

2020

## Talent Retention Strategies for Service Industry Managers Within Rust Belts

Tunisha Foley  
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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Tunisha Foley

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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

Talent Retention Strategies for Service Industry Managers Within Rust Belts

by

Tunisha Foley

MA, Wayne State University, 2008

BA, Oakland University, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

June 2020

## Abstract

Human capital flight jeopardizes the future of rust belt organizations. Service industry managers within rust belt cities are at high risk of failure. Framed by the talent management model, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies rust belt managers used to reduce human capital flight. Participants were 1 health care manager and 1 social assistance manager from Detroit, Michigan, and Flint, Michigan, respectively, who successfully implemented strategies to reduce human capital flight. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and business documents. Data were analyzed with inductive content analysis, word frequency searches, and theme interpretation. Three themes emerged: enhanced employee intrinsic motivation decreased employee turnover and increased talent prospects; business leaders who are more involved and communicate more with staff reduced employee turnover, and competitive compensation and benefits reduced employee turnover and increased talent prospects. A key recommendation is for managers to use the findings to decrease employee turnover and increase talent prospects. The implications for positive social change include the potential for greater population and economic growth within rust belt cities.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this research to my mother and daughter. Mom, thank you for instilling in me the belief that nothing good comes easy, further, for being my rock and support throughout my life. To Ava my beautiful daughter, thank you for being the muse to complete my goal; I do this to be the greatest example to you! Finally, I thank all of my friends and family who supported and challenged me to be greater than average.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Business leaders cannot successfully lead organizations without knowledge of the interactions among technical, economic, social, psychological, demographic, and other factors (Guni, 2012). Each organization, regardless of its type, has a myriad of factors that constitute the business environment (Guni, 2012). The challenge for business leaders is to not only recognize when external complexities influence effectiveness, but to respond accordingly (Sargut & McGrath, 2011).

As the economy changes from industrial to deindustrial industries, metropolitan cities known as *rust belts* exhibit population shrinkage (Hurley, 2017). Rust belt cities such as Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Cleveland, Ohio; Flint, Michigan; and Detroit, Michigan, have sustained declines in population for decades (United States Census Bureau, 2017). Declines in rust belt populations yield obstacles for successful shifts toward service-based industries.

Researchers in the U.S. Department of Labor (2016) purported that from 2016 to 2026 nine in 10 occupations within the United States will be service sector jobs. The greatest projected business growth is in the health care and social assistance sector (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). The health care and social assistance sector includes practitioners who provide specialized health care and social services (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

During the 2000 to 2010 decade, Michigan was the only state in the nation to lose population (State of Michigan, 2015; United States Census Bureau, 2017). By 2020, Michigan's health care industry may have nurse shortages, more than one-fourth of

Michigan physicians will be 60 years old or older, and more than one-half of medical school graduates may leave the state (State of Michigan, 2015). Business leaders must rethink their approach to best harness talent in view of aging workforces and heightened worker mobility (Oladapo, 2014).

### **Background of the Problem**

Auto production demands after World War II led to Detroit's rapid business expansion. Metro Detroit became the world headquarters for General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler. The increase in demand for auto production led to a rapid increase in Michigan's population. As industrial production moved to other regions and overseas, the residents in Michigan also moved. Both metro Detroit and Flint, Michigan, sustained population shrinkage from deindustrialization. Flint and Detroit are rust belt cities.

The automotive business is Michigan's primary industry. A worker's industrial experience may not transfer to potential areas of the greatest job growth. The occupations with the greatest projected growth are in the health care and social assistance sector (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Some business leaders may face obstacles when a demand exists to fill service industry jobs.

### **Problem Statement**

Political theorists invoke that brain drain may exacerbate regional disparities and stunt social and economic development (Kumar & Rani, 2019). In July 2016, 672,795 people lived in Detroit, the fewest residents since 1915 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016; Jackson & Leary, 2016). Flint, Michigan's population declined from 200,000 in the 1960s to approximately 98,000 (Morckel, 2016). The general business problem that I

addressed in this study is that an increasing lack of human capital negatively affects some businesses, which results in reduced business growth. The specific business problem that I addressed in this study is that some managers lack strategies to reduce human capital flight from rust belts.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that rust belt managers used to reduce human capital flight. Michigan was the only state with population shrinkage between 2000 and 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Thus, the target population was rust belt managers from that region: one health care manager from Detroit and one social assistance manager from Flint, who have implemented successful strategies to retain talent and reduce employee turnover. The implications for positive social change include population and employment rate growth within Michigan and external rust belt regions.

### **Nature of the Study**

I used the qualitative research method for this study. Qualitative methods are an interpretive approach to social science (Reinecke, Arnold, & Palazzo, 2016). The method's validity of findings is paramount to display data as a full picture of the constructs under investigation (Park & Park, 2016). A qualitative method was appropriate for this study because it enabled rich descriptions of complex phenomena and requires a researcher to track unique and unexpected events. The quantitative method permits an examiner to formulate and test hypotheses to analyze relationships and variable variances (Apuke, 2017). Quantitative research is deductive with an emphasis on measurement and

variable analysis with mathematical rigor (Apuke, 2017). The objective was not to test hypotheses or analyze variances among variables; therefore, the quantitative method was not appropriate for this study. Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017) implied that the mixed-method approach is useful for researchers to explore and examine complex problems because of the need to combine quantitative and qualitative methods. I sought to use mixed methods initially; however, I learned that barriers existed with the integration of quantitative and qualitative results. The quantitative and mixed methods were not appropriate for the study because there were no variables to assess. A qualitative method was appropriate for this study.

A multiple case study is appropriate when multiple realities exist based on one's construction of reality (Ridder, 2017). I chose the multiple case design to expand my knowledge of cross-case patterns of data. A case study permits a researcher to compare various cases that expand their comprehension of cross-case patterns (Sato, 2016). A researcher may use case studies for exhaustive research and to better understand larger classes of similar units (Rashid et al., 2019). The ethnographic design entails on-site data collection, numerous interviews, and long-term observation. An ethnography observation involves the study of cultures and social systems (Morgan-Trimmer & Wood, 2016). I was not interested in the examination of the participant's culture. Such design was also not appropriate for this study due to the participant's restricted site access within their company. A narrative researcher conducts interviews and collects stories about a phenomenon to describe past experiences (Mueller, 2019). In narrative analysis, a researcher interprets the larger meaning of a story to interpret data. I used direct

interpretations of data to develop generalizations; therefore, the narrative design was not appropriate. The phenomenology design necessitates a researcher to investigate lived experiences. Phenomenological tactics entail the method of the epoche (Englander, 2016). Phenomenology is a research method and the philosophical study of the structure of experience and consciousness (Englander, 2016). I selected the case study design because I solely wanted to explore the participants' thoughts, their retention practices, and events.

### **Research Question**

The overall research question was: What strategies do service industry managers use to reduce human capital flight from rust belts?

### **Interview Questions**

The interview questions were the following:

1. Explain your role in the organization as it pertains to talent retention.
2. What specific strategies do you use to attract different generations of individuals to your business (e.g. Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, generations X, Y, and Z)?
3. How do you alleviate adverse factors related to standard of living that affect employee retention?
4. From your experience, please describe why talented individuals relocate to other states?
5. What successful talent retention strategies are used within your organization?

6. What additional information can you provide to add insights about the study's research question?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The talent management (TM) model represents the framework for the study. Collings and Mellahi (2009) defined TM as activities that involve the systematic identification of key positions that contribute to an organization's competitive advantage. TM includes the development of a talent pool of high-potential and high-performing employees, a differentiated human resource architecture, and continuous employee commitment to an organization (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

The term *talent management* has evolved with time. Miner's (1973) definition of *talent management* is the procurement of talented individuals for top manager positions (Miner, 1973). Key tenets of the TM model are from Stahl et al.'s (2012) principles of: alignment with strategy, internal consistency, cultural embeddedness, management involvement, and employer branding through differentiation. As applied to this study, I used the TM framework to analyze and develop potential strategies to improve talent retention for rust belt managers.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Human capital*: The collective value of an organization's intellectual competencies. Firm-specific human capital is a source of sustained competitive advantage (Raffiee & Coff, 2016).

*Rust belt*: Former manufacture cities that sustained deindustrialization (Hurley, 2017).



*Service sector industries:* All industries except those in the goods production sector. (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016).

*Tacit knowledge:* Is an individual's unwritten, unspoken, and hidden form of knowledge that is difficult to communicate or share (Mohajan, 2016).

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

The following were assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. I defined the terms and explained where assumptions, limitations, and delimitations existed within the research.

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are perceptions that I assume to be true but cannot verify (Sampson, 2016). One assumption in this study was that the greatest projected job growth is in health care and social assistance (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2019). Another assumption was that all human capital flight represents brain drain.

#### **Limitations**

Limitations are deterrents that a researcher cannot control (Sampson, 2016). One limitation was the participants' patience to confirm the accuracy of their answers. This study is also limited to businesses within rust belt cities.

#### **Delimitations**

Delimitations define the parameters of a study (Guni, 2012). One delimitation of the study was that the participants are service industry managers who work in Detroit and Flint, Michigan. This study only included views from managers that represent the highest

projected areas of business growth; health care and social services (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

### **Significance of the Study**

Many economists, academics, and labor professionals view service sector workers as the future of the U.S. labor movement (Quigley, 2015). This study is of value to the practice of business because human capital is essential to business growth. Pasban and Nojehdeh (2016) professed that human capital is also vital to economic growth. The findings of the study may offer new business strategies to managers who work in rust belt regions. Greater human capital within rust belts could spur deindustrial business growth and incite competitive advantage for service industry managers.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

A business only sustains when managers innovate and improve policies (Sanchez et al., 2020). This study may contribute to the practice of business because the findings may expose internal and external barriers that affect business profitability. A business leader's premature decision might negatively affect business growth. Service industry managers may gain competitive advantage if they consider more effective strategies for talent retention.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The implications for social change include service industry expansion and population and economic growth within rust belt cities. Yoon (2017) noted that change in aggregate economic environments has differential effect on regional economies. Change

occurs in the course of decades and starts with a community of individuals who acknowledge strengths and build on them (Ruff, 2014).

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

A literature review includes substantive research and theoretical contributions to particular topics. A conventional literature review reflects the constructs of key word search (Yang & Hong, 2017). When a researcher collects data, they interpret concepts, summarize, and structure the data (Yang & Hong, 2017). This section exhibits a critical review on topics that affect psychological contracts and TM. A psychological contract includes individual beliefs and obligations that define the employer-employee relationship (Abela & Debono, 2019). Such contracts yield employee: job satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty to their employer (Abela & Debono, 2019).

