Pepperdine University
Pepperdine Digital Commons

Theses and Dissertations

2020

The "R" factor: perceptions of retirement as a consideration in small business owner succession planning

Debra L. Mitchell
dlm81@comcast.net

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd

Part of the Educational Leadership Commons

Recommended Citation
Mitchell, Debra L., "The "R" factor: perceptions of retirement as a consideration in small business owner succession planning" (2020). *Theses and Dissertations*. 1131.
https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd/1131

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Pepperdine Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Pepperdine Digital Commons. For more information, please contact bailey.berry@pepperdine.edu.

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

THE "R" FACTOR: PERCEPTIONS OF RETIREMENT AS A CONSIDERATION IN SMALL BUSINESS OWNER SUCCESSION PLANNING

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Debra L. Mitchell

April, 2020

Martine Jago, Ph. D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Debra L. Mitchell

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Committee:

Martine Jago, Ph. D., Chairperson

Diane Pike, Ph. D.

Kent Rhodes, Ed.D.

© Copyright by Debra L. Mitchell (2020)

All Rights Reserved

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation work to my father, Franklin C. Mitchell, a small business owner who was as creative in his speech as in his work. He taught me the importance of being independent, finishing what you start, and sharing what you have with others (“because you can’t take it with you, kid”).

And, to my late husband, Gregory James Carroll (GJC) who was a wonderfully gifted architect and friend to many. He encouraged me to start my own consulting business and referred me to my first client! Without a doubt, Greg was my biggest supporter and advocate in life, no matter the challenge.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation committee: Dr. Martine Jago, Dr. Diane Pike, and Dr. Kent Rhodes for their support throughout the program and completion of this dissertation. Dr. Jago, your patience and confidence in me was often greater than I had in myself. Dr. Pike, your feedback and expertise were invaluable to me as I navigated the murky waters of statistics and mixed methods design. Dr. Rhodes, I hope this is just the beginning of small business owner conversations in our future.

To the ever-supportive Pepperdine iGapsters who started as a cohort and have become friends that I will cherish the rest of my life.

To my family and friends who supported me through this endeavor and throughout my life. You are the best!

To my “family of the heart” and loved ones who demonstrated incredible patience, prayed, or gave selflessly of their time to support me when I needed it the most – Sashi, Curtis, Bonnie, Shelli, Lori, Liane, Gayle, Erin, Rachel, Marco, Pamela, Aaron, Nicki “G”, Kristin, Bob, Hazel, Sloan sisters, Paulie, Racheal, Margaret, Julian and Betty. Thank you.

Lastly, to the small business owners who participated in this study. Your voices and your stories made this possible. You are inspirational, optimistic and passionate.

VITA

EDUCATION

Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN
M.A., Leadership 2007

Concordia College, Moorhead, MN
B.A., Psychology 1985
B.A., Communication Studies

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

DLM Group, HR & Organizational Consulting
Principal 2006 – Present

Ameriprise Financial
Vice President, Human Resources 2005 – 2006

American Express (Financial Advisors Division) 1985 – 2005
Vice President, Human Resources
Director, Employee Relations
HR Generalist
Manager, Staffing

OTHER PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Augsburg University, Minneapolis, MN
Adjunct Professor, Masters of Arts in Leadership 2017 – Present

Hawaii International Conference of Education, presenter
"*Entrepreneurial Learning: Exploration into Educational Strategies for Owner Managed Small Firms"*, January 2016

Mitchell, D., & Rhodes, K. (2016). It's time for baby boomer small business owners to retire: Or is it? *Journal of the North American Management Society (JNAMS)*, 10 (2), 16-21.

Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN
Leadership Professional Development and Degree Preview Event, presenter,
"Demystifying Leadership: It's Easier Than You Think and Harder Than It Looks", November 2015

ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examines the phenomenon of retirement as a factor of consideration in small business owner succession planning in the United States (U.S.). A mixed methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative analyses, was used to answer the question: In what ways do perceptions of retirement influence small business owner succession planning? Small business owners (*N* = 102) primarily from the upper Midwest completed a 15-item online questionnaire which asked both closed and open-ended questions related to business and business owner demographics, as well as owner perceptions of retirement. Businesses included are both family owned and non-family owned. Small business owners selected to participate in the interview met the following criteria: (a) current CEO of a business, (b) CEO of the same business for a minimum of 10 years, (c) business has 2 – 99 employees, (d) for profit business designation. The semi-structured interview protocol was conducted with 17 small business owners.

Triangulation of analyses and findings resulted in significance: Perceptions of retirement do influence small business owner succession planning. Society views of retirement are significant as a factor in views owners have of their own retirement. Further research is suggested to expand the research related to succession planning and valence assignment of factors to determine impact, if any, to succession planning follow through as well as further exploration of other factors, post succession, that may have relevance to the phenomenon of succession planning implementation.

Keywords: business owner; retirement; succession; succession planning

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter Overview

This exploratory study examines the ways perceptions of retirement might influence small business owner succession planning. *Influence* in this context refers to the capacity to have an effect or association between variables, not to causality. As more business owners age, understanding these views may lend insight as to why so few businesses have succession plans in place. Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, and definition of terms. The research question, limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and researcher positionality are presented, concluding with a summary of how this study is organized.

Background of the Study

Many Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) consider succession planning to be critical to the continuance of their business (Marshall et al., 2006; Ward, 2004). However, the idea of planning for retirement and succession is one of the most difficult, complex, and personal issues faced by CEOs (Aronoff, 2011; Aronoff, McClure, & Ward, 2011; Breton-Miller, Miller, & Steier, 2004; Marshall et al., 2006; Nadler, Krupp, & Hossack, 2009; Stavrou, 2003; Vancil, 1987; Ward, 1997). Therefore, many business owners may delay or be reluctant to do the critical planning for a business future that may not include them.

Recognizing that many CEOs know the paramount importance of succession planning for the continuance of the business after their departure from the organization, it might be presumed that business owners intentionally plan and take appropriate action to ensure the business persists. Yet, this is not the case. A majority of CEOs do not have a succession plan in place for their small business and tend to defer taking deliberate steps toward planning for their exit. Some reasons for this identified in the literature include psychological and emotional readiness of the CEO, organizational preparation and identification of a successor, and business transfer issues which include financial and legal considerations (Aronoff et al., 2011; Breton-Miller et al., 2004; Christensen, 1953; Lansberg, 1988; Ward, 1997). For those business owners who do have a succession plan, implementation is often delayed because of factors such as a CEO's motivation to "let go" of the business and give up authority, issues of control, self-identity connected with the business, fulfilment, and facing the unknowns of life after leaving the business. All of these can be powerful forces of resistance that defy even the best of intentions (Brown & Coverley, 1999; Ip & Jacobs, 2006; Sharma, Chrisman, Pablo, & Chua, 2001; Ward, 1997, 2004).

Researchers have attempted to establish and categorize components of succession planning in meaningful and manageable ways to assist in addressing this phenomenon, but no single factor has been identified to explain why so few CEOs of small businesses have succession plans (Breton-Miller et al., 2004; Chua, Chrisman, & Sharma, 2003; Christensen, 1953; File & Prince, 1996; Handler, 1994; Ip & Jacobs, 2006; Sharma, Chrisman, & Chua, 2003; Ward, 1997). While it is beyond the scope of this study to explore, in depth, each of the numerous factors possibly affecting succession planning, the goal is to contribute to the body of useful "practice" information designed to increase succession planning among small business owners who wish for the business to continue.

The continuance of small business also matters to the economy. Small businesses are critical to the United States (U.S.) economy in terms of their contributions to the gross domestic product and employment of millions of people in the workforce (United States SBA Office of Advocacy, 2016). Christensen (1953), an early founder of business strategy, aptly stated, “From the viewpoint of aggregate size, small business is pretty big business” (p. 5). With small businesses comprising 99.9% of all U.S. businesses, Christensen’s statement (1953) still holds true today (United States SBA Office of Advocacy, 2018). Within these businesses, executive management’s contribution to the success of the organization is critical because management is responsible for decisions that impact the whole organization (Drucker, 2001).

Unfortunately, even with the CEO’s critical role in the success of the organization, many small businesses with employees fail to survive more than five years (United States SBA Office of Advocacy, 2016). In the case of family firms in the United States, fewer than one third survive the transition to the second generation and less than half of those make it to the third generation (De Massis, Chua, & Chrisman, 2008; Handler & Kram, 1988; Morris, Williams, & Nel, 1996; Sharma et al., 2001; Ward, 1997, 2004). However, considerable research suggests succession planning can improve the success of the transition (Aronoff et al., 2011; Barnes & Hershon, 1976; Christensen, 1953; Ip & Jacobs, 2006; Lansberg, 1988; Sharma et al., 2001; Wang, Watkins, Harris, & Spicer, 2004; Ward, 1997, 2004). Given the importance of small businesses to the U.S. economy and workforce, it is troubling so few owners have exit plans in place despite the abundance of research that supports the case for succession planning.

Compounding these challenges is the demographic reality that a large portion of the U.S. workforce is made up of employees of small businesses who are aging and approaching retirement. This sizable generation, often referred to as “baby boomers”, comprises those born between the years of 1946-1964 (Adams-Price, Turner, & Warren, 2015; United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). The baby boomer generation makes up the largest population of small business owners in the U.S. (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). As CEOs age, the notion of succession planning is paramount not only for the CEOs but also for company management, customers, boards, families, and employees (Nadler et al., 2009). Yet, these small business CEOs who are nearing, or at, retirement age tend to be without succession plans. The focus of this research project, then, is on ways in which individual small business CEOs consider retirement as a factor affecting their plans for succession.

Problem Statement

Perhaps no event in the life of a business organization is more critical than the transfer of responsibility, ownership, control, and authority from the incumbent CEO to a successor (Ward, 2004). The CEO is often in the best position to make decisions and take actions to avoid potential problems created by not having a well-developed plan for the future of the business (Lansberg, 1988; Malone, 1989; Sharma et al., 2001). However, CEOs find it incredibly difficult to “let go” of a business that, in many cases, they created and have spent a lifetime building (Aronoff 2011; De Massis et al., 2008; Handler & Kram, 1988; Nadler et al., 2009; Sonnenfeld, 1991; Ward, 1997).

It is estimated that between 60%-70% of small business owners are without a succession plan, and the rate of succession planning has improved little in the past 60 years (Christensen, 1953; Eliopoulos & Meister, 2017; Sharma et al., 2001; Ward, 1997). With few small businesses having succession plans, the fate of the majority of small businesses is uncertain (Chambers, 2014).

As more CEOs approach retirement age with no plans for their succession, the scope of the problem widens. This research addresses the need for additional research studies to understand more clearly the phenomenon of small business owner succession planning. How do small business owner perceptions of retirement factor into the succession planning process? The goal is to add knowledge to the body of literature related to succession planning that may be used to assist small business owners in planning for a successful transition.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which small business owners consider their own retirement in planning for their succession. This research is structured to examine why business owners tend not to do succession planning. It focuses on the perspectives of the small business owner and centers attention on the phenomenon of retirement as a factor that may influence, positively or negatively, their planning.

Significance of the Study

This study may lend insight to alternate succession planning approaches by providing a different lens through which small business owners view their retirement and succession. This perspective may be helpful in navigating the succession, post-succession, and retirement transition more smoothly by providing information that may influence CEOs to engage more actively in these processes. The outcomes may be used by small business owners who are considering their succession or by practitioners and advisors who assist small business owners with succession planning.

With respect to the professional literature, there are three potential benefits of this research. First, this research addresses a subset of small businesses by defining small businesses as those with fewer than 100 employees. In much of the literature, small businesses are defined as having fewer than 500 employees. Yet, firms with fewer than 100 employees make up 98.2% of small businesses and nearly 35% of U.S. private sector employment (Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council, 2016).

Second, there is limited research specifically addressing small business owner perceptions of retirement and their succession. Where retirement is considered, emphasis is placed upon passing the mantle to the next CEO rather than upon an understanding of the future, post-succession plan of the departing CEO (Breton-Miller et al., 2004; Naveen, 2006; Rubenson & Gupta, 1996; Vancil, 1987). Addressing the psychological and psychosocial factors of retirement from an individual and societal norm perspective can further understanding of the connection between succession planning and retirement.

The third area of significance relates to the potential impact of this issue on the U.S. economy and workforce. Small businesses have historically low succession plan rates and survival rates (Christensen, 1953; Goldenberg & Kline, 1999; Ward, 2004). If improvements in succession planning and survival rates occur, more businesses survive, employ people, and continue to provide goods and services.

Definition of Terms

This section provides definitions to key terms to be used in this study.

Baby boomer. This term identifies someone born between the years of 1946 – 1964 (Colby & Ortman, 2014). Named after the "boom" of babies after the Second World War and through the mid-1960s, this generation is a large contributor to the U.S. labor force and currently contains the largest number of CEOs in the U.S. (Adams-Price et al., 2015; United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).

Business owner. The business owner refers to the CEO or president of the small business, who has financial investment in the company. In this study, small business owner, CEO, president, founder, or owner are used interchangeably.

CEO. Typically, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the highest-ranking person in the business and has ultimate decision-making responsibility for the success or failure of the firm ("Chief executive officer," n.d.). For this study, "CEO" is used interchangeably with president, owner, business owner, or founder of the small business.

Family-owned business. There are many definitions for family-owned business (Michael-Tsabari, Labaki, & Zachary, 2014). In the broadest sense, family-owned business "requires that the family has some degree of effective control over strategic direction and the business is intended to remain in the family" (Kim & DeVaney, 2003, p. 199). Other definitions include additional requirements, e.g., that the CEO is also the founder, the business employs some family members, or the vision of the business is the responsibility of the family (Kim & DeVaney, 2003; Motwani, Levenburg, Schwarz, & Blankson, 2006). A family-owned business is one where the CEO is a family member, the family owns a controlling interest in the business, and family members are involved in the management and decision making of the business (Motwani et al., 2006; Rosenblatt, de Mik, Anderson, & Johnson, 1985).

Founder-owner. This term refers to the owner of the business as the entrepreneur who first created the business identity, built, managed, and owned it (Lansberg,1988). Founder is used interchangeably with CEO, president, business owner, and small business owner in this study.

Post-succession. This is defined as the period after business management has been transferred to the new CEO and the former CEO no longer has primary ownership, decision-making, or management authority of the company.

Retirement. This broad term can have different meanings. For this study, retirement is defined as “withdrawal from one’s position or occupation or from active working life” (“Retirement,” n.d.).

Small business. A common definition of a small business is one which has fewer than 500 employees (SBA Office of Advocacy, 2018). For purposes of this study, a business is defined as a small business when it is for-profit with two or more employees but fewer than 100.

Small business owner (SBO). This is the person who has financial investment or ownership in the small business and is seen as the primary leader and decision-maker in this study. CEO, president, business owner, founder, and owner are used interchangeably.

Succession. The transfer of leadership from the incumbent CEO to the successor CEO (Sharma et al., 2001).

Succession planning. According to Kleiman and Peacock (1996), “succession planning involves the transfer of assets, capital, contacts, power, skills, and authority from one generation to the next” (p. 98). De Massis et al. (2008) consider the “actions, events, and developments that affect the transfer of managerial control” as part of the succession planning process (p. 184). For this study, succession planning is defined as a deliberate and organized process of transferring leadership and control of the business from the incumbent CEO to the successor. This process is likely to occur over a period of time (Aronoff et al., 2011).

Valence lens. Valence is a way to designate emotions as positive or negative (Shuman, Sanders, & Scherer, 2013). For this study, valence lens is the owner’s view, positive or negative, of both the desirability and feasibility of retirement and succession. Valence assignment of positive or negative can change as internal and external factors change.

Research Questions

The primary research question that guides this study is as follows: In what ways do perceptions of retirement influence small business owner succession planning? This guiding question leads to two sub-questions:

1. What are the perceptions of small business owners toward their retirement?
2. What are the perceptions of small business owners toward their succession?

These sub-questions provide additional areas of inquiry related to the central question and are used in the construction of the questionnaire and interview protocol.

Limitations

Four limitations are identified for this study:

1. Each organizational membership group had sole discretion of questionnaire distribution to its members.
2. The snowball sampling technique was at the discretion of the researcher's network and who they referred to take the questionnaire, if anyone.
3. Small business owners shared their own unique perceptions. The results were used to identify patterns but not deemed predictive of a larger sample of small business owners.
4. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Delimitations

There are four delimitations, created by the researcher, that could restrict the transferability and generalizability of results in this study:

1. The researcher chose small, privately owned businesses with fewer than 100 employees and more than two employees. Transferability and generalizability of results to large companies is not the intention of the researcher.
2. The small businesses in this study are from different industries, largely based in a metropolitan area of the Midwest.
3. The populations from which the sample is drawn is primarily from the researcher's existing professional network and local metropolitan Chamber of Commerce membership.

4. The subjects selected for the interview protocol are required to be the current acting CEO of the small business for a minimum of 10 years. The CEOs do not have to be the founder.

Assumptions

The researcher makes the following assumptions:

1. Participants would be candid to best of their ability;
2. Instruments would be used appropriately and measure what they were supposed to measure;
3. Interpretation of the data would reflect the interviewee's perceptions.

Positionality

As part of a mixed methods study, a qualitative strand naturally lends itself to a degree of inherent bias that should be examined and mitigated when conducting research (Creswell, 2013). Included in positionality is the researcher's personal world view and relationship to the subject matter. The following aspects of positionality are worthy of note:

- The researcher's degree in psychology and Master's Degree in Leadership could impact the way data is interpreted;
- As a consultant for over 10 years, most of her experience has been advising small business CEOs facing challenges with their succession and pending retirements;
- The researcher's professional network was a source of interviewees of which the researcher had some familiarity.

This experience could have introduced unintentional bias into the results. Every effort was made to mitigate the possibility of the researcher's perceptions having influence, negative or positive, on the outcomes.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the reasons why small business owner succession planning needs further study. Chapter 2 provides a summary of the scholarly and pertinent literature on succession planning for small business owners. Chapter 3 explains the research design and methodology used in this research project. Chapter 4 reviews the findings of the study. Chapter 5 reviews and discusses the conclusions and implications of the study.

Chapter Summary

Succession planning has long been a topic of interest and research. Planning for succession is considered to be of critical importance in the successful transfer from one CEO to the next (Lansberg, 1988). For a number of small businesses, the CEO considering succession may also be the entrepreneur and founder. Many owners have a desire to see their businesses continue or passed on but find it difficult to "let go" of something they have spent a lifetime building (Aronoff, 2011; Ward, 1997). The continuance of small business is not only important to the CEO, but it has documented significance to the U.S. economy and workforce.

Despite its documented importance, few small businesses have a succession plan. The urgency of this issue is further compounded by the numbers of CEOs reaching retirement. This suggests an opportunity to conduct research that may be useful in better understanding this current and increasing challenge facing the U.S.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed literature relevant to small business owner succession planning and retirement as a foundation to exploring the question: In what ways do perceptions of retirement influence small business owner succession planning?

The first section provides a description of the conceptual framework used to explore the succession planning phenomenon, with a focus on Shapero's (1982) model (as cited in Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000) and adaptation of the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen,1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). A framework was constructed as a visual to demonstrate the researcher's conceptualization of the study.

The second section addresses research on small businesses and small business owners, including small business importance, owner description, business characteristics, and distinctions between family-owned and non-family owned firms.

The third section addresses the concept of retirement; historical context and current landscape of retirement, societal norms pertaining to retirement, and the psychological and psychosocial factors involved in retirement planning, with reference to business and human life cycles within the context of succession planning.

The fourth section reviews small business owner succession, highlighting issues in the literature that are most relevant to succession planning, namely: (a) theories of succession planning, (b) major components of the succession planning process, (c) the importance of succession planning, and (d) challenges faced by small business owners with a specific emphasis on planning-related ambivalence and resistance.

The final section juxtaposes literature that reviews the intersection of business and human life cycles and the similarities and comparisons made in later stages of the cycles. Gaps and inconsistencies in the literature have been summarized.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study is to explore small business owner views of retirement and succession. The central research question that guides this purpose is: In what ways do perceptions of retirement influence small business owner succession planning?

There is no one general theory that speaks to succession planning (Sharma, Chrisman, & Chua, 2003). Yet, theory is important in guiding the application of practice (Sharma, 2004). One relevant model, the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen,1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), has emerged as “one of the most influential models in predicting human behavior and behavioral dispositions” (Chiou, 1998, p. 298). According to Ajzen (2002),

> Human behavior is guided by three kinds of considerations: beliefs about the likely consequences or other attributes of the behavior (behavioral beliefs), beliefs about the normative expectations of other people (normative beliefs), and beliefs about the presence of factors that may further or hinder performance of the behavior (control beliefs; p. 665).

As an intentions-centered theory, the theory of planned behavior proposes that behavior can be affected by the intentions toward the behavior (see Figure 1; Ajzen, 1991, 2002; Krueger & Carsrud, 1993). Intentions formation is effected through the collective integration of attitudes, beliefs about expectations of important others, and perceptions of control over the behavior (Ajzen, 1991, 2002; Chiou, 1998).

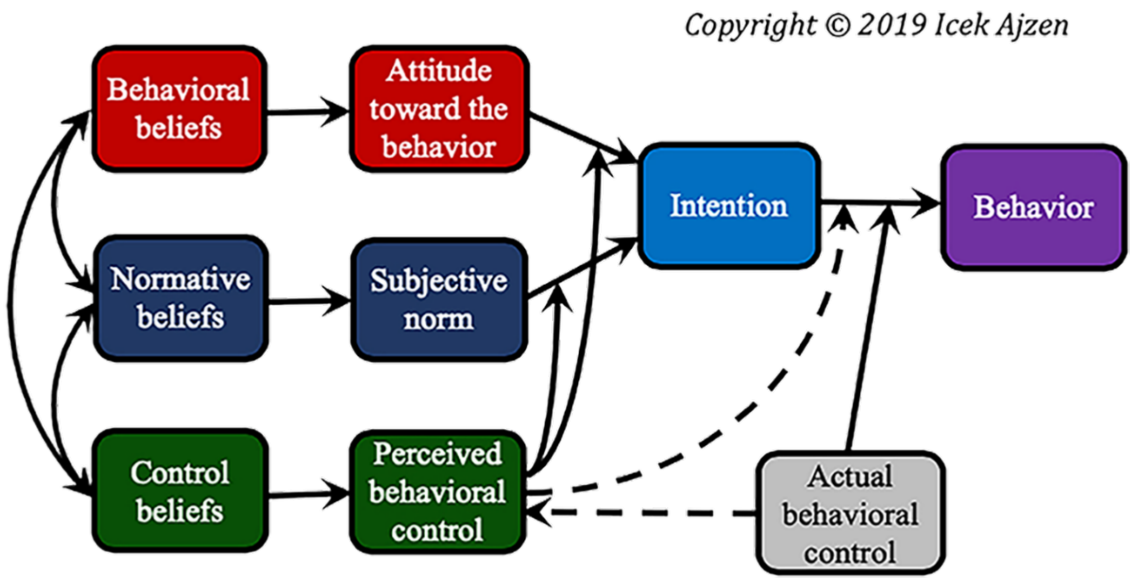

Figure 1. Theory of planned behavior model. From "Theory of Planned Behavior Diagram," by I. Ajzen, 2019 (http://people.umass.edu/aizen/tpb.diag.html). Copyright 2019 by Icek Ajzen. Reprinted with permission.

The theory of planned behavior has been used in a number of domains and included in many research studies. It has often been cited in preventative and intervention health studies related to areas such as diet, weight, alcohol, smoking, or other wellness. The theory has continued to expand its use to different and emerging fields.

- McCaul, Sandgren, Neill, and Hinsz (1993) used the theory of planned behavior and self-efficacy expectations to predict health-protected behaviors such as breast self-exams or brushing teeth.
- McDermott et al. (2015) and Cooke, Dahdah, Norman, and French (2016) conducted health-related meta analyses, which included a review of over 60 studies of the theory of planned behavior focused on health and prevention of specific issues.

- Krueger and Carsrud (1993) applied the theory of planned behavior to explore the entrepreneurial domain.
- Kautonen, van Gelderen, and Fink (2015) also used the theory of planned behavior for predicting business start-up intentions and subsequent behavior based on longitudinal survey data which included nearly 1000 participants.
- Chiou (1998) used the theory of planned behavior in an empirically based study to investigate the influence of attitude, subjective norms (expectations), and perceived behavioral control related to consumers' purchase intentions. The results showed that attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control had significant effects on intentions to purchase.
- Other researchers (Kim, Lee, Sung, & Choi, 2016; Paul, Modi, & Patel, 2016; Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006; Prapavessis, Gaston, & DeJesus, 2015) have chosen to extend or adapt the theory of planned behavior to areas such as social media, environmental and green consumption, marketing, leisure, and technology adoption.

Despite its popularity, the model has been criticized for its shortcomings. A universal limitation to the theory, also cited by its author, is the numerous exogenous factors that can change the situation affecting perceived control, attitudes, and behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Conner, 2015; McDermott et al., 2015). Intentions do not always lead to behaviors. A summary critique, *Time to retire the theory of behavior* (Sniehotta, Presseau, & Araújo-Soares, 2014), contends that while the theory of planned behavior has shaped psychological theory and supports intentions and perceived behavior control as psychological predictors of behavior, it has limited demonstrated predictive validity and questionable utility (p. 3). Variability in behavior is not sufficiently addressed in the theory and other factors may influence behavior more than intention. In addition, the utility of the theory is questioned. Studies have expanded on the theory, yet the theory has not changed thereby questioning the usefulness of the original theory.

In rebuttal to criticism, Ajzen (2015) points to the static nature that has been erroneously assigned to the theory. The theory espouses a more dynamic approach which recognizes movement and changes in the influences of intentions. Conner (2015), while acknowledging that bifurcated views of the theory exist, suggests its contributions to research have been profound and that a better approach to the debate of its merit may well be expanding the theory. Given its strengths and limitations, the theory of planned behavior in this study is not a theory as much as a model or road map which has various applications to understanding the dynamics of changing factors that influence human attitudes and actions.

