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Strategies to Improve Productivity of a Multigenerational Workforce

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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2017

Abstract

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by

Grace E. Beasley

MS, New School for Social Research, 1993

BS, Bernard M. Baruch, CUNY, 1985

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that millennials will soon represent 46% of the workforce. The anticipated changes in the workforce are of great concern to business leaders who may manage individuals from different generations. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the strategies that administrative leaders in an advisory group of community-based organizations and educational institutions used to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. The conceptual frameworks that grounded this study were the social constructivist perspective and generational theory. Data were collected from semistructured interviews to elicit narratives from 6 administrative leaders from 6 different nonprofit organizations selected via purposive sampling throughout the northeast region of the United States with experience improving the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. Data also came from a review of company documents and a reflexive journal. Data analysis entailed coding, identifying relevant themes, using Yin's 5 step analytic strategy approach, and member checking to strengthen the validity of the interpretations of participants' responses. Two principal themes emerged from the data: effective leadership strategies and essential retention strategies to improve productivity. The overall analysis of the 2 principal themes revealed the importance of communication, teamwork, training, work-life programs, recognition, knowledge sharing, and feedback in improving the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. Findings from this study may contribute to social change because chief executive officers (CEO) may use the strategies to implement corrective measures to positively influence the productivity of a multigenerational workforce.

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Dedication

My daughters inspired me to complete this doctoral study. They were my source of strength to complete this journey.

Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge and thank my chair, Dr. Annie Brown. There are not enough words I can say to express my extreme gratitude for her guidance and leadership throughout this journey. I also acknowledge my additional committee members, Dr. Janet Booker (second committee chair) and Dr. Peter Anthony (University research reviewer) for the important role they played in helping me to achieve the highest level of academia successfully. The past 4 years have been challenging, but I have had tremendous support from family, friends, and dedicated Walden faculty.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Multigenerational conflict may affect worker productivity (Wok & Hashim, 2013; Zhu, 2013). Differences in work styles, perceptions, and attitudes of three generational cohorts in the workplace may affect productivity (Messarra, Karkoulian, & El-Kassar, 2016; Solaja & Ogunola, 2016). The focus of this study was to explore strategies that some nonprofit administrative leaders may use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce.

Background of the Problem

As more generations join the workforce, it is necessary for leaders to understand how to effectively lead different generations (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). Managers should recognize their role as change agents (du Plessis, Nel, & San Diego, 2013; Mills, Fleck, & Kozikowski, 2013). Since 1996, members of the Baby Boomer generation were the primary players in the workplace (Haeger & Lingham, 2013). As the generational mix changes, the rules may change, and intergenerational relationships may pose numerous challenges for both leaders and direct reports (Haeger & Lingham, 2013). Age differences and leader-direct report perceptions between generations may affect work attitudes (Haeger & Lingham, 2013; Hillman, 2014).

Challenges may exist in handling conflict in a multigenerational workforce in nonprofit organizations (Zhu, 2013). The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) found the most common contributing factors to conflict are differences in personality and styles of working (CIPD, 2015). The traditional role of

managers may change to anticipate such conflicts and shape the work environment to stay globally competitive (du Plessis et al., 2013; Mills, Fleck, & Kozikowski, 2013).

The focus of this study was to explore strategies that some nonprofit administrative leaders may use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. Lack of strategies may pose numerous challenges for employers and organizational performance (Zupan et al., 2015). Nonprofit administrative leaders may need to discuss strategies to address the differences in communication patterns, working styles, and technological preferences of the multigenerational workforce (Solaja & Ogunola, 2016). Nonprofit administrative leaders may also need to tailor their business practices to attract, stimulate, and maintain the best talent from each generational cohort to succeed in improving performance expectations (Solaja & Ogunola, 2016; Vasantha, 2016).

Problem Statement

Generational differences may lead to conflict that affects worker productivity and overall performance of an organization (Wok & Hashim, 2013). Millennials will represent 46% of the U.S. workforce by 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013; Vasantha, 2016). The general business problem is that nonprofit administrative leaders have limited strategies to improve the productivity of their employees. The specific business problem is that some nonprofit administrative leaders often lack strategies to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some nonprofit administrative leaders may use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. The sample size was six participants who were members of an advisory group located in northeast region of the United States. This population was important to business leaders because the members of the advisory group are leaders from various nonprofit organizations that provide career and professional development training to individuals in the community from different generations. A qualitative multiple case study approach to interviewing nonprofit administrative leaders will allow an understanding of unique experiences and multiple views of participants (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015; Savolainen & Lopez-Fresno, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013).

I reviewed company documents such as employee handbooks to triangulate the data. Triangulation is a method introduced in this research study to avoid potential biases and involves using two or more sets of data collection (Heale & Forbes, 2013). The findings from this study may contribute to social change by providing information for CEOs, board members, and key leaders to improve business operations and implement corrective measures that may improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce (Ghalandari & Paykani, 2016; Messarra et al., 2016).

Nature of the Study

The research method for this study was a qualitative multiple case study. Qualitative research driven by a rigorous emphasis provides an opportunity to collect data from individuals or groups of individuals around a contemporary event (Kupers, Mantere,

& Statler, 2013; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015). Qualitative methodology goes beyond snapshots to provide a rich description of *how* and *why* things happen in particular settings (Guercini, 2014; Merriam, 2014). Qualitative researchers seek to gain a deeper understanding of phenomena related to business and organizational research (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015; Yilmaz, 2013). The quantitative approach involves exploring a detailed plan to collect data to test relationships between variables and statistical tests (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Quantitative research involves counting opinions of people and does not explore different perspectives (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). A mixed method study takes a back and forth approach, using both quantitative and qualitative research approaches (Mertens, 2014; Snelson, 2016). Using a quantitative or mixed method approach did not meet the purpose of this study, as I explored and captured leaders' experiences and personal viewpoints.

Case study research explores a phenomenon of a single case study or multiple cases (Yin, 2013). I selected the multiple case study approach for this study. The design is the most effective method to facilitate learning about meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Cronin, 2014; Tsang, 2014). The multiple case study design provides the researcher the opportunity to discover new information (Simons, 2015). Other qualitative designs considered for this study were grounded theory design, ethnography, and phenomenology (Naidu & Patel, 2013). Grounded theory design is overwhelming with the overlap of data collection and data analysis (Hoflund, 2013); based on the criteria of the grounded theory, I did not choose this approach. Ethnography research design

involves the researcher collecting data over a long period from multiple sources (Liberati et al., 2015). The ethnography approach was inappropriate as I did not propose collecting data over a long period for this study. The phenomenological approach seeks to explore and analyze lived experiences of participants, and involves several in-depth and lengthy interviews with participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2014).

Research Questions

The overarching research question for this study was: What strategies may some nonprofit administrative leaders use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce?

The interviews consisted of the following questions:

1. Tell me about your professional and educational background, and do you believe your professional and educational background prepared you to manage employees with generational differences?

2. What strategies do you use to improve the productivity of your multigenerational workforce?

3. What behaviors exhibited in the workplace do you think are the most critical to assist in improving the productivity of your multigenerational workforce?

4. How do your leadership skills drive productivity in your nonprofit business?

5. How do your work values affect your ability to retain your multigenerational workforce?

6. What additional information would you like to provide that we have not

    addressed already, or I have not asked you about your strategies to improve

    the productivity of your multigenerational workforce?

Conceptual Framework

The social constructivist perspective and generational theory served as the two

conceptual frameworks for this study. Both conceptual models assisted me in exploring

and explaining the strategies nonprofit administrative leaders may be using to improve

the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. I applied these conceptual frameworks

to gain an understanding of strategies administrative leaders in nonprofits are practicing

to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce.

Theorists Berger and Luckmann (1966) created the social construction of reality

concept to examine what reality and knowledge are to society. Researchers using the

social construction of reality approach try to understand what knowledge people know in

their everyday lives and understand what reality is for people (Berger & Luckmann,

1966). The social constructivist approach examines the dynamic process created and

recreated by individuals as they act upon common beliefs conceived as reality (Otubanjo,

2012). Kyriakidon (2011) also identified the constructivist framework as a link to

understand social beliefs, feelings, and actions among various parties. From a social

constructivist viewpoint, knowledge is the meaning people attribute to their world. This

conception of knowledge may help business leaders integrate different strategies to

improve productivity and sustain their businesses (Kahlke, 2014). Practitioners using the

social constructivist approach may propose methods to improve organizational culture (Mills, Fleck, & Kozikowski, 2013; Ray & Goppelt, 2011).

The social constructivist approach creates a lens through which to understand ways social actors produce meanings to create reality (Otubanjo, 2012). The framework offers an explanation based on the premise that leaders may find new ways of engaging employees that may involve a radical shift in infrastructure (Ray & Goppelt, 2011). Leaders work collectively with employees to find solutions to business challenges through shared visions (Devins & Gold, 2002).

Social constructivist key features draw attention to dialog, interpersonal communication, and language to convey meaning and, construct reality and experiences (Devins & Gold, 2002). As applied to this study, the social constructivist viewpoint involves the exchange of ideas between the researcher and participants (Kahlke, 2014). Research is participatory, and participants convey their perceptions and experiences of a social phenomena as it pertains to improving the productivity of a multigenerational workforce (Kahlke, 2014).

Social constructivist researchers assume social reality is always under construction (Ray & Goppelt, 2011). People fill in blanks with speculation based on previous experiences. Individuals talk to one another to make sense of their experiences in organizations, and call it storytelling (Ray & Goppelt, 2011).

Mannheim (1952) was the pioneer of generational theory. His seminal theoretical work stated that generations are not monolithic (Lyons, Urick, Kuron, & Schweitzer, 2015). The generational theory involves generational cohorts in the same phase of life.

The pioneers explained the phenomenon of generation involves the co-existence of generations (Mannheim, 1952). Strauss and Howe (1991) defined phases in terms of central social experiences. The cohorts have boundaries fixed by peer personality (Strauss & Howe, 1991). While cohorts grew up in the same period, like any group, a generation includes all kinds of people. Strauss and Howe (1991) described how the generational theory focused on a group of cohorts born over a span of 22 years that shared key historical events and social trends.

In contrast, Costanza and Finkelstein (2015) argued leaders need to be careful about making assumptions that all generational cohorts are alike. The authors challenged the notion that generational differences exist and suggested that managers scan the work environment and continue to look at workforce trends to address differences between individuals. Diverse concepts of each generation may influence work, productivity, and motivation of workers (Singh, 2013). The ability to understand generational theory may provide insights into the characteristics associated with each cohort-linked together through generations and birth years (Patterson, 2014).

Operational Definitions

Baby Boomers (Boomers): Baby Boomers are individuals with birthdates from 1946 to 1964 (Crown, 2013; Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Maxwell & Broadbridge, 2014; Schullery, 2013).

Generational cohort: A cohort is a group of people who are born together and travel through historical and economic environments at the same time (Amayah & Gedro, 2014; Patterson, 2014; Schewe et al., 2013).

Generation X: (Gen Xers) Generation X are individuals born between 1965 and 1980 (Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Schullery, 2013).

Generation Y: (Millennials, Gen Yers) Generation Y are individuals born after 1980 (Choi, Kwon, & Kim, 2013; Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

Still generation (veterans): Still generation are individuals born between 1925 and 1945 (Gay, Lynxwiler, & Smith, 2015; Lyons, Ng, & Schweitzer, 2014; Ropes, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions and limitations are elements that are out of the control of the researcher. Assumptions are elements that are critical components of this study. Delimitations are in my control as a researcher and limit the scope of the study.

Assumptions

Assumptions are assumed true, but are unverifiable by the researcher (Merriam, 2014). Assumptions are potential weaknesses in any study (Henderson, Kimmelman, Fergusson, Grimshaw, & Hackam, 2013). Kirkwood and Price (2013) explained that assumptions and principles are also elements that may influence research. The level of the participants' interest and eagerness to contribute to this research study may have a positive or negative effect on the findings. I assumed the participants would answer the interview questions honestly, and that they would not be biased about improving the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. Qualitative research is an in-depth description of a socially constructed dynamic reality (Yilmaz, 2013). Researchers using the qualitative approach try to understand lived experiences (Bailey, 2014; Yilmaz,

2013). I assumed the organizations were diverse, with three generations represented in the workforce.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses that could affect the study outcome (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013: Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). In this qualitative multiple case study, I identified some limitations. This study was a qualitative, multiple case study, where I was the only researcher collecting and interpreting data of participants' lived experiences. The sample size of the participants was a limitation in this qualitative multiple case study. The characteristics, lifestyle, education, and priorities of the participants may be different from other organizational members (Binsiddig & Alzahmi, 2013). Participants represented the attitudes and expectations of administrative leaders working in different nonprofit organizations. Some of the administrative leaders and executive directors were not accessible due to work schedule and availability (Oyko, 2013). The participants were in executive positions and were highly educated, so they are not representative of the population at large.

Delimitations

Delimitations are restrictions that researchers impose upon their research to narrow the scope of a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Welch, 2014). Delimitations of this study included the geographical location, population, and sample size. The interviews took place only in northeast region in the United States. The sample population was six nonprofit administrative leaders who were members of an advisory group with 5 or more years of experience managing a multigenerational workforce (Deal

et al., 2013). In this study, I did not address traits such as managerial level, even though a person's managerial level may have a direct effect on workplace conflict (Deal et al., 2013; Patterson, 2014). Including participants in an advisory group with the required work experience managing employees from different generations was a delimitation of this study.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it may improve the business practices of the organization. Generational differences may pose numerous challenges for leaders and influence productivity in the workplace (Haeger & Lingham, 2013; Hillman, 2014). Exploring strategies that may affect employee job satisfaction allows me to inform business leaders about policies that may improve productivity and profitability. Results from this study included information that may increase awareness of corrective measures to improve business practices and workplace settings within organizations.

Contribution to Business Practice

I explored the strategies used by administrative leaders of nonprofit organizations to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. The negative effect of generational differences may affect relations between individuals, performance, and retention of workers. CEOs seek to understand and consider strategies that may have an influence on productivity in their organizations (Giberson & Miklos, 2013; Rajput, Marwah, Balli, & Gupta, 2013). The leader's action may affect the effectiveness of teams and influence retention (Mahdi & Almsafir, 2014; Umamaheshwari & Krishnan, 2015).

This study may be of value to business leaders because the conclusions and data may shed light on corrective measures that may improve human resources management (HRM) practices and management strategies to improve the productivity of workers in the workforce (Messarra et al., 2016). Through this study, I sought to increase awareness of leadership skills that may be necessary for managing a growing diverse workforce with business ethics and values-based differences.