Business leaders who lose human capital might endure substantial costs for recruitment. Strategic recruitment is a practice that connects across levels of analysis and is aligned with attributes of an organization, a manager's strategies, and goals (Boon et al., 2018). In many companies, talent acquisition is not forward thinking. Business leaders need to re-evaluate their strategies and consider the effect on productivity costs when they lose human capital (Liu, Zhu, & Wei, 2019).

The purpose of this study was to explore retention strategies that rust belt managers used to reduce human capital flight. The literature review covers the following topics: conceptual frameworks, the Michigan water crisis, Detroit, talent migration, workforce generations, brain gain, brain drain, brain waste, brain exchange, brain circulation, aging workforces, background checks, talent, and tacit knowledge

preservation. I used several databases to collect peer-reviewed and government journal articles: Business Source Complete, Science Direct, ProQuest Central, and ABI/INFORM Complete. I also used the Google Scholar search engine. The review includes 134 sources total, with more than 85% peer-reviewed. I used the following key words for database searches: *conceptual frameworks, Talent Management theory, two - factor theory, Michigan Water Crises, Flint, Detroit, rust belts, human capital, human capital flight, brain drain, work force generations, aging workforce, background checks, and talent retention.*

A conceptual model is a representation of a system. Conceptual models help to separate functional parts of complex systems (Erdem, Kiraz, Eski, Ciftci, & Kubat, 2016). Collins and Stockton (2018) wrote that conceptual frameworks allow scholars to connect problems of practice that contribute empirical knowledge to their field of study. I used the TM model as the conceptual framework for this research with support from the two-factor theory.

### **Talent Management**

TM is an organizational plan for required human capital. TM continues to be a significant challenge to business leaders (Meyers et al., 2020). The fundamental philosophies of human resources specifically in TM need further dialog (Meyers et al., 2020). TM challenges include the following: business reputation and maintenance, employee autonomy, knowledge acquisition, profitability, employee mobility, performance management, and the development of leadership capabilities (Suseno &

Pinnington, 2017). A business leader's effective management of talent represents a critical challenge for organizations (Bostjancic & Slana, 2018).

Managers apply human resource strategies in diverse ways, and strategies vary among managers. The science behind TM is persuasive, however, the application of TM is overdue for an upgrade (Eichinger, 2018). For this study, I used Collings and Mellahi's (2009) definition of TM and the five principles of TM provided by Stahl et al. (2012): alignment with strategy, internal consistency, cultural embeddedness, management involvement, and employer branding through differentiation.

**Alignment with strategy.** Strategic alignment is the result of linking an organization's resources with business strategy. Business alignment is the process of how people, strategy, culture, processes, and systems are linked within an organization (Shuck, Nimon, & Zigarmi, 2017). Tawaha, Hajar, and Abuhajar (2017) noted that strategic alignment improved a company's market performance. Employee engagement occurs when there is psychological alignment between an individual and organizational goals (Shuck et al., 2017). The alignment strategy also exhibits corporate external and internal attributes (Shuck et al., 2017).

**Internal consistency.** Internal consistency is a measure of reliability. An impossible estimation of reliability by internal consistency however, has posed problems with the concept's application (Matheson, 2019). Stahl et al. (2012) provided IBM as an example of a business with managers that took superior measures for internal consistency. The IBM managers produced quarterly reports for their staff for corporate

alignment (Stahl et al., 2012). The IBM managers considered their corporate culture as a source for shared understanding and competitive advantage.

**Cultural embeddedness.** Culture embeddedness refers to collective understanding that shape strategies and goals. Cultural embeddedness provides insight into why individuals behave as they do and how their behavior affects network structure (Wu & Pullman, 2015). Business leaders who traditionally focused on job duties and candidate qualifications, have increasingly integrated cultural indicators. Such indicators assess a job candidate's cultural fit with an organization. Stahl et al. (2012) believed that skills are easier to cultivate rather than personality traits and values. Some managers believe that formal qualifications are not always the best work performance indicator (Stahl et al., 2012). Management involvement throughout a human resource process is necessary for optimal talent retention.

**Management involvement.** A manager is generally involved with the design of an organization's structure and how different aspects of the organization interact. Some managers view human resource (HR) departments as panaceas to acquire the best talent. Such belief is not entirely true. One HR Officer wrote that the retention of the right people is not an HR thing, but the responsibility of the managers within respective job functions (Stahl et al., 2012). Stahl et al. (2012) noted that executive commitment to a talent retention process is rare. A sustainable human resource process correlates to a sustainable employer brand (Backhaus, 2016).

**Employer branding through differentiation.** Employer branding is a manager's effort to make their company different and more desirable than other businesses. A

business leader establishes a strong employer brand when they enhance their employees' emotional attachment (Lenka & Chawla, 2015). Dhiman and Arora (2019) professed that employees increased their participation in brand development when employer image and brand alignment existed. Organizational leaders must find ways to differentiate themselves from competitors (Stahl et al., 2012). Vatsa (2016) advised that internal branding is essential for long-term business success. The success of a top manager's internal brand efforts depends on how they live up to their corporate mission (Vatsa, 2016). Internal brand efforts yield employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

### **The Two-Factor Theory**

Frederick Herzberg is one of the most influential theorists in business management. One theory that he is notable for is the Herzberg or two-factor theory. The two-factor theory reveals that there are certain factors in the workplace that cause job satisfaction and other factors that cause dissatisfaction (Damji, Levnajic, Skrt, & Suklan, 2015). Herzberg's studies refute that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are opposite (Sithole & Solomon, 2014). The two-factor theory, McClelland's Need Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, all display high-level psychological needs; however, the idea of expectation, differentiates the two-factor theory. Herzberg's theory is based on hygiene and motivation factors (Mangi, Kanasro, & Burdi, 2015). Hygiene factors exhibit the job environment and the motivation factors display the context of a job (Mangi et al., 2015). The hypothesis is that satisfied employees perform their job duties well and will continue to execute their job. The factors that lead to employee dissatisfaction are relative to conditions of work, organizational strategy, direction, salary and social relations

(Mangi et al., 2015). The attributes of motivation are extrinsic and intrinsic (Mangi et al., 2015). Motivation is a complex concept, as it includes intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics; induced by an individual's personality and expectations (Singh, 2016).

**Extrinsic motivation/hygiene factors.** Extrinsic or hygiene factors is the basic needs of employees. Herzberg referred to the extrinsic motivator as the hygiene factor (Sithole & Solomon, 2014). Extrinsic motivation denotes human behavior that is stirred by external rewards (Singh, 2016). Such motivators include status, job security, desirable work environments, salary, and benefits (Sithole & Solomon, 2014). Hygiene factors do not give positive satisfaction, but Sithole and Solomon (2014) argued that the absence of hygiene factors yield employee dissatisfaction. Forgeard and Mecklenburg (2013) referred to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as qualities that are not intrinsic or extrinsic to the creator but to the creative process itself. The authors implied that the difference between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation existed within an individual's locus of motivation (Forgeard & Mecklenburg, 2013).

**Intrinsic motivators.** Intrinsic motivators represent less tangible, more emotional human needs. Such motivation is relative to an individual's interests rather than for external rewards (Singh, 2016). Intrinsic motivators include: self-actualization, growth, and personal needs that are met by opportunities for social interaction, autonomy, and achievement (Singh, 2016). Intrinsically motivated individuals seek challenges, explore, and learn for their own sake (Zhao, Chen, Cheng, & Wang, 2018). The Self-Determination theory conveys that the personal autonomy of an individual's choices determined their course of action (Zhao et al., 2018). Intrinsic psychological needs entail



autonomy, competence, and personal growth (Liang, Wang, Wang, & Xue, 2018).

Cerasoli, Nicklin, and Nassrelrgawi (2016) inferred that when an individual is intrinsically motivated, they are prone to keep an open mind and adopt mastery goals that guide their tasks to completion.

The above components exhibit internal and external microenvironment factors of business. External environments are factors beyond a manager's control that affects business operations (Ontorael, Suhadak, & Mawardi, 2017). Some external factors include economic and social conditions. The following conveys external macro conditions that affect the sustainability of Michigan businesses.

### **Michigan Water Crisis**

The Michigan water crisis made national news when reports came out about ill residents and adolescent deaths due to elevated lead levels in their blood. In April 2014, emergency managers changed the city of Flint's water supply from Detroit to the Flint River as a temporary measure to save money (Hanna-Attisha, Lachance, Casey, & Champney, 2016). Shortly after, the water supply was contaminated and the residents were affected by bacteria and lead poisoning (Hanna-Attisha et al., 2016).

A myriad of Flint residents relocated for better public health conditions. Flint Michigan's population shrinkage yielded: fewer residents to pay property and income taxes, fewer people to sustain businesses that generate revenue, and more vacant structure blight that reduced property values (Morckel, 2016). Morckel (2016) noted that a decrease in Flint's revenue is coupled with an increased demand for services. Negative national news about the water crises in Flint and Flint's current economic decline may

affect a job applicant's desire to live and work there. Michigan state emergency managers subjugated Flint and Detroit to negate the cities' financial collapse.

### **Detroit Facts and Perceptions**

The city of Detroit is notorious for negative stereotypes and misconception. Marotta (2011) noted that during the economic decline in Detroit, hundreds of reporters focused their reports on images of despair and destruction. An issue of *Foreign Policy* depicted cities such as Detroit as carcasses of great cities in which the leaders could not, or would not, deal with globalization (Marotta, 2011). Marotta (2011) advised that such stereotypes infuse people with fear and restrained Detroit's ability to expand.

Daniel Gilbert is an American billionaire and the founder of Quicken Loans and Rock Ventures. Dan Gilbert is the undisputed business leader in Detroit's commercial development (Leary & Jackson, 2017). In 2017, the Detroit mayor appointed Gilbert to lead a committee to bid for an Amazon headquarters in Detroit. The Amazon agents concluded that one reason why the Detroit officials lost the bid was due to Detroit's talent prospects. Dan Gilbert refuted that notion and asserted that negative perceptions about Detroit still existed (Gallagher, 2018). Gilbert believed that perceptions are the single largest obstacle to Detroit's business growth (Gallagher, 2018).

The stereotype content model exhibits that social structure effects cultural stereotypes and associated emotional prejudice. Zait, Andrei, Horodnic, and Berteau (2016) introduced the stereotype content model (SCM) that compared connections between a person's perception and the mental labels attached to a specific city. The SCM exhibits that people organize their perceptions based on warmth and competence (Zait et

al., 2016). Zait et al. (2016) prescribed that sustainability and livability are key to competitiveness for strong city brands to attract inhabitants; which includes the inhabitants' talent, tourists, investors, and various international organizations. Brown (2015) noted that city leaders must enact policies to address socioeconomic and physical realities.

