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Strategies for Managing an Age-Diverse Workforce in Curaçao

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2016

Abstract

Strategies for Managing an Age-Diverse Workforce in Curaçao

by

Yamil W. Lasten

MS, Technical University of Eindhoven, 2005

BS, University of the Netherlands Antilles, 2000

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

November 2016

Abstract

Some business leaders find it challenging to manage individuals from different age groups; this is an issue, as organizations in many developed countries become more age-diverse. The purpose of this single case study was to provide business leaders with information about strategies top-level business executives and team leaders at a large company in Curaçao (a developed island nation in the Caribbean) use for enhancing productivity of an age-diverse workforce. The conceptual framework of this study consisted of generational theory of Mannheim. A key tenet of the generational theory includes that belonging to the same generational unit, generational location, and generational actuality shapes the beliefs, values, and attitudes of members of a generational cohort collectively. Data from interviews and company documentation that included an annual report, business guide, and performance management documentation were coded and analyzed using NVivo software, and member checking was used to enhance the trustworthiness of interpretations. Key themes that emerged from data analysis include the need to use communication strategies, foster equal treatment of employees, implement employee development plans, and adopt a structured approach for addressing issues related to age-diversity. Implementation of the different strategies and recommendations identified in this study might aid business leaders in their effort to manage an age-diverse workforce and increase workplace productivity. Implications for social change include the potential to improve empathy and relations between individuals from different generations and the cultivation of a more cohesive society.

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Dedication

I dedicate my study to two exceptionally brave and strong women who are no longer with us. My sister-friend Monique; our lives crossed for a reason, I made you a promise, one that I intend to keep. My grandmother, Machi; thank you for being there for me and for telling me how much you love me (all the way to the moon and back) and how proud you are of me. You will always be in my mind and forever in my heart.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The world's population is aging rapidly. In a study on demographic trends, the United Nations (2013) found that the proportion of individuals older than 60 years of age worldwide increased from 9.2% in 1990 to 11.7% in 2013 and is projected to reach 21.1% by 2050. Scholars attribute the aging of the world population mainly to lower fertility and decreasing mortality worldwide (Jong-Won, Jinill, & Jungjin, 2014). Individuals are living longer healthy lives, on the one hand, while having fewer children on the other hand, putting pressure on the social support system as there are less new people to contribute to social support and more (elderly) people to take care of (Liebermann, Wegge, Jungmann, & Schmidt, 2013; United Nations, 2013). Authors showed that in order to counter the negative effects of population aging on social support systems, many governments have revised their official retirement age to make it more in line with life expectancy (Kulik, Ryan, Harper, & George, 2014; Liebermann et al., 2013). In addition, as individuals are living longer, healthy lives, older workers have the possibility to remain longer active in the workforce (Bjursell, 2015; Kulik et al., 2014). Consequently, lower fertility and decreasing mortality trends together with the possibility for older workers to remain longer active in the workforce is making businesses more age-diverse (Boehm, Kunze, & Bruch, 2014; Fassi et al., 2013). The employment landscape is becoming more age-diverse, as individuals from different age groups work together.

Background of the Problem

A changing employment landscape presents workplace challenges involving multigenerational diversity. Business leaders are increasingly focused on assessing the implications of, and finding ways to manage, an increasingly age-diverse workforce (Boehm et al., 2014; Fox, Brogmus, & Maynard, 2015). A critical factor for managing an age-diverse workforce includes understanding how different generations interact with one another in the workforce (Boehm et al., 2014; Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Rabl & Triana, 2014). Many scholars have studied the issue of generational differences in the workforce (Boehm et al. (2014); Hendricks and Cope (2013); Lyons & Kuron, 2014). For example, Hendricks and Cope (2013) studied the effect that generational diversity has on the work environment and found that generational differences within the workforce, present challenges within the work environment in terms of communication, commitment, and compensation. Boehm et al. (2014) on the other hand examined the relationship between generational diversity and performance and found that that stimulating an age diverse climate can indirectly enhance firm performance. However, few scholars have conducted qualitative studies of generational differences in business, according to Lyons and Kuron (2014). Additionally, I found few qualitative studies while reviewing the literature on this topic. I devised this study in order to explore strategies that leaders need in managing different generations in the workforce.

Problem Statement

Some business leaders are finding it challenging to manage individuals from different age groups as many organizations, particularly in developed countries, become

more age-diverse (Boehm et al., 2014). Wells-Lepley, Swanberg, Williams, Nakai, and Grosch (2013) found from a focus group and survey in 10 organizations with 2 to 40,000 employees in Kentucky, that 55% of the participants (all top executives) reported generational differences in traits between younger and older workers while 65% of the respondents acknowledged not being able to manage challenges related to an age-diverse workforce. The general business problem was that interpersonal challenges within an age-diverse workforce result in decreased workplace productivity. The specific business problem was that business leaders need strategies to improve workplace productivity of an age-diverse workforce.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore strategies business leaders need to enhance productivity of members of an age-diverse workforce. The targeted population for this study consisted of top-level business executives and team leaders in large companies in Curaçao, selected because they have experience developing and deploying successful strategies to improve workplace productivity in an age-diverse workforce. Implications for positive social change included the potential to contribute to a better understanding of the distinct beliefs, values, and attitudes of generational cohorts, which in turn can enhance empathy between individuals from different generations, improve relations between individuals, and cultivate a more cohesive society.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative method for this study. The focus of this study was to create an understanding of how business executives manage age-diversity within the workforce,

which better aligns with a qualitative approach. Using a qualitative method can provide researchers with a good understanding of a contemporary phenomenon and lived experience of individuals (Yin, 2014). With a quantitative methodology, the focus of researchers is on examining relationships and differences (Szyjka, 2012). A quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because my purpose was to explore strategies and not to examine statistical relationships and differences. The use of a mixed method combines qualitative and quantitative approaches into one study (Muskat, Blackman, & Muskat, 2012). A mixed method was not appropriate for this study because I decided not to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches.

I decided that a case study design was appropriate for my investigation. Use of a case study allows researchers to explore experiences and perceptions of individuals toward a phenomenon in their real-world context (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Other qualitative designs include narrative research, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology (Yin, 2014). Narrative researchers describe lived experiences of participants (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013). Ethnographic researchers study cultural groups in their natural settings (Horst, Hjorth, & Tacchi, 2012). Researchers using a grounded theory design seek to develop one or more theories based on their data (Engward, 2013). Phenomenological researchers focus on gaining an understanding of how individuals experience a phenomenon (Roberts, 2013). I did not view any of these other qualitative designs as appropriate for my research. In carrying out this study, I did not seek to describe a phenomenon, research cultural groups, develop theory, or understand individuals' experiences about a phenomenon. A single case study design was

more appropriate than the other qualitative designs since the purpose of this study was to explore strategies business leaders need to enhance productivity in an age-diverse workforce.

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies business leaders need to enhance productivity of members of an age-diverse workforce. The central research question used to guide the study was, what strategies do business leaders need to improve the workplace productivity of an age-diverse workforce?

Interview Questions

I posed the following open-ended questions to participants during semistructured interviews:

1. How does the coexistence of different generations within your business affect workplace productivity?

2. What strategies work the best to improve workplace productivity between members of different age groups within your company?

3. What strategies do you recommend to individuals attempting to improve workplace productivity between members of an age-diverse workforce?

4. What barriers did you encounter when you first attempted to deploy strategies to improve workplace productivity between members of different age groups within your company?

5. How did you address the barriers you encountered when you first attempted to deploy strategies to improve workplace productivity between members of different age groups within your company?

6. What additional information can you provide related to the topic of improving workplace productivity of an age-diverse workforce?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study consisted of Mannheim's (1952) generational theory. Between 1923 and 1929, Mannheim (1952) developed generational theory in which he posited that individuals from the same age groups (*generational units*) behave differently depending on their geographic location (*generational location*) and experience of social and economic conditions (*generational actuality*). *Generational cohorts* consist of generational units grouped based on their generational location and generational actuality (Mannheim, 1952). Mannheim found that the shared experiences of generational units, location, and actuality collectively shape the beliefs, values, and attitudes of members of a generational cohort.

Besides in social context, generational cohorts also exist within a workforce (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Generational cohorts within the workforce have been found to show distinct beliefs, values, and attitudes towards work and leadership (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Sometimes three to four different generational cohorts work together in contemporary workplaces (Boehm et al., 2014). Hendricks and Cope (2013), and Lyons and Kuron (2014) demonstrated that the coexistence of different generational cohorts in the workplace might introduce communication challenges

between employees of different age groups. In this study, I sought to gain a better understanding of generational cohorts within the workplace by applying Mannheim's generational theory. As Hendricks and Cope (2013) noted, business leaders who understand generational differences within the workforce may be better able to develop strategies to manage an age-diverse workforce successfully. Therefore, it is imperative for a leader to have a good understanding of the different beliefs, values, and attitudes towards work and leadership of employees belonging to different generational cohorts, and Mannheim's generational theory can help with this understanding.

Operational Definitions

Age-diverse workforce: A workforce that consists of workers of different ages and from different generations (Boehm et al., 2014).

Ageism: The manifestation of negative stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes and actions toward older adults (Gergov & Asenova, 2012).

Explicit knowledge: Objective information captured, coded and stored in documents (Huang, Hsieh, He, & Hsieh, 2014).

Generational cohort: A group of people of same age range and geographical location, who share common social and economic experiences and show common traits regarding beliefs, values, and attitudes that distinguish them from other individuals (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014).

Large company: Companies with over 50 employees (Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao, 2015b).

Medium company: Companies with between 10 and 50 employees (Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao, 2015b).

Small company: Companies with 10 employees or less (Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao, 2015b).

Tacit knowledge: Specific knowledge or experience of workers, group of workers, or organization (Dzekashu & McCollum, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts that are considered true but are unverifiable (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Furthermore, Marshall and Rossman (2016) underlined that a researcher does not have control over these facts. In conducting this study, I assumed (a) that participants would provide honest and unbiased answers, (b) that my research approach and data sources would provide sufficient data to address my central research question, and (c) that my study results would benefit workers and business leaders and effect social change. My responsibility was to inform that my study findings are based on these assumptions and that if for any reason any of the assumptions do not hold this study will no longer be valid.

Limitations

Limitations comprise possible shortcomings of a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Marshall and Rossman (2016) explained that qualitative researchers include a discussion of study limitations to assure dependability of findings. This study had three limitations of which I am aware. My use of a small sample size (i.e., 10 top-level

business executives and team leaders of my targeted company) was one limitation. By using a small sample size such as this, I was not able to statistically generalize my findings to the broader population of business leaders (Yin, 2014). The second limitation was that not all executives and all team leaders of the targeted company were eligible to participate. The view of the executives that participated in this study may not reflect the experiences of executives or team leaders in the company. Finally, Yin (2014) argued that the experience and knowledge of a researcher limit data analysis. My skills and experience conducting qualitative research limited my interpretation of data

Delimitations

Delimitations refer to the boundaries of a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Delimitations narrowed the scope of my study and included my research problem, my geographical location, and my research design. With respect to the scope of my research problem, I chose to focus on strategies business leaders need to improve the productivity of an age-diverse workforce. However, the aging problem creates many other challenges to manage the different generational cohort combined in the workforce (Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). For example, having an aging workforce may also affect labor costs, hamper the transfer of tacit knowledge, and affect the ability of workers to perform their work (Dzekashu & McCollum, 2014; Fox et al., 2015; Vandenberghe, Waltenberg, & Rigo, 2013). Thus, my choice to focus only strategies to improve productivity was a delimitation. Another delimitation was my choice to focus only on business leaders in Curaçao. As Fox et al. (2015) explained, the issue of an aging workforce is prevalent in many other countries, so focusing on only one geographical

location was a delimitation. With respect to my research design, I chose a qualitative single case study method with a small sample. I conducted a case study with 10 purposively selected top-level business executives and team leaders of a large company in Curaçao. My research design was another delimitation of this study that impedes me to generalize my findings to a broader population.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The employment landscape in Curaçao is also becoming more age-diverse, as a result of workforce aging. Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao (2013) reported that workers 55 years of age and older comprised 30.7% of the country's workforce in 2013 (Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao, 2013). In addition, Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao (2015a) expects that by the year 2050, 49.2% of the population will be older than 50 years of age. Age-diversity in the workforce can create challenges to manage workers from different age groups in the workforce (Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Results of this study may benefit workers, business leaders, and businesses. Using study findings, business leaders may be better able to develop policies and strategies for managing an age-diverse workforce. They may also be better able to create awareness, and reduce ageism among colleagues, which may improve interpersonal relations.

Implications for Social Change

Generational diversity resulting from aging affects relations between generational cohorts (Van Den Heuvel, 2015). Conflict, driven by diverse and often contrasting

characteristics of different groups, can arise whenever groups of individuals interact with one another (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015). Failure of business leaders to recognize generational differences can lead to segregation of individuals and generational conflicts such as ageism (Van Den Heuvel, 2015). Implications for positive social change of this research include the potential to contribute to a better understanding of the distinct beliefs, values, and attitudes of generational cohorts, which in turn may enhance empathy between individuals from different generations, improve relations between individuals, and cultivate a more cohesive society.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

This literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the literature on the topic of age-diversity in the workforce. Subsequently, this literature review plays a central role in addressing the central research question and exploring strategies business leaders need to improve productivity of an age-diverse workforce.

Because of demographic changes, at the time of this study, many businesses consisted of three to four different generations working together (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Boehm et al., 2014). Having different generations working together creates challenges to manage the different generational traits combined in the workforce (Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Business leaders must foster a work environment where different age groups work well together and do not contribute to negative consequences for their teams or organizations, overall (Liebermann et al., 2013). Age-diversity presents workplace challenges for business leaders and understanding and managing different generations in workforces is critical for business success.

The sources used by me in this review of professional and academic literature consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and government websites. I found a majority of my sources through Walden University Library resources. I mainly used the following databases: EBSCO, Academic Search Complete/Premier, SAGE Premier, ProQuest Central, ScienceDirect, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search. Specific search terms included *ageism, age-diversity, baby boomers, Generation X, Millennials, Generation Y, generations in the workforce, workforce aging, communication, generational theory, job satisfaction and engagement, management of an aging workforce, multigenerational workforce, workplace conflict, employee performance, job satisfaction, and organizational leadership*. By searching these databases, I was able to find a broad range of academic peer-reviewed sources that had been published within the required timeframe of 5 years. Table 1 presents a summary of the type and age of the sources that I used in this review. Of the 85 sources used in this literature review, 100% were peer-reviewed, and 96% were published between 2012-2016.

Table 1

Literature Review Sources

Types of sources	Total	%
Peer-reviewed sources	85	100
Non peer-reviewed sources	0	0
Sources published within 5 years of study	82	96
Sources published more than 5 years before study	3	4

This review of professional and academic literature includes three subsections. The review begins with a discussion of age-diverse workforces, which includes a summary of different challenges business leaders face when managing an age-diverse workforce. The next subsection on generational cohorts includes a description of each cohort's distinct traits in terms of beliefs, values, and attitudes towards work and leadership preferences. The literature review concludes with an overview of organizational culture and leadership in which I consider research on organizational culture and leadership styles in relation to an age-diverse workforce.

Age-Diverse Workforces

Demographic changes worldwide affect the age-diversity of businesses (Boehm et al., 2014; Fassi et al., 2013). People are living longer, and older workers have the possibility to remain longer active in the workforce (Kulik et al., 2014). Businesses will sometimes consist of three to four different generational cohorts working together, as a result of aging (Boehm et al., 2014). Employees from different age groups ranging from young to much older employees must interact in the workplace (Rabl & Triana, 2014). Failure to manage an age-diverse workforce properly can create challenges for business leaders when managing the different generational cohorts combined in the workforce (Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Therefore, assessing the implications of and managing an age-diverse workforce effectively are becoming critical for business success (Boehm et al., 2014; Fox et al., 2015; Rabl & Triana, 2014). Age-diversity presents workplace challenges for business leaders and understanding and managing these challenges is critical for business success.

Interpersonal conflict in age-diverse workforces. One critical factor for managing an age-diverse workforce is understanding how different age groups interact with one another in the workforce (Boehm et al., 2014; Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Rabl & Triana, 2014). Conflict can arise whenever groups of individuals interact with one another (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015). Having an age-diverse workforce may introduce conflict among members of different age groups in the workplace (Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Hillman, 2014). A work-related conflict is often a consequence of tension resulting from contrasting views or interests between groups or individuals interacting in the workplace (Martinez-Corts, Demerouti, Bakker, & Boz, 2015; Muscalu, 2015). Muscalu (2015) explained that interpersonal conflict might arise when people with distinct beliefs, values, and attitudes interact with people with contrasting beliefs, values, and attitudes.