Implications for Social Change

Nonprofit administrative leaders need human capital with capabilities and skills to sustain the mission and business objectives of the organization. The results of this study may contribute to positive social change as the findings may better position administrative leaders with new leadership and retention strategies to improve current business policies and practices to address gaps in sustained performance (Hillman, 2014; Umamaheshwari & Krishnan, 2015). Disseminating the results of this study to CEOs and nonprofit administrative leaders may heighten awareness of how to adapt to the new wave of workers in the workplace and foster a better understanding of the primary generations in the workplace (VanMeter, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts, 2013). The findings may also contribute to social change as leaders apply solutions to improve work environments within organizations.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some nonprofit administrative leaders may use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. The central research question for the study was as follows:

What strategies may some nonprofit administrative leaders use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce? The research question was appropriate for this study because generational differences between the cohorts may affect productivity (Wok & Hashim, 2013; Zhu, 2013). The literature review supported the rationale behind this study and the associated interview questions. The detection of potential strategies may come from a qualitative research method, utilizing a multiple case study design (Emrich, 2015). An in-depth exploration of an advisory group of administrative leaders for effective strategies used to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce may lead to increased knowledge for other business leaders in organizations (Emrich, 2015). The literature may also assist in explaining how past researchers explored generational differences, helps identify gaps in the research, and identify the need for future research.

Generational theory and social constructivist perspective were the conceptual frameworks for this study (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Strauss and Howe (1991) posited generational theory as a cohort group whose members share concrete historical problems. Different work values of different generations may create misunderstandings and affect worker productivity in a multigenerational workforce. The generational mix changes may lead to a shift in leadership style, strategies, HR programs, and changes to the workers' side of the psychological contract (van der Smissen, Schalk, & Freese, 2013; Vasantha, 2016).

The prevalent generational cohorts in the workplace are Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Generation Yers (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Van der Walt, Jonck, &

Sobayeni, 2016). Generation Y represents the youngest participants entering the workforce. Understanding generational differences may help shed light on corrective measures business leaders may use to enhance employee productivity, creativity, and innovation (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Hillman, 2014). In 2014, Gen Y represented 27% of the adult population (O'Connor & Raile, 2015).

As the generational mix changes, perceptions of worker relationships and expectations may pose challenges for various employers (Vasantha, 2016). Gen Yers may create a new psychological contract with different values and attitude toward work (van der Smissen, et al., 2013; Vasantha, 2016). The psychological contract refers to an informal contract between employees and employers in the organization (Vasantha, 2016). Gibson and Sodeman (2014) suggested reciprocal mentoring programs for cross-training. The reverse mentoring program is a cost-effective strategy that may benefit the organization and demonstrate flexibility and adaptability.

Business leaders may change HR practices and policies to motivate and retain the best of the generations (Messarra et al., 2016; Solaja & Ogunola, 2016). The effect of multigenerational differences may create challenges to promote a positive work experience to reduce threats of high turnover and negative impact on organizational productivity (Kleinhans, Chakradhar, Muller, & Waddill, 2015). Organizational leaders may need to comprehend a different approach for managing conflict to minimize misunderstandings and improve relationships of human capital within workplaces.

I obtained literature through business and management databases, and searched for peer-reviewed articles, books, dissertations, and research documents from within the

Walden University online library. Most of the articles are from peer-reviewed journals published since 2013. This study contains 199 articles out of which 192 (92%) of the articles are peer reviewed, and 184 (92%) articles published within the past 5 years of completing the study. The literature review contains a minimum number of articles dated older than 5 years, and minimal number of references from a journal that is not peer reviewed. The literature review contains 73 peer-reviewed articles, as well as, 93% of articles published since 2013. Research databases utilized were Business Source Complete, Emerald Management Journal, ProQuest, Thoreau, government databases, Google Scholar, and Sage Premier. The keywords and phrases used in the databases searches included the following: *work values, age groups, intergenerational differences, multigenerational differences, workplace interaction, organizational culture, work environment, generational employee productivity, Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomers, millennials, conflict resolution,* and *leadership challenges*.

In the literature review, I offer findings from past researchers' explorations, as well as a historical overview of each generation in the workforce. I organized the respective literature by subject matter and content. The primary areas of focus included generational theory, social constructivist theory, still generation, Baby Boomers generation, generation X, generation Y, generational differences, work values, leadership styles, and employee productivity.

Generational Theory

The intent of this review and summary is to provide relevant information regarding multigenerational relationships to improve productivity. The primary

conceptual frameworks for this study focused on two theories. The first conceptual

framework is generational theory. Mannheim (1952) was the pioneer of generational

theory. Mannheim's theory of generations focused on shared life experiences and

historical events occurring during childhood. Foster (2013) suggested Mannheim theory

of generations focused on birth year, biological birth, and ultimately death. Foster (2013)

conducted a study that furthered the concept of generation to learn the perceptions,

understanding, and ideas of men and women of different ages. Foster (2013) found that a

generation is more than a structured approach and may be a tool to solve discourse.

Strauss and Howe (1991) theorized that people enter into cohort group

membership because its member encounters the same national events and trends at

similar ages. Cohort group membership develops a sense of collective ideas and

reinforces a common personality. The peer personality leads each generation to have

different attitudes about institutions and workplaces, meaning generations can mesh or

clash with one another (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Gursoy, Chi, and Karaday (2013)

supported Strauss and Howe's (1991) recommendations, noting in a study of service

organizations that most of the participants reported generational differences in values and

attitudes.

Vasantha (2016) echoed Gursoy et al.'s (2013) findings and concluded that

knowledge about generational differences may help leaders create work environments

that are of importance to different levels of each cohort to fulfill each one's demand.

Vasantha (2016) reported in a study of employees from an automobile industry, most of

the participants showed a generation gap and notable differences in values,

characteristics, and life experiences. Multiple studies indicated how the workplace has

changed over the last 40 years (du Plessis et al., 2013; Van der Walt et al., 2016).

Leaders may have to integrate five generations of workers in the workplace (Haeger &

Lingham, 2013), meaning employees may work differently and need flexibility in

policies to establish usefulness.

 Vasantha (2016) discussed the challenges in creating work environments to attract

and balance the unique obligations and expectations of the multigenerational workforce.

As defined by various researchers, generations are grouped together into cohorts, and

their members are linked together according to their year of birth (Kian, Yusoff, & Rajah,

2013; Schewe et al., 2013; Van der Walt et al., 2016). Generational cohorts may have

similarities in work behavior, expectations, values, and perceptions (Kian et al., 2013).

Generational cohorts are made up of individuals who may share similar experiences and

value sets, created in the formative phase early in life (Kleinhans et al., 2015; Vasantha,

2016). There is no consensus in defining generations year span and the names used to

describe cohorts (Kleinhans et al., 2015; Van der Walt et al., 2016).

 An ever-changing market landscape driven by globalization, government

regulations, and market uncertainty may mean that leaders who do not adapt and drive

change in the workplace may lose their competitive advantage (Mills, Fleck, &

Kozikowski, 2013; Van der Walt et al., 2016). Becton, Walker, and Farmer-Jones (2014)

concurred with Mills et al.'s (2013) notions and used generational cohort theory to

provide a conceptual framework for the study of Generation X and Baby Boomers.

Becton et al.'s (2014) study extended previous research opposing generation differences

in the workplace. Becton et al. (2014) studied 8,040 participants from two different hospitals in the United States to create strategies that helped managers develop HR practices and policies to manage workplace productivity. The researchers identified small differences in workplace behaviors between the Boomers and Gen Xers generations. Most leaders in 2016 are members of the Baby Boomer generation (Patterson, 2014). Becton et al. (2014) suggested organizational leaders design greater flexibility into HR practices and strategies to meet the needs and values of all workers regardless of the generational cohort group.

In contrast, Van der Walt et al. (2016) addressed generational theory in a study of 301 participants from South Africa. In a quantitative study, Van der Walt et al. (2016) reported that most generational cohorts differed regarding hard work and delay of gratification, meaning new and current employees may need to be on-boarded and coached differently to maintain ethical practices and principles. Administrative leaders who implement business programs to improve morale and flexibility may positively affect productivity (Becton et al., 2014).

Social Constructivist Theory

The second conceptual framework for this study was the social constructivist theory. A social constructivist approach suggests a new way of thinking about an old problem (Hosking & Bass, 2001). Hosking and Bass (2001) stressed that the social constructivist method is about overcoming resistance by not putting more energy into doing more of the same. A social constructivist approach involves viewing our relationships as an ongoing process of coordination (Hosking & Bass, 2001).

Likewise, Hachtman (2008) suggested the social constructivist theory is part of a dynamic process, and characteristics of a generation may change over time. Hosking and Bass (2001) explained that no one could know how the past reconstructs in the present and what may work in any situation. Hachtmann (2008) addressed generational theory and social constructivist theory in his study of 12 Generation X participants from three different countries. In a qualitative case study, Hachtmann (2008) explored how each generation from the United States, Japan, and Germany described their generation. The study resulted in five themes to help marketers grow their market of this generation. They were (a) family, (b) finding common cultural ground, (c) society: economic boom and bust, (d) building authentic relationships, and (e) media and advertising. Childhood, historical and socio-economic conditions, and events influenced participants in this study. Hachtmann's (2008) study suggested that the knowledge of the background of various consumer groups, such as Generation X may help business leaders develop appealing messages to attract new customers to sustain businesses.

Still Generation

The still generation is mostly retired (Ropes, 2013). They are the most senior generation in the workforce and were born between 1925 and 1945 (Ropes, 2013). Some other names for the still generation are the silent generation and traditionalists (Gay, Lynxwiler, & Smith, 2015; Lyons et al., 2014). Smola and Sutton's (2002) study also referred to this generation as Traditional and the Swingers.

Older employees may be mentors for the younger employees (Wok & Hashim, 2013). Members of the still generation display a sense of duty and sense of caution (Gay

et al., 2015; Pritchard & Whiting, 2014). In contrast, according to Wok and Hashim's (2013) study, some of the older workers may be regarded as a liability by some employers. Older workers may not always be good team players. In this study, I concentrated primarily on Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y.

Baby Boomers Generation

According to Vasantha (2016), Baby Boomers were born between 1945 and 1964. Baby Boomers are the large generation that was born after the end of World War II (Deal et al., 2013). Many are still working beyond 65 and 70 years of age (Badley, Canizares, Perruccio, Hogg-Johnson, & Gignac, 2015; Holian, 2015). Boomers had a strong generational influence on society (Becton et al., 2014).

Baby Boomers grew up during prosperous economic times (Holian, 2015) and desire money, title, and recognition (Vasantha, 2016). They also grew up feeling the pressure of caring for aging parents while caring for their children (Smola & Sutton, 2002). According to Badley et al. (2015), the Baby Boomer generation was a large generation due to the increase in birth rates after World War II.

Erlam, Smythe, and Wright (2016) reported that Baby Boomers are beginning to retire from the workplace. Some Baby Boomers are also working beyond age 65 due to increased life expectancy and the aging of the country's largest population (Duxbury & Halinski, 2014). Extending retirement age may offer new opportunities or challenges for business leaders with older workers who have low commitment or retired-on-the-job. An increase in biases toward older workers who are continuing to work beyond retirement

may create conflict between groups of older and younger generation of employees (Wok & Hashim, 2013).

Boomers want to work hard, keep busy, and they find personal satisfaction in working (Young, Sturts, Ross, & Kim, 2013). Holian (2015) agreed with Young et al. (2013) and argued leaders need to prepare younger managers to supervise older workers who will continue to work beyond retirement age. In contrast, Duxbury and Halinski (2014) found Boomers with low commitment increase the turnover intentions of committed older knowledge workers.

Generation X

Kian et al.'s (2013) study suggested Generation X refers to individuals born between 1965 and 1980. They are the children of compulsive workers, and this may affect their perception, attitudes, and values (Becton et al., 2014). Van der Walt et al. (2016) study described Generation X as individualistic, hardworking and focused on relationships. Generation X experienced the rapid advancement of technology (Kian et al., 2013). According to Hachtmann (2008), in a study of three generations from three different countries, Generation X used technology all the time, on the go, meaning they consider the internet a way of life (Hachtmann, 2008). Multiple researchers support the notion that members of this generation work to live and seeks a balance between work and life (Van der Walt et al., 2016).

Intrinsic factors, like work and recognition, motivated Generation Xers (Kian et al., 2013). In contrast, the findings of other researchers found external factors (pay and benefits) are the key factors for Generation Xers (Kian et al., 2013; Van der Walt et al.,

2016). Hachtmann (2008) added Generation Xers cohorts from different countries felt

building relationships with colleagues were important to demonstrate how well an

individual functioned in a group. Members of Generation X evolved from being

characterized as self-centered into a caring cohort (Hachtmann, 2008). Van der Walt et

al. (2016) results diverged from Hachtmann's (2008) and discovered Generation X

individuals preferred less demanding jobs.

Generation Y

There is little agreement on the birth years of this recent cohort to enter the

workplace (Becton et al., 2014). Born between the years of 1980 and 1983 and no agreed

upon cut-off date (Becton et al., 2014). Valentine and Powers (2013) explained

Generation Y cohorts are individuals born between 1981 and 1996 and raised by late

Baby Boomers. According to Erlman, Smythe, and Wright (2016), this cohort was born

between 1982 and 2000; this supports the lack of consensus.

Generation Y individuals are influencing organizations to redefine the workplace

(Barron, Leask, & Fyall, 2014) and employment relationships. Generation Y is the

largest generational cohorts (76 million) to enter the workforce since Baby Boomers and

often referred to as millennials (Erlam et al., 2016; Vasantha, 2016). Members of

Generation Y are different from any other generation (Mendelson, 2013; Smola & Sutton,

2002). As a generational cohort, these individuals are better educated, more affluent,

more diverse than previous generations (Erlam et al., 2016).

Members of the Generation Y like a wide variety of communication methods and

use a wide variety of social media networks to access information (Young et al., 2013).

Generation Y is also known as Millennials (Erlam et al., 2016). This group represents a quarter of the world's population (Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014). Generation Y cohorts seek to work for employers who help them meet their career expectations because they are highly ambitious and career-oriented individuals (Kong, Wang, & Fu, 2015).

The cohorts have strong work ethics and the ability to learn quickly. Young et al. (2013) found Generation Y do not buy into working long hours supported by Baby Boomers culture and Generation X managers. Gen Yers also prefer to work for supervisors who provide constant feedback and career support (Barron et al., 2014; Kong et al., 2015).

