mom had conflicting emotions, both enthusiastic and apprehensive; she further noted that many in her social circle had more pessimistic views about her business' ability to survive: “Excited and worried, at least my mom, at the same time. Other people just not expecting you to be able to probably succeed per se. I don't really remember a whole lot of them.” For E2, these reactions could have been tempered because she was first going into business with her husband; having a man as a partnership, she said, made family and friends less concerned about the decision. E3 also experienced mixed reactions, split between her family and her social circle; for her, these reactions were based, in part, on her decision to leave the corporate world. While E3's family was supportive and encouraging her social network was not as whole-hearted. As she explained:

My family really supported me through that. They had seen that I was very unhappy in corporate world, and [that] I'm not built for the cubicle life. They've seen that I'm very outgoing, and I don't know a stranger, and I love people, and I love to make people feel better. It just fit me. So they really supported me. On the other hand, some of the people outside of my family though, they didn't really understand it. They thought why did you go to college, why did you get a degree? Was that a waste? Why are you not doing this?... I struggled a little bit because I had to justify myself more with people outside of my family circle.

E3 also explored how her gender – specially, her role as a wife – affected her ability to become an entrepreneur, as well as have the support she needed to make that choice:

I'm married so my husband, him supporting me... Having his benefits, he was like, '[E3], you go do what you want to do.' He said, 'I got you.' So of course I had a fallback... Definitely if I didn't have his support as a husband, I would've probably had to wait a little bit longer to go into hair. I would probably have to start really setting aside like for my 401K or setting things aside like that. Yes, being a wife and having him as the head of household really helped.

E5 also felt she was supported, with conditions, by her husband. While he was excited and encouraging of her, he also doubted her ability to succeed, which became a motivating factor:

My husband's always been very, very supportive and helped me set up my company, physically, mentally, stayed right next to me the whole time... [But] he really didn't believe I was going to make it. When my husband looked at me one day, even before I was open, and said, "Okay, promise me within three months, you know, if you don't have any customers and you know ... You'll close, instead of trying to hang in there for like a year." I just looked at him and said, "How can you go into a business even thinking that word, to fail?" That prompted me even more just to show him and anyone else that ... I couldn't do it, that I was going to do it.

E5 believed her wider social circle had similarly negative views about the possibilities of her success. E5 said she believed friends "thought I would probably fail within the first year" and that nobody in her friends or family "ever thought it would be where it is today." E6 also had mixed support; her husband was both excited and nervous, her children were delighted, but her best friend was not completely understanding:

Talking to my husband about it, and he scoffed... all he could think about was his negative experience at first, but he saw my eyes light up when I talked about it... He was thrilled for me, you know, thrilled and nervous at the same time because all of a sudden I was going into something where I was not going to get paid... My kids were thrilled. I can't think of any negative reactions I had, except for my best friend. She was a teacher who had just retired and she couldn't imagine why anybody my age wanted to do something like this....

The same mixed reactions happened to E7, particularly from her husband:

He is my earth. He is my solid rock. He's the one that loves the, you go to work at this time, you get off at this time, these are your expectations... I would say he about had a heart attack when I came home from that funeral and told him I was quitting, and I think it is still really hard for him to understand what I do... I would say the rest of my family has been pretty supportive. He has never been as supportive as what I would have liked him to be.

E8 concurred, noting "I would say mixed reactions. There are probably six of my family members that I called to ask advice of before I made this jump who I think very highly of... My husband was a little more tentative, my then boyfriend. He was, you know, "Is this really going to make it?" He had some skepticism."

Almost all of the participants felt supported and believed they were treated well by other women in the field. For E3, this was a marked difference between the corporate world and the world of entrepreneurs:

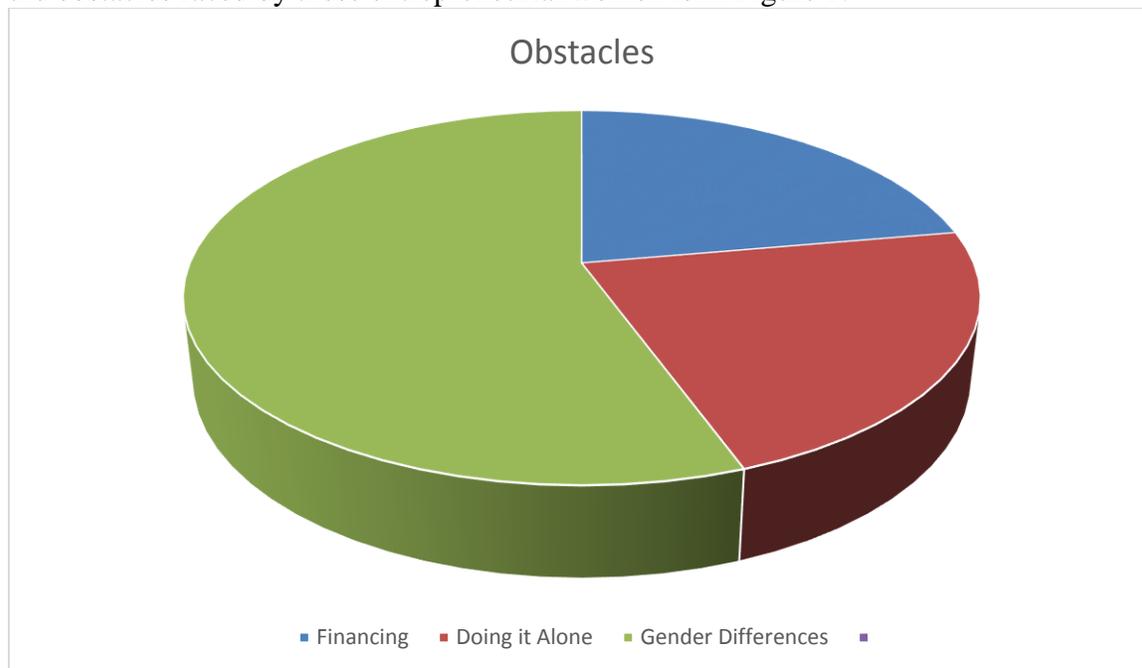
In corporate world, it's drama. You have best friends in corporate world, and then the next day they might, they'll throw you under the bus to get to the top, to get

the next promotion... Hair is a women's world really, and you come across so many different kinds. I was hoping and praying that I would find places that would accept me, and kind of be on my page about things. Luckily, I have. E4 similarly felt that women in her field were helpful and encouraging, saying that she had been treated "fine, supportive because it's mostly women who provide this service... I don't think there's any mistreatment. I think they're supported. Actually, there's been times we've actually referred people to each other so I would think supportive." For E6, a woman helped her navigate gender within a male-dominated industry:

I went to an executive coaching session, and the woman who does it, she said, "You've got to make yourself big when you come into a conference room." She said, "Sit down at that table and take up more space than you're really allotted in that conference room." She said, "Pull your shoulders back," and she even gave me exercises to do in the bathroom before I walked into a meeting like that. I thought it was a whole bunch of just malarkey, but you know what, it worked.

The exception was E8, who felt as though she had mixed support from women. As she explained, "I would say sadly a majority of the women that I've encountered have been competitive and catty almost. It sounds so bad but it's very true, rather than empowering and embracing."

**Major theme 5.** The fifth major theme was obstacles. The distribution of responses as to the obstacles faced by these entrepreneurial women is in Figure 1.



**Figure 3 Obstacles**

Two participants each (with E5 offering two different obstacles) cited financing, and doing the business alone, while six participants cited gender differences as obstacles in their own business. All of these obstacles were understood by the participants as a function of being female. In terms of financing, E2 explained that being female was a huge challenge in getting funding for her business:

I faced a huge obstacle getting financing as a female, absolutely... I was only

asking for a \$10,000-loan for 90 days. It was shot down but they said if I could get a co-signer that I could do it. So I got the co-signer, and I remember the VP of the bank calling my uncle, it was on speaker phone, and they said, "Jim, I can't believe you're gonna do this. You know how women are in business." Which really pissed me off, so I had an incentive instead of paying it back in 90 days; I paid it back in 30 days thinking that I would show him but also that that would help me get more loans, but they never would give me financing after that, ever, anything, not even with a co-signer.

For E5, the obstacle of finances was about both funding her business and not having the financial security she had in the corporate world:

Coming out of the corporate banking world, it's taboo to ever go into your 401K. That's a big decision I had to make when I did not have a job. We are a double income family. Me bringing money home was ... I didn't have a choice. Now, I had to go into my 401K; which I know you're never supposed to do that, but I was desperate. I believed in myself, and I did it.

Two other participants, E1 and E3, argued that they faced challenges about doing the business by themselves. For E1, this challenge was alleviated by working with her husband; however, she still said that in her business there are "a lot of challenges" and "you gotta be tough," a label that is frequently ascribed to men, rather than women. This notion was echoed by E3, who noted that the socially constructed notion of womanhood did not include toughness, and instead created women as people in need of support and help, unable to do things – much less a business – on their own:

I still think, and I know it's 2017, but I still think society has this perspective that women can't do things on their own or women can't, like they kind of look at it as they're trying to get out easy when they want to go do their own thing... I think that there is, I think society still views women as I guess weak in a way.

Moreover, E3 saw the contrast in how women are viewed in both the entrepreneurial and corporate sector, saying that society tells women "that they need to be, that they should feel lucky that they have job in something like corporate world."

Five others continued the idea of the construction of gender differences as an obstacle to female entrepreneurs, noting that the ways in which females are cultural constructed often adds challenges that their male counterparts do not have. For E4, these differences are frequently by industry; she argued that fields which are thought of as traditional female offer less resistance to women than those that are in the conventional purview of men:

I pursued were service oriented which I think are stereotypically the type of business ventures that women pursue. I was providing a service, and I was using my counseling background and my counseling skills and my counseling credential, and so I don't think it would have. But I was a woman trying to start my own CPA firm I think that would have had, it would have created some challenges.

E5 noted that expectations and predictions of success are also based on gender, with men receiving the benefit of the doubt and women always needing to prove themselves:

I'll give you an example, an analogy. A male could have done the same exact thing I did and the same person would look at that business being run by a male and my business, even though they're identical, but one has a woman behind the

wheel and the other one has a man behind the wheel. How people would perceive this, well of course, the man would make it. He's a man. He's stronger, physically stronger. Well, he could be smarter. The woman, maybe it's not because she was so strong, or she was smarter than man, maybe just luck behind the woman.

For E8, the gender obstacle was the persistent and negative gender stereotypes:

At the time, I was 32 or 33 years old and I was not aware to the degree that being a female, I was just under the impression that I could do anything I wanted to do. What I've experienced since that time, especially in my role currently, is that there are stereotypes that persist and that there are assumptions that are made about women when it comes to things like owning their own business, running their own company, etc.