Martinez-Corts et al. (2015) found that conflict in the workplace often results from differences in opinion between employees. Martinez-Corts et al. made the distinction between task conflict and relational conflict. Task conflict refers to a conflict that can arise when an employee, while performing his or her work duties, confronts contrasting views and opinion regarding work tasks (Martinez-Corts et al., 2015). Conversely, relational conflict results from differences in beliefs, values, and attitudes between individuals (Martinez-Corts et al., 2015).

The existence of different generations working together in a workforce can introduce conflicts, affecting the business and workers negatively. Conflicts often result in insolence and distancing of parties involved in the conflict (Meier, Semmer, & Gross, 2014). Conflict can affect productivity and performance of an organization negatively

(Fusch & Fusch. 2015). Conflict in the workplace can also affect the physical and psychological state of affected individuals (Martinez-Corts et al., 2015; Meier et al., 2014). It is therefore important for business leaders to identify and solve conflicts in the workplace before it affects the business or workers.

Conflicts between individual are easy to identify within a group (Avgar & Neuman, 2015). Business leaders can opt to resolve conflicts directly by addressing affected individuals either formally or informally (Avgar & Neuman, 2015). They can also choose a more indirect approach in which they acknowledge the existence of the conflict and make sure that affected individuals have minimum workplace contact (Avgar & Neuman, 2015). Muscalu (2015) added that the distinct and often conflicting traits, beliefs, values, and attitudes of workers from different age groups make it difficult for business leaders to maintain a work environment that is free from any conflict. However, by using an effective approach, business leaders can reduce conflicts and even use a conflict as a vehicle for organizational change (Muscalu, 2015). Fusch and Fusch (2015) argued that business leaders should maintain focus and use creativity to find solutions for conflicts. Individuals experiencing conflict should apply flexibility and optimism to stay focus and deal with the negative effects of interpersonal conflict (Martinez-Corts et al., 2015). Kaur (2014) posited that fewer conflicts might occur if business leaders foster appropriate employee behavior. Employees should be helpful to others, in order to reduce stress in the workplace (Kaur, 2014).

Communication. Distinct traits of members of age-diverse teams also affect business communication (Backes-Gellner & Veen, 2013). Communication involves the

exchange of information between employees with the aim to achieve business objectives (Kurtuhuz et al., 2014). Interpersonal communication requires human interaction and can occur face-to-face, via e-mail or video, or through voice calls (Pferrer & Carley, 2013). The communication process is social by nature, and employees communicate to interact to reach business goals (Keyton et al., 2013). Managers can use communication to enhance interpersonal relationships, provide feedback to enhance individual or business performance, and foster proper employee behavior (Kurtuhuz et al., 2014).

Business communication consists of formal and informal communication (Kurtuhuz et al., 2014). Kurtuhuz et al. explained employees use formal communication in support of the business structure while informal communication is used in interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, effective listening plays an important role in communication, especially in the assimilation of information received (Kurtuhuz et al., 2014). Kurtuhuz et al. found that employees assimilate information better when reading and hearing the message at the same time compared to hearing or seeing the message only.

New technologies like social media, text messaging, and instant messaging complement traditional communication tools and skills like verbal and nonverbal communications and oral communication (Lear, Hodge, & Schulz, 2014). The change in communication tools requires new skills and beliefs regarding communication, which will require employees to adapt the way that they communicate (Cardon & Marshall, 2015).

Lear et al. (2014) underlined that the effective and efficient use of these new forms of communication by employees is critical to business success. The use of e-mail as a communication tool facilitates clear communication as the employee has time to think about the message (Laetitia & Waters, 2013). Cardon and Marshall (2015) found, however, that although e-mail is still the main communication tool used by employees, organizations are increasingly using social network platforms to enhance business communication and teamwork. Social networks are projected to become the main communication tool in workforces by 2025 (Cardon & Marshall, 2015).

In a diverse workforce, a business leader must strive to communicate in an efficient and effective manner to guarantee productivity (Lear et al., 2014). Pferrer and Carley (2013) explained that contrasting beliefs, values, and attitudes between employees influence the effectiveness of the communication process. Communication is one of the main components of business management and is essential for business success (Kurtuhuz et al., 2014). In addition, Keyton et al. (2013) argued that communication is important for business leaders and that business leaders expect employees to communicate effectively. Effective business communication entails communication that is productive, planned, goal-oriented, interactive, and according to an agreed standard (Keyton et al., 2013). Laetitia and Waters (2013) posited that the quality of communication influences how well the receiver understands the message conveyed. Ineffective business communication can result in disinformation, inaccuracy, and poor feedback (Lear et al., 2014).

Kurtuhuz et al. (2014) recognized the following stages in communication: (a) message coding, (b) transmission of the message, (c) interpretation of the received message, and (d) feedback. Lear et al. (2014) added that ensuring that a sender properly codes and sends the message and that a receiver decodes and understands the message is key in the communication process. A sender must consider the audience and construct the message in clear, understandable language to avoid any misinterpretation (Lear et al., 2014). A way to enhance communication quality is to be clear and effective when communicating (Laetitia & Waters, 2013).

Skills transfer and knowledge sharing. Another challenge resulting from an age-diverse workforce includes the need to foster skills transfer and knowledge sharing among employees from different ages (Gilson, Lim, Luciano, & Choi, 2013). Furthermore, organizational knowledge plays a prominent role in the success of businesses (Ekore, 2014). The competitive advantage of businesses depends on the ability of business leaders to use organizational knowledge to create value (Ekore, 2014; Richert-Kaźmierska, 2014). Huang et al. (2014) made the distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge involves objective information captured, coded, and stored in documents (Huang et al., 2014). Tacit knowledge includes specific knowledge or experiences of workers (Dzekashu & McCollum, 2014). Creation of organizational knowledge starts with gathering and storing tacit knowledge from employees (Dzekashu & McCollum, 2014). Dzekashu and McCollum explained that knowledge is difficult to capture as knowledge comes from different sources. The process of capturing tacit knowledge includes gathering, analyzing, and coding of information

from workers or the organization (Dzekashu & McCollum, 2014).

Managing organizational knowledge is equally important in an age-diverse workforce. Specificly, Ekore (2014) and Schoenherr, Griffith, and Chandra, (2014) posited that knowledge management is important for businesses success. Ekore (2014) defined knowledge management as the creation, accumulation, application, and sharing of knowledge. Bjursell (2015) explained knowledge sharing in organizations as the process of passing knowledge from one employee to another. Transferring tacit knowledge requires employees to interact and share skills and expertise with one another (Huang et al., 2014). Age-diversity in the workforce challenges business leaders to evaluate knowledge and skill-sharing processes in their organization (Bjursell, 2015).

The different generational cohorts interacting in the workforce have distinct views on the knowledge sharing process (Bjursell, 2015). Business leaders foster skills transfer and knowledge sharing between generations as an effort to retain organizational knowledge (Richert-Kaźmierska, 2014). Employees influence the quality of organizational knowledge (Richert-Kaźmierska, 2014). Incorporating quality management in the process of capturing knowledge can enhance the performance of businesses in terms of technology, culture, management style, and collaboration (Dzekashu & McCollum, 2014). Dzekashu and McCollum (2014) explained that business leaders could develop a contingency plan for capturing organizational knowledge by devising a knowledge map containing a description of critical knowledge, skills, and knowledge.

Workplace productivity. Backes-Gellner and Veen (2013) argued that having an age-diverse workforce might also affect workplace productivity. To foster more productive workplaces, business leaders should, therefore, seek to create environments that leverage positive interactions among members of different age groups (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). In addition, Garnero, Kampelmann, and Rycx (2014) found that as age-diversity increases workplace productivity drops. Garnero et al. showed that the distinct traits of the different age groups could hinder communication and employee joy in work and introduce interpersonal conflict, which might affect productivity.

Business leaders could use measures to reduce potential adverse effect of age-diversity on productivity. For example, Sutton Bell, Hamilton, McMinn, and Bell (2014) argued that business leaders should focus on improving team relations, reducing ageism, and retaining tacit knowledge among employees. Garnero et al. (2014) also stressed that business leaders should foster cooperation and stimulate knowledge transfer between members of different age groups as a measure to counter productivity drop. To enhance performance, business leaders should enable a work environment where older and younger workers function in harmony (Wiedmer, 2015). Ciutiene and Railaite (2015) added that ensuring productivity also require business leaders to focus on physical working conditions, especially that of older workers. Addressing physical working conditions has been found to motivate and increase job satisfaction of older workers (Ciutiene & Railaite, 2015). Ciutiene and Railaite explained that motivated employees with high job satisfaction are more valuable for a business.

Generational Cohorts

The basis for the conceptual framework of this study consisted of the generational theory. Mannheim (1952) posited that belonging to the same generational unit, generational location, and generational actuality shapes the beliefs, values, and attitudes of members of a generational cohort collectively. Mannheim used sociological analysis to explain patterns of behavior of generational cohorts and argued that although generational cohorts do not hold an observable, structural, and organizational character such as the concept of family, belonging to a generational cohort shapes an individual's beliefs, values, and attitudes. To and Tam (2014) argued that social and cultural systems shape the beliefs, values, and attitudes of members of a generational cohort collectively. Similarly, the period, in which a person is born together with important lived events growing up, shape not only worldviews but also beliefs, values, and attitudes (Ertas, 2015). Mannheim combined the positivist view and the romantic-historical view to develop his generational theory. When viewed from a positivistic lens, generation is a pure measurable and quantitative concept (Mannheim, 1952). For instance, when analyzed from the positivistic perspective two individuals born in the same year, belong to the same generation. The romantic-historical view, on the other hand, uses a qualitative approach and when combined with the positivistic view provides a more comprehensive lens to view the generational phenomenon (Mannheim, 1952).

Members of the same generational unit share the same beliefs, values, and attitudes because they lived in the same social, cultural, and historical context (Mannheim, 1952). Lyons and Kuron (2014) underlined that each generational cohort

experience unique historical events. Each generational cohort experiences the same history, which helped shape beliefs, values, and attitudes (Bourne, 2015). Generational cohorts can also exist within a workforce (Ciutiene & Railaite, 2015). Workforce generational cohorts show distinct traits regarding beliefs, values, and attitudes towards work and leadership preferences (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

Lyons and Kuron (2014) presented an opposing theory to Mannheim's generational approach, which is the cohort perspective of Ryder (1965). Ryder developed the cohort perspective by using a positivist approach, where researchers view generations as a measurable and quantitative concept. Viewing generations from the cohort lens require the researcher to identify measurable attitudes or behaviors of a homogeneous group of individuals bound to a year of birth (Ryder, 1965). Researchers using the cohort perspective, focus on the effects of age and period in history (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). One limitation of the cohort perspective as opposing the theory for Mannheim's generational theory is that the cohort perspective fails to account for social and cultural effects (Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

Many scholars used Mannheim's generational theory over the years, to understand differences in beliefs, values, and attitudes of generational cohorts in different settings (Leask, Fyall, & Barron, 2014; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Because of aging, businesses are more age-diverse and sometimes consist of three to four different generational cohorts working together (Boehm et al., 2014). Yoshie (2015) explained the use of Mannheim's theoretical framework of generations to understand for instance, how generational cohorts behave in the workforce or to examine the experience in the

workplace of a specific cohort. Christopher (2015) applied Mannheim's generational theory to understand commitment and engagement to work of a specific generational cohort. Becton et al. (2014) on the other hand combined Mannheim's theoretical framework of generations and generational stereotypes to analyze the behavior of different cohorts in two organizations. When applied to this study, Mannheim's generational theory holds that generational cohorts show distinct traits regarding beliefs, values, and attitudes towards work and leadership preferences (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Generational diversity brings challenges for business leaders (Bourne, 2015). Hendricks and Cope (2013) and Lyons and Kuron (2014) argued that the existence of different generational cohorts interacting with one another in a business environment could introduce communication challenges for business leaders.

Some arguments exist between scholars when describing and delineating boundaries to generations (Lub, Bal, Blomme, & Schalk, 2016). Generations cohorts interact and individuals influence one another changing individual traits over time, making the process of finding an exact demarcation of the boundaries to generational cohorts difficult (Mannheim, 1952). Thomson (2014) explained that there are many ways to describe and delineate boundaries to generational cohorts. There are no universally accepted labels for generational cohorts nor are there universally accepted demarcations of the birth period (Kelan, 2014). For instance, Bucuta (2015), Chen and Lian (2015), Delli Carpini (2014), Harmel and Yeh (2015), and Wang and Peng (2015) each used different definitions and demarcations for generations. Some researchers, for instance, Bucuta (2015) and Delli Carpini (2014) arranged individuals by birth year. Using birth

year as only variable to assign individuals to a generation cohort is not in line with

Mannheim's generational theory. Mannheim (1952) argued that researchers must take

social, cultural, and historical effects into consideration when describing and defining

boundaries to generational cohorts.

Furthermore, lays the challenge of describing and defining boundaries to

generational cohorts in different countries (Lub et al., 2016). The generational location is

essential when analyzing generational cohorts since the geographical location of a cohort

helps shape beliefs, values, and attitudes of individuals (Mannheim, 1952). Members of a

generational cohort share the same generational identity because they lived in the same

social, cultural, and historical context (Mannheim, 1952). Individuals develop a common

generation identity when they live the same social, cultural, and historical events (Weiss,

2014). Researchers cannot simply apply common generational cohort classifications used

for one country in another if there is no commonality in the historical, social, and cultural

system (To & Tam, 2014). Some researchers, for instance, Chen and Lian (2015), and

Harmel and Yeh (2015) created specific generational cohort classifications for their

research. However, other scholars like Bucuta (2015) and Zopiatis, Krambia-Kapardas,

and Varnavas (2012) used generational cohort classifications commonly applied in the

United States for their research.

Globalization fueled by technology advances and media is creating global

generations as individuals are experiencing the same social, cultural, and historical events

through media (Becton et al., 2014; Lub et al., 2016; Sherman, 2014). Historical,

political, social, and cultural relationships between the U.S., the UK, France, and the

Netherlands in the Caribbean and globalization are dissolving cultural demarcations (Allen, 2010). Curaçao has historical, political, social, and cultural ties to the U.S. (Allen, 2010). The historical ties to the U.S. justify using commonly accepted U.S. labels and demarcations to generational cohorts in this study. The use of commonly accepted U.S. labels also enables comparison with a broad range of peer-reviewed literature, since the literature on the age-diversity phenomenon is nonexistent for Curaçao. Figure 1 is a visual representation of the generational cohorts used in this study. The Y-axis contains the year of birth while the X-axis displays age at the date of this study.
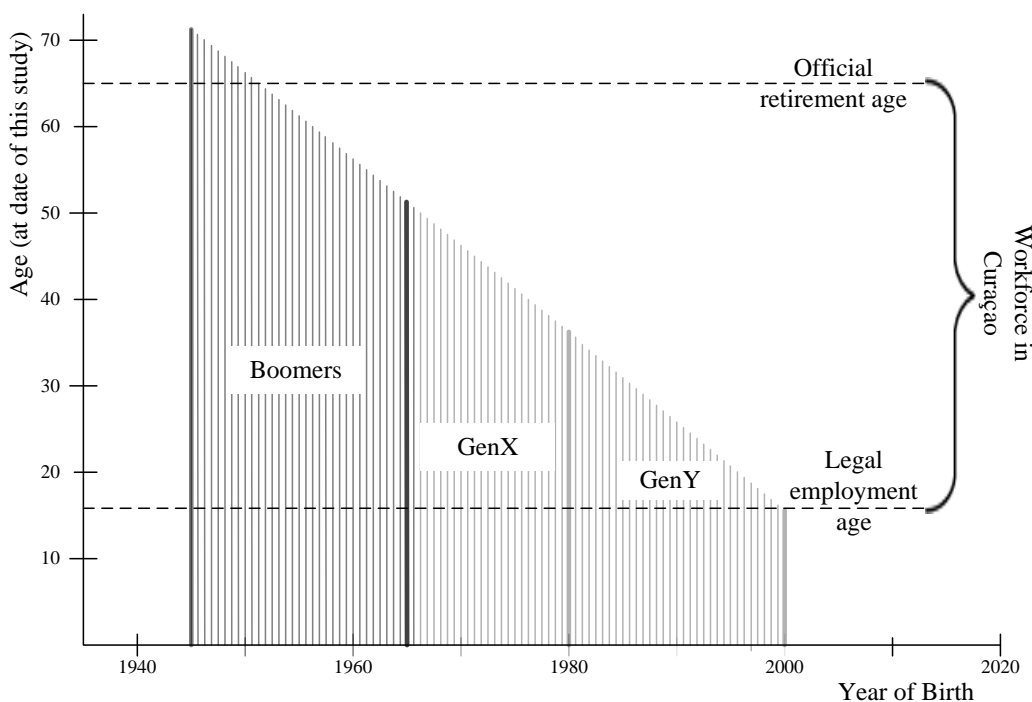
Figure 1. Three generational cohorts used in this study. The Boomers generation consists of individuals born between the mid1940s and mid1960s, GenX consists of individuals born between the mid1960s and 1980s, and GenY consists of individuals born between the 1980s and 2000. Copyright 2016 by Yamil Lasten.