The Detroit population continues to decline. Detroit's population dropped from a peak of 1.8 million in the 1950s to approximately fewer than 700,000 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Stansel (2011) affirmed that metro Detroit employee incomes rose by less than 2%, and the residents' tax burdens increased. Additionally, Detroit employees pay both a state personal tax and a local income tax (Stansel, 2011).

The Michigan government's general objective is an affluent state economy. As business leaders keep costs and spending at a minimum to maintain and gain customers, such strategy is applicable to local governments to compete with other governments for business and mobile residents (Stansel, 2011). Smith (2012) advised that managers must consider not only the profit-related bottom line of a business, but also a three-dimensional triple bottom line (TBL) approach. Smith (2012) defined TBL sustainability as the result of activities within an organization that demonstrated a manager's ability to maintain their business without adverse effects on economic stability, ecological systems, or the social bottom line. The social bottom line is a measurement of a business' profits in intellectual capital (Smith, 2012).

## **Talent Migration**

Intellectual capital (IC) is an employee's intellect and the intangible value of an organization. IC is a key source in business with a positive association to a firm's market performance (Ariff, Islam, & van Zijl, 2016). Ruginosu (2014) claimed that employees are committed to companies that have safe and comfortable environments with managers who are supportive and not judgmental. Campbell, Coff, and Kryscynski (2012) agreed with the Ariff et al. (2016) position; however, they believed that IC is only a source for competitive advantage when isolated mechanisms prevent workers from taking their skills to rival organizations. Campbell et al. (2012) defined *isolated mechanisms* as firm-specific human capital that limited a worker's mobility, whereas general human capital does not. Three conditions must exist for firm-specific human capital to produce competitive advantage: (a) the exchange value of human capital must not be greater than the use value, (b) the exchange value of workers' skill and firm specificity of those skills must be tightly merged, and (c) supply-side mobility constraints cannot be so low that workers are amenable to incur substantial costs to move (Campbell et al., 2012). A skilled workers' mobility within this process is critical to business productivity (Kerr, Kerr, Ozden, & Parsons, 2016). Talented individuals guide the actions of others and spur economic growth (Kerr et al., 2016).

For the first time in U.S. history, business leaders now manage five generations. Each generation has individuals with defined experiences that shape their values. Business managers must consider how such experiences affect the management of their workforce.

## **Workforce Generations**

The five generations in the U.S. work force are: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z. Jiri (2016) expressed the need for critical qualitative inquiry, given the conceptual complexity, perception of generational differences, and limits of present research. The Traditionalists are workers who were born between 1900 and 1945, and characterized as conservative, respectful of policies, risks adverse, and self-sacrificing (Wiedmer, 2015). Traditionalists lived during the Great Depression, Pearl Harbor, World War II, and they used the radio for news and entertainment. Baby Boomers are workers who were born between 1946 and 1964 and characterized as team players, ambitious, and workers who seek personal gratification (Arellano, 2015). Baby Boomers lived during the Watergate Scandal, Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights movement. Wiedmer (2015) noted that there are approximately 76 million Baby Boomers.

Generation X are workers who were born between 1964 and 1981. Generation X workers are independent thinkers, efficient, and they view work- life balance as extremely important (Wiedmer, 2015). The term work-life balance commenced in the United Kingdom and emerged within the United States in 1986 (Benito-Osorio, Munoz-Aguado, & Villar, 2014). Generation X workers lived during the: explosion of the space Challenger, debut of MTV, and the technological revolution. Generation X individuals also have families with higher levels of caution and pragmatism than their parents demonstrated (Wiedmer, 2015).

Generation Y workers were born between 1982 and 2002. Generation Y workers are fast paced, entrepreneurial, technologically savvy, and community oriented (Wiedmer, 2015). Also known as Millennials, they lived during the Oklahoma City bombing, Columbine shootings, and the September 11th terrorists attack. Kilber, Barclay, and Ohmer (2014) conceived that Millennials tend to embrace work environments as those in which they can relax, represent diverse culture, and have a casual dress code.

The oldest members of a new generation named Generation Z (Gen Z), is now in the workforce. Gen Z workers were born in the mid-1990s through the late 2010s (Jurenka, Starecek, Vranakova, & Caganova, 2018). The Generation Z are digital natives because they never experienced life before the internet (Turner, 2015). The Gen Z is exposed to more cultural variations than all prior generations. They are also affected by the growing economic income gap and the shrinking middle class (Turner, 2015). Social interest may affect the Generation Z, as they lack interpersonal training in the nuances and art of conversation (Turner, 2015). A lack of interpersonal skills may inhibit this generation's development of skills to connect socially and in person.

One consistent trait of the Millennials and Gen Z is that they had no qualms about relocation if they did not see opportunity where they were. Valentina and Liviu (2011) noted that young professionals represent the most mobile of the migrant population, especially for external migration. This is due to their independence from family which may make them more inclined to migrate. A young professional's path for career development is compromised as he or she enters the job market with a lack of favorable

employment (Valentina & Liviu, 2011). Krahn and Galambos (2014) advised that job entitlement is higher with younger generations.

Many young professionals and other cohort want more than a paycheck to feel like a valued colleague. Cohen, de Souza Costa Neves Cavazotte, da Costa and Ferreira (2017) conveyed that the factors associated with the retention of young professionals go beyond monetary issues. Seale (2011) provided three categories for young professionals: Seekers, Stayers and Achievers. The Seeker and Achiever categories had a subset named Returners, who, for various reasons, returned to their hometowns. The Returners category had two subsets named High Flyers and Boomerangs. The High Flyers represented the young who were successful in their careers and the Stayers remained in their hometowns (Seale, 2011). As individuals desire a variety of needs, different work motivation theories capture various aspects of motivation (Ertas, 2015). Seale (2011) concluded that once young professionals experienced life outside of their hometowns, they gravitated toward areas with a variety of goods, good restaurants, and entertainment. Business leaders must support a robust local economy to keep young professionals from migration elsewhere (Seale, 2011).

### **Brain Gain, Brain Drain, Brain Waste, Brain Exchange and Brain Circulation**

A skilled worker has special training and ability in their work. Skilled worker migration is the movement of skilled workers from one place to another with greater opportunities. Daugeliene and Marcinkeviciene (2009) implied that there are five ways to look at skill migration; skill migration may cause brain gain, brain drain, brain waste, brain exchange, or brain circulation. Various researchers coined the phrase brain gain to

describe the rise of human capital after an exodus of talented people (Garcia Pires, 2015). Author Garcia Pires (2015) argued that the systematic emigration of talent generates systems that produced replacements; sometimes better quality, and higher quantity than those that existed prior to.

Brain gain exists when a population of skilled workers rises, and brain drain exists when a population of skilled workers decline. A brain gain region attracts skilled workers and leaders to knowledge intensive organizations (Helgesen, Nettet, & Strand, 2013). Helgesen, Nettet, and Strand (2013) suggested that brain drain occurs in less successful regions where there are large exodus of students and highly skilled individuals. Students are especially important because many students who study abroad do not return to their home towns (Qin, 2015). This may create problems for managers who aspire to recruit highly educated workers for high-skilled positions (Helgesen et al., 2013). Heyler and Lee (2014) exhibited manager concerns with recent graduate employability; ranging from skill sets and personal attributes to subject abilities. McCracken, Currie and Harrison (2016) however, believed that graduates are the core source of talent for many organizations.

Some college graduates want to live in thriving cities where there is copious jobs in their area of study. Young professionals prefer large cities with dense walkable urban centers and rental apartments (Njemanze, 2016). Helgesen et al. (2013) measured student satisfaction with nightlife, social offerings, cultural offerings, and a variety of other offerings and encouraged decision makers to focus on modifiable town offerings that yield high levels of student loyalty (Helgesen et al., 2013).



Brain drain exists when skilled workers move from a less developed area to a more developed area. Fadinger and Mayr (2014) defined brain drain as both the unemployment and emigration of skilled workers. When the skilled worker ratio within a region increased, brain drain decreased (Fadinger & Mayr, 2014). Skilled workers migrate for greater opportunities to earn higher pay (Romero, 2013). Brain effect is a condition where skilled workers desire the idea of work abroad, higher wages, and the support to advance their education (Romero, 2013). Romero (2013) postulated that when skilled workers migrate, they increase the return on human capital; they may not however, produce typical brain effect from work abroad.

Skilled workers who work abroad have the opportunity to increase their skills and learn new skills. A myriad of authors declared that brain drain is not such an undesirable thing (Muller, 2016). Early migration literature exhibits that the emigration of educated workers prompted economists to propose a brain drain tax (Shrestha, 2017). Migration however, has two polar effects: brain effect and drain effect (Romero, 2013). Drain effect is a decline in an educated population after skilled emigration (Romero, 2013). When brain effect surpasses drain effect, an emigrant's hometown economy benefits from brain drain (Romero, 2013).

The underutilization of skill is known as brain waste. A skilled worker suffers from brain waste when they migrate and work as a less skilled worker (Garcia Pires, 2015). Brain waste is comprised of two unfavorable outcomes: unemployment and underemployment (Batalova, Fix, & Bachmeier, 2016). Such waste minimizes incentives

for people to acquire education and lessens the possibility of brain gain (Garcia Pires, 2015).

Brain gain yields brain exchange. Brain exchange occurs when business leaders move skilled workers between organizational operations (Daueliene & Macinkeviciene, 2009). Brain exchange is also brain circulation (Daueliene & Macinkeviciene, 2009). Some policy makers have made efforts to reverse the affects of brain drain by brain circulation. Brain circulation exists when skilled workers return to their home towns with technology, capital, and institutional know-how (Zagade & Desai, 2017). The brain circulation process stimulates the creation, dissemination, and the adaptation of new knowledge (Singh & Krishna, 2015).

Brain circulation changes the general concept of brain drain versus brain gain due to the upward mobility of human talent. Daueliene and Macinkeviciene (2009) defined brain circulation as a skilled worker who moves between countries or regions. Proponents of brain circulation regard it as a “win-win situation” when a source country and an outside country benefit from the flow of human capital (Ma & Pan, 2015). India, Korea and Taiwan are examples of countries that sustained an aging population shrinkage without brain drain (Daueliene and Macinkeviciene, 2009). The countries’ leaders implemented talent attraction programs that led to brain circulation and even brain gain (Daueliene & Marcinkeviciene, 2009).

The United States government for years benefited from the brain gain of immigration. American business leaders now face greater challenges with how to replace 70 million workers as the Baby Boomer generation retires (Oladapo, 2014). Other

challenges include strategy, cross cultural management, and marketing (Chand & Tung, 2015). Knowledge loss from an aging workforce remains a problem for business managers (Dzekashu & McCollum, 2014).