Some researchers have adapted the theory to address limitations of exogenous factors and also to modify or add features to address areas of interest outside of the health domain. Shapero's 1982 model of entrepreneurial event (SEE) and Elfving's contextual model of entrepreneurial intentions (EIM) are two such adaptations (Elfving, Brannback, & Carsrud, 2009; Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000). In Shapero's model, perceived *desirability* refers to the extent to which a person feels an attraction toward a given behavior (e.g., starting a business). Similarly, *perceived feasibility* is the degree to which a person feels personally capable of executing a given behavior (Krueger et al., 2000, p. 419). These two types of perceptions are combined with a person's disposition to act as influenced by cultural and social factors or the person's own values and beliefs as seen in in Figure 2, below.

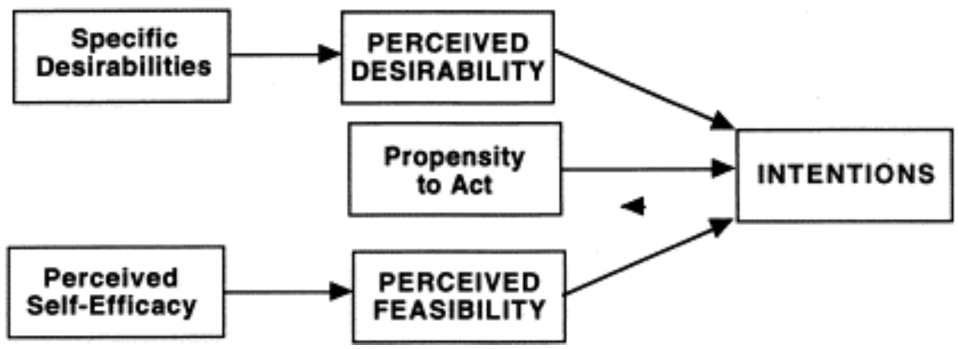

Figure 2. Shapero-Krueger model of intentions. Adapted from "Competing Models of Entrepreneurial Intentions," by N. F. Krueger, Jr., M. D. Reilly, and A. L. Carsrud, 2000 (*Journal of Business Venturing*, *15*(5-6), p. 411-432). Copyright 2000 by Elsevier. Adapted with permission.

Elfving et al. (2009) discuss the role that motivation and specific goals can play in these models. The researcher has adapted the theory of planned behavior and the Shapero-Krueger model concepts of feasibility and desirability (Krueger et al., 2000) in the creation of a new framework (Figure 3):

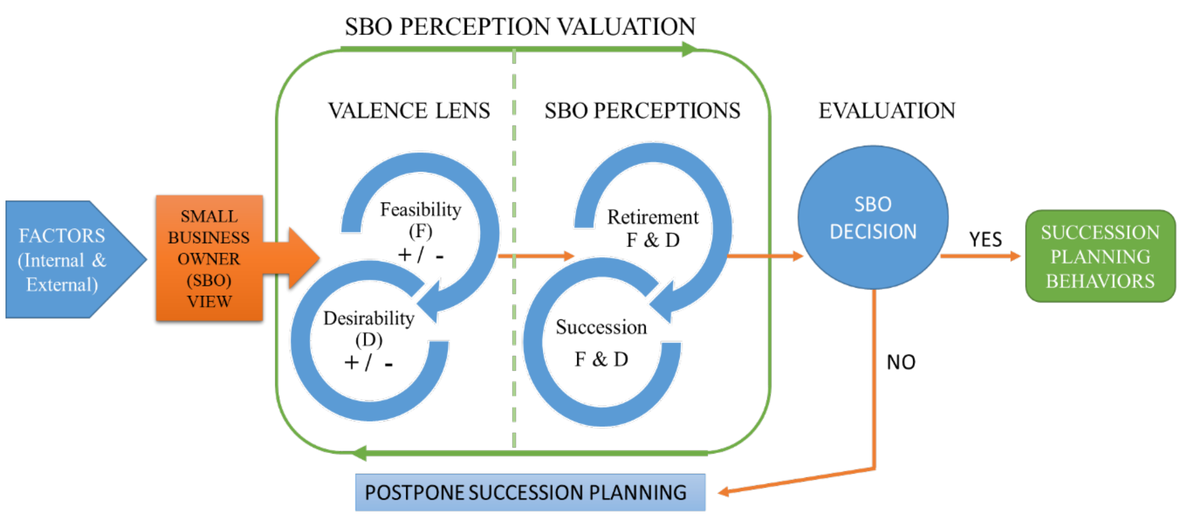

Figure 3. Perception valuation model for small business owners.

Sharma et al. (2003) used the theory of planned behavior to look at succession planning intentions from an incumbent's desire to keep the business in the family, the family's commitment, and the propensity to trust the successor. According to Krueger and Carsrud (1993), "understanding intentions is particularly useful where phenomena are relatively rare" (p. 315). The theory has been used in the context of entrepreneurship and starting a business, as well as in the context of family business. Regarding succession, "there is a gap between business owners' desires and their actions" (Marshall et al., 2006, p. 351).

For this study, the conceptual framework describes links between the later stages of a business in the context of owner retirement and succession. It serves as a perspective for understanding succession planning intentions through the collective integration of beliefs, attitudes, perceived desirability, feasibility, and self-efficacy. Business owner perceptions of retirement are emphasized in the model. The researcher assumes a valence core affect which is a "psychological process of valuation (a simple form of meaning analysis that codes the environment in terms of whether it is good or bad, helpful or harmful, rewarding or threatening) at a given instant in time" (Barrett, 2006, p. 36). The continued cycle of evaluation of this combined composite informs decision-making on the part of the small business owner on the topic of retirement. The following major themes were selected for in-depth discussion:

- small business enterprises;
- business life stages;
- retirement;
- succession planning; and

- intersection of business and human life cycles.

Small Business Enterprises

While there is no standard definition for small businesses, the SBA has "taken the lead in defining what constitutes a small business in the eyes of the federal government, and the SBA's definition is the most widely used" (United States Department of the Treasury, 2010). According to the SBA (2015), independent businesses having fewer than 500 employees are considered small. The SBA uses size guidelines for different categories of businesses to give guidance for understanding small business. Size is largely determined by the amount of revenue and/or by the number of employees (SBA Office of Advocacy, 2016). Even though firms with 500 employees are considered small, the United States Census Bureau's Statistics of U.S. Businesses (SUSB, 2017) indicates that firms with less than 100 employees make up the largest share of small business employment.

A majority of businesses in the U.S. are considered small businesses (SBA Office of Advocacy, 2016). The 30.2 million small businesses represent 99.9% of all U.S. businesses (SBA Office of Advocacy, 2018). These small businesses employ 56.8 million members of private sector jobs and account for nearly 66% of new job creation (SBA Office of Advocacy, 2016; SBA Office of Advocacy, 2018). Over the decades, small businesses have become increasingly more important as entrepreneurial contributors to economic growth, and their impact can be seen in changes within entrepreneurial activity, advances to innovation, stimulation for new industries and contribution to new job generation (Thurik & Wennekers, 2004, p. 145-146). Kobe (2012) identified small businesses as sizeable contributors to U.S. gross domestic product (GDP). According to the International Trade Association (ITA), of the companies that export goods from the U.S. to other countries, over 97% are small firms (SBA Office of Advocacy, 2016).

Despite their size, small businesses continue to be a significant part of the U.S. economy and a growing source of innovation and entrepreneurial development into the foreseeable future, as they have been for years past (Thurik & Wennekers, 2004). Schumpeter (1934), as cited in Carland, Hoy, Boulton, and Carland (1984), was one of the early authors of entrepreneurship and a proponent of its importance to the economy. He described the leaders of these small businesses as entrepreneurs "whose function was to carry out new combinations of means of production" (Carland et al.,1984, p. 354). Entrepreneurship is also viewed as a key quality for business owners in the promotion of firm growth (Baum & Locke, 2004; Kellermanns, Eddleston, Barnett, & Pearson, 2008; Kuratko, Morris, & Schindehutte, 2015; Michael-Tsabari et al., 2014; Miller, 1983; Schein, 2004).

Small Business Owner

As with the definition of a small business, there is no single title nor definition for the individual who leads the business. The top executive leader of the business may be called business owner, owner, CEO, founder, founder-owner, or president (Sonnenfeld, 1991; Ward, 2004). The CEO is often the founder or entrepreneur who started the business and built it from the ground up (Aronoff, 2011; Aronoff et al., 2011; Baum & Locke, 2004; Ward, 1997). Entrepreneurship is associated with the creation of something new that hasn't existed before and therefore naturally has been used to characterize small business owners, primarily as founders in family firms (Baum &

Locke, 2004; Carland et al., 1984; Kellermanns et al, 2008; Michael-Tsabari et al., 2014; Ward, 2004).

The emphasis on small business and entrepreneurship has primarily focused on the traits and behavioral characteristics of the owner. According to Carland et al. (1984), early authors who studied characteristics of entrepreneurs included: Mill, Weber, Schrumpeter, Sutton, McClelland, Davids, Pickle, Timmons, and Welsh and White. Their studies identified characteristics of entrepreneurs such as risk bearing, innovative, authoritative, powerful, having an internal locus of control, being achievement oriented, ambitious, and self-confident (Carland et al., 1984, p. 356). Miller (1983) studied the correlates of entrepreneurship in three types of firms. Firms of fewer than 500 employees where authority was centralized at the top were considered small. Findings showed a high correlation between the leader and entrepreneurship. In small firms, "entrepreneurship is so very tied up with the leader's personality, power, and information that *almost nothing else seems to count*" (Miller, 1983, p. 783).

There is considerable overlap in the literature between entrepreneurship and small business ownership. However, a distinction has been made by some authors regarding the characteristics of entrepreneurs versus small business owners. Carland et al. (1984) have supported some commonalities between the two but contend that small business owners primarily establish and manage a business for personal reasons and not necessarily for growth. In contrast to small business owners, Carland and colleagues described entrepreneurs as characterized by primary desires for innovation, growth and profit. Gartner (1988), took exception with the concept that entrepreneurship is tied to owner characteristics, and proposed that entrepreneurship is a behavior linked to a phase of the organizational development and not the owner – a behavior that begins with the creation of an organization and ends once that phase of the firm's development ends. If a business lives past the creation stage and continues to grow through different cycles of its maturity, the business owner could take on different roles and behaviors appropriate for the business at that stage (Gartner, 1988). For example, in a business' burgeoning state, the owner role is that of entrepreneur or innovator. As the business develops and becomes more stable or advanced in its life cycle, the owner takes on more of the role of a manager of the business.

Family and Non-Family Ownership

The preponderance of the small business literature is centered on family-owned businesses and their owners (Aronoff, 2011; Aronoff et al., 2011; Barnes & Hershon, 1976; Breton-Miller et al., 2004; Brockhaus, 2004; Handler & Kram, 1988; Kleiman & Peacock, 1996; Lansberg, 1988; Malone, 1989; Sharma et al., 2001, 2003; Sharma, 2004; Sonnenfeld, 1991; Ward, 1997, 2004). Much of the family business research has, as its underpinnings, a systems theory approach. The family as a system has many interactions and interacting relationships that extend between the family and the business. The earlier literature focused on the impact of the family on the business in a two-way interconnection that goes back and forth (Lansberg, 1988). Tagiuri and Davis (1996) have taken a more multi-systems approach and developed what is often referred to as the *three-circle model* of the family business system (see Figure 4).

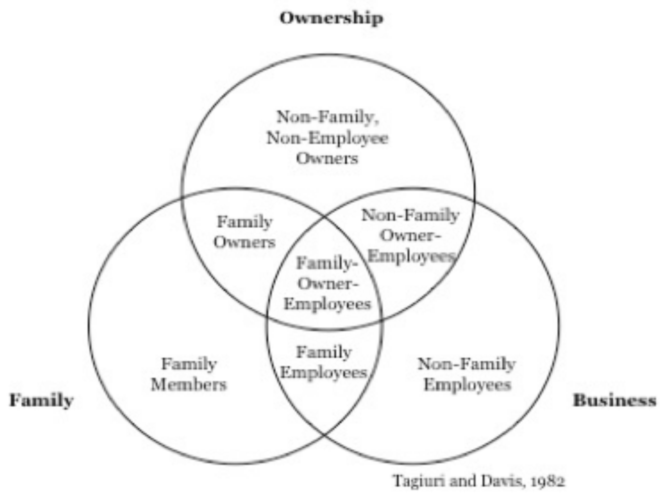

Figure 4. Bivalent attributes of the family firm. Adapted from “Bivalent Attributes of the Family Firm,” by R. Tagiuri and J. Davis, 1996 (*Family Business Review*, *9*(2), p. 199–208). Copyright 1996 by SAGE Publications. Adapted with permission.

This model has become a staple of the literature on family businesses. It contributes to the family and business model by adding the element of ownership to the equation. By approaching the family business as an open system of interconnections and subsystems, Tagiuri and Davis’ model (1996) has allowed researchers to expand their focus to a host of subsystems such as environmental variables, management factors, ownership elements, personal variables, and other influencers. This has also provided researchers an avenue for exploring differences between family-owned and non-family-owned businesses.

With the growing trend toward a more integrated view of family business, there is still limited literature relating to nonfamily businesses and their owners (Brockhaus, 2004). Of the literature related to nonfamily businesses, Fiegener, Brown, Prince, and File’s (1994, 1996) research specifically highlights the comparisons between family and non-family businesses and their corresponding elements. Fiegener et al., in their 1994 study comparing successor development, argue that family and non-family businesses differ in three ways. First, in family firms, the owner generally has a preference for personal oversight and centralized power, as well as control of people and most all organizational activities (Lansberg, 1988; Mintzberg, 1984). Second, there is an overlap between the family system and the business. Members of the family often work in the business, which intertwines family dynamics, culture, communication, and processes with those of the business (Lansberg, 1988; Schein, 2004). Lastly, family relationships allow for a much closer degree of relationship not typical in non-family business.

Contrary to family firms, non-family firms rely less on relationship and more on formal systems and task-oriented development (Fiegener et al., 1996). Another difference between family and non-family businesses in the literature centers on entrepreneurial risk taking. Huybrechts, Voordeckers, and Lybaert (2013) empirically demonstrated the difference in risk taking among non-family CEOs of family firms. The results of the research confirmed that “family firms generally take less entrepreneurial risk than non-family firms” (p. 173). A non-family CEO will generally have a positive effect on the level of entrepreneurial risk early in their tenure, which levels off as tenure lengthens. However, as tenure increases, there is no significant observed difference in the levels of risk taking between family and non-family CEOs. Family owners typically have more vested in the business, in terms of financial investment and emotional investment. This may affect their risk-taking appetite, as does age (Marshall et al., 2006). Over time, non-family CEOs become more psychologically attached to the business in ways that are similar to a family business CEO. When this occurs, risk taking is mitigated and moderated over time.

Personality differences between family and non-family CEOs is an area of little research. Kelleci, Lambrechts, Voordeckers, and Huybrechts (2019) looked at nine characteristics of CEOs: independent minded, democratic, data rational, behavioral, detail conscious, conscientious, relaxed, worrying, and trusting. Findings show that family CEOs tend to demonstrate a more strong-willed personality profile and non-family CEOs have a very balanced personality profile against the nine characteristics. This may suggest non-family CEOs can strike a balance between family goals and business goals and may be more rational and willing to compromise than a more independent, less democratic family CEO (p. 48).

According to Sharma (2004), the results of studies comparing family and non-family businesses are mixed. Family and non-family firms were different on some dimensions, such as entrepreneurial activities taken and perceptions of environmental opportunities and threats. They were not different on dimensions such as strategic orientation and sources of debt financing. However, even with the studies that exist, “no set of distinct variables separating family and nonfamily firms has yet been revealed” (p. 5). This suggests the need for additional research focusing on the distinctions between family and non-family businesses.

There is neither a single way to describe small business owners nor a specific way in which they lead and manage their businesses. A business itself is no less complex than the owner who runs it. The integration of the owner and business is a multi-faceted and complex relationship with few threads of widespread agreement. However, there is general agreement that the CEO role is a position with a great deal of power, influence and control in the business, and that this role is overwhelmingly responsible for the success or failure of the small business. Regardless of this importance, it remains puzzling that few CEOs do succession planning. Intentionally gathering information from family and non-family CEOs in this study related to views of retirement may provide insight to the differences, if any, to their plans for exiting the business.

Business Life Stages

The stages of business have been well documented and referenced using frameworks to outline the phases of organizations. Such conceptualizations have remained relatively constant throughout the decades, such as organizational life cycle, organizational phases, firm development stages, or phases and stages of business growth (Churchill & Lewis, 1983; Greiner, 1998; Mintzberg, 1984; Steinmetz, 1969). Steinmetz (1969) groups organization growth into four stages and emphasizes the critical phases involved in reaching each stage of development. The first stage is one of beginning or creating the organization. In this stage, the business is small and is largely an idea that the entrepreneur or owner has. Risk of failure is high, and this stage is often referred to as the “live or die” stage. Each stage is marked by a different type of supervision and control used by the leader of the business. In each stage, the firm and leader pass through critical phases of development that lead to the next stage and phase. In the final stage, the small business grows to a size that either becomes larger and more complex as a stand-alone entity, or it is absorbed by a larger organization.

Scott and Bruce (1987) term the phases of the business life cycle *inception, survival, growth, expansion,* and *maturity* (see Figure 5, below). Different from other models, they consider size of the business to be unique to each business and not a "larger is better" requirement.

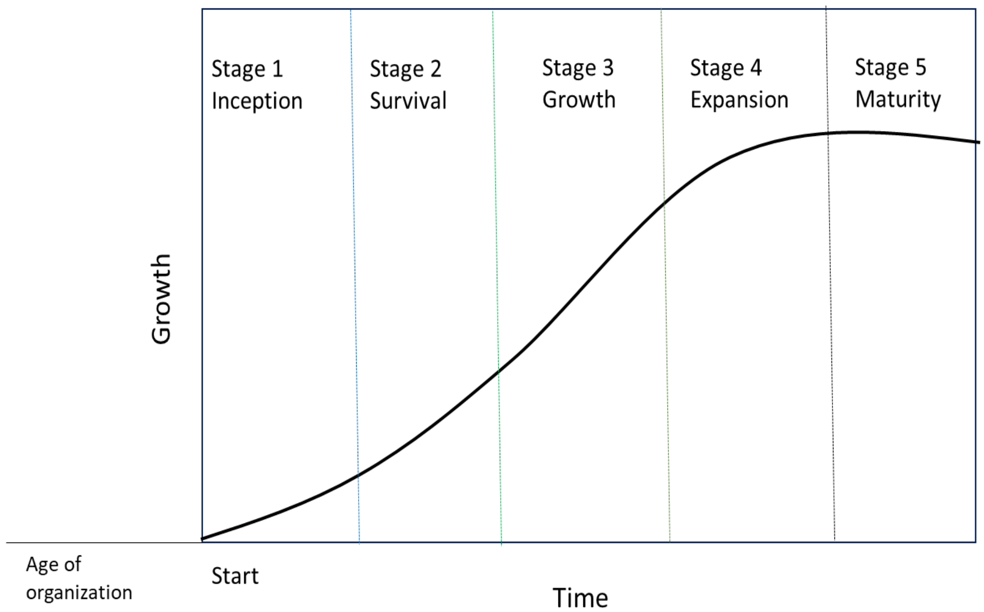

Figure 5. Small business growth stages. Adapted from "Five Stages of Growth in Small Business," by M. Scott and R. Bruce, 1987 (*Long Range Planning*, *20*(3), pp. 45-52). Copyright 1987 by Elsevier. Adapted with permission.

Contrary to the literature that describes business growth as a process of becoming larger and more complex, Churchill and Lewis (1983), Mintzberg (1984), and Scott and Bruce (1987) take different approaches to the life cycle of a business. Churchill and Lewis (1983) specifically focus on the life cycle and growth of small business by conceptualizing five stages of firm development: existence, survival, success, take-off, and resource maturity. These stages, like much of the literature on business stages, correspond to the age of the business. The *existence stage* is the starting point of the new business and its life, and operation is centered primarily on the control behaviors of the entrepreneurial owner. As the business grows, the company moves from the *existence* to the *survival* stage. As the business enters the *survival stage* it has demonstrated that it is a working entity and can earn at least marginal returns. Small businesses may stay in the survival stage for years. The *success stage* can go one of two directions: Either the business has reached a point where it is likely to continue a level of success indefinitely, excluding any unforeseen changes to the marketplace or competition, or it is at a point at which the owner decides to grow and further increase its resources, leadership, operations, and profitability. This is relevant to this study as this is a logical point in the business cycle for the business owner to begin planning for succession while the business is experiencing success.

As the business moves through different stages of growth, the owner assumes different roles depending on the approaches used to achieve success. For example, the owner may take a more maintaining or “coasting” role and become more disengaged from the business. A second scenario is where the owner becomes increasingly active in all stages of intentional growth. Regardless, the fourth stage, *take-off*, involves a more complex, decentralized approach to running the business. It primarily focuses on maintaining cash flow to run the business and delegating responsibility. The final stage, *resource maturity*, is the point at which the company “has arrived.” It is at a size and stage of leadership talent and financial resources to be considered a long term, contributing business in the marketplace. However, in this stage, should the company lose its innovative edge and become more risk avoidant, it may become vulnerable to growing competition. Churchill and Lewis (1983) stop short of including a phase in which a business declines or dies.

Steinmetz (1969) and Greiner (1998) focus on the stages of the growth through the leader’s style and approach to leading the business using factors of business size and age to determine growth. In both cases, the business becomes more complex and matrixed as it advances through the different stages. However, Greiner adds the idea that each stage of growth has both evolutionary periods or relative stability and revolutionary periods characterized by turbulent times in the business that are often followed by more evolution and growth. Scott and Bruce (1987) incorporate Greiner's idea of crisis points in the stages of business life growth as it is precisely at these points where businesses are more likely to fail.

Mintzberg (1984), however, contends that businesses do have endings and that the life cycle of the organization should include decline and death as a stage of company life. There are four stages of an organization's life cycle which are sequential in nature. Like other models, the first stage is the beginning of the business. This is called the stage of *formation,* which is followed by the stage of *development*, stage of *maturity* and stage of *decline* (Mintzberg, 1984). In contrast to other models, Mintzberg focuses on the power distribution of the organization and how the leader influences the transitions from one stage of the business life cycle to the next. Within this power-based context, he argues that every business will, at some point, decline or end its existence as a business. However, it is possible for a company in decline to experience a renewal of the business.

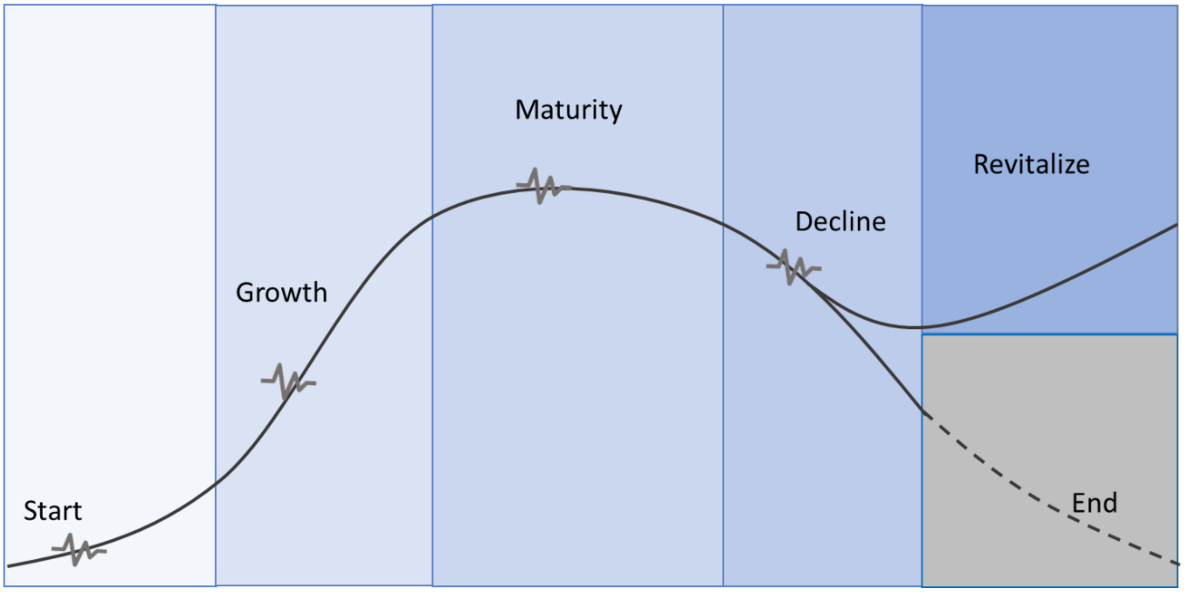

Figure 6. Life cycle of a business. Adapted from "Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow" by L. E. Greiner, 1998 (*Harvard Business Review*, *76*(3), p. 55–68), Copyright 1998 by Harvard Business Publishing; and from "Power and Organization Life Cycles" by H. Mintzberg, 1984 (*Academy of Management Review*, *9*(2), p. 207-224), Copyright 1984 by the Academy of Management. Adapted with permission.

Owner role in the business life cycle. Within this life cycle, the very leaders who create the business may actually stand in the way of the business' continued success and may contribute to its decline (Mintzberg, 1984). To move from business decline to renewal takes extraordinarily strong leadership and willingness to transition whatever power is necessary to support the steps toward change. The leader needs to be willing to create "new" structures, bring in new talent, make difficult decisions, and effect the high-level change needed for the organization to thrive again.