Baby Boomers (Boomers). Literature reviewed on Boomers showed a common way amongst researchers to describe and delineate boundaries to the Boomer generation. Becton et al. (2014), Delli Carpini (2014), de Rubio and Kiser (2015), and Seipert and Baghurst (2014) posited that the Boomer cohort consists of individuals born between the mid1940s and mid1960s. Members of the Boomer generation grew up in a period of significant economic growth and shared social, cultural, and political turmoil (Delli Carpini, 2014). Boomers are a result of unprecedented high birth rates making the Boomers the largest generational cohort (Becton et al., 2014). Bourne (2015) showed that some members of the Boomer generation retired already while some are pending to reach retirement age in the coming years. Changes in the age-structure of businesses affect the interaction between generations (Bourne, 2015). Bourne showed that with the changes in the business environment having Boomers reporting to younger managers is common. Understanding how the different generations interact with one another in the workforce is, therefore, critical (Boehm et al., 2014; Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Rabl & Triana, 2014).

With respect to work values, Boomers prefer a permanent long-term job and will often work long hours -often at the expense of family time- to ensure their long-term job stability (Becton et al., 2014; Johnson, 2015a; Seipert & Baghurst, 2014). Typical traits for Boomers are that Boomers are goal oriented and willing to go the extra mile (Wiedmer, 2015). DeVaney (2015) explained that Boomers are loyal to the organization and enjoy competition. Boomers are not keen in functioning in teams (Seipert & Baghurst, 2014). Members of the Boomer generation are not comfortable with

technology; however, Boomers are open to learning and adapting to new technology
(Seipert & Baghurst, 2014). Boomers respect and value hierarchical structures and ranks
often resulting in Boomers striving and holding positions of high authority (Wiedmer,
2015). Wiedmer showed that control and recognition in the workplace motivate Boomers.
Boomers value acknowledgment and appreciation for accomplishments (Hendricks &
Cope, 2013).

Communication is important for Boomers (Morris, 2012). Morris explained that
Boomers require feedback as a validation for their viewpoint. Kasabov and Hain (2014)
argued that because of their constant quest to be in control Boomers possess a demanding
style of communicating in the workforce. Bourne (2015) found that with Boomers, the
efficiency of a communication method is more important than the communication
method itself. Hendricks and Cope (2013), Johnson (2015b), and Tudu and Pathak (2015)
showed however that Boomers prefer face-to-face contact to impersonal communication
methods. Boomers in contrast to other generational cohorts prefer traditional
communication tools instead of social networks (Cardon & Marshall, 2015).

The Boomers group is the generational cohort that is aging in the workforce
(Remund, 2015). Ciutiene and Railaite (2015) argued that finding solutions to allow older
workers to stay active in the workforce is becoming critical for business leaders. A
critical factor to manage an aging workforce includes understanding different changes in
physical, cognitive, and health conditions that older workers experience (Fox et al.,
2015). Aging is not only affecting the age structure of the workforce but also the
workers' ability to perform work in relation to physical and physiological demands of the

job (Fassi et al., 2013; Weigl, Müller, Hornung, Zacher, & Angerer, 2013). Gergov and Asenova (2012) explained that intolerance and discrimination towards older workers could also exist in an age-diverse workforce, which can affect the motivation, mental state, goal setting, self-concept and emotional state of older workers.

Generation X (GenX or GenXers). The GenXers cohort comprises of individuals born between the mid1960s and 1980 (Becton et al., 2014; Bourne, 2015; Bucuta, 2015; DeVaney, 2015; Keys, 2014; Zopiatis et al., 2012). Krahn and Galambo (2014) described GenXers as the generation that followed the Boomers. The Generation X group is smaller in contrast to Boomers (Becton et al., 2014). GenXers are children of Boomers and often grew up in broken families or with absent parents (Wiedmer, 2015). Wiedmer showed how GenXers as parents, in contrast to Boomers, focus more on family values and parenting. Members of Generation X grew up in a period of major economic recessions and unemployment (Krahn & Galambo, 2014).

Financial compensation is important for GenXers since they have mortgages to pay and family to take care of (Kelan, 2014). Debevec, Schewe, Madden, and Diamond (2013) described GenXers as entrepreneurs. Becton et al. (2014) suggested that GenXers are not loyal to an organization because they grew up in a period where commitment to work did not guarantee employment security. GenXers expect to receive opportunities to develop skills and receive promotions (Seipert & Baghurst, 2014). Having a balance between work and family life is important for GenXers (Bourne, 2015). GenXers show less commitment to work due to limited employment opportunities and pressure of their Boomer parents to succeed (Krahn & Galambo, 2014). Some stereotypical characteristics

of GenXers related to work include that GenXers stand up for what they think and dislike being micromanaged (Wiedmer, 2015). Furthermore, GenXers put the quality of life and their preferences before work (Debevec et al., 2013).

Johnson (2015b) and Seipert and Baghurst (2014) emphasized the importance of communication between generational cohorts in a workplace for a proper work relationship. Seipert and Baghurst explained that technological developments push cohorts to use alternative communication methods to face-to-face. GenXers are technology savvy and prefer interaction via technology to face-to-face contact (Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Seipert & Baghurst, 2014). Members of Generation X do not like to function in teams (Debevec et al., 2013). GenXers dislike small talks and prefer short, to-the-point discussions during meetings (Hendricks & Cope, 2013). Cardon and Marshall (2015) posited that GenXers are more inclined to use social networking tools as the main communication method.

Generation Y (GenY or Millennials). Millennials are the most recent cohort in the workforce today (Dai & Goodrum, 2012; Zopiatis et al., 2012). The group of Millennials consists of individuals born between the year 1980 and 2000 (Bourne, 2015; DeVaney, 2015; Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Lian, 2014). Millennials grew up in a time where the wellbeing of children was high on political agendas (Kasabov & Hain, 2014). Family values, integrity, and good citizenship are important values for Millennials (Debevec et al., 2013). Millennials see their parents are role models (Debevec et al., 2013). Wiedmer (2015) showed the dedication to the family of their parents played a role

in making Millennials people-centric and engaged members of the society (Wiedmer, 2015).

The great recession had a big impact on Millennials, who suddenly had to cope with high costs of living, unemployment, debt, and mortgages, all of which helped shaped Millennials work values (Chen & Lian, 2015; Debevec et al., 2013). Millennials have a lot in common with GenXers (Hendricks & Cope, 2013). Financial compensation, for instance, is equally important for Millennials as for GenXers (Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Kelan, 2014). Millennials, same as GenXers, expect to receive rewards as recognition of their work (Seipert & Baghurst, 2014; Wiedmer, 2015). Equal to GenXers, Millennials also strive for work-life balance (Hendricks & Cope, 2013). Millennials value hierarchical structures and teamwork (Debevec et al., 2013). Millennials grew up in a period of great technology advances and depend on technology to function (Bourne, 2015; Hendricks & Cope, 2013). Millennials, therefore, prefer to work in an innovative environment with a constant challenge (Wiedmer, 2015). Typical for Millennials is that Millennials are risk averse and need clear directions and feedback (Kasabov & Hain, 2014).

Johnson (2015b) explained that Millennials are social, technology savvy, and enjoy collaboration. Millennials prefer face-to-face meetings and need clear direction and feedback (Hendricks & Cope, 2013). Members of the Millennials cohort use technology to support them in their daily activities (Wiedmer, 2015). Hendricks and Cope (2013) underlined that Millennials dislike reading and prefer instant messaging, chat rooms, emails, and intranet as communication methods.

Organizational Culture and Leadership

Organizational culture is a key resource within a business (Mihaela & Bratianu, 2012). Mihaela and Bratianu described organizational culture as a set of common beliefs, values, and attitudes in the workforce. Purdy and Manning (2015) added that people transfer culture from generation to generation. Organizational culture results from common beliefs, values, and attitudes of employees (Essawi & Tilchin, 2012). Mihaela and Bratianu (2012) posited that shaping organizational culture could boost business performance and help with the achievement of business goals. Essawi and Tilchin (2012) explained that shaping organizational culture requires business leaders to change employee values. Aligning organizational values with employee work values is imperative for business success (Rajput & Kochhar, 2014). Ryu (2015) found that when employee value aligns with organizational value, the employee feels more engaged to the business goals. Abrhiem (2012) argued that business leaders use organizational culture to shape employee values.

Leaders of successful businesses foster a culture of teamwork (Essawi & Tilchin, 2012). Essawi and Tilchin explained that it is imperative for business leaders to take the existence of subcultures within the organization into account. Business leaders must consider how workplace diversity affects organizational culture. Age-related demographic changes affect workforce structure creating challenges for business leaders to retain knowledgeable and skilled workers (Rajput & Kochhar, 2014). Herrera, Duncan, and Ree (2013) showed that based on the age-related demographic trends, business leaders are confronted with a lack of younger workers to replace older workers entering

retirement. Business leaders must find ways to retain tacit knowledge and recruit workers to fill in vacancies (Herrera et al., 2013). Diversity involves distinct values and beliefs; therefore, the focus of business leaders should be to foster a workplace where diverse employees interact respectfully and in good harmony (Herrera et al., 2013). Herrera et al. also stressed that a culture of inclusion is important in a diverse workforce as employees will be more inspired to function in teams and to achieve common business goals.

Purdy and Manning (2015) underlined that with a generational diverse workforce it is important for business leaders to develop an agile, adaptable, and flexible culture with strong interpersonal communication to guarantee that employees commit to business goals. Failing to provide equal and fair treatment to employees in the workplace could hamper business results as employees will lose their feeling of belonging to the organization (Herrera et al., 2013). Business leaders must understand the distinct traits, values, and beliefs existent in the workforce to enhance interpersonal relations (Purdy & Manning, 2015). The success of a diverse business depends on how well the business leader understands the workplace regarding cultural behaviors, values, and norms (Purdy & Manning, 2015).

Leadership is inherent to organizational culture (Kostovski, Bojadjiev, & Buldioska, 2015). Business success depends on a leader's ability to assess distinct organizational values, beliefs, and traits (Kostovski et al., 2015). Kostovski et al. made the distinction between the following types or organizational cultures each with a distinct leadership styles: (a) the conservative culture, with a strict segregation of roles and a strict top-down leadership style, (b) the entrepreneurial culture which is strongly

influenced by the owner with an informal leadership style, and (c) the flexible culture where employees have a participatory role and where the leader uses a leadership style of inclusion. Dike (2012) explained that a leader should always behave in line with the organizational culture as employees look up to leaders and project own cultural behavior. Failure of the business leader to align own behavior with organizational culture will affect employee behavior and engagement (Dike, 2012). Employee commitment will decline if employees experience leaders exerting a behavior that is not in line with the organizational culture (Dike, 2012). As Dike explained, a business leader in an organizational culture of inclusion, for instance, must support teamwork and not be acting alone, since such behavior will affect the drive of employees.

Boekhorst (2015) argued that an authentic leadership style works best with a culture of inclusion. Authentic leaders show a behavior of inclusion, fostering interpersonal relationship and communication while encouraging feedback and active participation of followers in the decision-making process (Boekhorst, 2015). As part of their interaction in the workforce, employees rely on business leaders to learn business expectations (Boekhorst, 2015). Boekhorst posited that successful authentic leaders function as role models and exert a visible behavior of inclusion that induces followers to show better interpersonal relations, which is positive in a diverse environment. An authentic leader is a leader in which followers can trust and believe (Yasinski, 2014). Yasinski explained some traits of an authentic leader include an understanding of own worldview and purpose of life, is consequent, values relationships, and leads with passion. Datta (2015) found that authentic leadership enhances leadership effectiveness.

Northouse (2013) explained that an important trait of a leader is the ability to influence and motivate employees into committing to a common objective.

Transition

Section 1 contained the problem and purpose statement, and nature of study to substantiate the use of a descriptive, single case study design. Subsequently, Section 1 also included: (a) a research question and interview questions, (b) a conceptual framework, (c) operational definitions, (d) the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study, and (e) the significance of this study. Section 1 concluded with a review of the professional and academic literature. The literature review provided a comprehensive overview of the literature on the topic of age-diversity in the workforce. The review of professional and academic literature included a discussion on the different challenges business leaders face when managing an age-diverse workforce and a description of the distinct traits in terms of beliefs, values, and attitudes towards work and leadership preferences of each cohort within the workforce. The literature review concluded with a description of organizational culture and leadership styles in relation to an age-diverse workforce.

Section 2 includes: (a) a restatement of the study purpose, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) the selected participants, (d) a description of the research method and design, (e) the population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection instruments technique, organization, and analysis, and (h) reliability and validity. Section 3 presents the findings of this study as well as a discussion of the application to professional practice, the implication for social change, recommendation for action and

further research, and a reflection of my experience with the research process. Finally,

Section 3 includes a summary and conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

Demographic changes in the workforce presents challenges to manage different generation working together. Business leaders in developed countries are experiencing increasingly age-diverse workforces (Fox et al., 2015). A critical factor for managing age-diversity in workforces includes understanding the interaction the different generations in the workforce (Boehm et al., 2014; Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Rabl & Triana, 2014). Conducting semistructured face-to-face interviews and analyzing company documentation formed the basis of this qualitative case study to explore strategies business leaders need to enhance productivity of members of an age-diverse workforce.

Section 2 of this study contains my purpose statement and an overview of my role as a researcher, participants, and the research method and design that I used. Section 2 also contains a discussion of the population and sample, ethical research, data collection and organization techniques, data analysis, and reliability and validity of this research.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore strategies business leaders need to enhance productivity of members of an age-diverse workforce. The targeted population for this study consisted of top-level business executives and team leaders in large companies in Curaçao, selected because they have experience developing and deploying successful strategies to improve workplace productivity in an age-diverse workforce. Implications for positive social change included the potential to contribute to a better understanding of the distinct beliefs, values, and attitudes of generational cohorts,

which in turn can enhance empathy between individuals from different generations, improve relations between individuals, and cultivate a more cohesive society.

Role of the Researcher

A researcher plays a central role in a qualitative study because he or she is the main data collection instrument (Xu & Storr, 2012). I recognized personal biases concerning the study topic prior to data collection process and remained aware of personal biases throughout the data analysis process. As the managing director of a large, government-owned company in Curaçao, I understand the challenges of managing an age-diverse workforce. As a result of aging, many organizations in Curaçao have an age-diverse workforce (Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao, 2013). To minimize researcher bias, I maintained awareness of my experience managing an age-diverse workforce.

Ethical challenges are not specific to organizations or industries; researchers can experience ethical challenges in all fields (Stenmark, 2013). I conformed to basic ethical guidelines and principles involving human subjects in conducting this study. Specifically, I followed guidelines set forth by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research Subjects of Research in the Belmont Report ("Belmont Report," 2016). These principles include (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice ("Belmont Report," 2016). James et al. (2014) emphasized the importance of conforming to ethical requirements and protecting participants. I strove to protect the welfare of participants. I also took care to treat participants fairly and respectfully and not do anything that would cause them harm.

Any conflicting objectives or drives a researcher may have can introduce researcher bias and influence a research (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). The authors added that researcher bias is a common issue in research. Personal experience and beliefs researchers have with the topic are inherent to the researcher's being the main instrument in data collection and analysis (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Reflexivity refers to a researcher's efforts to maintain transparency and create self-awareness about his or her actions, feelings, and beliefs and how they may influence study's results (Darawsheh, 2014). By using reflexivity, I reminded myself of the fact that business leaders are experiencing the effects of an age-diverse workforce, and finding a solution for the age-diverse problem is necessary.