### **Aging Workforce**

The American aging workforce is referred to as the greatest rise in the median age of workers since the Social Security Act of 1935. Oladapo (2014) professed that the aging workforce challenge comes at a time where there are shifts in the ethnic composition of the U.S. workforce. The human population is aging at a rate unlike any other in history (Kulik, Ryan, Harper, & George, 2014). A company's executive management must develop stable and long-term strategies to attract, hire, develop, and retain employees (Oladapo, 2014).

Employers may face long-term vacancies if they lack incentives for younger workers and if bias toward older workers exists. When an employee ages, gains and losses occur; gains that are relative to knowledge and losses in terms of physical ability (Kooij, Jansen, Dijkers, & De Lange, 2014). Older workers perform just as well as younger workers when they control their work pace (Kulik, Ryan, Harper, & George, 2014). The link between corporate social responsibility and employee satisfaction are greater among older workers (Wisse, van Eijbergen, Rietzschel, & Scheibe, 2018). Retirement may no longer mark full-time departures from the workforce (Anderson, 2015). Over 70% of the current workforce age 50 years and older want to work during retirement (Anderson, 2015).

The Society for Human Research Management (SHRM) began a national initiative that emphasized the value of older workers and best practices for an aging workforce. The overall purpose of the study was to investigate managers' views on how their workforce will change within their industry. The specific purpose of the study was to determine what, if any, management actions were in effect to prepare for an aging staff. Many managers were not aware of how the aging demographic affected their business (Society for Human Research Management, 2014). The managers that were aware focused on the immediate future (Society for Human Research Management, 2014).

Many employers are not prepared to meet the aging demographic challenge. Ciutiene and Railaite (2015) advised that organizational leaders need to make changes to their policies to include age management practices. Thirty-eight percent of the SHRM studies' health care and social assistance managers only recently began to examine internal policies and practices to prepare for an aging staff (Society for Human Research Management, 2014). Each organization is unique; hence it is necessary for business leaders to assess the best workforce age management strategy (Ciutiene & Railaite, 2015).

In conclusion, the health care and social assistance managers were primarily concerned with long-term effects of their aging personnel. Aging, and the consequences from aging, are frequently analyzed in macroscale (Richert-Kazmierska, 2015). An aging workforce was evident since the 1980s but went largely unnoticed and unaddressed (Colley, 2014). The SHRM researchers posited that skill shortages from retirements may

have a greater affect on the health care and social assistance industries compared to other industries (Society for Human Research Management, 2014). Business leaders must create strategies that target mission critical knowledge (Dzekashu & McCollum, 2014). A business leader's inability to measure the value of older employees may contribute to the organization's demise. A prolonged shortage of workers also magnifies the costs of labor to acquire talent for the future (Hunt, 2014). Health care and social assistance managers must ramp up employee retention to mitigate future demand for services (Society for Human Research Management, 2014). HR managers must also gain greater knowledge about demographic shifts to capture and transfer older worker knowledge (Taneva, Arnold, & Nicolson, 2016).

The older age population may grow substantially in the U.S. between 2020 and 2050. By 2050, the population aged 65 and over may be 83.7 million; almost double the population of 43.1 million in 2012 (Ortman, Vellkoff, & Hogan, 2014). The most rapid increase of the 65 years and older population is expected to occur between 2020 and 2030 (Ortman et al., 2014).

As conveyed above, a rapid aging population may yield fewer workers in the U.S. workforce. Further, over 74 million people in the United States have criminal records (Selbin, McCrary, & Epstein, 2018). As a result, business leaders must also examine their organization's background check process to assure sustainability.

### **Background Checks**

Human resource professionals conduct background checks to mitigate liability and to identify undesirable candidates. A business leader's knowledge of an applicant's

background is invaluable to their business and limits risks of negligence (Dwoskin, Squire, & Patullo, 2014). Although background checks are imperfect, Dwoskin, Squire and Patullo (2014) professed that the retention of the most qualified job candidate is vital to organizational success.

Managers that conduct background checks generally use third parties who search court records, sex offender registries, bankruptcy records, employment, and driving records. Certain public industry managers, such as those in health care, are required by law to conduct background screenings (Zeitler & Luisi, 2016). One issue with background checks is costs; a defined cost is not simple (Paul-Emile, 2014). Many factors must be considered, such as, what is the agreement between the background check managers and the employer, and how many individuals need discovery (Paul-Emile, 2014)? Background checks may not daunt an applicant's fraudulence. Risks of not performing background checks however, may surpass screening costs (Glasner, 2014).

Technology has revolutionized background screenings. Technology such as electronic records and databases make background checks more efficient (Brody & Cox, 2015). Some business leaders believe that basic checks rather than in-depth background checks are enough to guide their retention decisions (Glasner, 2014). Managers might also be concerned with an applicant's acceptance of a background check process. An applicant's acceptance of a background check process is a challenge for managers when they fail to provide appropriate information to their applicants (Glasner, 2014).

Employers must establish and follow reasonable test procedures and policies. There are state and federal laws that regulate the usage of applicants' information (Zeitler

& Luisi, 2016). Class action efforts may result in significant damages for employers who fail to assure legal compliance (Coburn & Suttle, 2014). Accordingly, employers must take cautious steps to confirm that they are federally compliant to: hire, fire, reassign, and to promote applicants or employees (Coburn & Suttle, 2014).

A criminal record is an individual's criminal history that includes misdemeanors and felonies. Approximately 74 million individuals within the United States have a criminal record (Selbin, McCrary, & Epstein, 2018). More than 10,000 people per week are released from the United States' state and federal prisons (United States Department of Justice, 2018). Some individuals endure marginal treatment which negates equal opportunity. Increased employment decreases recidivism rates (Denver, Siwach, & Bushway, 2017). Recidivism is a person's return to criminal behavior (Alarid & Rubin, 2016). Individuals who lack job opportunities may harm public safety which yields an adverse effect on the economy (United States Department of Justice, 2018). Business leaders ought to limit their consideration of criminal records (Denver, Siwach, & Bushway, 2017).

Managers should first consider the age of a conviction. Business leaders should only consider convictions that are probative of an individual's job duties (United States Department of Justice, 2018). Moreover, business leaders should include buffer mechanisms so that managers with a need-to-know only view an applicant's criminal history (United States Bureau of Justice, 2018). This buffer enhances opportunities for equal employment.

Employers, lenders, and others, use an individual's criminal history to gauge their trustworthiness. Some employers assume that a person who has broken the law essentially makes poor decisions; no data exists to support this assumption (Gaebler, 2013). The population affected by criminal checks is massive; more than 600,000 prisoners are discharged from United States prisons every year (United States Bureau of Justice, 2018). Subjective evidence shows that ex-offenders are no more prone to exhibit disorderly conduct than other employees (Gaebler, 2013).

Other contexts may justify an employer's consideration of convictions. A job applicant's theft conviction is generally relevant to a manager with positions to handle cash on a job. Both job duties and the context of a position may justify consideration of particular convictions (Gaebler, 2013). Business leaders are also concerned with criminal convictions that reflect poor moral fiber (Gaebler, 2013). In contrast with the above example, this issue is not based on a connection between criminal behavior and the job's context or duty.

Some individuals are incarcerated due to racially disparate policies, beliefs, and practices. A myriad of managers recognize that there are racially disparate arrest and imprisonment rates (Minton & Golinelli, 2014). Some job candidates lose job opportunities for reasons beyond character. A manager that does not want to hire an ex-offender may use race as a substitute for a criminal background check (Petersen, 2015).

Some recruiters use Google search to avoid what they would deem as high liability employees. Many employers search for job applicants on search engines and social networks (Reicher, 2013). Some consider internet background checks unfair



because the checks are inaccurate; false credentials are allocated to individuals with the same name, and a candidate's status protected under the equal employment law is exposed (Reicher, 2013). Under federal law, hiring managers must not base their talent retention decisions on race, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability status, genetic information, pregnancy, and veteran status (Dwoskin, Squire, & Patullo, 2014). Some state leaders have expanded this protection to include sexual orientation, marital status, credit history, and criminal history (Dwoskin, Squire, & Patullo, 2014).

Businesses continue to globalize at a rapid rate and the competition for talent is intense. A new approach to TM that includes an analysis of the uncertainties of the business world today is vital. Business leaders must glean lessons from outside operations and supply chain research so that they can develop a new business model that is best suited to today's realities.

### **Talent and Tacit Knowledge Preservation**

Workforce turnover is often unpredictable, inevitable, and occurs in many forms. The global crisis of 2008 and subsequent economic recessions have resulted in significant employee turnover challenges (Johennese & Te-Kuang, 2017). TM is a popular retention strategy, yet how TM leads to greater employee retention is an unexplored terrain (Narayanan, 2016). Less than 20% of TM literature conceptualizes TM (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016). The TM process is socially unpredictable and based on clear perspectives through corporate social responsibility strategies (Pyszka & Gajda, 2015). People are the most valuable assets in organizations (Gashi, Pozega, & Crnkovic, 2017). An organization contains communities of people, and people are not one

dimensional or all the same (Sheth, 2016). Business leaders need to understand each person to engage, influence, change, manage, or inspire (Sheth, 2016). A manager's knowledge of an applicant's core motives for a job search is important for attraction and retention strategy deployment (Koval, Nabareseh, Klimek, & Chromjakova, 2016).

In a knowledge-based economy, knowledge preservation is essential. There is limited research on business knowledge internalization (Wipawayangkool & Teng, 2016). TM is generally associated with the direct costs of talent retention and less associated with the loss of tacit knowledge costs (Tlaiss, Martin, & Hofaidhllaoui, 2017). Tacit knowledge is critical to organizational success; hence an employee who leaves a job without record of know-how is axiomatic (Garrick & Chan, 2017; Mezghani, Exposito, & Drira, 2016). Spraggon and Bodolica (2017) advised managers to support collective activities to build propitious corporate climates for tacit knowledge mobilization.

Some business leaders are in flux as they respond to the rapid changes in the global economy and in their external business environment. Employee education relative to organizational change is core to initiative development (Vogel, 2017). A manager's successful enactment of organizational change requires alignment with the need to change; both the perceived need and the actual need (Rieley, 2016). A Towers Watson study with over 32,000 employee participants showed more than half of all companies have no employee retention strategy (Towers Watson, 2014). Less than 50 % of the study participants believed that their managers did not do a good job with talent retention (Towers Watson, 2014). HR managers and line managers need to work together during

organizational change to identify people whose retention is critical (du Plessis & Sukumaran, 2015). Employee retention minimizes costs with hiring and training new employees (Mngomezulu, Challenor, Munapo, Mashau, & Chikandiwa, 2015). Authors of the Towers Watson study cautioned that if managers underestimate the value that their staff placed on key retention factors then they will lose key talent (Towers Watson, 2014).