Barron et al. (2014) argued employers are required to appreciate and respond to the expectations of each employee's potential contribution. In a qualitative study, Valentine and Powers (2013) examined the media habits of Generation Y to identify changes from previous cohorts. Generation Y employees have made their presence felt in organizations with their tech-savvy style of working, and this may further change the dynamic of the workplace (Barron et al., 2014). These attributes may make Generation Y employees an increasingly valuable asset to an organization (Barron et al., 2014).

Generation Y cohorts may also expect flexible working options. More emphasis is placed on work-life balance by this cohort than previous generational cohorts (Barron et al., 2014). Valentine and Powers (2013) supported Barron et al. (2014) conclusions, noting Generation Y employees may have different priorities and want time from work for hobbies, family, and friends. Similarly, Kultalahti and Viitala (2014) concurred with Valentine and Powers (2013) and found work-life was a critical factor but also noted

Generation Y felt work should not take over one's life. Flexible arrangements and remote work locations may be worth testing with the millennials (Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014).

Kong et al. (2015) studied the benefits of career management and job satisfaction. They collected data for a qualitative study of Generation Y cohorts working in service-oriented businesses. The researchers used the balanced theory of career management approach to provide a conceptual framework. Kong et al. (2015) concluded Generation Y employees perceived work-life balance differently and strived to make a difference. Generation Y employees are looking for a stable work environment that accommodates their career expectations (Kong et al., 2015). Business leaders may improve work environments if managers understood the intangible value for supporting work-life programs.

Schewe et al. (2013) argued there is sparse empirical literature on attitudes and values of millennials across cultures. Schewe et al. (2013) studied the similarities and differences between millennials in the US and two countries. They concluded generational differences may exist with millennials in other countries because of upbringings and political systems. Schewe et al. (2013) suggested further research to understand the distinctive characteristics of millennials in other countries to develop marketing strategies.

Viswanathan and Jain (2013) concurred with Schewe et al. (2013) and conducted a study to learn more about the decision making of Generation Y. The researchers interviewed six participants between the ages of 18 to 30 and discovered their peers and

family heavily influence Generation Y. They also found Gen Y cohorts do not like to plan beyond six months. Administrative leaders in nonprofit organizations may have to restrategize their work practices for this recent generation of employees (Barron et al., 2014) to understand the challenges in motivating employees to remain committed to the organization.

Generational Differences

A review of the literature indicated generational differences may have benefits and drawbacks on productivity (Patterson, 2014). Hernaus and Vokic (2014) reported there are five generational cohorts: Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z. The workforce consists primarily of three generational cohorts: Baby boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y, as veterans are retiring, and Generation Zers have not entered the workforce (Hernaus & Vokic, 2014). According to Mencl and Lester (2014), three generations may work with each other for the next decade or more: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y.

Generational prototypes may create complexities in the management of HR policies and programs if generations desire different things in the workplace. It may become increasingly common for an older worker to work side-by- side with younger colleagues, by 50 years (or more), and this landscape may pose serious challenges for organizational leaders (Holian, 2015; Solaja & Ogunola, 2016). The younger generation may have different priorities playing out in the workplace, and these differences may frustrate leaders (Solaja & Ogunola, 2016).

The older generations are mastering the computer as opposed to the younger generations who embrace the high-tech advancements (Vasantha, 2016). The younger generation is more tolerant and trusting than the older experienced generation in the workplace (Valentine & Powers, 2013). Socially connected orientation negatively affected ethical conduct and differences in the younger generation (VanMeter et al., 2013). The younger individuals may enter the workplace not accustomed to structured work practices or conduct.

Volkom, Stapley, and Amaturo (2014) supported Valentine and Powers (2013) recommendations and added older generations expressed less interest in technology and a less favorable attitude than the younger generations. Volkom et al. (2014) conducted a study of 276 participants (104 women and 158 men) to identify sex and generational differences in the use and perception of technology. The researchers found the older cohorts were less likely to view cell phones and websites as user-friendly and most likely to feel technological advances moves too fast. Administrative leaders may need to provide older workers with better training to keep them engaged in technology-based communication to improve productivity (Volkom et al., 2014).

Valentine and Powers (2013) recommended organizations develop different messages to reach sub-groups of generational cohorts. VanMeter et al. (2013) recommended mentoring and training programs to help the younger generation learn work norms. Messarra et al. (2016) suggested adopting age-oriented decisions and appropriate management practices across generational groups. In contrast, du Plessis et al. (2013) suggested organizations pay attention to differing career stages to connect with

employees. Investing in the team and individual development is a component of leadership talent development that may accelerate the development of people within organizations (du Plessis et al., 2013; Sakiru, D'Silva, Othman, DaudSilong, & Busayo, 2013).

Organizations may need to move away from a one-size fit all management pyramid and retention strategy to develop the best talent in a multigenerational workforce (du Plessis et al., 2013; Solaja & Ogunola, 2016). For example, Young et al. (2013) found job satisfaction may vary greatly between generations even when some similarities may exist. Using a qualitative research method, Young et al. (2013) collected data from 550 professional employees from the recreation sports industry to examine attitudes toward job satisfaction. Participants had a broad range of job experience from three generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y).

Young et al. (2013) found some differences among the three generations, but there were no significant differences in attitudes, orientations, and work ethic. Specifically, Young et al. (2013) found Baby Boomers reported higher levels of job satisfaction than the two younger generations in the following four areas: (a) supervisory support and interaction, (b) working conditions, (c) work and environment, and (d) resources and employee benefits. There were no differences in overall job satisfaction in four areas between Generation X and Y cohorts (Young et al., 2013).

The study results reflect the greatest difference between Baby Boomers and Generation Y (Young et al., 2013). Yelkikalan and Ayhun (2013) found Generation X and Generation Y cohorts rarely disagreed and experienced conflict with each other on

task, process, and relations. Several researchers attested to Yelkikalan and Ayhun's (2013) recommendation on job satisfaction and work environment (Moore, Grunberg, & Krause, 2014; Young et al., 2013).

The scholars argued the research showed little correlation between white collar and blue collar cohorts across three generations (Gen Y, Gen X, and Baby Boomers). Moore, Grunberg, and Krause (2014) discovered blue collars workers and white collar workers from manufacturing companies showed differences in the areas of, work to family conflict, work to family conflict expected and work home integration. Leaders may expect differences based on combined factors among workers.

Kim, Kim, Jaquette, and Bastedo (2014) found a college education did not influence job satisfaction or occupational prestige. Specifically, they discovered career advancement diversified from 40 years ago, and career advancement may happen over time. Organizational leaders may need to consider marketing positions focused on non-monetary benefits to enhance job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2014) because millennials enter the workforce seeking educational pursuits as an essential step toward advancement. Based on these studies, it is clear each generation experiences brings strength to the workplace. New tactics about work values from different generational cohort may help improve performance gaps and create common ground to improve the productivity of employees (Vasantha, 2016). Wok and Hashim (2013) argued the need for additional research as to the effect of generational differences on worker satisfaction and productivity.

Multiple studies indicated a strong link between engagement and providing satisfying work to achieve business success (Barron et al., 2014). Administrative leaders need to create a business strategy to engage individuals from all generations in the workplace (Binsiddig & Alzahmi, 2013). Group dynamics may influence work engagement of a multicultural team (Binsiddig & Alzahmi, 2013). Woehr, Arciniega, and Poling (2013) recommended a different approach that differed from those suggested by Binsiddig and Alzahmi (2013). Woehr et al. (2013) argued a homogeneous work environment is attractive when people share the same values. Generational differences may have a positive and negative influence on business success (Patterson, 2014) and individual experiences change attitudes and may alter workplace relationships.

The millennials entering the workforce have different values, attitudes, and lifestyles from previous generations (Valentine & Powers, 2013). Rentz's (2015) study found younger cohorts were afraid to ask for guidance and direction from anyone outside of their teachers and parents. Leadership and direction from seasoned managers with the right attitude may help the younger cohorts (Rentz, 2015). Organizations may be shifting their corporate strategy to incorporate generational diversity initiatives to improve relationships and work engagement (Binsiddig & Alzahmi, 2013).

Barron et al. (2014) conducted a mixed methods study that focused on different strategies that can be adopted to encourage the engagement of a multigenerational workforce. Barron et al. (2014) conducted interviews with 77 employees representing Generation Y, Generational X, and Baby Boomers from five organizations. Barron et al. (2014) found that managers' support of a range of policies and practices tailored to the

specific needs of the employee may place them at an advantage to see benefits in productivity and job commitment.

Results of the study indicated engagement may have a positive outcome for industries with low pay, unpleasant physical working conditions, and shrinking pool of new recruits. In contrast, if the managers are resistance when it comes to using technology for training, tools, and systems, strategies for engagement may not work. Several researchers argued for support of work-life programs to reduce work-life conflict and stress (Kang, Yu, & Lee, 2016; Ko, Hur, & Smith-Walter, 2013). The flexibility of HR programs and work-life programs serves to motivate and validate individuals from this group.

Work Values

Chen and Lian (2015) found differences in work values of the new generation may affect employee productivity in the workplace. Managers may need to take generational differences into consideration to respond to workplace situations. The meaning of work varies by members of different generations. Changes in the meaning of real work may pose potential challenges (O'Connor & Raile, 2015). The workplace interactions of different generations may affect work attitudes and relationships.

O'Connor and Raile's (2015) study of college students explored the differences in the meaning of work for the Gen X and Gen Y generations. According to the study results, Gen Y emphasized the importance of benefits, described different salary expectations from Gen X, and highlighted a college education as integral to obtaining a real job. Older managers' understanding of a job may lead to conflicting expectations

and misunderstandings when managing younger workers. Keeping employees happy is a

task unique to each cohort (Seipert & Baghurst, 2014). Different generations may hold

different psychological contracts with their employer (Vasantha, 2016). Deal et al.

(2013) reported a younger worker in an executive position may be motivated differently

than a younger worker in a middle management position.

Chen and Lian (2015) conducted interviews with three generational cohorts

working in various organizations. The discovery was the older men and women from this

group attached more importance to work values than the younger generation. Managers

of multinational organizations should note these differences in generational attitudes and

create flexible policies to manage the differences in work values.

In an additional study, Zupan et al. (2015) found significant differences in work

values between business students. Yi, Ribbens, Fu, and Cheng (2015) related to Zupan et

al. (2015) findings and presented additional information on work values. Yi et al. (2015)

linked culture with values and attitudes in the workplace. Results of the study indicated

their experiences do not shape people from different countries born in the same period in

the same way even when they are in the same generational cohort (Yi et al., 2015).

Generational differences may affect how a worker reacts to different work design.

Hernaus and Vokic (2014) conducted a study of 512 participants (139 managers and 373

professionals) to examine the relationship between work design and generational

differences. Hernaus and Vokic (2014) found that four out of the eight job characteristics

differ significantly between generations. According to the study results, work autonomy,

interaction with others, initiated interdependence and teamwork are job characteristics

recognized by knowledge workers across different generations. Specfically, Hernaus and

Vokic (2014) concluded that HR executives may improve the performance level of their

employees by taking into consideration their personal values and work preferences.

Business leaders in some industries may have limited strategies for career mobility and

upward promotion. Mencl and Lester (2014) conducted a qualitative study of 653

employees of three generations and found differences in the importance of career

advancement opportunities, diversity climate and immediate recognition and feedback

(Mencl & Lester, 2014).

Leadership Styles

A strategic workforce is essential to achieve business objectives and gain a

competitive edge (Umamaheshwari & Krishman, 2015). Today's workforce is becoming

increasingly age varied, so managers need to modify and develop strategies and ideas that

attract and retain every generation (Holian, 2015; Messara et al., 2016; Solaja &

Ogunola, 2016; Vasantha, 2016) to improve the workplace settings of organizations.

Some leaders may lack the knowledge to build trust and the talent mix of four

generations in the workplace (Messarra et al., 2016; Solaja & Ogunola, 2016) to foster a

better understanding of the primary generations in the workforce.

Leaders cannot forget there is a new attitude toward work with the attraction of

younger and better-educated workforce (Long & Perumal, 2014). An organization may

have leaders with impressive technical skills but may be unable to design interventions

for change management. Generation Y, the fastest growing generational cohort, value

strong leadership (Gursoy et al., 2013). Intergenerational relationships may present new

challenges for both leaders and direct reports when individuals do not listen to different perspectives (Haeger & Lingham, 2013). Workforce planning and change management strategies may become increasingly complex (du Plessis et al., 2013).

According to Mehta (2016), organizations need to embrace continuous change, and this may lead to employee resistance and negative reactions. Training programs to teach leaders social skills may help minimize stress and negative outcomes on performance in organizations. Likewise, Mehta, Maheshwan, and Sharma (2014) found it is challenging to change people perception and behavior. The results of the study showed leaders might effectuate change and influence productivity if they balanced tasks and needs of employees in organizations.

Coggburn, Battaglio, and Bradbury (2014) disagreed with Mehta et al. (2014) and argued conflict is inevitable, and management should not oppress or eliminate it. Business leaders need to learn how to reap the benefits of conflict to avoid its negative aspects (Coggburn et al., 2014). Savolainen (2013) added communication and direct interaction decrease conflict. Savolainen (2013) also stated commitment to change is linked strongly to how leaders are behaving in the organization.

The central role of business leaders is to resolve and manage conflict (CIPD, 2015). The number one reason employees give for leaving an organization is dissatisfaction with immediate superior (du Plessis et al., 2013). Some managers lack confidence and conflict management skills (CIPD, 2015). Nonetheless, conflict management systems with team-based structures resolved differences among employees and management (Olu & Abolade, 2014).

Working in a team with people who have different characteristics may pose potential problems (Wok & Hashim, 2013). Sathyakumar and Ramakishan (2013) claimed effective management strategy is one of the dimensions that may influence and build a committed workforce that is conflict free. Olu and Abolade (2014) suggested opposition to ideas should be encouraged. The researchers also found dysfunctional and destructive conflict characteristics hinder performance (Olu & Abolade, 2014; Sathyakumar & Ramaskishan, 2013).

Likewise, Coggburn et al. (2014) found traditional systems of limiting and controlling conflict counterproductive. Using a quantitative research method, Coggburn et al. (2014) used data from a survey of 74,000 public employees to understand the perception of workplace conflict and the affect on job performance and organization performance. The results of the study indicated companies reap benefits of constructive conflict management when a business leader understands how to manage conflict under different circumstances to encourage dialogue and avoid delay or frustration (Coggburn et al., 2014). Seipert and Baghurst (2014) concurred and supported Coggburn et al.'s (2014) findings, and stressed multigenerational workplace trends may be a new management paradigm.