The same was true for E7, who saw the stereotypes as specific to women not being taken seriously as business owners and as entrepreneurs:

They assume that I'm female, that I've got my own business, that it's a hobby, or it's ...not everybody takes it serious. I don't stay at home and eat bonbons on the couch. They can't fathom that I could be at home, and "What do you mean you don't do laundry?"

**Major theme 6.** The sixth theme is leadership. While three participants noted toughness as a one form of their leadership style, that was the only area of similarity. Moreover, three participants believed that their leadership style was affected, or perceived to be affected, by their gender.

E5, E4, and E2 all described at least one element of their leadership as tough or strong. As E2 described, "I think they see me as a strong leader. I don't know if I'm being naïve but I think they do." Yet, E2 denied that her gender had anything to do with her leadership style, saying, "I think it's strictly me as an individual." Both E4 and E5 also described themselves as tough; however, they either overtly or indirectly noted that this characterization is a function of their gender. For E4, her toughness was explained in contrast to "typical women," which implicitly pointed to how gender shaped her leadership style: "I am a very strong personality and I'm very assertive, and most women in this field tend to be a little bite more nurturing, and I'm more of a tough-love type approach." E5 said that her approach was "absolutely" influenced by her gender:

I'm a tough cookie. I'm a tough boss. I really, truly am. Maybe I wasn't a tough boss back in the banking days when their salary wasn't coming out of my pocket. Now, of course, that all changed. I think being an entrepreneur, owning your own company has made me a tougher boss, because it does come out of my pocket.

While the concept of toughness is typically associated with women, these participants either believed their leadership style was in this vein, or that their employees saw them in that light.

The remaining participants, as well as the additional elements of leadership, described a wide range of leadership qualities. E7, who explicitly denied that her leadership style was affected by her gender, saw teambuilding as her strong suit: "The leadership thing, I feel like, is one of my sweet, sweet spots, about pulling a team together and helping them to reduce stress and streamline." For E1, leadership was by example: "I'm usually trying to do more than what they're doing, so I'm hoping they will follow me." E3 saw her leadership style as relatable and detail-oriented:

I'm down to earth, personable. I try to relate, I try to really relate to all my clients. Everybody's different, and I try to relate to all them. I think that they kind of see me as a leader in that aspect because you have to have the personality in this industry as well... I have attention to detail. I'm very anal about my work... I want to do the best I can so I'm very anal in attention to detail with my work.

In addition to being tough, E4 also saw herself as being innovative and creative:

They [employees] said I'm very visionary and I'm very impactful, and I'm passionate and ... I'm very creative, I'm very innovative. A lot of people will do what I do in their own businesses, ask me for my activities that I come up with and ask me if they can replicate the workshops that I facilitate because I'm really good at coming up with very engaging exercises and workshops and I'm very innovative in that kind of way.

E5 also added to her leadership style of toughness, noting that respect and hard work are essential elements, as well: "I think the respect is there. Again, we've all been an employee. I think it's very important that you respect who you report to. We all work hard, so they see me working hard." E5 described her leadership as understanding and encouraging, a style to which she attributed her gender:

I think they see me as a very supportive leader, somebody who takes a personal interest in them as a person, not just as an employee, and who will try to motivate them to do their absolute best. I think my gender does play a role in that, and it's funny because the fore founders of my company are all men....

Finally, E8 also believed her leadership style was affected by her gender. Saying "100% yes, yes, yes, yes," E8 noted that her leadership method of being "humble, inclusive, enthusiastic, and empowering" stood in contrast to the men she worked with.

**Major theme 7.** The seventh theme is success. Seven of the entrepreneurs believed that their success was related to their gender; however, the ways in which these women believed their gender influenced their success varied between participants. E9 said her success was "all word-of-mouth. One customer would tell another friend, and another friend would tell another friend, and that's how it went down, all down the line."

However, she did not see this as related to her gender in any way. For E1, her success was based on the idea that "maybe women can do everything" in her business, including advertising, competition, and tending to customers. E2 defined her success not monetarily – which she associated with masculinity – but with satisfied customers, which she saw as a part of her ability as a woman:

In real estate women listen better than men. Men may have even more successful businesses as far as the dollar figure in many times but they may not have as happy a clients. To me, because I'm in a relationship business I want not only success for me financially but I want happy clients to give me repeat business. I think being a woman you hear this from clients all the time. They say, "You listen." And I believe that woman in general are more inclined to listen than men.

However, E2 believed that her success as an entrepreneur was in sharp contrast to the majority of women; she contended that women were often confined to a certain level of success:

I think from the 70's which is when I first became one to know it's a world of difference for women to be accepted. However, you can look at corporate America today and still see, there's not a whole lot of women that are at the top, at

the very top, being entrepreneurs running their own business, not a whole lot. They're out there but not in comparison.

E3 noted that as women, success came to those who pursued their passions and were inspired by their career; she argued that while the careers women often chose were not societally constructed as successful, women have to take the power of their success:

In this industry women that want to get out and do it on their own, we have, I think because we are women we have that goal to showcase what we can do, and look we made what we love, what we're passionate about, into our careers, and we are successful, being a successful woman doing this, and it's not just a job. It is, we could actually make this into something that is our primary income, that is our career, that is enjoyable, and it's not just us trying to get out easy... I think when people see that I'm a woman and I have made this my career, and [inaudible] in the beauty industry, you become very powerful because people don't view us like that. Society does not view a hair stylist as being successful and powerful, and they kind of view us we just do hair or we just cut hair for a living, and that's not how, that's not really how it is.

E5 described her success as an outcome of women "being more intuitive, being more ... Women just, the success, or the nurturing, or perhaps being calmer." She contended that women who work hard are respected and successful, and she attributes her success to hard work. As E5 explained,

I've actually had women, several in the past whatever eight, nine years, come to me and ask, because they're scared to death. "How did I do? Well, what was my secret? How am I successful? Why? What happened?" Not that it's easy, but you can't overanalyze it. You just have to believe in yourself. You have to believe you can do it. You have to work hard. You really have to work hard.

In addition, E5 noted that the nurturing aspect of women is essential for strong customer service, which is the cornerstone for success. As she noted, "My belief is, you can't have an ego in business because it's not about you. It is about the customer. If you're listening, you can hear the customer, you can see the customer, and to try to just bring something new and exciting into the atmosphere for their evening or event or afternoon."

For E6, success was a combination of learning and acquiring knowledge, as well as networking and establishing relationships with others:

The strategies I've implemented is always just trying to learn as much as I can and admit when there's something I don't understand and seek outside guidance for that. I think when I take anything on, I jump in and I become like a knowledge sponge. I just try to learn everything I can... I just started putting myself in places and creating collisions with the people who could make it happen. I'd see that there was going to be a meeting of people who were in the venture capital world or whatever, and I'd find out then go to the meetings and I'd introduce myself.

E6 also saw these strategies for success as firmly entrenched within the female gender: I think doing a lot of that stuff ahead of time and establishing relationships with people prior to when you need them. I think that's something that women do better than men, so I think that's been a success factor for me. I think early in my career, being a woman probably hurt me [but] I think understanding how I think as a woman and how I can turn that as an advantage now has really been helpful to me in the second half of my career.

E7, who also saw her success as being informed by being a woman, similarly cited a form of planning as her strategy for success. For, looking ahead and diversifying was key:

I think the biggest thing is that I never gave up and that sometimes you just have to keep pushing and keep pushing on. I think the other huge factor that has been a huge thing for me is that I'm constantly looking ahead, and I've built a business that I call it my three-legged stool, which means I always have three avenues of income all of the time.

Like E6, she believed this was because she was a woman: "I just think women are adaptable. We can do it all. We might not be able to do it all today, but we can do it all." For E8, while the success of her business was premised on having the "right customer with the right culture," her personal success in the business was viewed differently. While E8 did see her gender impacting her success, unlike all the other participants, this female-based success was attributed to working with males. As she explained, "I've had the most success in my career as a female working for a male... The male-female dynamic. That they've trusted me, so in that regard I think the male-female has benefited me hugely."

**RQ2.** How do gender roles and expectations influence a woman's choice to enter the corporate arena?

The same seven themes from the entrepreneur participants were also extracted from the corporate female participants: motivation, mentors, choice of business field, obstacles, support networks, leadership, and success.

**Major theme 1.** The first theme in the second research question is motivation. Eight participants said that their motivation was to support themselves or their family, while one said it was her career interest that motivated her. In addition, five of the participants linked this motivation to their gender. Four participants specifically said their jobs as a way to support themselves as women, without the support of a man; their motivation was to be financially independent women. As C3 explained:

My mother was a widow and had worked from ... as early as I can remember. She always told us that, "You never know what will happen, you have to have a career." She pushed us hard to go to college, she had some college, but never a bachelors degree. She expected that we would have that or more. It was never something I really thought about, I just knew that I would work. My grandad, back in those days, told me that women had two choices for work, you could be a nurse or you could be a teacher. I knew I wasn't going to do either one of those.

C4 did not have a role model for working; instead, she learned the lessons of supporting one's self when she was a child:

My father died when I was young, 13, and my mother had never worked outside the home ... And when he died she wasn't able to take care of herself financially and I just always knew that when I grew up and got married that I would have a career to where I could be financially stable on my own, if I had to be on my own. And, at the time, nursing seemed like the best way to do that... I just knew that at a early age that that was what I wanted to do and it also seemed like the right avenue for me to be able to be financially sound on my own if I needed to be.

C9 added her motivation came from her grandmothers, and wanting to break that chain of female homemaking:

I would probably in a strange way say it came probably mainly from my grandmothers. I spent a lot of my youth with my grandmothers, and they were women who had several children, and I think felt a bit oppressed by being homemakers and maybe not doing the things in life that they wanted to do. I think they were always encouraging of, "Get an education. Make sure you can take care of yourself so that you don't have to depend on other people, like a man or a husband, unless you want to. Get more options in your life. Give you more opportunities to be successful." I would say a lot of that probably came from them.

C8 also felt her motivation was about her gender; more specifically, about not having a mate and being able to support herself:

I felt like that this would be the best way to achieve financial security. I was single. I am single. I've remained single my entire life. This was the way to achieve financial independence and security. As I gained more time in the corporate arena, that feeling was reinforced and I felt achieved.