Great employees foster positive corporate culture and business growth. The best and most qualified job candidates are also the most highly desired (Bugg, 2015). Job security is a positive determinate of employee commitment (Abuhashesh, Al-Dmour, & Masa' deh, 2019). Key findings from the Towers Watson study were that job security is fundamental to attract employees, competitive work/life balance programs are vital, and that business leaders ought to develop leadership models that incorporate performance components aligned with their strategic priorities, values, and culture (Towers Watson, 2014). Greater key facts from Towers Watson (2014) are that managers must focus on competencies consistent with their words and actions and offer their employees a consumer like experience at work.

In general, Herzberg's hygiene theory conveys two groups of human needs: individual and job level; hygiene factors, and group and organization level; motivational factors to maintain talent. Some managers deem job candidates as less important than the organization and group (Shahvazian, Mortazavi, Lagzian, & Rahimnia, 2016). The results of the Towers Watson study established that the retention of talented individuals is less predictable and more complex.

Talent is generally associated with a celebrated excellence or skill. Shahvazian et al. (2016) provided two approach concepts to define talent. First, the subject approach is based on valuable, scarce, inimitable, and difficult to replace employees (Shahvazian, et al., 2016). The second is the object approach based on the characteristics of talented people such as abilities, knowledge, and competencies (Shahvazian et.al, 2016). Shahvazian et al. (2016) presented two diversity perspectives for the definition of talent; an inclusive perspective that everyone is talented and an exclusive perspective that everyone within an organization is not talented. Bhattacharyya (2014) noted that talent pools consist of employees who are more productive, efficient, and exceed expected levels of performance.

Business leaders need engaged and high-performing employees to reach optimal supply chain success. Kontoghiorhes (2016) conducted a study that tested the validity of talent attraction and retention on the effects of organizational culture and employee attitudes. Employees who have strong and respectful cohort relationships are more apt to remain with their employer (Shahvazian et al., 2016). Strategically aligned and ethically high organizational cultures have strong effects on talent retention. Also, such cultures are highly conducive to the development of high commitment and galvanized work systems (Kontoghiorhes, 2016).

Business leaders influence their team's performance and goal achievement. Shahvazian et al. (2016) concluded that the reason why employees leave organizations is due to the behavior of their managers. Leadership style affects the motivation and behavior of employees (Syafii, Thoyib, Nimran, & Djumanir, 2015). It is essential for

managers within an organization to understand what motivates employees if they intend to maximize organizational performance (Lee & Raschke, 2016). Shahvazian et al. (2016) study respondents' perception of talent was based on the perceptions of the CEO and their actions. Such discovery was consistent with the Theory of Upper Echelons; the organization as a reflection of its top managers (Shahvazian et al., 2016). Jackson (2015) advised business leaders to ramp up internal resources to acquire talented workers. Harter and Adkins (2015) posited that some managers have extra ordinary flair to recruit and retain highly capable individuals.

Managers with a coach leadership style generally use incentive structures for recruitment. Some business leaders use incentive structures to positively influence talent retention (Zhang, Ahammad, Tarba, Cooper, Glaister, & Wang, 2015). A myriad of employees contribute to the design of their compensation packages through remuneration systems (Vidal-Salazar, Cordon-Pozo, & de la Torre-Ruiz, 2016). Harter and Adkins (2015) suggested that compensation packages were the most important strategy to attract the best talent, but not a sole factor. Deery and Jago (2015) noted that a well-designed talent retention process also includes work-life balance initiatives. Harter and Adkins (2015) opined that meaningful work and purpose inspired talented employees far more than compensation packages.

A business opportunity consists of a need, the means to fulfill a need, a method to fulfill a need, and a method to benefit. Business opportunities are created or destroyed by influences of economic, societal, political forces, and complex interactions between these forces (Zeady, 2017). Leadership is the main factor that makes everything work (Zeady,

2017). There are many definitions of leadership and many examples of what good leaders do. Without leadership, all other business resources are ineffective (Zeady, 2017). Some individuals assume that all managers are leaders, however, all managers are not leaders (Algahtani, 2014). Many individuals are both managers and leaders. Leaders aim to create passion for others to follow their vision and challenge the current status quo (Algahtani, 2014). Leadership is the capability to articulate a roadmap and to motivate others to focus on desired goals (Khoshhal & Guraya, 2016). A good leader who engages employees clearly communicates with staff, measures employees' performance based on clear goals, and focuses on employees' strengths over their weaknesses (Harter & Adkins, 2015).

A manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of an organization that includes process, execution, and efficiency. In general, the concept of management involves the translation of strategies into operations (Baker, 2014). Whether an individual is a business manager, a business leader, or both, one common goal is business sustainability. Leaders have a vision of what they want the future to look like and execute measures to realize that future (Khoshhal & Guraya, 2016). A business leader must comprehend and value the essential nature of corporate operations to effectuate their vision (Algahtani, 2014). Otherwise, a leader's vision without well-defined operations is simply a hallucination (Algahtani, 2014).

### **Transition and Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore successful strategies that managers used to reduce human capital flight. In the literature review, I presented a historic perspective and discussion of human capital flight, causes of employee turnover, and the conceptual frameworks that previous researchers have enacted to reduce human capital flight. Section 2 begins with a review of the study purpose, the role of the researcher, study participants, and the research method and design. Additionally, Section 2 describes population and sampling methodology, practices for ethical research, the data collection instruments and techniques, data organization and analysis. In Section 3, I identified applications for professional practice and implications for social change. I also recommended action and further research on the topic.

## Section 2: The Project

Section 2 of the study provides details on the methods that I used to complete the project. In this section, I describe the role of the researcher, the qualitative research method, and the multiple case study design. Further, I offer a detailed validation for my strategy to select participants. I complete Section 2 with a discussion of ethical research, validity and reliability, collection of data, data analysis, and data organization.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that rust belt managers used to reduce human capital flight. Michigan was the only state with population shrinkage between 2000 and 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Thus, the target population was rust belt managers from that region; one health care manager from metro Detroit and one social assistance manager from Flint, who have implemented successful strategies to retain talent and reduce employee turnover. The implications for positive social change include population and employment rate growth within Michigan and external rust belt regions.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As researcher, I recruited participants, collected data, analyzed results, and interpreted data. One advantage to a case study researcher is the flexibility to overlap collected data with data analysis (Sato, 2016). This study has relevance to me as a business leader within the health care industry. Further, I am a resident of Michigan, a rust belt region in the United States. I collected all data with scholarly ethics and pursuant to the Belmont Report protocol. The primary purpose of the Belmont Report is to protect



the rights of all research participants (Miracle, 2016). I refrained from personal judgment and approached the phenomenon with a fresh perspective. When a scholar identifies biases, they certify their ethical responsibility (Hlady-Rispal & Jouison-Laffitte, 2014). My general role was to select participants, conduct interviews, analyze collected data, and to analyze company documents. The researcher is a data collection instrument and an integral component of qualitative research (Fusch & Ness, 2015). My objective for an interview protocol (Appendix A) was to use several key questions to explore areas of the phenomenon. The interview process is the most common form of data collection in qualitative research (Jamshed, 2014). A qualitative interview is an occurrence where practices and standards are recorded, achieved, challenged, and reinforced (Jamshed, 2014). My goal throughout the interview process was to maintain the upmost ethical standards. The three major components of ethical standards are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Miracle, 2016).

### **Participants**

The participant criteria were health care and social assistance managers from Detroit and Flint with 5 years of successful talent retention experience. A participant selection is purposeful when the participants provide depth and their best answers to research questions (Young, Gropp, Pinar, Waddell, Marshall, & Thomas, 2014). I selected two service sector managers, one from the health care industry in Detroit and the other manager from the social assistance industry in Flint. I worked with two participants, one from each sector with the greatest projected job growth in the United States. A sample size in qualitative research is generally based on a small number of interviewees;

this enables richness and depth of detail (Crocker et al., 2014). Based on the participant's 5 years of experience with talent retention, they provided robust data. Qualified and eligible participants enhance research validity and produce reliable data (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015).

I gained access to the participants through LinkedIn and social media networks. Communication is essential for a researcher to find participants (Kondowe & Booyens, 2014). After I identified eligible participants, I requested their voluntary participation in the study. A researcher must receive consent from each participant and their organization prior to interviews to avoid ethical conflict (Sobottka, 2016). I communicated with all potential participants in person, through e-mail, and by phone. Suitable procedures with a link between the researcher and the participant include clear messaging and multiple communication channels (McLevey, 2015).

I maintained open channels of communication and followed-up with all participants as needed. Communications help a researcher to build trust and rapport with the participants (Kondowe & Booyens, 2014). I used reflexivity during the entire research. Reflexivity is a process of ongoing mutual reflection between the researcher and the research relationship with the participants (Attia & Edge, 2017). I maintained a rapport with the respondents by acts of partnership. Reflexive practices create dynamics in which the interviewer and the respondent are jointly involved in knowledge production (Attia & Edge, 2017).

I chose participants with experience using successful strategies to reduce human capital flight from rust belts. A qualified participant allows a researcher to acquire

unified, valid, and reliable data (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015). I chose participants based on alignment with the specific problem and the overarching research question.

Benoot, Hannes, and Bilsen (2016) convey that strategies that align with the purpose of the study are credible, feasible, ethical, and efficient. Alignment between all aspects of a research project is essential (Paradis, O'Brien, Nimmon, Bandiera, & Martimianakis, 2016).

## **Research Method and Design**

### **Research Method**

Scholars use the qualitative research method to explore and comprehend meanings that individuals ascribe to their experiences (Austin & Sutton, 2014). The research method was qualitative. Reinecke, Arnold, and Palazzo (2016) noted that qualitative research enables greater comprehension of business ethics from complex and pluralistic realities. Qualitative research captures what is ethical or not for social conditions under study; further, it captures changes through time (Reinecke et al., 2016). The qualitative method is especially effective for researchers to obtain specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations (Bansal & Corley, 2012).

I chose the qualitative method over the quantitative method due to its flexibility. The qualitative method results are in natural language, whereas quantitative research yields numbers and statistical models (Gerring, 2017). Quantitative research entails counting the opinions of people and does not explore disparate perspectives (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Open-ended questions enable the participants to respond in their

own words, rather than forcing them to do so with fixed responses. My goal was to use a method that generated greater creativity, explained why particular events happened, and substantiate why the chosen phenomenon is important.

The mixed method is not a good fit for this study due to the probable risks of two independent results. The mixed method integrates the quantitative and qualitative methods and creates a long discovery process for the researcher (Johnson, 2015). Mixed methods are appropriate for research when neither a quantitative nor a qualitative approach alone remedy the research questions (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). The qualitative method was appropriate for this study because it enabled me to deliver successful business strategies. Bailey (2014) noted that the qualitative method provides an interpretive model that researchers may analyze and interpret to launch successful business strategies.