I was aware that my motivation as a managing director to find a solution to this issue might push study in a certain direction. Thus, I remained aware and vigilant not to let my motivation and expectation influence the research process and introduce researcher bias. I chose not to conduct the study at my employer. I conducted it at another large company in Curaçao to minimize any researcher bias. Additionally, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to structure interviews and ensure consistency in my interactions with participants. An interview protocol is a commonly used tool to ensure consistency with structured interviews (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The interview protocol included the procedure to follow when conducting the interviews along with the interview questions.

Participants

The target population for this study consisted of top-level business executives and team leaders in large companies in Curaçao. I purposively selected a sample of 10 participants from the target population. Participant recruitment is an important aspect of research involving humans (James, Taylor, & Francis, 2014). The aim of qualitative researchers is to collect enough quality data to create an understanding of the phenomenon under study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). A researcher can alter the sample size during the research process to include more or fewer participants than planned depending on the amount of data gathered (Robinson, 2014; Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). Roy et al. explained that since no general rule exists on sampling, a researcher should provide a clear argument for selecting participants. I gathered data by conducting semistructured face-to-face interviews and analyzing company documents.

Before recruitment commenced, I made sure that I conformed to Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethical and legal requirements as set by Walden University (Walden University, 2016). I did not recruit participants or collect data until the IRB approved my study (approval number 07-26-16-0453637). The IRB protects participants from potential risks related to their involvement in research (Connelly, 2014).

I purposively selected 10 top-level business executives and team leaders who worked for a large company in Curaçao at the time of the study. Purposively selecting the participants guarantees that participants are knowledgeable on the topic under study (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014; Dilshad & Latif, 2013; Yin, 2014). To be eligible,

participants had to (a) be older than 18 years of age, (b) work at the targeted company, and (c) have experience developing and deploying successful strategies to improve workplace productivity in an age-diverse workforce.

Høyland, Hollund, and Olsen (2015) emphasized the importance of obtaining the full support of decision-makers who understand the phenomenon under study and are willing to help the researcher gain access to participants. Once I received IRB approval, I contacted the chief executive officer (CEO) of the targeted company by phone to request a face-to-face meeting. I discussed the purpose of my study and sought authorization to (a) recruit top-level business executives and team leaders to participate in my study and obtain their consent, (b) conduct interviews with participants, (c) record interviews, (d) obtain relevant company documentation, (e) communicate with participants via e-mail, and (f) conduct member checking to verify participant responses. I requested that the CEO provide a list that included name, position, and phone number of eligible top-level business executives and team leaders whom I could contact.

Researchers must establish a close working relationship with participants and ensure a level of comfort during the face-to-face interview to gain satisfactory information (Yin, 2014). Collins and Cooper (2014) posited that the ability to communicate properly and listen actively are important traits a researcher needs to establish a close relationship with participants. To foster a close working relationship, I shared my intentions regarding the interview and encouraged the participants to share information from their individual perspectives. I explained confidentiality measures and consent details as well as request a written consent before I conducted the interviews.

Research Method and Design

An important aspect of the research process is the selection of the appropriate research method and design to achieve the goals of the study (Quick & Hall, 2015). The purpose of this study was to explore strategies business leaders need to enhance productivity of members of an age-diverse workforce. The following section contains the rationale for selecting a qualitative method with a descriptive, single case study design as the most appropriate research method and design for my study.

Research Method

The three methods that exist for conducting research are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Delost & Nadder, 2014). Qualitative research enables researchers to understand the experiences or perceptions about and connotation people give to a specific phenomenon (Astin & Long, 2014). In line with Astin and Long, Yin (2014) posited that a qualitative method is about understanding a phenomenon by exploring how individuals experience or perceive the phenomenon in their real-world context. The main goal of qualitative research is to understand the phenomenon under study as perceived by the participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Experiences and perceptions of participants together with observation form the basis in qualitative design to explore the phenomenon under study (Delost & Nadder, 2014). A qualitative method was best suited for exploring strategies business leaders need to enhance workplace productivity between members of an age-diverse workforce.

Scholars use quantitative research to examine relationships and differences between measurable attributes (Balkin, 2014). Hagan explained that for researchers to

test ideas or hypotheses about variables, the variables must be quantifiable. With a quantitative study, the focus is on numbers (Gaskin, 2014). Based on the research question the scholar collects numerical data and performs statistical analysis to test an idea or hypothesis (Gaskin, 2014; Hagan, 2014). The purpose of my study was to explore strategies business leaders need to enhance productivity of members of an age-diverse workforce rather than to test ideas or hypothesis. A quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because I did not test a hypothesis or examine relationships or differences between variables.

A mixed method approach includes a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in one study (Sandelowski, 2014). In a mixed method study, researchers use quantitative research to measure the phenomenon and qualitative research to explore experiences and perceptions of individuals on the phenomenon (Kaur, 2016). Using a mixed method can provide deep insight of a phenomenon; however, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in one study can be complex and time-consuming for the researcher (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). A mixed method is not appropriate for studies that do not require quantitative data (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). A mixed method was not appropriate for this study since I did not examine quantitative relationships or differences.

Research Design

Yin (2014) made the distinction between the following qualitative designs: (a) narrative research, (b) ethnography, (c) grounded theory, (d) phenomenology, and (e) case studies. The narrative research design uses stories as research instruments to

investigate people (Cihodariu, 2012). Narrative research was not an appropriate design for this research, as the purpose of this research was not on the investigation of personal life experiences of top-level executives, but on exploring strategies used to manage an age-diverse workforce. When using an ethnography design, scholars focus the study on cultural groups in their natural context (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013). The focus of this study was on strategies used to manage an age-diverse workforce. Since no cultural groups are involved, ethnography is also not an appropriate design for this study. Researchers use grounded theory to collect data and develop theories (Maz, 2013). The focus in grounded theory is to analyze the data collected and develop a conceptual framework out of which a theory can emerge (Lo, 2014). Grounded theory did not suit this research well since the purpose was not to develop a theory. A phenomenological design focuses on understanding the meaning of experiences and perceptions of participants with a phenomenon (Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixsmith, 2013). With phenomenology, the focus is on the meaning of the experience of the person experiencing the phenomenon (Roberts, 2013). Phenomenology was not an appropriate research design since the purpose of this study was on successful strategies business leaders need to manage an age-diverse workforce and not on understanding the experiences and perceptions of business leaders.

From the qualitative designs described by Yin (2014), I found the case study design the most appropriate for this research. Researchers use a case study design to explore common themes from the data to address a phenomenon over which the scholar has no control (Yin, 2014). Conducting a case study allows researchers to explore

experiences and perceptions of participants in their real-world context (Marshall &

Rossman, 2016). Scholars use a case study design to explore single or multiple cases

(Cronin, 2014). Starman (2013) defined a case as the subject under study. With a multiple

case study, the researcher examines each case as if it is a single case (Starman, 2013). In

this study, I used a single case study to examine one large company in Curaçao. Case

study research types consist of: (a) explanatory, (b) descriptive, and (c) exploratory

design (Yin, 2014). Yin explained that researchers use explanatory case studies to

provide explanations as pertaining to causality between events. Researchers use an

exploratory case study design to explore a theme and develop grounds for future research

(Yin, 2014). A descriptive case study design describes themes as they occur in their

specific context (Yin, 2014). With a descriptive case study design, the scholar focuses on

the descriptive aspects of the study (Starman, 2013). A descriptive single case study

design was more appropriate than the other qualitative designs since the purpose of this

study was to explore (and describe) strategies business leaders need to enhance

productivity of members of an age-diverse workforce.

Data saturation is an important aspect when considering sample sizes in

qualitative studies (Roy et al., 2015). Data saturation is the point in the data collection

process where no new themes emerge, and instead, redundant information comes forward

(Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). The sample size of a study is appropriate if the participants

are sufficient to reach data saturation (Cleary et al., 2014). Not reaching data saturation

affects the quality of a study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I continued with data collection

process to the point of reaching data saturation. To reach data saturation, I conducted the

semistructured interviews, analyzed the interview data, validated data from the interviews against company documentation received, and performed member checking until no new information or themes emerged from the data.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study consisted of top-level business executives and team leaders in large companies in Curaçao. The sample consisted of 10 purposely selected top-level business executives and team leaders working in a large company in Curaçao. Purposively selecting the participants ensures that they have the knowledge required about the topic (Cleary et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). Dilshad and Latif (2014) explained that with a purposive sampling method, researchers recruit participants based on the lived experience of the participant with the phenomenon under study. The number and eligibility of participants depend on the research question (Cleary et al., 2014). Selection criteria for the participants in this study included: (a) the participant must be older than 18 years of age, (b) the participant must be working at the targeted company, and (c) the participant must have experience developing and deploying successful strategies to improve workplace productivity in an age-diverse workforce. Determining the adequate number of participants is an important process of the data collection process (Cleary et al., 2014). A small group size will provide less rich qualitative data compared to a larger group size (Kai-Wen, 2014; Roy et al., 2015). However, having a large group creates a challenge for the researcher to moderate (Kai-Wen, 2014; Roy et al., 2015). A sample size is appropriate if the participants are sufficient to reach data saturation (Cleary et al., 2014). When using multiple sources of data, Yin (2014) suggested for case study

researchers to use a sample size of 10 participants as an adequate sample size. My sample size of 10 as suggested by Yin was adequate since I collected data from company documentation also. Roy et al. (2015) emphasized that data collection in a qualitative study ends at the data saturation point, which is the point where no new information emerges. Data saturation is an important aspect of the quality of research (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Roy et al., 2015). To reach data saturation in this study, I conducted the semistructured face-to-face interviews, analyzed the interview data, and checked data from the interviews against information from company documentation received to the point that no new information or themes appeared. I achieved data saturation after completion of three interviews and analysis of company documentation received.

Doody and Noonan (2013) explained that researchers must conduct interviews at the convenience of the participant(s) in a setting that is comfortable and private. Researchers must foster an environment for conducting interviews where a participant is tranquil and without stress (Ferreira, 2014). Mitropolitski (2015) had the participants choose locations and times for interviews to assure participants were comfortable. I also had the participants chose a date, time, and a location that was convenient for them where we shared information without being disturbed.

Ethical Research

Researchers must consider ethical aspects when conducting interviews as sensitive issues may arise (Doody & Noonan, 2013). I conformed to IRB ethical and legal requirements as set by Walden University (Walden University, 2016). The purpose of the IRB is to protect participants from any harm resulting from the research (Connelly,

2014). Walden University IRB guidelines require that all participants provide consent to participate in the study (Walden University, 2016). Once I received IRB approval, each participant received a consent form via e-mail that included the Walden IRB approval number. I provided each participant with the opportunity to review the consent form, ask questions, and provide consent via e-mail before starting the with the data collection. I provided participants a copy of the informed consent form to retain for their records.

By giving consent, participants confirmed that they were aware of the purpose of the study and that I guaranteed the confidentiality of both the participants as their organization. Participants also confirmed that they were aware that participation in the study was voluntary, and that they did not receive any compensation or incentive whatsoever. By providing consent, participants also confirmed that they were aware that they were free to withdraw their participation by giving verbal notice at any time during the study without any negative consequences. No participant decided to withdraw so I did not have to discard any data collected from participants.

I will retain and secure all hard and electronic copies of the collected data for 5 years in a locked and fireproof safe in my office to which I have exclusive access. After 5 years, I will shred all hard copy notes and documentation and erase all electronic data. The Walden University IRB approval number for my study is 07-26-16-0453637. The IRB approval number is to certify that I conform to the ethical requirements. Walden University IRB guidelines also require the researcher to guarantee the privacy and confidentiality of the participants (Walden University, 2016). Using codes protects the identity of the participants (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). To protect the confidentiality

of participants, I referenced participants using codes (e.g., P1-P10) in the study. I am the only one who knows the identity of the participants.

Data Collection Instruments

In qualitative research, the main data collection instrument is the researcher (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). As the researcher, I was the data collection instrument, and I used semistructured face-to-face interviews and company documentation as sources for collecting data. An interview is the most commonly used data collection source in qualitative research (Yin, 2014). In a qualitative interview, the researcher asks open-ended questions, and the participants respond in their words (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Doody and Noonan made the distinction between structured, unstructured interviews, and semistructured interviews. Structured interviews involve asking every participant the same question using the same words (Doody & Noonan, 2013). In unstructured interviews, a researcher asks one overall high-level question about the phenomenon under study on which participants can then elaborate (Doody & Noonan, 2013). In semistructured interviews, the researcher asks predefined questions but is open to elaborate further (Doody & Noonan, 2013). I used semistructured interviews guided by open-ended questions in this study. With a semistructured interview, the researcher uses predefined questions same as with a structured interview, however with a semistructured interview the researcher has the flexibility to ask further questions for clarification (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Compared to an unstructured interview a semistructured interview is more efficient in terms of time, reduces bias and subjectivity, and makes it

easier for the researcher to control the topic and format of the interview (Doody &

Noonan, 2013).

Several techniques exist to enhance reliability and validity of the data collection

process. One technique to enhance reliability and validity of the data collection process is

to ensure consistency when conducting interviews (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Doody and

Noonan showed that using an interview protocol is a common tool to ensure consistency.

Yin (2014) suggested using an interview protocol as a guide during the data collection

process. An interview protocol, which is a detailed plan of the data collection process,

enhances transparency and the quality of the research (Sarma, 2015). Another technique

to enhance reliability and validity of the data collection process is for researchers to

perform member checking to validate the interpretation of the data gathered (Carter,

Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Farrelly, 2014; Yin, 2014). I used

an interview protocol (see Appendix A) that contains detailed steps of the data collection

process and performed member checking, to enhance reliability and validity of the data

collection process.

Data Collection Technique

In this study, I collected data through semistructured face-to-face interviews

guided by open-ended questions and relevant company documents. Data collection

commenced following approval of this study by the Walden University IRB (Walden

University, 2016). Once I received IRB approval, I contacted the CEO of the large

company, recruited the participants, and scheduled the interviews. Doody and Noonan

(2013) suggested choosing a time at the convenience of the participants and location that

is private and free from interruptions. McDermid, Peters, Jackson, and Daly (2014)

underlined the importance of coordinating the recruitment of participants in a

noncoercive manner for participants not to feel pressured to participate in a study. I

coordinated participant recruitment in a noncoercive manner. Although I am acquainted

with the CEO of the targeted company, I do not hold a position of authority over the CEO

for him to feel pressured to have his personnel participate in the study. Furthermore, I

chose not to interview the CEO to minimize any potential for conflict of interest or

perceived coercion to participate. I purposively selected participants from a list of top-

level business executives and team leaders provided by the targeted company. I made

sure to exclude any potential participant that may introduce a risk for either (a) conflict of

interest or (b) perceived coercion to participate. Offering incentives to participate in a

study can also introduce coercion (Jennings et al., 2015). Participants did not receive any

compensation or incentive to participate in this study. The consent form contained

statements excluding conflict of interest or perceived coercion to participate.

After approval of the CEO, I contacted each participant via phone to schedule the

interview two weeks in advance and called participants two days before their scheduled

interview to confirm the date, time, and location. Two days before the interview, I e-

mailed the participant the consent form that included sample research questions, so the

participant knew what to expect. I made sure I prepared well for the interviews by

internalizing the interview protocol in order to know subsequent steps by head and not

having to consult the interview protocol too often. Doody and Noonan (2013) argued that

a well-prepared researcher connects to the interview, which will enhance the flow of the

interview. Roberts (2013) posited that preparing for the interview enhances the quality of the findings. I recorded the interviews on two devices as a precautionary measure. For recording purposes, I used WavePad Masters Edition v 6.24 on my laptop and an additional digital audio recorder as a backup. Once on location for the interviews, I performed a sound check on both my laptop and the audio recorder before starting the process to make sure the devices were recording properly. I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix A) and took handwritten notes that included date, time, the location of the interview and any other relevant observations during the interview. Field notes may result from the interviews, observation, or analysis of company documents (Yin, 2014). After a personal introduction and summary of the study topic, I explained the content of the consent form and addressed any concerns the participant may have. Dilshad and Latif (2013) suggested small talk could make participants feel at ease. Following an explanation of consent, I started recording the interview on my laptop and the digital audio recorder. Audio recording an interview enables the researcher to capture the full extent of information provided by the participant (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). I started asking questions and follow-up questions and ended the process by scheduling a follow-up meeting for member checking.