Some responsibilities of business owners are more prevalent in different stages as required to meet the business needs of that phase. Huybrechts et al. (2013) recognize the contributions to the business these different responsibilities make. They also suggest some CEO responsibilities extend throughout the life cycle of the business, such as having considerable financial, operational, and emotional investment in the business. In addition, the CEO is in the pivotal role of often being the only one who is responsible for the vision, culture, management, and decisions of the company (Sharma, 2004; Schein, 2004; Ward, 2004). Regardless of the stage of the business life cycle, the CEO role is seen as one with ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of the business (Christensen, 1953; Drucker, 2001).

Kuratko, Morris, and Schindehutte (2015) take an intentional integrative approach to these multiple frameworks of past decades. They take a “framework of framework” approach and expand on the collective ideas by incorporating additional decision-making, environmental, and organizational context elements into the equation. Though this work is from an entrepreneurial perspective, the idea of integration has strong corollaries for small business owners assessing the life cycle of the business and their roles throughout.

Although the various business cycle models so far discussed differ somewhat in the way they characterize the stages of business development, what is clear is that in the literature, the vast majority of models track the life cycle of the business from a creation stage to a stage of decline. It is important to seek links between owner desires for the small business, prospects of retirement, recognition of business life cycles, and need for succession planning.

Retirement

Retirement is a multidimensional concept that can be viewed in terms of history, demographics, characteristics, psychosocial stages, societal norms, and a host of other dimensions. *Aging* is a term that is often used in association with retirement (Costa, 1998). There is extensive research related to aging and retirement.

History of retirement as a concept. Retirement has been seen as the completion of employment or, more generally, as an ending of career or work life. While retirement is a socially constructed concept, its meaning is grounded in historical context related to actuarial age and life span (Costa, 1998; Sonnenfeld, 1991). Retirement has its roots in the French 16th century, and the term "retirement" is taken from the words *tirer* (to draw) and *re* (back), together meaning to "withdraw back from," as in seclusion ("Retirement," n.d.). According to Costa (1998), the term retirement "generally connotes a complete and permanent withdrawal from the paid labor, and entering retirement is often thought of as an abrupt change in the life of an elderly person" (p. 6). Purcell (2010) defines retirement with "reference to two characteristics: non-participation in the paid labor force and receipt of income from pensions, Social Security, and other retirement plans" (p. 70).

Retirement became associated with the age of 65 in the U.S. in the 1930s for a number of reasons: younger workers could be hired for the majority of manufacturing positions that required physical stamina and strength, psychologists had attributed age with decline in mental functioning, and the actuarial calculation of life span was determined. However, the age of 65 as a retirement age was not supported by any statistical data. Research suggests that decline in mental functioning and performance occurs gradually and not abruptly. Nevertheless, private industry and state and federal government created systemic mechanisms which supported the perception of retirement as coupled with a declining capacity to contribute with increasing age.

The institution of private pension plans in the 1890s and the development of Social Security in the 1930s became significant factors that perpetuated the retirement concept. During the mid-1930s, the concept of retirement took direct meaning as it became directly tied to the benefits provided to workers who reached a certain age. To receive these benefits, workers were encouraged to leave the workforce and in some cases were required to do so in order to receive benefits. Prior this point in history, retirement from the workforce was not tied to an age, as many simply worked until they were physically unable or died. However, after the introduction of Social Security, the actuarial life expectancy was 66.5 years. According to Ellis (2014), this allowed for 45 years of work and 1.5 year of retirement. Life expectancy has continued to increase. In one century, nearly 30 additional years have been added to average life expectancy in the United States (Carstensen, Rosenberger, Smith, & Modrek, 2015).

Stages of life and retirement. Psychologist Erik Erikson is well known for his development of the psychosocial life span approach to human development (Monte & Sollad, 2003). His eight stages of ego development are sequential and intended to describe the impact of social experiences throughout a lifetime. This approach includes a theory of personality "change" in adulthood which draws on a biological foundation of development but recognizes that the social environment can influence development at each phase. These eight steps can be grouped in four broad life periods: infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (Monte & Sollod, 2003). The first five stages largely cover the period from birth to age 18. The final three stages span the rest of adulthood. Even though age is often associated with the stages of the Erikson model, the proposed stage scheme is not exclusively specified by age. Erikson acknowledges that progression occurs in concert with the impact of social and other human interaction factors on development (Whitbourne, Zuschlag, Elliot, & Waterman, 1992).

As individuals progress through development, they confront what Erikson refers to as a psychosocial crisis in each of the eight stages. These problems or conflicts help the person develop to a point that they can transition from one stage to the next. This may involve establishing trust in others, developing a sense of identity in society, or helping the next generation prepare for the future. There are both positive and negative aspects of each crisis. A crisis is favorably resolved when it has more positive than negative elements. These lived experiences become integrated as part of the person's identity.

Levinson (1986) further explores the adult development stages of Erikson's model. He develops a more comprehensive theory of adult stages referred to as the *seasons of life* (Figure 7). Levinson's model uses seasons as a metaphor for the phases of the life cycle. Every season has its own time but is influenced by the greater whole of everything around it. In this model, no season of life is better or more important than any other season. Each has its contribution to the wholeness of life and is unique and special in that way. The seasons are grouped by the stages of early adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood. Each stage is marked by a period of development and certain patterns including personality, social roles, and biological characteristics and their collective relationship to the world. In each unique period, an individual makes a series of crucial choices and pursues specific goals. Guiding these choices are central components of life (e.g., marriage, family, occupation) that have the greatest significance or importance to the person and therefore receive the most time and energy.

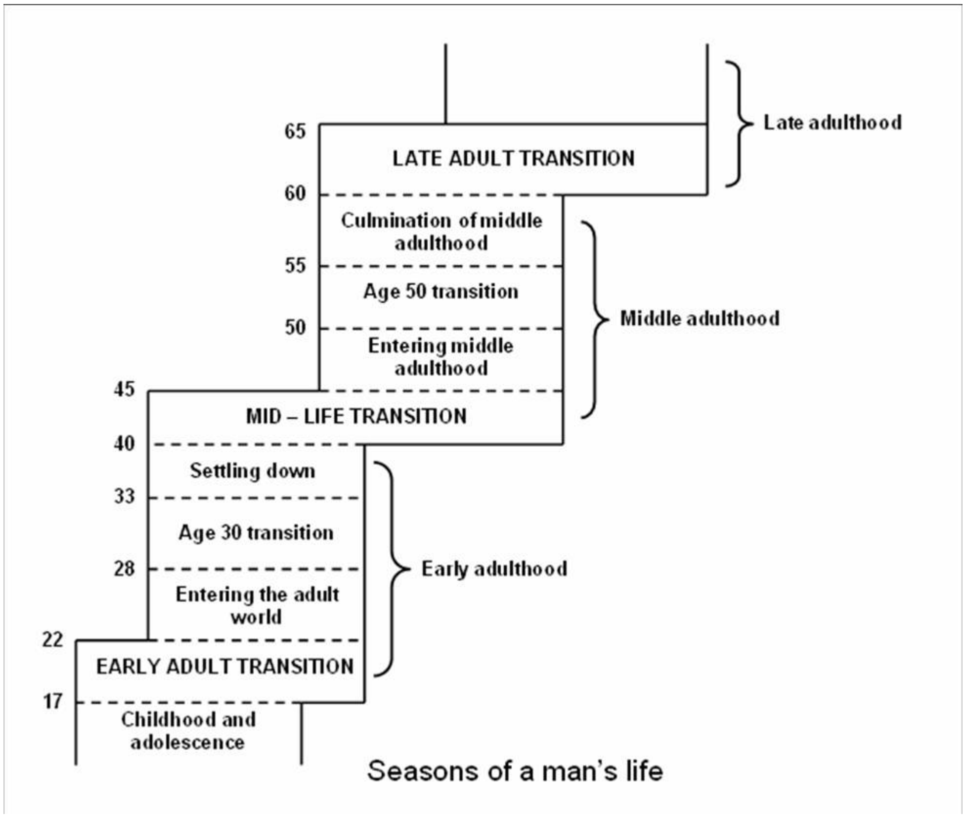

Figure 7. Levinson's model of adult development. Adapted from "A Conception of Adult Development" by D. J. Levinson, 1986 (*American Psychologist*, *41*(1), p. 3-13). Copyright 1986 by the American Psychological Association. Adapted with permission.

In addition to the components within each stage, each season also has a transition period that occurs between the stages. This is marked by the ending of one stage and the beginning of a new one. Age is a key factor in the distinctions between the stages. According to Levinson (1986), each stage and period of development begins and ends at a well-defined age and only varies by a range of two years. Furthermore, each stage lasts about five to seven years but no more than 10 years with the actual transition period lasting about five years.

In Levinson's theory, the mid-life transition and beginning of the middle adulthood stages occurs between 40 – 50 years of age. This is the time period that is sometimes one of crisis, wherein people typically begin to evaluate their lives. Values may change, and the way society views these people may also change. It is not uncommon to see drastic changes during this transition phase such as career change or family changes. In the stage of middle adulthood, “biological capacities are below those of early adulthood but are normally still sufficient for an energetic, personally satisfying and social valuable life” (Levinson, 1986, p. 6). This is the stage where people begin the process of becoming “seniors” in society and they start making choices about the future and retirement. This phase is akin to Erikson’s adulthood stage. At this season of life, people tend to think about passing on wisdom and knowledge to younger generations as well as pondering their own mortality and legacy.

While the theories of Erikson and Levinson enjoy widespread support for their stage development approach to human development, there are some who argue that the stage-phase approach has limitations. Dannefer (1984) takes exception to the development life cycle model as one that is defined by universal stages and ages. He proposes a more open-system, less restricted view of human development which is more diverse and heterogeneous in its orientation. This includes a life course that, in addition to being influenced by the individual’s personality, is shaped by social, cultural, and environmental factors, as well as by pure “chance”. Through the relationships and interconnections of life, the development of a person actually evolves and can be changed or modified (Dannefer, 1984).

These weaknesses in any human development theory are exacerbated by the fact that the complexity of human development makes it difficult to measure such a complex phenomenon. The multi-dimensional aspects of development across the lifespan provide no clear standards for measuring such things as experiences, choices made, strategies, life events, or a host of other factors, making it difficult to demonstrate conclusive, empirically based evidence (Dannefer, 1984, p. 103). Another compounding limitation is that development theory uses age as its primary independent variable. However, “age is often correlated with a host of other historically and culturally specific conditions that are thus confounded with it” (p. 104). Age is often impacted by social and cultural patterns as well as its interactions with other characteristics encountered in the course of life. Components such as marriage, career, and family may not be the same for everyone, but many of the human development theories suggest they occur at certain ages and stages of life. As history and the present day would indicate, these “normal” life activities and events may no longer be appropriately defined by a specific age.

Social norms around aging and retirement*.* Contrary to the bureaucratic definitions of retirement, we know that age is not an accurate or absolute indicator of an individual’s ability to contribute at work. Musicians, artists, politicians, scientists and many who contribute independently are examples of impressive later life contributions well near the age of 100. However, despite examples of contributions provided by individuals late in life, unfavorable views of aging continue (Robbins, 2015). Age-related government incentives such as Social Security support a retirement age concept. Societally promoted beliefs and assumptions of aging and its important influence should not be underestimated (Cumming & Henry,1961).

Age remains a key consideration in human development theories. The concept of “successful aging” is described in multiple ways (Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin, 1961). Common descriptions of successful aging include: adding life to the years, life satisfaction, positive functioning over a lifetime, longevity, good health, quality of life, and happiness (Bearon, 1996). As life expectancy increases and the number of older people in society continues to grow, more studies are needed to increase understanding in this area of aging. There are three prominent psychosocial theories of aging outlined in the literature: disengagement theory, activity theory and continuity theory. *Disengagement theory* is built on the premise that people, as they age, gradually withdraw or become more disengaged from social roles as a result of lessened capabilities and interest, as well as societal disincentives for being active in society (Cumming & Henry, 1961). Proponents of this theory contend that aging is inevitable and naturally results in a mutual withdrawal from society – an individual withdraws from society and society withdraws from the individual. This withdrawal creates morale issues as the individual ages. Therefore, according to Burbank (1986), “society made withdrawal easier for the individual through certain processes such as retirement” (p. 75). Though this theory is dated, it does speak to the history of societal perceptions of aging and retirement and the prominence of those perceptions at the time of the theory’s inception.

The *activity theory* of aging proposes that people age most successfully if they are active and continue social participation. Havighurst and Albrecht, as cited in Neugarten et al. (1961), maintained that high levels of activity are necessary for positive adjustment in old age. Their contention was that activity is necessary to mitigate the negative effects of old age and that high activity would improve satisfaction with life. In contrast to disengagement theory, activity theory takes the perspective that psychological and social needs do not change significantly from middle age. Notable in this theory is that if decreases do occur in the social roles and activities of older people, it is seen primarily as a result of society not providing opportunities for interaction due to some preconception of what older people can and cannot do (Burbank, 1986). As with disengagement theory, activity theory is also seen as a dated theory, primarily by gerontologists, because it has a very narrow focus on a particular lifestyle of activity. However, some would argue that activity in aging adults is still touted as a key to successful aging and that keeping busy and engaging in social opportunities is critical to longer, more satisfying and healthier life (Bearon, 1996).

The third classic theory of aging is *continuity theory*, arguably the most well supported of the three. This theory proposes that people who experience the most successful aging are those who continue habits, preferences, lifestyles and relationships from mid-life to later life. In the transition from middle age to older age, psychological and social characteristics, behaviors, and relationships remain relatively stable. Personality is the distinguishing factor between disengagement and activity theories as well as the key element in adapting to the process of aging (Neugarten et al., 1961). Hence, continuity is a grand adaptive strategy that is promoted by both individual preference and social approval in the aging process.

Other theories or models address aging through concepts such as self-efficacy, control, empowerment, and perceptions. Schroots (1996) highlights the power of perception in change as a component of Thomae's cognitive theory of personality and aging. Change is perceived and evaluated in terms of an aging person's dominant concerns and expectations. As people age, some consider themselves as old and others reject the concept of old altogether. Perception can be a powerful influencer. This theory contends that perception of a situation and perception of self can influence perceived change rather than objective change. The perception of change has more influence on the actual behavior and is more related to actual behavior change. Jopp and Rott's (2006) study on centenarians and their happiness find that in very old age, physical and mental capacity declined. However, happiness and psychological well-being remain very stable into advanced age. Psychological factors such as self-referent beliefs and attitudes are strong predictors of well-being despite the physical constraints older individuals faced.

Retirement and aging, thus, are clearly related. Even though the definitions of retirement often include an exit from work or an ending of work life, retirement as an event often takes place over a long period of time (Oakman & Wells, 2013). Marshall (1995) contends that retirement is a social institution created by human beings. Therefore, the factors that influence retirement intentions are subject to change.

The literature has identified two broad groups of factors influencing intention to retire: push and pull factors. Typically, *push factors* are things that move individuals toward retirement such as poor health, an organizational downsizing, or work fatigue. Generally, these types of push factors are perceived as negative. In contrast, *pull factors* are generally viewed as positive and are things such as a person's interest in seeking retirement, outside work interests, a significant other's retirement status, and care-taking responsibilities (Oakman & Wells, 2013). These push and pull factors interact in complex ways that influence intentions to retire. Oakman and Wells (2013) find that age and length of service are important in influencing intentions to retire – older workers were much more likely to retire than younger workers, and the longer they have been employed by the company, the more likely they are to retire sooner. However, where there is high job satisfaction, there is lower intention to retire even if the person is older (i.e., 55 years or more).

Lakra, Ng, and Levy (2012) find that attitudes toward retirement can impact longevity. In their longitudinal study spanning 23 years, participants who had positive attitudes toward retirement at the start of the study lived an average of 4.9 years longer than those with negative attitudes toward retirement. The findings suggest that planning for retirement in traditional ways (e.g., financial planning) may be important, but that psychological preparedness is also important to successful retirement and should be considered in planning prior to the event of retiring.

Societal norms and beliefs about retirement shifted in the mid-1900s and became more associated with leisure and travel. Generations of elderly have rejected the notion of peace and quiet and opted for an emphasis on world travel and active retirement. Yet, not all retirement age people can, will, or want to retire for leisure reasons. Financial stability, income needs, and tax implications of retirement are commonly mentioned in the literature. Levels of physiological and psychological deterioration occur over the course of life. However, deterioration can be minimized.

Psychosocial aspects of aging and retirement. Even well-known psychologists and sociologists, including Erikson, Havinghurst, Neuberstein, and Schein fall victim to the broad, sweeping perceptions of retirement and capabilities brought about by centuries of assumptions, evidenced in the way they refer to individuals in the later stages of life as “ending” in their works. Physiological, psychological, and psychosocial aspects of aging and retirement can result in decline over the lifespan. Yet, deterioration can be reduced in many cases and may not necessarily become a self-fulfilling prophesy of obsolescence.

Changes in environmental factors, such as a decreasing workforce impacted by the departure of many older people leaving the workforce, can necessitate that aging people stay in the workforce longer. However, the stereotypes of retired people, their productivity, and their contributions are still perceived to be less favorable to younger people. Contemplating retirement is difficult when many small business owners believe they can still contribute a great deal. For many owners, retirement is unattractive.

The current societal perceptions of retirement may have evolved, but in some ways remains bolted to attitudes from decades past. Society still largely views retirement as an “age,” a time of human deterioration and burden to society, and of lower cognitive abilities and contributions to society overall. Laura Robbins (2015) commissioned research through the FrameWorks Institute to study the American public’s understanding of aging. Eight organizations in the field of aging (AARP, the American Federation for Aging Research, the American Geriatrics Society, the American Society on Aging, Grantmakers in Aging, the Gerontological Society of America, the National Council on Aging, and the National Hispanic Council on Aging) collaboratively researched this issue (Lindland, Fond, Haydon, & Kendall-Taylor, 2015). The results showed “three (mis) perceptions about older adults’ capabilities (more accurately, the lack thereof), the role of older adults in the broader society, and the concern of culpability” (Robbins, 2015, p.19). Aging is associated with “decline” or “deterioration” and the perception that “older adults can no longer learn new information as well as are seen as ‘elderly’, ‘other’ and ‘compartmentalized from society’” (Robbins, 2015, p. 19). The concept of culpability was identified in the FrameWorks study where perceptions about older people focused on individual accountability, results of life choices, and the consequences or rewards for those choices (Robbins, 2015, p. 20).

Contrary to public opinion, experts from the study as well as from the Boston Center for Retirement Research and the Stanford Center on Longevity view older adults as critical to society and well positioned to contribute in meaningful ways. There are pockets of change noted in the literature that offer more optimistic outlooks for retirement age and future contribution given the needs of the workforce. Nonetheless, there appears to be a disconnect between retirement and business owners delaying (or not doing) planning for their succession.

Succession Planning

The importance of succession planning is well documented as critical to the success of CEO transition and business continuation (Brockhaus, 2004; Lansberg, 1988; Motwani, et al., 2006; Parkhurst, 2013; Sharma et al., 2001; Wang et al., 2004; Ward, 2004). CEO succession in small businesses can be particularly important because CEOs of small firms face fewer organizational constraints than those in large firms, and their decisions can have proportionately larger and more immediate impacts on the business (Fiegener et al., 1996). Documented planning is more prevalent in large companies than in small businesses adding to the concern over the widespread lack of planning (Fernandez-Araoz, Iqbal & Ritter, 2015; Naveen, 2006; Parkhurst, 2013).

Most CEOs want their businesses to continue even after they leave the business (Lansberg, 1998; Sharma et al., 2003; Wang et al., 2004). Despite their desire, most businesses do not survive beyond five years of operation (Chambers, 2014; SBA, 2016). This rate drops to one-third after 10 years, and fewer than a quarter survive after 15 or more years (SBA Office of Advocacy, 2012). Similar to the historically flat rates of succession planning, overall small business survival rates have not changed by any meaningful degree in decades (SBA Office of Advocacy, 2012). In the case of family-owned businesses, about 30% survive into the second generation and less than 15% of family businesses make it into the third generation (Breton-Miller et al., 2004; Handler & Kram, 1988; Ip & Jacobs, 2006; Breton-Miller, 2004 Morris et al., 1996; Sharma et al., 2001; Ward, 1997, 2004). According to Chambers (2014), "despite obvious benefits of succession planning to business survival, most small business owners leave their business legacy to chance" (p. 3). Handler and Kram (1988) argue that low survival rates from generation to generation may be, in part, due to resistance to succession (p. 361).

Succession models. Given the multi-faceted complexities of small businesses and the owners that lead them, it stands to reason that the succession planning models outlined in the literature are no less varied or complex. While research related to succession exists, studies tend to examine only one or a few factors of succession planning at a time (Sharma et al., 2003). The integrated relationships of multiple factors and perspectives make it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about any one right way to do succession planning. Lansberg's 1988 study addresses succession planning from the three perspectives outlined by Tagiuri and Davis (1996) in their three-circle business systems model: the family system, the ownership system, and the management system. This model explores factors that can increase or reduce resistance to succession planning among members of each of these systems. Lansberg (1988) contends that succession planning is best mobilized by diagnosing the resistance of key stakeholders and applying interventions that reduce the gridlock of resistance among the interrelated constituency groups. His model proposes working with the founder, family members, owners, and managers of the firm to promote increased succession planning.

Rubenson and Gupta (1996) propose a contingency model of succession which is focused on the interplay between the evolving organization and its founder's characteristics. In this model, succession is contingent upon whether or not the needs of the organization are changing, the ability and desire of the owner to adapt to those needs, and whether or not the founder can adapt to the needed succession. Because their study is focused on the founder, Rubenson and Gupta (1996) use existing entrepreneurial traits and behavior literature to assess founder adaptation as well as business life cycle models to describe the organizational needs according to different stages of development. Another business succession model developed by Breton-Miller et al. (2004) is based on a review of 40 articles and seven books on positive family owned business succession experiences from which an integrated model of succession is created. The components of the models include: the stages of the succession process, involved people and their characteristics, and different types of contexts to consider. These components all interact together to influence the success of succession.

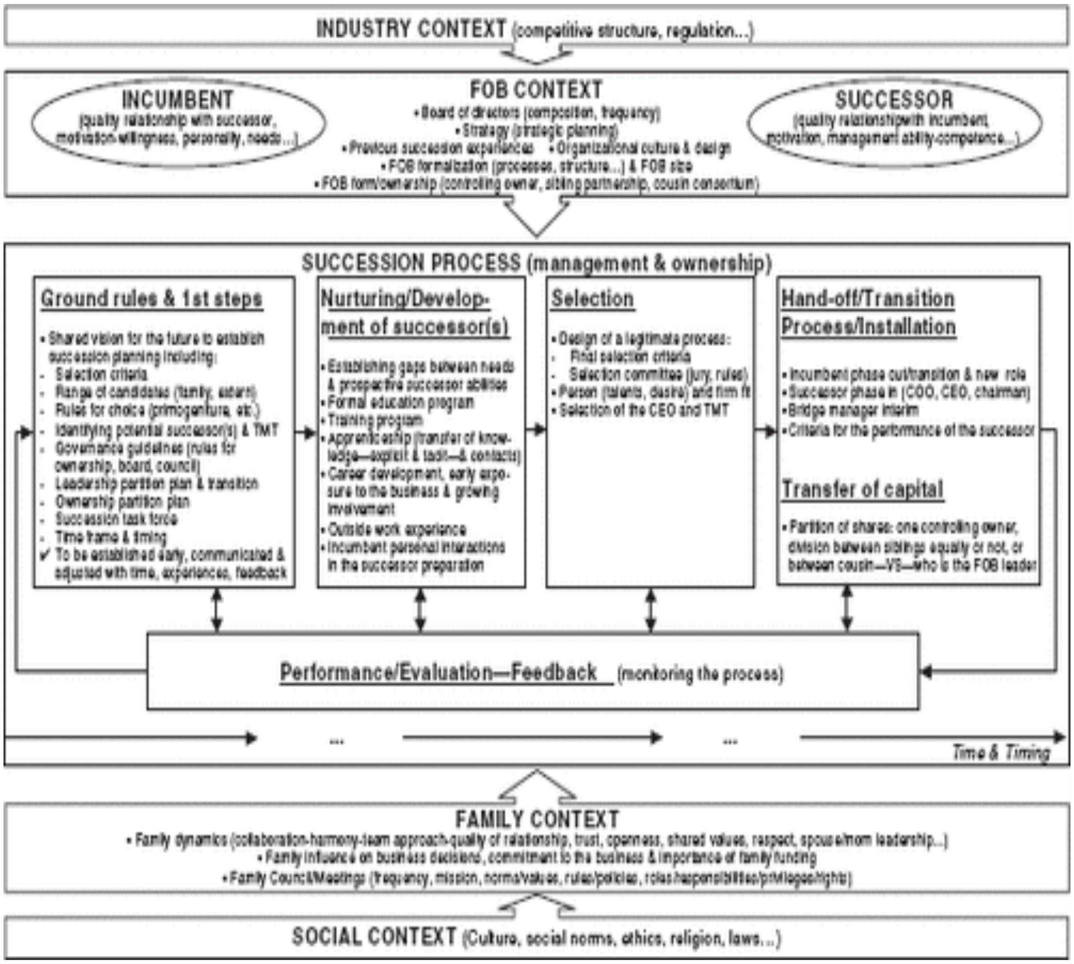

Figure 8. Integrative model for successful family-owned business successions. Adapted from "Toward an Integrative Model of Effective FOB Succession" by I. L. Breton-Miller, D. Miller, and L. P. Steier, 2004 (*Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 28*(4), pp. 305-328). Copyright 2004 by SAGE Publishing. Adapted with permission.

This model (see Figure 8) shows the multiple and varied factors to consider in business succession planning which, when integrated, make for even more complexity. For this study, intentional integration of various theories, models and frameworks is central to the approach of used by the researcher to address business owner succession planning and highlights the complexity of factors inherent in in this phenomenon.

Sharma et al. (2003), extend Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior to the study of succession planning activities in family firms. The theory of planned behavior "suggests that desirability, conformance with social norms, and feasibility of the behavior determine the intentions of an individual and the intention is the best predictor of the propensity of the individual subsequently to engage in that behavior" (Sharma et al., 2003, p. 11).