### **Research Design**

The case study design is a comprehensive method that incorporates multiple sources of data to yield detailed accounts of complex phenomena (Morgan, Pullon, Macdonald, McKinlay, & Gray, 2016). Qualitative case studies enable thought provoked changes in business strategies (Schwepker & Schultz, 2015). Fusch and Fusch (2015) recommended that a scholar use a design with the greatest potential to remedy research questions and reveal links between events over time. The goal was to use a multiple case study to glean talent retention strategies for rust belt managers.

The ethnography design requires a researcher to observe participant experiences (Bansal & Corley, 2012). The observation portion of ethnographic research deviates from

the scope of the research questions that involve past evidence and already lived experiences. In ethnographic research, a scholar seeks to understand a specific culture within their field or natural setting (Baskerville & Myers, 2015). I did not seek to understand a specific culture phenomenon therefore this design was not appropriate.

The narrative design entails the examination of a study respondent's life through conversations, stories, or documents (Khan, 2014). Narrative research includes the participant views and a researcher's life experience (Maiello, 2014). Mardis, Hoffman, and Rich (2014) noted that narrative research is more relevant to a respondent's lived experiences rather than their perceptions. A narrative design was not appropriate for the study because I was not interested in life experiences that deviated from the research question.

Phenomenology is the study of phenomenon, the appearance of things as they exist in our experience, and the ways that we experience things (Kaivo-oja, 2017). One feature of phenomenology is the emphasis on a phenomenon as a single idea or concept (Mol, Silva, Rocha, & Ishitani, 2017). Phenomenology, however, is not the same as case studies that generalize research results to a certain group or population (van Manen, 2017). Phenomenology studies also display participant experiences, rather than their experiences and their opinions, therefore, this design was not appropriate.

The "gold standard" for quality research is data saturation (Hancock, Amankwaa, Revell, & Mueller, 2016). Qualitative research is based on a participant's perspective and opinions rather than the number of participants who contribute to a study (Hancock et al., 2016). Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013) advised that a researcher must extract an adequate

amount of relevant information from each participant for data saturation. Data saturation exists when data emerges repeatedly and does not result in any new information (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Fusch & Ness, 2015). I also used member checks to ensure data validity.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population for this study was service industry managers within rust belt regions. The sampling method was purposive. In purposive sampling an individual may learn a lot about issues of importance to the researcher's purpose of inquiry (Benoot et al., 2016). Purposive samples exhibit data from specific groups of participants (Sonenshein, 2014). Researchers use purposeful sampling to identify and select information-rich cases to optimize limited resources (Palinkas et al., 2015). I used purposive sampling to select participants from the target population and parameters of interest. The project sample consists of two managers who work in Flint and Detroit, Michigan. Cho and Lee (2014) noted that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. I selected two managers from Michigan to ensure that there was sufficient data to answer the research question. Moser and Korstjens (2018) believed that sampling strategies must yield rich information. The prevailing concept for sample size in qualitative research is saturation (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2015).

A direct correlation exists between a sample size and data saturation (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Researchers use data saturation to gauge the quality of a study (Hancock, Amankwaa, Revell, & Mueller, 2016). I ensured data saturation by in-depth interviews and by follow-up member checking. Member checks are important for researchers to

assure the accurate meanings of information that is provided by study participants (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). I also obtained company documents for triangulation. Data triangulation ensures data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation occurs when no new themes emerge from research data (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013).

The study participants had at least 5 years of talent retention experience within a rust belt region. The participant criterion also required the participants to have at least 10 years of Michigan residency. I had a fixed sample of 2 cases, one from each parameter of interest: health care and the social assistance sector. A scholar's decision to determine a sample size prior to a study relies on his or her need to reach data saturation (Marshall et al., 2013). Boddy (2016) concluded that a single-case study may be highly informative and worthy of publication. Benoot et al. (2016) advised that it is important to choose rich samples of a phenomenon of interest, but not highly unusual cases.

A researcher may use interview settings to enhance a participant's quality of information (Cairney & St. Denny, 2015). Deakin and Wakefield (2014) advised that participants are more inclined to provide detailed and useful information when they are in comfortable surroundings. Leedy and Ormrod (2014) suggested that interviews take place at suitable locations. I conducted face-to-face interviews with all participants at mutually agreed upon times and locations.

### **Ethical Research**

Informed consent is an ethical and legal requirement for research that involves human participants (Nijhawan et al., 2013). I obtained the following approvals before

data collection: endorsement from the Walden University IRB; approval number 09-06-19-0170607, and written consent from all participants. I offered consent forms (Appendix D & E) for the participants to provide approvals to begin the study. It is the researcher's obligation to be ethical even when interviewees are unaware or unconcerned about ethics (Khan, 2014). The consent form included a disclaimer that all identifiable information is confidential, and I will keep it in a locked file for 5 years. A researcher must certify the confidentiality of all participants and maintain ethical conduct (Gibson, Benson, & Brand, 2013). I informed the participants verbally and in writing that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Further, I informed the participants that there were no incentives for participation with the research. Cummings, Zagrodney, and Day (2015) noted that all participants have the right to withdraw from a voluntary study. Cummings et al., (2015) also advised that a lack of incentives eliminate motivation factors within the participants' responses. I used pseudonym codes during data collection, and not the interviewees' nor business names.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research for data collection and analysis (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Haahr, Norlyk, & Hall, 2014). As the primary instrument, I remained neutral and maintained a professional character. Siu, Hung, Lam, and Cheng (2013) advised that researchers ought to maintain a professional relationship with their study respondents.

The data collection process consisted of semistructured interviews and company documents. Business documents provide greater context to a study (Bretschneider et al.,



2017). Researchers use interviews in research to gain individual perspectives for specific situations (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013). The most valid form of data collection is personal interviews (Pacho, 2015). I presented six interview questions to the participants prior to all data collection meetings. To commence the interview process, I sent invitations to eligible participants as exhibited in the interview protocol (Appendix A). The member checking process validates interview interpretations and enhances data validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). A researcher uses member checks to ensure the validity, reliability, and the credibility of data (Bradley, Getrich, & Hannigan, 2015). I used conference calls for all interviews.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

I collected data with semistructured interviews and business document review. In qualitative studies, a researcher collects data by interviews and by document discovery (Bansal & Corley, 2012; Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014; Pacho, 2015). Guest, Namey, Taylor, Eley, and McKenna (2017) conveyed that interviews yield more insight into a respondent's personal thoughts, feelings, and world view. During the interview process I used two tape recorders for accuracy and validity. Further, after each interview, I followed-up with all participants to validate their noted responses and increase data authenticity. The tape-recorded interviews provided me with enhanced data validity, however, one disadvantage was a probable malfunction of a sole tape recorder. To mitigate this problem, I used two tape recorders.

A secondary data collection technique is common in research (Johnston, 2014). One advantage to business document research is that I had access to information that was

hard to obtain by other means. When a scholar triangulates primary and secondary techniques, they enhance their knowledge of a research problem (Varaki, Floden, & Kalatehjafarabadi, 2015). One disadvantage of document discovery is that some business leaders are not willing to share non-public information. Therefore, I researched public business documents from the participants' organizations.

I used member checks to confirm the participant responses. Member checking is the process of participant follow-ups, or the process of greater data collection to elaborate on categories (Harvey, 2015). Follow-up meetings with participants also minimize researcher bias (Romm & Tlale, 2016). When a researcher offers a respondent the opportunity to confirm study results, research credibility and dependability is enhanced (Cope, 2014).

### **Data Organization Techniques**

A content analysis process involves three main phases: preparation, organization, and results (Elo et al., 2014). For data preparation and organization, I tracked notes on my computer with Excel and Word applications. I used the latest version of NVivo to: organize data, identify trends, and to compare findings. Oliveira, Bitencourt, Zanardo dos Santos and Teixeira (2016) noted that researchers use NVivo to cross-reference words and phrases, and to develop themes by word recognition and auto codes. Notes on my computer denoted reflective journal entries. Reflective journals help researchers interpret field data (Applebaum, 2014). I also used USB files to back-up all records.

Searle and Hanrahan (2011) advised that pseudonym codes protect the privacy of research participants. Each talent retention manager received a code SSM1 (Service

Sector Manager) and a number; SSM1 and SSM2. I organized all respondent data in a password protected file that included a label with the respondent's code name and their consent form. All participant files will remain in my possession and in a locked file for 5 years. I will delete all computer files and destroy USB records after 5 years of storage.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis process is methodological triangulation. Heale and Forbes (2013) conveyed that data triangulation provides a researcher with a more comprehensive illustration rather than one source of datum. Methodological triangulation enhances researcher confidence and their knowledge of research results (Turner, Cardinal, & Burton, 2015). Researchers use triangulation to ensure a valid and reliable study (Tuncel & Bahtiyar, 2015).

The sequential process for data analysis begins with the research question, a literature review and data collection, and concludes with analyses and a transcription of the study (Harland, 2014). A documented data analysis process is essential to credibility and transferability (Ament et al., 2014). After Walden IRB approval, I initiated the data collection process. I concluded with a formal analysis of the results after I collected data and performed member checks. An effective data analysis technique yields better quality data interpretations and results (Stuckey, 2015).

Data codes are essential throughout the data analysis process (Janesick, 2015). The NVivo software includes data formats such as videos and audio files (Oliveira et al., 2016). Scholars use software to ensure that methodological rigor, dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability exist within qualitative research (Houghton,

Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). A researcher identifies themes by collecting data through coding and clustering (Yin, 2017).

I identified key themes and juxtaposed the themes with the literature review and conceptual framework. Ashley, Halcomb, and Brown (2017) conveyed that qualitative researchers use conceptual frameworks to guide the design of their study. The research design stimulates the creation of patterns and themes from complex data (Zheng, Guo, Dong, & Owens, 2015). The data analysis process continued until data saturation existed. I exhibited contributions and limitations to the research. Further, I linked the themes that emerged from the data with current studies and noted all variances. A scholar exhibits their research contributions and limitations to connect their study with the larger body of knowledge (Goldberg & Allen, 2015).

## **Reliability and Validity**

### **Dependability**

Barker and Hunsley (2014) cautioned that there are a myriad of reliability and validity issues within research. A qualitative researcher demonstrates reliability, validity and rigor to establish trust and confidence of their research results (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). I verified dependability of this study through a code-recode strategy and applied triangulation. I also established dependability through an external audit that involved an outside scholar who reviewed: the data collection process, my data analysis, and the research results. Research dependability is established with an audit trail, a code-recode strategy, triangulation, and by peer examination (Anney, 2014).