Sarma (2015) suggested using multiple sources of data to enhance the overall quality of the research. Besides collecting the data through the semistructured face-to-face interviews, I collected data from company documentation. I requested the participants to point out any documentation that might be relevant to addressing the research question, such as organizational charts, policy documents, and management

documents (see Appendix B). The participants did not have the authority to release those company documents, so I requested approval from the CEO, who was the company official with the authority to provide the documents.

Collecting data from the face-to-face interviews and documentation has advantages and disadvantages. One advantage of a semistructured interview as a data collection source is that the researcher can collect abundant data in support of the phenomenon under study (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Doody and Noonan and Pathak and Intratat (2012) showed that using semistructured interviews, as a data collection source is also beneficial in that the researcher is free to guide the interview process and explore new themes as they come up. Another advantage is that the researcher can probe for additional questions and explore the participant's interpretation if deemed necessary (Doody & Noonan, 2013). A disadvantage of using a semistructured interview is that for inexperienced researchers, it becomes difficult to recognize when to probe or ask follow-up questions (Doody & Noonan, 2013). A shortcoming is also that a semistructured interview is time-consuming (Isaacs, 2014). Malagon-Maldonado (2014) explained that the researcher might influence responses of participants, which is also a disadvantage of a semistructured interview.

An advantage of using documentation in the data collection process includes the ability to use methodological triangulation to crosscheck data gathered to reach saturation (Yin, 2004). Methodological triangulation is a commonly used strategy to validate data in quality research and to enhance trustworthiness (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Another advantage is that analysis of documentation enables the researcher to

gather a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (Carter et al., 2014). On the downside, researchers have to be careful when analyzing data from documents since authors write documents for a specific reason, researchers must avoid misinterpreting the information (Yin, 2004). Therefore, when analyzing data from documents, researchers must rather ensure the quality of the data instead of focusing on quantity (Carter et al., 2014). Malagon-Maldonado (2014) added that possible inaccuracy and incompleteness of documentation is another disadvantage.

I transcribed the interview verbatim and summarized the participant's response to each question, within a timeframe of three to four days after the interview. I subsequently e-mailed the summary of the participant's response to each question to the participant to allow member checking. Member checking is the process of allowing participants to check the interview transcript for accuracy, as a strategy to enhance validity (Darawsheh, 2014; Harvey, 2015; Houghton et al., 2013). Allowing participants to validate their responses enhances the credibility of the data (Houghton et al., 2013). In the e-mail, I requested the participant to check if the summary of the participant's response to each question reflects the participant's view and to provide any corrections they may have during the follow-up meeting for member checking. All participants confirmed per e-mail that my summary of the participant's response to each question reflected the participant's view.

Data Organization Technique

Yin (2014) underlined that the creation of a case study database to store all data collected from the field in an orderly manner would enhance the reliability of the study.

For this case study, I created a case study database containing two folders. The first folder, *interview data*, contains the consent e-mails, the audio recordings, transcripts, summaries of the participants' responses, and field notes of the semistructured interviews. The second folder, *company documentation*, contains all company documentation collected during the interview process. I stored the case study database on a password-protected external drive, and a secondary copy of the case study database on a password-protected, cloud-based storage system for backup. Cloud storage is a commonly used method for backup as it allows backup and retrieval of data from any device with Internet access (Bergman Whittaker, & Falk, 2014). I will keep the external drive, hard copy notes, and company documentation secure in a locked and fireproof safe in my office to which I have exclusive access. I will retain and secure all hard and electronic copies of the collected data for 5 years. After 5 years, I will shred all hard copy notes and documentation and erase the case study database.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore strategies business leaders need to enhance productivity of members of an age-diverse workforce. I conducted semistructured interviews guided by open-ended interview questions. The interview questions addressed the central research question and guided the study to explore how business leaders successfully managed the effects related to generational diversity in the workforce. Participants shared insight on the aging workforce problem. I collected data from multiple sources including semistructured face-to-face interviews and relevant company documents.

Several methods are available for managing and analyzing data (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). Gale et al. suggested using the framework method for the management and analysis of qualitative data. The framework method is a widely used approach in which the researcher identifies differences and commonalities in qualitative data to draw conclusions around themes (Ahmed et al., 2016; Gale et al., 2013; Mabuza, Govender, Ogunbanjo, & Mash, 2014). I used the following steps of the framework method: (a) use audio recording and verbatim transcriptions of the interviews, (b) become familiar with the interviews by using field notes and audio recording, (c) read transcripts of the first interview line by line and apply coding, (d) analyze other interviews using the codes developed, (e) create a matrix that contains the developed codes and a concise synthesis of the data, and (f) final interpretation of the data. Before finalizing the data from the interviews, I provided each participant a summary of their responses to each interview questions to have them check for accuracy and completeness.

A researcher will spend a significant amount of time analyzing transcript and field notes and identifying commonalities and differences before being able to draw any conclusions (Chenail, 2012). The coding process can be demanding and time-consuming if manually done (Cope, 2014). Cope explained that new technologies such as the development of qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) enable researchers to focus on data analysis rather than on manual undertakings. Cope (2014), Isaacs (2014), and Malagon-Maldonado (2014) showed that researchers make frequent use of software such as Coding Analysis Toolkit, Atlas.ti, and NVivo to analyze qualitative data. I used NVivo 11 for Windows to assist in the coding process.

The conceptual framework for this study is Mannheim's generational theory. Business leaders can use generational theory to enable a comprehensive understanding of how generational differences within the workforce introduce challenges to manage the different generational worldviews combined in the workforce (Hendricks & Cope, 2013). Applying Mannheim's generational theory to this study and conducting literature review increased the understanding and helped me identify themes of the different beliefs, values, and attitudes, along with strategies to manage the different generational cohorts within a workforce. Once identified, I correlated the themes identified as an outcome of the data analysis process with literature findings. I triangulated data from semistructured face-to-face interviews, company documentation, and literature. Methodological triangulation is a commonly used strategy to test validity in qualitative research (Carter et al., 2014; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Carter et al. defined methodological triangulation as the use of different methods of data collection to analyze the phenomenon under study. With triangulation, the researcher uses different viewpoints to approach and analyze the phenomenon under study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Yin (2014) stressed the importance of defining a strategy when analyzing case study data as the amount of data could overwhelm the researcher. An interview of one hour, for instance, often generates between 15 to 30 pages of text, and having a strategy to manage and analyze the abundance of data is imperative (Gale et al., 2013).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

The focus of a researcher in qualitative research is to understand the phenomenon under study and to ensure proper representation of the research process (Farrelly, 2013). Farrelly defined reliability as the ability to follow an audit trail of the initial researcher and repeat the study achieving a same consistent result. Scholars often compare dependability in qualitative research with reliability (Houghton et al., 2013). Marshall and Rossman (2016) posited that dependability refers to the ability of a researcher to account for changes to the design and research setting caused by the refined understanding of the phenomenon under study as the research progresses. The researcher must ensure the integrity and proper care during the data collection and analysis process (Farrelly, 2013).

Several measures exist to enhance the reliability and dependability of a study. Chen, Hailey, Wang, and Yu (2014) explained that the collected data must be complete, accurate, and timeless to be of quality and reliable. Yin (2014) argued that the use of multiple sources of data might improve the reliability of a case study. Checking the data, data use, and data collection process for completeness, accuracy, and timelessness before use, can ensure reliability and quality of the research (Chen et al., 2014).

Mechanisms such as having a clear and well-documented research design and method and keeping an audit trail of the research process ensure dependability (Houghton et al., 2013). Yin (2014) suggested that the creation of a case study database to store all data collected from the field in an orderly manner would enhance the dependability of the

study. Doody and Noonan (2013) showed that using a protocol is a commonly used technique to ensure consistency. Yin (2014) suggested using an interview protocol as a guide during the data collection process. An interview protocol, which is a detailed plan of the data collection process, enhances the quality of the research (Sarma, 2015).

I adhered to the interview protocol (see Appendix A) developed as a measure to ensure dependability during the research process. To ensure dependability, I created and maintained a case study database containing all interview data, audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes of the research process. To enhance reliability, I performed member checking by providing the transcripts and a concise synthesis of the interpretation of each of the interview questions to allow each participant to check for correctness.

Validity

Credibility, transferability, and confirmability are criteria used to assess the validity of qualitative research (Farrelly, 2013; Sarma, 2015). Credibility is a measure for the truthfulness of the data and results of the study (Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013; Sarma, 2015). Farrelly (2013) posited that the criterion for assessing credibility is to establish that the results of the study are credible from the participant's point of view. A method to assess credibility is, therefore, to allow participants to validate the correctness of the interview transcript and interpretation of the research questions (Farrelly, 2013). I requested each participant to judge the interpretation of the responses to the interview questions and the interview transcript for correctness, during the follow-up meeting.

Transferability in quality research refers to the ability to apply the results of the study to a different context (Farrelly, 2013; Sarma, 2015). Transferability is the responsibility of the person who wishes to transfer the findings (Farrelly, 2013). A strategy to enhance transferability, as emphasized by Farrelly and used in this research, is to ensure an overall, detailed description of the research process and assumptions such that the person transferring could evaluate for himself or herself prior generalization.

Confirmability in qualitative research refers to the degree to which the findings are free of the effects of researcher's bias and align with other studies (Farrelly, 2013). Methods for enhancing confirmability include methodological triangulation and reflexivity (Farrelly, 2013; Sarma, 2015). Triangulation types consist of (a) data triangulation, which refers to the collection of data from different types of people, (b) investigator triangulation includes using multiple researchers to analyze data, (c) theoretical triangulation involves analyzing data using from different theoretical perspectives, and (d) methodological triangulation which includes using different sources of data (Carter et al., 2014). Since I collected data from different sources, I followed the suggestion of Carter et al. to use methodological triangulation to enhance the validity of this study. I performed methodological triangulation using data from face-to-face semistructured interviews and company documentation.

The sample size and amount of data gathered can also influence the quality of a study (Cleary et al., 2014). Fusch and Ness (2015) added that failing to reach data saturation affects the quality as well as the validity of the study. Roy et al. (2015) discussed data saturation in the context of validity and showed that researchers could use

strategies to promote credibility such as member checking to achieve the quality of data and saturation. The data saturation point may differ from research to research (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Fusch and Ness emphasized that exhausting the resources does not mean the researcher has reached data saturation point. Data saturation point is where the researcher keeps finding redundant themes emerging in the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). To reach data saturation in this study, I conducted the semistructured interviews, performed member checking, analyzed the interview data, and checked data from the interviews against information from the company documentation received, then repeated the process to the point that no new information or themes appeared.

Transition and Summary

In this section, I discussed the purpose of this qualitative, single case study, which is to explore strategies business leaders need to enhance productivity of members of an age-diverse workforce. Subsequently, this section included a discussion of my role as researcher and a description of the target population and sample that consisted of 10 purposively selected top-level business executives and team leaders working in a large company in Curaçao. Section 2 also contained a justification for using an exploratory single case study design for this research. Subsequently, I described how I conformed to ethical requirements and included a discussion of how data collection through face-to-face semistructured interviews and documentation in combination with methodological triangulation and member checking contributed to data saturation. Section 2 concluded with a discussion on the data collection and analysis process and methods that I used to

guarantee research quality and ensure reliability and validity throughout the research process.

Section 3 presents the findings of this study as well as include a discussion of the application to professional practice, the implication for social change, recommendation for action and further research, and a reflection of my experience with the research process. Finally, the section includes a summary and conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The focus of this study was on finding strategies needed to manage an age-diverse workforce. Section 3 provides the findings of this study. The section contains (a) an introduction with an overview of the study, (b) a presentation of the findings, (c) applications to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommendation for action, (f) recommendation for further study, (g) reflections, and (h) summary and study conclusions.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore strategies business leaders need to enhance productivity of members of an age-diverse workforce. I conducted semistructured interviews with three top-level business executives in a large company in Curaçao. For the interviews, I had the participants chose a date, time, and a location that was convenient for them where we shared information without being disturbed. I used six open-ended interview questions to guide the semistructured interviews, and all interviews remained within a duration of 60 minutes. The participants provided informed consent prior participating in the interviews.

I used NVivo 11 for Windows to assist in the coding process. I triangulated data from my semistructured face-to-face interviews, company documentation, and literature. In doing so, I identified eight themes, which I grouped into three thematic categories. Table 2 presents a summary of the themes and thematic categories.

Table 2

Themes per Thematic Category

Thematic category	Themes
Effect of an age-diverse workforce on productivity	Theme 1: Positive effect of age-diversity on productivity
	Theme 2: Negative effect of age-diversity on productivity
Strategies to improve productivity of an age-diverse workforce	Theme 3: Deploy communication strategies
	Theme 4: Foster equal treatment
	Theme 5: Implementation of an employee development plan
	Theme 6: Adopt a structured approach
Barriers when deploying strategies to improve productivity of an age-diverse workforce	Theme 7: Resistance to change
	Theme 8: Strategies to counter resistance to change

Theme 1 and Theme 2 include findings on the effect of an age-diverse workforce on productivity. Themes 3-6 reflect leaders' strategies to improve the productivity of an age-diverse workforce while Themes 8 and 9 address leaders' barriers when deploying these strategies.

Presentation of the Findings

I selected three top-level business executives based on their experience developing and deploying successful strategies to improve workplace productivity in an age-diverse workforce. I conducted semistructured interviews and collected data to answer the following central research question, What strategies do business leaders need to improve workplace productivity of an age-diverse workforce? I followed steps from

Gale et al.'s (2013) framework for managing and analyzing qualitative data. I recorded

the interviews on two devices as a precautionary measure. I used WavePad Masters

Edition v 6.24 on my laptop and as backup an additional digital audio recorder for the

recording of the interviews. I transcribed the interviews verbatim, summarized participant

responses to each question, and e-mailed the summary of the participant's responses to

the participant to allow for member checking. Allowing participants to validate their

responses enhances validity and credibility of data (Darawsheh, 2014; Harvey, 2015;

Houghton et al., 2013).

Eight themes emerged from my analysis of participant responses, company

documentation, and literature. I included an analysis of the relationship between the

conceptual framework and the developed themes. The conceptual framework for this

study was Mannheim's (1952) generational theory. Company documentation included the

company's guidelines for business conduct and an annual report (see Appendix B).

Descriptive Data Concerning Participants and the Target Company

My targeted company is a large company with headquarters in Curaçao. The

company has a workforce of approximately 1,500 employees. The targeted company had

maintained a successful and stable business for almost a decade at the time that I

conducted my investigation (Document 1). One of the company's values is that "its

clients and communities deserve to be provided with the most innovative services and

products" (Document 1). The targeted company has an age-diverse workforce. Figure 2

shows the composition of the workforce in terms of generational cohorts.

Figure 2. Generational composition of target company workforce. Of the company's total

workforce, 27% were Boomers, 47% were GenX, 26% were GenY at the time of the

study.
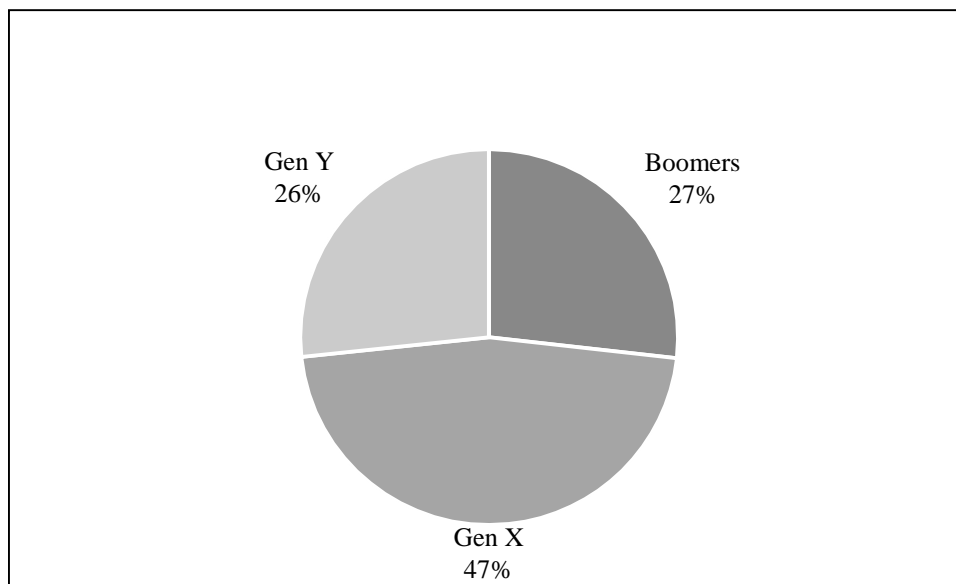
I selected three participants based on their experience developing and deploying

successful strategies to improve workplace productivity in an age-diverse workforce.