Seipert and Baghurst (2014) conducted a study to examine work values of Baby Boomers and Generation X public school principals (22 males and 18 females) from two school districts. The researchers found generational differences existed among the principals in the school district. Potential challenges included the attitude and use of technology, training preferences, and collaboration in the workplace. Seipert and

Baghurst (2014) discovered generational cohorts may have common work values experience that may change when exposed to other cohorts. If the leaders are not willing to learn from the younger employees, there is a potential for negative results that cause a misunderstanding.

Organizations that establish mentoring and professional development programs to integrate the new workforce with the current employee workforce may achieve a better work environment (Young et al., 2013). Managers may need to allow younger employees more flexibility and less of hands-on micromanagement style to generate higher levels of productivity and output (Young et al., 2013). Perceptions between the generations are not clear and may lead to ineffective interactions (Haeger & Lingham, 2013).

There are new trends and emerging patterns that may suggest a new paradigm of leadership (Haeger & Lingham, 2013). Haeger and Lingham (2013) discovered young leaders have a task-centered, productivity-centered, and multitask centered leadership style. Haeger and Lingham's (2013) study explored interactions between young leaders who supervised older direct reports. They conducted a qualitative study of 13 leaders under the age of 36 from five different states and diverse industries.

The researchers explored memorable events with older direct reports. Haeger and Lingham (2013) used a ground theory approach and found leadership style, task expectations, and the roles of relationships lead to strained relationships. Specifically, Haeger and Lingham (2013) concluded that direct reports expectations and leader behavior created intergenerational collusion. Based on this study, organizational leaders

may need to ask the question as to what is leadership in the new intergenerational workplace with young leaders. Haeger and Lingham (2013) argued the need for additional research on young leaders who lead older workers and vice versa to understand the effects on productivity and work relationships.

In contrast, Olu and Abolade's (2014) study found that effective conflict management tools and styles may influence employee morale and performance. For an organization to prosper, business leaders are trained to manage conflict (Olu & Abolade, 2014) effectively. Olu and Abolade (2014) conducted a quantitative study that examined the causes, consequences, and methods employed to solve conflict. Olu and Abolade (2014) elaborated on the training of managers. Olu and Abolade (2014) also recommended training employees, creating policies for resolution, and taking conflict seriously to create a conducive working environment.

O'Connor and Raile's (2015) agreed with Olu and Abolade's study (2014) and reported the meaning of work shifted due to generational changes, and this may present potential generational conflict about how members of different generations understand work. Workforce planning is a process that ensures the right people are being employed in the right roles to meet organizational strategic plan (du Plessis et al., 2013) to facilitate human capital management. Understanding workforce planning may be the strongest driver to understand productivity because some organizations may have to do more with less skilled employees (du Plessis et al., 2013).

Employee Productivity

Business leader's attitudes toward productivity, quality, and customer satisfaction have contributed to rethinking the shape and nature of organizations (du Plessis et al., 2013). The anticipated changes in the business environment are of great concern to business leaders to retain their workforce and keep turnover low as possible (du Plessis et al., 2013). Multiple studies indicated a strong link between HRM practices and labor diversity in influencing productivity.

du Plessis et al.'s (2013) study found HR management (HRM) practices may affect productivity. The most important resource of successful organizations is people. The results from the study showed the positive affect strategic HRM practices had on responsibilities in large organizations in New Zealand. The responsibilities included talent acquisition, talent development, and the retention of employees (du Plessis et al., 2013). The current study is relevant to the previous studies because HRM practices may play a significant role in determining how the 2020 leaders manage people in the workforce to affect productivity. Thoroughly understanding certain factors that affect employee needs plus legislation about how business leaders run their business may create knowledge to help other business leaders (du Plessis et al., 2013). In contrast, Garnero, Kampelmann, and Rycx (2014) reported that diversity in age may hamper productivity in traditional industries in certain cases. Effective diversity management programs aimed at improving the economic outcome may deserve an organization's attention.

Pfeifer and Wagner (2014), disagreed with du Plessis et al. (2013) and found productivity and profitability improved in the younger participants up to the age of 30.

According to the study results, human capital may be subject to depreciation after age 30. In addition to strategic HRM practices, research has also identified a link between incentives and human capital investments. Pfeifer and Wagner (2014) also identified the human capital theory as a link to decision making to address differences in productivity and profitability of the aging workforce.

According to Zhu (2013), a difference of ambitions and work styles may potentially result in intergenerational conflict that leads to low productivity, alienation, and high staff turnover. Enriching employment experiences may improve job satisfaction and engagement. Several researchers agreed differences in work styles and values negatively influenced job performance, productivity, and work environment (Binsiddig & Alzahi, 2013; Messarra et al., 2016).

Munn (2013) discovered work-life initiatives may become popular as organizations continue to adapt to a changing workforce. Work-life programs have advantages for employees and influence organizational performance (Munn, 2013). The cost of creating work-life programs for some organizations is significant (Munn, 2013). Kang (2016) agreed with Munn (2013) and found benefits may improve engagement and loyalty of employees. Organizations may want to design benefits programs to build good employee relations and employee productivity.

In contrast, Stoute, Awad, and Guzman (2013) argued managers may not support work-life programs despite its benefits because they feel employees are not responsible and may abuse the benefits. Ko et al. (2013) agreed managerial influence may affect an employee's ability to balance work-life issues successfully. Meanwhile, Mungainia,

Waiganjo, and Kihoro (2016) research of 43 banks found wellness programs supported

productivity. The rate of absenteeism and turnover decreased in the banks. However,

investing in wellness program alone may not indicate the optimal solution. Education

and supportive management may evoke change and lead to a positive outcome.

Transition

Section 1 includes an introduction to this study, problem statement, purpose

statement, as well as, the nature of the study, that will justify using a qualitative, multiple

case study design. The section covers some key elements for this study, to include the

research questions, interview questions, conceptual framework, significance of the study,

and the literature review section. Section 1 includes an overview of core values and

characteristics of four generations that can affect employee productivity. The literature

on previous studies regarding generational differences, work values, leadership styles,

conflict management strategies and employee productivity will set the foundation for this

study. A thorough review of historical and current academic literature will further

support the subject. Section 2 focuses on the project and provides further detailed

information surrounding a description of a qualitative method research approach,

including the populations and sampling, data collection, data analysis, and reliability and

validity. Section 3 begins with an introduction including the purpose statement, research

question, and findings. Section 3 will further include application to professional practice,

implications for social change and behaviors, recommendations for action and further

study, and concludes with researcher reflections.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 includes the plan for the research design: (a) restatement of the purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) research participants, (d) research method and design, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection instruments, (h) data collection technique, (i) data organization techniques, (j) data analysis techniques, and (k) reliability and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some nonprofit administrative leaders may use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. The sample population consisted of six participants who were members of an advisory group located in northeast region of the United States. This population is important to nonprofit business leaders because it is an advisory group of administrative leaders from various nonprofit organizations that employ employees who are members from the three primary generations. A qualitative multiple case study approach to interviewing nonprofit administrative leaders may allow an understanding of unique experiences and multiple views of participants (Bailey, 2014; Bernard, 2013; Scholz & Tietje, 2013). Nonprofit administrative leaders may benefit from this study by gaining an understanding of factors that may influence the business decision-making of different generation of employees.

I reviewed and analyzed company documents, such as personnel policies to triangulate the data. Triangulation is a method introduced in this research study to avoid potential biases and involves using two or more sets of data collection (Heale & Forbes,

2013). The research design included the following data sources: (a) semistructured interviews, (b) interview notes, and (c) company documentation. The findings from this study may contribute to social change by providing business processes for CEOs to improve business operations and contribute to sustainable growth. The findings from this study may also shed light on some corrective measures that may be implemented to influence business success and influence the productivity of a multigenerational workforce (Messarra et al., 2016; Solaja & Ogunola, 2016).

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary data collection instrument for this study. The role of the researcher is to contribute to the practical concerns of people (Arnaboldi, 2013). Researchers observe and collect data to help provide solutions to organizational problems (Arnaboldi, 2013; Kornhaber, de Jong, & McLean, 2015). The role of the researcher also includes interviewing, recording, transcribing, and analyzing the data in a study to develop themes (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Sho-ghi, & Cheraghi, 2014). Researchers are the instruments in qualitative interview research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Simons (2015) described researchers as artists who help people understand perspectives through a different lens.

I have 20 years of professional interviewing experience as a senior HR executive to help facilitate an honest sharing personal experience. I do not work for the same company as any of the participants. No prior personal or business relationship exists between the research participants and me. The participants may know each other within their common company.

The Belmont Report focuses on the well-being of participants (Bromley, Mikesell, Jones, & Khodyakov, 2015). The report describes the four key principles of ethical research and guidelines for the protection of human subjects (Bromley et al., 2015). I followed the protocols of the Belmont Report to maintain ethical standards involving human subjects throughout this study. The protocols include the following principles: (a) ethical action, (b) respect for participants, (c) generalize beneficence, and (d) negotiate justice (Bromley et al., 2015).

The relationship developed between the researcher and participants brings ethical concerns and demands (Gibson, Benson, & Brand, 2013). The boundaries of the relationship requires careful negotiation and possibly renegotiation (Gibson et al., 2013). Ethical issues arise in data collection, analysis, the way participants are portrayed and protecting anonymity while presenting the data (Gibson et al., 2013). The participants reviewed the interview transcripts to ensure rigor and trustworthiness (Morse, 2015). It is critical to ensure the interpretations of the results from the study participant's experience are valid through member checking (Brandburg, Symes, Mastel-Smith, Hersch, & Walsh, 2013). Member checking is the process of obtaining additional data or correcting data through the review of transcripts (Morse, 2015). As the key research instrument, I used a data collection protocol (see Appendix C). Yazan (2015) explained the data collection protocol is the foundation for semistructured, qualitative interviews because it allows for follow-up and clarification.

Using a qualitative, multiple case study method, the researcher conducts a series of face-to-face interactions with participants via semistructured interviews with open-

ended questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The interview provides an opportunity for the researcher to focus exclusively on the participants' conversation and categorizations of messages (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Torronen, 2014).

The interviews with the participants were audio recorded and transcribed in this study. Six to 12 semistructured well-chosen interview questions for a novice researcher is a good starting point (Elo et al., 2014). Open-ended questions allow the participants to express their viewpoints and engage in a deep discussion about the topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Interviewing different participants using the semistructured interview questions reduces bias (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Ponterotto, 2014).

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of a sample population of six nonprofit administrative leaders who were members of an advisory group located in northeast region of the United States. The criteria for selecting participants included (a) the participant had 5 years of supervisory responsibility of a multigenerational workforce, (b) the participant had to be at least 18 years of age, and (c) the participant had to be available for a face-to-face interview. Nonprofit administrative leaders include CEOs, executive directors, directors, assistant directors, vice presidents, and administrative leaders. The advisory group influences social connections by creating employment opportunities for people with barriers to employment (Foley & O'Connor, 2013). I used a qualitative research methodology to ask broad, open-ended questions. According to researchers (Kaczinksy, Salmona, and Smith, 2013; Koch, Niesz, and McCarthy, 2014),

this approach helps researchers to find out how participants think and provides content-rich responses regarding a phenomenon.

Before commencing this study, I obtained approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to obtain participants with information and success strategies of the phenomenon (Elo et al., 2014; Poulis, Poulis, & Plakoyiannaki, 2013). A small number of cases (less than 20) is suggested to address the research problem in-depth and enhance the validity of the study (Elo et al., 2014). My extensive experience conducting face-to-face interviews made this format ideal for this study. The selection of an advisory group came from networking with the executive director through an HR professional organization. Pre-existing contact with the executive director of the advisory group assisted with gaining access and contact information of the members of the advisory group to ensure the participants possess the required experience. A researcher tries to put aside his perceptions to focus on the phenomenon (Ponterotto, 2014).

The relationship between myself and the participants was professional throughout the interviews. This study sample was a diverse group of individuals with varying genders, ethnicities, backgrounds, and experience. Participants possessed various backgrounds spanning across job functions and years of service with their employer. Purposive sampling allows the researchers to use their judgment in selecting participants based on the criteria of the study (Elo et al., 2014; Poulis et al., 2013). To address the central research question, purposeful sampling was used to identify and interview a

sample pool of six participants who were members of an advisory group located in northeast region of the United States.

After Walden University IRB approval, the research process began. I selected participants from a list of advisory group members listed on the website. Next, I emailed letters of invitation to prospective participants (see Appendix A). The letter of invitation (see Appendix A) explained the intent of the study.

I selected the participants who responded with their consent to my email. Participants were contacted by telephone to schedule interview times and dates that were convenient. As suggested by Ketefian (2015), I informed participants that their participation was voluntary and confidential. Once a participant agreed to participate in this study, I followed up with phone calls and emails to establish a working relationship. I conducted face-to-face interviews with four participants, and telephone interviews with two participants, that was no more than 60 minutes. As recommended by Marshall and Roman (2016), I used a small number of probing/exploratory questions to evoke rich data, as well as silence to draw out information from participants. I also advised participants that they can withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

Research Method and Design

The three possible research methods are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method design (Earley, 2014). The research method I choose was a qualitative, multiple case study over quantitative or mixed method research design. Qualitative researchers seek to make sense of data by observing behaviors, interviewing participants, and

exploring documents to analyze strategies business leaders may use to improve productivity (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013).

Research Method

The focus of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies from the perspective of nonprofit administrative leaders used to improve productivity (Schonfeld & Mazzola, 2015). The strategies may be used to influence the productivity of a multigenerational workforce, and so the qualitative method was most appropriate for this study. A qualitative multiple case study allows the researcher to explore a deep investigation of contemporary experiences in its natural context (Bailey, 2014; Yin, 2013). I analyzed data to explore strategies some nonprofit administrative leaders may use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. Qualitative research does not include statistical procedures (Street & Ward, 2012). Qualitative research driven by a rigorous emphasis provides an opportunity to collect data from individuals or groups of individuals around a contemporary event (Kupers et al., 2013; Yin, 2013).

Using a qualitative method met the needs of the study whereas the quantitative method was not the best approach (Kupers et al., 2013). The quantitative approach involves exploring a detailed plan to collect data to test relationships between variables and statistical tests (Barnham, 2015). Quantitative research also involves counting opinions of people. The quantitative research design does not explore different perspectives (Barnham, 2015; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). In this qualitative study, I created relationships with a small group of participants to help obtain details from semistructured interview questions (Powell & Eddleston, 2013).