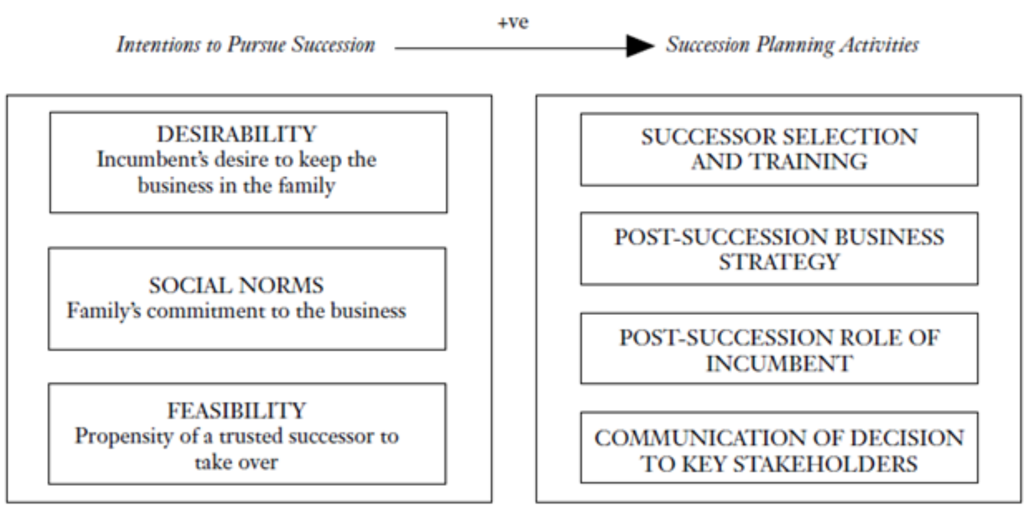

Figure 9. Planned behavior model of how family firm characteristics influence engagement in succession-planning activities. Adapted from "Succession Planning as Planned Behavior: Some Empirical Results" by P. Sharma, J. J. Chrisman, and J. H. Chua, 2003 (*Family Business Review, 16*(1), p. 1-15). Copyright 2003 by SAGE Publications. Adapted with permission.

Planning activities are isolated to successor selection and training, post-succession business strategy, post-succession role of the incumbent, and stakeholder communication (Sharma et al., 2003). Based on the theory of planned behavior, their assumptions related to planning for succession were three-fold: a CEO's desire to keep the business in the family leads to an intention to pursue succession which generates activities associated with planning; a family's commitment to the business influences succession planning actions; and, the propensity of a trusted successor to take over the firm also impacts succession planning. The findings show that the propensity of a trusted successor to take over and the CEO's belief that the successor has the skills, values alignment and best interests of the business at heart, is the biggest driver of succession planning activities. In contrast, the CEO's desire to keep the business in the family was not related to succession planning activities. An explanation for this is that while the feasibility of having a successor is necessary for succession, it is not sufficient to ensure success.

The commitment of family to the process and the desire of the CEO to pursue succession planning are arguably still important or the succession process may be stalled or halted (Sharma, et al., 2003). The development of socioemotional wealth (SEW) model further explores the importance of emotion in preserving the family business and the influence affective elements have in the strategic decisions made by the CEO, such as succession planning (Berrone, Cruz, & Gomez-Mejia, 2012; Bertschi-Michel, Kammerlander, & Strike, 2019).

These models demonstrate the varied approaches to a breadth of compounding factors related to business owner succession planning. The complexity and multi-faceted factors influencing succession planning make it difficult to draw definitive conclusions even with the existence of these models. Therefore, this study approaches the complexity of multiple approaches to succession planning by recognizing the ever-growing list of exogenous factors as a reality and does not attempt to account for all possibilities. Instead, exogenous factors area accepted as possible influencers to the formation of perceptions of retirement, whatever they may be.

Succession planning process. *S*uccession planning is a process to prepare for and support the transition from one CEO to the next with the intent of business continuation (Aronoff et al., 2011; Ip & Jacobs, 2006; Morris et al., 1996; Sharma et al., 2003; Ward, 1997, 2004). It involves the grooming of a firm leader so that the firm's specific knowledge can be transferred and developed (Eddleston, Kellermanns, Floyd, Crittenden, & Crittenden, 2013).

The succession planning process and its components take multiple forms as do the elements deemed important to succession planning (Ip & Jacobs, 2006; Sharma, 2004; Wang et al., 2004). Components for consideration in planning include: successor identification; selection and development; timing and communication planning; business continuation and operations; role of the incumbent CEO; financial, legal, and ownership elements, and an array of personal and emotional change dynamics (Aronoff, 2011 Aronoff et al., 2011; De Massis et al., 2008; Handler & Kram, 1988; Ip & Jacobs, 2006; Morris et al., 1996; Sonnenfeld, 1991; Ward, 1987).

According to the literature, many theories and models have been developed to conceptualize succession planning. However, in the vast majority of models, succession is viewed through at least two common lenses: that of the business, and of the owner. Succession requires "planning and considerations as to the fate of the CEO and also the fate of the company itself" (Sonnenfeld,1991, p. 35). Parkhurst (2013) defines succession planning as "an organized process in which organizations recruit employees to develop skills, abilities, and knowledge in preparation for advancement within the organization to ensure leadership will continue during unplanned or planned departures" (Parkhurst, 2013, p. 1). De Massis et al. (2008) consider the "actions, events, and developments that affect the transfer of managerial control" as part of the succession planning process (p. 184). Related to the business, Kleiman and Peacock (1996) conceptualize succession planning as encompassing ownership, leadership and people-related items such as transferring assets, capital, authority, decision-making, clients, and knowledge.

Succession planning can be a complex and overwhelming process. Due to the many individuals who may be interested parties in the planning, it is important that succession is managed appropriately. Aronoff et al. (2011) emphasize five aspects of the succession process that should be handled well. These include: prepare the CEO (to leave the business), prepare the business (to continue successfully after the departure of the CEO), develop a successor, prepare the family (who need to support the succession), and prepare the ownership team (to effectively govern and own). This type of thoughtful and extensive planning takes preparation and time. Transferring authority and control of a business to a successor may take 5 to 15 years. Most owners begin thinking seriously about their succession at about 45 to 50 years old and most plan to retire at about age 60-65. Fifteen years may seem like a long time, but this gives time to develop and execute a strategy for determining potential successors. In the case of family businesses, if a successor is chosen, it is common for that person to go through a period of training, mentoring, and assessment. This transition process may last for up to five years and is intended to help create a smooth transition when the incumbent CEO retires. As a result, succession planning is recognized as an integrated process of multi-level complexity.

Ambivalence toward succession planning. Despite the recognition that the transfer of power and authority from the incumbent CEO to a successor is critical, a large number of small business owners resist—or, at minimum, are ambivalent toward—succession (Aronoff , 2011; Aronoff et al., 2011). Analysis of attitudes toward succession planning is heavily skewed toward less positive aspects of succession centered primarily on the business owner (Aronoff, 2011; Sonnenfeld, 1991; Venter, Boshoff, & Maas, 2006; Ward, 1997). None are more significant than the factors related to the business owner on an individual, emotional, and psychological level (Aronoff, 2011; Handler & Kram, 1988; Kets de Vries, 1988; Nadler et al., 2009; Ward, 1997).

Common factors related to succession ambivalence on the part of the CEO include: need for control, desire for purpose and meaning impact, issues related to legacy, mortality, and sense of responsibility; difficulty leaving day to day operations; financial concerns in retirement; and family change dynamics (Aronoff, 2011; Aronoff et al., 2011; Sharma, et al., 2003, Sonnenfeld, 1991; Ward, 2004). Handler and Kram (1988) identify additional factors relating to owner concerns about health, other interests, business associations, and control; fear of aging; and avoidance of learning and consultation (p. 375).

Handler and Kram (1988) and Lansberg (1988) suggest intervention methods such as: utilizing a documented succession plan, consulting with professional advisors on areas of concern, incorporating family and close networks, and planning years in advance of the departure. In addition, specific attention given to interventions that identify negative emotions and actively working to alleviate them (often through an advisor) may create more positive emotions that lead to increased succession planning satisfaction (Bertschi-Michel et al., 2019) See Figure 10.

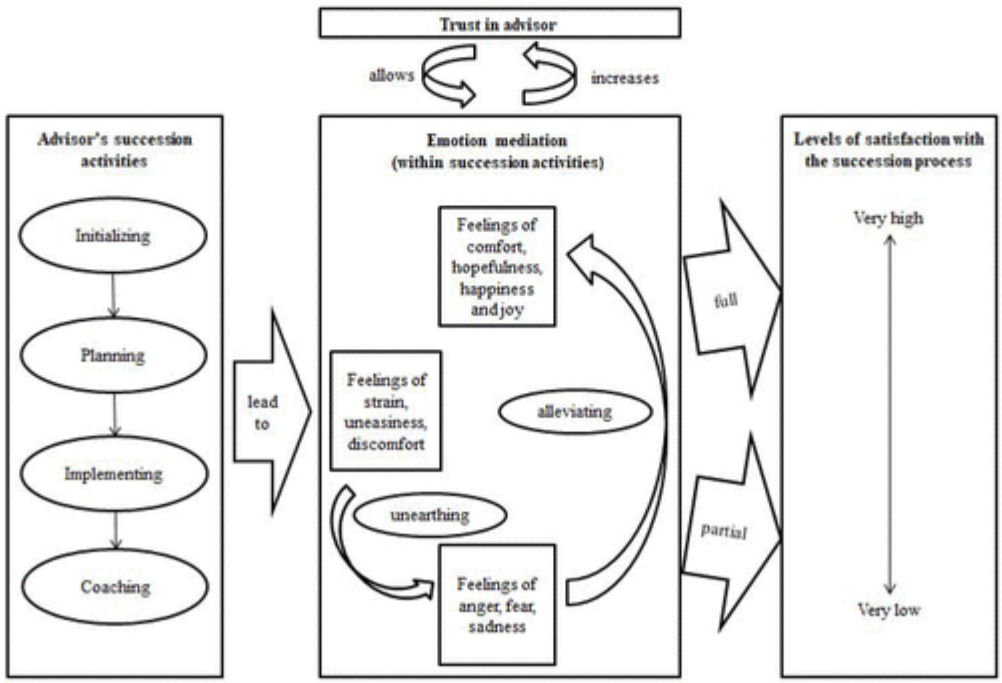

Figure 10. Variances in emotion mediation and succession satisfaction. Adapted from "Unearthing and Alleviating Emotions in Family Business Successions" by A. Bertschi-Michel, N. Kammerlander, and V. M. Strike, 2019 (*Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 00*(0), p. 21). Copyright 2019 by SAGE Publications. Adapted with permission.

Thus, given the importance of the role that emotion plays in both family businesses (Stanley, 2010), and human development (Scherer, 2005), this study has at its core an examination of CEO's positive or negative emotions, attitudes, and perceptions toward retirement as a factor of consideration in the succession process.

Intersection of Business and Human Life Cycles

Business life cycles have used human development descriptions such as formation, development, maturity and decline to represent stages of the business (Mintzberg, 1984). Succession planning is often associated with the later stages of the business cycle. Likewise, succession is often associated with the adult development stages of later life. Both have age attributions that are primary to both business and psychosocial development.

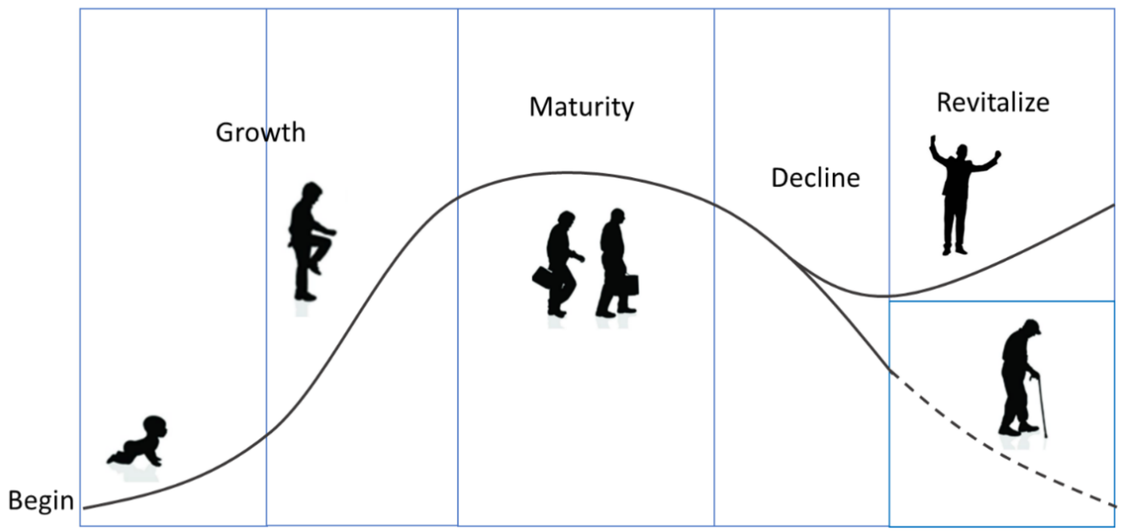

Figure 11. Business and human life cycle similarities.

As in Erikson's stages of psychosocial crisis, both positive and negative elements exist and are experienced as part of the transition from one life stage to the next. These crises are social in nature, highlighting the conflicts and angst people can have as they transition from stage to stage. As earlier mentioned, the age of business owners considering succession is often somewhere between age 45-50. Coincidentally, this overlaps with the period of time in adult development where individuals begin to ponder legacy, retirement, and death. This is also the age in which business owners, especially those who are founders and in family businesses, are operating the business at a mature business cycle phase. These three components—age at which to start succession planning, age to consider retirement, and age of the business—together become a powerful triad of psychological and psychosocial influence for the business owner.

The perceptions that people face regarding retirement and succession planning, whether favorable or unfavorable, may then have an impact on how small business owners transition from the business to retirement and to the next stage of life.

Retirement and succession planning. Limited literature exists which juxtaposes retirement and small business owner succession planning. This limitation is further highlighted when isolating retirement factors such as age, perceptions, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors in the context of small business owner succession planning.

According to Ip and Jacobs (2006), “there is a notable connection between succession planning and the age of owners/managers: it seems that those in their late 50s are most vulnerable to succession failure” (p. 335). As the baby boomers (born between 1946 -1964) begin to age, fewer are in the pool to lead organizations. As these leaders exit the workforce at increasing rates, the knowledge and institutional experience they have gained over the decades will largely disappear.

Business owners need to understand the forces that move them toward or away from developing a formal succession plan. According to the Current Population Survey (CPS), the median age of CEOs in the US is 52.5 years (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Increasing numbers of aging CEOs and the limited number of businesses doing succession planning is identified as a concern in the literature. Kim and DeVaney (2003) studied the phenomenon of family business owner succession, examining partial retirement as a possible transitional phase to full retirement. Age of owner was directly correlated to choosing partial retirement. Equity in the business, type of ownership, and involvement of other family members did not affect the likelihood of partial retirement. Marshall et al. (2006) studied owner age relationship to succession-related processes and plans. Older owner age was found to be positively associated with the importance of succession planning. Paradoxically, older age was also negatively associated with cooperative conflict management. The reasons for retiring or not retiring from the business are many. Retirement reasons cited in the literature include: health of the owner, health of the business, successor identification and development; individual preferences of the owner, desires of family, and financial needs or desires.

"Letting go". In the literature, "letting go" is cited as the single largest problem in succession. Reluctance of CEOs to do succession planning may be misunderstood in the light of their specific occupational and psychological qualities. "Letting go" refers to relinquishing control and leadership of the business and is one of the most emotionally difficult experiences of a CEO's life (Aronoff, 2011; Sonnenfeld, 1991). The word "succession" is often perceived by business owners as taboo and evokes fears and emotions long hidden under layers of defense mechanisms and imperceptible habits. The desire to avoid this issue is strongest in most successful CEOs (Aronoff, 2011).

Research emphasizing the impact of small business owners' views of retirement on their planning for succession and for life going forward is limited. According to Bruce and Picard (2006), the number one reason given by business owners who are planning to leave the business is retirement. Furthermore, they identified that "soft issues" tend to be lagging in small business owner attention. As owners face retirement, they are confronted with unknowns about the future, doubts, fears, excitement, and a number of other emotional and psychological variables which lend to the difficulties of letting go of the business.

Gagnè, Wrosch, and Brun de Pontet (2011) explored letting go from the CEO's psychological capacity to disengage from business activities (current goal) and re-engage in new goals. Goal disengagement predicted taking steps to planning for retirement but not necessarily tied to setting a retirement date. Goal re-engagement capacities were related to positive retirement expectations. For example, if the CEO had trust (positive beliefs) in the successor, disengaging from the business and reengagement capacity was higher than if the CEO had low trust (negative beliefs) in the successor. This demonstrates the importance of the CEO's emotion valuation used to inform judgment about specific event or specific stimuli such as those included in decisions to do succession planning (Barrett, 2006). New models of retirement embrace a reinvention of the concept.

Given that the concept of letting go is quite pronounced in the literature, Sargent, Lee, Martin, and Zikic (2013) suggested a different approach to this challenge, one that *reinvents* retirement altogether, thereby proposing a new way to look at later life which replace past meaning of retirement with new meaning, as well as challenges retirement as a distinct period of time all-together (p. 4).

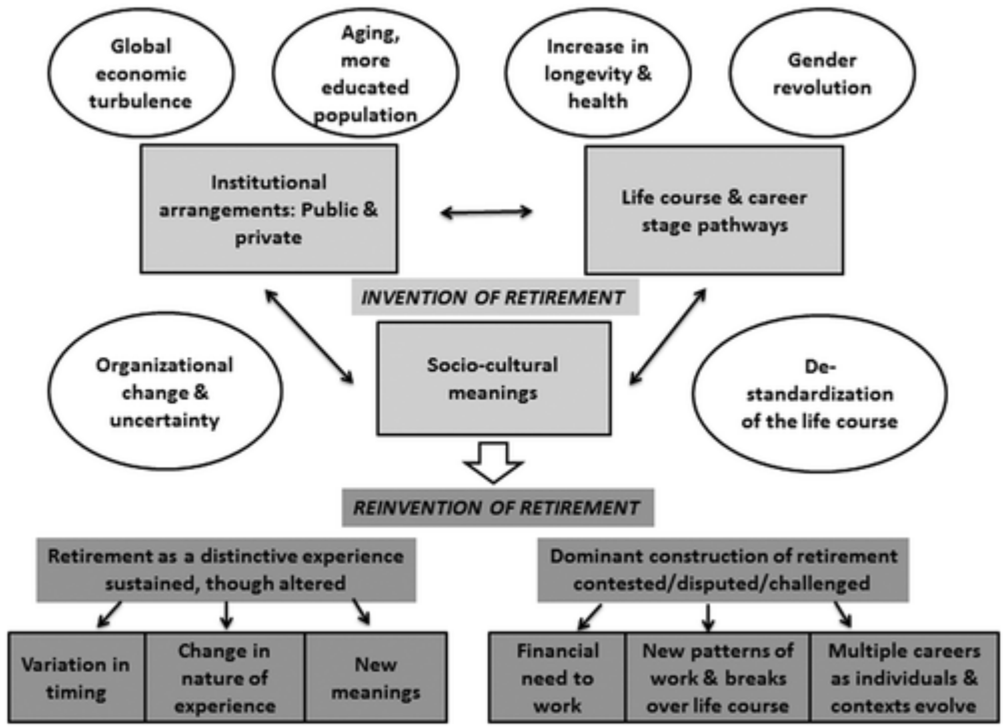

Figure 12. Invention and reinvention of retirement. Adapted from, "Reinventing Retirement: New Pathways, New Arrangements, New Meanings," by L. D. Sargent, M. D. Lee, B. Martin, and J. Zikic, 2013 (*Human Relations*, *66*(1), p. 3–21). Copyright 2013 by SAGE Publications. Adapted with permission.

In this inventing and reinventing retirement model (Figure 12), it encapsulates a holistic illustration of retirement that includes: (a) the invention of retirement as a concept, (b) recognition of the forces of change that influence retirement in concept and practice, and (c) the two kinds of retirement reinvention that are emerging (p. 6-7). Small business owners "need to understand the forces that move them toward and away from developing a formal succession plan" (Marshall et al., 2006, p. 351). By better understanding both business and human development life cycles, it may provide a new lens from which to address business owner reluctance to do succession planning.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a review of literature most pertinent to small business owner succession planning and retirement. Gaps and inconsistencies identified in the literature are as follows:

- Small Business Succession – expansion and integration of business, psychology, and social models such as the theory of planned behavior;
- Social Norms – relationships between retirement and CEO perceptions of those norms as considerations in planning for succession; and
- Life Cycles – comparison of psychosocial stages and business stages with an opportunity to explore potential reasons for resistance to planning.

This summary sets the stage for the research design and methodology to approach this phenomenon from a new angle on the topic specific to exploring the influence perceptions of retirement might have on succession related intentions or actions.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the research approach used to investigate the perceptions of business owners toward retirement and succession planning. A review of the research questions is provided followed by the methodology and research design. Specific sections address the following in detail: the setting, population, human subject consideration, instrumentation, data collection, management protocols, and data analysis. The chapter concludes with the positionality of the researcher and a chapter summary.

Context

This investigation into small business owner perceptions of their retirement and succession planning is addressed by looking at individual CEO data collected and analyzed through a mixed method approach. The overarching question that guides this study is as follows: In what ways do perceptions of retirement influence small business owner succession planning?

Two sub questions were constructed in order to answer the central question:

1. What are the perceptions of small business owners toward their retirement?
2. What are the perceptions of small business owners toward their succession?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspective in this study is *constructivist*, taking a phenomenological inquiry approach that allows for the gathering of perspectives about succession planning and retirement from multiple small business owners. There is a positivist tendency in this mixed methods study. This constructivist paradigm focuses on identifying the "common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences…and what they all have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). Because it does not require "the right answers," this research paradigm is an appropriate foundation for the theoretical model.

A theoretical framework is illustrated in Figure 13.

Research Question	In what ways do perceptions of retirement influence small business owner succession planning?
Research Approach	Mixed Method
Theoretical Paradigm	Constructivism
Methodology	Phenomenology
Methods	• Questionnaire – quantitative/qualitative • In-depth Interview – qualitative
Instruments	• Online Questionnaire • Semi-Structured Interview protocol

Figure 13. Theoretical framework for research design. Adapted from "Conceptual Framework of Theoretical Frameworks" by M. Jago, 2020 (Manuscript in preparation). Copyright 2020 by Martine Jago. Adapted with permission.

Research Design

The research design is a mixed method framework of both qualitative and quantitative analysis for breadth and depth understanding (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). There are three common mixed methods design types: sequential explanatory, sequential exploratory, and convergent (parallel; Creswell, 2014).

Three common features of mixed method design — priority, timing, and mixing — are reviewed and considered (Creamer, 2018). As illustrated in Figure 14, a convergent (parallel) design is chosen for the following reasons:

1. Timing of the collection of qualitative and quantitative data are collected at the same time.
2. Equal priority is given to the qualitative and quantitative information collected.
3. Blending of qualitative and quantitative data is used for interpretation and drawing conclusions.

Figure 14. Convergent parallel mixed method research design. Adapted from *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th edition), by J.W. Creswell, 2014 (p. 220). Copyright 2014 by SAGE Publications. Adapted with permission.

In this model, quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, results compared, and blended (mixed) in order to provide additional robustness to interpretation of findings (Creamer, 2018).

Quantitative descriptive and trend information of small business owners was gathered through a 15-item questionnaire. A subset of the business owners who completed the questionnaire, participated in a semi-structured interview (*N* = 17). The interviews allowed for CEOs to share a deeper level of their unique and personal experiences related to retirement and succession.

Setting

Chamber of Commerce sites in a metropolitan area of the Midwest were originally selected to conduct the study. Over 1500 businesses, including not-for-profit and government organizations, operate in the designated metro counties (Minneapolis Area Chamber of Commerce, 2019). Membership from the Chamber of Commerce organizations was the intended population from which the sample of small business owners was to be drawn. However, of the individual chapters contacted, only one group participated; the rest declined or did not respond to inquiry. Thus, this population was not accessible.

The next option was to identify small businesses from the researcher's network. This included businesses primarily but not exclusively from the upper Midwest. Family-owned small businesses are included, but not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations are excluded due to the differences in a monetary focus and regulatory restrictions.

Population

For this study, the target population is small business owners who have been CEOs of the company for a minimum of 10 years and are still active in that capacity at the time of the inquiry. While titles may vary (CEO, business owner, president, or owner), they all represent the top executive leader who has primary accountability for overall decisions of the business. Participants may have some financial ownership of the business. However, no inquiry is made into the size or amount of financial ownership as part of this study. Of participants, 74% are from the Midwest and 27% are from other parts of the U.S.

Sample size. Convergent parallel design in this study used a different sample size for the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the research. Although not a random sample, a larger sample size, N = 116, for quantitative elements suggests more generalizability to larger populations (Creswell, 2014). The interview data was designed to elicit greater in-depth understanding. Therefore, generalizability of the data was not the goal, but rather illumination and explanation of the phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2013; Gray, 2014). The sample size of 17 CEOs is a subset from the questionnaire population described above.

Purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used in this study to gather information from a small group of individual business owners faced with the phenomenon of planning for succession and retirement. Specifically, a snowball sample based on the networks of the researcher increased the determined size of the study.

Participant selection. In order to be included in the first phase of the study, the questionnaire, the only criteria required was that of being the current CEO of the business. Respondents who met the following criteria were given the opportunity to participate in the next phase of the study, a face-to-face (in person or virtual) interview:

1. Current CEO status
2. Tenure as CEO of the same business
3. For profit business designation
4. Minimum and maximum number of employees

Human Subject Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Guidelines of the Pepperdine Graduate and Professional Schools (GPS), and IRB approval was acquired on February 9, 2018. The primary goal of the GPS IRB is to "protect the rights and welfare of human subjects participating in research activities conducted under the auspices of Pepperdine University" (Pepperdine University, 2017).