Table 3 presents descriptive data for the three participants. All three participants (100%)

are top-level business executives and work for the targeted company. None of the

participants (0%) is younger than 35 years old. Participant 1 (P1) was between 35-50

years of age while Participants 2 and 3 (P2 and P3) were older than 50 years of age. All

participants (100%) manage an age-diverse workforce of more than 75 employees. P1

and P2 both have over 20 years of managerial experience; P3 has over 25 years of

managerial experience. Table 3 includes a summary of the participants' age group,

position, managerial experience, and total reports.

Table 3

Participants' Descriptive Data

Participant	Position	Age (years)	Managerial experience (years)	Total reports
P1	AMD	35-50	20+	80
P2	AMD	> 50	20+	180
P3	AMD	> 50	25+	75

Note. AMD = Assistant Managing Director. Total reports include both direct and indirect

employees who report to the participant.

Thematic Category 1: Effect of an Age-Diverse Workforce

This thematic category reflects the effect of an age-diverse workforce on

businesses. Two themes emerged from my coding process and analysis. P2 and P3

acknowledged that age-diversity in the workforce could have both positive and negative

effects on business. As observed by P2, "It [age-diversity in the workforce] has its

positive and its negative side." P3 underlined, "No I see it [age-diversity in the

workforce] really as an opportunity" and "Yes, of course, you see that [age-diversity

having a negative effect on the business]." P2 and P3's observations are in line with

evidence found by Backes-Gellner and Veen (2013) that age-diversity in the workforce

could have both a positive as a negative effect on workplace productivity. Figure 3 shows

the two themes and respective codes for thematic category 1.
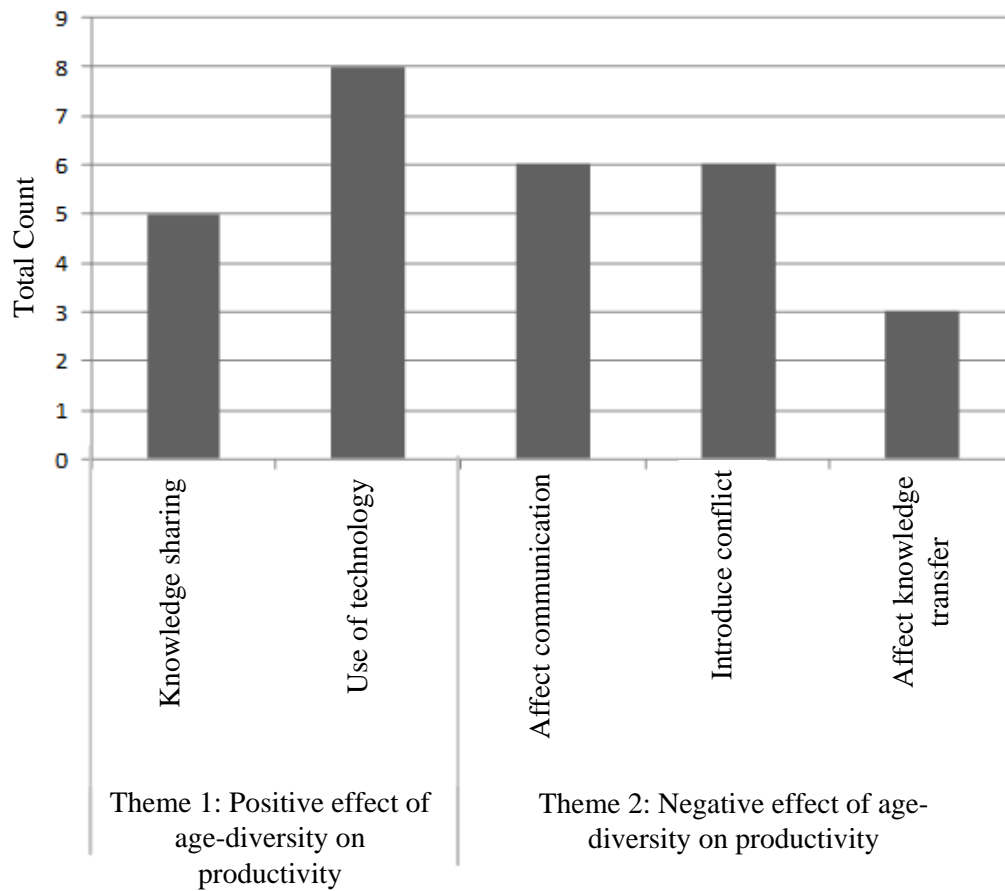
Figure 3. Themes and codes for Thematic Category 1.

Theme 1: Positive effect of age-diversity on productivity.

Participants recognized the ability to share knowledge between generations as one of the positive effects of having an age-diverse workforce. Knowledge sharing in organizations is the process of passing knowledge from one employee to another (Bjursell, 2015). P3 expressed that the positive side of having an-age-diverse workforce is the ability to foster knowledge sharing between employees. Gilson et al. (2013) found that knowledge sharing enhances positive effects of diversity.

One of the missions of the targeted company is to be innovative in terms of services and products (Document 1). P1 argued that a difference between the younger generation and older generation is that the younger generation focuses on making their life easier by using technology while the older generation prefers to do things the old-fashioned way. P1 explained that the younger generation uses technology and prefer to use social media. There is a difference in the way older and younger generations communicate. New technologies like social media, text messaging, and instant messaging are complementing traditional communication tools and skills like verbal and nonverbal communications, oral communication, and listening (Lear et al., 2014). Combining a traditional approach with new technologies creates "an environment for the best coexistence" between age groups (P1). The change in communication tools (from e-mail to social networks) require new skills and beliefs towards communication, which will require employees to adapt the way they communicate (Cardon & Marshall, 2015). P2 showed that having an age-diverse workforce will help the company keep up with technological development in a sense that "youngsters joining will be more flexible having new ideas that can be shared with the older generation."

Theme 2: Negative effect of age-diversity on productivity.

Participants showed that not managing an age-diverse workforce properly could introduce challenges for the business (P1, P2, and P3). Employees from different age groups ranging from young to much older employees must interact in the workplace (Rabl & Triana, 2014). P1 explained that having different generations working together could affect productivity. Backes-Gellner and Veen (2013) also argued that having an

age-diverse workforce might affect workplace productivity. P2 argued that "It is the difference in traits between the older and the younger generation that can affect the business." The difference between the younger generation and older generation is that the younger generation is more focused on the ease of doing things (making their life more easy by using technology for instance) while the older generation is more used to doing things the old fashioned way (P1). P2 stated, "It is difficult for the older generation to understand the younger generation." Failure to manage an age-diverse workforce properly can create challenges for business leaders when managing the different generational traits combined in the workforce (Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Not managing an age-diverse workforce properly can lead to a "dis-balanced organization" (P3). P3 noted, "It is difficult to reach targets when you have a dis-balanced organization." Garnero et al. (2014) found that the distinct traits regarding beliefs, values, and attitudes towards work between the different age groups could hinder communication and employee joy in work and introduce interpersonal conflict, which in turn affects productivity. All participants (P1, P2, and P3) confirmed that the coexistence of different age groups (if not managed properly) could affect communication, introduce conflict, and hamper knowledge transfer, which in turn can affect the business negatively.

The distinct traits between members of an age-diverse workforce affect business communication (Backes-Gellner & Veen, 2013). P2 underlined that the difference in traits between the older and younger generations could hamper productivity in the sense that it can bring conflict and with communication you have to choose your strategies to communicate otherwise it can have an effect on, on your business. P1 and P2 underlined

that there is a difference in the way older and younger generations communicate. P2

stated, "With respect to communication; the younger generation doesn't like to read they

prefer everything digital and in visual, whereas with the older generation it is the

opposite." P1 added:

> The younger generation uses technology and prefers to use social media. This is
>
> something to keep in mind when managing different age groups. One has to create
>
> the proper environment and use the proper tools to communicate with each
>
> generation. People from the older generation prefer to have information in
>
> memos; they prefer to have something on paper. Older generations must see
>
> something on paper in order to believe it.

Contrasting views and traits between age groups within a workforce are common,

"you will have those disputes in every organization" (P3). P1 added, "There will be

interpersonal conflict, a struggle between groups [age groups within a workforce] and the

one that is not benefited from all of this, is the client." Conflict, driven by diverse and

often contrasting traits can arise whenever you have groups of individuals interacting

with each other (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015). The difference in traits between the

different generations in the workforce can introduce conflict, which can hamper

productivity (P2 and P1). Fusch and Fusch (2015) also underlined that interpersonal

conflict could affect productivity and performance of an organization negatively. P1

explained:

> Here [in the case of interpersonal conflict caused by age-diversity] the
>
> organization plays a central role to stimulate collaboration. An organization must

foster the environment where the different age groups can coexist and collaborate in a positive manner. Failing to do so can have devastating consequences for the company.

One critical factor to manage an age-diverse workforce includes understanding how the different age groups interact with one another in the workforce (Boehm et al., 2014; Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Rabl & Triana, 2014). Interpersonal conflict at work is often a consequence of tension resulting from contrasting views or interests between groups or individuals interacting in the workplace (Martinez-Corts et al., 2015; Muscalu, 2015). As stated by P2 the different generations in the workforce have different traits and views, which can bring conflict.

Another challenge resulting from an age-diverse workforce includes the fact that the different views and traits between members of the different age groups can hamper knowledge transfer (P3). Organizational knowledge is the key to the success of a business (Ekore, 2014). The competitive advantage of a firm depends amongst other on the ability of business leaders to use organizational knowledge to create value (Ekore, 2014; Richert-Kaźmierska, 2014). The different generational cohorts interacting in the workforce have distinct views on the knowledge sharing process (Bjursell, 2015). P2 observed:

The gap that exists between the older and the younger generation can bring conflict. It is difficult for the older generation to understand the younger generation. They are quick and do not want to go in debt which can bring problems especially when knowledge is transferred from the older generation to

the younger generation. As the younger generation does not want to go in depth,

they will end up making mistakes that can affect the business.

Failure to manage an age-diverse workforce can lead to a "dis-balanced organization"

where everybody "works on islands, and nobody works coherently as a team," making

knowledge sharing difficult (P3). Age-diversity in the workforce challenges business

leaders to evaluate the knowledge and skills sharing process in their organization

(Bjursell, 2015).

Thematic Category 2: Strategies for Improving Productivity

Thematic Category 2 reflects strategies to improve the productivity of an age-

diverse workforce. I examined data from the semistructured face-to-face interviews,

company documentation, and literature and identified codes on strategies to improve the

productivity of an age-diverse workforce (see Appendix C). I applied code count, and

four themes emerged from the coding process and analysis of the strategies to improve

the productivity of an age-diverse workforce. Figure 4 shows the four themes and

respective codes for thematic category 2.
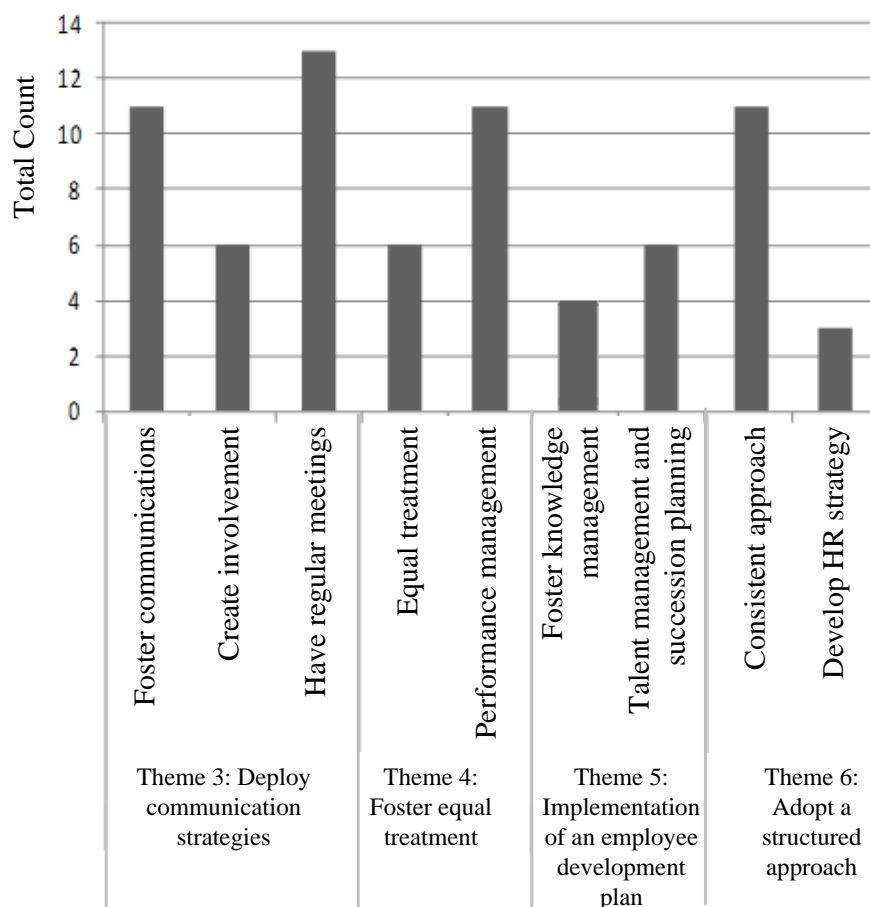
Figure 4. Themes and codes for Thematic Category 2.

Theme 3: Deploy communication strategies.

Communication is one of the main components of business management and is

essential for business success (Kurtuhuz et al., 2014). P1 emphasized, "Communication is

so essential, and that is absolutely the way of dealing with a lot of these [age-diversity

problem] issues." P3 added, "Communication is key." Management should find a way to

combine the different communication preferences to be able to communicate to the group

(P2). Management should create a bridge between the different generations (P1). In a

diverse workforce, a business leader must strive to communicate in an efficient and effective manner to guarantee productivity (Lear et al., 2014). As observed by P3:

If you have a clear communication between, you and your colleagues that basically also improves, the atmosphere within the organization, the working atmosphere [generations working together]. That is very key, and I really stress to have communication. I want to be clear and transparent. In our organization, everybody needs to be clear and transparent. That is the best way going forward.

Keyton et al. (2013) argued that communication is important for business leaders and that business leaders expect employees to communicate effectively.

All participants (P1, P2, and P3) recognized creating a feeling of involvement as another strategy to enhance the productivity of an age-diverse workforce. Purdy and Manning (2015) underlined that with a generational diverse workforce it is imperative for business leaders to guarantee that employees commit to business goals. Mihaela and Bratianu (2012) posited that shaping organizational culture could enhance business performance and help with the achievement of business goals. Using a combined approach (bottom up and top down) to create "the sense that you really care" and "involve them in coming up with solutions or coming up with feedback" will help with commitment to business goals (P1). Ryu (2015) found that when employee value aligns with organizational value, the employee feels more engaged to the business goals. P2 showed that giving employees "a feeling that they are valued" would trigger participation. "People sometimes do not participate because they think you put them aside" (P2). Dike (2012) explained that a leader should always behave in line with the

organizational culture to project as employees look up to leaders and perceive cultural behavior. Northouse (2013) explained that an important trait of a leader is the ability to influence and motivate employees into committing to a common objective. P3 argued that demonstrating leadership and encouraging mutual respect between employees is essential to have their commitment.

P2 stressed the importance of having regular focus group meetings "to touch base to see what's going on." P2 explained further that during the meetings managers should "discuss these types of things [age-diversity issues] that are hampering the employee at work." P3 also noted that having regular meetings with staff is essential to enhance collaboration between generations within a workforce. Purdy and Manning (2015) underlined that with an age-diverse workforce it is imperative for business leaders to develop an agile, adaptable, and flexible culture with strong interpersonal communication to guarantee that employees commit to business goals. P1 mentioned the creation of committees and workgroups to deal with issues related to age-diversity. Leaders of successful businesses foster a culture of teamwork (Essawi & Tilchin, 2012). P2 mentioned teambuilding as a possible strategy to counter the age-diversity problem:

Actually, I think team building will help. Because once you organize or have enough team building moments, they [employees] will forget about the age difference. They themselves will become equals by interacting as much as possible with each other. When I have like focus group meetings, I put some youngsters together with the more experienced people or elderly. [At the beginning] They think totally different, but at the end, they laugh about the things

the one said. So that means they break the ice, and that makes it [counter age-

diversity problem].