A mixed method study takes a back and forth approach between quantitative and qualitative research approaches (Mertens, 2014; Snelson, 2016). Mixed method research uses multiple research designs to understand a phenomenon of interest (Mertens, 2014; Sparkes, 2014; Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). Although the mixed method approach may be a valuable methodological approach, the choice to use a research design is based on the research questions (Venkatesh et al., 2013). Using a quantitative or mixed research method design did not meet the purpose of this study, as counting opinions was not necessary when exploring what strategies administrative leaders use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce.

Research Design

Case study design is useful when a researcher must go beyond the study of isolated variables (Yin, 2014). Utilizing the preferred approach of a multiple case study design met the need for this study based on the research question (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013; Yin, 2014). A researcher may conduct a qualitative multiple case study with multiple participants to capture the complexity and participants' worldviews (Cronin, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2013). A qualitative multiple case study was utilized to understand the experiences of those currently in leadership positions.

Qualitative researchers can also consider several other key qualitative study designs, such as grounded theory, ethnography, and the phenomenological design. Grounded theory design is overwhelming with the overlap of data collection and data analysis (Hoflund, 2013). Theory generation is the approach to the inquiry to explain the

phenomena or setting of interest by working backward (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). A

grounded theory research method design did not satisfy the purpose of this study. The

intent of this study was not to collect and analyze data for theory generation.

Ethnography research design involves the researcher observing and participating in the

lives of participants in groups, communities, or organizations (Grossoehme, 2014;

Simpson, Slutskaya, Hughes, & Simpson, 2014). The research design also involves the

researcher analyzing data and patterns by using a variety of data collection sources

focusing on the interaction of people within groups (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Ethnography research would not satisfy the purpose of this study, as the intent of this

study was not to participate in the lives of the participants and collect data over a long

period.

The phenomenological approach encourages participants to share their stories

exactly as experienced in their world (Rafique & Hunt, 2015). Investigating, exploring,

and analyzing the interests of subjects is the purpose of the phenomenological approach

(Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Phenomenological research method partially meets my

research design because I explored the lived experiences of the participants through

interviews. The phenomenological research method was not the most effective design

option for this study, given the desired in-depth inquiry of participants working for

different non-profit organizations (Yin, 2014). The research design was also not the most

effective design option for this study because I would have difficulty reaching data

saturation in a phenomenological study of an advisory group. Saturation occurs when

researchers hear the same story repetitively, and the researcher does not identify new

themes from the sample (Morse, Lowery, & Stuery, 2014; Walker, 2012). The multiple case study approach was selected over the other key designs to explore a phenomenon and collect company documentation (Barratt et al., 2011; Yin, 2013).

A case study design includes an in-depth understanding of a single or multiple numbers of cases (Yin, 2014). The multiple case study approach is the most effective method to obtain an invaluable insider's perspective of a small number of detailed experiences (Cronin, 2014). The multiple case study design gives the researcher the opportunity to get lost in the data and discover new information (Simons, 2015). Utilizing the preferred approach of a multiple case study design met the need for this study based on the research questions (Yin, 2014).

I gathered data using a methodological triangulation that includes using a qualitative, multiple case approach. Methodological triangulation is the use of more than one approach to researching a question (Heale & Forbes, 2013). The researcher should consistently recheck data from different, as well as, the same sources to enhance the rigor of the research study (Yin, 2014). The researcher may not have the appropriate time to obtain actual practices and experiences in an organization (Yin, 2014). Collecting data from multiple sources is always better than one single source to compare findings and different perspectives (Heale & Forbes, 2013; Yin, 2014).

Population and Sampling

The population selected for this qualitative study included a purposive sample of six nonprofit administrative leaders who were members of an advocacy group in northeast region of the United States (Mayoh & Onwegbuzie, 2015; Merriam, 2014).

Through purposive sampling, I obtained participants with information and success strategies of the phenomenon (Jones, 2014; Yilmaz, 2013). The sample size in qualitative studies is relevant due to the depth of data collected from participants of their varied experience (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

Purposive sampling in qualitative research allows the researcher to select participants who were experts on the topic of interest (Jones, 2014; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Poulis et al., 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). It is essential to interview the nonprofit administrative leaders in the advisory group who have the most knowledge to answer the research questions to reach data saturation (Arquiza, 2013; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Yin, 2014). The sample size is small in qualitative research, and not fixed to include a certain number of participants (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Qualitative research focuses on meaning, depth, and not generalizing to a larger population (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Miles, Huberman, & Saldan, 2014, Yin, 2014).

I examined a sample size of six participants who were members of an advisory group. Saturation is the point where data collection does not generate new information from participants to support the study (Oberoi, Jiwa, McManus, & Hodder, 2015; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Rabinovich & Kacen, 2013). In qualitative studies, the focus is on gathering sufficient in-depth data and not acquiring a fixed number of participants (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). I conducted multiple interviews with all six participants to reach data saturation for this study.

A researcher can use a purposeful sampling approach to ensure a range of experiences (Sharp et al., 2014). New York City in the state of NY was the best location

for the study because of the convenience of the work sites. New York has a population of approximately 19 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). NYC government workforce is more diverse with employees from different generational cohorts with a wealth of experience and education than it was 10 years ago (New York City Government, 2013).

The participants met the following criteria for the study, which are: (a) 5 years of supervisory responsibility of a multigenerational workforce, (b) the participant has to be at least 18 years of age, and (c) the participant has to be available for a face-to-face interview. Nonprofit administrative leaders included CEOs, executive directors, directors, assistant directors, vice presidents, and managers of non-profit organizations in northeast region of the United States to be eligible to participate in the study. The perspectives of the participants drawn from the sample pool, and secondary materials to triangulate the data, helped to obtain detailed experiences on strategies nonprofit administrative leaders use to improve the productivity of multigenerational employees (Walker, 2012).

The participants in this study responded to semistructured, open-ended interview questions asked in a face-to-face conversational manner (Powell & Eddleston, 2013). Open-ended responses allow the researcher to see the world from the perspective of the participant at a personal level (Yilmaz, 2013). The interview questions are available in Appendix B. As suggested by Ketefian (2015) and Morse and Coulehan (2015), I interviewed participants behind closed doors to ensure confidentiality.

Ethical Research

After Walden University IRB approval, the research process began. The approval number for this study is 08-16-16-0410249. This study represents Walden University ethical guidelines and follows the Belmont Report protocols to maintain ethical standards (Bromley, Mikesell, Jones, & Khodyakov, 2015). I sent letters of invitation to prospective participants selected through e-mail. The letter of invitation (see Appendix A) explained the intent of this study.

The participants could refuse or withdraw from this study at any time without contacting the researcher directly. To exit this study, the participants were allowed to contact me by phone or email to withdraw. The participants could withdraw from this study even after the conclusion of data collection, and I would honor their request. If the participants wanted to withdraw, I would remove all of their interview notes and recordings from this study by shredding printed information and erasing electronically stored information.

I selected the participants that responded and replied to my email. I contacted the participants by telephone and scheduled interview times and dates that worked best for them and advised participants that their participation in this study is voluntary. Once a participant agreed to participate in this study, I established a relationship with them through follow-up phone calls and emails.

The interviews were conducted in a private office space or by teleconference. The interviews were confidential and scheduled to minimize workplace disruption (Ketefian, 2015; Morse & Coulehan, 2015). All participants voluntarily consented to the

recording of the interview. Data were also collected using handwritten notes to document the interview.

Participants received no incentives to take part in this study (Robinson, 2014). Upon publication of this study, the participants will receive an electronic copy of the completed study on request. To ensure confidentiality of all participants, I used alphanumeric codes from Participant 1 to Participant 6 to prevent disclosure of the participant identities. I also assigned the companies with a fictional name to mask the name of the organization. I will store interview recordings, transcriptions and company documents in a locked storage cabinet on a password-protected flash drive for 5 years to ensure that no one except me has access to confidential data. After 5 years I will destroy the password protected flash drive. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, the researcher omits all confidential information including the company, and the name of the participants from the study (Ketefian, 2015; Morse & Coulehan, 2015).

Data Collection Instruments

In this qualitative multiple case study, I was the primary data collection instrument. I collected data from open-ended interview questions, interview notes, and archival company documents. De Massis and Kotlar (2014) explained interviews provide more details and may make a study insightful for the researcher to collect facts and rich data of a phenomenon. The objective of each interview with the participant was to explore their strategies for improving the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. Interviews represent a natural mode of inquiry, and it is the most common way of collecting data in qualitative research (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Marshall &

Rossman, 2016). Upon receiving approval from the IRB, I conducted semistructured

interviews following an interview protocol to collect data (see Appendix C). The

researcher analyzes repeated themes and patterns in the interviews which are the most

intellectually challenging phase of data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

This study focused on strategies used to improve the productivity of a

multigenerational workforce. Each interview consisted of six open-ended interview

questions covering the perceptions, experiences, and strategies some nonprofit

administrative leaders may use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational

workforce (see Appendix B). An hour maximum time limit for each of the

semistructured interviews. The central research question directed the interview questions

in this study (see Appendix B). Field notes were used to reflect on what worked or not in

gathering data and document unsolicited comments made before and after the interviews

(Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative researchers garner insightful descriptions to

understand people's experiences (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013; Tembo,

Parker, & Higgins, 2013).

Company's documents complemented semistructured interviews for data

collection (Bryde, Broquetas, & Volm, 2013). I requested access to organization's

policies in employee handbook and procedures to obtain a thorough understanding of

strategies used to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. Including

documentation from the employer strengthen the findings, and provide a greater

understanding of the phenomenon (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013).

Administrative leaders emailed or gave me the documents directly. I also reviewed the website of all the organizations for supporting documentation.

Case study researchers benefit from incorporating multiple forms of sources into their data collection strategies through triangulation (Houghton et al., 2013). The researcher should constantly check and recheck the findings from same and different resources (Yin, 2014). If the method of gathering data from multiple sources can verify the findings, this establishes credibility (Houghton et al., 2013).

Member checking served as a tool to assure validity and reliability through confirmation of the extensive data (Brandburg et al., 2013; Myburgh, 2014). Participants were asked to member check the transcript to ensure the explanation of the phenomenon shared in the interview was accurate (Brandburg et al., 2013). A researcher conducts multiple interviews for data collection and member checking to improve the quality and accuracy of the data (Chronister, Marsiglio, Linville, & Lantrip, 2014). I performed member checking by meeting with nonprofit administrative leaders for a second interview to check my data collection techniques and to reach data saturation. When information is unclear while member checking, Marshall and Rossman (2016) noted the researcher may need to probe participants with follow-up questions to collect additional data.

Data Collection Technique

Upon receiving approval from the IRB, I began the data collection. I did not conduct a pilot study. The primary data collection technique was semistructured interviews, interview notes, and documents collection. The interview is a method of data

collection that enables participants to think and talk about their understandings and predicaments (Anyan, 2013; Morse et al., 2014). Interviews may deviate from the organization's actual practices (Yin, 2014). During the interview sessions, participants responded to six semistructured, open-ended interview questions (see Appendix B) in accordance with the interview protocol (see Appendix C). I asked for clarification when I needed a description and details. Responses were recorded utilizing an audio tape, and the audiotaped responses of the participants will remain anonymous (Morse & Coulehan, 2015).

Field notes were taken to reflect on what worked in gathering data and documented observations of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Saldana, 2016). Observation may not always be effective because the participant may have time to change their routine for the researcher (Yin, 2014). Field notes supported evidence collected and provided information to reflect gaining access or entry. Field notes were identified with participant code numbers to merge with interview data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Saldana, 2015). Archival documentation may be subject to shortcomings and bias (Yin, 2014). The researcher needs to be sensitive to the information being inaccurate or incomplete (Yin, 2014). Triangulating research with multiple sources of evidence is the best strategy to understand the organization's actual practices (Yin, 2014; Yin, 2013).

Pre-existing contact with the executive director of the advisory group assisted with gaining access to the participants that are administrative leaders with the appropriate experience. Upon receiving approval from the Walden University IRB, I used the

following process to conduct the proposed study. I gathered contact information of potential participants from the website of the advisory group. An email served as the initial contact with all participants. The email contained information about this study conduct procedure (see Appendix A). All participants responded back via email indicating voluntary agreement to participate in this study. I scheduled interviews with the participants.

At the beginning of each interview, I reiterated the study participant rights. Collected data from face-to-face semistructured interviews and teleconference before importing into NVivo 11 (Glaser & Laudel, 2013). Before importing interview data into NVivo 11, I scheduled another meeting with the participants to review transcripts for errors or missing information. Information was restated or summarized for member checking (Chronister, Marsiglio, Linville, & Lantrip, 2014). As directed by Walden University, I stored interview recordings, transcriptions, and company documents in a locked storage cabinet on a password-protected flash drive for 5 years to ensure that no one except me has access to confidential data. After 5 years, I will erase all electronic files on the computer and shred copies of printed information.

Data Organization Technique

Reflective journals are written documents that learners create as they learn about various events and concepts to gain critical reflection and insight (Davies, Reitmaier, Smith, & Mangan-Danckwart, 2013). According to Davies et al. (2013), who analyzed reflective journals of 59 nursing students for many themes, reflective journals is popular as a learning strategy. I organized the data from this study using an electronic filing

system to enhance organization. The data and supporting document components included (a) interview transcripts and interpretation of each interview data for member checking (b) interview notes, and (c) company documentation. NVivo 11 software is user-friendly and transcribed interview data from the participants (Glaser & Laudel, 2013). The software also assisted with coding and organizing the data into themes (Castleberry, 2014).

I will store data on a password-protected laptop and retain hard copies locked in a cabinet in my home office in accordance with IRB and Walden requirements. I will store data in both electronic and hard copy for 5 years. I will be the only person who will have exclusive access to all data. After the 5-year retention period, I will shred the printed copies of the documents and erase all electronic files on the computer.

Data Analysis

In most studies, qualitative interview data is often the primary strategy to capture the deep meaning and information of experience in participants' own words (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The data analysis process for this multiple case study is methodological triangulation. Semistructured interviews, observations, and company documentation demonstrate methodological triangulation in this study (Cope, 2014). An audio recorder captured the conversations of each in-depth interview. NVivo 11 software assisted with coding and transcribing the data (Glaser & Laudel, 2013). After data collection and post member checking, I triangulated the interview data and company documentation. Analyzing qualitative data involves analyzing line-by-line of interview notes for themes (Nassaji, 2015).