For the Chamber of Commerce group participation, a site consent form (Appendix A) was completed and recruitment letter (Appendix B) provided to the Executive Director of the Chamber. Participants recruited through the Chamber of Commerce or researcher's network to take the survey portion of the study were provided an informational sheet explaining the study, confidentiality, participation and other considerations prior to completing the online questionnaire (Appendix C). Participants who completed the questionnaire indicated their desire to participate in the interview portion. Participants who met the selection criteria and indicated their desire to participate in the interview phase, were provided an Informed Consent letter to review prior to the interview (Appendix D). The Informed Consent outlines the purpose, procedures, research benefits and risk mitigation steps as well as how confidentiality is maintained.

The coding system de-identified participants using letters and numbers in the questionnaire and subsequent interview protocols. As a voluntary study, participants could opt out of the process at any time. In addition, participants were informed of the opportunity to receive a summary of findings.

Instrumentation

Data collection methods for this study were an online questionnaire and face-to face interview, both appropriate for a mixed methods study (Creswell, 2014; Gray, 2014). The questionnaire collected basic participant and company information as well as initial views of retirement and succession. The interview instrument collected narrative information following a semi-structured format. Each of these tools were developed by the researcher, reviewed by other qualified individuals, and piloted before use with the study participants.

Questionnaire. A web-based 15-item questionnaire was designed to gather basic demographic and qualifying information about the small business owner and the business (Appendix E). The instrument asked primarily close-ended questions as a way to collect data on a larger population that could be analyzed relatively quickly and determine the sample of small business owners to be interviewed.

A pilot questionnaire was conducted with ten individuals, half of whom have small business ownership experience. A pilot allows the researcher the opportunity to test reliability, content validity, instruction clarity, style, format, length, and web functionality

(Creswell, 2014; Gray, 2014). No substantive changes were made to either the questionnaire or interview.

Interview. The protocols for interviews as outlined by Creswell (2014) included use of a semi-structured interview questions, audio recordings, and transcription.

The interview instrument was developed based on the literature and the researcher's knowledge and experience with the subject matter (see Appendix F). The interview consisted of 15 open-ended items and estimated to take 50 minutes to conduct. Follow up questions, when asked, were intended to clarify or expand upon responses.

The interview schedule was tested for content validity using a three-step process (prima facie, peer review, and expert review). The validated interview protocol was then tested for reliability in a pilot consisting of three business owners like those in the desired target population. Minor adjustments to wording were made based on feedback, such as changing the reference from *small* business owner to business owner. Depending on the industry, what is considered small in one industry may be considered mid-size or large in other industries.

Validity and reliability. The reliability of the questionnaire was demonstrated through the pilot testing of the survey instrument. The test-retest reliability showed the same results with repeated administrations of the questionnaire such as the amount of time to complete the survey and advancement from one question to another based on the choice selected.

Validity of the questionnaire and interview instruments was supported by prima facie, content, peer review and expert review strategies. These validation strategies were incorporated to help assist in the assurance of accuracy. While no such thing as exact validity exist, only *estimates* of validity, more types of estimates of validity lend more credibility (Newman, Lim, & Pineda, 2013).

Prima facie validity was established through the development of table which demonstrated the relationship between the interview questions and research questions and between survey items and research questions. Content validity was demonstrated through the peer review and expert review process. The peer review team consisted of three professionals who were trained by the researcher on coding procedures. Members of the peer review team provided timely critique on elements of the interview, such as structure, wording, flow, timing, and alignment with primary research question. Members of the dissertation committee provided additional comment on the interview and questionnaire protocols. Minor adjustments were made to the questionnaire and interview guide, resulting in the final versions created.

In addition to demonstrating validity of the instruments, triangulation was a validation strategy used to build themes from examination of data collected from multiple sources (Creswell, 2014; Gray, 2014). Triangulation is an appropriate for mixed methods research as the data is evaluated separately as quantitative data (questionnaire data) and qualitative interview (interview) which is then blended and mixed in the conclusions (Figure 15).

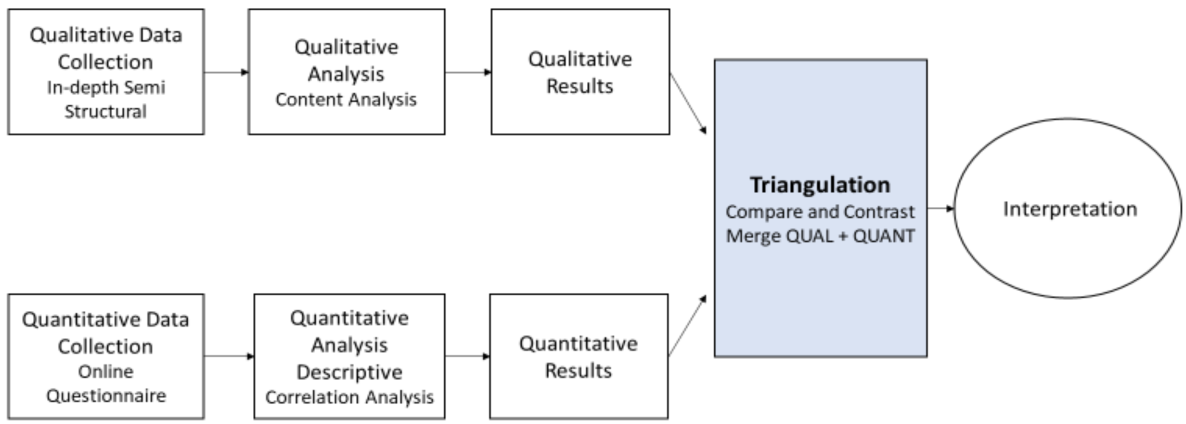

Figure 15. Mixed method concurrent triangulation. Adapted from "How Do Cognitive Function and Knowledge Affect Heart Failure Self-Care?" by V. Vaughan Dickson, C. S. Lee, and B. Riegel, 2011 (*Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *5*(2), p. 172). Copyright 2011 by SAGE Publications. Adapted with permission.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred through 116 online questionnaires and 17 in-depth interviews. Responses to the survey were recorded directly through Qualtrics and accessed only by the researcher. A review of the responses resulted in the removal of 14 questionnaires (largely due to insufficient completion) resulting in 102 usable questionnaires appropriate for use in data analysis.

The in-person interviews were conducted face to face when possible. One of the 17 interviews was done over the phone at the request of the participant. The interview was scheduled at a time and place convenient for the small business owner. The semi-structured, 15 question interviews were expected to take approximately 50 minutes. However, in most cases, interviews went longer than the 50 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participant. The audio recordings were transcribed by a transcription service and reviewed for accuracy by the researcher.

Each interview began with a review of confidentiality, confirmation of informed consent and statement of purpose. Easier questions were at the beginning, such as: “Please take five minutes and tell me about the path of your career and experience up until now”. Questions became increasingly more specific and potentially more difficult. For example, “What are the challenges to succession planning specific to you as the owner?” or “How do people you deem most significant to you, view your retirement?” The interview concluded with an affective question which asked the CEO to share a piece of advice to new business owners just starting out in business.

Data Management

All data related to the research are the responsibility of the researcher in accordance with the Pepperdine University IRB guidelines. All data gathered during the study in a hard copy format is kept in a locked file cabinet in the home office of the researcher. If data are digitized, they are stored on a separate hard drive and in Carbonite cloud backup. The separate hard drive is locked in a cabinet in the researcher’s home office. All participant data will be kept for three years from the date of the final dissertation report. After that date, all participant data will be shredded through a professional shredding vendor. Files will be deleted from the hard drive and cloud backup system of the researcher’s computer.

Data Analysis

The steps of a mixed method data analysis include both quantitative and qualitative data analysis done separately. The quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data was captured and tabulated across all respondents. For responses to qualitative questions of the questionnaire, data were converted into quantitative form for purposes of analysis. SPSS computer software was used to analyze the quantitative data and evaluate relationships between variables.

The following steps of qualitative data analysis were taken:

- Data were read and organized for referencing;
- Each interview and questionnaire were examined, and key words and phrases highlighted;
- Data were classified into codes;
- Themes emerged and were categorized.

The initial coding of the narrative data captured the “first impression” of the data by reviewing the data line by line and assigning descriptors (Saldana, 2013). As noted, each interview was transcribed by a paid service and reviewed for quality by peer review team member or the researcher. Interview transcriptions of each CEO were coded independently and were reviewed a minimum of three times to code for patterns and categories that emerged. Once coded, the data was triangulated across all interviews. Twenty-five percent of the coded interviews were then peer reviewed and identified a high level of consistency. Any disparities were discussed and recoded as appropriate.

After analyzing qualitative and quantitative data separately, the next step of data analysis included a triangulation of both forms of analyses to compare and relate the results. Figure 16 illustrates the triangulation process specific to this study.

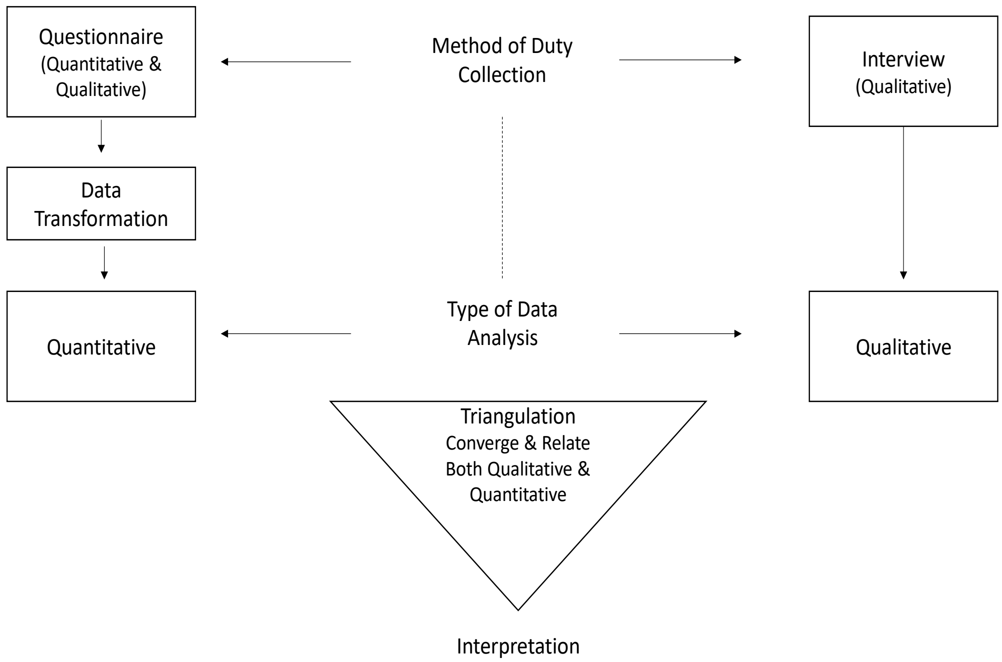

Figure 16. Triangulation process for this study.

Chapter Summary

Using a constructionist perspective, data were analyzed from a mixed methods design of web-based surveys and face to face interviews. Tests for reliability and validity indicated reasonable strength in the design. IRB protocols were followed, and participants consented to all data collection. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were conducted on the questionnaires, and qualitative only in the interviews in order to provide both a breadth of finding about retirement and succession planning and to discover the construction of meaning around those topics within the interviews.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Chapter Overview

This chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the research findings. It includes a restatement of the purpose and research questions followed by sections organized to share demographic patterns, quantitative analyses of the questionnaire data, qualitative analyses of open-ended responses from the interviews, and triangulation of the data separately and together. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings and sets the stage for analysis and conclusions.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore business owner perceptions of retirement and succession and how those perceptions might influence their plans to exit the business. The data collected from current business owners though the survey and in-depth interviews is the basis from which to investigate and further examine this phenomenon. The following research questions designed for this study are:

In what ways do perceptions of retirement influence small business owner succession planning?

Two sub-questions are paramount to answer the central question:

1. What are the perceptions of small business owners toward their retirement?
2. What are the perceptions of small business owners toward their succession?

Sample

Participants were selected using a snowball sample design. The intended source of participants, Chamber of Commerce organizations, proved not a viable source for participants resulting in 97% of questionnaire respondents and 83% of interviewees identified from the professional network of the researcher. This network includes business owner contacts and colleagues who are either, themselves, small business owners or knew of business owners. Of the questionnaires received, 102 out of 116 are included in the final analysis. Those not included responded to 40% or fewer of the questions. Of the respondents that met the criteria and agreed to be considered for the interview, 74% (17 of 23) participated in the interview phase.

Demographic Profiles

Business owner. Business owner demographics were largely captured through the questionnaire and complemented by the interview data. Of the 102 participants who completed the questionnaire, 42% are women and 58% are men. Of those who were interviewed, the data mirrors the break out of women 41% (N = 7) and men 59% (N = 10). According to other studies in the literature, this distribution appears to be very balanced. Age of business owners range from under 40 to over 70, represent a bell shape curve distribution in Figure 17.

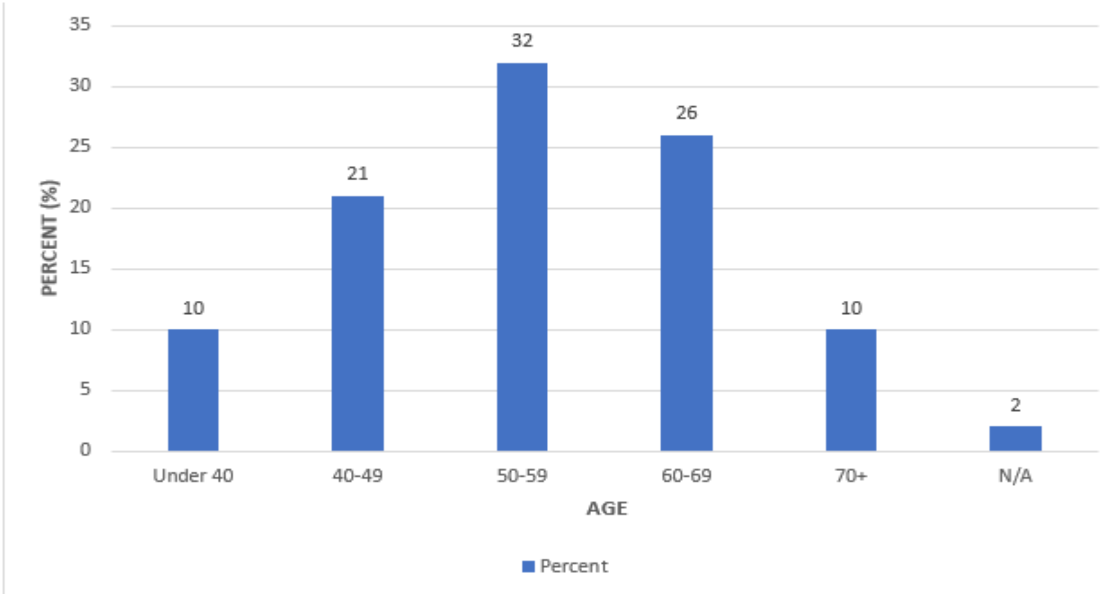

Figure 17. Distribution of business owner age range.

Number of years as CEO were collapsed into three categories for comparison. A criterion to be selected for the interview phase was to be a CEO of the same company for 10 years or more. Figure 18 shows a relatively balanced distribution of CEO years with the company.

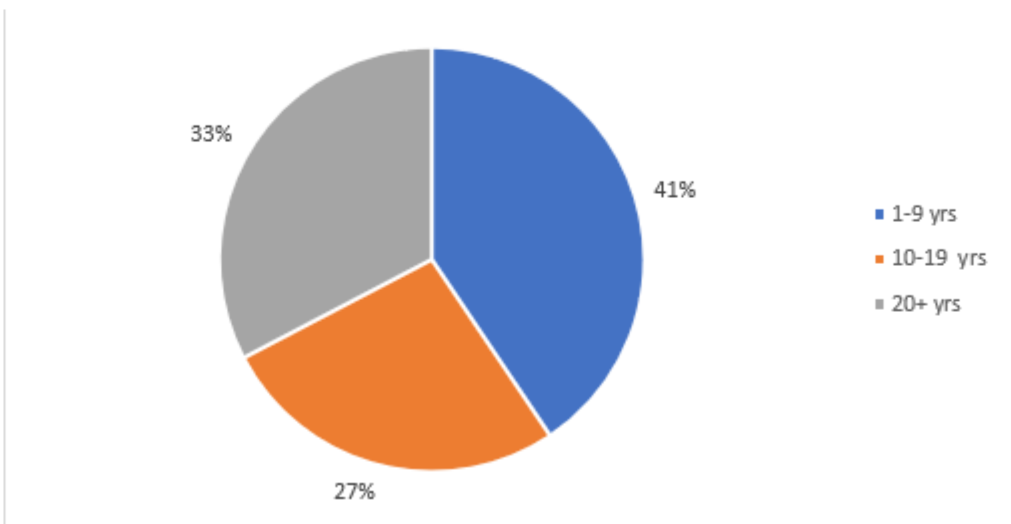

Figure 18. Distribution of years as CEO of the company.

Eighty-three percent of the participants are the original founding CEOs of the company and 75% of respondents to the questionnaire indicated they hold a financial stake (shares) in the company.

As identified through the interviews, 95% (*N* = 16) of CEOs have a college education and nearly 60% (*N* = 10) indicated they were employed as a youth and had entrepreneurial or business ownership as an early adult or while in college.

Of the responses to questions that asked why they chose to become a business owner, responses were categorized as either positive or negative. Of the negative responses, owners indicated they decided to become a business owner as a response to some negative or unpleasant events such as: promised promotions or ownership that never materialized, personality conflict with a boss, business partner differences or questionable business practices, or a feeling of being stymied. Positive descriptors were typically described as: a desire to pursue a passion, purpose or utilization of skills and expertise they possessed.

Business owners described the meaning of being successful as characterized by business continuity, profitability and growth (*N* = 12). Other descriptions of successful included personal satisfaction ("doing what you love"), helping others and employee satisfaction. Specific strategies which account for their success varied with over a dozen cited. However, 35% (*N* = 6) of the interviewees mentioned the following: a) innovation including learning from mistakes, b) providing quality products and services, c) hiring and retaining the right talent. Owner expertise and referrals are also mentioned as strategies for success.

Competition was the number one challenge described by business owners (*N* = 7), followed by barriers of capital, acquiring talent, owner capacity and day to day details ("working in the business not on the business''), and navigating regulatory environments. As a CEO, challenges described as most concerning were: (a) exit strategy and related factors such as business valuation, (b) employee retention and training, (c) business growth or shrinkage, (d) managing time/balance, and (e) pace of technology – fast or slow. Contrary to the concerns highlighted, nearly one quarter (*N* = 4) of the business owners interviewed indicated they have no worries or concerns.

Business*.* Business demographics included type of business owned (family or non-family), industry category, type of business (for profit or not for profit), and employment of staff. Nearly three quarters (74%) of the businesses in the study were active businesses located in the Midwest at the time of the study. Industries are varied with 30% from professional services (consulting/advise) and the other dispersed throughout a dozen other options. Ninety-seven percent of businesses in this study are for-profit entities and include both family-owned and non-family owned businesses. Sixty-three percent of businesses in the study were family owned, and 37% were not.

Questionnaire Findings

Quantitative analyses of the questionnaire data covered two areas: succession planning and views of retirement. Findings were both descriptive and bivariate.

Succession – findings. As the research indicates, despite the fact that few business owners have a plan, succession preparation plays an important role in business continuation. In this study, 28% of participants indicated a succession plan for the company while 72% indicated they did not have a plan or were unsure if there was a plan for the business (Figure 19).

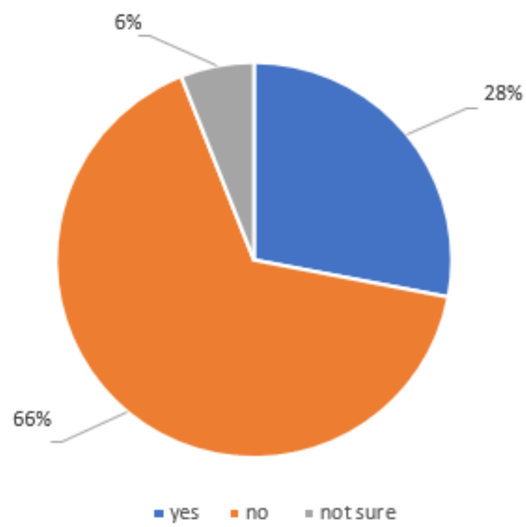

Figure 19. Business owners with a succession plan.

Related but slightly different, owners were asked what *type* of succession plan (formal, informal or no plan) existed to determine if there is a difference between formal and informal plan types. Figure 20 indicates 60% of business owners surveyed have no succession plan even though some indicated they think about it. Twenty-six percent have an informal succession plan, and 14% indicated they have a formal plan in place. This aligns with the research which suggests that 60% or more business owners do not have a succession plan.

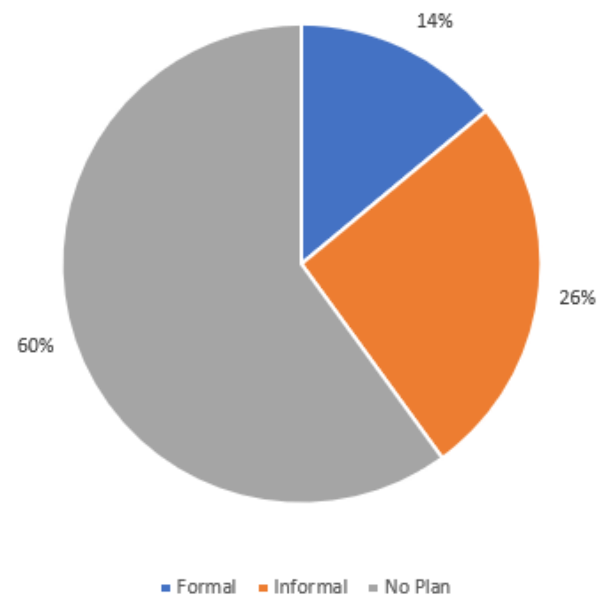

Figure 20. Succession plan type (Formal, Informal, or No Plan).

In this study, business owners with a plan, two-thirds indicated they have a professional advisor such as a tax advisor, legal or financial advisor.

The independent variables of age, gender and years as a CEO are viewed in relation to the dependent variable of succession plan resulting in the following:

Over half of men (53%) and women (69%) reported not having a succession plan. However, Table 1 suggests that men were more likely to have a succession plan than women, but the results were not quite statistically significant.

Table 1

Succession Plan Type by Gender

Type of Succession Plan	Male	Female	Total
Formal or Informal Plan			
Count	27	13	40
% within Gender	47%	31%	40%
No Plan			
Count	30	29	59
% within Gender	53%	69%	60%
Total			
Count	57	42	99
% within Gender	100%	100%	100%

The age of a CEO showed a significant relationship to having a succession plan at the .015 level. Figure 21 indicates that younger CEOs tend not to have succession plans. As business owner age increased, so did the percent of those with a succession plan to such a level that more CEOs had a succession plan than did not.

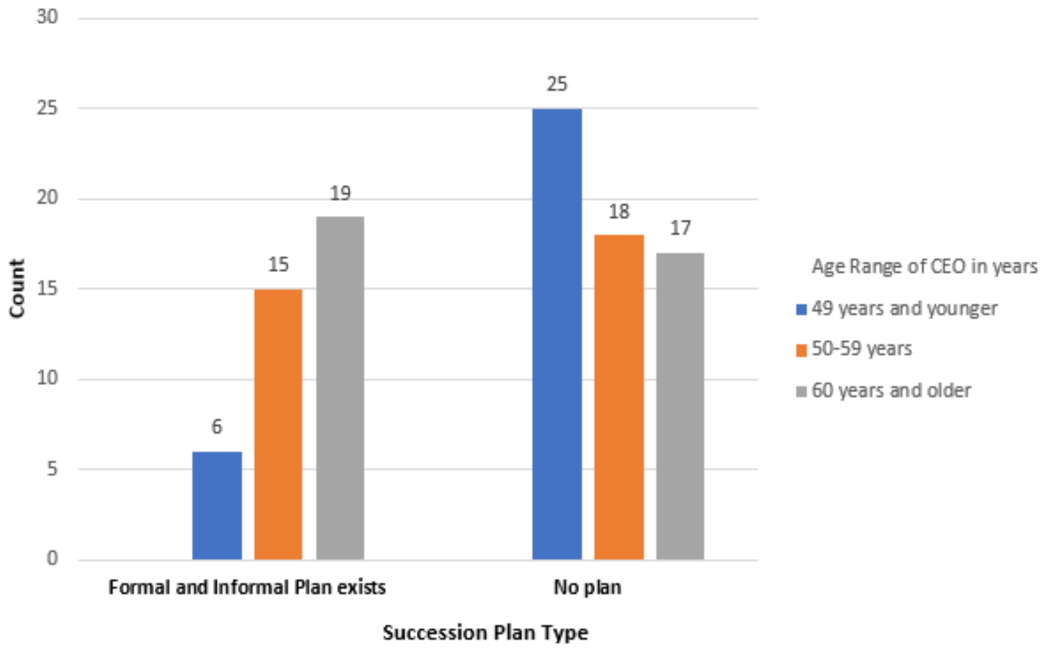

Figure 21. Succession plan type by CEO age. A chi-square test showed a statistically significant relationship between succession plan type and CEO age at the .015 level, $\chi^2 = 8.36$.

Years as the CEO in the same business suggested that the longer CEOs are in the role, the more likely they are to have a succession plan. This is similar to the findings related to age and planning, though number of years as a CEO was not found to be statistically significant, using a Pearson chi-square test, $p = .126$.