### **Credibility**

Prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checks enhance credibility (Black, Palombaro, & Dole, 2013). To assure credibility, I spent a minimum of one hour with each participant and provided unlimited time for them to answer all of the research questions. Prolonged engagement ensures that the researcher spends enough time with study participants to best understand the phenomenon of interest (Black, Palombaro, & Dole, 2013). I also triangulated data sources from interviews and explored company documents for analysis. After triangulation, I member checked to assure the accuracy of the participants' thoughts. The transferability of a study depends on a credible research process (Noble & Smith, 2015).

**Transferability** The extent of how research results apply to other contexts defines transferability (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). To ensure transferability, part of this research effort included specific detail and numerous topics related to the subject. I added themes such as background checks and the aging workforce that enables other scholars to develop conclusions from other topics. The researcher does not determine transferability however, transferability is determined by the external audience of the research (Cope, 2014). Thorough studies enable a future researcher to judge the transferability of a study to other contexts (Rushing & Powell, 2014).

### **Confirmability**

Thomas and Magilvy (2011) argued that confirmability is the researcher's responsibility. After the participants answered all of the study questions, I confirmed the participants' responses by follow up interviews and member checking. Further, I documented the procedure with two voice recorders and scrupulous notes. Confirmability challenges how the collected data will help the research results (Connelly, 2016). I certified confirmability through reflexivity, and I transcribed detailed notes for audit purposes. Moon et al. (2016) advised that dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability are necessary elements that enable a researcher to demonstrate the reliability and validity of a study.

A researcher cannot assume that data saturation has been reached when they have exhausted their resources (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation is not about the numbers in general, but about the depth of the data (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2016). I have no time barriers for interviews to assure that no new themes emerge. The member checks

also helped me to provide more robust data. Data saturation involves a researcher's capacity to collect information until the participants are not able to provide greater unique input (Marshall et al., 2013). I interviewed all participants until the data was repetitive and reached data saturation.

### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 2 of this study I addressed the study purpose, role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling method, research ethics, data collection techniques, organization, and analysis, and reliability and validity. In Section 3, I present the findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, research reflections, and the study conclusion. The study findings may assist others to address business problems that are relevant to human capital flight from rust belts.

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

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that rust belt managers use to reduce human capital flight. I interviewed two rust belt managers and explored successful talent retention strategies. I conducted each interview in less than 60 minutes, and member checks yielded no additional in-depth information. In addition to the interviews, I reviewed public business documents that included leadership development and talent retention practices from the participants' organizations. The study results revealed significant talent retention issues and strategies for business success. Such strategies include greater benefits for employees, improved communications and knowledge, increased ability to advance, and work life balance.

#### **Presentation of the Findings**

The central research question was: What strategies do service industry managers use to reduce human capital flight from rust belts? I used semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to enable the participants to provide robust information. Moreover, I reviewed public company documents that included organizational journals, statistics, and manuals to enrich the triangulation of data. Before I initiated the interviews, the participants signed a consent form, and they received a signed copy of the consent form for their records. All interviews took place via teleconference and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. To protect the participants' identities, I labeled all transcriptions SSM1 thru SSM2; meaning Service Sector Manager 1 and 2. After I completed all recordings and transcripts, the interviewees participated in member checks. Once the participants



confirmed the accuracy of their responses, I coded all data with NVivo 12. NVivo enabled me to understand the research data in a more organized form. I used NVivo to conduct word frequency searches. The data from the search generated themes from the participants' interviews. During the data analysis, I focused on themes that were relevant to the conceptual framework and the overall research question. The conceptual framework was the TM model and the two-factor theory. The data analysis exhibited the following themes:

- Business leaders that were more involved and communicated more with staff reduced employee turnover.
- Enhanced employee intrinsic motivation decreased employee turnover and increased talent prospects.
- Competitive compensation and benefits reduced employee turnover and increased talent prospects.

**Theme 1: Business leaders that were more involved and communicated more with staff reduced employee turnover.**

Theme 1 emerged from the participants' responses and from my review of business documents on employee turnover. SSM1 and SSM2 explained that supportive managers reduced human capital flight and increased staff and employee satisfaction. SSM2 stated, "As a Director, I listen to my staff and I don't believe that I have the answers for everything. Being hands-on with your team, listening, and clearly communicating expectations is key to success." Martinich (2017) conveyed information that confirmed SSM2's perspective that when business leaders fail to listen, and believe that they are always right, subordinates become intimidated, angry, and organizations

become dysfunctional. Martinich (2017) further advised that when managers do not effectively listen to subordinates, such behavior yields poor productivity and an inability to retain valuable and talented people.

Osborne and Hammoud (2017) purported that a leader's ability to effectively communicate is a basis for employee engagement. A manager's ability to leverage employee engagement strategies is essential in an organization (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Business leaders need to understand each person to manage, engage, influence, change, or inspire (Sheth, 2016). For business leaders to understand each subordinate, they must understand generational differences and cultural attributes that go beyond background checks. For successful and socially responsible communications, one must know the difference between cultures and various characteristics of a business environment (Kukovec, Mulei, & Zizek, 2018). Kukovec, Mulei, and Zizek (2018) implied that an individual must also understand how organizational communication matches social responsibility. Variations between cultures cause invisible barriers, which is overcome by knowledge and a worker's willingness to change for successful business operations (Kukovec, Mulei, & Zizek, 2018).

Theme 1 fits within the key tenets of the TM model framework that includes: alignment with strategy, cultural embeddedness, and management involvement. Theme 1 also links to the two-factor theory which exhibits hygiene factors within a job environment. Hygiene factors are extrinsic motivators that represent more tangible needs (Sithole & Solomon, 2014). Extrinsic motivation has varied effects on an employee's behavior and how he or she pursues goals. David, Brennecke, and Rank (2019) revealed

that increased levels of extrinsic motivation prompted employees to adopt more efficient and goal-oriented behaviors.

**Theme 2: Enhanced employee intrinsic motivation decreased employee turnover and increased talent prospects.**

Enhanced employee intrinsic motivation decreased employee turnover and increased talent prospects was the second theme that emerged from the participants' responses. SSM1 and SSM2 both conveyed that they received more positive results from their staff when they were genuinely passionate about their work. SSM1 said: "You can tell the difference between someone who is at work because they like what they do versus those who are simply there for a paycheck." SSM1: "When I recruit for talent, I take a careful look at the work that they've done in the past." SSM1: "During interviews I ask job candidates why they like to do the work that they do." SSM1: "The genuity in their response helps me decipher rather I believe that they'll be there for the long-run, or if their employment with our organization is temporary."

Intrinsic motivation refers to an employee's inspiration for work. As knowledge-based work evolves, business leaders depend on creative and innovative impulses from their employees for competitive advantage (Fischer, Malycha, & Schafmann, 2019). A worker's motivation may have great affects on his or her performance and productivity (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). Sahir, Phulpoto, and uz Zaman (2018) believed individuals like to come to work when they are passionate about what they do, rather than solely for a paycheck. Relatively few workers find their jobs interesting enough to work without pay or a reward (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017). Typical intrinsic motives include interest,

enjoyment, fun, self-determination, and self-growth (Liu, Hau, & Zheng, 2019). Among the most significant models in contemporary behavioral science is the self-determination theory (Al Harbi, Alarifi, & Mosbah, 2019). The self-determination theory exhibits a broad framework for the factors that promote motivation and psychology (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Empirical evidence exhibits that intrinsic motivation affects an individual's persistence and other long-term positive behavior (Liu, Hau, & Zheng, 2019).

Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation often correlate. Extrinsic motivation affects intrinsic motivation when the physical appearance of something influences one's thoughts and behavior. For example, talented individuals with criminal records might not apply to certain jobs if they believe that an employer is adverse toward various criminal backgrounds.

Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation also correlate during word of mouth communications. Word of mouth communications is one of the oldest practices of marketing that forms behavior. The Michigan Water crises produced a lot of negative publicity. SSM2 conveyed that "The Michigan water crises is bad, I definitely see a decline in applicants." SSM2: "Flint residents and a lot of other talented individuals are leaving the state." SSM2: "It's sad that people are scared to work in a state where they think that the drinking water will kill them!" Boufides, Gable, and Jacobson (2019) advised that the community's trust of the Michigan government damaged the morale and confidence of the public health workforce in Flint and beyond. Their recommendation was for the government to enact trust building measures, be honest about mistakes, be

accountable, have basic competence, and for the government to seek input from respected experts until the community restores its trust (Boufides, Gable, & Jacobson, 2019).

An individual's lack of intrinsic motivation is due to a variety of reasons and often begets unhappy employees. Disgruntle employees create a negative atmosphere in work environments which affects overall productivity. SSM1 said that "My success with having the right people on the bus is hiring employees who believe in the corporate culture prior to coming aboard." One disgruntle employee, however, may quickly change the "right person's" views. Sahir, Phulpoto, and uz Zaman (2018) found peer relations negatively correlate with a worker's intention to leave. Internalized extrinsic motivation is an individual's process of taking in values, beliefs, behavioral regulations from external sources and transforming them into his or her own (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Autonomous motivation is a hybrid of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in individuals who identify with values and how certain values align with sense of self (Ackerman, 2019). Self-determination theory theorists broadened the dichotomous intrinsic verses extrinsic polarized framework into an organismic continuum of various types of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Theme 2 links to the key tenets of the TM model that includes cultural embeddedness and employer branding through differentiation. Cultural embeddedness is insight into why individuals behave as they do, and how their behavior affects network structure (Wu & Pullman, 2015). Employer branding through differentiation exhibits how business leaders make their companies more desirable. Business leaders make their organizations desirable when they enhance their employees' motivation and their

emotional attachment to their employer (Lenka & Chawla, 2015). Motivation is a complex two-factor theory concept that is induced by an individual's personality and expectations (Singh, 2016).

**Theme 3: Competitive compensation and benefits reduced employee turnover and increased talent prospects.**

A myriad of business leaders determine compensation for their employees by market research on competitive wages. Both SSM1 and SSM2 conveyed that workers must be compensated well to acquire and keep them. SSM1 explained, "With the rising costs of living expenses, people want enough money for luxuries." Business leaders who want to attract talented employees cannot just rely on nonfinancial practices, they must offer desirable financial rewards (Turnea, 2018). Desirable financial rewards are particularly important in service sector organizations; where most work is based on the employees' explicit and tacit knowledge (Turnea, 2018). In service sector organizations, employee behavior is an essential part of the organizational outcome (Saeed, et al., 2013). Along with their compliance with job duties, service sector employees must also be involved in decisions about their jobs (Saeed, et al., 2013).

Human capital is the key determinant in a knowledge-based economy, thus how managers keep balance between human capital and labor costs is extremely important (Chu Lin, Liang, Chiu, & Chen, 2019). Unrecoverable vicious cycles occur when managers in financially distressed firms do not fully weigh human capital risks (Chu Lin et al., 2019). SSM2 mentioned that "Workers now pay for costs that employers use to pay for." SSM2: "The costs of living is higher, and salaries, and compensation for talent has

declined.” Given these findings, employees have become increasingly responsible for paying more of their monthly contributions, premiums, and deductibles than they have in the past. Changes in health care and other federal regulations increased employer costs for benefits. Such costs at times become an employees’ obligation without proper notice. SSM2 suggested that “Executives need to always communicate to their employees when changes occur and provide them with an opportunity to voice a solution or opinion.” Greater leadership focus on financial and non-financial compensation yielded greater employee job satisfaction (Hasna, 2019).

The Pareto Principle, also known as the 80/20 rule, exhibits that for many events roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes (Khan & Ramzan, 2018). The fundamental premise of the principle is that managers must focus on what is most important and minimize time spent on less important factors. Edwards (2015) purported that each situation is different. If 20% of workers deliver incremental contributions that override the affects of the other 80% of workers, then managers should focus their time on the 20% (Edwards, 2015). Business leaders must decide what portion of the team will yield desired contributions and focus there (Edwards, 2015).

Iqbal and Hashmi (2015) presented employee retention strategies and practices within a two-fold concept. The first concept was for managers to reduce employee turnover, and the other was for managers to considerably reduce the expense of hiring and training new employees (Iqbal & Hashmi, 2015). Business leaders risks: customer loyalty, expertise, more organizational costs, and interruption in daily workflow, when employees terminate their job (Saeed et. al, 2013). There is no panacea approach for

talent retention, and retention practices must be tailored to the goals of an organization (Ott, Tolentino, & Michailova, 2018). In addition, with changes in the global job market and individual preferences, managers must also consider contextual differences and the needs and wants of talented individuals (Ott, Tolentino, & Michailova, 2018).

Theme 3 nexuses to the following key tenets of TM: alignment with strategy, internal consistency, and management involvement. Alignment with strategy links an organization's resources, human capital, compensation, and benefits, with strategy. Internal consistency gauges the balance between human capital and labor costs. Management involvement has a significant influence on human capital marketing, policy, and process innovation. Theme 3 linked primarily to extrinsic motivation. When an individual feels devalued from a lack of external rewards, such motivation is internalized and fuses with intrinsic motivation.

The three themes that emerged from the study supported the TM model and the two-factor theory. The participants provided discernment on human capital flight within rust belt cities. My findings related to voluntary attrition might provide key insights and practical ways for managers to improve their talent retention strategies.

### **Application to Professional Practice**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore strategies that rust belt managers used to reduce human capital flight. Human capital flight affects more than productivity, it lessens the organization's sustainability from lost knowledge and reduced performance (Ahammad, Tarba, Liu, & Glaister, 2016). The specific business problem is that some managers lack strategies to reduce human capital flight from rust belts.



Human capital is the quality of human knowledge that must react to market needs (Alawamleh et al., 2019). Business leaders must recognize that human capital is a significant resource to their organization (Alias, Nokman, Ismail, Koe, & Othman, 2018). SSM1 and SSM2 explained that supportive managers reduced human capital flight and increased staff and employee satisfaction. The findings from this study apply to professional business practices that might optimize talent retention within rust belt cities.

The study results revealed methods that managers can use for successful employee retention that includes greater pay and benefits, greater management involvement and communications, and enhanced extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Such strategies may have an immediate, direct, and permanent affect on the professional practice of business. The participant's strategies will also potentially yield positive economic results. The business leaders who apply the strategies highlighted in this study might achieve improved organizational performance and profits. My study results indicate that business leaders must create a work environment where employees feel included, valued, appreciated, and have greater job opportunities.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The management strategies ~~that~~ I explored in this study might increase job satisfaction, improve employee performance, and yield better compensation. Social change is the transformation of relationships and behaviors that create beneficial outcomes for employees, companies, and communities (Stephan et al., 2016). The implications for positive social change include population and employment rate growth within Michigan and external rust belt regions. Employers who have satisfied employees,

decrease employee turnover. A decrease in employee attrition minimizes business costs for talent retention and training. Cost control can lead to business sustainability by reducing waste, motivating employees, and unifying company efforts to achieve goals (Nita & Stefea, 2014). Satisfied employees might progressively enhance an employer's image within their community. There is no better way to improve a company's image than through business sustainability (Nita & Stefea, 2014). The results of this study might support leadership strategies to improve profitability within the service sector industry. A reduction in talent attrition might also produce opportunities for business leaders to create more jobs in rust belt cities. New jobs will stimulate the economy and induce positive social change.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The objective of this study was to explore strategies that service industry managers use to promote sustainability in rust belt companies. The themes in the study support the participants' recommended actions that managers might use to develop sustainable plans. The study participants indicated the need for managers to increase their communications, involvement, and knowledge of cultural factors. The participants conveyed that managers must offer better pay and benefits, and enhance employee extrinsic and intrinsic motivation for sustainability.

I recommend that managers review these findings to understand the importance of how effective management strategies improve employee retention. Business leaders can disseminate employee satisfaction surveys and conduct exit interviews. Exit surveys and exit interviews are beneficial for providing information for business practice diagnosis

and strategy (Hossain, Himi, & Ameen, 2017). I plan to publish the findings of this study on the ProQuest/UMI dissertation database. I will also seek opportunities to share the results of the study at business conferences and in the classroom when I teach.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

I recommend further research on the effects of background check practices and research beyond the geographic location of this study. Factors such as geographic location might affect the validity of research (Yin, 2017). Scholars might also investigate beyond the industries of this study to compare findings and relevant strategies. A limitation of this study was the participants' patience with confirmation of the accuracy of their answers. Future researchers could engage more participants with less time constraints. I used a qualitative research method, however, other researchers might examine relationships and not disparate perspectives with a mixed method approach. For future research, scholars might also want to use other research designs. I recommend further research relative to the literature and themes within this study.

### **Reflections**

I gained copious knowledge from the literature review and the data collection process. I also read a myriad of great studies that I plan to explore further in my future publications. Member checks were difficult as my goal was for the participants to carefully review their responses; not quick reviews and quick confirmations of accuracy. The participants, however, were willing to give their responses another review to assure accuracy. After tedious years of secondary research, I was excited to see the results of the study. I also hope to use the findings to help business leaders outside of the service sector

industry. This research was a humbling experience. I had to sacrifice a lot to complete it, and I am thankful that God has blessed me with the ability to conduct research of this caliber.

### **Conclusion**

Numerous factors affect a business leader's ability to retain employees. Individuals have greater exposure and access to external opportunities than they had in the past and are more open to opportunities even when they are not actively looking (Ott, Tolentino, & Michailova, 2018). As business leaders adapt to job market uncertainties and environmental changes, careers are increasingly unstable and less structured (Ott, Tolentino, & Michailova, 2018). This research illustrates successful retention strategies that might be essential for managers to reduce brain drain. Application of the findings may enhance industry and leadership practices that optimize business sustainability.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol Guide

Research Topic: What strategies do service industry managers use to reduce human capital flight from rust belts?

Date of Interview:

Time:

Venue:

Questions:

1. Explain your role in the organization as it pertains to talent retention.
2. What specific strategies do you use to attract different generations of individuals to your business (e.g. Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, generations X, Y, and Z)?
3. How do you alleviate adverse factors related to standard of living that affect employee retention?
4. What are your thoughts on why talented individuals relocate to other states?
5. What successful talent retention strategies are used within your organization?
6. What additional information can you provide to add value to this study?

## Appendix B: National Institutes of Health Certificate



## Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in the Study Letter

Greetings,

As health care or social service hiring managers, you are invited to participate in a research study on talent retention strategies. The study purpose is to provide health care and social assistant business managers with strategies on how to attract talent and to reduce human capital flight from rust belts. I am a doctoral student at Walden University. This research is partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree.

Your participation is completely voluntary and contingent upon your consent. If you agree to participate the interview process takes a minimum of 60 minutes to complete. You will need to sign a consent form prior to your participation. The consent form contains additional information about the research. The interviews are conducted face-to-face and recorded with a digital recorder. You will be asked open-ended and semi structured questions.

All identifiable information provided will be kept confidential.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or my doctoral chairperson.

The researcher's name is Tunisha Foley phone: 586-909-4529 or email at: [tunisha.foley@waldenu.edu](mailto:tunisha.foley@waldenu.edu)

The researcher's faculty chair is Dr. Annie Brown (email: [Annie.Brown@waldenu.edu](mailto:Annie.Brown@waldenu.edu)).

I appreciate your time and consideration to participate.

Best regards,

Tunisha Foley



## Appendix D: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study that involves talent retention concerns for service industry managers that work/worked in rust belt cities. The researcher is inviting health care and social assistance hiring managers to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before you decide whether or not to take part.

The study will be conducted by a researcher named Tunisha Foley, doctoral student at Walden University.

### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to explore strategies that service industry managers use to attract talent and to reduce human capital flight within rust belt cities.

### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Meet face to face at a convenient location for an interview (an estimate of 60 minutes).
- Answer questions regarding the topic of the study.
- Be present for an estimate of 60 minutes for a follow up meeting to assure credibility and accuracy of your answers.
- Provide public company documents about your employer that outlines your talent retention process.

Here are some sample questions:

- Explain your role in the organization as it pertains to talent retention.
- What specific strategies do you use to attract different generations of individuals to your business (e.g. traditionalists, baby boomers, generations X, Y and Z)?
- What are your thoughts on why talented individuals relocate to other states?

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. The researcher will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. The researcher will not treat you different if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Your participation in this study will pose minimal risks to your safety and wellbeing. The potential benefit of the study is that the researcher's findings may expose internal and external barriers that impact business profitability. Service industry managers within rust belt cities may gain competitive advantage if they consider more effective strategies for talent retention.

**Payment:**

The researcher will provide no thank you gifts, compensation, or reimbursements to the participants within this study.

**Privacy:**

The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of the consent process for this research. The researcher will not include your name or any of your identifiable information in the study reports to the public. The researcher will keep all data secure in a locked file. Also, the researcher will keep all data for at least 5 years; as required by the university, then the data will be destroyed after 5 years.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at (586) 909-4529 or msfoley@aol.com. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210 (for US based participants) OR 001-612-312-1210 (for participants outside the US). Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep. Please keep this consent form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I feel that I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of Consent

Participant's Signature

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## Appendix E: Letter of Cooperation

Community Research Partner Name:

Contact Information:

Date:

Dear Tunisha Foley,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled "Talent Retention Strategies for Service Industry Managers within Rust Belts". As part of this study, I authorize you to interview our hiring manager, collect data, provide follow-up interviews; to assure data collection accuracy, and provide results. All participant involvement will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include the following: The participant signing a consent form prior to interviews, providing a conference room to conduct interviews, and providing our company's talent retention process documents for analysis. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting, and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Best regards,

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).