Data analysis is likely to pose numerous challenges in case studies (Marshall et al., 2013; Yin, 2013). A diligent investigator evaluates the adequacy and meaning of collected data (Yin, 2014). The researcher does not disclose names of the organizations or the participants in this study (Morse & Coulehan, 2015). Demographic details and work site descriptions were limited to maximize participant participation. Random participant codes represented each study participant. Utilization of these codes preserved the identity of each of the interviewees. The participant codes were helpful in organizing and classifying the data after completing the interviews (Bishop & Lexchin, 2013). I analyzed and summarized the study results based on the (a) coded transcripts (b) detailed notes, and (c) company documentation. Methodological triangulation is beneficial in providing confirmation of findings, more comprehensive data, increased validity, and enhanced understanding of the phenomenon (Cope, 2014).

Reliability and Validity

The aim of this component was to discuss the role of reliability and validity in achieving a qualitative case research study. Reliability and rigor are quantitative concepts (Cope, 2014). Qualitative and quantitative data differ in methodological approach and quality measures (Cope, 2014). Researchers provide data trustworthiness in qualitative research by including questions that both researchers and reviewers can ask to assess the quality of case studies (Street & Ward, 2012).

The perspectives of qualitative research are credibility and trustworthiness (Cope, 2014). To develop trustworthiness in qualitative research, there are four criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Cope, 2014; Marshall et al.,

2013). Researchers regard validity as truth, fact, or accuracy (Crescentini & Mainardi, 2009). Validity and reliability mean researchers must use proper standards of evidence (Street & Ward, 2012). I mitigated personal bias, not to affect interpretation and analysis of this study, by asking all the participants the same open-ended interview questions, following the interview protocol (see Appendix C). I followed the data collection protocol and included triangulation, member checking, and saturation to increase validity in this study.

Reliability

Qualitative research design allows a researcher to collect and analyze data to understand people experiences (Yilmaz, 2013). Qualitative case studies allow the researcher to collect rich, complex, and detailed perspectives from the participants of the phenomenon (Houghton et al., 2013; Yin, 2013). The interview sessions were recorded to ensure the accuracy of the information (Yin, 2014). I explained the researcher's role in this study and the relationship the researcher has with the participants to ensure reliability. According to Street and Ward (2012), examining multiple sources of data increase reliability in the case study.

The query tools in NVivo 11 was used to provide a comprehensive audit trail during the data collection process to establish dependability (Cope, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013). All the data were managed using the software NVivo 11. Careful notes were maintained throughout the interview process to establish confirmability and provide a rationale for the methodological approach (Houghton et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). Member checking allowed the participants to evaluate and check the transcript for accuracy to

reduce potential bias (Yilmaz, 2013). Blending different elements of information into one paradigm obtain richer interpretations, and enables the formation of accurate conclusions (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

Validity

Researchers define validity as accurately representing what it purports to measure in a study (Crescentini & Mainardi, 2009). Multiple case studies make the study more robust and augment external validity (Barratt et al., 2011). I used methodological triangulation, a tape recorder, interview notes, and member checking for validity. Validity in research with internal and external validity needs to be considered to reduce potential research bias (Barratt et al., 2011). I used the following strategies to achieve internal and external validity. I used member checking to check for accuracy of data and interpretation (Yilmaz, 2013). Semistructured detailed and organized interview questions (see Appendix B) help the researcher probe and capture detailed responses from the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Powell & Eddleston, 2013; Yin, 2014).

To establish creditability, the data collected from participants include a description of people and activities (Cope, 2014; Yilmaz, 2013). Unclear methodological descriptions may lead the reader to discredit the findings of the study (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014). The description of data must be accurate and true to participants. Findings are transferable to other settings if the researcher provides a description of actions, context, people, and events studied (Yilmaz, 2013). Rich and vigorous presentation of the findings enhances transferability so the readers can consider their interpretations (Houghton et al., 2013).

Crescentini and Mainardi (2009) described validity to constructed step-by-step procedures. The use of two or more methods to collect overlapping data is data triangulation (Yin, 2013). Triangulation increases validity and transparency of the findings (Cope, 2014; Crescentini & Mainardi, 2009). Triangulation provides an opportunity to collect data from multiple sources to paint a complete picture (Houghton et al., 2013; Street & Ward, 2012). I collected data from open-ended interview questions, interview notes, observation, and company documents. The researcher ensures data saturation by interviewing participants until they offer no new and relevant information (Crescentini & Mainardi, 2009; Morse et al., 2014). Data saturation is the process where the data collection process no longer offers new information that sparks theoretical insight (Morse et al., 2014).

Transition and Summary

Section 2 presented an in-depth view of the study design, and details of the study plan. Section 2 also provides further detailed information regarding the plan for the research design: (a) restatement of the purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) research participants, (d) research method and design, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection instruments, (h) data collection technique, (i) data organization techniques, (j) data analysis techniques, and (k) reliability and validity of the study.

Section 3 includes interview data and company documents with my interpretation, analysis, and presentation of key themes and patterns. I used Vivo 10 software to gather and analyze information, create codes, and identify themes. Section 3 will further include

application to professional practice, implications for social change, implications for social

change/behaviors, and my personal recommendations for action and further study.

Section 3 will conclude with researcher reflections.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section 3 includes the findings of the research study. In addition, Section 3 also includes an overview of the study, presentation of the findings, application to the professional practice, and implications for social change. This section also includes recommendation for actions, recommendations for further study, and my own reflections. Finally, I conclude with a summary and study conclusion.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some nonprofit administrative leaders may use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. In this study, I collected data from six administrative leaders from different nonprofit organizations in northeast region of the United States through semistructured interviews. The participants provided reliable, valid, and replicable data to help reach data saturation.

I also examined company documents of each participant's organization (see Appendix E). Qualitative researchers collect data to help provide solutions to organizational problems (Arnaboldi, 2013). The documents I reviewed included relevant documents such as policies, employee handbooks, training curriculums, human capital plans, benefits summary plans, core values, onboarding checklists, and memos for new hires (see Appendix E). I also reviewed the website of each company, and used my reflective journal with my notes for each interview to triangulate and confirm interview data. After reviewing and transcribing the data from each interview, I loaded the participants' responses into NVivo 11 software. I coded the data and categorized themes.

The findings of this study included two principle themes that business leaders may use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce.

Based on the research question and analysis of interview responses, as well as company documents (see Appendix E), I identified two principal themes: effective leadership strategies and essential retention strategies to improve productivity. Table 2 shows the occurrence frequency of three sub-themes that were generated from the analysis of data on effective leadership strategies to improve productivity. These sub-themes were (a) communicating and connecting, (b) teamwork and collaboration, and (c) training and development discussed later in the findings, impact the strategies leaders used to improve productivity.

Table 3 shows the occurrence frequency of three sub-themes that generated from the analysis of data on essential retention strategies to improve productivity. The sub-themes were: (a) rewards and recognition, (b) work-life programs, and (c) knowledge sharing and feedback discussed later in the findings, impact the strategies leaders used to improve productivity. The overall analysis of the two principal themes revealed communication, teamwork, training, work-life programs, recognition, knowledge sharing, and feedback positively influenced the productivity of a multigenerational workforce.

Presentation of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies nonprofit administrative leaders may use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. The study participants were six participants who were administrative leaders with at least 5 years of supervisory experience in the nonprofit

industry in northeast region of the United States. I did not use actual names of the

participants; I labeled them P1 through P6.

O'Reilly and Parker (2013) explained that it is essential to interview participants

who have the most knowledge to answer the research questions to reach data saturation.

Data saturation occurred with six interviews of nonprofit administrative leaders. The

study's participants represented a diverse group of executive directors, a chief operating

officer (COO), a vice president, and directors. Participants responded to six

semistructured, open-ended interview questions providing detailed responses regarding

strategies some nonprofit administrative leaders may use to improve the productivity of a

multigenerational workforce. The interviews took place in a private office space or by

teleconference. No interviews lasted longer than 60 minutes.

The sample Case 1 (P1) was composed of the senior director representing

company C1. The sample Case 2 (P2) was composed of the executive director

representing C2. The sample size for Case 3 (P3) was composed of the executive director

representing C3. The sample size for Case 4 (P4) was composed of the director

representing C4. The sample size for Case 5 (P5) was composed of the vice president

representing C5. The sample size for Case 6 (P6) was composed of the chief operating

officer representing C6.

Also, I reviewed previous research, organizational documents, web links,

websites, human resources policies and strategies, and my interview notes to triangulate

and confirm interview data and enhance the rigor of the research study. I labeled the

company documents regarding leadership strategies as *D1* through *D18* (see Appendix

E). Collecting data from multiple sources is better than one single source to compare findings and different perspectives (Yin, 2014).

As reported in Section 2, I loaded the interview data into NVivo 11 software for coding and analysis of themes. I used Yin's 5 step analytic strategy approach to form the basis for analysis of the data collected for this study. Following the collection and analysis of data collected, I reviewed company documents regarding human resource strategies and my reflexive journal to triangulate and confirm the semistructured interview data. I analyzed all the data and identified 12 emergent themes, which I grouped into two principal themes. The two principal themes that emerged from the data addressed the central research question. The two principal themes encompassed effective leadership strategies to improve productivity, and essential retention strategies leaders to improve productivity. The consensus from participants on these two principal themes emerged from the replications in responses represented by its subthemes.

The social constructivist perspective and generational theory drove this research and focused strategies to manage and improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. Berger and Luckmann (1966) social construction of reality concept and Mannheim (1952) hierarchical point of view regarding generation theory was the conceptual framework for this research. I reviewed the frameworks to examine what reality is for the leaders and how they integrate different strategies to improve productivity (Kahlke, 2014).

Differences between generations may influence work, productivity, and motivation of employees (Singh, 2013). In this study, I reviewed the two approaches to

the study findings to gain a better understanding of the strategies leaders use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. Many of the company documents and participant responses supported Berger and Luckman's (1966) and Mannheim's (1952) theories. The overall analysis of the two principal themes revealed communication, recognition, training, and collaboration positively influenced productivity and improve multigenerational job satisfaction, which leads to productivity.

Participants Educational and Professional Background

Participants considered for this study were members of an advisory group. The advisory group consists of leaders that manage nonprofit organizations that provide career and professional development training for women and men in the community from different generations. Six administrative leaders participated in a face-to-face or teleconferenced recorded interviews. The first question asked related to whether the participants' professional and educational background prepared them to manage employees with generational differences (see Table 1).

All the participants had graduate degrees. Some of the participants had postgraduate certifications. The average length of employment ranged from 8 to 40 years among the participants. P1 had 22 years of company tenure and 40 years of experience as a managerial leader. P2 had 5 years of company tenure and 17 years of experience as a managerial leader. P3 had 2 years of company tenure and 30 years of experience as a managerial leader. P4 had 16 years of company tenure and 8 years of experience as a managerial leader. P5 had 20 years of company tenure and over 20 years of experience as a managerial leader. P6 had 20 years of company tenure and over 20 years of

experience as a managerial leader. All the administrative leaders were involved in the operational focus of the business managing multigenerational workers.

Each participant indicated the important role of managing a multigenerational workforce to meet the mission effectively and organizational objectives. The nonprofit workforce comprised an ever-changing and evolving demographic that may have retirees (Baby Boomers) replaced by people 35 years or younger who think, learn, and work differently (Burch & Strawderman, 2014). There was a clear theme across participants from the interviews. The business leaders learned and acquired knowledge on the job about management of a multigenerational workforce. The participants used various HR tools and leadership strategies to improve the productivity of the workforce. The participants had not attended a seminar or training on generational differences.

All participants expressed insights of their educational and professional background. P1 mentioned that his professional career gave him a technical foundation and parameters for understanding and breaking down complexities into simplistic workable forms. It did not necessarily translate into the psychology of workers. P2 mentioned that she read some articles about millennials and post-retirement careers. Similarly, P3, P4, P5 and P6 stated that they acquired work experience and knowledge about human capital as business leaders. P3 also added she learned mediation skills that helped her connect to workers. P4 discussed recognizing some differences in work styles of the older and younger generation to improve their effectiveness.

Similarly, P5 mentioned some older workers in the workforce were retiring, and the importance of understanding generational communication styles and that needs for

technology had evolved. P6 stated his professional and educational background had somewhat prepared him for the management of human capital. His perception of human capital was "one size fit all," and he does not segment the workforce into their generation." P6 also claimed that he was open to learning about generational differences.

Through member checking, P5 shared her experience as a younger manager managing older workers and the need for leaders to "shift their thinking for the new generation entering the workforce." It was mentioned in the literature and confirmed by the participants in this study, that professional knowledge about generational differences may help managers adapt their management styles and human resource practices. The participants' responses align with the research data conducted by Messarra et al. (2016) and Solaja and Ogunola (2016), who stated that some leaders lacked the knowledge to build trust and the talent mix of four generations in the workplace.

All participants discussed creative strategies to improve productivity, morale, and their effectiveness as a leader. Barron, Leask, and Fyall (2014) suggested that leaders develop a better understanding of the characteristics that certain groups of generations possess to adopt appropriate management styles and introduce human resources policies. Consistent with previous research, differences in work values of the new generation may affect employee productivity in the workplace (Chen & Lian, 2015). The findings revealed training of leaders may support human resources strategies and promote productivity within organizations.

Table 1

Responses to Professional and Educational Background

Participants	Participant Responses	Percentage of Responses
Yes	2	33.33%
No	0	0.00%
Somewhat	4	66.67%

Theme 1: Effective Leadership Strategies to Improve Productivity

The subthemes within this section emphasize the importance of communication, teamwork, and training as a leadership strategy to promote a positive work experience to improve organizational productivity (Kleinhans et al., 2015). There were 47 mentions of the three subthemes in the interviews and the company documents. Participant responses resulted in three subthemes of (a) communicating and connecting, (b) teamwork and collaboration, and (c) training and development.

The sub-themes identified in this study were common leadership strategies that successful leaders who manage a multigenerational workforce have in common. Since generational cohorts may have different worldviews, talents, behaviors, and interests, the findings revealed information from the perspective of administrative leaders. Based on the coded responses of the administrative leaders and integration of company documents, I identified the strategies to use supporting the Berger and Luckman (1966) and Mannheim (1952) theories. A social constructivist concept suggests a new way of

thinking about an old problem (Hosking & Bass, 2001). Some leaders who participated

in this study also sought out every cohort voice of the various generations and found

mutual experiences supporting Mannheim (1952) generation theory. Table 2 shows the

occurrence frequency of sub-themes that generated from the analysis of data used by

administrative leaders to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce and

sustain the performance of an organization.