Retirement-related findings. The questionnaire was made up of mostly quantitative items but did include qualitative questions such as views related to retirement. Data were transformed to quantitative where possible. Specifically, qualitative responses to retirement questions were categorized by response description. Responses were also recoded with a valence assignment of either positive or mixed (negative, or positive and negative). For example, the question, "*How do you think society views people who are retired?* Elicited responses such as "old" or "not productive" which were coded as negative comments (negative valence). Responses to the same question such as “lucky” or “accomplished” were coded as a positive comment (positive valence). The questionnaire had three open-ended questions related to retirement:

- What words first come to mind when you think about *Retirement*?
- How do you think *society* views people who are retired?
- When you envision yourself no longer CEO of the company, what do you see?

Question: What words first come to mind when you think about ‘Retirement’? Interviewees provided multiple word answers to the question. They are categorized in the following themes: Financial freedom and security, time freedom, relaxation and travel, not ready to retire, change, worry and concern, anticipation, and new opportunities. Responses varied with no more than about one-quarter of respondents responding similarly to any single category. Time freedom (26%), not ready (21%), and financial freedom and security (20%) emerged as the top three categories.

Recoded views of retirement were categorized into either positive view of retirement or mixed views of retirement. Responses in the mixed category were not neutral responses. They included either negative responses, exclusively, or responses both positive and negative had to be present in the response. Regardless, the mixed category was not positive only. Nearly three-fourths (73%) of business owner respondents used positive words to describe retirement and 28% provided mixed responses.

The independent variables of age, gender and years as a CEO were viewed in relation to the dependent variables of retirement views. Views of retirement by gender were similar and showed no statistically significant difference. Over 70% of both men and women indicated favorable views of retirement. (Figure 22).

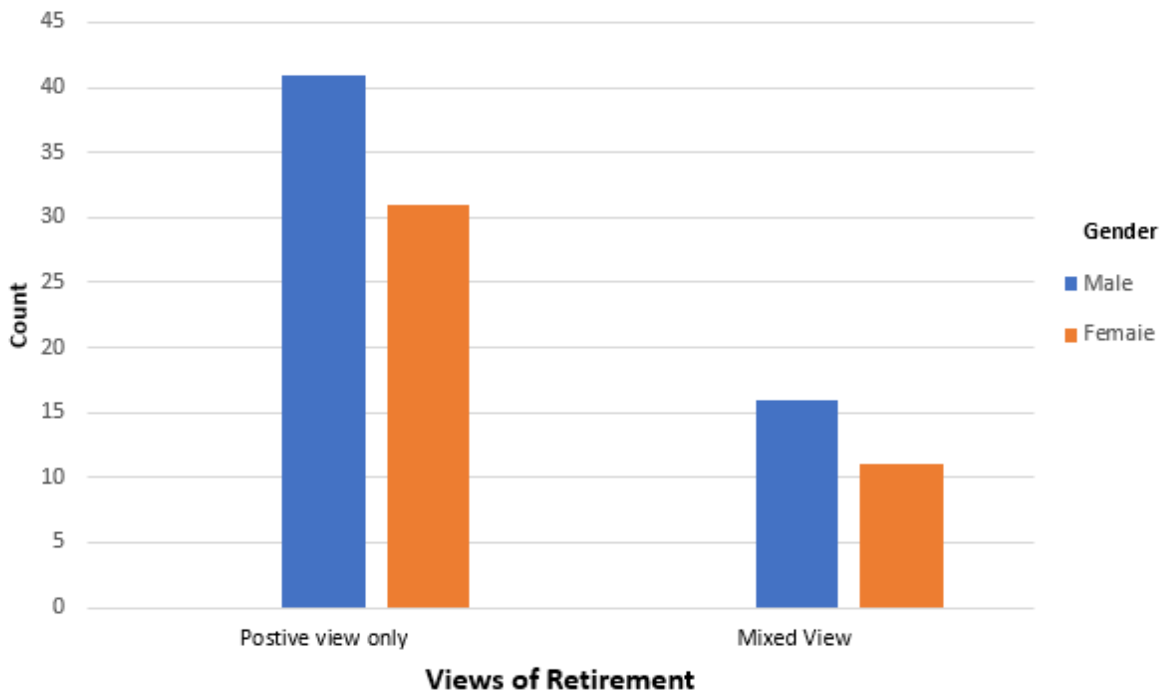

Figure 22. CEO view of retirement by gender.

Neither age nor years as CEO were significant in relationship to views of retirement. However, Figure 23 suggests CEO views of retirement, while still positive, become less positive as age increases, though not at a significant level.

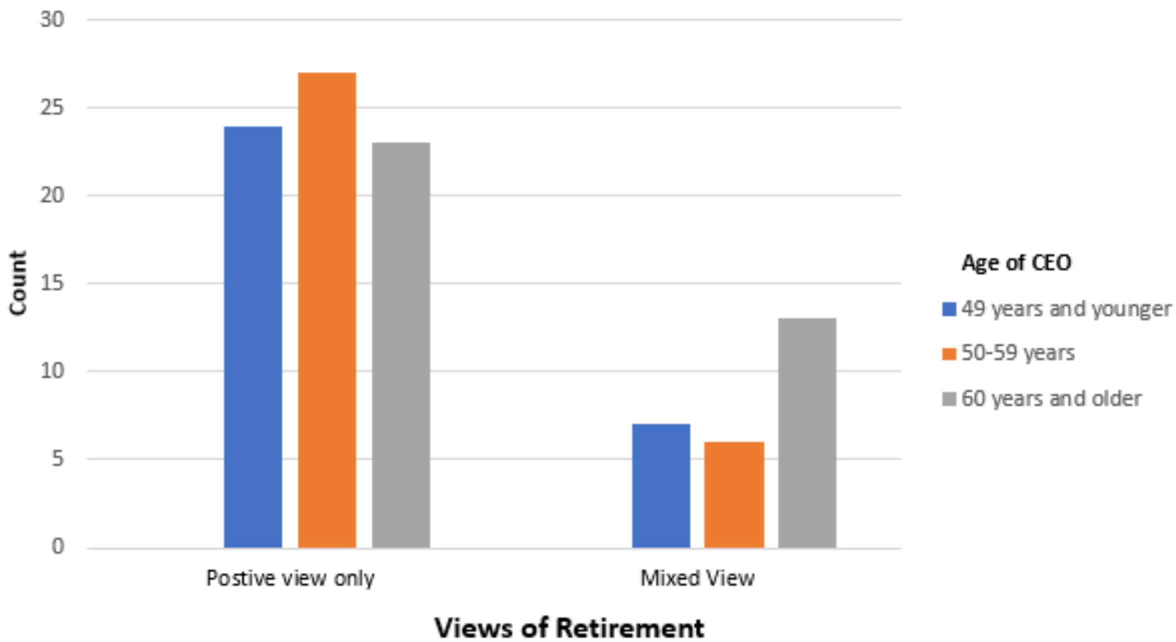

Figure 23. CEO view of retirement by age.

Question: How do you think society views people who are retired? Opposite of business owners' views of retirement – the majority of which are positive – business owners' conception of society's views of retirement are more negative or mixed. Of respondents, 60% indicated a mixed view of how society regards retired people (Table 2).

Table 2

CEO Perspective of Society View

View Type	Frequency	Percent
Positive View	41	40
Mixed View	61	60
Total	102	100

CEO perspective of society view of retired people showed significance at the .038 level (Figure 24). Younger CEOs (55%) indicated more favorable views of how society views retired people than did older CEOs (25%).

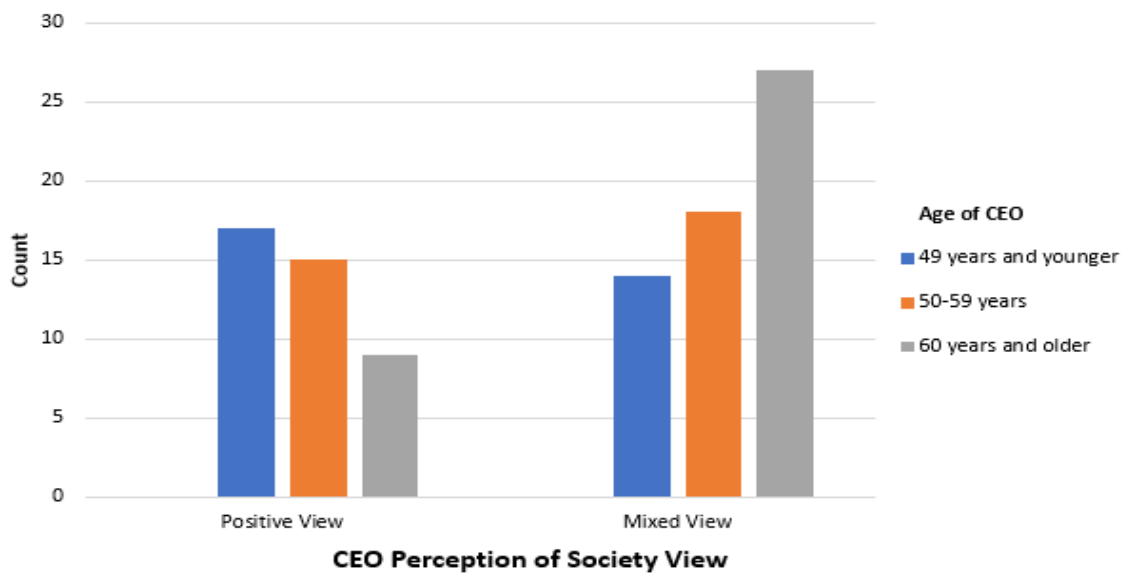

Figure 24. CEO perception of society view of retirement by age. A chi-square test demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between these variables at the .038 level, $\chi^2 = 6.54$.

Question: When you envision yourself no longer CEO of the company, what do you see? Similar to the responses of business owners positively describing retirement, 82.4% of business owners described positive views of how they envision themselves after leaving the CEO role. Neither gender, age, nor years as CEO indicated any significant influence in CEO views of their vision post their CEO role.

Succession Planning and Retirement – Bivariate Findings

This research is designed to further explore the relationship between succession planning and views of retirement. In this study, findings related to succession planning and views of retirement were reviewed separately. Central to concurrent mixed method analyses is the review of information separately and then in combination for purpose of complementarity. Thus, in order to answer the research question, succession planning and retirement combined analyses were also performed.

Findings indicated that those with a positive view of retirement were significantly more likely to have a succession plan than those with a mixed view, 46% compared with only 22%, respectively ($\chi^2 = 4.66$, significant at the .031 level).

A different question is, *"If business owners have or don't have a succession plan, what is their view of retirement?"* If owners have a plan, 85% have a positive view of retirement compared to 15% who do not have a positive view of retirement.
CEO views of how society views retirement, positive or mixed, did not indicate significance related to succession planning. However, CEO views of society's retirement views suggest a relationship to their own view of their retirement at just slightly less than a significant level ($p = .054$).

Business owner views of themselves after they leave the CEO role (post CEO) suggests a potentially strong relationship to views of their own retirement, though not significant due to numbers.

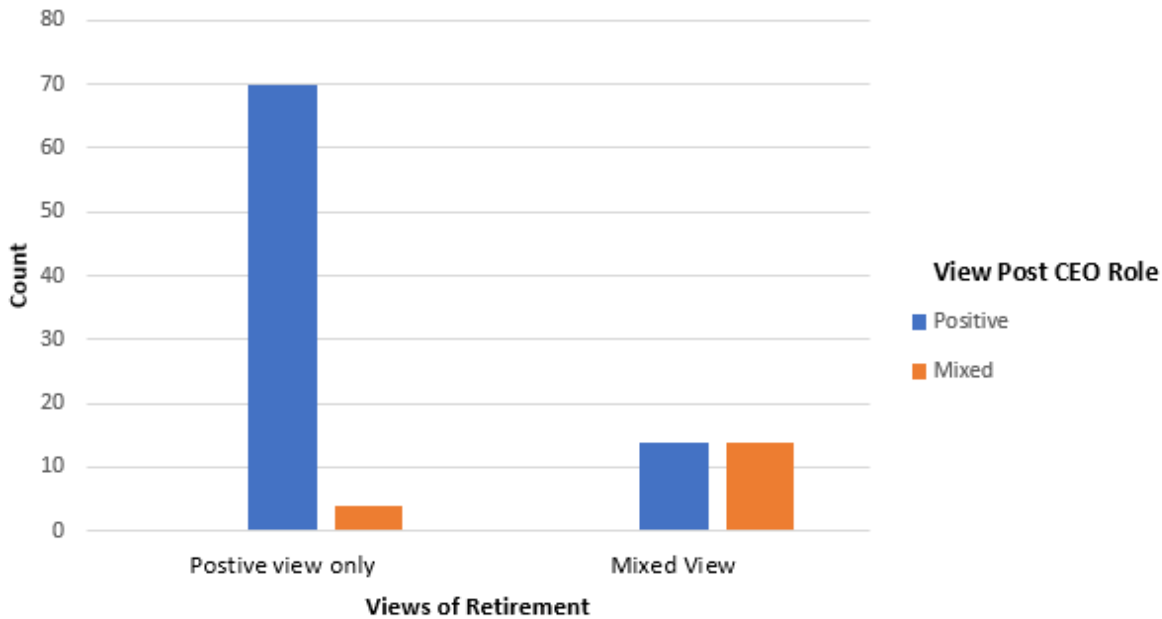

Figure 25. Perception of self (post-CEO role) and views of retirement.

Interview Profile Demographics

Table 3 identifies the participant number and basic demographic information used to appropriately connect specific quotes with the respective business owner while maintaining confidentiality.

Table 3

Business Owner Profiles for Data Analyses

Number of Interview	ID #	Gender	Age	Business Type	Succession Plan Type	Geography
1	P1	M	1	NF	NP	US
2	P2	M	2	F	FP	US
3	P13	F	3	F	NP	US
4	P19	M	1	F	NP	US
5	P23	M	3	F	NP	US
6	P33	M	3	F	NP	MW
7	P39	M	3	F	IP	MW
8	P65	F	2	NF	IP	MW
9	P78	F	2	F	NP	MW
10	P85	F	3	F	NP	MW
11	P86	F	1	F	NP	MW
12	P88	F	2	NF	NP	MW
13	P93	M	3	F	FP	MW
14	P94	M	2	NF	IP	MW
15	P100	M	3	F	FP	MW
16	P105	M	2	F	IP	US
17	P106	F	2	NF	NP	MW

Note. Gender: M=Male F=Female ; Age(1) <50 year, (2)50-59,(3) 60+ ; Business Type: Family/Non-Family; Succession Plan Type: Formal Plan, Informal Plan, No Plan; Geography; United States/ MidWest

Interview Findings

Qualitative analyses of the interview data cover two areas: succession planning and views of retirement. Findings emerged through the rich description of individual business owner experiences. Where meaningful, interview data were supplemented by responses to the questionnaire to provide a more complete and robust analyses of content.

Succession-related findings. Business owners were asked specific questions related to the benefits, challenges and plans for succession. Given the nature of open-ended questions, in some cases, owners provided multiple answers to questions.

Business owners see many benefits to succession planning. Three-fourths (*N* = 13) of respondents indicated business growth and continuity as key benefits to succession planning followed by benefits of: security (financial) or *peace of mind*, the ability to *take care* of *employees*, and the clarity of a *road map and roles* for the future.

Responses to challenges to succession planning were divided into challenges specific to the business and challenges specific to the owner. Fifty-nine percent of responses (*N* = 10) indicated that the greatest single business challenge to succession is the “Owner as Expert”, meaning the owner wears many hats and performs many functions, making the transfer of “owner knowledge” an issue of concern. One owner, Participant 88, stated, “Operationally, I got my fingers in everything…I am an accountant by trade, I’m ordering product, developing a product line and creating relationships.” Other owner responses such as, identification of a successor, finding a buyer for the business, business valuation, and concerns related to staff and talent were highlighted as succession challenges.

Specific to the owner, responses were evenly split between challenges of *relinquishing control* of the business, and issues dealing with *uncertainty* and *unknowns*. One owner indicated she had a successor identified for the business, but it didn’t work out. Another owner had an opportunity to sell the business but didn’t. She stated: “The thought of letting it go, I couldn’t do it. I just couldn’t do it…You make a decision by not making a decision. I couldn’t make a decision (to sell the business) so I just didn’t” (Participant 78).

Of those interviewed, 59% (*N* = 10) indicated they have a plan or intend to have a plan. This is contrary to their pattern of questionnaire responses regarding whether or not a succession plan exists. In the questionnaire, business owners were given a very specific definition of succession planning: "For the purposes of this study, succession planning is defined as a deliberate and organized process of transferring leadership and control of the business from the incumbent CEO to the successor. *In the company of which you are CEO, is there a succession plan for the business?"* Responses to this definition indicated 71% (*N* = 12) *do not* have a succession plan and 29% (*N* = 5) have a plan. In the interview, when left to their own interpretation of the type of succession plan for the business, the polarity of responses was not as pronounced. Fifty-nine percent (*N* = 10) indicated they have *no plan* and 41% (*N* = 7) indicated they have a plan (either formal or informal).

In response to the questionnaire item, *"Have you taken any concrete steps toward your succession?"*, 65% (*N* = 11) have not or were unsure, and 25% (*N* = 6) indicated they have taken steps. The interview expanded on this question and probed into what *steps or actions owners have taken or intend to take related to planning.* Responses to action steps centered on the idea of *preparation* – preparation of people/staff and preparation of the business. If responses were not related to preparation, they indicated they did not take or intend to take actions toward planning.

Retirement-related findings. Business owners were asked retirement related questions related to definition, perception, benefits, challenges, and planning.
The following questions are highlighted:

- What is the definition of Retirement?
- How do you think society, as a whole, perceives retired people?
- What do you see as the benefits or positives, if any, to retirement?

- What do you see as the challenges, if any, to retirement?
- Have you planned or intend to plan for retirement? If so, what steps have you taken?

Definitions of retirement were quite similar. Respondents identified not having to work for an income, more choice with their time, and financial independence as components of the definition of retirement. The following are statements from owners reflecting their unique definitions:

- "No longer drawing paycheck for a job" (Participant [P]13).
- "Devoting time and energy to non income-based activities" (P78).
- "Retirement is when you've lost the view of how to make an impact and make money from doing it" (P19).
- "Work is optional, and retirement is affordable" (P2).
- "When you block off the entire day to get your haircut" (P33).
- "You are finally financially independent and you're in control of your schedule" (P105).
- "It's not going to an office every single day. However, it's still working in a capacity of doing a different type of work or doing something that you're passionate about or you want to volunteer" (P88).

Business owners further described their own view of their retirement in terms of mostly positive terms using words like *travel, flexibility of time and balance, contribute*, or *doing something different*. Of the 17 business owner questionnaire responses, 71% (*N* = 12) used positive words to describe retirement views compared to 29% (*N* = 5) who described retirement in a mixed way.

Question: How do you think society, as a whole, perceives retired people?

Responses were evenly split between positive (*N* = 11) and negative (*N* = 11) descriptions. One respondent summed up society's view as, "It's binary. Part of society thinks that retirees are old people that can't get work and need somebody to take care of them. The other side is the exact opposite, that they are so successful that they can award themselves with retirement" (P19). Responses are generally opposite in nature and are not neutral in description. Negative responses included:

- "You're old and don't have the skill set any more…you can't keep up and it's time for you to sit on the front porch in a rocking chair with a gold watch" (P65).
- "Past your prime" (P106).
- "You're done. You're old or you're backwards. You're going senile or crazy" (P88).
- "Old people who just go away" (P105).
- "Live frugally and go that restaurant when they give senior discounts" (P94).
- "Doddering white haired people who can't contribute meaningfully" (P13).

Positive responses included:

- "Financially secure", "freedom", "fortunate" (P33).
- "Sit back and sleep in and do what you want" (P93).
- "A good resource for lots of organizations" (P85).
- "Our whole volunteer world is based very heavily on retired people. They are not self-absorbed. They just don't need an income" (P78).

The questionnaire responses of the 17 owners indicated much more mixed responses to society views of retirement. Eighty-two percent (*N* = 14) indicated negative or mixed views compared to only 18% (*N* = 3) providing a favorable view. Once again, the interview data indicated a more balanced perspective than indicated in their questionnaire responses which offered explanation and rationale for both their positive and negative descriptions. In the interviews, owners recognized and articulated an understanding that both types of views of retirement exist in society – favorable and unfavorable.

Question: What do you see as the benefits or positives, if any, to retirement?

A number of benefits to retirement were mentioned. Flexibility/Freedom was mentioned the greatest number of times (*N* = 7). Responses included:

- “Pursuing things you never had a chance to do” (P94).
- “Freedom to look at the world in a way where they can fashion it whatever way they want” (P19).
- “Volunteer…give back to society and make this country, the state, the city a better place when I leave it” (P39).
- “You are able to kind of go with the day, or not go with the day” (P106).
- “Freedom to have more margin in life” (P13).

Other benefits such as more discretionary time to travel and be with family, pursuit of new interests, and better health were included.

Question: What do you see as the challenges, if any, to retirement?

Owners identified challenges to retirement as financial (*N* = 12), concerns over staying healthy (*N* = 6), and an overall uncertainty about retirement (how, when, what) (*N* = 7). One owner answered the question with a question, “Who’s going to take care of me?” (P13). Others responded in the following ways:

- “Do you have the financial wherewithal to do it, really” (P94).
- “In my case, I’ve not been a good stock picker. I don’t have a pension plan. My trade off is selling the business…So, I’m thinking in my personal case that retirement for me will obviously be social security” (P33).
- “Staying healthy. I’ve got joint issues and have to get a hip replaced already.” (P106).
- “Outside of financial, it’s health” (P39).
- “How do you make the decision to step away completely?” (P6).

The majority of respondents indicated they have a plan (or intend) to plan for retirement. Steps taken center on preparation. Respondents indicate taking financial actions to save and plan for retirement and reduce expenses (pay off house and down size). Yet, others indicated mentally preparing and ‘dabbling’ in other things such as starting a new hobby, adopting a reduced schedule, change in role, or volunteering to try new things. One business owner indicated he would like to become an expert witness once he retires from his firm. Another is starting other entrepreneurial ventures, and another is joining boards and pursuing the idea of becoming an adjunct professor.

Succession and retirement merge – findings. Mixed methods convergent design calls for the merging of analyses and findings. The interviews include combined questions which relate to retirement and succession. For example, “*In what ways do your views of retirement impact your plan for your succession?”* Questions related to post succession views and “letting go” are included.

Contrary to most owners who have a succession plan or intend to have one, more than half (N = 8) indicated they do not have plans in place for after leaving the business (post succession). Others simply could not distinguish between retirement and post succession. This coincides with business owner views of retirement and impact on plans for succession. Many acknowledged a connection between views of retirement and succession but were unsure of how they're connected. Yet, some indicate their view of retirement has no impact on their plans, or they prefer to just "leave it to chance."

When asked if "letting go" was a factor that impacts succession planning, clear opinions emerged. The following reasons were cited with regard to the difficulty of "letting go": CEO ego (N = 10) and identity (N = 10) are often tied to the business, fears (N = 9) of failure, mortality, and unknowns; positive sources such as (N = 7) friends, purpose and satisfaction, and those who simply have no plan for letting go or no intention to do so (N = 7). Business owners recognize the need to relinquish control of the business at some point, but it makes it no less difficult to let it go. "It is just painfully difficult to allow someone else to be the owner" (P13). Another owner summed it up this way, "If you've never had to let it go, you don't know how to let it go" (P100).

Chapter Summary

The key finding to the primary inquiry of small business owner retirement perceptions as a factor influencing succession is that there is a significant relationship. Quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted to determine the relationship of various variables affecting business owner perceptions toward retirement and plans for leaving the business. Descriptive and content analyses were performed to summarize the findings, using triangulation to increase the validity of results by using both the quantitative and qualitative data.

Business owner demographics such as age and years as CEO were found to have more significance in retirement and planning views than gender. The positive or negative (valence) nature of business owner views of succession and retirement is also shown to be a factor of influence and significance. The next chapter will discuss the interpretation of findings and what conclusions may be drawn to influence further research and implications for small business owner practices.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter Overview

This chapter includes a brief summary of the study, presents and interprets key findings, draws conclusions and implications, provides evaluation and makes a series of recommendations for future research and practice.

Study Overview

How do perceptions of retirement influence small business owners' succession planning? Understanding these views may provide insight as to why so few business owners have succession plans in place. This study investigates how perceptions, positive or negative, might influence succession planning; specifically, owner beliefs and attitudes of retirement and what impact, if any, that has on their succession planning. The following central question guided the study: In what ways do perceptions of retirement influence small business owner succession planning?

Two sub questions are foundational to answer the central question:

a. What are the perceptions of small business owners toward their retirement?

b. What are the perceptions of small business owners toward their succession?

Data from 102 business owners who completed a 15-item questionnaire were used to determine qualification for the interview phase. A 15-question semi-structured interview protocol with 17 small business owners elicited their in-depth views of succession and retirement. A mixed method concurrent research design incorporated both qualitative and quantitative strands of analyses triangulated for increased validity and added robustness of findings. Significant findings and themes are identified as follows.

Key Findings

There are six key findings from the study. The first two pertain to the quantitative data collected; the subsequent four findings are qualitative in nature.

Question: What are the perceptions of small business owners toward their succession?

Key finding #1. The majority of business owners (72%) in this study do not have a succession plan, which is consistent with earlier research indicating that same pattern (Christensen, 1953; Eliopoulos & Meister, 2017; Sharma et al., 2001; Ward, 1997). However, when given the opportunity to define succession for themselves in terms of formal or informal plan, like the questionnaire responses, the interviews reveal that an increased number of owners, 24%, state that they have an informal plan. Thus, the pattern of “no plan” is mitigated by uncovering these informal plans and suggests that future research might focus on making this distinction. The in-depth interviews provide possible explanations for differences in succession plan type. For the majority of interviewed small business owners, discussing the future of the business is very personal. Owners describe the apprehension to discussing any thoughts of leaving the business with anyone. They expressed concern that if their intentions for a succession plan or actual plan become known to the public, it could jeopardize client relationships, and employee retention. A plan might lead those constituents to have reservations about possible changes in leadership and future stability of the business. A succession plan could be viewed as a discouraging indicator leading clients, customers and employees to look elsewhere rather than being seen as an indication of a well-run business that is planning for a successful future. This expressed risk is one which small business owners in the study state they are not willing to take.