For C1, the notion of self-support was motivating; however, it was not about financial independence, per se, but instead about empowering herself as a woman in the face of gender stereotypes:

I decided that I wasn't going to let anybody stop me. Being a woman that had also been divorced, I decided that it was up to me to make my path... My motivation came from within myself because I don't believe that people should be able to stop you whether it's gender or whether it's color or whatever it is, then it shouldn't be something that can stop you. You have to fight and you have to better than somebody else that is at your position. You cannot just go in and be just like any male would be. You have to be stronger than the male as you have to know more or you have to study more in order to get into that position.

The remaining three participants cited financial stability for themselves or family but did not ascribe this motivation specifically to gender. As C7 described:

Before I had worked nonprofit, and also had worked for a smaller company, and I knew for sure I didn't, wasn't going back to nonprofit because I had worked nonprofit twice and I love the work, but it wasn't enough to pay the bills. I knew I needed something that actually, I could live off of. The salary from the company was very attractive to me at that point. Starving graduate student.

C2 also pointed to financial support, specifically for her family. However, C2 did not ascribe this motivation to her gender. As she explained, "I wanted to get out and use my education. I wanted to help supply income to the family. I just felt like I needed to be out there in the world of other people, other than my immediate family." C5 simply explained that her corporate job would offer "stability. I knew I could find a job in this career. It's a guaranteed position."

The one outlier was C6. She explained that her motivation was her interest in the job. As she noted, "the key factors I think for me, it was based on my career interest. I knew I wanted to do something with finance; I knew I wanted to do something with investments."

**Major theme 2.** Within the second theme of mentors, seven corporate participants had a mentor, whether that was in school or in their work environment; two said that they never had a mentor. Of these nine participants, five felt that the mentorship was premised on

their gender. For C1, her mentor was at work, and was a woman in a superior position who could help her navigate the gendered waters. As she described:

[My] mentor was a female that was at a higher position than I am at to guide and lead me. I could talk to her and get some answers that I needed and some strength that I needed when going through some of the rougher times in the position.

Being the same gender, she had already been through some of the things that I was going through. It had a lot to do with helping me to become the person that I am.

C9 also had a mentor at work, which she believed was, at least in part, premised on her gender. She explained that “Once I did get into corporate America, initially through the internship group, I did find some early advocate managers that I connected with early in my career, that were very supportive of new people coming into the company that were very supportive and helped give direction.” C9 was involved with an executive female networking group, as well, which “was definitely based on gender, was kind of the premise of the group in and of itself, was to have executive women obviously mentor younger women.” However, it should be noted that C9 argued that race was more influential than gender within the mentoring framework: “That advocacy and mentoring from a minority standpoint was stronger than I would say from a women's standpoint.” C6 also had a work mentor, one that was specifically developed by her organization and was premised on gender:

During my years with Bank of America Merrill Lynch, they had an organization within the corporation that was assigned the task of creating a mentoring sector that would enable top level female executives to interact and mentor those who are lower level within the organization...In most cases, they were putting female with female and male with male.

C2's mentor was also gendered, but that was grounded primarily in the fact that her mentor was at her all-girls college. That female atmosphere allowed C2 to focus on her studies:

I went to an all-girl's college. And the reason I went to an all-girl's college was, first of all, I didn't have to dictate my brain power on when I was accepted or not accepted by a man...Therefore, you could be as smart as you wanted to be, and you actually could dress however you wanted to do to go to class. My professors were dead-on, they mentored me constantly, in fact at one time, toward the end of my bachelors', the chemistry professor, my p-chem professor, actually had me apply for a PhD chemistry degree at Mississippi State.

The remaining participants did not think that their mentoring had any grounding in their gender. However, C3, C4, and C5 had mentors that they believe helped propel their career. For C3, these mentors were in elementary and junior high school, encouraging her ability to write and suggesting careers based around those skills:

The earliest that I remember was my 5th grade teacher who told me that I could write really well. Then, in the 8th grade, I had another teacher who told me that, he said, "You should major in journalism." I had no idea what journalism was, but I said, "Okay." Then, I got to college and professors told me that I could write well. It was not based on gender, it was based on a skill I had.

For C4, her mentor was in nursing school, as well as nurses when she began her career. While C4 noted that most nurses are female, she contended that mentoring otherwise did

not have any foundation in gender:

In my life and in my nursing career I can remember an LPN school had an instructor who was very nurturing and encouraging and I ... Looking back I think that she picked up on something in not only myself, but other students. I think she just kind of gravitated towards them and nurtured them and helped them along the way. And when I first started at the hospital as an LPN, there were a couple of nurses who were more experienced then, took me under their wing and gave me great advice and helped me grow into the nurse that I am today.

There were two participants, however, who said they did not have mentors during their career trajectories. C8 noted she was self-motivated, rather than having any sort of mentor during school: "The school situation was all motivated by me and it was at night, and so there were not mentors or it was really a function of my own drive." For C7, she not only did not have a mentor, she described a professor in graduate school who actively tried to tell her not to pursue her career choice:

Undergraduate, I was really just on my own. I really didn't know what I was doing. I switched majors several times, and trying to figure it out, what I wanted to do. Then in graduate school, I actually had people discouraging me. One of my professors discouraged me from even interviewing with a corporation, because he said, "No, no, they only want technical people. They don't want you."

**Major theme 3.** The third theme of choice of business arena varied by individual participant. For some, entering the corporate arena was about financial stability, for others, it was following a passion, and still others it was about convenience and expediency. Three participants felt that their gender played a role in their choice of sector. For C1, her choice was based on what she like to do, as well as the encouragement of a supervisor: "This field was something I really enjoyed and when the availability came, I decided to apply for other position. Actually, the supervisor at the time thought that I would be great for the position and kind of encouraged me to apply for the position... I like[d] where I was at and what I was doing also." Two other participants made their industry choices based on opportunities available to them. For C6, this was through an internship during college:

My first year I was offered a co-op with this corporation where I had to leave, alternate between school and work semesters. From there, I did a subsequent assignment and picked up internships over the summer, so that kind of solidified my career start with corporate America.

C7 also noted "it was opportunities," particularly during college. As she described: I was in professional communication program at Clemson University and we had a technical board there with Microsoft and IBM and a couple of other tech companies. They were very active with our program. That was an opportunity for me there. When they came on campus, we did a big presentation. It was like, this is our chance, this is our opportunity. We're in front of executives. Make the most of it. I think that was one of the driving factors that helped get me a foot in, was to make sure that I was using my opportunities.

For C3, her decision began when she was a teenager; a corporation began recruiting her, which began her educational and occupational journey. More specifically, C3's decision was grounded in her race, gender and geographic locale:

I made a decision to start working in corporate America at a very young age. I was 16 years old in high school when a company in Michigan called Dow Corning Corporation had a social responsibility to attract more African American men and women into science. They went into all of the area schools in Michigan and recruited the academically inclined students, so GPA at least 3.0 and better, and they gave them an opportunity to interview for cooperative education positions and interns. In my case, it was co-op because I was in high school, but the college students it was internships.

This opportunity working for Dow cemented C3's dedication to the corporate field, particularly within a traditionally male industry of chemistry:

I gained an opportunity to work at Dow Corning my junior year in high school, so I attended school from 8 to 12 and then I went to Dow Corning from 1 to 5. While working there, they treated me like an employee so I really had the opportunity to experience work life, you know, an 8 to 5 job with breaks and benefits such as Franklin Covey. I was able to attend a Franklin Covey class off site at a lake resort in Michigan. I learned time management and organization really, really early in life. Then, I had the ability to work alongside chemists and chemical engineers, which essentially shaped my interest in chemistry. Went to college and majored in chemistry and then went on to work for the chemical and pharmaceutical industry.

C2 similarly entered a field that was traditional masculine; however, her decision was premised on her education, rather than her education being premised on her occupational possibilities:

I double-majored in biology and chemistry and minored in math, and felt like because I had an education I should use it for something. I got married while I was in college, so the idea of becoming employed and finding a job to utilize my education in the town we lived in was a little bit difficult and limited resources. I started working for a company in the paper industry and it utilized my education to a certain extent. It used my mathematical skills, and it also let me reach out into an industrial environment that helped to me get to know employment as it is.

C4 argued that her choice of profession – education – was linked both to her desire for financial stability and the gender norms of acceptable female professions. She said her choice was based on “just the satisfaction of enjoying work and earning money. I've never wanted to be dependent on someone else for money.” Her choice was, however, simultaneously, affected by her gender, specifically as it related to motherhood:

As a mom, I needed to find a job that had flexibility, so that's how I ended up in higher education. When I was pregnant, the second time, I had been searching for a job and anytime that I included that information, that I was expecting a child in my cover letter, I did not get an interview. I decided to change tactics and just not mention it and send out resumes. The job that I got hired for, I walked in to the interview, nine months pregnant, I had not said a word about it. I just said to the man who was interviewing me, I looked at him and I said, "I'm going to have a baby." That was the only way that I mentioned it, and he was scared to death of me, I think. I looked like I was going to have it that minute, but he hired me.

Like C4, C5 chose her field based on both a desire to have financial stability and an underpinning of gender stereotypes:

I think I've always wanted to be a nurse, but, as far as being a nurse in the corporate world, you have more opportunities open to you because corporations can provide more in the way of insurance ... They have better insurance packages because they have a larger pocket. So, they can get insurance at a lower rate for their employees. Plus, they have a better education reimbursement and just more opportunities to move around within the nursing field.

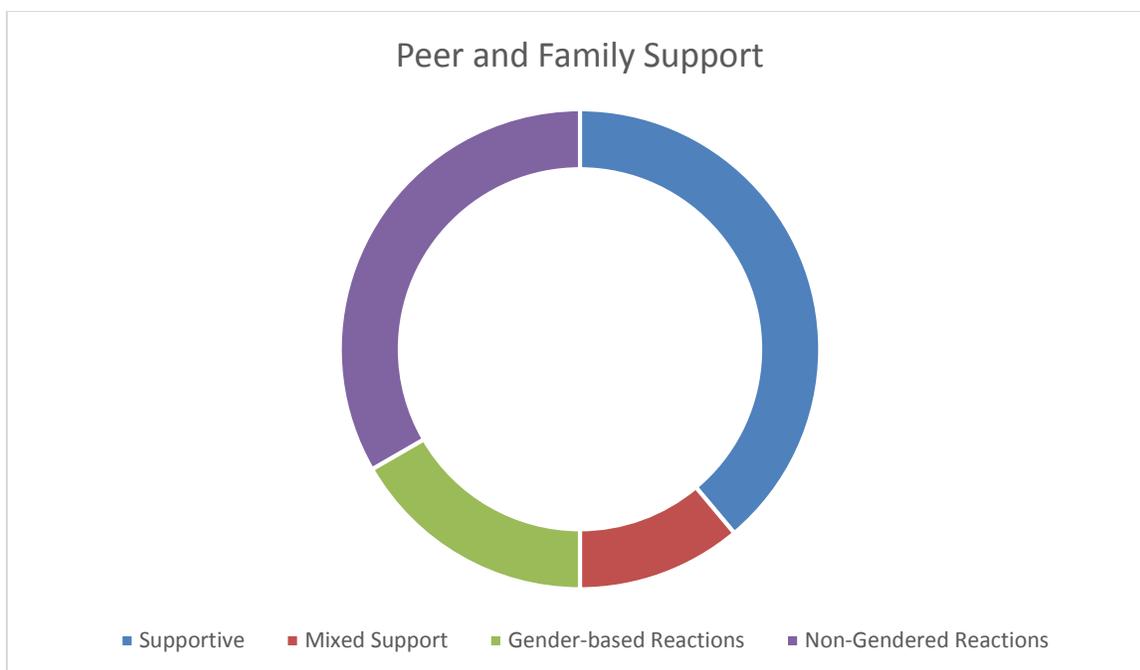
This pragmatism about finances was one part of C4's decision; however, her choice of the field of nursing was, in part, premised on the societally constructed fields that were appropriate for women: "At that time, over 30 years ago there were not a lot of stable positions for women in other areas." C9 also cited financial stability as part of her decision: "Somebody has to pay the bills, while sometimes that's when the other person is taking chances. In my relationship, I was more the provider or the stabilizer..." The same was true of C5, who said she chose the corporate arena because "I knew there would be that steady paycheck, better hours, and also a better retirement."

Moreover, these women within the corporate arena were confident in their choice; they had either tried entrepreneurship and found it untenable (C1, C4, C6, C7), considered it but chose the corporate arena (C2, C8 and C9) or knew it was not for them (C5).

Participants described the difficulties that emerged from having to work for yourself and provide income. As C1 said, "I dabbled in it a little bit. I did some, just a little bit on my own. But I didn't care for trying so hard. It was just too hard to do by myself." For C4, the lack of consistent income was the problem: "I've done freelance writing here and there always. It can be difficult to get paid and it can also be not a steady source of income. I've never wanted to solely be an entrepreneur. I've always just wanted to use that to supplement my full-time job." C6 also did not have enough time, saying, "I don't have much time at this point, no projects, active projects right now." C2 concurred with this assessment, noting that while she had "considered being an entrepreneur from a consulting-type person," she decided against it because "that would mean that I would need to supply my own medical insurance. I would also live, or not live, based on income coming in or not coming in. And I am one of those people that just prefers to have a solid income coming in that I know I can count on month to month to month, versus wondering whether it's going to show up and whether I have another job." C8 agreed, saying, "I recognized that the pull for financial security, especially in light of being single, was really something that I decided against."

For C5, however, she did not view herself as an innovator, an attribute which she ascribed to entrepreneurs: "I just don't consider myself a ... I think of an entrepreneur as someone who's like a, breaking edge, has their pulse on things that are new and how to get that to people, and I've just never really been wired that way."

**Major theme 4.** The fourth theme of support network has two subcategories: support of family and friends, and support by female colleagues within the field. The participants' response for the first subcategory are demonstrated in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 4 Peer and Family Support**

Seven of the participants felt their friends and family were supportive of their decision to enter the corporate arena, while two felt that there were mixed reactions. Two participants who felt supported by family and friends believed it was based in gendered perceptions, while one who had mixed support also felt the reaction was based in gender. As C8 explained, “They were supportive. My environment pretty much supported that decision.” The influence of gender, she said, was based on her safety: “I think they might have been more concerned because of the female going into the geographic area where I did not have any support system...It was more about my safety, being a young single female. It was not geared towards my ability in any way.” For C9, she also felt very supported, but felt the effect of her gender as it related to her chosen field. She explained:

They were very supportive, because it was generally an expectation that that's what I would do, so very supportive... Many years ago, we'll say, going into a math, science field, especially for a woman was not the norm. Most of my engineering classes and such forth I was either the only female in the room, or maybe I was lucky to have one other female in the room, but my particular field of going into engineering, it was kind of rare. That would be the only gender impact I would say, was that, you know, my parents and I and such forth realized the challenge to go into a male-dominant field at the time.

C1, however, felt supported by her family and did not feel that this support was in any way contingent on her gender. She said friends and family were “Very encouraging, very positive, thought it was great, very happy for me,” and that her gender did not affect those reactions “at all.” C5 similarly felt supported by her family, and did not believe these reactions were premised in her gender; however, she noted this could be because she was already in a traditionally female field. Her family were “excited and encouraged me,” while her husband was:

Very supportive and helpful. He helped, he took on extra responsibility around the

house, and like I said, our children were young so he took on extra responsibility in helping them with their school work and making sure they had their baths and freed up more time for me to spend on my studies.

Moreover, because “historically most nurses have been women,” C5 believed that gender most likely did not affect her family’s reaction. C7 was also very supported, in part because of the financial stability it would afford: “I think my friends, both were very excited. The company is well known and well respected, so I think people were excited for me for the opportunity.... my father could take a deep breath and go, ‘Oh, great.’ Finally, I’m not going to worry about her.”

For C3, she felt supported by her family and friends, and while she felt her family did not base their reaction on her gender, her peers did. Her family and friends were enthusiastic for her opportunity:

My family and friends was very happy... I had one friend from high school that also got the internship and she actually rode with me to work. My mom, my dad, my aunt, my grandmother, all were so excited. They couldn’t understand how I was able to do that. I explained to them and they didn’t know what corporate responsibility was. They loved the idea. They were frightened for me actually because of course that made the youngest person in the building, you know, least educated. At one point I was only one of two African Americans in the whole building.

C3 felt that her gender was not consequential in the reactions of “my friends and family, but definitely my peers.” For C2, while the support from her family was mixed about her decision to enter the corporate arena, she did not believe these reactions were based on her gender. C2’s parents and sister supported her decision, but her brother was less encouraging:

The positive was that my parents were both supportive of me getting a job that utilized my education. My sister was also a positive influence. My brother, however, because he just could not make it through college, he was very negative about how we were given the golden plate and he wasn’t.

These reactions, C2 asserted, were not affected by gender identity, particularly by her female friends, who were also entering the corporate arena. For her, the standards and expectations for women were changing, and this reflected in people’s attitudes towards her decision: “I think it was more of a positive because most of the friends I associated with were also entering in the corporate world. And very few were people who stayed home, or who took care of kids and did not go out, and did not do anything with themselves.” C6 agreed, noting that “for me, there was some concern maybe from my parents, but other than that, no.”

For C4, the support she received was also mixed, and she believed that this was indeed premised on the societally constructed notions of what women – and specifically mothers – were supposed to do. At first, C4 noted that her friends and family were extremely supportive, “giving me the in-feeds to childcare, to how to handle when you needed to work overtime, I had a grandmother in Mississippi who could easily take care of my kids when I had to work on Saturdays or Sundays.” However, this support was conditional, and began to change as C4 went back to school to further her education and her career. These reactions, C4 believed, were tied to her gender. Friends and family were supportive because C4 thought they believed “Well, you’re out of college, you should get a job until

you land that husband.” This changed “when I decided to add graduate school to the mix and continue working.” At this point, the lack of support was explicitly tied to her gender and her role as a mother:

I remember my mother-in-law felt that good mothers don't work and she pretty much expressed that in many different ways. Good mothers, also, do not earn graduate degrees. Good mothers have money that comes to them from an inheritance and they are available to their kids 24/7. During that time when I was trying to work and go to graduate school, maybe once or twice I asked her to help with the kids, pick them up or take them somewhere and she didn't want to do that. She thought that what I was doing was just kind of silly...she could kind of understand a college degree because there you might meet a man, but she didn't understand the graduate stuff.

C4 also noted that this gender-based viewpoint was not limited to her mother-in-law, who was of a different generation and could be excused for having more traditional views of women. Instead, C4 noted that her friends – even today – have gendered views of success and working:

I still have very good friends who think that the greatest success for a woman is finding someone who will support you. They want their daughters to go to good schools, they want them to get into good colleges, they want them to have internships, they want them to get good post college jobs. In the long run, they hope that they won't have to work. They don't understand that there's a lot of satisfaction in working. They think it's just something you do if you're single or if your husband doesn't have sufficient income. It's a whole different mindset from what I have.

Of the participants who discussed their support network of other women in the field, the reaction was mixed. Five believed they were supported by their female colleagues, one believed they were not, and three saw it as mixed. C2 saw female colleagues as positive, noting:

Actually, it's a very positive environment. Most women who are in the industry know that I'm a go-getting firecracker and most of the women I affiliate with are also that way. They know that if they need something and they need it quick, they know who to come to. It's been a positive.

C5 agreed, saying that women in her field have always been supportive, adding that the men in her field have also been warm to her: “the women that I have worked with over the years that have nurtured me and have embraced me and been like family to me ... I think it's been good. I think I've been well received by other women, and by men also.” C6 also concurred, noting that “For the most part I would say pretty decently for the most part...overall, it's been pretty positive.” C8 added that she “I had more support from the women than I did from the men.”

However, C4 disagreed, contending that there is an atmosphere of tension, competition, and gossip:

I don't think women are very nice to each other, sometimes in the workplace. They sometimes don't want other women to succeed. They gossip, some of them, and I don't participate in gossip so that can create problems for me with other women, because I just don't go there. I think women, a lot of times they're jealous of each other and if somebody gets a promotion, then they're jealous and they

don't want to work with that person anymore, they don't want to collaborate. Women don't treat each other very nicely sometimes.

Two others saw support from other women as mixed. As C9 explained,

There have been some women that were leaders that I had interfaced with over the years, and some of them recognized a mutual gender challenge and would lend a friendly smile or go a little bit out of their way to make sure they said hello to you, or something to that effect. Then there were some that were just really busy fighting their own challenges and demons within the corporate world, they didn't really have time, or really didn't notice the opportunity to help maybe a fellow woman through the system.

C7 concurred, noting that the divisions among women were often generational:

It's good and bad. There's a lot of women, and I find them honestly, in my peer group, and probably late 30s to 40s, that we're very supportive. I found some of the women that are a little older than me, maybe two generations up, that are very hardnosed and really feeling like they have to prove something, and not being so kind along the way.

Yet, C1 saw it as individual reactions, premised on the person and the situation rather than gender-based. As she noted, "It's been both ways. I feel left out sometimes and whether it's a female leaving me out or male."

**Major theme 5.** Within the fifth theme of obstacles all participants noted that their gender was a barrier in their field. These gendered obstacles took different forms for different participants, including race, class, childcare, and societal prejudices that colored their superiors' views of them. For C1, her obstacle was being both a woman and being black; this combination made her feel never quite apart of the work community:

It was definitely being a female and it was also being a colored female, made it a little bit even harder than it should have been. I've been in this business for 18 years. I still feel like there's barriers. I still feel like I'm not a part of the clique or whatever you, however you want to call it. I don't know if that will ever change.

But I'm not going to let that make me leave my job.

The same was true for C9. As a minority and a woman, she noted that "there were so few being accepted into this space, and the challenges of sometimes realizing that sometimes you'll be accepted and sometimes you'll have to be an island, and sometimes you'll just have to figure how to survive in either setting."

For C2, the barriers of being a woman were sociohistorically situated in the 1980s, as well as contextualized in an all-male field. Within this specific context, C2's boss continually demonstrated condescension towards her because of her gender, and avenues of advancement were closed:

In that particular job, and in my first twenty years of being in the corporate world, there are perceptions and expectations that the corporate world has of women. Some of which, in the man's world that I was in, it meant that I had to sit and listen to vulgar jokes at the table... Few females ever went above a lab technician at the plant. Needless to say, my lab manager referred to us as "his girls." And he never bought a lab table so we had to crawl on the floors to inspect return products. And even one of the customers came up and said something about, "Why don't you buy a lab table for these girls?" And he said, "My girls don't

mind." He was an okay boss, but he wanted to keep us in his nest. No matter how good you did, you were never promoted.

Moreover, she faced gender-based discrimination by her colleagues:

A lot of, in my initial stages of my career, being a female was a negative. Being in the paper industry, I actually had one instance where, dressed in coveralls, steel-toed shoes, steel hat, safety goggles, ear-plugs and everything, I had to stand to the side while the guy that was with me went and asked the superintendent of the paper machine if I could go on the machine. And through that career, I faced getting chased around tables, at whatever, I had to put up with a lot because of my gender.

Even more disturbing, C2 reported that not only was she date raped by a fellow worker, but that if she had reported it – and when the company found out – she was laid off:

I, at one time, got into a situation where I was date raped and because of being a female in an all-male industry, I knew if I reported it, I would be down-sized. And oddly enough, the doctor who was treating me, by accident, put a form instead of to the doctor, he put it over the public fax machine at my work place. And it laid by the fax machine for a minimum of an hour and a half, and four months later I was down-sized.

While other participants' stories were not as dramatic or as upsetting as C2's, other corporate female workers also felt that they had encountered gender-based barriers. For C3, this gendered obstacle was based on her role as a woman and as a mother; the biggest challenge for her was finding childcare and confronting the female stereotypes perpetuated by her superiors:

Childcare was always an obstacle, because maybe there are more options now, but then there weren't. There seemed to be a lot of preschools that had limited hours and lots of breaks. They were more set up for women who stayed home than they were for women who had to be at work every day. It was difficult sometimes. If the kids were sick, it was even more difficult.

In addition to childcare, C3 explained how disrespectfully she was treated, and the ways in which constructed views of women influenced her position at her place of employment:

Where I work, we had a previous president who was very old-fashioned and he would insult women for various reasons. Sometimes based on their weight, which he did not do that with men, he did that only with women. I think it sort of depends on who's in charge, who's running the show. Also, this previous president gravitated toward women who were not really very capable, but were very outgoing and flirtatious. He thought that they were the best. I think there are times when people like that create barriers.

C4 also described the barriers to career advancement, even within a field that was primarily female: "I think a female nurse ... Even though the majority of people who are nurses who work in the nursing field are women, I've seen men who come into nursing get management positions quicker than women." For C6, the barriers were of entry into the field. As she described, "If you query or Google any of the top major firms, most of those positions are held by men. You have very few women. You may have one or two women that are part of the senior level management. For the most part, diversity is not as common within this particular sector." C8 also fought gender stereotypes: "This

particular perception I battled throughout my entire career, this idea of she gets something because she's a female. This has been a very strong motivator for me throughout my career in terms of making sure I have credibility and respect because of my knowledge and probably I overachieve because of that."

However, four of the participants also argued that females were better able as handling obstacles, as they arose. As C2 noted, "In my opinion, I think women tend to handle obstacles much better than men. We can guide around whatever obstacle and make it work." C4 concurred, explaining, that "women are better at overcoming obstacles, and if they have something in mind and they're determined I think that they're more apt to work through the obstacles and the roadblocks to get what they want." For C3, women were better at the obstacles because they were better at multi-tasking, which allowed them to address multiple issues at once. This was how C3 addressed her challenge of childcare – with creativity and an ability to do different tasks at once:

I mean the way I handled them, is that sometimes I brought my kids to work and I let them sit under my desk and color and nobody knew they were here, if they were well-behaved. I did what I had to do. Yes, I think women are good at multi-tasking, and that was part of it. I just sort of figured it out. There were times when my husband could take the kids when they were sick, but there were times when he couldn't. I just worked it out.

**Major theme 6.** The sixth theme that came from the second research question is leadership. Like this theme for entrepreneur respondents, there was no consistent leadership style between the participants; each cited a different type of leadership approach. However, seven of the nine participants in the corporate field participants agreed that being female affected how employees understood or viewed their leadership.

**Table 4 Leadership Styles and Gender Effect**

| Participant | Leadership Style(s)            | Leadership Affected by Gender? |
|-------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| C1          | Lead by Example                | Yes                            |
| C2          | Explanatory; Logical/Reasoning | Yes                            |
| C3          | Direct; Efficient              | Yes                            |
| C4          | Participative                  | Yes                            |
| C5          | Caring                         | Yes                            |

|    |                    |     |
|----|--------------------|-----|
| C6 | Team Player        | Yes |
| C7 | Noninterventionist | No  |
| C8 | Nurturing          | Yes |
| C9 | Task-Driven        | No  |

C1 has a staff of 60 employees and argued that she leads by example, showing her staff that she is willing to do the same things that she is asking them to do:

I think they regard me very nicely because they see what I do and they know that I'm not afraid to do anything I ask them to do. They know that I am willing to do any training that I ask them to do. They know I'm willing to do any teaching that I ask them to do. I think as being an example of showing them what I am willing to do myself gives them say they feel good because they know that I'm not pushing them out there and not doing it myself as an example.

For C1, her gender affects the perception of her leadership by the male employees, instead of the female employees; she contends this gap in perception is due to male's lack of comfort with having a woman be in a superior position and issuing directives:

I think it does with more males than females. The males do not like me telling them what to do even if I'm asking. It's still looked down upon like, "Who does she think she is?" But I don't have that same feeling with the females that's under me.

C2, on the other hand, viewed her leadership as grounded more in reasoning and logic, employing an explanatory style that correlates to her field in the hard sciences. C2 noted that she uses a show-and-tell aspect to utilizing reason with her employees:

As a leader, one of the things I always try to do is, in the manufacturing side of the plant where I'm selling products from, I try to go to the plant, try to take parts that have been molded to take trunks, or wheel-well liners or whatever, and expose the people who are running the product on the machine and letting them know what it is. And explaining that if it has this defect, would they actually buy a car with that in it? And once they see that this white clump of fiber on a black-white piece of trunk, is standing out like ... They wouldn't pay their money for it. Then I can turn that around and say, "Well, then, why are you sending it out?"

While at first C2 thought her leadership style, personally, was unaffected by gender, saying, "I think that it may not be gender, it may be A-type personality instead," she argued that there are specific qualities that women have that make them a difference type of leader than a man would be: "One thing I do know a woman does, is they are more patient and more descriptive on their ability to explain something. Whereas a man kind of says it, and you either get it or you don't."

C3 explained her leadership style as direct and efficient:

People have told me this that I am perceived as efficient, and when I conduct a meeting it's going to be to the point, and we're going to meet about what we need to meet about, get it done, and move forward. I'm kind of matter of fact and I try not to waste other people's time, or my own.

And while C3 did not believe that there was anything inherently gendered about her leadership style – that is, that women are no more or less likely to use this style than men – she did contend that the perception of such a style is frequently premised on gender. C3 noted that men are often assumed to be direct and blunt, but such qualities go against the cultural understandings of what women should be:

If a man were to the point and efficient, people wouldn't feel the need to point it out because it's what they expect of a man. When a woman conducts a meeting like that, then people are like, "Oh, that's so great, the way you conducted that meeting."

For C4, her leadership style is affected by the fact that she works in a female-dominated field. She noted that “given that it’s primarily women” and that she had “more female employees than male employees” her choice of leadership was influenced. She saw her leadership style as participative, including the thoughts and opinions of her staff:

I can go by the recent evaluation that I received from them and over the years, things that have been said to me. I think they perceive me as a good leader who listens to other people's input and is a thoughtful. Not someone who dictates. I would say my leadership style is very participative.

C5 categorized her leadership as caring, noting she takes a personal approach to her employees:

They come to me for advice. Or they email me when they have a problem. They just really seek advice from me if they need help with something, but I've been in this career a long time to know the ropes and what I'm supposed to do, how to solve problems. They feel like they can come to me if they have a problem. Furthermore, C5 perceived this style as related to her gender, arguing that “I feel like they may feel more comfortable coming to me as a female because they're female.”

C8 also described her style and perception as influenced by gender. As she said:

I think I'm comfortable being a female leader and I think they get that off of me, they feel that off of me. My style is a nurturing style and that goes with the stereotype of being female, and that's okay with me and quite frankly when it's time to stand up and be counted, they know that I do that. When it's time to be sympathetic, they know I do that. It's really having your employees understand what they can expect from you and when they can expect it.

C7 saw her leadership as noninterventionist, saying that she does not like to “micromanage at all.” She explained that she “expect[s] to have competent people and allow them to do their job. If they want, they need help, they can come to me I think fairly easily.” However, she did not see her gender as affecting either her style or her employees’ perception of her style.

**Major theme 7.** The final theme for the second research was success within the business sector. All participants had different reasons they cited for success within their industry; three cited hard work, three cited continual learning, two cited drive, and others described networking, and personal advocacy. Seven of the participants also noted that they did

believe gender had a role in their success, while one said it did not. For C1, her success was based on a panoply of reasons, including continual learning, volunteering, and connecting with others. As she explained:

Studying up on the field, knowing the field as an expert. Lots of training. Lots of certifications. I have a leader certification and some of the other ones you see up on my desk. Just keeping my knowledge base very strong, being professional when I talk to people, try to treat them like I want to be treated. I think that seems to be enough. Always volunteer. I think volunteering is a big part of it. They always want to see that you are not just worrying about your part but you're worrying about the whole corporation as a whole. Knowing that mission and vision that they want to go and then making myself available to help them get there.

C1 did believe that gender played a role in her level of success; while she did think that success could be obtained, regardless of gender, C1 contended that women always have to work harder to be at the same level as men:

I feel like a male could do the same exact thing that I am doing and be successful. The only difference is that I have to work harder. I have to be more knowledgeable. I have to spend more time than they would have to to do the same thing that I'm doing. I think a male is accepted easier and they can come in and they don't have to ... The standards are not the same. The standards are different. I have to go to higher standards to get the same position that a male would have to not go to a higher standard for.

C5 and C9 also cited continuing education as a reason for their success; moreover, C9 also believed that gender had a role in their success. For C5, this continual knowledge gathering is about "staying up to date with knowledge within my career. I go to many state conferences. I go to many conferences in general." For C9, the education process has been more formal:

I would say education has been key for me. I've continued to go to school for most of my career. I'm on my fourth degree now. I just feel it's important to give yourself that mental challenge, and not stagnate yourself. I think because it's somewhat rare, people acknowledge that and kind of I think respect that in a way at work, so hopefully you build new skills to apply them at work and keep yourself valuable as an employee, but also there's just kind of the credibility that that brings, that people kind of respect that, "Hey, she's an intellectual, and she can go toe to toe. She can challenge," you know, that piece. I think that's been a very helpful strategy.

Moreover, C9 said that her gender has hindered her success, arguing that "I think for the effort and education and such forth that I've put in, if I was a male, I think I would be further along."

C2 had two distinct experiences in her pursuit of success, contingent on the specific business at which she was employed. In her first corporate job, her success was predicated on having a boss who was open minded and willing to give her a chance, and her own willingness to self advocate when she knew she should get a promotion:

I got a new boss and within a matter of six months I was promoted five times and actually ended up being the quality director for the plant. If you get the right boss at the start, you move up. As it went further, I slowly evolved into wanting to do

something different, and design was my next step. But there were no women designers in the entire industry. I went to my boss and I told him I wanted to be a designer, and he says, "Well, we can make you senior product development engineer." I said, "I am the product development engineer. I'm senior over what?" And I said, "Listen, I've applied for a lot of government jobs. If you'd just give me a good recommendation, I would appreciate it," and walked out. About a week later I was called up to the design place and offered a trainee job in design. In the most elite paper grade, I had made myself a name.

Once C2 switched to the automotive industry, her path to success altered, and she focused on acquiring knowledge and more education to prove herself:

You have to have your education behind you, and you have to know your products back, forth, and in-between, because the first line of defense going into tier-one, is the engineers who are the program managers for the different platforms, such as the Chevy Cruze or the Toyota Rav4, or whatever, those people are the ones you're gonna face, and they won't listen to you unless you can answer their questions. From my standpoint as career-minded as I was, I dove into educating myself on acoustics and molding and went to as many places as I could find that, and watched the processes and learned how to troubleshoot. If you can troubleshoot any kind of problems in somebody else's process, it's worth a million dollars. That's how you get in there.

C2 also argued that gender was a part of her success; however, since moving to the automotive industry, that impact was actually positive, as the predominantly male field has tried to attract more women:

Now that I'm in my other career, which is the automotive industry, although it may in some people's opinions feel as though it's all male, they are actually embracing women. They are trying to get women to take engineering jobs to, well, Mary Barra, from GM is now the CEO of GM. They are promoting women right and left because they know that we can do it. It's a breath of fresh air to know that there's no handcuffs on you now, and you can be everything you want to be and more, as long as you have the drive to do it.

C3 argued that she was successful in the corporate arena because of an ethic of hard work: "I think I have been able to succeed because I work hard, I apply myself, I enjoy what I do and it shows in what I do. I try to give it my all, all the time. I love it, so I enjoy doing that, but I also work very hard." Moreover, C3 attributed her success to her ability to exhibit the characteristics of both males and females; by doing so, she argued, she was more likely to be successful:

As a woman, sometimes I can be empathetic. Men can too, but there are times when a female can look at an issue and maybe figure out what someone's problem with it might be, what the barriers might be based on what someone else might be feeling, kind of try to work that out with someone else. I also understand male mindsets, I think, not all of them, but I understand when people just want to get work done. I operate that way too, so I think I can relate to how some males, they don't want a lot of fluff in an email, they just want an answer, and I can handle that.

C8 and C6 also cited work ethic as their primary success strategy. C8 believed that her gender stimulated this strategy, but argued it was a positive quality:

My big strategy was being a workaholic and overachieving. I felt it was necessary for me to work from a base of knowledge, to earn the respect, and that meant sacrifice, that meant volunteering for crummy assignments. It meant taking on difficult situations and it meant proving myself... I think because I felt the need to overachieve and prove myself, I stayed committed to that.

C6 noted that her work ethic was tied to her competitiveness, which was a necessity of her gender:

I think my success has been the work ethic. I think once you establish your work ethic and the reputation for that...it's almost as though you have to learn to accept in terms of competition. If you have two, a female and a male that are both competent and qualified, you have to, even though you want to be assertive and accept your own strength as being promotable, you also have to allow for that possibility that the guy next to you might get preferential treatment just because he is a male and you just can't let it intimidate you.

C4 argued that it was her drive to learn more and improve herself within her field and as a person that helped her success:

I think I've been able to succeed because I'm always moving forward. I'm always looking at ways that I can improve. Not only my paycheck, but myself as a person. I'm always looking for ways that I can grow as a nurse, as a leader, as a community servant, as a teacher, as ... I've always wanted to make a difference in nursing and that's a big part of why I want to go into education. Although, my husband and some of the people that I work with and my current manager, director, have told me that I make a difference every day. But, I just feel like I've always wanted to grow and move forward.

However, C4 did not believe that her success was a function of, or affected by, her gender. While she acknowledged that “as a nurse in the corporate setting it is mostly women,” she explained. “I don't know that I would say it's my gender identity as much as my personality and my inner strength” that helped with her success. C7 also cited her drive as her success strategy; however, she did note the barriers that gender construct to that success. She explained:

I think my strategy is always to be curious. I'm not satisfied just doing the minimum. I never wanted to be one of those people that just punched a clock, if that analogy can even be used anymore, but I want to have an experience on my job. I want to be contributing. That's what I really look for much more so than what ladder do I climb next?

However, this drive is also a product of gender disparity. C7 noted, “as a female you feel like you have to try a little harder. You have to really prove something.”

#### **IV.7 Summary**

There were seven major themes that emerged from both research questions: motivation, mentors, choice of business arena, support networks, obstacles, leadership, and success. Each research question examined how gender roles and expectations influenced a woman's choice to enter a specific arena of business – either as an entrepreneur or within the corporate arena. These seven themes were analyzed within each question and each business arena.

First, female entrepreneurs discussed their career experiences and choices. The first theme within this research question was motivation; within the theme, five participants noted that money was a primary motivating factor in being an entrepreneur, while four cited the freedom offered by becoming an entrepreneur; one participant had an outlying response. The second major theme to come from the first research question is mentors. The majority of respondents – seven – said that they did have mentors to assist them in their career path, although four had them during their education and three others within their professional field; however, two participants said they did not have a mentor. The third major theme was the choice of business arena. For five of these entrepreneurial women, the choice of specific industry was based on their knowledge, skillset, and desire to be within the industry; four of the participants moved from the corporate arena to the entrepreneurial arena, and three saw their industry and field as influenced or affected by gender.

The fourth major theme was support network. Within this theme, there were two subcategories: family and friends and colleagues. Three of the participants said they had received positive support from their friends and family in their decision to be an entrepreneur, while six noted that the support was mixed. However, no participants felt unsupported. Moreover, all but one participant said that they felt supported and treated well by their female colleagues in their field.

Within the fifth theme of obstacles, two participants each (with E5 offering two different obstacles) cited financing, and doing the business alone, while six participants cited gender differences as obstacles in their own business. All of these obstacles were understood by the participants as a function of being female. The sixth theme is leadership. While three participants noted toughness as a one form of their leadership style, that was the only area of similarity. Moreover, three participants explicitly stated that her leadership style was affected, or perceived to be affected, by their gender. The seventh theme is success. Seven of the entrepreneurs believed that their success was related to their gender; however, the ways in which these women believed their gender influenced their success varied between participants.

Within the fifth theme of obstacles all participants noted that their gender was a barrier in their field. These gendered obstacles took different forms for different participants, including race, class, childcare, and societal prejudices that colored their superiors' views of them. The sixth theme that came from the second research question is leadership. Like this theme for entrepreneur respondents, there was no consistent leadership style between the participants; each cited a different type of leadership approach. However, seven of the nine corporate arena participants agreed that being female affected how employees understood or viewed their leadership.

The final theme for the second research was success within the business field. All participants had different reasons they cited for success within their industry; three cited hard work, three cited continual learning, two cited drive, and others described networking, and personal advocacy. Seven of the participants also noted that they did believe gender had a role in their success, while one said it did not.

## V CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Gender disparities are rampant within the arena of entrepreneurship and corporate business, including inequities in entrepreneurial intention (Haus et al., 2013; Lindsay et al., 2014), inequalities in funding for and investment (Marom, Robb, & Sade, 2015; Thébaud & Sharkey, 2016), lack of females in leadership positions (Artigas, Callegaro, & Novales-Flamarique, 2013; Barta et al., 2013) and stereotypes that persist within the industry (Balachandra, Briggs, Eddleston, & Brush, 2013; Fuentes-Fuentes, Bojica, Ruiz-Arroyo, & Welter, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how and why women choose to enter either the corporate business or entrepreneurship realm. From the results of this study, there were seven major themes that emerged: motivation, mentors, choice of business arena, support networks, obstacles, leadership, and success. Each research question examined how gender roles and expectations influenced a woman's choice to enter a specific arena of business – either as an entrepreneur or within the corporate arena.

There were marked similarities – as well as differences – between the groups of first generation female entrepreneurs and those in the corporate arena. Within the area of motivation, the two groups were strikingly similar; the majority of both groups cited money as the primary factor for entering their respective fields. The only variation was those within the corporate arena specifically linked that motivation to supporting themselves and their family, and four entrepreneurs – unlike those in the corporate arena – also cited freedom as a motivation for their field. Similarly, an equal number of female entrepreneurs and those in the corporate arena – seven – said that they had a mentor either during school or within their professional field. Another area of similarity was gender as an obstacle within their chosen field; both a majority of entrepreneurs (six) and all of those in the corporate arena (nine) saw being female as an obstacle in their arena. There were differences between both subsets of female business women, as well. Reasons for entering their specific field were different between groups; for a majority of entrepreneurial women, the choice of specific industry was based on their knowledge, skillset, and desire to be within the industry, while those who entered the corporate arena did so primarily for financial stability and expediency. One similarity in this area, however, was that most women in both groups had worked in the opposite arena - four of the participants moved from the corporate arena to the entrepreneurial arena, and four of participants had tried entrepreneurship and moved to the corporate arena. There were also minor differences in the support these women received from their families; while neither group felt unsupported, three of the entrepreneurial participants said they had received positive support from their friends and family in their decision to be an entrepreneur, while six noted that the support was mixed, but seven of the participants felt their friends and family were supportive of their decision to enter the corporate arena, while two felt that there were mixed reactions. The area of leadership varied both within and between both groups; just as for entrepreneur respondents, there was no consistent leadership style between the participants; each cited a different type of leadership approach. Finally, the ways in which these women saw their path varied between groups with one exception – participants in both groups cited continual learning. See Figure 3 for the similarities and differences between groups.

### Figure 5 Entrepreneur Corporate Comparison

- Similarities
  - ▣ Motivation significantly similar / money primary factor
  - ▣ 7 in both had mentors
  - ▣ Gender as an obstacle
  - ▣ Most participants had worked in opposite sector
  - ▣ Path continual learning
- Differences
  - ▣ Reasons for entering specific field
  - ▣ Entrepreneur – knowledge, skillset, and desire within that industry
  - ▣ Corporate – primarily financial stability and expediency
  - ▣ Leadership Styles

### V.1 Interpretation of the Findings

Overall, the results of this study reinforce the extant literature on gender within the field of business, both with entrepreneurs and in the corporate arena; however, there were some areas in which the results contradicted or subverted the conclusions of the literature. The results support the main contentions within the theoretical framework of this study, with some minor variation. The Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2010; 2012) recognizes the historical division in labor between the sexes, leading to a divergence in the social and cultural expectations of men and women (Eagly, 1987). These expectancies are transmitted to future generations and, in turn, impinge on the social behavior of each gender (Eagly, 1987, 1997 & Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000) and represent sexual stereotypes (Williams & Best, 1982). This contention about female-based stereotypes and their effect on female behavior was, in part, upheld by the results in the participants' decisions to enter specific industries and specific business arenas. E2 believed her arena choice was based, in part, on her gender: "I think because women are naturally drawn to helping professions ...it was a natural progression for me to pursue a venture that was providing help...I was thinking about providing a service which is very traditional for women." Similarly, C4 argued that her choice of profession – education – was linked both to the gender norms of acceptable female professions; C5's choice of the field of nursing was also premised on the societally constructed fields that were appropriate for women. In these ways, the results reinforced the theoretical framework as it applies to gender stereotypes and expectations.

However, only three out of nine entrepreneurs saw their industry and field as influenced or affected by gender. Moreover, only three participants from the corporate arena felt that their gender played a role in their choice of arena. Therefore, while the Social Role theory was upheld by some of the participants, many did not believe that their gender – with the accompanying construction of specific societal roles – was influential in their career choices.

Yet, the theory as a whole was still upheld by the participants when looking at others' perceptions of gender and gender roles. That is, while not all participants personally felt that gender roles and expectations effecting their choice of career, they still thought others' perceptions and expectations were molded by gender roles and expectations. Social Role Theory argues that the perception of people and their social role is based solely on their gender. These stereotypic gender roles are formed by social norms that

apply to people of a certain category or social position. This aspect of the theory – that women are perceived by the social role assigned to them by their gender - was confirmed by the results of this study, particularly within the theme of obstacles participants faced within the field of business. In this way, the results of this study found that women faced perceptions and expectations in their career, based on stereotypes and gendered constructions of who women in business were. Five entrepreneurs claimed that the construction of gender differences was an obstacle to female entrepreneurs, noting that the ways in which females are culturally constructed often adds challenges that their male counterparts do not have. For E4, these differences were frequently by industry; she argued that fields which are thought of as traditionally female offer less resistance to women than those that are in the conventional purview of men. For E8, the gender-based obstacle was the persistent and negative gender stereotypes, particularly about women who own their own businesses. Similarly, all corporate participants noted that their gender was a barrier in their field. These gendered obstacles took different forms for different participants, including race, class, childcare, and societal prejudices that colored their superiors' views of them.

Moreover, this study's results buttress Social Role theory's assertion that young people learn and emulate the roles they see played out by the adults in their lives. This was particularly relevant for women participants in the corporate arena. Two stated that they chose these careers because of their role models. C9 cited her family as role models as a factor in her decision, saying, "my parents had always kind of set the expectation that you would work hard, and go to college, and work your way through college, and then you know, ideally you would get a job, and that would be most likely employed by someone else." C5 took inspiration from her widowed mother who always worked to provide for her family and told her daughter, "You never know what will happen, you have to have a career." For other participants, their choice to be in the corporate arena was based off of *not* following the steps of family. C4 noted that her father died when she was young, and her mother had no work experience; because of this, she "always knew that when I grew up and got married that I would have a career to where I could be financially stable on my own, if I had to be on my own." In this way, both gender and role models were essential in formulating participants' career choices, which aligns with Social Role theory.

The results of this study also added nuanced supplements to Social Role theory, whose view on family is somewhat limited. Rather than gender-based career decisions solely as a function of role models, this study also found that the influence and support of family helped to counteract any socially constructed gender roles. Seven of the participants felt their friends and family were supportive of their decision to enter the corporate arena, while two felt that there were mixed reactions. In addition, three of the participants said they had received positive support from their friends and family in their decision to be an entrepreneur, while six noted that the support was mixed. However, no participants in either field felt unsupported, which points to how socially constructed roles for women may be able to be overcome by the support of family and friends.

### **V.1.1 *Entrepreneurs***

While the vast majority of the literature explores the gender gap within the field of entrepreneurs, there is a small section that specifically looks as entrepreneurial intentions.

Haus et al. (2013) explored how the relationship between gender and entrepreneurial intention is mediated by motivational constructs, including attitude toward starting a business, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Fini, Grimaldi, Marzocchi, & Sobrero, 2009; Haus et al., 2013). Haus et al. (2013) learned that women tend to choose business ownership as a way to achieve more work–family balance and how much time and effort to put into growing their businesses. The findings from this study were partially supportive of the literature. Participants did cite the attitude of freedom and emancipation as a strong motivator for being an entrepreneur; four of the nine participants mentioned the freedom offered by becoming an entrepreneur. For example, E3 was unambiguous about the opportunities being an entrepreneur offered her as a woman. She saw the leap to owning her own business both as an emancipatory act and a way to afford the flexibility and autonomy to set her own hours so that she can be there for her family. However, the other, stronger motive was financial independence (which could be understood as a form of perceived behavioral control); five participants noted that money was a primary motivating factor in being an entrepreneur.

Also within the realm of entrepreneurial intentions, Yang and Aldrich (2014) claimed that the normative expectations of family roles include having the male/husband as the breadwinner while the female/wife remains as the supportive arm to the career of the husband through the household management needs and hands-on childcare. Because of these social expectations that are present in most families, the others argued that women tend to be less aggressive in entertaining pursuing entrepreneurial intentions, especially when these intentions may be a hindrance to the fulfillment of their primary responsibility of taking care of the household. In part, this concept was reinforced by this study's results; E1 and E3 argued that they faced challenges about doing the business by themselves, but argued that this challenge was alleviated by working with their husband. For E2, while she cited freedom as a motivator, she did note that it was her husband's idea to start a business, not her own. This fact can complicate the concept of autonomy for women with its direct link to the patriarchal impetus. However, the participants also subverted Yang and Aldrich's claims by acting as the breadwinner. E8 became an entrepreneur by necessity; her family needed the money because her husband was handicapped. Moreover, many women became entrepreneurs in order to have more hands-on childcare, rather than in spite of it. E3 became an entrepreneur to be able "to be with my daughter when she starts going to school. I want to be able to be there for her." Scholars have claimed that women entrepreneurs experience gender-based biases in relation to accessing funds from investors, whether they be business entities as well or individuals (Alsos & Ljunggren, 2016; Jayawarna, Woodhams, & Jones, 2012; Marom et al., 2015; Welsh, Kaciak, & Minialai, 2015). Jayawarna et al. (2012) provided evidence that women entrepreneurs tend to experience significant disadvantages in their acquiring resources from orthodox funding channels (e.g., banks and financial institutions), as compared to their male counterparts in the field of entrepreneurship. This literature is moderately supported by the literature. Three of the nine entrepreneurs cited financing as an obstacle to their ability to start their own business. E2 explained that being female was a huge challenge in getting funding for her business; in addition, For E5, the obstacle of finances was about both funding her business and not having the financial security she had in the corporate world. However, this was only 33.3% of the participants who felt funding was a gendered disparity.

In addition, the literature has explored the ways in which female entrepreneurs are viewed as leaders. Research has found that women entrepreneurs tend to react less negatively in situations at work. Moreover, women tend to be more effective when using directive management style (Gupta et al., 2014). This finding is supported by the literature, in part, as three participants noted toughness as a one form of their leadership style; E5, E4, and E2 all described at least one element of their leadership as tough or strong. Moreover, three participants believed that their leadership style was affected, or perceived to be affected, by their gender. These participants argued that their toughness was explained in contrast to “typical women,” While the concept of toughness is typically associated with women, these participants either believed their leadership style was in this vein, or that their employees saw them in that light.

Finally, research has explored the reasons for success for female entrepreneurs. Ayala and Manzano (2014) explored resilience of entrepreneurs and success of businesses. They found that hardiness, resourcefulness, and optimism are the significant dimensions of resilience that predict entrepreneurial success (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). Moreover, resourcefulness of the entrepreneur is also another trait that is a significant predictor of business success (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). The results of this finding were different than the extant literature. While seven of the entrepreneurs believed that their success was related to their gender, the ways in which these women believed their gender influenced their success varied between participants. Some argued that women listen better than men, others that women can do everything, another that success came to those who pursued their passions; still another woman said that those who work hard are respected are successful, while another noted that the nurturing aspect of women is essential for strong customer service, and a different participant said female success is because women are adaptable. Participants noted many more reasons for gender-based success than the notion of resilience and resourcefulness, although those were qualities included.

### ***V.1.2 Corporate Field***

The literature on females in the corporate arena primarily focuses on women as leaders. According to this research, women are viewed as having less leadership capabilities than men and their leadership is evaluated less favorably (Eagly & Karau, 2002). According to Reuben et al. (2011), the different ways that men and women think of themselves and act with regard to incentives may create gender differences that lead to leadership disparity between the sexes, rather than a disparity caused by discrimination alone during the selection process. Women are more global in terms of handling responsibilities and view themselves as leaders of the team, while men approach responsibilities as managers of the team (Kochan et al., 2014). Yet, the findings of this study show that there was no consistent leadership style between the participants; each cited a different type of leadership approach, including leading by example, explanatory, logical/reasoning, direct, efficient, participative, caring, team player, noninterventionist, nurturing, and task-driven. While one participants cited team leadership, these participants placed themselves in a broad spectrum of styles. However, seven of the nine participants in the corporate arena participants agreed that being female affected how employees understood or viewed their leadership, which supports the concept of gender disparity in leadership and perception of leadership.

The extant literature also addresses the integration of work and life is challenging for individual women in the corporate arena; specifically, researchers argue this tension is because the responsibilities of full-time jobs conflict with the conventional roles of family life (Tajlili, 2014). One of the most cited reasons for women's reduced participation in executive positions is the intense pressure to balance family roles, and work demands. For example, prior research has found that the pressure to balance academic work and family roles dominates as the main limiting factor for career/professional advancement (Johnsrud, 1995; Setiadarma, 1993). However, this is directly contradicted by the findings of this study, which discovered that women enter the corporate arena specifically *for* their family. Eight of the nine participants in the corporate arena said that their motivation was to support themselves or their family. In addition, five of the participants linked this motivation to their gender. Four participants specifically said their jobs as a way to support themselves as women, without the support of a man; their motivation was to be financially independent women. This suggests that research may have an outdated mode of how women view themselves and their role in their family.

## **V.2 Limitations of the Study**

There were three main limitations to this study. First, there may be selection bias based on the sample. Because the participants were based on convenience sampling, the group was limited by the knowledge of female businesswomen known by the researcher. Moreover, this bias could have been augmented by who agreed to participate in the study; those who choose to participate may have had stronger or different opinions, based on prior experience in the workplace, than those who opted not to participate in the study. Second, for the purposes of career arena choices by women, the researcher will base the results of the analysis on the actual words and ideas that the participants used in the interviews. As such, the results may not identify terms as used in academic and research literature; rather, results may be versed in the vernacular or using ordinary terms. Provided this limitation, the researcher may not be able to directly link the results of the study to theory.

Second due to the use of a small sample size, the results may not be generalized to all fields of business or all businesswomen as those represented in the interviews. Case studies, however, do not aim at statistical generalization where results are generalizable to populations; rather, they represent an example of analytic generalization (Yin, 2009).

## **V.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher proposes the following recommendations:

- The creation of mentoring programs within both the educational system – including business majors – as well as in the workplace. Research has found that mentoring is essential for women who want to achieve leadership positions in their professional life (Levitt, 2010). For example, Monash University introduced the Women's Mentoring Program in 2000, which supports the career progression and development of female professional and academic staff. The program facilitates mentoring partnerships which provide women with opportunities to reflect on and grow their leadership capabilities, build professional skills and more effectively navigate the

university system. Accenture, a technology-based consulting firm, not only has a Women Mentoring Program, which pair female leaders with Accenture leadership mentors, including virtual workshops and networking tips to help ensure the advancement of women at Accenture, they also created Women's Network, a global internal website that connects women across the company and provides resources that can help them define their vision of success through education, tools and multimedia.

- The establishment of and greater involvement in social activities with different networks for women in both the corporate and entrepreneurial fields. Research has found that such participant can lead women to become a significant part in promoting needed initiatives that aims to minimize the problems encountered in public institutions (Little, 2016). Moreover, women's advantage of forming good and wide networks may be beneficial to generating funds for an entrepreneurial venture through the creation of close contact with venture capitalists or investors (Tinkler et al., 2015).
- Formal policies changes that are centered on promoting the growth of women entrepreneur networks with the business field. This may include financing policies for female entrepreneurs such as microcredit, crowdfunding, and the establishment of more venture capital funds specifically for women. Such policies can empower women in becoming open to entrepreneurial tendencies (Kaushal et al., 2014).
- Prioritizing diversity – of both gender and race – as an organizational priority and developing a culture of engagement in the workforce. This can be done with hiring practices as well as meetings, retreats, and seminars. Diversity in the workforce will not only help women feel more comfortable, but may also result in cumulative financial benefits (Riccò & Guerri, 2014).

#### **V.4 Implications**

This study may be able to promote positive social change in the realm of education, the workplace and in society. The first way this study can do so is by highlighting the gender divisions and stereotypes that still exist and the need for institutional transformation. Because these gender inequities are visible at both educational and workplace institutions, the organizational power structures of those institutions form the basis of the gender hierarchy; through these institutions, specific – often stereotypical and biased – constructions of females are constructed.

The first area of change is within education, which has the ability to change perceptions of gender, particularly within specific disciplines. Schooling – both in K-12 and undergraduate up until graduate school, is not gender neutral; instead, there is an implicit – often times explicit – structuring of gender structuring that occurs (Connell, 2010). Children have knowledge about gender in the school curriculum as early as in the second grade. Good education is education that is just, which has often been made on the basis of rights (Connell, 2010).

Change should also be implemented within business organizations themselves. Organizations that are male-dominated can aid female careers, as well as help abolish the gendered stereotypes, by developing and cultivating a culture of inclusion. Moreover, females themselves can and should cooperatively push organizations to establish more gender-equal policies, which will aid females in opposing discrimination and inequities (Washington, 2011). These policies may include the promotion of women into more

leadership positions, establishing metrics to maintain track of female progress within the organization, and creating mentoring opportunities for women.

The finally area of change is within society, which requires a systematic restructuring of gender roles and perceptions. The researcher hopes that women may be able to come together to collectively fight against inequality, stereotypes, and discrimination. They can do so by continuing their professional pursuit in traditionally male-dominated fields, maintaining their zeal for continual education, as well as training, and joining woman-centered networks and mentoring organizations. Positive social change will be attained if women are cognizant of the perceptions and stereotypes that exist and how they can fight them.

## **V.5 Conclusion**

This research underscores the diversity of approaches that women use in response to gendered constructions and roles, particularly within the field of business. How gender is perceived, internalized, and ultimately is used as motivation or barrier to specific career choices is unique and individual. For both female entrepreneurs and those in the corporate arena, it was impossible to escape specific constructions of womanhood; however, the extent to which they affected, impacted, or changed the participants varied greatly. Some participants fought actively against the stereotypes of women in society; some modelled their choices from their family; some took their family into consideration; some focused on the importance of financial stability.

Therefore, it is problematic to understand gender roles in the business arena as a monolithic and undeviating group. Individual histories, sociopolitical and historical contexts, and personal preference, all contribute to both the facilitation and obstruction of women within specific fields of business. This speaks to the difficulty of a transformation process within the male-dominated field of business; not only is the transformation of social roles and gendered stereotypes a slow and long process, but it also differs by geography, age, nationality, race, and religion. Therefore, giving voice to women – offering agency for them to air their concerns, their successes, and their needs – is essential.

## APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Questions for businesswomen

1. How did you decide to become an entrepreneur/corporate employee?
  - a. Describe the factors that influenced your decision to become an entrepreneur/work in the corporate arena.
  - b. Describe the experiences you had as you started out as an entrepreneur/work in the corporate sector.
2. How did your friends and family react when you informed them about your decision?
  - a. Tell me about some specific positive/encouraging reactions.
  - b. Tell me about some negative/discouraging reactions.
  - c. Did those reactions positive and negative influence your decisions?
  - d. Do you feel your gender identity affected the reactions of your friends and family?
3. Were your friends and family supportive in your decision to become an entrepreneur/ work in the corporate sector? (Answer Yes or No) If answer is yes:
  - a. How did they support you in your decision? If answer is no:
  - b. Why do you think they were not supportive?
  - c. Do you think your gender identity had anything to do with lack of support?
4. Did you face any obstacles in your decision process? (Answer Yes or No) If answer yes:
  - a. Narrate some of those obstacles.
  - b. How did you handle those?
  - c. Do you think, your gender identity helped you in better handing those obstacles?
  - d. Or, do you think your gender identity aggravated the obstacles?
5. Do you think there are societal perceptions and expectations related to women entrepreneurs/corporate employees? (Answer Yes or No). If Answer Yes:
  - a. How did that affect your decision to become entrepreneur/work in the corporate sector?
6. Is it difficult breaking in to the networks you have to break into to be successful?

- a. Are there are networks you have to be a part of? For example, family, friends, banks, other organizations, colleagues in the industry?
- b. Where do you get your network information from and how valuable do you think that information is?
- 7. As you were going through school, were there people mentoring/ advising/recommending things?
  - a. Did you think their advice was premised on your gender?
- 8. What were the key motivating factor(s) that led you to become an entrepreneur/work in the corporate sector?
- 9. (If an entrepreneur): Describe the process of acquiring capital for your business.
  - a. What challenges did you face in acquiring capital?
  - b. Did you believe gender had a role in your acquiring capital?
- 10. (If in the corporate sector). Did you ever consider becoming an entrepreneur? Why/Why not?
- 11. What risks did you associate with your career sector course?
  - a. Were these risks associated with your gender?
- 12. How could it have been easier or smoother if you had to do it all over again? How would you do it differently or what would have made it easier?

#### **Questions Related to Individual's Sector Choice**

- 13. How did you choose your specific sector?
  - a. What are the main factors that influenced your choice?
  - b. What role did your gender identity play in influencing your industry choice?
- 14. What were the barriers you faced in entering this particular sector?
  - a. Please narrate some instances.
  - b. Do you feel gender identity acts as a barrier to entrance in this particular sector?
  - c. As a woman has it been easier/difficult for you to enter this sector?
- 15. How have you been treated by other women in the sector?
  - a. Do you think your gender identity has influenced the way you have been perceived in the sector? If Answer is yes:
    - b. Narrate some such instances.

16. How do your employees regard you as their leader?
  - a. Do you feel your gender identity influences the way you are perceived as a leader by your employees?
17. How have you been able to succeed in this sector?
  - a. What strategies have you implemented to stay in business?
  - b. Do you feel that your gender identity has been a factor in your success? If Answer is yes,
  - c. Please describe why and how gender has influenced your success.
  - d. Do you feel your gender identity has prevented you from being successful in your sector? If answer is yes,
  - e. Please explain how and how your gender identity has prevented you from being successful.

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### **VITA**

Margaret grew up in Greensboro, NC where she attended high school. Upon graduation, Margaret travelled to Columbia, SC to University of South Carolina where she received her Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice. Margaret moved to Charlotte, NC and worked for Bank of America for 18 years before leaving to start her own mortgage company. She had this company for 5 years. After closing the company in 2008 she went attended Pfeiffer University to get her dual degree Masters in Business and Health Administration. Margaret has been teaching business and health undergraduate classes for the past 5 years. She will continue to teach, research and publish. She resides in Davidson, NC.