Table 2

Frequency of Sub-Themes for Effective Leadership Strategies to Improve Productivity

Sub-Themes	Reference	Frequency %
Communicating and connecting	18	38.30%
Teamwork and collaboration	18	38.30%
Training & Development	11	23.40%

Communicating and connecting. As indicated in Section 1, administrative

leaders need effective strategies to enhance communication with employees to improve

productivity. The findings of this study were consistent with previous research by

Ghalandri and Paykani (2016), which showed organizational leaders need to maintain

focus on people in the organization. All participants agreed workers are the main

elements and a determinant of success or failure of organizations in reaching their

mission and operational goals (Ghalandri & Paykani, 2016). By fully understanding and

analyzing generational differences an organizational leader may fully influence organizational productivity.

P3 and P4 stated leaders must connect, communicate, and relate to employees because they want to do a good job. P1 expressed the importance of leaders looking at principles and making an adjustment for personality to meet goals. P2 claimed leaders who overcommunicate, respect people needs, and work styles are effective in driving productivity of a multigenerational workforce. P5 explained successful leaders are individuals who are open-minded and listen to workers' feedbacks.

P2 and P5 both emphasized everyone in the workforce regardless of their generation has value and contribution. P3, P4, and P6 proclaimed some managers may need to adjust their style to understand the needs of the workers, to facilitate discussions, and address issues. P5 developed a flyer for new employees that explained professional etiquette and dress code to establish effective interaction with management.

The C3 Employee Handbook indicated the company expects managers to maintain a positive work environment, provide resources, coaching, and support to employees. The findings from the C2 employee handbook, C1 member rights statement, C4 grievance policy, and C5 memo on professional etiquette indicated the company encourages employees of all generation to be actively engaged in making the work environment and atmosphere productive and enjoyable.

The personnel policies are documents that provide guidance on standards of conduct, company standards and operating protocols. Business leaders may change HR practices and policies to motivate and retain the best of the generations (Messarra et al.,

2016; Solaja & Ogunola, 2016). Policies also reduce unethical behavior and provide managerial and operational communication methods (Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, & Pemberton-Jones, 2015).

Participant responses and company documents suggested the company communicates in a fair and respectful manner with employees in the work setting. P1 discussed how important it is for leaders to "get workers to understand their personal responsibility in their professional lives." Pl also indicated leaders should "diffuse the situation and find internal resources to correct the situation." P6 described how leaders enhanced the way they onboard staff so they can be productive faster. P6 also stated in member checking that while managers are communicating more effectively with staff, "managers start from the premise of respect to get results from staff." C6 onboarding checklist suggested management provide employees with an understanding of the mission, culture, and work environment to help them understand their responsibilities.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research and align with the generational theory noted by Gursory et al. (2013) and Vasantha (2016) who suggested leaders need to learn about differences in values and attitudes of generational cohorts to yield environments that integrate generations in the workforce. Employers depend on employee knowledge to help them deliver quality services (Allen, Ericksen, & Collins, 2013). HR practices that reflect the values of employees and supported by the CEO or top leaders increase employee commitment and performance (Allen et al., 2013).

Teamwork & Collaboration. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research by Hernaus and Vokic (2014) that indicated work autonomy,

interaction with others, initiated interdependence and teamwork are job characteristics recognized by knowledge workers across different generations. Stumpf (2014) found organizational leaders whose opinion is of value to workers in developing job-related skills assist organizations in improving productivity and business results. Warburton, Moore, Clune, and Hodgkin (2014) suggested open communication impact engagement to build sustainability for nonprofit organizations. In contrast, Haeger and Lingham (2013) argued leadership styles of some managers need to be taken into account to minimize stress for employees.

P1 stated leadership should not "hinder anyone from a viewpoint because they did not have the opportunity to attend college." P2 explained how important it is for leaders to make sure the workers understand "we are a team" and stated she regularly meets with her staff to discuss goals and accomplishments. P3 emphasized leaders should "care because the employees are not working in the industry for money."

Through member checking, P2 and P3 explained it is challenging when you are a small company with limited opportunities for incentives or career mobility. P4 indicated an open-door policy is an effective strategy for collaboration. P5 added it is not effective when leaders sit back and tell workers to follow their process because this may exclude some workers. P6 emphasized leaders are responsible for monitoring progress while providing good customer service for employees and participants.

In a review of the C5 policy from employee handbook regarding employee suggestions and C6 memo on core values, I triangulated with the interview data by noting that communication to employees encouraging suggestions and work values of the

company instill a sense of team spirit and collaboration without compromising the operational productivity goals.

The findings of this study were consistent with previous research which showed there may be generational differences in perceptions and attitudes in the psychological contract that employees hold with their organization (Vasantha, 2016). Perception of fairness in policies and support from supervisors could explain the lowered intention to quit by employees (Kim & Kao, 2014). The findings from this study were consistent with previous research by Jha and Kumar (2016) which showed open communication, appreciation, and work value improve productivity and commitment for the organization.

Training & Development. Training of human capital might be the backbone of an organization's implementation strategy to increase capability. Organizational leaders may use training to increase the gap in skills from Baby Boomers retiring and promote staff from within to create a competitive edge over competitors (Long & Perumal, 2014). Company website and company documents showed partnership with unions, colleges, and other nonprofit organizations for training across four out of the six participants. C1, C2, C5, and C6 demonstrated management commitment to employee training and development. Complementing the company documents (Staff Training Plan; Leadership Training; Policy on Educational Assistance Program; and, Agenda on Leadership Retreat), responses from participants were as follows: Pl noted the union encouraged on-going training for employees to be successful. P2 added leadership encouraged employees to attend professional development training externally and mandated internal training. P3 noted some of the employees are not open to training because there are no

financial rewards. Through member checking, P3 clarified, there are some employees who are interested in growing and developing their skills and knowledge, but they are a small organization with limited resources. P4 and P6 noted, leaders need to learn continuously as role models for their team. P5 claimed leadership development programs help leaders move staff into management positions when the older workers retire.

The findings confirm the previous study by Alasadi and Sabbagh (2015) which found training program help leaders to make organizational changes necessary to grow and handle increased managerial demands. Organizations that create a mentoring program to integrate the new workforce with the current employee workforce may achieve a better work environment (Cloutier et al., 2015; VanMeter et al., 2013; Young et al., 2013). Valentine and Powers (2013) recommended organizations develop different messages to reach sub-groups of generational cohorts. The training practices suggest opportunities are presented to help employees grow professionally within the organization so they can achieve their maximum potential.

Theme 2: Essential Retention Strategies to Improve Productivity

As presented in Section 1, employers are required to appreciate and respond to the expectations of each employee's potential contribution (Barron et al., 2014). Leadership requires being strategically focused and applying behavioral techniques to attain the best performance from the workforce (Solaja & Ogunola, 2016). The workforce is more diverse than in the past and differences exist in generational cohorts (Jones, 2014). The effect of multigenerational differences may create a need for strategies to promote a positive work experience to reduce threats of high turnover and negative impact on

organizational productivity (Kleinhans et al., 2015). Participants responses resulted with three subthemes of (a) rewards and recognition, (b) work life programs and (c) knowledge sharing and feedback. There were 32 mentions from participant interviews containing the themes of essential multigenerational retention strategies to improve productivity. Table 3 displays the subthemes and frequencies.

Table 3

Frequency of Sub-Themes of Essential Retention Strategies to Improve Productivity

Themes	Reference	Frequency %
Rewards and Recognition	12	38.88%
Work Life Programs	5	14.29%
Knowledge Sharing and Feedback	15	46.88%

Rewards and Recognition. Employees are representative of the organization (Jha & Kumar, 2016). Managers must work to develop engagement of employees in reaching their missions or goals. Engagement encourages positive attitudes and behavior to increase organization performance (Jha & Kumar, 2016). Each of the participants explained some of the strategies used to recognize and retain staff. P1 described how leaders should understand a person's background regardless of the generation, a worker who may be retiring, climbing the career ladder worker or the entry level worker. All participants rewarded employees through encouragement and positive praises. Through member checking, P2 stated the company gives employees annual salary increases. P3 added work values are about how you treat people. Through member checking, P3 added

there is some apathy because the company cannot provide additional incentives or compensation beyond what comes from the union. C6 company documentation on Human Capital Plan proposed that developing employees, and recognition programs are strategies the company has taken seriously to revitalize the workforce.

      Work Life Programs. All six organizations offered various benefits promoting work-life balance, including paid time off. Four out of the six organizations offered flexible work hours, consideration to come in early and leave early, take a longer lunch hour, benefits, and the opportunity for management staff to work at home (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 & P6). Consistent with generational research cohorts differed in the areas of hard work (Van der Walt et al., 2016) meaning new and current employees may need to be on-boarded, mentored, and coached to maintain ethical practices and principles.

      In addition to health insurance, one organization redesigned their retirement plan (P5) which served as a huge benefit for employees (Retirement Plan). While P2, P3, P5 and P6 participants offer telecommuting benefits to administrative staff, it is not a company policy utilized throughout the organization. P2 stated, "we teach in a classroom, so it is limited to flexible work schedules or part-time status." P3 stated leaders "give extra time for lunch and allow people to leave early as a reward." P5 and P6 both revealed telecommuting was an option for top administrative staff. Through member checking, P6 indicated Wellness and Sport Day programs bring employees together to have fun outside of the office environment. In reviewing the company documentation, there is no information validating P2, P3, P5 and P6 claim regarding telecommuting program. In my reflexive journal, I noted some leaders indicated the

practice of telecommuting was not a company policy. More studies indicated emphasis placed on work-life balance, noting younger generational cohorts may have different priorities (Barron et al., 2014; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014; Valentine & Powers, 2013).

Consistent with previous research, administrative leaders who implement programs to improve morale and flexibility may improve productivity (Becton et al., 2014). Gilley, Waddell, Hall, Jackson, and Gilley (2015) study on work-life balance and generational differences indicated management may impact an employee's level of balance through their action and support. Kultalahti and Viitala (2014) study found work-life was a critical factor for the younger generation. Flexible arrangements and remote work locations may be worth testing with the millennials (Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014). Fundamentally, work-life programs is an important and valuable element that can promote organizational productivity.

Knowledge Sharing and Feedback. All six participants mentioned knowledge sharing or feedback as an effective strategy to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. P1 mentioned the "younger and older employees needed to learn and listen to each other. Older workers fear replacement if they train younger workers." P2 and P5 mentioned leaders surveyed staff for feedback and suggestions as a management tool. P5 also stated leaders use workgroups to solicit feedback from employees from different departments on various work issues. Likewise, P4 indicated she create opportunities for interns to work in teams to share prior experience to learn from each other.

P5 also explained leaders are automating HR systems to communicate effectively across work sites and "the younger generation are technologically savvy, and they want to work from anywhere, so they are productive." P6 mentioned the leaders use sales force technology to chat with employees as a customer relations tool. In a review of the C5 policy from employee handbook on employee suggestions, C5 agenda for safety committees and C6 human capital plan, I triangulated with the interview data by noting that knowledge sharing has a positive effect on productivity and minimize misunderstanding in a multigenerational workforce.

Consistent with previous research, the meaning of work varies by members of different generations (Napoli, 2014; Zupan et al., 2015). Napoli et al. (2014) study on generational differences with 12 focus groups found the generational paradigm examined other factors, such as social media use. The findings of this study showed the differences in the meaning of work and work expectations may influence leadership strategies. Likewise, Pilotte, Bairaktarova, and Evangelou (2013) agreed with Napoli et al. (2013) and added different generations may prefer traditional or high-tech communication. All the participants preferred face to face meetings for knowledge sharing and to identify ideas. P2 shared there are "a lot of emails sent to each other for transparency," and there are monthly, bi-weekly, and one to one meetings with senior staff for knowledge sharing. P3 discussed leaders meet with staff and share the rationale for business decisions in face-to-face meetings. P5 discussed leaders at the company use work groups to develop strategies to resolve business problems across work sites.

Older employees may be mentors for the younger employees (Wok & Hashim, 2013). Wok and Hashim's (2013) also believed some older workers may be regarded as a liability because they may not always be good team players. Through member checking, P1 agreed older workers have a lot of knowledge and experience to pass on to the younger generation. "Collective impact may change how society views multigenerational differences in the workforce."

As knowledge shift from retiring Boomers to the younger cohorts, business leaders may need to increase awareness of ideas and that impact employment relationships to retain the younger workers (Burch & Strawderman, 2014). Some researchers argued there may be an increasing need for organizations and younger managers to appreciate what motivates older workers (Holian, 2015; Joe, Yoong, & Patel, 2013). Baby boomers are staying in the workplace and working beyond the ages of 65 to 70. The knowledge of the older workers may be a tool for competitive advantage. Small to medium enterprises may be vulnerable when they lose the knowledge of the older workforce (Joe et al., 2013).

The participants' answers supported the conceptual frameworks for this study. The social constructivist approach examines the dynamic process created and recreated by individuals as they act upon common beliefs conceived as reality (Otubanjo (2012). Kyriakidon (2011) also identified the constructivist framework as a link to understand social beliefs, feelings, and actions among various parties. From a social constructivist viewpoint, knowledge is the meaning people attribute to their world which may help

business leaders increase awareness of different strategies to improve productivity and

sustain their businesses (Kahlke, 2014; Kornhaber, de Jong, & McLean, 2015).

Hosking and Bass (2001) stressed the social constructivist method is about

overcoming resistance by not putting more energy into doing more of the same. The

social constructivist approach is always looking at relationships as an ongoing process of

coordinating (Hosking & Bass, 2001). Likewise, Hachtman (2008) suggested the social

constructivist theory is part of a dynamic process, and characteristics of members of a

generation may change over time.

The generational theory involves generational cohorts in the same phase of life.

The cohorts have boundaries fixed by peer personality (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Mannheim (1952) created the theory with a fundamental tenet that generations are not

monolithic (Lyons, Urick, Kuron, & Schweitzer, 2015). Strauss and Howe (1991)

defined phases in terms of central social experiences. Diverse concepts of each

generation may influence work, productivity, and motivation of workers (Singh, 2013).

All six of the participants confirmed generational differences may impact productivity in

their business.

As noted by previous researchers the millennials entering the workforce may have

different work styles, perceptions, attitudes, and communication preferences than the

generation that is retiring (Napoli, 2014; Valentine & Powers, 2013; Zhu, 2013).

Understanding the specific characteristics that differentiate the behaviors of each

generation may help to formulate management and retention strategies to improve

productivity and business practices. In conclusion, Barron et al. (2014) indicated

administrative leaders may have to reevaluate their business practices for the primary generations in the workforce.

The results from this study revealed administrative leaders addressed management of employees in a contemporary workforce by following well-established policies and practices to address communication, training, teamwork, and essential retention strategies. Competition for scarce skills is a challenge in the nonprofit sector. Developing strategies to retain and motivate multigenerational workers with scarce skills may involve various effective multigenerational leadership skills and essential retention strategies to improve business operations (Kabungaidze, Mahlatshana, & Ngirande, 2013), relations, and productivity.

Application for Professional Practice

The study's findings were significant to professional business practice in several ways. The findings of this study revealed administrative leaders' views within six companies about the strategies business leaders may use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. CEOs seek to understand and consider strategies that may have an influence on productivity in their organizations (Giberson & Miklos, 2013; Rajput, Marwah, Balli, & Gupta, 2013) and the results may be used as a guide to assist in improving their strategies and practices. The findings from this study may also demonstrate how leaders implement policies and practices centered on communication, teamwork, training and development, and retention of a multigenerational workforce. Data from this study may provide business leaders with the foundational knowledge to assess whether their workplace practices and policies maximize productivity within their

organization. Differences in work styles, perceptions, and attitudes of three generational

cohorts may affect work environment and society. The leader's action may affect the

effectiveness of teams and influence retention (Mahdi & Almsafir, 2014;

Umamaheshwari & Krishnan, 2015). This study may also be of value to business leaders

in improving their professional knowledge to develop corrective measures that may

improve Human Resources Management (HRM) practices and business policies to

improve the productivity of workers in the workforce (Solaja & Ogunola, 2016; Messarra

et al., 2016).

The results of this study supported the generational and social constructive

theories. The results indicated the strategies leaders use to improve a multigenerational

workforce. The findings also suggested there is a growing recognition of the existence of

emerging cohorts of employees as an increasingly important element of the workforce by

leaders (Barron et al., 2014). Participants in this study were administrative business

leaders in an advisory group. The participants that participated in this study utilized

various strategies ranging from traditional approaches, such as, connecting with people

and redesigning benefit programs which worked well for engagement to the use of

contemporary communication, such as, work groups and virtual offices for all

generations (Barron et al., 2014).

Moreover, the research findings revealed two key principal themes. Based on the

research outcomes, administrative business leaders need to develop key strategies for

changes in leadership which focus on communication and connecting, teamwork and

collaboration, training and development, rewards and recognition, work-life programs,

knowledge sharing and feedback from employees to improve productivity. Based on the conclusions and recommendations of this study, business leaders may gain relevant business knowledge, enabling them to review their internal policies, and identify strategies to improve business policies and redesign HR practices.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this multiple case study may have several implications for social change. Due to tough competition in the nonprofit industry, employees are considered the heart and soul of the organization (Umamaheshwari & Krushnan, 2015). The multigenerational workforce is essential to operate and provide services to the stakeholders in the community. Two of the most difficult challenges facing nonprofit organizations are the knowledge transfer from Baby Boomers who are retiring to their younger replacements and retention of the younger workers (Burch & Strawderman, 2014). A multigenerational workforce has many rewards and challenges (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014). All generations want to be valued, respected, and treated well by management and colleagues. Becton et al. (2014) agreed with this perspective and suggested designing flexibility in HR practices and strategies to meet the needs and values of all employees. The findings of this study may provide useful insight and awareness of corrective measures that may improve current operational policies and practices and relationships so the generations can learn from each other to maximize the organization's success. This study's findings and recommendations may serve as a basis for positive social change.

The corrective measures and strategies may effectively work to increase awareness of generational differences and accommodate these differences to satisfy the employees who differ by roles, needs, and their motivation to serve stakeholders in the community (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014). The work rules may change, as the generational mix changes. Intergenerational relationships may pose numerous challenges for both leaders and direct reports (Haeger & Lingham, 2013). Age differences and leader-direct report perceptions of one another may affect work attitudes (Haeger & Lingham, 2013; Hillman, 2014). Improvement of business policies and practices may foster a positive perception of the organizations and its leaders to the clients served in the community.

The role of the leader involves directing individuals toward the business objectives and inspiring people to achieve organizational success (Solaja & Ogunola, 2016). Nonprofit administrative leaders have limited resources, and the loss of productivity is high in financial and non-financial terms. Disseminating the findings of this study to CEOs, board members, and community business leaders may help improve strategies for communication, training, and development to improve the work environment. Organizational leaders may use the results of this study to develop a greater understanding of strategies for interventions to improve productivity and generate additional ideas to continuously improve operations to address gaps in organization performance (Hillman, 2014; Umamaheshwari & Krishnan, 2015).

Nonprofit administrative leaders need human capital with capabilities and skills to sustain the mission of the organization. Disseminating the results of this study to CEOs and administrative leaders may heighten awareness of how to adapt to the new wave of

workers in the workplace to improve productivity (VanMeter, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts, 2013). Furthermore, this study constituted an addition to the body of knowledge about the strategies administrative leaders may use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce.

Recommendations for Action

Organizational leaders across various industries are facing the dilemma of maintaining a productive workforce comprised of three or more generations. As the findings revealed, organizations may need to look beyond a one-size fit all management style and retention strategy to develop and retain talent in a multigenerational workforce (du Plessis et al., 2013; Solaja & Ogunola, 2016). Young et al. (2013) found job satisfaction may vary greatly between generations even when similarities exist between members of generations. Business programs introduced in the workplace may require on-going monitoring.

The implementation of various creative and innovative solutions may improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce (Solange & Ogunola, 2016). Three recommended strategies suggested for future and current leaders from this study: (a) organizational leaders may need to learn different management styles to adapt to the new generation of workers that think, learn, respond, and work differently than Boomers. It is essential that older and younger employees work together for knowledge sharing to help each generation learn from each other and maximize the performance of the workforce. The Baby Boomers and Generation Y may both provide institutional knowledge, improve the message and communication of work expectations through job descriptions,

development plans, training, benefits, and recognition programs. Tools come in different forms, such as training, face-to-face communication, knowledge transfer, work-life programs, work groups and benefit programs. Enhance technological know-how as a tool for generating knowledge sharing (Solaja & Ogunla, 2016). Organizational leaders need to accommodate tools and new skillsets between younger and older workers to ensure they can perform the job. Communicate expectations and facilitate on-going training of employees on all level to build staff capability to change and learn quickly. Younger workers value frequent feedback and cooperative learning (Twenge, 2013), (c) train leaders with the capacity to create, solve problems quickly, and incorporate ideas of all generations to add value and direct business affairs. Survey employees for suggestions on how to engage current workers, and develop tools, including technology to reduce turnover. As the generational mix changes, organizational leaders who ask questions on best practices and solicit feedback from engaged workers may influence productivity.

In general, the dissemination of the findings from this study may be beneficial to key community stakeholders, including business leaders, and corporate executives. The following community leaders will receive a summary of the study results via email: research participants and executive director of the advisory group. Whenever possible, I may attend panel discussions, lectures, and seminars to publicize the research results. I will work with the chair of my doctoral study committee to submit a manuscript for publication to a boarder audience.

Recommendations for Further Research

The focus of this study was administrative leaders who possess experience on strategies for improving the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. The study was specific to administrative leaders who were members of an advisory group from different nonprofit organizations. The sample consisted of six administrative leaders as they represented various perspectives on strategies of a multigenerational workforce. I noted several study limitations and key areas for further research around improving the productivity of a multigenerational workforce.

Limitations are potential weaknesses that could affect the study outcome (Brutus, et al., 2013; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). In this qualitative multiple case study, I identified several limitations. This study is a qualitative, multiple case study, where I was the researcher collecting, and interpreting data of participants lived experiences. The sample size of the participants is a limitation. This limitation is common to qualitative research. The characteristics, lifestyle, education, and priorities of the participants may be different from other organizational members (Binsiddig & Alzahmi, 2013). Future research could include the selection of a larger sample size of participants without professional degrees, who are not in leadership positions. In this study, I focused on six nonprofit leaders in an advisory group in the northeast region of the United States. I recommend exploring different types of advisory groups in different geographical locations to determine if data reveal similar or different results.

Reflections

As the generational mix changes, the current research is crucial now when administrative leaders may need to modify and develop new leadership strategies and ideas to attract and retain every generation (Holian, 2015; Solaja & Ogunola, 2016; Vasantha, 2016). Before conducting this research, I had no preconceived ideas regarding the study topic. I approached the process with an unbiased approach and relied on the data to address the answer to the research question.

The administrative leaders were forthcoming in sharing their perceptions and lived experiences of improving the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. Throughout the data collection process, I utilized the data collection protocol (see Appendix C) and remained neutral and focused on the task of the researcher. During data analysis, I carefully examined the data to develop key themes.

The findings derived from the data represented the essence of the responses that led to a better understanding of the research question. This research study has been rewarding and provided new skills and knowledge as a researcher and practitioner on managing a multigenerational workforce. Multigenerational differences and its impact on productivity have been an area of focus because it incorporates my specialization of leadership. I felt enlightened by the results of the study and learned new knowledge from the findings.

The research participants shared their perceptions and personal experiences about a new phenomenon in today's workforce. Other scholars researched multigenerational differences and its impact on productivity from different viewpoints in different

industries (Jones, 2014; Patterson, 2014). However, the challenges and opportunities of generational differences continue to manifest themselves in workplace settings. My experience helped me to understand the topics of multigenerational differences and productivity are complex. The topic may change the work rules, management paradigm, and employment relationships.

Conclusion

Administrative leaders should consider investing time to understand the significance of this generational shift to effectively work with the multigenerational workforce (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014). It is imperative for leaders to understand each generational prototype for deeper connections (Lyons et al., 2015) to affect worker productivity. Leaders should assess and evaluate the workforce and how the organization supports its workforce (Soloja & Ogunola, 2016). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to answer the central research question: What strategies may some nonprofit administrative leaders use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce? In a changing workforce, leaders may have to do more with less and awareness of generational differences may increase knowledge of the changing nature of work, careers, and employment relationships. Six administrative leaders in an advisory group in northeast region of the United States participated in semistructured interviews, and a review of company documents augmented the data. I collected data using semistructured interviews and triangulated the data by reviewing articles, personnel policies, websites, and HR strategies.

After collecting and analyzing the data, two principal themes emerged from the data: effective multigenerational leadership strategies and essential retention strategies to improve productivity. The initial findings are strategies leaders may need to manage a multigenerational workforce. Leaders need to decide which innovative tools and strategies are most effective to address the challenges of maximizing talent and affecting the productivity of a multigenerational workforce (Roodin & Mendelson, 2013). Administrative leaders who manage multigenerational workers may need to be aware of differences to prevent and minimize conflict and misunderstandings in the workforce (Van der Walt et al., 2016). Utilizing different management approaches may help workers to feel empowered in the multigenerational environment (Van der Walt et al., 2016).

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Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in Research Form

Greetings Mr. or Mrs. **XXX**

A researcher named Grace E. Beasley will conduct this study, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You are invited to voluntarily take part in a research study that focuses on the perceptions and lived experience of administrative leaders regarding work values, strategies, employee productivity and leadership styles. The purpose of this study is to ascertain the strategies that business leaders may use to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce. The study will include a series of interviews with nonprofit administrative leaders. Your name or any other information that could personally identify you will not be included in any reports of this study.

Walden University's approval number for this study is **08-16-16-0410249** and it **expires on August 15, 2017**. If you are agreeable to participate in this research, please contact me directly by e-mail with the words *I consent*. By doing so, you are agreeing to voluntarily participate in this study. Please feel free to email me if you have any questions or would like additional information. Please respond at your earliest convenience indicating your decision. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Grace E. Beasley

Doctorate of Business Administration Candidate

Appendix B: Semistructured Interview Questions

The interview will consist of the following questions:

1. Tell me about your professional and educational background and do you believe your professional and educational background prepared you to manage employees with generational differences?

2. What strategies do you use to improve the productivity of your multigenerational workforce?

3. What behaviors exhibited in the workplace do you think are the most critical to assist in improving the productivity of your multigenerational workforce?

4. How do your leadership skills drive productivity in your nonprofit business?

5. How do your work values affect your ability to retain your multigenerational workforce?

6. What additional information would you like to provide that we have not addressed already, or I have not asked you about your strategies to improve the productivity of your multigenerational workforce?

Template updated 1/31/2016.

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview Title: The purpose of this study is to explore strategies nonprofit

administrative leaders use to improve productivity of a multigenerational workforce

1. Introduce self to the participant(s).

2. The study participants will have previously read the informed consent

   form and provided their consent via email, agreeing to participate in this

   research. I will thank the participant for their agreement to participate in

   this research study. I will also provide information regarding the member

   checking process that will follow the transcription and interpretation of the

   data. Following transcript interpretation, I will schedule time with the

   interview participants for member checking procedures to assist with

   ensuring the reliability and validity of the data.

3. Present consent form, go over contents, answer questions and concerns of

   participant(s).

4. Turn on an audio recorder, and I will note the date, time, and location.

   Get a pencil and pad ready for the first response.

5. Follow the procedures to introduce participant(s) with pseudonym/coded

   identification, e.g., "respondent R01' on the audio recording, documented

   on my copy of the consent form and the interview will begin.

6. Begin interview with question #1; follow through to the final question.

7. Follow up with additional questions.

8. End interview sequence; discuss member checking with participant(s)

9. Thank the participant(s) for their time and participation in this study. Reiterate contact information for follow up questions and concerns from participants.

10. End protocol.

Appendix D: Observation & Field Notes

Observation/Field Notes: Strategies to improve the productivity of a multigenerational workforce.

Setting:

Role of Observer: Nonparticipant Observer

Date and Time:

Length of Observation:

Description	Reflective Notes/Questions

This form will be duplicated as needed.

Appendix E: Case Study Documents

Document Identification	Description
Document 1-C1	Member Rights, September, 2016
Document 2-C1	Member Benefits & Discounts, September, 2016
Document 3-C2	Employee Handbook, October, 2014
Document 4-C2	Observation of notes on flip chart paper, September, 2014
Document 5-C2	Staff & Executive Training, September, 2016
Document 6-C3	Employee Handbook, July, 2015
Document 7-C4	Code of Ethics-National Assoc. of Social Workers
Document 8-C4	Grievance Policy from Employee Handbook, September, 2016
Document 9-C5	Suggestions Policy from Employee Handbook, April, 2009
Document 10-C5	Flyer on Professional Etiquette for Job Candidates, October, 2016
Document 11-C5	Agenda for Safety Committee, October, 2016
Document 12-C5	Leadership Training at City University, April, 2016
Document 13-C5	Educational Assistance Policy from Employee Handbook, April, 2009
Document 14-C5	Benefit-Retirement Plan, April, 2009
Document 15-C6	Human Capital Plan, October 2014-2017
Document 16-C6	Onboarding Check List, October 2014-2017
Document 17-C6	Core Values, October 2014-2017
Document 18-C6	Agenda for Leadership Retreat, October 2014-2017