The focus of business leaders should be to foster a workplace where diverse employees

interact respectfully and in good harmony (Herrera et al., 2013).

Theme 4: Foster equal treatment.

Equal treatment emerged as one of the strategies to counter the age-diverse

problem. P2 acknowledged that despite the distinct traits regarding beliefs, values, and

attitudes of the different generational cohort within the workforce "you still have to treat

them equally." Failure to treat employees equally will result in a "such a huge problem

that you cannot get yourself out of it" (P2). Herrera et al. (2013) underlined that failing to

provide equal and fair treatment to employees in the workplace could hamper business

results as employees will lose their feeling of belonging to the organization (Herrera et

al., 2013). P1 underlined the importance for business leaders to define "what type of

behaviors do you want to focus on within the organization." The company defined

guidelines for business conduct (Document 3). One of the basic principles includes fair

and equitable treatment:

Fair and equitable treatment must always prevail in the evaluation of personnel,

customers, suppliers and other business associates. The company prohibits any

discrimination in these matters on the basis of race, color, marital status,

language, national origin, creed, sex, age, or physical abilities. (Document 3)

P1 suggested the development of an employee development plan linked to

performance management as a strategy to manage the age-diverse problem. Management

use balanced scorecard systems as a strategy to measure and improve the performance of an organization (Harden, & Upton, 2016). The company implemented a performance management system based on a balanced scorecard system (Documents 4 and 5). The balanced scorecard contains four quadrants, "the financial part, the operational and the customer and the people's part and each quadrant has its weighing" (P3). The balanced scorecard system ensures equal treatment as the system is not easily manipulated (Harden, & Upton, 2016). As P3 noted, "The balanced scorecard is more objective." Employees need to understand "what is expected from them" (P2). P3 explained:

We have performance rating parameters for everything. So here, everybody knows their task, everybody knows their responsibilities, and everybody knows how and when they have to report.

Managers can use the balanced scorecard as part of a performance management strategy to measure subjective targets like equal treatment or respect (P2). Employees prefer equal treatment and an open way of communication (Lub et al., 2016). P2 argued that managers should treat employees equally and manage everyone according to equal measurable targets despite the difference in traits.

Theme 5: Implementation of an employee development plan.

Ekore (2014) defined knowledge management as the creation, accumulation, application, and sharing of knowledge. Dzekashu and McCollum (2014) argued that developing a knowledge map containing a description of critical knowledge, skills, and knowledge profile are imperative in knowledge management. An employee does not have to possess all the knowledge and expertise the key is to foster knowledge transfer from

who in the workforce has the knowledge (Gilson et al., 2013). Knowledge management is important for businesses (Ekore, 2014; Schoenherr et al., 2014). P3 stated,

> It is very critical to the success of any organization to create a culture that encourages, supports and invests in the development of their employees. That is, very important. It is an ongoing process to ensure that your employees are staying current, if not one step ahead in their fields.

P1 argued that knowledge sharing plays an important role in the succession planning. Transferring tacit knowledge requires employees to interact and share skills and expertise (Huang et al., 2014). Fostering knowledge transfer enables the development of employees that can take over from those reaching retirement (P1). P3 explained that Boomers, for instance, are important to "educate and guide the younger generation." P3 acknowledged that the older generations possess "the know-how and the experience that they [younger generation] can learn from." Conversely, the younger generations joining the workforce also have "new ideas that can be shared with the older generation" (P2). P1 observed:

> We try to minimize the gap that might exist and foster knowledge transfer making sure that there is a consistent approach in creating people that can take over from people leaving because they reached retirement.

The implementation of an employee development plan is essential for closing the gap between generations with respect to knowledge and skills (P1). As explained by P3:

> That [employee development] is very important. Let us say if tomorrow something happens, and you are not there, the organization, the work has to

continue. It is for this reason that we invest in the development of each employee.

So for each employee, we have an employment development plan.

An organization can create leaders for the future "with the proper approach and things like talent management and succession planning" (P1). On the job training, coaching, guidance from team leaders in combination with e-learning programs play an essential role in the development of employees (P3).

Theme 6: Adopt a structured approach.

Adopting a structured approach is important for the success of generations working together. As P1 explained:

It [adopting a structured approach] is the foundation; you need to have a solid foundation so that you can keep on building on it. In the sense of having all the proper guidelines and policies in place to make sure that we approach this [age-diversity problem] in a consistent and structured way. So that is the biggest item that we have. To really make sure we have consistent approaches in really taking care of the existence of this organization for the future.

P2 also underlined the need to adopt a structured approach to manage the age-diversity problem, "develop an HR-strategy to deal with it, so we treat people equally and don not leave it to the creative minds of managers decide how to they deal with it [age-diversity problem]." Organizational policies should provide guidelines amongst other on how to communicate, ensure fair treatment, foster participation, and ensure fair performance management (Lub et al., 2016). P3 stated that the policy should state how the organization wants the personnel to interact regarding communication, how to deal

with conflict, and knowledge sharing as an effort for managing the age-diversity problem. As noted by P2, every organization should have an HR-policy in place on how to deal with an age-diverse workforce to guarantee consistency and not to leave it to each the manager to handle it in a different way.

Thematic Category 3: Barriers to Deploy Strategies for Improving Productivity

Thematic category 3 contains a description of barriers to deploy strategies for improving productivity of an age-diverse workforce. I examined data from the semistructured face-to-face interviews, company documentation, and literature and identified codes about the effect of an age-diverse workforce (Appendix C). I applied code count, and two themes emerged from the coding process and analysis of the barriers when deploying strategies. Figure 5 shows the two themes and respective codes for thematic category 3.
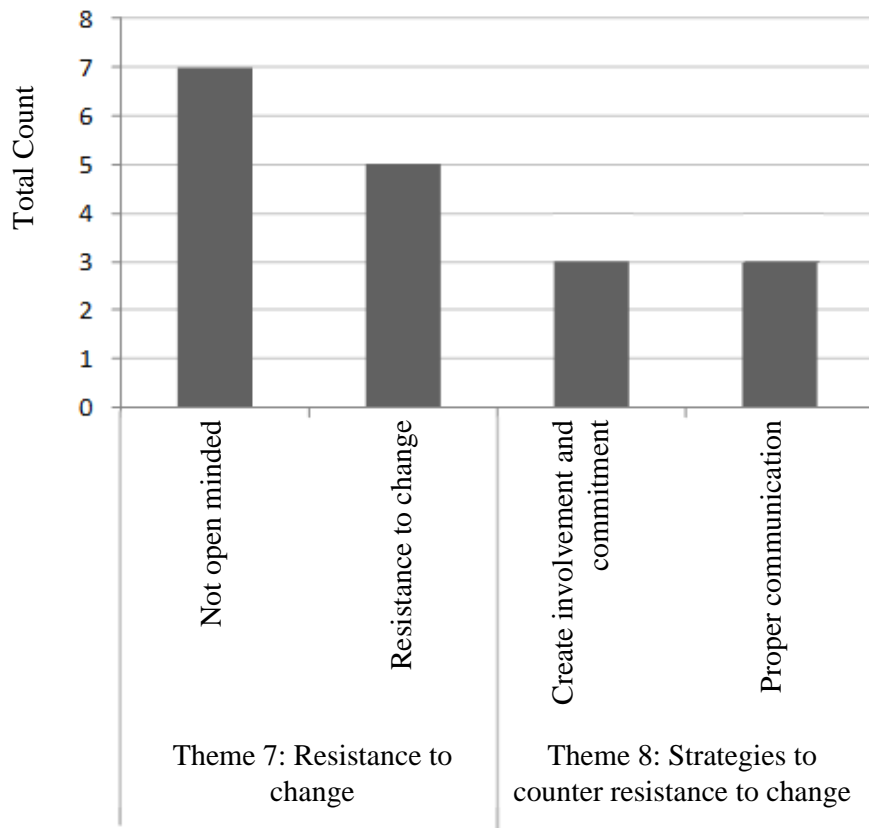
Figure 5. Themes and codes for Thematic Category 3.

Theme 7: Resistance to change.

All participants (P1, P2, and P3) recognized resistance to change as a barrier

encountered when attempting to deploy strategies to improve workplace productivity

between members of different age groups within their organization. Managers must

expect resistance with any attempt to change (Deneen & Boud, 2014). Deneen and Boud

(2014) explained that resistance is an effort of a group or individual to counter perceived

negative consequences towards a process. P3 stated, "Older employees are more resistant

to change, resistance to change is a barrier." P2 also explained:

Resistance is a barrier. Especially the employees that have been for long with the

company think they know better, so they are not open to change. They are

resistant to change, and they are not open to listening to the other one.

Participant P1 added, "Resistance to change is considered one barrier, as change is

unnatural for a human being and creates discomfort." Members of the younger

generations tend to be more open and say what is on their mind while members of the

older generations are the opposite (P1). P2 noted, "They [older generation] resist change

and are not open to listening to others." Dwyer and Azevedo (2016) found that the

distinct traits, beliefs, values, and attitudes of the different generations in the workplace

create challenges when it comes to how generations react to organizational change.

Theme 8: Strategies to counter resistance to change.

Strategies to reduce resistance to change, as suggested by Dwyer and Azevedo

(2016) include: (a) training and education, (b) communication, and (c) strategies to foster

commitment and engagement of employees. P1 recognized fostering commitment and

involvement as a strategy to manage resistance. P1 stated:

So we need to make sure that we create an environment for the best coexistence

of the group while focusing on things like values, behaviors, because that is what

you need to have in place in order to really be open and to listen to other views,

open to accept other thoughts, and in a very respectful manner, but still be also

open to debate passionately but not taking it personally.

P3 underlined the importance of demonstrating leadership to achieve commitment, "you

need to have their buy-in." P1 expressed the need to have a common goal, "first they

need to understand where we are going and why we are going that direction, once they have that commitment, it will be easier to accept the steps leading towards that direction."

Another strategy to reduce resistance to change discussed by participants is proper communication. Simoes and Esposito (2014) found that resistance to change decreases with effective communication. Communication is important when gaining an understanding of change process, once people understand what the reasoning behind the change is, "that will deal with the resistance part" (P1). Another participant stated:

> That barrier [resistance to change] is difficult to overcome. You have to have patience, and you have to keep explaining why. Why am I doing this, why do I want to change. Why can't we do this as we were doing it 25 years ago? So it's a matter of communication. Here is where the communication is essential. You need to keep communicating with them and trying to convince them that this is the best. (P2)

Fostering two-way communication to discuss and learn from issues can help reduce resistance (Simoes & Esposito, 2014). P3 noted, "I provide feedback to them, and I try to make from every negative a positive experience for the older generation as well as for, the younger generation."

Relationship of the Themes Developed to the Conceptual Framework

Mannheim's generational theory served as the conceptual framework for this qualitative study on strategies needed to manage an age-diverse workforce. Mannheim (1952) posited that belonging to the same generational unit, generational location, and generational actuality shapes the beliefs, values, and attitudes of members of a

generational cohort collectively. Figure 6 shows the relation of the eight developed

themes to the conceptual framework.
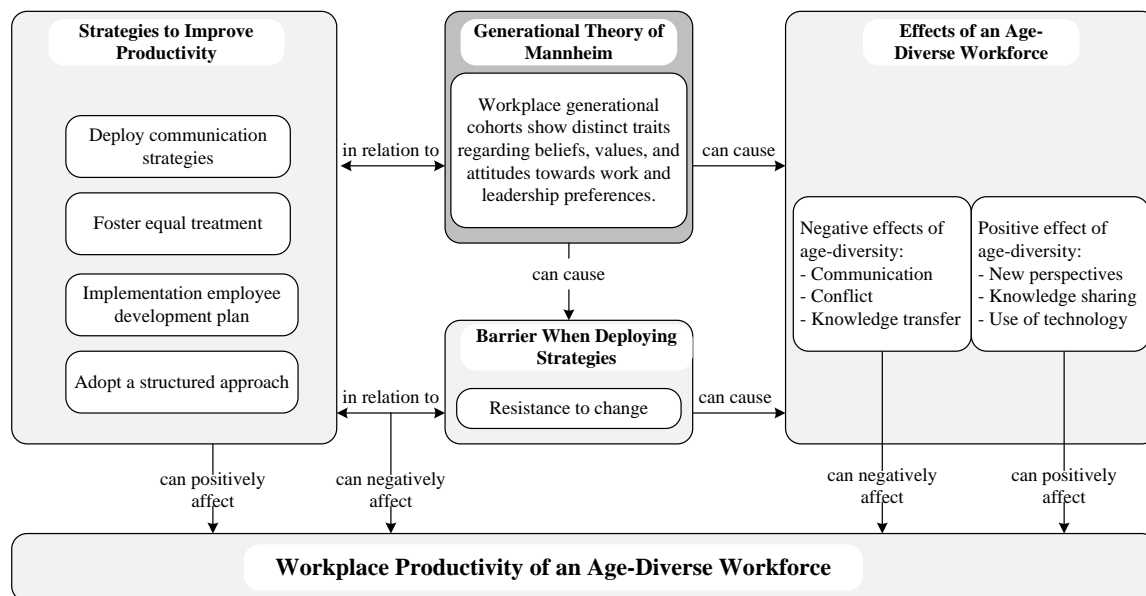
Figure 6. Relation of developed themes to the conceptual framework. Copyright 2016 by

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Workforce generational cohorts show distinct traits regarding beliefs, values, and

attitudes towards work and leadership preferences (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Lyons &

Kuron, 2014). P1 and P2 acknowledged that the difference in traits between generations

could affect the business. P1 added:

> There is a difference in what the younger generation expects versus, the older
>
> generation, which reflects in how one has to communicate to them [the younger
>
> generation]. A difference between the younger generation and older generation is
>
> that the younger generation is more focused in the ease of doing things (making
>
> their life more easy by using technology for instance) while the older generation

is more used to doing things the old fashioned way. Management should acknowledge this and try to find a balance when dealing with the different age-groups.

The distinct generational traits can have both positive as negative effects, which in turn can affect workplace productivity of an age-diverse workforce (Figure 6). All participants (P1, P2, and P3) confirmed that not managing an age-diverse workforce properly could introduce challenges for the business. P2 and P3 affirmed that age-diversity could have a positive effect also. One participant observed:

The coexistence of different generations within a workforce can have both a positive as a negative effect on the business. The diversity on the positive side is important as (if managed properly) diversity can enable knowledge sharing where workers from different age groups interact and learn from each other (P3).

Generational traits can also introduce a barrier when deploying strategies to manage an age-diverse workforce, which can hamper workplace productivity (Figure 6). All participants (P1, P2, and P3) recognized resistance to change as a barrier when deploying strategies to manage an age-diverse workforce. Taking into account the distinct generational traits, business leaders can deploy strategies resulting from this study to enhance workplace productivity of an age-diverse workforce (Figure 6).

Applications to Professional Practice

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore strategies business leaders need to enhance productivity of members of an age-diverse workforce. Analysis of participant responses, company documentation, and literature offered a

comprehensive view of the causes and effects of age-diversity on the workforce. Participant responses to the age-diversity problem and the effects of age-diversity underline evidence in the literature that assessing the implications and managing an age-diverse workforce effectively is becoming critical for business success (Boehm et al., 2014; Fox et al., 2015; Rabl & Triana, 2014).

In addition to underlining the age-diversity problem in the workforce, participants expressed the need for business leaders to focus on strategies to improve workplace productivity of an age-diverse workforce. Not managing an age-diverse workforce properly can create challenges for business leaders when managing the different generational traits combined in the workforce (Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). The distinct traits, beliefs, values, and attitudes towards work of the different age groups could affect communication and employee satisfaction and introduce interpersonal conflict, which in turn affects productivity (Garnero et al., 2014). The focus of business leaders need to be on improving team relations, reducing ageism, and retaining tacit knowledge, as an effort to reduce the negative effects of age-diversity on productivity (Sutton Bell et al., 2014). P1 argued that organizations should foster an environment to stimulate involvement of the employees and make sure that there is a level of understanding and acceptance between the different age groups within the workforce. Business leaders should foster cooperation and stimulate knowledge transfer between members of different age groups as a measure to counter the negative effect on productivity (Garnero et al., 2014). To enhance performance business leaders should foster a work environment where older and younger workers function in harmony

(Wiedmer, 2015). All participants (P1, P2, and P3) posited that proper communication could enhance collaboration between different age groups.