Another possible reason for not doing succession planning may be related to the retirement planning process. Both succession and retirement planning processes are often interdependent for business owners in the later stages of life and are likely to be done independently and on different timelines. Business income for small business owners interviewed in this study is often a part of their intended retirement income and viewed as part of their retirement security. Therefore, it may be difficult for small business owners to have a formal succession plan in place if they are uncertain when and how to coordinate it with their retirement planning.

Furthermore, professional advisors to assist with succession planning may be perceived as too costly if they even know who to contact for retirement or succession planning. About half of owners interviewed contemplating succession shared that they are uncertain who to contact for succession support. All of these factors may be reasons why small businesses have informal undocumented plans which may make them feel better about having a plan and also may buy time while they find ways to reconcile disconnects. Additional research to further explore succession plan types in small businesses, and if these differences have any impact on the business and owner transitions, is warranted.

Key finding #2. Business owner age is a key factor identified related to succession planning. Through the stages of life, aging is a natural part of that cycle (Levinson, 1986). The data strongly suggest (p = .015 level) that as CEOs age, they are significantly more likely to have a succession plan. Not surprising, younger owners tend not to have succession plans. As age increases, business owner succession planning increases. Yet, the majority of owners still do not have a succession plan until age 60. At age 60 years and older, more business owners have a succession plan than do not. This change, contrary to literature, may arise because small business owners at a certain age appear to be *less* reluctant to “let go” of the business and more willing to plan for their departure. One explanation may be that age is connected to the retirement stage of life. Age may be a consideration that aids in the transition of the owner from the business. Business owners who have greater awareness of the later stages of life and the aging process at some point appear to be more willing to consider their succession from the business. While the literature primarily emphasizes the reluctance and ambivalence to letting go of the business, it may be beneficial to further examine the factors that may lead to a “tipping point” of this change from reluctance to willingness to do succession planning.

Key finding #3. The interview data reveal that the business owners recognize the benefits of succession planning both personally and for the business, but still do not do planning even when they intend. Nearly 60% say they have a plan or intend to plan for their succession. This is contrary to the fact that those *same* owners (who said they have a plan or intend to have a plan) respond the opposite way on the questionnaire, 59% of those interviewed do not have either a formal or informal succession plan. This is also supported by the larger population of business owners in which 60% indicate they do not have a plan. Although the research did not directly examine “why” the difference in responses, it may be that the owners in this study tend to be very positive in their responses and are optimistic they will do planning even when they do not actually demonstrate behaviors reflecting that intention. This type of social desirability effect may be one explanation to this finding (Richman, Kiesler, Weisband, & Drasgow, 1999). The literature shows that business owners know the value of succession planning and the benefits it can bring. Yet, they may think they should respond in a more socially desirable manner by indicating they have a plan or intend to have a plan even when that may be a distortion or not factual.

In addition to social desirability effect as a possible reason for contradictory responses to succession planning existence, another explanation may be related to the instrumentation methods used to collect the data as part of a mixed methods research design. It may be that the relatively quick responses on a survey, such as the online questionnaire, produce fewer personal responses than those elicited in intimate interviews. This affirms the value of the mixed methods approach.

Key finding #4. Challenges specific to doing succession planning impact both the business and the owner, particularly relating to issues of "preparation." The transfer of knowledge and the multiple roles the owner performs are expressed by a majority of interviewed CEOs as barriers to planning. One owner stated, "What am I doing that I have my fingers in everything? How do I get out of that? Who else can take this on?" (P6). Preparation of the business, such as how to identify a successor, buyer, valuation of the business, and plan for the care of the employees are all reservations shared by the owners in this study. While business owners intend to do succession planning, many are unsure as to *how* to prepare the business for the future. They are looking for a road map. One business owner stated, "I'm always trying to figure out where are my exit paths? I want to get to an endpoint" (P4). Another owner who was looking to sell her business said, "The biggest challenge for me…is figuring out how to value the business in order to sell it" (P16). These statements imply the desire for preparation support in several areas of the business.

Similar to the concerns related to the preparation of the business, owners express personal barriers to succession planning relating to the difficulty in relinquishing control and dealing with the unknowns of their futures without the business. These perceived challenges suggest a personal road map may be desirable to help navigate the future of the owner post the CEO role. Nearly three-fourths of the business owners in this study do not have a documented plan, and, of those interviewed, professional advisor support was limited to one or two independent types. The limited use of professional advisors by owners could be that they see such support as risky, as noted earlier. For those owners who have advisors, the advisors are often specific to legal, tax, or financial matters, and do not appear to be integrated in a holistic way in the business and owner planning. Such gaps leave the integration up to the business owner who may feel unprepared to adequately do the planning in an interdependent manner.

This pattern may provide insight into a common critique of the theory of planned behavior. Intentions do not always lead to anticipated behaviors. Factors such as the perception of being unprepared, either from a behavioral capability (feasibility) or emotional (desirability) perspective, may inhibit even the best of intentions from becoming manifest in succession planning behavior.

Adaptations to the theory of planned behavior, such as the Shapero model, are evident in the conceptual framework for this study and aid in the explanation of business owner reluctance to planning for retirement. While intention to perform succession planning is explored in the interviews, it is Shapero's model that highlights the propensity to act based on perceived desirability and feasibility. The valence assignment, positive or negative, assigned by the owner to desirability and feasibility of retirement and succession is the modification which is central to the researcher's conceptual framework.

As highlighted earlier, age is a factor relating to retirement and later stages of human development. Social norms continue to see retirement as an event associated with becoming a certain age and then declining in productivity and contribution (Robbins, 2015). This may also be a possible explanation for the lack of desired preparedness to leave the business as it relates to the owner retirement and unfavorable social perceptions of aging. Even though the owners view retirement favorably, they are less positive about their perceptions of society's view of retirement. The key finding then is that there is an expressed challenge to doing planning related to *preparation.* There are challenges in preparation readiness for both the business and business owner and the causes or factors that may influence preparation suggest further study possibilities. One such suggestion is to look at preparation in both the business life cycle and human life cycle models. The planning for succession may have synergies to the later stages of life and additional studies looking at the intersection of revitalization and decline may warrant further examination.

Question: What are the perceptions of small business owners toward their retirement?

Key finding #5. The findings relating to retirement start with a basic understanding of what people think about it and how they describe it. The business owners in this study described retirement similarly to the literature (Costa, 1998; Purcell,

2010) as people who are no longer working for an income. Retirement is either a set of freedoms or a set of concerns. Freedom of time, perception of having more time and choice of how to spend the time, are benefits of retirement. Yet, a clear set of worries, uncertainties and concerns over financial security are also prominent in the owner interviews, supporting other research on reluctance to “let go” of the business (Aronoff, 2011) and identification of less favorable views of aging and retirement (Robbins, 2015). What is interesting in this study is that owners recognize retirement to have distinct benefits (positives) and challenges (negatives) associated with it and describe them in a balanced and objective manner. Those same owners, over 70%, view retirement only favorably and yet they think society’s views of retirement are opposite of their own and mostly negative (60%). A possible explanation for this may be that these small business owners have experienced success (tenured CEOs) and therefore have a positive self-concept and are optimistic about their own retirement and futures, and less so about their perception of society. In the interviews, while still more positive about their own retirement views than society, they clearly state that society, like themselves, understand the “binary” views of retirement. As earlier stated, there may be a difference between a quick response to the survey and more thoughtful reflection to the in-depth interviews, demonstrating the value of the mixed methods approach.

Another dimension of exploration relating small business owner views of retirement is gender. Gender was not intended to be a focus of this study, yet due to the quality of the sample and the findings, gender differences are significant. Both men and women express higher levels of positive views of retirement than mixed or negative in both the questionnaire and interviews, while those interviewed also perceive society’s view of retirement to be very negative (only 18% perceiving society to have favorable views of retired people). Women more than men, verbalize the outdated nature of society's views of retirement and express a need to change how the later stages of life are described and characterized. This perspective may be a response from women who describe their post life after being CEO as one that is active, creating value and contributing to life for years to come. For example, one woman shared a list of six options she is considering once she leaves the business. “I know I have a purpose. I know I've got passions. The right doors are gonna open, ‘cause they do.” Women owners also describe intentionally “testing” new things and being actively involved in the community while they are running the business. “I'm sowing seeds, making connections and building relationships…I'm just honing my skills.” This type of *preparing* for life after being a CEO is described as something intentional about doing. As one woman voiced, “I think instead of aspiring to retirement, you aspire flexibility.” Some men also indicate options for retirement and post succession, but just not as many possibilities nor with the same passion. Staying engaged, starting another business or taking more vacations are examples given by men.

One reason women cite more possibilities post CEO could be that many of the women owners have had multiple careers and have taken time away from the workforce for parenting and therefore, feel they are not done contributing or pursuing passions that may have been delayed for other family responsibilities in the past. Due to the limited research highlighting women business owners in the later stages of life and business, there is opportunity to examine gender further in this context.

Key finding #6. Another key finding is the relationship of words associated with retirement, either positively or negatively. The literature describes the valence factor as a documented explanation of how humans assign simple meaning to events (Barrett, 2006). What is notable is that retirement in this study is seen as favorable (positive) or mixed (positive and negative attributes). Responses to views of retirement are not neutral. This is an unexpected finding. Absent in the literature is an expressed recognition that retirement is seen as *both/and* such as retired people have more leisure time (positive) *and* they are greater burden on society (negative). Retirement views are often seen as opposites, this *or* that, retired people are lucky *or* unlucky. This recognition of both/and may be an indication of change in societal norms relating to views of aging and retirement as generations evolve and people live more years than when retirement was first socially constructed. Regardless, this study shows social norms to be significant in relation to retirement views and age.

Social norms matter. In this study, CEO perceptions of society views of retired people is significant at the p = .038 level related to age. Younger business owners indicate they have more favorable perceptions of society views of retirement than older owners. This is surprising given the literature which highlights the continued nature of stigmas and unfavorable views of retired people especially those held by younger people (Robbins, 2015). This study only includes CEOs who have a tenure of 10 years or more in the same company. Thus, these younger CEOs are already seen as successful and perhaps their perceptions may be more positive due to this success at an earlier age. Additional research exploring age and perceptions of retirement may provide further insight on ways to more proactively engage in planning behaviors when views are positive.

Conclusions

Perceptions of retirement are a factor of influence in succession planning. Business owners who have a favorable view of retirement are significantly more likely to have a succession plan (46%) than those with a mixed view of retirement (22%) at the (p = .031 level). Capitalizing on these positive views at an earlier age as a business owner may allow for more years to engage in the planning and transition process from the business ultimately leaving the fate of business less to chance. This study also reveals the interdependency and disconnects evident between retirement and succession planning. Navigating the later stages of life as an owner of a small business and as human being faced with aging and societal perceptions of retirement can be complicated. Taking a more integrated approach to both retirement and owner transition may be one way to close the gap between these two stages of business and life.

Both the preparation for retirement and succession appear to be important to owners. CEOs interviewed are more likely to have planned for their retirement than their departure from the business. Financial planning and savings or reducing debt are frequently cited as actions taken to prepare for retirement. Many owners indicated they have planned for retirement and “put away” money for years. Contrary to this traditional form of preparing for retirement, less planning has been done to prepare for their succession. Even if owners have a plan, the number of years planning for their succession will likely be considerably less than the years they have already been financially planning for retirement. This disconnect may be a reason why retirement and succession timelines are difficult to set by owners.

The findings also suggest that planning for retirement in traditional ways (e.g., financial planning) may be important, but that psychological preparedness is also important to successful retirement and may be relevant to consider as part of planning prior to retiring. Attitude toward retirement can impact longevity (Lakra, Ng, & Levy, 2012). Psychological preparedness may also be associated with perception valence and how favorable or unfavorable the view is of retirement or succession. The perceived feasibility and desirability of both personal retirement and "retirement" from the business, can be hard to reconcile for an owner. Retirement and leaving the business are often characterized as specific events or dates which tie to age. The potential disconnect can occur when the retirement date and business transition date do not align. Changing the perceptions of retirement and succession as isolated events at specified points in life, to more like phases that intersect, overlap and occurs over time may emerge as cultural norms change and generation X and millennials age. Visually envision rolling hills with a slope that leads to a gradual decline as opposed to a cliff or sharp drop that happens in a single event. As one business owner stated, "Nobody wants to jump off the cliff when they have no idea what they're jumping into." Moving from more rigid views of aging allows for the intersection of the business and life cycles to take directions that may temporarily ascend for periods before declining. There is always the possibility that a single event could end life or the business. However, it is more probable that endings occur over the course of years and takes on a bell shape curve appearance.

Perhaps one of the more significant conclusions from this study is a need to create a different way of addressing small business owner retirement. In other words, how can we create a way of conceptualizing the period after succession as well as the next stage of life for the former CEO that better serves the business and the leaders. The desire to coin a term other than *retirement* may be a factor in the quest to promote succession planning. Terminology might be created that connotes the next stage, post-succession, as something other than an “ending” or “retirement” for individuals. The strong sentiments by women in particular to resist using the word retirement and exchange it for words such as “Protirement”, “Refirement”, or “the next chapter” could be expanded to changing the way society views the later stages of life.

Implications

This study has implications for the larger body of work related to small business owner succession. Implications of the research multi-disciplinary approaches to exploring retirement and succession may advance the research to include more holistic views of this complex phenomenon. This study includes psychology, social norms, and organizational integration in examining small business owner views of their retirement and departure planning from the company. It also references the overlap between business and human life cycles. Further study of the overlaps of these two life cycle types may expand the understanding of the reluctance to leaving the business as well as the disconnects that exists between retirement and departure events.

Discussion of retirement and succession are often “taboo” conversations. It is evident from the business owners of this study that they were seeking information on how to better prepare the business and themselves for the future. If more could be done to help with business and owner preparation, the implications might increase the numbers of owners who engage in succession planning behaviors. At minimum, a preparation road map can aid the cadre of consultants who wish to better support their clients in the transition of leaving the business. It may also lead to a more comprehensive and integrated services to owners who are uncertain about how to plan for their future and the future of their businesses.

The theory of planned behavior and Shapero models were used as initial components to the creation of a conceptual framework for this study. The theory of planned behavior has its advocates and critiques (McDermott et al., 2015; Sniehotta et al., 2014). Regardless of the polarizing support and critiques, it is nonetheless frequently cited in the literature and used in many fields (Conner, 2015; Kautonen, van Gelderen, & Fink, 2015). Additional expansion to these models may be worthy of more attention and have usefulness in multiple fields not just small business owner succession planning. The valence factor used to better understand how owners assign value, positive or negative, to their desires (emotions) and assessment of feasibility (capability) may become a growing variable in addressing succession planning. The business owners in this study almost at an unconscious competence level, are constantly aware of factors, internal and external, which they assess, positively or negatively, to make decisions every day. This area shows promise to further understanding the “world” of the small business owner and how planning occurs or doesn’t, for succession.

Recommendations

Opportunities for further research exist to expand this study or explore other related areas of small business owner succession. This study includes business owners primarily from the Midwest with a smattering of other owners from across the U.S. and mostly from urban locations. Expanding the study to include either rural areas or other geographic areas of the U.S. may result in different outcomes. Other geographic regions have different social norms and cultures and may reveal different perceptions of retirement and succession.

Gender was not a factor intended to be an original area of focus for this research. However, when it became evident that there was gender balance in the participants, gender perspectives were included as appropriate. Though gender does not have statistical significance in this study, there are differences in succession plan levels, views of the concept of retirement and views of post succession opportunities as shared in the interviews. Few studies seem to exist which include a gender balance of business owners in the later stages of business and life cycles. Additional research related to gender differences in small business succession studies is recommended.

Business size and the employment of staff is a specific criterion for this study. Additional research could explore small business size differences related to planning for leaving the business. Examining businesses with different types of staffing models may also provide insights useful to the growing concern over a shrinking labor market and talent shortage impacted by an aging workforce.

Researcher's Reflection

This study set out to explore the relationship, if any, of small business owner succession planning and views of retirement. Small businesses have always been a part of the researcher's life. Growing up on small farm and having a father who owned the family farm (second generation) and a welding shop, I have always been drawn to how businesses run and who runs them. As my father aged, he never uttered the "R" word, retirement, and continued to work until he was physically unable. As a consultant to small businesses, I see CEOs faced with the challenges of what to do with the business as they near retirement. In many cases, the owners are at the center of the business. It is a way of life and "is life" for many who find purpose, satisfaction, community, identity, and a means of income and livelihood. This is the backdrop that spurred my interest to pursue this research.

I originally chose a qualitative approach to the phenomenon of succession planning and then changed to a mixed methods design. While I think mixed methods was an appropriate design for this research, a grounded theory approach would have also been a viable option. The conceptual framework is a conglomerate of the information I have acquired from business owners who have faced the challenges of retirement and succession and have combined this with pertinent theories in the literature. Emphasis was not only based on the individual experiences of CEOs but also shaped by the views of several business owners expressed through the questionnaire (Creswell, 2013). This conceptual framework could serve as a succession navigating process for the larger audience of small business owners. This process could also become a model used by consultants who work with small business owners.

Professionally and personally, I think I am a better practitioner, and resourced better academically, to coach CEOs in their businesses and later life transitions. Personally, I mirror the age and challenges faced by many of the business owners in this study and experience the valence choices of emotions and desires related to retirement and what to do with a small business.

Chapter Summary

This final chapter presented the key findings of the study and provided recommendations for future research which could further address the challenges of small business owner succession.

Choosing a mixed method approach to this problem gave insight to this complex problem though the blending of both qualitative and quantitative information. This allowed greater breadth and depth of information from which to interpret and draw conclusions. The findings suggest that to more clearly understand the phenomenon of succession planning and retirement is to know that perceptions matter. Social norms matter. Age matters. They are not mutually exclusive. The central point of this research reveals owner views of retirement influence succession planning. This study does not imply cause but reveals the complexity of the phenomenon. CEOs and businesses are complicated entities. Together, they are like strands of DNA that form an intricate and complex whole that are in constant motion that can be influenced by changes at most any time. Retirement and succession are interdependent and call for an integrated approach to addressing each corresponding stage within the context of the business owner’s life and the life of the business.

Business owners are the “head and heart” people who think about their succession planning and retirement the most. This research highlights, somewhat unexpectedly, the influencing nature of desirability and feasibility valence related to succession planning, retirement and the owner’s future. Planning of the later stages of life do not necessarily align with the planning of leaving the business, leading to a variety of possible disconnects and misalignments in desirability and feasibility within the process of planning for departure.

The concept of retirement has strong social norm connections. As human beings, norms can influence meaning, emotions and actions, as is the case with small business owners contemplating leaving the business and pondering what lies ahead. If more can be done to assist business owners in preparing for the business and preparing themselves as they navigate the interdependencies of each life cycle, it may be possible for businesses and business owners to continue through the transitions of life in ways that are more planned, positive, productive for the owner, the business and society.

REFERENCES

Adams-Price, C. E., Turner, J. J., & Warren, S. T. (2015). Comparing the future concerns of early wave baby boomers with the concerns of young-old adults. *Journal of Applied Gerontology: The Official Journal of the Southern Gerontological Society, 34*(6), 691-711.

Ajzen, I. (2002). Perceived behavioral control, self-efficacy, locus of control, and the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 32*(4), 665-683. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.2002.tb00236.x

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50*(2), 179-211.

Ajzen, I. (2015). The theory of planned behaviour is alive and well, and not ready to retire: A commentary on Sniehotta, Presseau, and Araújo-Soares. *Health Psychology Review*, *9*(2), 131-137.

Ajzen, I. (2019) Theory of planned behavior diagram. Retrieved from University of Massachusetts Amherst website: http://people.umass.edu/aizen/tpb.diag.html

Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Aronoff, C. E. (2011). *Letting go: Preparing yourself to relinquish control of the family business.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Aronoff, C. E., McClure, S. L., & Ward, J. L. (2011). *Family business succession: The final test of greatness.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Barnes, L. B., & Hershon, S. A. (1976). Transferring power in family business. *Harvard Business Review*, *54*(4), 105-114.

Barrett, L. F. (2006). Valence is a basic building block of emotional life. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *40*(1), 35-55.

Baum, J. R., & Locke, E. A. (2004). The relationship of entrepreneurial traits, skill, and motivation to subsequent venture growth. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *89*(4), 587.

Bearon, L. B. (1996). Successful aging: What does the “good life” look like? *The Forum, 3,* 1-7.

Berrone, P., Cruz, C., & Gomez-Mejia, L. R. (2012). Socioemotional wealth in family firms: Theoretical dimensions, assessment approaches, and agenda for future research. *Family Business Review*, *25*(3), 258-279.

Bertschi-Michel, A., Kammerlander, N., & Strike, V. M. (2019). Unearthing and alleviating emotions in family business successions. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *00*(0) , 1-28. DOI: 10.1177/1042258719834016.

Brown, R. B., & Coverley, R. (1999). Succession planning in family businesses: A study from East Anglia, U.K. *Journal of Small Business Management, 37*(1), 93-97.

Breton-Miller, I. L., Miller, D., & Steier, L. P. (2004). Toward an integrative model of effective FOB succession. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 28*(4), 305-328.

Brockhaus, R. H. (2004). Family business succession: Suggestions for future research. *Family Business Review, 17*(2), 165-177. doi:10.1111/j.1741-6248.2004.00011.x

Bruce, D., & Picard, D. (2006). Making succession a success: Perspectives from Canadian small and medium-sized enterprises. *Journal of Small Business Management, 44*(2), 306-309. doi:10.1111/j.1540-627X.2006.00171.x

Burbank, P. M. (1986). Psychosocial theories of aging: A critical evaluation. *Advances in Nursing Science*, *9*(1), 73–86. https://doi.org/10.1097/00012272-198610000-00009

Carland, J. W., Hoy, F., Boulton, W. R., & Carland, J. A. C. (1984). Differentiating entrepreneurs from owner managers. *Academy of Management Review*, *9*(2), 354-359.

Carstensen, L., Rosenberger, M., Smith, K., & Modrek, S. (2015). Optimizing health in aging societies. *Public Policy & Aging Report. 25*, 1-5. Retrieved from http://longevity3.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Public-Policy-Aging-Report-2015-Carstensen-ppar_prv004.pdf

Chambers, H. A. (2014). *Opening the black box: Why small business owners neglect succession planning* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses A&I: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection. (1527177245)

Chief executive officer. (n.d.). In *Business dictionary*. Retrieved from http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/chief-executive-officer-CEO.html

Chiou, J. S. (1998). The effects of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control on consumers' purchase intentions: The moderating effects of product knowledge and attention to social comparison information. *Proceedings of the National Science Council, Republic of China, Part C*, *9*(2), 298-308.

Christensen, C. R. (1953). *Management succession in small and growing enterprises.* Boston, MA: Harvard University.

Chua, J. H., Chrisman, J. J., & Sharma, P. (2003). Succession and nonsuccession concerns of family firms and agency relationship with nonfamily managers. *Family Business Review, 16*(2), 89-107.

Churchill, N. C., & Lewis, V. L. (1983). The five stages of small business growth. *Harvard Business Review*, *61*(3), 30-50.

Colby, S., & Ortman, J. (2014). The baby boom cohort in the United States: 2012 to 2060*.* Retrieved from United States Census Bureau website: http://www.census.gov/prod/2014pubs/p25-1141.pdf

Conner, M. (2015). Extending not retiring the theory of planned behaviour: A commentary on Sniehotta, Presseau and Araújo-Soares. *Health Psychology Review*, *9*(2), 141-145.

Cooke, R., Dahdah, M., Norman, P., & French, D. P. (2016). How well does the theory of planned behaviour predict alcohol consumption? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Health Psychology Review*, *10*(2), 148-167.

Costa, D. L. (1998). *The evolution of retirement: An American economic history, 1880-1990.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Creamer, E. G. (2018). *An introduction to fully integrated mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Cumming, E., & Henry, W. E. (1961). *Growing old, the process of disengagement*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Dannefer, D. (1984). Adult development and social theory: A paradigmatic reappraisal. *American Sociological Review*, *49*(1), 100-116.

De Massis, A., Chua, J., Chrisman, J., (2008). Factors preventing intra-family succession. *Family Business Review, 21*(2), 183-199.

Drucker, P. F. (2001). *The essential Drucker: Selections from the management works of Peter F. Drucker*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Eddleston, K. A., Kellermanns, F. W., Floyd, S. W., Crittenden, V. L., & Crittenden, W. F. (2013). Planning for growth: Life stage differences in family firms. *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice, 37*(5), 1177-1202. Doi:10.1111/etap.12002

Elfving, J., Brännback, M., & Carsrud, A. (2009). Toward a contextual model of entrepreneurial intentions. In M. Brännback, & A. Carsrud (Eds.), *Understanding the entrepreneurial mind: Opening the black box* (pp. 23-33). New York, NY: Springer.

Ellis, C. D. (2014). Hard choices: Where we are*. Financial Analysts Journal, 70*(2), 6-10.

Eliopoulos, P. J., & Meister, D. P. (2017). The power of planning: Why business owners need viable transition plan, and practical strategies for putting them in place. *Wilmington Trust Study, 2017*. Retrieved from https://www.wilmingtontrust.com/repositories/wtc_sitecontent/PDF/The-Power-of-Planning.pdf

Fernandez-Araoz, C., Iqbal, S., & Ritter, J. (2015). Leadership lessons from great family businesses. *Harvard Business Review, 93*(4), 82-88.

Fiegener, M. K., Brown, B. M., Prince, R. A., & File, K. M. (1996). Passing on strategic vision. *Journal of Small Business Management, 34*(3), 15-26.