Participants recognized resistance to change as a barrier affecting the deployment of strategies to improve workplace productivity between members of different age groups. The distinct traits, beliefs, values, and attitudes of the different generations in the workplace create challenges when it comes to how generations react to organizational change (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). Failure to recognize and manage the distinct traits, beliefs, values, and attitudes of the different generations in the workplace can result in conflict between the different generations (Bennett, Pitt, & Price, 2012). The success of a diverse business depends on how well the business leader understands the workplace regarding cultural behaviors, values, and norms (Purdy & Manning, 2015). Strategies to reduce resistance to change, as suggested by Dwyer and Azevedo (2016) include: (a) training and education, (b) communication, and (c) strategies to foster commitment and engagement of employees. Participants recognized proper communication and the need for business leaders to foster involvement and commitment as strategies to overcome resistance to change.

Participants suggested a structured approach to the age-diversity problem. Participants expressed the need for each organization to have a strong and well-communicated HR-policy in place to manage the different age groups within the organization. Organizational policies should provide guidelines amongst other on how to communicate, ensure fair treatment, foster participation, and ensure fair performance management (Lub et al., 2016). P3 stated that the policy should state how the

organization wants the personnel to interact regarding communication, how to deal with conflict, and knowledge sharing as an effort for managing the age-diversity problem. As noted by P2, every organization should have an HR-policy in place on how to deal with an age-diverse workforce to guarantee consistency and not to leave it to each the manager to handle it in a different way. Employees favor equal treatment and an open way of communicating (Lub et al., 2016). P2 observed that managers should treat everyone equally and supervise everyone according to equal measurable targets despite the difference in traits.

Business leaders that want to manage challenges resulting from the different generational worldviews combined in the workforce might benefit from the results of this study. The result of this study might help business leaders with the development of policies and strategies for managing an age-diverse workforce, the creation of awareness amongst colleagues to reduce ageism, and improvement of interpersonal relations.

Implications for Social Change

Demographic changes worldwide affect the age-diversity of businesses (Boehm et al., 2014; Fassi et al., 2013). The distinct beliefs, values, and attitudes of generational cohorts present challenges within the workforce (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). All participants (P1, P2, and P3) expressed the concern that failure to manage age-diversity in the workforce might cause conflict. Interpersonal conflict at work is often a consequence of tension resulting from contrasting views or interests between groups or individuals interacting in the workplace (Martinez-Corts et al., 2015; Muscalu, 2015). Failure to manage diversity in the workplace could lead to segregation of individuals and

intergenerational conflicts such as ageism (Van Den Heuvel, 2015). Intolerance and discrimination towards older workers affect their participation, motivation, mental state, goal setting, self-concept, and emotional state (Gergov & Asenova, 2012). Maintaining active participation in the workforce can improve the quality of life of older employees (Wysokińska, 2014). Active participation of older workers can lead to prevention of stress and illnesses, contributing to the wellbeing of not only the older employees but also their families while offering benefits to their communities and society as a whole (Wysokińska, 2014).

By using strategies resulting from this study, business leaders may be able to manage age-diversity within the workforce while reducing intergenerational conflicts and maintaining an active participation of (older) employees. Business leaders' use of communication strategies to bridge generation gaps and manage resistance might support efforts to reduce intergenerational conflict. The implementation of an employee development plan for each employee that includes individual action points for training, coaching, and guidance may contribute to the identification of additional ways to engage older workers actively in the workforce and community, making them feel valued for their skills, experience, and knowledge.

Implementation of the strategies identified in this study includes the potential to contribute to a better understanding of the distinct beliefs, values, and attitudes of generational cohorts, which in turn can reduce intergenerational conflict, enhance empathy between individuals from different generations, improve relations between individuals, and cultivate a more cohesive society.

Recommendations for Action

I triangulated data from the semistructured face-to-face interviews, company documentation, and literature and identified eight themes. Themes 3-6 reflect strategies that business leaders should consider to improve productivity of an age-diverse workforce and Theme 9 addresses strategies to overcome resistance to change. Business leaders with an age-diverse workforce should consider the following recommendations. The first recommendation for business leaders is to create awareness within the organization of the distinct traits regarding beliefs, values, and attitudes towards work and leadership preferences that generational cohorts show by developing training programs. A critical factor to manage an age-diverse workforce includes understanding how the different generations interact with one another in the workforce (Boehm et al., 2014; Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Rabl & Triana, 2014). Dwyer and Azevedo (2016) argued that training and education are key to addressing the age-diversity problem. Business leaders could develop training programs to help with the understanding of the different beliefs, values, and attitudes towards work of generational cohorts (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). Understanding the distinct traits, values, and beliefs existent in the workforce enhances interpersonal relations (Purdy & Manning, 2015).

The second recommendation for business leaders is to foster an organizational culture of inclusion that includes equal treatment. Herrera et al. (2013) showed that failure to provide equal and fair treatment to employees in the workplace could hamper business results, as employees will lose their feeling of belonging. Employees favor equal treatment (Lub et al., 2016). P2 observed that managers should treat everyone equally and

supervise everyone according to equal measurable targets despite the difference in traits. Business leaders should embed equal treatment as part of the organizational values and ensure alignment and commitment of each employee. The focus of business leaders should be to foster a workplace where diverse employees interact respectfully and in good harmony (Herrera et al., 2013). Herrera et al. also stressed that a culture of inclusion is important in a diverse workforce as employees will be more inspired to function in teams and to achieve common business goals.

Third, business leaders should foster efficient and effective communication between generational cohorts. Business leaders should stimulate an authentic leadership style. Johnson (2015b) and Seipert and Baghurst (2014) emphasized the importance of communication between generational cohorts in a workplace for a proper work relationship. All study participants (P1, P2, and P3) expressed the need for managers to foster clear and transparent communication to enhance the work environment. In a diverse workforce, a business leader must strive to communicate in an efficient and effective manner to guarantee productivity (Lear et al., 2014). Leaders with authentic leadership style show a behavior of inclusion, fostering interpersonal relationship and communication while encouraging feedback and active participation of followers in the decision-making process (Boekhorst, 2015). Boekhorst posited that having an authentic leadership style is positive in a diverse environment as leaders function as role models and exert a visible behavior of inclusion that stimulates followers to show better interpersonal relations.

The fourth recommendation is for business leaders to foster skills transfer and knowledge sharing among employees of different age groups. One of the main challenges in an age-diverse workforce from a business leader's point of view is the ability to retain organizational knowledge (Bjursell, 2015; Ciutiene & Railaite, 2015). Garnero et al. (2014) argued that business leaders should foster cooperation and stimulate knowledge transfer between members of different age groups as a measure to counter productivity drop. To enhance performance business leaders should enable a work environment where older workers and younger workers function in harmony (Wiedmer, 2015).

The final recommendation is for business leaders to adopt a structured approach and develop an organizational policy on how to manage an age-diverse workforce. Organizational policies provide guidelines on how to communicate, ensure fair treatment, foster participation, and ensure fair supervision (Lub et al., 2016). The organizational policy should include the desired organizational culture, communication and leadership strategies, and knowledge management strategies specifically to support the management of an age-diverse workforce.

Business leaders should recognize the challenges age-diversity bring for the business. This study is of not only relevance for business leader but also for, team leaders, managers, HR-managers, and C-level executives of an age-diverse workforce. Application of the study findings may enhance workplace productivity between members of an age-diverse workforce. Managing an age-diverse workforce properly could improve communication, reduce conflict, and increase knowledge transfer, which in turn can enhance productivity and performance of the business.

I will use multiple channels for the dissemination of study findings. Participants will receive a summary of the findings and recommendations. I will also prepare a presentation describing the study findings and recommendations for the management of the targeted company. Additionally, I will ensure publication of the approved doctoral study in the dissertation database of ProQuest/UMI for scholars to have access to the study. I will also pursue the opportunity to publish the study findings in a peer-reviewed journal and present at relevant conferences seminars.

Recommendations for Further Research

The population for this study consisted of top-level business executives and team leaders in large companies in Curaçao. The sample consisted of 10 purposively selected top-level business executives and team leaders working in one large company in Curaçao. The small sample size of ten top-level business executives and team leaders of the targeted company was the first limitation of this study. A small sample size is not sufficient to achieve statistical generalization (Yin, 2014). Another limitation was that not all top-level business executives and all team leaders of the targeted company participated and therefore the result may not reflect the experiences of executives in the company. Expanding the boundaries and conducting further research in different geographical locations, multiple companies, and with larger sample sizes might provide additional insight on the age-diversity problem, a problem that is common and prevalent in many other countries.

The first recommendation for further study includes exploring effective leadership styles to the problem of age-diversity in the workforce. Scholars could use a similar

qualitative approach as in this study to explore effective leadership styles to the problem of age-diversity in multiple companies and at different geographical locations. Exploring effective leadership styles to the problem of age-diversity in multiple companies and at different geographical locations could provide additional insight on how to manage an age-diverse workforce.

Based a newspaper article (Document 6), P3 expressed that it would be interesting to understand the effectiveness of management in relation to their age and geographical location. As an alternative, scholars could use the result of this study to conduct a quantitative study to examine the relationship between leadership styles, age of the manager, geographical location, and workplace productivity of an age-diverse team.

One final recommendation for further study is a phenomenological study on how members of age-diverse teams within the workforce experience the phenomenon of age-diversity. Understanding how participants experience a phenomenon can be useful when developing strategies to manage an age-diverse workforce effectively. As Purdy and Manning (2015) explained, understanding the distinct traits, values, and beliefs existent in the workforce enhances interpersonal relations. A better understanding of the distinct beliefs, values, and attitudes of generational cohorts could also have the potential to contribute to positive social by enhancing empathy between individuals from different generations, improve relations between individuals, and cultivate a more cohesive society.

Reflections

The primary research goal was to explore strategies business leaders use to enhance workplace productivity between members of an age-diverse workforce. Establishing a close working relationship with the participants was important to ensure a level of comfort during the face-to-face interviews to explore strategies business leaders need. All participants were excited about the topic and believed that the results of this study might help business leaders with the age-diversity problem. I was aware that my motivation as a managing director to manage the age-diversity problem could drive the study in a certain direction. I constantly remained aware and vigilant not to let my motivation and expectation influence the research process and introduce researcher bias.

Before starting with the data collection, I focused on the fact that business leaders are experiencing negative effects of an age-diverse workforce, and finding a solution for the age-diverse problem is necessary. All participants (P1, P2, and P3) recognized that not managing an age-diverse workforce properly could introduce challenges for the business. However, P2 and P3 underlined that age-diversity could have a positive effect also, which made me aware not to focus only on the negative effects age-diversity can have. Participants also acknowledged the need for a well communicated and understood HR-policy to manage the age-diversity problem. Conducting this study made me also aware that managing workplace productivity between members of an age-diverse workforce require a structured approach.

Previous studies like the one of Boehm et al. (2014) and Hendricks and Cope (2013) addressed the existence and nature of generational differences in the workforce.

Few scholars have addressed generational differences as a phenomenon in business, leaving some qualitative questions unanswered (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Conducting this study enabled interactions with business leaders to explore what strategies business leaders need to improve workplace productivity of an age-diverse workforce. Furthermore, participant responses supported the generational theory of Mannheim in that distinct traits regarding beliefs, values, and attitudes towards work and leadership preferences of generational cohorts affects the business. Analysis of participant responses, company documentation, and literature offered a comprehensive view of the causes and effects of age-diversity on the workforce and enabled the identification of strategies to enhance workplace productivity between members of an age-diverse workforce.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore strategies business leaders need to enhance productivity of members of an age-diverse workforce. The central research question used to guide the study was: What strategies do business leaders need to improve workplace productivity of an age-diverse workforce? Three top-level business executives from a large company in Curaçao participated in the study. I purposively selected the participants based on their experience developing and deploying successful strategies to improve workplace productivity in an age-diverse workforce. The interview questions addressed the central research question and guided the study to explore how business leaders successfully managed the effects related to generational diversity in the workforce. Participants shared insight on the age-diversity problem. I

collected and triangulated data from multiple sources including semistructured face-to-face interviews, company documents, and literature.

Key themes that emerged from data analysis and methodological triangulation of collected data included the need to deploy communication strategies, foster equal treatment, implement an employee development plan, and to adopt a structured approach to manage the age-diversity problem. Business leaders may use the themes identified in this study gather additional insight on the age-diversity problem and to develop successful strategies to improve workplace productivity in an age-diverse workforce.

Study findings are in line with evidence I found in the literature that assessing the implications and managing an age-diverse workforce effectively is becoming critical for business success. A recommendation resulting from the study was for business leaders to create awareness within the organization of the distinct traits regarding beliefs, values, and attitudes towards work and leadership preferences that generational cohorts show by developing training programs. Another recommendation is the need for leaders to stimulate and foster an organizational culture of inclusion that includes equal treatment. Also, business leaders should foster efficient and effective communication between generational cohorts. An additional recommendation is for business leaders to foster skills transfer and knowledge sharing among employees of different age groups. A final recommendation is for business leaders to adopt a structured approach and develop an organizational policy on how to manage an age-diverse workforce.

The results of this study may contribute to a better understanding of the distinct beliefs, values, and attitudes of generational cohorts within the workforce.

Implementation of the different strategies and recommendations identified in this study might aid business leaders in their effort to manage an age-diverse workforce and increase workplace productivity. A better understanding of the different beliefs, values, and attitudes of generational cohorts might also enhance empathy between individuals from different generations, improve relations between individuals, and cultivate a more cohesive society.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview	
What to Do	**What to Say**
Start interview protocol	-
Introduce myself and the topic under study.	My name is Yamil Lasten, and I am a Doctorate student at Walden University. I would like to thank you for your time and for granting me this interview. The primary research goals are: (a) to explore strategies business leaders use to enhance workplace productivity between members of an age-diverse workforce, and (b) to identify common beliefs under participants on the topic.
Explain content of the consent form and address any concerns the participant may have.	On [Date] you received a consent form via mail containing some legal and ethical requirements. On [Date] you replied granting me the consent for this interview. Are there any concerns that you may want to address before we proceed?
Receive consent to start the interview.	We will proceed if I have your consent.
Start audio recording.	I will now start the audio recordings.
Introduce participant with code, the date, and time.	Interview with Participant [1..10] , [Current Date], and [Current Time]
Start interview with the initial probe question, followed by the targeted concept questions, targeted follow-up questions, and ending with the wrap-up question respectively.	1. How does the coexistence of different generations within your business, affect workplace productivity? 2. What strategies work the best to improve workplace productivity between members of different age groups within your organization? 3. What strategies do you recommend to individuals attempting to improve workplace productivity between members of an age-diverse workforce? 4. What barriers did you encounter when you first attempted to deploy strategies to improve workplace productivity between members of different age groups within your organization? 5. How did you address the barriers you encountered when you first attempted to deploy strategies to improve workplace productivity between members of different age groups within your organization?

6. What additional information can you provide related to the topic of improving workplace productivity of an age-diverse workforce?

I would like to thank you for your time and information provided. As explained in the consent form This interview will be de-identified using your code [PX] and verbatim transcribed. I will also summarize your response to each question, within a timeframe of three to four days after this interview. I will subsequently e-mail you the summary of your response to each question to allow you to check if the summary of your response to each question reflects your view and for you to provide any corrections you may have.

End interview section and discuss member-checking with participant	I will e-mail you the transcript on [Date] and would like to schedule the follow-up meeting on [Date].
Schedule follow-up member checking meeting	-
End interview protocol	-

Appendix B: Company Documentation

Table B1

Company Documentation

Document number	Description
1	Annual report 2013
2	Age-diversity graphs of the group
3	Guidelines for business conduct
4	Performance scorecard
5	Performance management presentation
6	Article from local newspaper *Amigoe* (dated August 16th, 2016) on the relation between management effectiveness and age in different countries

Appendix C: Thematic Categories and Code Counts

Table C1

Thematic Categories and Code Counts

Thematic categories and codes	Total count
Thematic Category 1: Effect of an Age-Diverse Workforce	
New perspectives	3
Use of technology	5
Knowledge sharing	5
Affect communication	6
Introduce conflict	6
Affect knowledge transfer	3
Thematic Category 2: Strategies to Improve Productivity	
Have regular meetings	11
Create involvement	6
Foster communication	13
Equal treatment	6
Performance management	11
Foster knowledge transfer	4
Talent management and succession planning	6
Develop HR strategy	3
Consistent approach	11
Thematic Category 3: Barriers When Deploying Strategies	
Not open minded	7
Resistance to change	5
Proper communication	3
Create involvement and commitment	3