Fiegener, M. K., Brown, B. M., Prince, R. A., & File, K. M. (1994). A comparison of successor development in family and nonfamily businesses. *Family Business Review, 7*(4), 313-329. Doi:10.1111/j.1741-6248.1994.00313.x

File, K. M., & Prince, R. A. (1996). Attributions for family business failure: The heir's perspective. *Family Business Review*, *9*(2), 171-184.

Gagnè, M., Wrosch, C., & Brun de Pontet, S. (2011). Retiring from the family business: The role of goal adjustment capacities. *Family Business Review*, *24*(4), 292–304. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894486511410688

Gartner, W. B. (1988). 'Who is an entrepreneur?' is the wrong question. *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice, 13*(4), 47-68.

Goldenberg, S., & Kline, T. (1999). An exploratory study of predicting perceived success and survival of small businesses. *Psychological Reports, 85*(2), 365-377. Doi:10.2466/pr0.1999.85.2.365

Gray, D. E. (2014). *Doing research in the real world*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Greiner, L. E. (1998). Evolution and revolution as organizations grow. *Harvard Business Review*, *76*(3), 55–68.

Handler, W. C. (1994). Succession in family business: A review of the research. *Family business review*, *7*(2), 133-157.

Handler, W. C., & Kram, K. E. (1988). Succession in family firms: The problem of resistance. *Family Business Review, 1*(4), 361-381.

Huybrechts, J., Voordeckers, W., & Lybaert, N. (2013). Entrepreneurial risk taking of private family firms: The influence of a nonfamily CEO and the moderating effect of CEO tenure. *Family Business Review*, *26*(2), 161-179.

Ip, B., & Jacobs, G. (2006). Business succession planning: A review of the evidence. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 13*(3), 326-350.

Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, L. A. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(2), 112–133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689806298224

Jopp, D., & Rott, C. (2006). Adaptation in very old age: Exploring the role of resources, beliefs, and attitudes for centenarians' happiness. *Psychology and Aging*, *21*(2), 266.

Kautonen, T., van Gelderen, M., & Fink, M. (2015). Robustness of the theory of planned behavior in predicting entrepreneurial intentions and actions. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *39*(3), 655-674.

Kelleci, R., Lambrechts, F., Voordeckers, W., & Huybrechts, J. (2019). CEO personality: A different perspective on the nonfamily versus family CEO debate. *Family Business Review*, *32*(1), 31-57.

Kellermanns, F. W., Eddleston, K. A., Barnett, T., & Pearson, A. (2008). An exploratory study of family member characteristics and involvement: Effects on entrepreneurial behavior in the family firm. *Family Business Review*, *21*(1), 1-14.

Kets de Vries, M. F. R. (1988). The dark side of CEO succession. *Management Review*, *77*(8), 23-28.

Kim, E., Lee, J. A., Sung, Y., & Choi, S. M. (2016). Predicting selfie-posting behavior on social networking sites: An extension of theory of planned behavior. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *62*, 116-123.

Kim, H., & DeVaney, S. A. (2003). The expectation of partial retirement among family business owners. *Family Business Review, 16*(3), 199-210. Doi:10.1177/08944865030160030501

Kleiman, R., & Peacock, E. (1996, Winter). Family businesses as an economic phenomenon. *Michigan Family Review*, *2*(2). Retrieved from http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mfr/4919087.0002.208?view=text;rgn=main

Kobe, K. (2012). *Small business GDP: Update 2002 -2010*. Retrieved from https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/rs390tot.pdf

Krueger, N. F., Jr., & Carsrud, A. L. (1993). Entrepreneurial intentions: Applying the theory of planned behavior. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *5*(4), 315-330.

Krueger, N. F., Jr., Reilly, M. D., & Carsrud, A. L. (2000). Competing models of entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *15*(5-6), 411-432.

Kuratko, D. F., Morris, M. H., & Schindehutte, M. (2015). Understanding the dynamics of entrepreneurship through framework approaches. *Small Business Economics*, *45*(1), 1-13.

Lakra, D. C., Ng, R., & Levy, B. R. (2012). Increased longevity from viewing retirement positively. *Ageing & Society*, *32*(8), 1418-1427

Lansberg, I. (1988). The succession conspiracy. *Family Business Review, 1*(2), 119-143.

Levinson, D. J. (1986). A conception of adult development. *American Psychologist*, *41*(1), 3-13.

Lindland, E., Fond, M., Haydon, A., & Kendall-Taylor, N. (2015). *Gauging aging: Mapping the gaps between expert and public understandings of aging in America*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

Malone, S. C. (1989). Selected correlates of business continuity planning in the family business. *Family Business Review*, *2*(4), 341-353.

Marshall, J. P., Sorenson, R., Brigham, K., Wieling, E., Reifman, A., & Wampler, R. S. (2006). The paradox for the family firm CEO: Owner age relationship to succession-related processes and plans. *Journal of Business Venturing, 21*(3), 348-368.

Marshall, V. W. (1995). Rethinking retirement: Issues for the twenty-first century. In E. M. Gee & G. M. Gutman (Eds.), *Rethinking retirement* (pp. 31-50). Vancouver, British Columbia: Gerontology Research Centre, Simon Fraser University.

McDermott, M. S., Oliver, M., Simnadis, T., Beck, E. J., Coltman, T., Iverson, D., & Sharma, R. (2015). The theory of planned behavior and dietary patterns: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Preventive Medicine*, *81*, 150-156.

McCaul, K. D., Sandgren, A. K., O'Neill, H. K., & Hinsz, V. B. (1993). The value of the theory of planned behavior, perceived control, and self-efficacy expectations for predicting health-protective behaviors. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, *14*(2), 231-252.

Michael-Tsabari, N., Labaki, R., & Zachary, R. K. (2014). Toward the cluster model: The family firm's entrepreneurial behavior over generations. *Family Business Review*, *27*(2), 161-185.

Minneapolis Area Chamber of Commerce (2019). Retrieved from: https://www.mplschamber.com/membership/

Miller, D. (1983). The correlates of entrepreneurship in three types of firms. *Management Science*, *29*(7), 770-791.

Mintzberg, H. (1984). Power and organization life cycles. *Academy of Management Review*, *9*(2), 207-224.

Monte, C. F., & Sollod, R. N. (2003). *Beneath the mask: An introduction to theories of personality.* Danvers, MA: Wiley & Sons.

Morris, M., Williams, R., & Nel, D. (1996). Factors influencing family business succession. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research, 2*(3), 68.

Motwani, J., Levenburg, N. M., Schwarz, T. V., & Blankson, C. (2006). Succession planning in SMEs: An empirical analysis. *International Small Business Journal, 24*(5), 471-495.

Nadler, M., Krupp, S., & Hossack, R. (2009). Overcoming the obstacles to CEO succession planning. *Corporate Governance Advisor, 17*(2), 7-13.

Naveen, L. (2006). Organizational complexity and succession planning. *The Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis, 41*(3), 661-683.

Neugarten, B. L., Havighurst, R. J., & Tobin, S. S. (1961). The measurement of life satisfaction. *Journal of Gerontology, 16*(2), 134-143.

Newman, I., Lim, J., & Pineda, F. (2013). Content validity using a mixed methods approach: Its application and development through the use of a table of specifications methodology. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *7*(3), 243–260. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689813476922

Oakman, J., & Wells, Y. (2013). Retirement intentions: What is the role of push factors in predicting retirement intentions? *Ageing & Society*, *33*(6), 988-1008.

Parkhurst, M. (2013). *Founder succession in small businesses* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from Dissertations & Theses @ Pepperdine University – SCELC, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses A&I: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection. (1328402263)

Paul, J., Modi, A., & Patel, J. (2016). Predicting green product consumption using theory of planned behavior and reasoned action. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *29*, 123-134.

Pavlou, P. A., & Fygenson, M. (2006). Understanding and predicting electronic commerce adoption: An extension of the theory of planned behavior. *Management Information Systems Quarterly, 30*(1), 115-143.

Pepperdine University. (2017). *Institutional Review Board.* Retrieved from http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb

Prapavessis, H., Gaston, A., & DeJesus, S. (2015). The theory of planned behavior as a model for understanding sedentary behavior. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *19*, 23-32.

Purcell, P. J. (2010). Older workers: Employment and retirement trends. *Journal of Pension Planning & Compliance, 36*(2), 70-88.

Retirement (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary*. Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/retirement

Richman, W. L., Kiesler, S., Weisband, S., & Drasgow, F. (1999). A meta-analytic study of social desirability distortion in computer-administered questionnaires, traditional questionnaires, and interviews. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *84*(5), 754–775.

Robbins, L. A. (2015). Gauging aging: How does the American public truly perceive older age – and older people? *Generations: The Journal of the Western Gerontological Society, 39*(3), 17-21.

Rosenblatt, P., de Mik, L, Anderson, R., & Johnson, P. (1985). *The family in business: Understanding and dealing with the challenges entrepreneurial families face*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rubenson, G. C., & Gupta, A. K. (1996). The initial succession: A contingency model of founder tenure. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, *21*(2), 21-36.

Saldana, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Sargent, L. D., Lee, M. D., Martin, B., & Zikic, J. (2013). Reinventing retirement: New pathways, new arrangements, new meanings. *Human Relations*, *66*(1), 3–21. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726712465658

Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Scherer, K. R. (2005). What are emotions? And how can they be measured? *Social Science Information*, *44*(4), 695-729.

Schroots, J. J. (1996). Theoretical developments in the psychology of aging. *The Gerontologist*, *36*(6), 742-748.

Scott, M., & Bruce, R. (1987). Five stages of growth in small business. *Long Range Planning*, *20*(3), 45-52.

Sharma, P., Chrisman, J. J., & Chua, J. H. (2003). Succession planning as planned behavior: Some empirical results. *Family Business Review, 16*(1), 1-15.

Sharma, P. (2004). An overview of the field of family business studies: Current status and directions for the future. *Family Business Review, 17*(1), 1-36.

Sharma, P., Chrisman, J. J., Pablo, A. L., & Chua, J. H. (2001). Determinants of initial satisfaction with the succession process in family firms: A conceptual model. *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice, 25*(3), 17.

Shuman, V., Sander, D., & Scherer, K. R. (2013). Levels of valence. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *4*, 261.

Sniehotta, F. F., Presseau, J., & Araújo-Soares, V. (2014). Time to retire the theory of planned behavior. *Health Psychology Review*, *8,* 1–7. Doi:10.1080/17437199.2013.869710

Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council. (2016). *Annual Survey of Entrepreneurs (ASE).* Retrieved from https://sbecouncil.org/about-us/facts-and-data/

Sonnenfeld, J. (1991). *The hero's farewell: What happens when CEOs retire.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Stanley, L. J. (2010). Emotions and family business creation: An extension and implications. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *34*(6), 1085-1092.

Stavrou, E. T. (2003). Leadership succession in owner-managed firms through the lens of extraversion. *International Small Business Journal, 21*, 331-348.

Steinmetz, L. L. (1969). Critical stages of small business growth: When they occur and how to survive them. *Business Horizons*, *12*(1), 29-36.

Tagiuri, R., & Davis, J. (1996). Bivalent attributes of the family firm. *Family Business Review*, *9*(2), 199–208. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6248.1996.00199.x

Thurik, R., & Wennekers, S. (2004). Entrepreneurship, small business and economic growth. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 11*(1), 140-149.

United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017). *Career outlook*. Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2017/article/older-workers.htm

United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2018). *Current population survey*. Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11b.pdf

United States Census Bureau. (2017). *2013-2014 SUSB employment change data tables.* Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2014/econ/susb /2014-susb-employment.html

United States Small Business Administration. (2015). Small business profiles offer valuable insight into states' economies. *The Small Business Advocate, 34*(2), 1-8.

United States Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy. (2012). Small business facts, 2012. Retrieved from https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/Business-Survival.pdf

United States Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy. (2016). Frequently asked questions, 2016. Retrieved from https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/SB-FAQ-2016_WEB.pdf

United States Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy. (2018). *United States small business profile, 2018.* Retrieved from https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocy/2018-Small-Business-Profiles-US.pdf

United States Department of the Treasury. (2010). *About: Part 1: The government definition of a 'small business.'* Retrieved from https://www.treasury.gov /about/organizational-structure/offices/Mgt/Pages/dcfo-osdbu-how-to-part1-index.aspx

Vancil, R. F. (1987). *Passing the baton: Managing the process of CEO succession.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Vaughan Dickson, V., Lee, C. S., & Riegel, B. (2011). How do cognitive function and knowledge affect heart failure self-care? *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *5*(2), 167-189.

Venter, E., Boshoff, C., & Maas, G. (2006). Influence of owner-manager-related factors on the succession process in small and medium-sized family businesses. *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, 7*(1), 33-47. doi:10.5367/000000006775870451

Wang, Y., Watkins, D., Harris, N., & Spicer, K. (2004). The relationship between succession issues and business performance: Evidence from UK family SMEs. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, *10*(1/2), 59-84.

Ward, J. (2004). *Perpetuating the family business: 50 lessons learned from long lasting, successful families in business.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillian.

Ward, J. L. (1997). *Keeping the family business healthy: How to plan for continuing growth, profitability and family leadership*. Marietta, GA: Family Enterprise.

Whitbourne, S. K., Zuschlag, M. K., Elliot, L. B., & Waterman, A. S. (1992). Psychosocial development in adulthood: A 22-year sequential study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *63*(2), 260.

APPENDIX A

Site Consent

Site Permission Letter

[PRINTED ON RESEARCH SITE'S LETTERHEAD]

[DATE]

Pepperdine University
Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB)
6100 Center Drive – 5th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90045

RE: Debra Mitchell, EDOL doctoral candidate
Proposed research study permission
Study title: PERCEPTIONS OF RETIREMENT AS A CONSIDERATION IN SUCCESSION PLANNING AMONG SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

To GPS IRB:

This letter is to convey that I/we have reviewed the proposed research study being conducted by Debra Mitchell intended to utilized a questionnaire and face-to-face (in-person or virtual) interviews with small business owners from the membership of the local metropolitan chamber of commerce organizations [Insert specific names] and find the topic PERCEPTIONS OF RETIREMENT AS A CONSIDERATION IN SUCCESSION PLANNING AMONG SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS to be acceptable. I/we give permission for the above investigator to conduct research at this site and with this organizational membership. If you have any questions regarding this permission, please contact: [INSERT PHONE NUMBER AND/OR CONTACT INFORMATION].

Sincerely,

[INSERT AUTHORIZED AGENT'S NAME OF CHAMBER OF COMMERCE]
[INSERT TITLE]

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Script Template - Survey

Dear [Name],

My name is Debra Mitchell, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Organizational Leadership Program at Pepperdine University (Graduate School of Education and Psychology). My research focuses on business owner succession planning and views of retirement. You are invited to participate in the online survey which should take no longer than 10 minutes. Upon completion of this survey you may be invited to participate in a follow-up interview.

Participation in this project is voluntary. Confidentiality is maintained by using pseudonyms and removing potential identifiers throughout the research.

This study has been approved for research, IRB # 17-11-667. For further information click here [link to the Information Facts Sheet for Exempt Research].

If you have questions, please contact me via email.

Thank you for your participation,

Debra Mitchell
Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP)
Doctoral Candidate in Organizational Leadership

APPENDIX C

Information/Facts Sheet for Exempt Research

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP)

INFORMATION/FACTS SHEET FOR EXEMPT RESEARCH

A STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF RETIREMENT AS A CONSIDERATION IN SUCCESSION PLANNING AMONG SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by **Debra Mitchell, EDOL doctoral candidate, and dissertation chairperson, Martine Jago, Ph. D.,** at Pepperdine University, because you are small business owner. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to identify and understand small business owner perceptions (beliefs and attitudes) toward retirement and succession planning. This study will attempt to further the research related to planning for owner succession and retirement. The findings of this research may be a used for additional research or used to support successful succession behaviors. In addition, the results may be used by business owners and practitioners/advisors to support the succession planning process.

PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT

If you agree to voluntarily to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete a 15 item, online survey which is anticipated to take no more than 10 minutes. You do not have to respond to each item if you don't wish to do so. Click "next" or "N/A" to move to the next item of the survey.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or completing only the items which you feel comfortable.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records collected for this study will be confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

The data will be stored on a password protected computer in the principal investigator's home office. The data will be stored for a minimum of three years. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Your responses will be coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately. The data will be stored on a password protected computer in the researcher's home office for three years after the study has been completed and then destroyed.

INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

You understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries you may have concerning the research herein described. You understand that you may contact **Debra Mitchell, EDOL doctoral candidate, and dissertation chairperson, Martine Jago, Ph. D.,** if you have any other questions or concerns about this research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University
6100 Center Drive Suite 500
Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or gpsirb@pepperdine.edu.

Please indicate below whether or not you wish to participate in this study. You

withdraw from this survey and this project at any time, for any reason, without penalty.

Do you wish to participate in this study?

Yes, I Agree to Participate

No, I Do Not Wish to Participate

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Letter

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP)

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

A STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF RETIREMENT AS A CONSIDERATION IN SUCCESSION PLANNING AMONG SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by **Debra Mitchell, EDOL doctoral candidate, and dissertation chairperson, Martine Jago, Ph. D.** at Pepperdine University, because you are small business owner. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to identify and understand small business owner perceptions (beliefs and attitudes) toward retirement and succession planning. This study will attempt to further the research related to planning for owner succession and retirement. The findings of this research may be a used for additional research or used to support successful succession behaviors. In addition, the results may be used by business owners and practitioners/advisors to support the succession planning process.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer a series of open-ended questions about the business, CEO role and views regarding succession planning and retirement. Interviews will be conducted face-to-face (in-person or virtual) and will be audio-recorded for transcription. Interviews will take no more than 60 minutes. Should the participant not wish to be audio recorded, the researcher will take notes. Upon completion of the interview, no expected contact is necessary, unless further follow up is needed, until the completion of the study and findings are released.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation include inconvenience of time to complete the interview. It may cause some discomfort to discuss personal views on topics such as the business, role of CEO, succession planning or retirement. To aid in minimizing these possible but not anticipated risks, steps will be taken to respect the participant's schedule and logistics. In addition, the participant may decline to answer any question if they so choose at any point in the interview. Interview content will be de-identified to maintain privacy of participant.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, there are anticipated benefits to society, which include: addition to the body of literature related to small business owner succession and insights into succession planning and retirement perceptions which may have usefulness to practitioners.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records collected for this study will be confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

The data will be stored on a password protected computer in the principal investigator's home office. The data will be stored for a minimum of three years. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Your responses will be coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately. The audio-recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. The data will be stored on a password protected computer in the researcher's home office for three years after the study has been completed and then destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or answering only the questions which you feel comfortable.

EMERGENCY CARE AND COMPENSATION FOR INJURY

If you are injured as a direct result of research procedures you will receive medical treatment; however, you or your insurance will be responsible for the cost. Pepperdine University does not provide any monetary compensation for injury.

INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

You understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries you may have concerning the research herein described. You understand that you may contact **Debra Mitchell, EDOL doctoral candidate, and dissertation chairperson, Martine Jago, Ph. D.,** if you have any other questions or concerns about this research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University
6100 Center Drive Suite 500
Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

APPENDIX E

Questionnaire

Purpose of study: My name is Debra Mitchell. I am a doctoral candidate in the Organizational Leadership program, Graduate School of Education and Psychology, at Pepperdine University. I live in the Twin Cities where I have been a small business owner for over 10 years. I am conducting a research study examining small business succession planning. Your participation is voluntary and confidential. Information will be de-identified to ensure confidentiality of responses and of individuals and business. I am interested in the thoughts and opinions of local business owners around this topic and would greatly appreciate your participation.

Instructions: Please respond to the following items by clicking the answer that best represents your response. Some items ask for more detail pertinent to your business. Type in your response, if applicable.

Please note: For purposes of this research, individuals who identify themselves as president, business owner, founder, owner or chief executive officer (CEO) of the business are used interchangeably to mean “the highest ranking person in the company and who has ultimate decision-making responsibility for the success or failure of the firm”.

Please click the arrow button at the bottom of each page to advance through the survey.

The first set of questions is about your role in the company:

1. **Are you currently the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), president, owner or founder-owner of a small business?**
   - o Yes
   - o No
     - ▪ If Yes, how many years have you been the CEO?
       - o Under 5 years
       - o 5 - 9
       - o 10 -14
       - o 15 -19
       - o 20 -24
       - o 25 + Indicate years: ________

2. Your business is:

- o For Profit
- o Not for profit

3. In what year did the business start? (write in year): _______________

4. Are you the original founder?

- Yes
- No
  - If No, how many years did business exist prior to you becoming the CEO/owner?
    - Under 5 years
    - 5-9
    - 10-14
    - 15-19
    - 20-24
    - 25+ Indicate years: ________

5. The business is:

- Family owned
- Non-family owned

The second set of questions is related to succession planning:

6a. When you see or hear the word *"Retirement"*, briefly, what are your first thoughts and reactions? ___________________________

6b. How do you think society views people who are retired? ___________________________

6c. When you envision yourself no longer CEO of the company, what do you see? _____

7. For purposes of this study, succession planning is a deliberate and organized process of transferring leadership and control of the business from the incumbent CEO to the successor. In the company of which you are CEO, is there a succession plan for the business?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
  - If Yes, has a professional advisor (ex. estate, tax, legal,) assisted or reviewed the plan?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Not sure

8. The succession plan for my company is:

- A formal documented plan communicated to at least one other significant person.
- An informal understanding of a plan communicated to at least one other significant person.
- An informal understanding of a plan that has not yet been communicated to others.
- No plan, formal or informal, but I think about it.

9. Have you taken any actions to implement the succession plan?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
    - **If Yes, what actions have you taken? (List most significant)**

      ____

      ____

The final questions are demographic:

10. How many employees are currently in the company?

- Number of Full-Time: ________
- Number of Part-Time: ________
- Other, please specify: __________________________

11. The type of industry description best fits your business:

- Accounting, Tax, Bookkeeping & Payroll
- Agriculture & Farming
- Arts, Entertainment & Recreation
- Energy & Mining
- Engineering, Architecture & Construction
- Finance & Insurance
- Healthcare & Social Services
- Hospitality & Food Services
- Information Systems & Technology
- Manufacturing
- Other Professional Services, Managerial & Consulting
- Real Estate, Rental & Leasing
- Sales (Wholesale & Retail)
- Scientific, Technical & Pharmaceutical
- Transportation & Warehousing
- Waste Management, Housekeeping & Home Services
- Other (Please indicate) _________________________

12. Do you have financial ownership, such as shares, in the company?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

13. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Self-Identify:___________________________
- Prefer not to answer

14. Select your current age range:

- Under 40 years
- 40-44
- 45-49
- 50-54
- 55-59
- 60-64
- 65-69
- 70-74
- 75+
- Prefer not to answer

15. The next step of this project includes individual face-to-face confidential interviews to gain a deeper understanding of these issues and learn from experienced business owners. **If you would like to be considered for participation in the next step, please provide your contact information:**

First Name: ____

Last Name: ____

Email Address: ____

Phone Number: ____

THANK YOU for sharing information about your business. Please indicate below if you would like a summary of findings.

- YES – I would like summary of your findings sent to the above email
- NO – I am not interested in receiving a summary of your findings

APPENDIX F

Interview Questions

Opening: Greeting, introductions, re-statement of study topic and purpose, steps they completed to be at the interview phase, and what they can expect in the interview – 15 semi-structured questions, about 50 minutes in length. Sub-questions are for follow up and clarification of responses to the main question and used as necessary.

- Review the informed consent document and consent to be audio recorded
- Highlight confidentiality and pseudonym approach
- Participation is voluntary, and candidate may answer questions as comfortable

Section I: Career and Business Owner Questions

1. Please take five minutes and tell me about the path of your career and experience up until now.
   If not included, ask: Why (and How) did you become a small business owner?

2. For you, what does it mean to be a "successful" small business owner?
   - Given where you are in your career, how do you describe your success in light of that understanding?
   - What key strategies do you feel account for your success?

3. Similarly, at this point in your career, what challenges or barriers do you face as a small business owner?

4. In thinking about the future of your company, what worries, or concerns do you have?
   - Which ones worry you the most and why?
   - Which ones give you least concern and why?

Section II: Succession Questions

5. For purposes of my research, succession planning is defined as *"a deliberate and organized process of transferring leadership and control of the business from the incumbent CEO to the successor."* What do you see as the benefits, if any, to succession planning?

6. Are you currently planning for succession or do you *intend* to plan for succession?

7. What *steps* (*actions),* if any, have you taken to plan for succession?

8. What are the challenges with succession planning?
   a) Specific to the business
   b) Specific to you, more personally, as the owner

Section III: Retirement Questions

9. Retirement has different meanings to people.
   - How do you understand retirement?
   - What does retirement mean to you? (What perceptions do you hold about retirement?)
   - How do those people most close to you view *your* retirement?
   - How do you think society, as a whole, perceives retirement?
   - When you think of retirement, how to you envision yourself spending your time?

10. What do see as the benefits or positives, if any, to retirement?

11. Have you planned for retirement or do you *intend* to plan for retirement?

12. Have you taken any steps, thus far, to plan for retirement? If so, what steps have you taken?

13. In what ways do your views of retirement impact your plans for succession?

14. Do you have plans in place for after you leave the role you currently occupy?

15. Given your years as a small business owner, what advice would you give small business owners just starting out?

Closing: This concludes the interview questions. Do you have any other comments you would like to add?

Thank the participant for the time and provide contact information again. Confirm their consent for follow-up contact if needed for minimal clarification or confirmation of understanding related to the interview responses. End the interview with a hand shake or other closing gestures as appropriate.

APPENDIX G

Notice of Approval for Human Research

PEPPERDINE

Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: February 09, 2018

Protocol Investigator Name: Debra Mitchell

Protocol #: 17-11-667

Project Title: THE #R# FACTOR: PERCEPTIONS OF RETIREMENT AS A CONSIDERATION IN SUCCESSION PLANNING AMONG SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Debra Mitchell:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair