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James Irvine Greene, Jr.

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Acquisition and Retention of Skilled Employees for Industries in Giles County, Tennessee

by

James I. Greene, Jr.

MS, Belmont University, 2004

BS, The University of Alabama in Huntsville, 2000

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

July 2017

Abstract

The U.S. manufacturing industry produces products that ship all over the world. Because of the shortage of skilled labor, some manufacturing human resource professionals lack the strategies and processes necessary to acquire and retain skilled employees. Guided by Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies and processes that manufacturing human resource professionals use to acquire and retain skilled employees. Data were gathered from a population of manufacturing human resource professionals in Giles County, Tennessee from individual interviews; focus group; and participants' internal documents, public documents, and websites. Transcribed interview data and focus group data, along triangulated data from other gathered documents, were inductively coded following Yin's approach to analysis. Six themes emerged as key strategies to acquire and retain skilled employees: company culture, succession, benefits, finding new employees, incentives, and employee attraction and retention. These findings may contribute to improving business practices in manufacturing industries or human resource management. The implications for positive social change include the potential for the community to become more attractive for other industries and improve the quality of life for individuals who reside in the community.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my family, Melissa (wife), Lex (son), and Shelby (daughter), as well as my mother Sue (deceased) who gave me heart, my father (Jimmy) who gave me business and logic, and Lydia (sister) who is passionate in all undertakings in life. I know without them, I would not be the person I am today. Also, I would like to thank God, who has not only blessed my life but also provided me with inspiration and fortitude to complete this laborious, yet fulfilling journey.

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To my committee chair Dr. George Bradley, thank you for stepping in and helping me complete this journey. I was at a low point in this process when we met, but you were able to pick me up and get me to the finish line. Dr. Theresa Neal, as my second committee member, you have been with me from the very start. Your tutelage and oversight allowed me to keep faith in the program. I knew once I passed your sharp eyes the rest would be downhill. You both have been part of and made a monumental change in my life.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Since 2010, and for the first time in the United States, four generations are taking part in the Tennessee workforce (Deepthi & Baral, 2013). Previous scholars have explored how each generation had its unique desires and reasons to be a productive and stable workforce (Schweyer, 2015). Though the research regarding workforce acquisition and retention is prevalent throughout the United States, little information on acquisition and retention exists for the Giles County, Middle Tennessee area. Without the necessary workforce, companies within the Giles County Tennessee area could not compete in the global market.

Background of the Problem

Beginning in the 21st century, manufacturing human resource professionals faced an increasingly aging workforce, a lack of appropriately qualified employees, and difficulty recruiting and maintaining the workforces because of the retirement of the Baby Boomer generation (Mallory, 2015). Levanon, Cheng, and Paterra (2014) indicated that by 2022, individuals older than 50 would account for over one-third of the entire workforce. Manufacturing human resource professionals now understand what strategies are necessary to acquire and retain skilled employees to replace an aging workforce.

The number of skilled employees in the workforce has been declining from the 1980s to the 2010s (Hemphill & Perry, 2012). Organizations must address the issue of a declining skilled workforce because unless an organization has the necessary workforce to be productive, it cannot be competitive (Hemphill & Perry, 2012). Manufacturing human resource professionals who attempted to educate or train the workforce have

received mixed results (Neumark, Johnson, & Mejia, 2013). After training, the newly skilled individual often relocates or moves to a different company for higher wages (Neumark et al., 2013). In the 1980s, the function of human resource professionals was typically administrative or supportive (Froese, 2013). The human resource role started to change in the 1990s as personnel shortages affected organizations' strategic priorities (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2013). Due to the need for skilled employees, human resource professionals started to help define and develop organizational core competencies (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2013). Since the 1990s, companies have transitioned into talent wars, where manufacturing human resource professionals compete for individuals who have specialized knowledge and expertise (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2013; Froese, 2013; Sparrow, Farndale, & Scullion, 2013). An organization's manufacturing human resource professionals must have a better understanding of not only how to acquire new talent, but also how to entice these individuals to stay with the organization. Manufacturing human resource professionals must continue to assess and overcome the typical plights businesses encounter. Manufacturing human resource professionals must retain skilled employees in an aging workforce with a lack of skilled employees by finding ways to acquire and retain younger generation workers (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2013).

Problem Statement

Due to the aging workforce in the United States, more individuals are reaching retirement age and leaving skilled labor positions unfilled (Duxbury & Halinski, 2014). As a result, companies within the United States are having difficulty maintaining an adequate workforce (Neumark et al., 2013). Hogan and Roberts (2015) projected that

700,000 skilled labor positions would go unfilled in the United States by 2024. The general business problem was that businesses might be less profitable and could fail without adequately skilled employees (Henderson, 2015). The specific business problem was that some manufacturing human resource professionals lack the strategies and processes to acquire and retain skilled employees.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore the strategies and processes that manufacturing human resource professionals use to acquire and retain skilled employees. The study population consisted of manufacturing human resource professionals from three different organizations who successfully used strategies to acquire and retain skilled employees in Giles County, Tennessee. The study may contribute to positive social change by providing local manufacturing human resource professionals with the strategies and processes to acquire and retain skilled labor. A town or community may become more desirable to other manufacturers when an adequate skilled workforce is in place (Hogan & Roberts, 2015). New or vibrant manufacturers reduce unemployment and increase the standard of living and tax base (Hanif, Khalid, & Khan, 2013). A higher tax base allows for better education and municipal improvements that may enrich the lives in the area (Henderson, 2015).

Nature of the Study

Given the diverse research methods and designs available, a researcher must consider which methodology is best to answer the topic under investigation. Quantitative, qualitative, or combinations of both are available methods in scholarly

research (Yin, 2014). I selected a qualitative method for the study. Qualitative studies consist of a process of naturalistic inquiry, the perspectives of others, discovery-oriented studies, and the study of natural or complex phenomena (Bernad, 2013). Researchers use qualitative methods to create valid results by describing and interpreting patterns in words, pictures, sounds, and other means of representation (Yin, 2014). My exploration of the strategies and processes to acquire and retain skilled employees warranted a qualitative approach for the study. Quantitative and mixed methods were not ideal for this study. Researchers using these methods deal with numerical representations and manipulation of observations (Anfara & Mertz, 2015). In a quantitative and mixed-methods study, researchers use empirical information expressed in the numerical form (Stake, 2010). In this study, I included the use of expressive data, such as emotion and feeling, which I could not gain from quantitative data.

I selected the multiple-case study design for this study. Researchers use case studies to explore an organization or individual through complex relationships, communities, interventions, or programs. A complex unit under analysis may require a multiple-case study design (Yin, 2014). Alternative qualitative research designs include ethnographic, Delphi, and phenomenological studies (Rimando et al., 2015). I determined these designs were inappropriate for the study. Ethnography was not an appropriate design because my research purpose was not the investigation of the shared beliefs and practices of culture-sharing group, as is the focus of ethnography, according to Takyi (2015). Delphi was not suitable because this study did not involve forecast or predictions, which Mont, Kosa, Macdonald, Elliot, and Yaffe (2015) noted as the primary

focus of Delphi studies. Though the phenomenological research may seem appropriate, the psychological focus of the phenomenological tradition did not align with the research problem. A multiple-case study design was ideal because it facilitated the investigation of the research question within the natural setting in which the phenomenon occurred, which Yin (2014) stated is the primary function of multiple-case study designs.

Research Question

What are the strategies and processes that manufacturing human resource professionals use to acquire and retain skilled employees?

Interview and Focus Group Questions

1. What processes do you use to motivate your skilled employees?
2. What processes do you use to retain skilled employees?
3. What strategies do you use to retain skilled employees?
4. What process and strategy are the most effective in retaining skilled employees?
5. What processes do you use to hire skilled employees?
6. What strategies do you use to hire skilled employees?
7. What process and strategy are the most effective in hiring skilled employees?
8. What processes do you use for succession planning?
9. What strategies do you use for succession planning?
10. What process and strategy are the most effective in succession planning?

Conceptual Framework

I used the hierarchy of needs and two-factor theories as the conceptual lenses through which to view this study. Maslow (1943) introduced the hierarchy of needs theory. Maslow suggested that the lower tiers of the hierarchy are needs that are more fundamental and a person will tend to abandon a higher tier need to meet a lower tier need. Herzberg, in work on two-factor theory, discussed job retention and how independent factors within the workplace cause satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). According to Herzberg et al. (1959), motivators are satisfying factors and the lacks of hygiene are dissatisfying factors.

Manufacturing resource professionals embrace a variety of conceptual theories in the United States; those of Herzberg et al. (1959) and Maslow (1943) are predominant (Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, & Labat, 2015). Maslow's theory was the foundation of this study because this theory is seminal to retention and acquisition theories (Sankar, 2015). Using the combination of Maslow's and Herzberg's theories as the conceptual framework for this study enabled me to explore (a) what types of need fulfillment human resource professionals in manufacturing have identified that motivate employees to join and stay with a company, (b) what factors enhance or diminish employee job satisfaction, and (c) what strategies and processes human resource professionals have developed and used to acquire and retain skilled employees.

Operational Definitions

Baby Boomers: Members of the workforce born shortly after World War II between 1946 and 1964 (Holt, Marques, & Way, 2012).

Cohort: A group of people who have similar related experiences and times (Wilson, 2015).

Experience: In a phenomenological sense, this term refers to a lived experience. Experience is an individual's conscious awareness from his or her personal perspective (Hernaus & Vokic, 2014).

Generation: A group of people or cohorts who have similar age experiences, as the group moves through time together (Wilson, 2015).

Generation X/Gen X/Thirteenth Generation: These interchangeable terms refer to any individual born between 1961 and 1981 (Holt et al., 2012).

Generational perspective: The outlook of a generational group's commonly shared behaviors and attitude towards a topic is generational perspective (Litzinger & Dunn, 2013).

Generation Y/Millennials: Those born between 1982 and 2002 (Holt et al., 2012).

Multigenerational workforce: A labor pool that consists of multiple generations of workers. Each generation has characteristic motivators and expectations that direct psychosocial behaviors at work (Litzinger & Dunn, 2013).

Relational rewards: Intangible rewards, including any complex set of relationships, such as a company's culture, work-life balance, and social atmosphere (Verma, 2015).

Transactional rewards: Those of a financial nature but include anything tangible (Verma, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Data collection involves making assumptions (Anfara & Mertz, 2015). Assumptions are items believed to be true but not confirmed (Cook, 2012). For this study, I assumed that the demographic shift in the labor force would be a significant phenomenon affecting a majority of businesses and organizations. According to Mallory (2015), the researcher must trust that respondents will be true to the interview process. I assumed that the respondents would take the necessary time to comprehend the interview questions and answer accordingly and that the participants answered truthfully and did not attempt to skew the research. I also assumed the multigenerational workforce would create changes in corporate culture and dynamics.

Limitations

A limitation is an aspect of a study that the scholar has no control over (Balcanoff, 2013). The number of manufacturing human resource managers who participated in the study may have limited the study. If too few or too many participated, it could skew the findings because of the number of or similarity between participants. The data collection was dependent on an interview, focus group, and document review process. Multiple factors limit an interview or focus group, such as time, honesty, or willingness to participate.

Delimitations

Delimitations are limits placed on the study by the scholar (Cook, 2012). The geographic scope of the study was Giles County, Tennessee. The industry emphasis was

on manufacturing industries that require skilled employees for production. The interviews, focus group, and document review for the study consisted of manufacturing human resource professionals and the document they provided who worked in the selected region and industries.

Significance of the Study

Manufacturing human resource professionals in the Giles County, Tennessee area cannot recruit and retain a stable workforce because of the aging workforce and the lack of younger skilled individuals (D. Speer, personal communication, March 15, 2013). As the Baby Boomers age, a higher percentage of their cohorts will either be unwilling or unable to be a part of the workforce (Cook, 2012). The age and skill gap created issues for organizations that need to maintain a stable and skilled workforce (Hernaus & Vokic, 2014). Manufacturing human resource professionals are experiencing difficulty acquiring and retaining skilled workers (Hanif et al., 2013).

Value to Business and Social Effects

Business leaders are striving to remain competitive while keeping operational costs down. Employee recruitment and replacement are costly to any human resource department (Ismail, 2016). Ismail (2016) outlined additional tools to acquire and retain a younger skilled workforce. The loss of production and the time and resources required to fill vacant positions negatively affects profit and potential growth (Ismail, 2016). The findings of this study may provide businesses and organizations in the area a competitive advantage.

Contribution to Business Practice

Acquiring and retaining a workforce has become a significant issue for the government and private sector leaders (George, 2015). The generation entering the workforce has more contractual concerns than its predecessors (Ismail & El Nakkache, 2014). Manufacturing human resource professionals are experiencing difficulty satisfying the needs of a multiple generation workforce (George, 2015). The results of this study may help companies in Giles County, Tennessee to acquire and retain multiple generational cohorts.

Implications for Social Change

A productive and stable workforce is necessary for success and survival of any nation, region, or city. When a human resource professional maintains or improves the workforce, it increases the likelihood of the organization being more competitive (Nikoloski, 2016). A competitive advantage makes it easier for the organization to stay in business or grow (Ismail, 2016).

A key to continued success for any business is access to a highly skilled workforce (George, 2015). Maintaining an adequate workforce is becoming more difficult because of the demographic changes in age, sex, and race in U.S. society (Olander, Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, & Heilmann, 2015). Because the aim of this study was to explore the strategies that some manufacturing human resource professionals lack and the process needed to acquire and retain skilled employees, a positive social change may occur when business leaders learn how to recruit and retain a skilled workforce because of the findings of this study. When communities and businesses maintain a

skilled labor workforce, the far-reaching effect on the local area is that the average income increases. A vibrant workforce and industrial sectors also increase the local tax base (Hanif et al., 2013).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The literature review will begin with a statement of the strategies I used when searching the literature on this topic followed by a description of the content organization. I conducted most searches for the literature review using the Walden Library digital databases. I used Business Source Complete/Premier, ABI/INFORM Complete, Emerald Management Journals, SAGE Premier, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, and EBSCOhost databases. Walden University's Library provided a resource for new search criteria. Walden's librarians clarified that labor force or human capital were related search terms for researching this topic. Words used in the search expanded to include the following list of relevant terms: *demographics, minorities, immigration, workforce participation, skill workforce, birth rates, aging workforce, labor retention, Baby Boomers, technology in manufacturing, high-skilled workforce, generational diversification,* and *workforce diversification*. After reading articles that I retrieved using the broad search terms, I extracted the articles that were from peer-reviewed sources between 2013 and 2017. I also focused more on the sources related to the aging workforce, best practices of workforce retention, and succession planning for an aging workforce.

I begin this literature review by describing the business problem within the context of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et

al., 1959). I review these theories in relation to human capital theory. Researchers using human capital theory, such as Lauder (2015), looked at the attributes and traits necessary to evaluate labor, so it produces an economic value, not how to acquire and retain labor (Mandlebe, 2014). Through the literature review process and the use of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two-factor theory, I discovered three elements in the literature review: (a) aging workforce, (b) current best practices of workforce retention, and (c) succession planning.

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore the strategies and processes that manufacturing human resource professionals use to acquire and retain skilled employees. The topic of workforce management pertained to a considerable body of knowledge. For this study, I used three meta-concepts of workforce management to guide the literature review research. These concepts were an aging workforce, workforce retention, and succession planning. In the section on aging workforce, I discuss the cause of the aging workforce, its physical and mental effects on the workforce and companies, and the talent drain as the generation retires. In the workforce retention section, the topics include methods used to retain the older skilled workforce. The strategies for succession, planning, and communication that business leaders must use within a multigenerational workforce are in the final section (Ismail & El Nakkache, 2014).

I examined more than 100 peer-reviewed articles and reviewed studies with research methods and designs similar to those that I used for my study. Of the 175 articles reviewed, 47 pertained to Herzberg's and Maslow's theories. To ensure that more than 85% of the literature was current, I searched for articles published within the

last 5 years. The search criteria were limited to 2013–2017 except for the nominal occurrences of seminal work pertinent to this study. In the literature review, 89% of the references are within the required 5 years of expected publication date and 98% are peer-reviewed. Figure 1 presents a graphic presentation of this literature review.

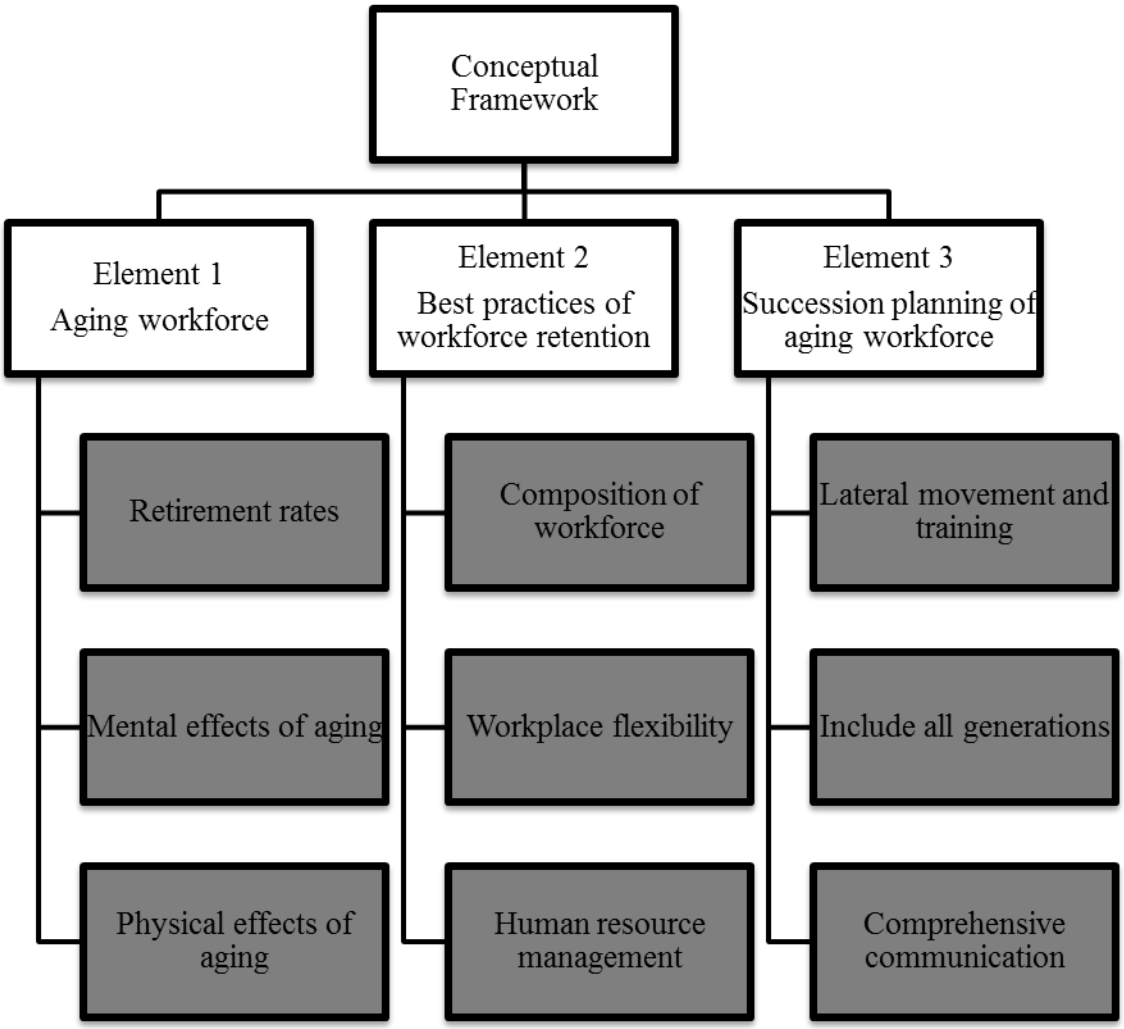

Figure 1. Literature review organization.

Maintaining an adequate workforce is important to business. The retention and acquisition of employees is a difficult task for public and private organizations (Neumark

et al., 2013). Globalization has increased the mobility of the highly skilled workforce, making it easier for them to find jobs in other areas (Lawton & De Aquino, 2016). To improve the acquisition and retention of skilled labor, manufacturing human resource professionals must understand motivational issues that will keep employees at the organization (Hanif et al., 2013). To understand motivational issues correctly, a human resource professional must understand the available theories about motivation

There are many theories to choose from when exploring motivational issues in the workforce. Maslow (1943), one of the original scholars of humanistic approaches to management, created a theory on five essential human needs and the hierarchical structure. Maslow stated that individuals are motivated to fulfill certain needs. When a need is satisfied, the person moves to the next level. A five-tiered pyramid often represents Maslow's hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow's theory, the lower the need, the more fundamental it becomes. In the theory, Maslow stated that an individual stops pursuing a higher need to meet a lower need (Andreassi, Lawter, Brockerhoff, & Rutigliano, 2014; Maslow, 1943). An individual's basic understanding of motivation helps lure him or her from other organizations or causes the individual to receive additional training to fulfill a need (Sanderson, 2015). As individuals age, they seek opportunities beyond what motivated them to seek employment with an organization. As the workforce ages, Maslow's theory applies to meeting organizations' different needs as the age of the workforce increases.

Researchers who study various aspects of the workforce retention and acquisition can use Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. For example, Jerome (2013) used Maslow's

hierarchy of needs in the context of business management practices and employee performance levels. Jerome stated that to increase employee performance levels, managers should alter their leadership style to promote self-actualization among employees. Self-actualization is the highest tier of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Atan, Raghavan, and Mahmood (2015) also used Maslow's hierarchy of needs in their quantitative study at a manufacturing company. However, in Atan et al.'s study, the study population was workers from the facility and not human resource professionals. Jerome as well as Atan et al. explained that although employee self-actualization can increase performance levels, improved performance cannot happen unless management first addresses and provides a means to the employees' physiological and safety needs. Physiological and safety needs are the first two tiers of Maslow's hierarchy, and without them, self-actualization is impossible.

Adiele and Abraham (2013) used Maslow's hierarchy of needs to investigate motivation and retention of 500 teachers from 245 schools in the River States of Nigeria. Adiele and Abraham stated that Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory had become one of the most widely acclaimed and referred theories in the study of human retention and motivation. Adiele and Abraham, using a 25 item questionnaire found that elementary school teachers showed insignificant levels of achievement in lower and higher tier needs of Maslow's theory; the school had a poorly motivated and unproductive education system that lacked qualified employees. Researchers and the business community can use Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory in workforce retention and acquisition.

Researchers have applied Maslow's theory to different disciplines as a way to articulate conceptual frameworks. These conceptual frameworks are the lenses for which researchers can explore the phenomena. Andreassi et al. (2014) used Maslow's theory when collecting data from skilled employees to determine if Western management practices are effective in Latin America, Europe, and Asia. The samples for the quantitative study included over 75,000 employees from three multinational companies in the manufacturing and oil industries. Andreassi et al. also evaluated the data using a combination of regression analysis and comparison testing. Andreassi et al. coupled social exchange theory with Maslow's theory instead of Herzberg's two-factor theory. Researchers, such as Andressi et al., who used social exchange theory instead of Herzberg's two-factor theory attempted to explain stability or social change through a process of exchanges between parties instead of through the lens of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Social exchange theorists claimed that connections are the product of a cost-benefit analysis (Andreassi et al., 2014). Alexander, Havercome, and Mujtaba (2015) used Maslow's theory in conjunction with behavioral management theory. Alexander et al. categorized behavioral management theory as the study of how managers should act to motivate and encourage employees to perform at increased levels and become committed to the success of the organization. Researchers using behavioral management theory focused on increased production and organizational success; therefore, the theory was not appropriate for workforce acquisition and retention.

Another primary theory on workforce motivation is Herzberg's two-factor theory. Herzberg, in the two-factor theory, divided job satisfaction and motivation into two

groups: hygiene and motivation (Herzberg et al., 1959). Herzberg et al. (1959) deduced that fulfillment of lower needs at work does not satisfy people. People look for the gratification of higher level needs that are related to advancement, responsibility, recognition, achievement, and the nature of work itself (Alexander et al., 2015). In the two-factor theory, the motivation factors include accomplishment, recognition, work, accountability, advancement, and the potential for growth (Damij, et al, 2015; Singh, 2016). Hygiene factors may include company culture, supervision, work conditions, connection to peers, financial gains, personal life, relationships with subordinates, position, and job security (Wilson, 2015). The main point of Herzberg's theory is that the factors that cause satisfaction are not the same as the factors causing dissatisfaction. Herzberg stated that an unsatisfied person does not automatically denote dissatisfaction; it means that such a person has no satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). In Herzberg's theory, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are two different factors of human motivation. Researchers who used Herzberg's studies revealed factors related to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Wilson, 2015). Because motivating factors such as achievement, advancement, recognition, responsibility, the work itself and personal growth, did not align with hygien factors that may include company policies, salary, supervision, status, security, work condition and relationship with supervisors, satisfaction is not the opposite of dissatisfaction. Instead, it means that an individual is not satisfied with his or her job (Oluwatayo, 2015). The absence of job dissatisfaction does not imply job satisfaction (Wilson, 2015). Herzberg's theory is valuable when analyzing the best practices of workforce retention.

Since the publication of Herzberg's two-factor theory, there have been many critics and supporters of the theory (Damij, Levnajic, Skrt, & Suklan, 2015). During 1960s and 1970s, critics of Herzberg's theory, tested the empirical validity and showed contradictory results that did not support the two-factor model (Hulin, 1971; Korman, 1971; Wernimont, 1966). In addition, researchers found the theory to be impractical because distinguishing between hygiene and motivator factors is not simple and dependent on the individual (Hulin, 1971; Wernimont, 1966). Korman (1971) incidenced the oversimplification of the methodology does not represent general population. King (1970) supported Herzberg's theory and claimed that the majority of the controversy between critics and supporters of the two-factor theory came from the lack of an explicit statement of the theory. The absence of the explicit statement could explain why Alexander et al. (2015) stated that some critics misinterpreted Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. King concluded that the two-factory theory had possible biases from the investigator or respondent. Acknowledgement of the weakness in the two-factor theory does not preclude researchers from using it in their conceptual frameworks so long as other frameworks remove biases from both the investigator and respondents (King, 1970).

Despite being one of the founders of the modern motivation theory, Herzberg's could not account for transition to a knowledge based economy with technology at its core (Damij et al,. 2015). Researchers in the first decades of the 21th century revisited Herzberg's theory (Ozguner & Ozguner, 2014). Damij et al. (2015) concluded that the framework of Herzberg's theory is still pertinent. Herzberg's theory has proved resilient,

and scholars continue to use it as a conceptual framework (Goetz et al., 2015; Hernaus & Vokic, 2014; Wilson, 2015).

Wilson (2015) used Herzberg's two-factor theory and administered a survey to 56 participants in an attempt to determine which parts created the most job satisfaction for health care employees. Wilson stated that Herzberg's two-factor theory was superior to other theories for his study because motivators or intrinsic factors affect the employee's internal satisfaction whereas the person determines other factors. Wilson concluded that, in Herzberg's two-factor theory, both extrinsic and intrinsic factors at work have a significant correlation with the intention to leave. This information may assist human resource professionals in implementing strategies to improve retention. Goetz et al. (2015) used Herzberg's theory to evaluate the shortages of skilled healthcare professionals in low- and middle-income countries. Goetz et al. used a quantitative approach for analyses the data from 435 participants to evaluate job satisfaction and organizational atmosphere at 10 different health care facilities. Goetz et al. found that the working atmosphere and job satisfaction were indicators for the retention and recruitment of skilled health care employees. Hernaus and Vokic (2014) used Herzberg's two-factor theory to evaluate the nature of job performance and personal values as connected to different generational cohorts. Hernaus and Vokic found differences between task and social job characteristics across generational cohorts. Hernaus and Vokic established that work values are not equal within different generational cohorts. Personal values and work preferences of the different generations define organizational behavior policies and procedures. Oluwatayo (2015) used Herzberg's two-factor theory to study the

architectural industry and to investigate the employees' accounts of the human resource practices about employee satisfaction. Oluwatayo stated that Herzberg's two-factory theory is ideal for evaluating factors that refer to job satisfaction. Oluwatayo claimed that there are extrinsic factors that correlate to the individual's relationship with his or her work environment. The factors include company policies, work conditions, supervision, personal status, and interpersonal relations (Oluwatayo, 2015). Oluwatayo claimed that extrinsic variables caused dissatisfaction, which aligned with Herzberg's theory. Herzberg's two-factor theory is relevant when evaluating employee motivation and retention.

Researchers have also combined Herzberg's two-factor theory with other theories. Rae, Sands, and Gadenne (2015) studied the connection between a motivated and prepared workforce and environmental and organizational performance. Rae et al. used Herzberg's two-factor theory in conjunction with human capital theory as a way to examine the association between human capital and organizational performance. Baran and Klos (2014) explored employee experiences across different generations, placing importance on their outlooks towards work as determining factors in managing and retaining employees across multiple generations. Baran and Klos used a qualitative design survey to collect data from 850 individuals and included members of the Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y. Baran and Klos used Herzberg's two-factor theory with human capital theory and found that motivational factors are comparable across the generations in the workforce. Human capital theory refers to the amassed

value of knowledge, personal attributes, competencies, and knowledge embodied in the capability to create basic and measurable economic value.

In human capital theory, humans are economic units in productivity analysis, public policy, and education and economic development (Lauder, 2015). Though used in correlation with Herzberg's two-factor theory, the human capital theory was not suited for this study because it refers to connecting differences in an individual's collective knowledge, skills, and attributes used to justify pay differences (Rodriguez, 2016). Although human capital theorists address the connection of human capital to the benefits of an organization, human capital theory relates to the way that organizations make decisions about compensating an individual. In this study, I focused on understanding how the shifting workforce impacts the skills required of business and what individual employees value in an employment situation.

The most appropriate theoretical framework for this study was Maslow's hierarchy of needs in conjunction with Herzberg's two-factor theory. Many researchers used both Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two-factor theory when studying workforce acquisition and retention (Hanif et al., 2013; Ismail & El Nakkache, 2014; Ramprasad, 2013). Researchers have used both Maslow and Herzberg's theories when evaluating human resource professionals' experiences as business leaders for acquiring and retaining a skilled workforce (Adiele & Abraham, 2013; Sankar, 2015; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). Ozguner and Ozguner (2014) stated that if managers consider both Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory, they will promote employee satisfaction and higher performance levels than if they only consider

one theory. The aging workforce has various needs that managers need to meet to boost retention, and by using Maslow's and Herzberg's theories together, it may enable these managers to do so more effectively.

Herzberg's theory complemented Maslow's theory of needs and added a new dimension by adding the two-factor model. Business managers who are aware of the difference between satisfaction and dissatisfaction may be more equipped to properly provide for their employees and foster employee satisfaction as well as decrease their dissatisfaction (Andreassi et al., 2014). Such management practices may also help companies meet the needs of their aging workforce, as well as their younger workforce (Alexander et al., 2015). Further, companies may succeed in meeting the needs of their aging workforce by understanding and using the information put forward by both Herzberg's two-factor theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Figure 2 is a graphic demonstration of the conceptual framework that researchers use when exploring business strategies to acquire and retain skilled laborers to replace an aging workforce.

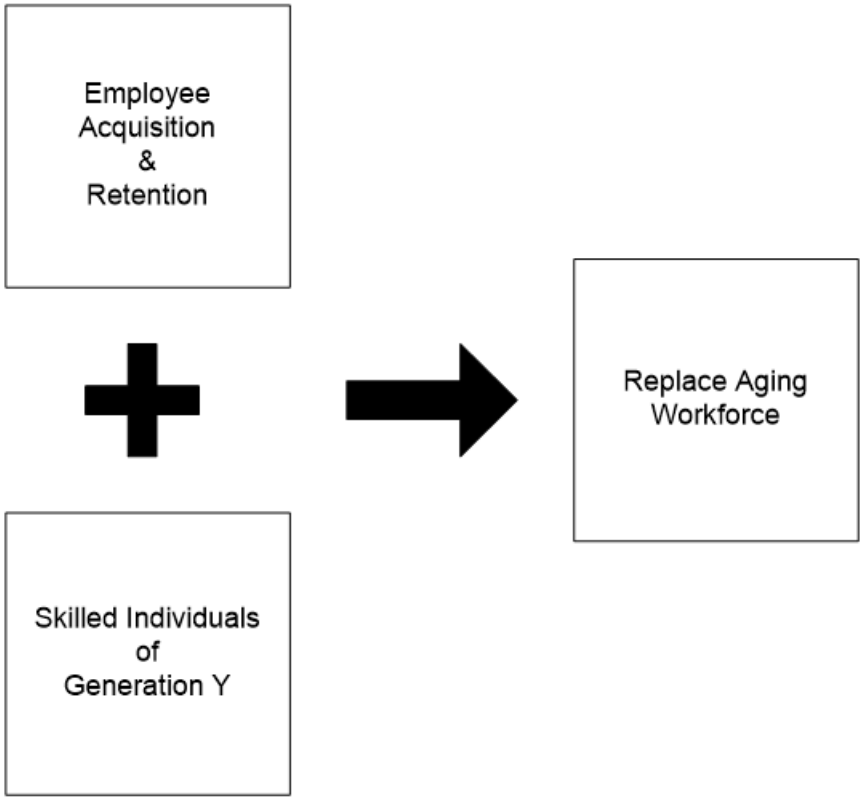

Figure 2. Conceptual framework for exploring business strategies to acquire and retain skilled laborers to replace an aging workforce.

In the United States, most individuals who belong to Generation Y go through life having their basic needs provided (Kilber, Barclay, & Ohmer, 2014). Most Generation Y individuals have not thought of needing food, shelter, and security (Crisan, 2016). This experience gives Generation Y a different perception than that of previous generations, such as Generation X and Baby Boomers (Ertas, 2015). Many Baby Boomers believe that diligence and hard work yield reward and success (Hernaus & Vokic, 2014). The members of the Baby Boomer generation believe in a work ethic that requires persistence with a reward at the end of a career. The non-Baby Boomers do not wish to wait for a reward; these generations expect rewards throughout a career. If that expectation goes

unmet, then Generations X and Y will move on to another job or position that will meet his or her expectations (Cook, 2012). Baby Boomers' involvement in the workforce facilitates the transfer of knowledge to Generations X and Y. A knowledge and skill gap may occur without the participation of both the Generation Y and the Baby Boomer generation (Seipert & Baghurst, 2014).

Aging Workforce

This discussion of the meta-concept of the aging workforce includes retirement rates, as well as the mental and physical effects of aging. Retirement rates directly affect an organization's workforce by limiting the talent. To explore the topics relating to the aging workforce, I detail each topic. The Baby Boomer cohorts' aging poses challenges for the Baby Boomers and business organizations (Sandrick, Contacos-Sawyer, & Thomas, 2014). By understanding retirement rates and the mental and physical effects of aging, manufacturing human resource professionals can prepare for the changing workforce (Rajput, Marwah, Balli, & Gupta, 2013).

Retirement rates. Research is abundant on the demographic shifts apparent within the workforce (Watty-Benjamin & Udechukwu, 2014). Manufacturing human resource managers worldwide are facing an aging of the workforce. The Baby Boomer cohorts are creating challenges within society and business organizations. The future success of manufacturing human resource professionals and organizations depends on understanding and retaining this demographic (Aaronson et al., 2014).

Manufacturing human resource professionals continue to struggle with having adequate personnel during this historic change within the U.S. workforce. An

unprecedented demographic change emerged during the latter half of the 20th century. This demographic change continues to have a far-reaching effect on businesses (Radu & Radu, 2014). The potential loss of knowledge and availability of skilled employees are critical for businesses and organizations. Not addressing these threats jeopardizes business success (Rajput et al., 2013). The continual increase in the median age of the U.S. population has direct and indirect effects on profit and production for businesses and the economy (Hogan & Roberts, 2015). As the population ages so does the median age of the workforce, thus increasing the number of working individuals who could leave the workforce. Individuals 65 years and older will make up 23.8 percent of the global population by 2030 (Mahon & Millar, 2014). In 2011, the medical industry started experiencing an average workforce age near or exceeding 50 for nurses (Auerbach, Buerhaus, & Staiger, 2014; Dahl & Peltier, 2014).

An increase in the median age of the population and workforce created a unique environment for businesses. Now that the average median age of the workforce exceeds 40, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is experiencing an increase in the volume of age discrimination lawsuits. The increase in legal risks makes it difficult for employers to replace aging employees whose positions are physically demanding (Coduti, Tugman, Bruyere, & Malzer, 2015). The purpose of the Employment Act (1967) was to protect anyone older than 40 from discrimination in promotions, wages, hiring, terminations, and layoffs. The Employment Act (1967) created an additional difficulty for manufacturing human resource professionals who attempt to replace existing personnel who are not performing in a satisfactory manner (Barrington, 2015).

The Baby Boomers allowed businesses to enjoy a well-trained and adequate source of personnel for almost 40 years (Kohanna, 2014). The aging population is now reaching retirement age and is beginning to leave the workforce voluntarily. As the average workforce age increases, so will retirement rates for key positions within an organization (Ferguson, 2013). Because one in five individuals occupying a skilled employee position is between the ages of 55 to 64, human resource managers of these physically and mentally demanding positions are going to experience a higher rate of retirement than other industries (Cook, 2012). The mass exodus of a retiring workforce will create a higher demand for skilled individuals. The increased demand will soon surpass the number of qualified and willing candidates, creating workforce shortages within the industry and negatively affecting an organization's performance (Ng & Law, 2014).

The population of the United States is aging, which is evident in the business setting as the median or average age of the workforce rises (Ferguson, 2013). Retirement is a protracted and multistep process, where previously the event was a singular, momentous affair (Chen, Van Assche, Vansteenkiste, Soenens, & Beyers, 2015). The increasing average age means that more of the workforce has the potential to retire and take with it the knowledge and skills accumulated for decades. The potential workforce exodus could leave manufacturing human resource professionals with a lack of knowledge and skills necessary to run a successful organization (Ferguson, 2013).

Mental effects of aging. As the workforce ages, the mental abilities of employees lessen possibly making their task more difficult. Manufacturing human

resource professionals may believe that if younger workers do not become available, then the knowledge and skills within the organization will be lost (Hemphill & Perry, 2012). Good mental health allows a person to feel confident, more relaxed in stressful situations, and able to overcome life's tasks or small problems more quickly (Bartels & Naslund, 2013). Understanding the mental effects of aging is important for manufacturing human resource professionals to understand the possible outcomes on the aging workforce (Coduti et al., 2015).

Organizations should understand that mental health and fitness are an aspect of the quality of life and work performance of an individual. The intellectual capacity of a senior citizen's brain is just as capable as a younger person's brain (Coduti et al., 2015). However, an older person may process information more slowly or require addition attempts to master a duty. As the human body ages, the mental ability to recall or learn a complex task becomes more difficult (Ihle, et al., 2015). This change includes verbal communication, meaning that the Baby Boomer generation uses fewer words than younger adults do. Businesses are now simplifying instructions and tasks to allow older workers to understand and perform better than the older workers previously had (Coduti et al., 2015).

Workforce mental health is a business issue that needs attention. Each year, lawsuits revolve around an employee suing an employer for discrimination because of mental health issues (Coduti et al., 2015). Mental illness is a biologically based disorder that may disrupt an individual's ability to feel, think, perceive the world, or relate to others. Mental illness is the second leading disability in the United States next to heart

disease (Bor, 2015). An extensive range of disability symptoms exists that an older worker may exhibit. These symptoms vary between individuals and depend on a person's general health and other aging factors (Bartels & Naslund, 2013). A worker who experiences mental health issues might face additional challenges when returning to or entering the workplace (Ferri-Reed, 2013b). Workforce or management shunning, underusing, or misunderstanding an individual with a mental health issue is common (Ihle, et al., 2015). Businesses have to employ, train, or engage outside services when dealing with mental health issues to avoid or mitigate the potential for litigation (Coduti et al., 2015).

When an individual with a mental health disorder is on site, he or she becomes the responsibility of the organization. Recognizing mental disorders and addressing any potentially violent or dangerous situation is becoming another issue that manufacturing human resource professionals face (Bor, 2015). Bartels and Naslund (2013) predicted that 20% of those who are 55 years or older would exhibit or become diagnosed with some form of mental health concern. The most commonly diagnosed disorders include cognitive impairment, anxiety, and mood disorders (Bartels & Naslund, 2013). Those diagnosed with these mental health concerns later in life typically blame the employers for the hardship, creating legal and workforce issues. Adults 65 years or older are over 50% more likely than other ages to report rarely receiving the support needed to feel emotionally or socially involved in their workplace. This disconnection contributes to individuals leaving the workforce. If addressed, workforce retention may increase by

giving the individual a feeling of belonging to the organization (Koolhaas, Klink, Boer, Groothoff, & Brouwer, 2014).

Since the 1990s, mental health issues in the workplace are becoming more common. The psychological state of the aging workforce requires manufacturing human resource professionals to change and accommodate the evolving workforce (Koolhaas et al., 2014). Business leaders should recognize or prevent mental health issues before the issues become a safety concern. However, an employer is often legally unable to ask questions regarding an employee's psychological state or history (Fox, Brogmus, & Maynard, 2015). An option for human resource professionals is to enlist the aid of a mental health professional. Depending on education or training, a mental health professional may treat and assess mental illness. A mental health professional who specializes in geriatric mental health can recognize the ways that older individuals experience and exhibit mental health problems (Hemphill & Perry, 2012). The same professional should deliver an appropriate diagnosis (Bartels & Naslund, 2013).

Physical effects of aging. Business organizations must be aware of the effects that an aging workforce will have on the success of the organization. Aging is a natural process that transpires differently for each person. Physiological aging is the changes that occur in the functioning and structure of the body during a lifetime (Stephan, Sutin, & Terracciano, 2015). The changes that occur during physiological aging are involuntary and may occur gradually while others happen during a short period. This multidimensional progression of aging affects an individual's health status and day-to-day functions (Koolhaas et al., 2014). The process varies depending on the environment,

cultural factors, and genetics. In some cases, the process of aging has a negative effect on the individual's physical performance and the company's bottom line (Gargoline, 2012).

Historically, business did not have to worry about the age of its workforce. The organization could expect a new generation or cohort to replace its existing workforce (Levanon, et al., 2014). This natural occurrence continued until the arrival of one of the largest cohorts of the 1940s, frequently denoted as the Baby Boomer generation (Radu & Radu, 2014). The aging of this cohort was the catalyst that has precipitated the lack of skilled employees, which businesses and society acknowledge. Because the younger generation lacks the skills or desire to enter skilled trades, businesses are facing a problem previously unknown within modern business history (Levanon et al., 2014).

Business organizations must start to understand the physical effects of aging and how the physical effects of aging vary from individual to individual. A worker's hearing, vision, and balance are likely to undergo changes with age (Ng & Law, 2014). For example, after the age of 40-an individual normally requires more light to perform the same task due to lens of the eyes becoming more opaque (Fox et at., 2015). As the human body ages, it loses the ability to adjust to temperature differences. Thermal regulation diminishes as well as the ability to metabolize alcohol and other drugs (Cummings & Magalhaes, 2015).

During the aging process, the body's muscle mass and flexibility reduce (Fox et al., 2015). The loss of muscle mass and flexibility starts in a person's 30s and continues throughout life. A part of the loss is the result of decreasing amounts of testosterone and

growth hormones, which causes muscle development. By age 60, the average person loses 15% to 20% of his or her muscle mass (Ng & Law, 2014). An individual who could perform a task earlier in his or her career might be unable to perform the same task as he or she ages because of naturally occurring physical limitations (Welmer, Kåreholt, Rydwik, Angleman, & Wang, 2013). The conditions can increase production cost or even reduce productivity for businesses and organizations (Fox et al., 2015). Consistent exercise programs to strengthen muscles will delay or partially offset the effects of muscle loss because of aging or Sarcopenia. For this reason, more human resource managers are paying for gym memberships or providing onsite gyms (Poscia et al., 2016).

The demographic age shift potentially could be a benefit for employers, but it also represents many new threats. The environments in which older individuals work could expose these workers to carrying, lifting, and other physical activities that could increase the chance of injury or production loss (Poscia et al., 2016). Work-related injuries are costly to employers both directly and indirectly with litigation, worker compensation, or medical costs, and a valued and difficult-to-replace part of the organization must leave and may not return because of injury (Fox et al., 2015).

The size of the Baby Boomer generation makes it difficult for the other cohorts to offset the Baby Boomers exodus from the workforce. Many organizations have underestimated or even ignored the physical and mental changes beginning to affect the skilled workforce (Levanon et al., 2014). The potential loss of Baby Boomers' knowledge and experiences when they depart could cause knowledge and skill gaps

(Kuyken, 2012). Researchers have examined the aging workforce, retirement rates, physical effects, and mental effects of aging (Bartels & Naslund, 2013; Moutray & Swift, 2013; Welmer et al., 2013). Maslow (1943) proposed that higher order needs for self-actualization and affiliation has a tendency to occur in later adulthood, succeeding the accomplishments of lower-order needs during early adulthood. However, scholars have not provided information on proactive methods for offsetting these effects on older skilled workforce members (Moutray & Swift, 2013; Seipert & Baghurst, 2014). A lack of documentation exists regarding how the retirement of the Baby Boomers influences other generations within the skilled workforce (Bartels & Naslund, 2013; Welmer et al., 2013). I synthesized the following questions from the research, which represent a portion of the semistructured list of the interview and focus group questions:

- What processes do you use to motivate your skilled employees?
- What processes do you use to retain skilled employees?
- What strategies do you use to retain skilled employees?
- What process and strategy are the most effective in retaining skilled employees?

The answers to these four questions helped fill the gaps in the literature. The information also provided insight from manufacturing human resource professionals in skilled workforce acquisition and retention. Manufacturing human resource professionals who understand and prepare for these events will have an advantage over other organizations.

Best Practices of Workforce Retention

Within the workforce, fundamental changes that could alter how companies relate to the workforce are taking place. Understanding what motivates the aging workforce to remain active is essential to any manager or business leader (Bailey & Madden, 2016). The retention of employees, especially of the skilled or most valuable employees, is a challenge to organizations. By retaining key employees, organizational leaders ensure the long-term success and health of the organizations (Gargoline, 2012).

Composition of the workforce. The aging of the U.S. workforce has an effect on organizations. Another transformation within the workforce is the product of variations in participation rates, or those actively seeking employment, among multiple gender groups (Liu, 2014). At the start of the 20th century, the bulk of the U.S. workforce consisted of Caucasian males. The demographic began to change near the beginning of the 20th century and developed into a workforce that is a reflection of the population, not a workforce dominated by one gender and race. This demographic and gender complexity within the workforce is causing manufacturing human resource professionals to rethink business procedures and policies that have been the status quo since the 1950s (Litzinger & Dunn, 2013).

As the workforce became diverse the government created rules and regulations to prevent discrimination. The first phase of racial workforce diversity took place within the last half of the 20th century. The Civil Rights Act (1964) qualified discrimination in matters of employment based on color, race, religion, and the nation of origin (Wright, 2015). This act provided the government with the ability to both withhold resources from

programs that discriminate and to sue public facilities that discriminate based on a person's race, age, or gender (Rutherglen, 2015). Manufacturing human resource professionals have had to prepare for the potential consequences of sexual harassment within the workforce (Wright, 2015).

In the new Millennium, with similarities in both the workforce and population demographics, the likelihood of interoffice relationships or harassment increases. The elimination of sexual harassment within the office is difficult because attempting to regulate or remove romance is contrary to human nature (Gilani, Cavico, & Mujtaba, 2014). One individual might consider a comment to be neutral rather than offensive or unwanted attention. In the 1990s, organizations required more time and resources to limit legal exposure by identifying sexual harassment before it developed into costly legal problems (Druhan, 2013).

At no other time in history have manufacturing human resource professionals experienced such a diversity of generations within the workforce. In the first 10 years of the 21st century, four distinct cohorts coexisted within the workplace (Hernaus & Vokic, 2014). Each cohort had different attitudes, values, needs, expectations, and motivations. Manufacturing human resource professionals found it more difficult to manage and incorporate these varying attitudes into a positive corporate culture (Gargoline, 2012). At the beginning of the 21st century, an increase in third-party organizations that specialized in blending cohorts within a workplace environment occurred. Insight into these differences among cohorts allowed leaders and organizations to comprehend the

expectations, motivations, and other driving factors of the multigenerational workforce (Kuyken, 2012).

Women are now actively seeking employment, which made it necessary for organizations to create or improve strategies or techniques to retain and manage a workforce consisting of mixed genders. Women began to become a major part of the workforce during World Wars I and II (Goldin & Olivetti, 2013). Much like single parents of the early 21st century, working mothers would unexpectedly need time away from work to meet their children's needs (Formankova & Krízkova, 2015). Inconsistency in attendance placed additional burdens on production managers because the workforce became difficult to predict and manage on a day-to-day basis (Litzinger & Dunn, 2013). Because of the physical and psychological differences between genders, manufacturing human resource professionals who treat men and women the same will have difficulty retaining one or the other. When managing a mixed-gender workforce, manufacturing human resource professionals need to create a culture that accommodates the two genders (Gilani et al., 2014). By understanding and acknowledging the similarities and differences between genders, employers promote loyalty to the organization. Organizational relationship and loyalty increases retention and may assist employee acquisition (Yang, Wan, & Fu, 2012).

Manufacturing organizations with human resource professionals who understand the legal concerns and the needs of the multigenerational and mixed-gender workforce may have an organization that has a higher profit and better sustainability. A moderate level of turnover is healthy for business (Bruce, 2014). Turnover within an organization

provides opportunities for the recruitment of individuals from a generation who bring new and fresh perspectives to assimilate into the organization's product or culture. However, an organization's management should review causes for turnover whenever the organization's turnover becomes excessive (Litzinger & Dunn, 2013). The upper management should learn why the workforce is leaving and develop a strategy to retain its high performers to maintain a competitive edge (Hopkins, 2012).

Workplace flexibility. Technology and society are making the Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m workweek obsolete and counterproductive. Workplace flexibility defines how, where, and when to work. The concept of workplace flexibility is becoming a part of workforce performance and well-being (Formankova & Krízkova, 2015). The shifting personal demographic and professional choices of the modern workforce require organizations to become flexible with work hours. The lack of workplace flexibility is a reason why some employees leave an organization (Suthar, Lathangi, & Pradhan, 2014).

To retain the necessary workforce, manufacturing human resource professionals may have to rethink the traditional 9–5, 40-hour workweek. The 40-hour week did not emerge until after World War II (Goldin & Olivetti, 2013). The rest of the 20th-century employees and employers witnessed a decline in the average of hours worked. Individuals who matured during this same period have continued the trend, and as the group reaches retirement age, the cohort wishes to have more time or flexibility to do other things (Tishman, Van Looy, & Bruyère, 2012). The popularity of workplace flexibility has gained enough attention that the U.S. Department of Labor has addressed

workplace flexibility by providing laws and recommendations for business (Hodges, 2015).

A trend in business organizations is a position or title flexibility. A growing percentage of older workers wish to work part time to have the ability to take care of other issues, such as to attend to elderly parents or grandchildren (Shabo, 2016). If a person's wish to care for his or her family goes unfulfilled, then he or she may leave the organization. The organization either can create new part-time positions or allows an individual to job share with individuals who also wish to work part-time in an attempt to accommodate the requirements of the worker (Duxbury & Halinski, 2014). A part-time position or job share for an individual allows the organization to retain the employee's knowledge and avoid the cost of finding and hiring someone else who may not have the skills essential to accomplish the duties necessary for the job (Jennex, 2014).

The development of technology has provided organizations with another option for workplace flexibility. Home-based work or telecommuting is an arrangement between the organization and individual, in which the individual does not travel to a location to perform work (Kilber et al., 2014). The individual does not have to remain at home and may use mobile devices to perform work from any place that has a connection to the Internet. Telecommuting is a method of work common in foreign countries (Caillier, 2016). Manufacturing human resource professionals also have the option to place valued individuals on retainer and give these individuals a mobile device on an as-needed basis (Kilber et al., 2014). A retainer allows the organization to maintain access to the knowledge and skills that the individuals possess. The reduction of workers

reporting to a central location can reduce overhead costs for the organization (Caillier, 2016).

Allowing workplace flexibility is essential for the success of both the employee and the organization. Shifts in technology, demographic changes, and streamlined workforces are a few of the reasons that workplace flexibility will become more prevalent (Tejpal, 2015). Although not all organizations develop a formal procedure for creating a flexible workplace, it is advantageous to create a flexible attitude regarding the workplace (Kilber et al., 2014). Manufacturing human resource professionals who create a culture around workplace flexibility should have better retention rates than the organization's competitors. Such a culture allows the organization to acquire talent from other companies that are not as flexible (Tishman et al., 2012).

Human resource management. To remain or to become successful, an organization must have abundant manufacturing human resources. The function of manufacturing human resource management is the recurring evaluation and motivation of employees within the workplace (Unal & Turgut, 2015). Organizations must ensure that the workplace environment is safe and meets the legal requirements to prevent litigation (Prause & Mujtaba, 2015). Human resource managers serve as leaders in business, and the duties of these managers are a part of an organization's success (Thomas, Bellin, Jules, & Lynton, 2013).

The title of the human resource manager and its importance to the organization has changed throughout history to meet the economic and social activities of the period. At one time, the position was limited and known as the industrial welfare or personnel

manager; the duties of this manager primarily dealt with sick employees and the administration of pay (Thomas et al., 2013). As the industry grew, the duties of the personnel manager also grew. The last half of the 20th century produced not only an increase in the responsibility of the manufacturing human resource officer, but also an increase in the number of individuals required to perform the new duties (Mukkelli, 2015). One reason for human resource professionals' increasing responsibility was due to the passing of employment legislation that created the potential for additional litigation for employers. Recruitment and training exist because of extended employee shortages similar to conditions experienced worldwide (Bailey & Madden, 2016).

Employers must manage conflict within the workplace. To protect the organization and its business leaders, manufacturing human resource departments manage and defuse issues with legal implications (Mukkelli, 2015). Such human resource interventions allow a quicker response to deal with an issue before it evolves into a major organizational issue. The benefit to the company is two-fold. First, a human resource response ensures that issues within the organization conclude before escalating to include other departments or the whole company (Kar & Misra, 2013). Such a response reduces the possibility that an employee or employees will become dissatisfied and leave the company. Second, by containing moral or legal issues, the manufacturing human resource manager mitigates the possibility of legal repercussions that could cost the company additional resources and enhance the likelihood of having to replace a key employee (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014).

Successful business leaders assign manufacturing human resource management roles regarding the mitigation of legal issues or concerns. The changing and litigious environment is not an excuse for misconduct (Olive & Cangemi, 2015). Business organizations that excel at mitigating risk review the policies of the organization continually. A continual review process is not the same as the periodic process recommended by the Department of Labor (Cherian & Farouq, 2013). A perpetual or continual review process communicates the organization's expectations and the values of the company's operations. If a manufacturing human resource manager recognizes a gap resulting from either a culture shift or a change in the law, business leaders should be aware of this gap because the resource manager or the business may face unneeded legal woes (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014).

Businesses rely on the manufacturing human resource department to do more than process payroll or insurance enrollment once a year. Manufacturing human resource managers operate in tandem with business leaders to provide alternative views in the decision processes (Mukkelli, 2015). The partnership between manufacturing human resource managers and business leaders is a means by which organizations can remove an individual perceptive from the process, which reduces risk. Business leaders who can rely on a manufacturing human resource manager can focus on improving the company in other areas (Jalloh, Habib, & Turay, 2016).

In an attempt to retain the older workforce, organizations have begun to increase the focus on evolving workforce management capabilities and processes. The process begins with upper management obtaining a better understanding of the generational,

ethical, and gender makeup of its workforce (Alexander et al., 2015). Once management has a clearer understanding of the motivational factors within its workplace, leaders may be able to offer incentives and options that historically have not been available (Lin, Yu, & Yi, 2014). For this reason, the policies and procedures of an organization need continual review and improvement (Stein, Silvers, Areheart, & Francis, 2014).

Scholars have documented changes in workforce composition, intangible benefits, and the role manufacturing human resource managers, which changed more during the last 2 decades than any other period in history (Kar & Misra, 2013; Mukkelli, 2015; Tishman et al., 2012). The U.S. workforce consists of people who reflect the population of the country as opposed to a single demographic. However, researchers have not addressed how this new workforce composition personally affects skilled individuals in the organization and its influence regarding retention and acquisition (Lin et al., 2014; Parker, 2014). Scholars did not address ways that manufacturing human resource professionals can positively influence a skilled workforce (Cherian & Farouq, 2013; Kar & Misra, 2013). Consistent with the two-factor theory, hygiene factors significantly influence turnover, which is consistent with Herzberg's theory (Hanif et al., 2013). To fill these gaps, business leaders need to ask the following questions:

- What processes do you use to hire skilled employees?
- What strategies do you use to hire skilled employees?
- What process and strategy are the most effective in retaining skilled employees?

These represent some of the possible questions in addressing the gaps in the literature. The process may allow decision makers to use better business practices to strengthen the organization. These questions may lead to other questions, which address the phenomenon of employee retention.

Succession Planning of an Aging Workforce

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Baby Boomer generation makes up the largest segment of the workforce. An en masse retirement of the cohort affects both the private and public sectors (Duxbury & Halinski, 2014). The potential workforce epidemic will reach its peak by 2030. Organizations must address ways to manage the knowledge and information embedded within the systems and minds of its workforce. Otherwise, the knowledge may be lost or become difficult to replace. The practices of advanced technology allow the leveraging of existing knowledge to create new processes, technology, or business information (Accius & Yeh, 2017).

Lateral movement and training. The need for succession planning is not unique to modern business (Jennex, 2014). In 1969, NASA sent Neil Armstrong to become the first man to land on the moon. Less than 20 years later, the same department leaders admitted returning to the moon would be difficult because the current engineers did not have the skills needed to perform the task. This loss of knowledge and talent affected both private and public business sections on an unprecedented scale (Carruth & Carruth, 2013). As Baby Boomers retire or partially retire, voids in talent and knowledge become evident, and succession plans are key to continual prosperity (Ferguson, 2013).

Historically, as generations entered the workforce, the skill level increased from that of previous generations. This trend is currently not true for business (Carruth & Carruth, 2013). Societal and educational priorities at the beginning of the 21st century focused on college degrees rather than on vocational training. Members of the Millennial generation lack the vocational skills that organizations require (Accius & Yeh, 2017). A slowing economy has created unemployment and has negatively affected college students. The cost of college education causes some Millennials to drop out of college or face financial constraints after graduation because of a lack of job opportunities. Manufacturing human resource professionals face the existence of a high level of unemployment, while the individuals without work cannot perform the necessary or available jobs (Accius & Yeh, 2017).

Lateral career movement is becoming a popular option in companies; lateral career movement creates a high success rate in retaining or recruiting older workers (Suthar et al., 2014). Lateral movement allows individuals to leave a position that is becoming too physically demanding or mentally tedious and assume another less taxing position with the same company. In the new position, the individual learns other processes within the organization (Hemphill & Perry, 2012). The new position can generate renewed interest in the company and its operations, and such action can lead to innovative process improvements. If the individual and his or her knowledge stay with the organization, the company can eliminate the cost of finding someone to fill the position (Moutray & Swift, 2013).

As a company attempts to retain its older workforce, the administration needs to select adept successors and develop plans that will allow these new workers to learn how to perform tasks before a predecessor leaves the workplace (Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2013). Before the older knowledge base leaves, the organization should create transitions or knowledge transfer processes to facilitate the allocation and preservation of as many intellectual assets as possible. Many organizations prefer an experienced workforce that trains and educates the members of a younger workforce (Kuyken, 2012). Mentoring creates a bond between the two generations so that an experienced worker is willing to assist the understudy. Even if an experienced person leaves the workforce, he or she may still assist or mentor the other individual (Shih, 2014).

A common mistake made by organizations is the alienation of the older workforce. Organizations should not assume that the older workforce is interested in only low responsibility positions (Moutray & Swift, 2013). Training and lateral career movements within the organization are ways to retain individual interest and involvement within an organization (Shih, 2014). The development of plans that preserve information, contact, and processes will provide a competitive advantage for the organization (Stein et al., 2014).

Include all generations. Modern managers and manufacturing human resource professionals have to deal with generational differences within the workforce. A multitude of different options exists in extending a company's longevity. With the options, the workforce plays a pivotal role (Kuyken, 2012). Acquiring employee buy-in forms the beginning of the process, increasing the potential for success. Because the

workforce of the 21st century is multigenerational, an organization must consider ways to include all generations in the decision-making process to increase satisfaction and loyalty (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014).

In traditional business, the oversight of the organization has consisted of a board and upper management (Stein et al., 2014). Typically, the board of a company consists of members of the same generational cohort. Management dictates changes within the organization, expecting those below management to follow orders (Vasconcelos, 2015). Because of the number of different generations within the workforce, this business structure has become antiquated. Business leaders must include the younger generations in the workforce to provide buy-in and give a feeling of belonging (Stein et al., 2014).

The Gen X and Millennial cohorts are more likely to need an explanation rather than be dictated orders before performing a task. The Millennial cohort, in particular, needs to feel a sense of belonging to an organization or group (Crisan, 2016). By including Gen X and Millennial cohorts in activities not normally allowed, such as upper management or executive meetings, the cohorts develop a sense of purpose, creating loyalty to the organization and reducing turnover within a cohort that is notorious for frequently leaving positions (Stein et al., 2014). An increase in retention allows business leaders to plan a succession process without worrying if those selected to replace the aging cohort will leave the organization (Forsyth & Maranga, 2015).

Another benefit of including multiple generations in the organizational process is increasing the flow of knowledge (Levanon et al., 2014). The learning experience does not always need to be positive. In business and society, mistakes have a negative stigma

attached (Moutray & Swift, 2013). The knowledge and experience gained while attending upper management meetings are vital to the organization. Individuals who learn what not to do may be more valuable to the organization than individuals who think something is correct (Lawton & De Aquino, 2016). An organization must create a workspace and culture to meet the expectations of different generations. By facilitating a workspace that includes the generations, the organization increases workforce retention (Holt et al., 2012). A multigenerational workforce increases the flow of knowledge between generations and prevents intellectual asset loss. The company is then better prepared to plan for future changes in management and other key technical positions (Bencsik, Horváth-Csikós, & Juhász, 2016).

Comprehensive communication. The exchange of information or communication is necessary for business functions, but is also imperative for training and knowledge transfer. Although finance, marketing, production, maintenance, and personnel departments may obtain direction from objectives or corporate goals, communication facilitates continual success (Holt et al., 2012). Communication is vital to business success. Organization members should be effective communicators to be efficient. When an organization, department, or team can communicate effectively, the chance for success increases (Ferri-Reed, 2013a).

Each generation prefers to communicate in a medium that they are comfortable. Before the advancement of technology, business communication required face-to-face interaction (Deepthi & Baral, 2013). This form of interaction allowed each person to read the social and physical cues of the other individual to understand the conversation.

As technology changed, so did business practices (Aaltio, Salminen, & Koponen, 2014). The progression of written business communication started with hand written letters, which has culminated into an e-mail or text, or attached documents. After several decades of written communication, video-conferencing, which is a new form of face-to-face communication, is becoming popular (Hall, 2016).

The preferred method of communication is one of the most apparent communication distinctions between generations. A difficulty might emerge when the preferred method of communication for the sender causes frustration for the receiver (Kuyken, 2012). Members of Generation X and Generation Y exist in a workplace that is more technology-driven than that of senior cohorts (Kilber et al., 2014). As the evolution of technology continues to increase, it is possible that these differences in communication will become even more prominent (Ferri-Reed, 2013b). More than 90% of message communication is nonverbal (Hall, 2016). Effective managers within an organization should stress nontraditional forms of communication (Bencsik et al., 2016).

The different generations also have varying levels of formality, adherence to grammar, and style of communicating when in the workplace (Ferri-Reed, 2013a). Previously, older individuals only communicated with senior-level management in a formal manner. These same senior workforce employees associate this formality in workplace communication with respect (Hall, 2016). When the older workforce members receive communication that is less formal, those individuals may misunderstand such an exchange as a sign of impertinence from a younger coworker. Business leaders

should educate and train its workforce regarding the difference in writing styles as well as what is acceptable communication within a business setting (Kuyken, 2012).

Traditionally, a manager's predominant duty was communication. The invention of technology and the global economy has distributed the need for communication skills to more areas, such as multicultural interaction and telecommunications (Bencsik et al., 2016). Technology has complicated the multigenerational workplace because each generational cohort prefers a different communication method (Moutray & Swift, 2013). Depending on whom the individual is communicating with, the selected method may create unintended strife. A business's leadership should educate its workforce on a multitude of communication methods to improve organizational communication (Balcanoff, 2013).

Understanding the different expectations and communication methods of a multigenerational workforce is vital (Hall, 2016). Scholars have discussed lateral movement and training, the need to include each generation, and comprehensive communication (Balcanoff, 2013; Carruth & Carruth, 2013; Moutray & Swift, 2013). However, researchers did not address manufacturing human resource professionals' perspectives on ways to assist the aging workforce transition out of the workforce (Carruth & Carruth, 2013; Moutray & Swift, 2013). Researchers failed to discuss these two groups when determining methods for communication across the new and complex skilled workforce (Hall, 2016; Ferri-Reed, 2013b). The theories of Maslow provide insights for managers to find ways to motivate employees and to formulate succession plans (Gibson & Petrosko, 2014; Ibidunni, Osibanjo, Adeniji, Salau, & Falola, 2016).

Manufacturing human resource professionals need to understand the answers to the following questions:

- What processes do you use for succession planning?
- What strategies do you use for succession planning?
- What process and strategy are the most effective in succession planning?

Retention and succession planning often refer to the larger knowledge management strategy within an organization (Carruth & Carruth, 2013). It is necessary to identify key individuals with workplace knowledge and skills before the individuals leave. Once identified, the key individual should transfer the skills and knowledge to newer cohorts. Effective plans need to include the three elements discussed. Otherwise, organizations may risk the loss of key individuals (Balcanoff, 2013).

Transition

In Section 1, I documented the qualitative, multiple-case study to explore what strategies and processes manufacturing human resource professionals use to acquire and retain skilled employees. In Section 2, I will define the research method, data collection, parameter, reliability, and validity factors. I will then present findings, recommendations, and implications for social change in Section 3.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 includes the purpose statement, the role of the researcher in the study, the participants of the study, the selected research method, research design, the population of the study, and ethical considerations. Section 2 also contains information on data collection, data instruments, data collection techniques, data analysis, reliability, and validity factors. The section is a transition between the foundation in Section 1 and the results in Section 3.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore the strategies and processes that manufacturing human resource professionals use to acquire and retain skilled employees. The population consisted of manufacturing human resource professionals from three different organizations who successfully used strategies to acquire and retain skilled employees in Giles County, Tennessee. The study may contribute to social change by providing local manufacturing human resource professionals with the strategies and processes to acquire and retain skilled labor. A town or community may become more desirable to other manufacturers when an adequate skilled workforce is in place (Hogan & Roberts, 2015). New or vibrant manufacturers reduce unemployment and increase the standard of living and tax base (Hanif et al., 2013). A higher tax base allows for better education and municipal improvements that may enrich the lives in the area (Henderson, 2015).

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the data collection instrument (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). In the study, I was the data collection instrument. I was interested in the study because the company that I partially own is the largest private employer in Giles County. As a business leader in a small community, I am aware of hiring and retention issues within the local manufacturing industry. While attending regional and state functions, I learned that there was a lack of skilled employees.

I held an elected position on the county school board for more than two terms and served on the vocational school's advisory board and the college's alumni board. My involvement in the multiple levels and types of education allowed for a broader understanding of the challenges faced by each organization. Using the combination of my professional and educational experience, I understood how the educators and human resource professionals could work together to alleviate the problem. Because I was a business owner and former elected official in a small community, in some cases, I had pre-existing interactions with some study participants. However, as Yin (2014) suggested, I used interview protocols to ensure uniformity while conducting the interview and focus group, thus diminishing any potential biases I might have had about the topic.

The overall ethical guidelines for research in the United States come from the Belmont Report (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1979). The creation of the Belmont Report in 1979 included an account of how to conduct research on a human participant. The three principles of the report are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1979). Following the guidelines

from the Belmont Report, I respected all individuals' wishes to participate in the study or to withdraw from the study. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (1979) stated that it is necessary to safeguard the welfare of all participants. Walden University's IRB gave permission to conduct the research. Walden University's approval number for this study is 12-10-15-0398820. I did not to use a person's information without informed consent. I did not harm any participant, and the research has a potential benefit for the study participants. Finally, I acted fairly when interacting with the participants.

The role of the researcher in qualitative studies is to develop interview questions, conduct interviews, gather the data, analyze the data, and interpret the results (Takyi, 2015). In that aspect, the researcher's subjectivity and bias can influence the study (Cope, 2014). In a small, rural Middle Tennessee community, a smaller pool of qualified participants existed, contributing to a higher possibility of working knowledge.

To overcome bias and to avoid interjecting personal perspectives, I used multiple processes. During the interviews and focus group, I verified meaning or statements with the participants and created a detailed document regarding the aspects of the research, such as setting, process, interaction, and the participant's body language. Bracketing is a method used to enable the researcher to identify and set aside personal biases and opinions using self-reflection (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Cope, 2014). In the course of the research, I exercised epoché, or bracketin*g*, to limit the influence of researcher bias in the study. The use of interview protocols ensures uniformity while conducting the interview and focus group, thus diminishing biases (Yin, 2014).

Participants

The eligibility criteria for participants included individuals who were manufacturing human resource professionals working in Giles County organizations that require skilled employees. I formed a focus group consisting of all the previously interviewed Giles County manufacturing human resource professionals from three different organizations. I acquired supplementary documents for the document review process. The strategy I used to gain accesses to participants was participation in the Giles County human resource professional lunches. The luncheons allowed local human resource professionals to exchange current issues and ideas. Because the company I partially own is the largest locally owned employer in the county, I and other members of the organization, attend these events.

I already had professional relationships and contact information for human resource managers or general managers whose organizations met the requirements. If I did not have the contact information for the manufacturing human resource professional, I contacted the general managers. To facilitate the interviews and to create a working relationship with the participants, I contacted the human resource professionals directly to request their involvement in the study. Once granted permission, I disseminated all necessary documentation. An exact process for determining an acceptable sample size in qualitative research does not exist (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). In this multiple-case design, the unit of study was manufacturing organizations. Yin (2014) stated that to assess a phenomenon that is suitable or requires a high degree of certainty; a study should have a minimum of five to six participants.

I interviewed human resource professionals who hired skilled employees for the manufacturing organizations within Giles County, Tennessee. In the focus group, the participants provided perspectives regarding the study interview questions. Purposeful sampling is appropriate for qualitative research for the identification and selection of implementation research (Imran & Yusoff, 2015; Yin, 2014). Purposeful sampling is acceptable for workforce retention studies (Davis, 2013). Using purposeful sampling, I approached the largest employers of skilled employees within the area because I assumed that the largest employers would have a need for an adequate workforce in the face of an aging workforce. A multiple-case study, where the researcher wishes to exhibit a high level of certainty, should be at least six cases (Yin, 2014). The sample population of at least six manufacturing human resource professionals, focus group, and document review met the requirements presented by Walden University (Davis, 2013; Mandlebe, 2014; Yin, 2014).

The interviews and focus group took place in a setting void of loud noises or other distractions that were comfortable for the participant. Both processes involved the same standardized, open-ended questions (Appendix A). Before starting the interview, focus group, or document collection, participants signed a document verifying consent to participate in the study. I affirmed to the contributors that the interview process and the information provided would remain confidential.

If a participant wished to meet at an employer's office, then the interview process took place there. Otherwise, the local economic development office agreed to allow

meetings at its location. The participants contributed to the study with free will and accord.

Giles County and its surrounding Tennessee counties have multiple industries that rely on skilled employees. Several other organizations within the county could take the place of the original organizations selected. If no other organizations exist within these counties, then geographical boundaries could expand. The reduction of the sample size was an option (Yang et al., 2012). Although it might feel more natural and comfortable to conduct the interview and focus group process without a script, the use of systematic processes for data collection improves the integrity of the collected data (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013).

Research Method and Design

In this section, I explain the selection process for the method and design of the study. I refer to the processes and styles used for collecting data. I outline the research design and present the strategy for this study.

Research Method

The three method types acceptable in research are qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method (Tracy, 2013). Qualitative research methods originate from philosophy, sociology, and anthropology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Although qualitative research procedures existed before the early 20th century, the method became prominent when used by Malinowski in 1922; however, in 1935, Mead created scholarly adaptations for qualitative research (Potts, 2015). Qualitative researchers focus on the interaction, language, and life experiences of the participants (Bernad, 2013). The topic includes

distinctions in behaviors and attitudes perceived by the subjects' lived experience. Neither quantitative nor mixed methods were appropriate methods to use in this study because both involve mathematical models rather than life experiences. Qualitative method was best suited for this study.

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore the strategies and processes that manufacturing human resource professionals use to acquire and retain skilled employees. I determined that in-depth interviews were the best tool to explore the participants' experiences to investigate the viability of remaining with the employer. Researchers support interviews as an effective tool of data collection in qualitative research (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Sorsa, Kiikkala, and Astedt-Kurki (2015) stated that the use of qualitative interviews enables a researcher to focus on collecting in-depth data from a relatively small participant sample. The conversational and flexible nature of face-to-face interviews allows a researcher to obtain an understanding of the person's lived experiences, without imposing predetermined constraints upon the participant's responses (Rimando et al., 2015). Cross-referencing this information with the strategies of manufacturing human resource professionals may improve existing processes or foster the creation of new policies.

Other researchers who explored acquisition and retention used a qualitative process (Kolachi & Akan, 2014; Lawton & De Aquino, 2016; Yang et al., 2012). Kolachi and Akan (2014) built on previous qualitative studies to explore the effects of mentoring and retention and determined that the qualitative method provided a better understanding for retaining beginning teachers. In another qualitative study, Yang et al.

(2012) evaluated employee turnover and retention plans within the hotel industry. The method was superior to other methods because it allowed for idea generation and development (Yang et al., 2012). The data collection process of interviewing management and staff was similar to the method for this study. In the study of multigenerational managers and the effect on retaining a younger workforce, Lawton and De Aquino (2016) concluded that a qualitative approach was preferred when exploring nuances or issues of interest to the problem at hand. If a manufacturing human resource manager does not recognize and prevent these problems in an organization, then workforce turnover will increase. Based on these three scholarly sources, I decided to use a qualitative method for the study.

The first step in the qualitative research plan is to create the interview questions. This process may require multiple iterations until the questions' validity and accuracy are at a scholarly level (Houghton et al., 2013). The interview process began with the companies previously selected. Transcription and coding occurred daily to ensure the best results. After the collection and coding of data, I synthesized the data for analysis. The synthesis provided a summary of the conclusions of the research process. Reviewing and checking each section increased validity to ensure the integrity of the study. Figure 3 presents the planned qualitative research model.

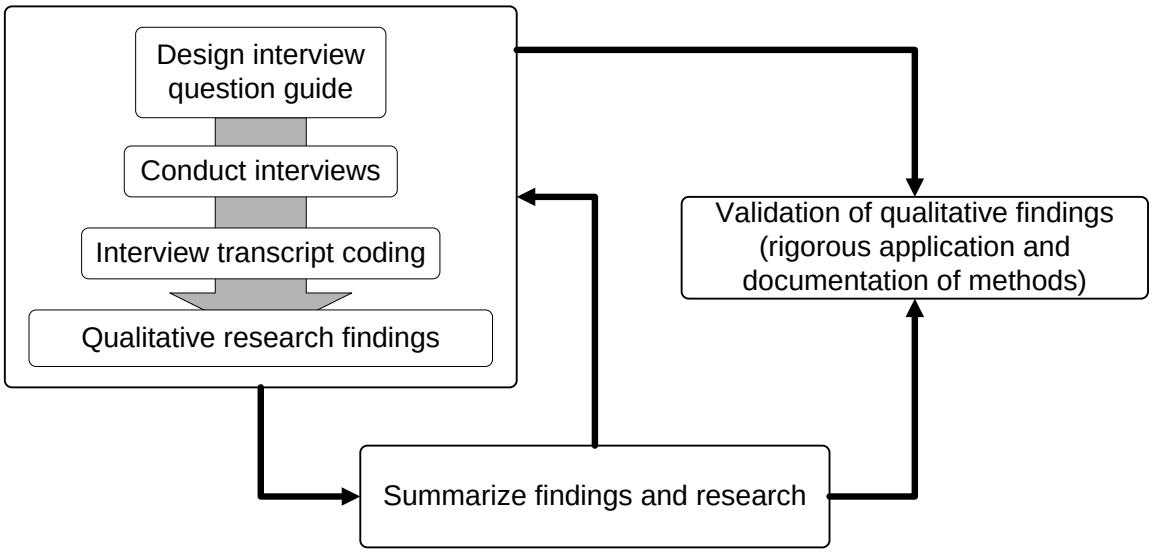

Figure 3. Data collection and analysis strategy used for this qualitative research method. The figure is an original model created for the study.

After selecting a qualitative study, I chose from a variety of procedures and approaches. The design options included ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, conversation analysis, and cooperative inquiry. Selecting the best design is imperative to successful research (Houghton et al., 2013).

Research Design

A multiple-case study is used by researchers to probe a modern phenomenon in detail and within a real-life setting, particularly when the separation between context and the phenomenon are not evident (Mandlebe, 2014; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) wrote that any design could produce a successful case study, and the type of data analysis must align with the purpose of the study. I selected a multiple-case study design because I wished to explore a modern phenomenon with blurred boundaries between context and setting. Yin stated that one of the requirements for a case study is that the line between the

participants and their setting is not clear. The context effects the participants and the participants effect the context, to the point where it can be impossible to study one without studying the other (Davis, 2013; Yin, 2014).

The multiple-case study design is not a new form of research. The origins of the multiple-case design come from the case study designs of Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, Mead, and Embree, who used case studies in anthropology (Stake, 2010). Of these authors, Malinowski was the most compelling and innovative (Mandlebe, 2014). Malinowski's study is one of the most influential works in social anthropology (Stake, 2010). Malinowski (1961) helped one social group understand another, which allowed scholars to recognize the profession in a similar perspective; this also formed the foundation of other theories. Other areas of multiple-case study design use include psychology, medicine, and law (Stake, 2010). The use of this design in scholarly writing includes an array of approaches and texts in peer-reviewed circulation (Yin, 2014). Researchers who used a multiple-case study focused on the understanding of a single dynamic setting. When compared to statistical research, researchers using a multiple-case study provided a deeper understanding of multiple instances of a phenomenon (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013).

Before selecting a multiple-case study for the design, I reviewed narrative analysis, grounded theory, phenomenological, and ethnographic designs. Narrative analysis, or narrative inquiry, involves the organization of a person, people, or a group's experience and knowledge more than data (Stenhouse, 2014). Common sources of information for this design include stories, journals, personal letters, and photos (Yin,

2014). Researchers using grounded theory design start with data collection through a series of categorizations and evaluation attempts to create a theory or hypothesis (Belfrage & Hauf, 2015). Walden University does not approve narrative analysis or grounded theory research for Doctorates of Business Administration studies. These methodologies were not applicable for this study. Researchers use the phenomenological design to focus on the lived experiences and perceptions of 20 or more participants, and researchers use those experiences to describe a phenomenon. I did not choose this design as the focus of this study was on more than an individual's independent experiences with a phenomenon (Stake, 2010). Ethnography is a design used to evaluate a cultural phenomenon for a given period with a long period of observation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The researcher's role is to collect data by observing the cultural phenomenon as an embedded part of the group under study (Yin, 2014). Ethnographic designs were not appropriate for this study because the purpose of the study involved gathering information from multiple sources during a relatively short period.

Qualitative researchers focus on understanding the meaningful associations between initial portrayals of experience about a particular situation (Yin, 2014). The decision to use a qualitative method and multiple-case study design has support from other studies. Hopkins (2012) used a qualitative method to explore the integration of the continual diversification of the United Kingdom's workforce after the European Union expansion of 2004. Jain (2014) stated that other designs were inferior to multiple-case studies regarding good business practices and incentives that promote retention and recruitment of older works in eight European countries. Jain also explored the

employability of the aging workforce. Becker, Hyland, and Soosay (2013) applied a multiple-case study design while investigating approaches used to attract and retain employees in rural and remote Austrian communities. In the multiple studies, researchers identified the need for qualitative data when studying similar phenomenon to this study and its use for acquiring empirical data (Baran & Klos, 2014; Becker et al., 2013; Hopkins, 2012). Other scholars have used Maslow's hierarchy of needs to evaluate workforce acquisition and retention in a case study (Hanif et al., 2013). Using a qualitative, multiple-case study design was acceptable for this study.

The question guiding this study was the following: What strategies and processes do manufacturing human resource professionals use to acquire and retain skilled employees? When compared to statistical research, a multiple-case study allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of an instance of a phenomenon (Miles et al., 2013). This multiple-case study included a follow-up group interview with all previous participants to provide an additional level of information and data saturation.

Population and Sampling

As a part of this qualitative, multiple-case study, I defined key ways in which companies can acquire and retain skilled employees. This section provides the rationale for the population and sample parameters of the study. The population and sampling process must provide the researcher with knowledge, understanding, and applicability of the study. A scholar must choose the proper process for both the population and sampling (Miles et al., 2013).

I chose to initially approach companies with more than 50 employees for participation in the study. Using these criteria, I concluded there were 21 companies from which to select manufacturing human resource professionals. The original plan was that if enough participants did not volunteer from the larger companies, then the smaller organizations would become part of the pool, starting with the largest and working down to the smaller workforces. The inclusion criteria of the study did not have to expand to reach the required number of participants. Interviews took place within each company's conference room. I selected the setting because it was familiar to the participant. Each facility was warm and inviting, but also provided the requisite amount of privacy for the interviews to take place.

The study's target population was human resource professionals representing approximately five manufacturing companies who have strategies and processes to acquire and retain skilled employees in Giles County (D. Speer, personal communication, March 2013). The sampling frame for this study consisted of manufacturing human resource professionals from a minimum of three organizations in Giles County, Tennessee. The sampling method was purposeful. A purposeful sample population is beneficial because the researcher only includes participants who have a knowledge of the phenomenon (Mandlebe, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2013). Hopkins (2012) used this method to perform research within industries experiencing the effects of a more diverse workforce. To be eligible for the interviews and focus group of the study, a participant had to be a manufacturing human resource professional working in Giles County. The focus group consisted of all the participants who had taken part in individual interviews.

The interviews, focus group, and document review had a minimum of six participants per the recommendations of Krueger and Casey (2015). Other multiple-case researchers have successfully used similar sample sizes (Becker et al., 2013; Hopkins, 2012). While exploring workforce retention, other scholars have documented that a minimum of six participants is necessary (Davis, 2013).

I evaluated the data after the initial individual interviews, focus group, and document review. After a review of the individuals' information and a focus group consisting of those participants, I conducted the document review and found that I had reached saturation and provided an opportunity for methodological triangulation. Data saturation represents the point in which data collections are not relevant, or no new information emerges on the topic (Franzosi, Doyle, Mcclelland, Putnam, & Vicari, 2013). Methodological triangulation is a method that establishes a research study's credibility and confirmability (Yin, 2014). If the researcher's combined information is robust and does not display unexplained phenomena or gaps in the data, then the data collection has achieved saturation (Yin, 2014; Mandlebe, 2014). After the fourth interview, no new data emerged from the participants. The focus group provided no new emerging data, indicating that the data were saturated. I reviewed the documents provided by the participants and found that they supported the themes uncovered during the analysis process and supported the saturation of these results.

Ethical Research

A scholar needs to become familiar with the many different government agencies, professional associates, and universities that reference the scope of the relevant moral

codes (Yin, 2014). After reviewing these different sources, researchers understand their moral and social responsibilities to the research subject (Yin, 2014). I completed the National Institutes of Health course, Protecting Human Research Participants. The certification number is 1139417, located in Appendix C. A researcher should possess an understanding of the Belmont Report, as discussed in the Role of the Researcher section of this study. The main areas of concern in any research process are consent and possible withdrawal from the study, incentives, protection of rights, and the maintenance of confidentiality (Stake, 2010).

The participants of the study received the informed consent document to review, as suggested by Owonikoko (2013). Each participant received a consent form when he or she first agreed to participate in the study. To qualify, the participants had to agree to the terms of Walden University's Participant Consent Form for Doctoral Study and return or e-mail a signed copy. Any participant wishing to withdraw from the study could do so at any time. Written communication to withdraw from the study would supersede the original consent form. Participants in the study did not receive any financial or another form of incentive, as suggested by Meins, Fernyhough, and Harris-Waller (2014). Once I completed the research study, the participants and contributors received a copy of the research study. The data are in two fixed locations to ensure the reliability and availability of information for 5 years. The first location is on a separate server located at my personal home. Only I have the login and password to access the information. The information is on a thumb drive placed within a personal lockbox that will remain at a local bank for 5 years.

The purpose of confidentiality is to protect the participants' identifying information and the information of others, which enables participants, to be honest in their responses and to ensure that they are not the recipients of any negative repercussions because they participated in the research study (Tracy, 2013). To ensure confidentiality, I followed Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies and guidelines. To ensure confidentiality, I coded all documents to protect the participants and organizations. After the coding process, a researcher must synthesize the material and findings to validate its quality and relevance regarding the research questions (Chowdhury, 2015). Finally, I developed and refined the findings by conducting a final review of the material from the manufacturing human resource professionals, focus group, and document review to complete the systematic synthesis process.

A researcher faces a multitude of potential ethical issues when performing human subject research. Research ethics entail the integration of ethical principles toward the subject and participants. The key to avoiding ethical issues is the use of clear forms that document consent to the study, protect the rights of the participants, and maintain confidentiality. A researcher must accept his or her part in protecting the participants (Stake, 2010). The same privacy considerations apply to the information and its collection process.

Data Collection Instruments

Onsite, I used interviews, focus group, and document review for data collection, allowing me to seek information from consenting participants. I asked the same questions in the interviews as I did in the focus group. According to Stake (2010), the

researcher acts as the primary research instrument. For this study, I was the data collection instrument. During the interview and focus group, I performed a transcript review process by e-mailing the resulting verbatim transcripts to participants of both the interview and focus group to verify the accuracy of these transcripts. In doing so, I was able to establish the credibility of my transcripts before moving into the data analysis process.

The individual interview and focus group process allowed me to delve into the participants' opinions and insights on the topic (Rimando et al., 2015). The same inquiry asked in a different way may have resulted in additional information about the subject (Yin, 2014). The instrument for the interview and focus group process was the Manufacturing Human Resource Professionals Questions (see Appendix A). These 10 open-ended interview questions expanded on the conceptual framework of the study. I used the questions to address the gaps in each of the three elements from the literature review. The first four and last three questions pertain to the aging workforce and succession planning of aging workforce sections of the literature review. In the three remaining questions, I focused on changes in the workforce section of the literature review. Participants completed the study once they provided documents and answered all of the questions in the interviews and focus group. I will review requests from participants to review raw data.

The study included transcript review. Transcript review addresses reliability and validity concerns (Davis, 2013; Hanif et al., 2013; Mandlebe, 2014). Measures to ensure validity included a review of the data collection process and a review of the data analysis

processes. I used NVivo 10 software to improve the consistency of data by identifying the trends and themes within the data (Davis, 2013; Mandlebe, 2014). I did not perform any modifications, adjustments, or revisions to the NVivo 10 software. I recorded all interviews and the focus group on a personal iPhone that was capable of creating voice memos and a digital recorder. At the conclusion of each interview and the focus group, I checked the digital information from the device and compared it with the written data. During the document review, I verified any public document provided were current by cross-referencing it to those listed on websites. The trustworthiness of any data is at the heart of any qualitative study (Yin, 2014). I conducted transcript review to verify the accuracy and credibility of the resulting data.

Data Collection Technique

I selected a qualitative method and multiple-case study design for this study. Interviewing is a documented and accepted form of data collection (Rimando et al., 2015). The types of interviews are unstructured, structured, and semistructured. In unstructured interviews, scholars apply little control of the participant or the responses. The openness of this data collection technique may allow the interview to become off topic (Yin, 2014). All participants receive questions and stimuli in as identical process as possible in structured interviews (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). A structured interview process is similar to a questionnaire. A semistructured interview follows an interview outline (Yin, 2014). Semistructured interviewing allows for a free flowing style of the interview without the concerns of moving too far beyond the desired topic (Davis, 2013; Yin, 2014). Another benefit of a semistructured approach is the ability to expand on

ideas that may be particular to the participants' organization and the community where the organization exists (Mandlebe, 2014). Semistructured interviews are ideal for situations when the researcher only meets a participant a limited number of times (Stake, 2010). A disadvantage of semistructured interviews is that they are time-consuming to conduct and analyze (Davis, 2013; Mandlebe, 2014). Another disadvantage to semistructured interviews is that the researcher needs adequate interviewing skills, as well as the ability to analyze data (Yin, 2014). Participants in this study were human resource professionals with firsthand knowledge. In this study since I was trying to determine if the themes of an aging workforce, best practices of workforce retention and succession planning of an aging workforce were present, the semistructured interview would best suit my purpose.

I collected data through in-depth, semistructured interviews, a focus group, and documents provided from manufacturing human resource professionals within Giles County, Tennessee. In the data collection process, I used transcript review after the interview and focus group. I collected a series of documents (policies, procedures, and photographic evidence) to review and analyze. After the initial visit to the location, I followed the process outlined in Appendix B. At the conclusion of the interviews and focus group, I provided all participants with a verbatim transcript of their responses and provided them with the opportunity to clarify any of the responses that they gave. I used the following process:

1. Set a time and location; provide information regarding the consent form and copy of the signed form.

2. Interview willing participants individually or in the focus group; ask thought provoking questions to obtain knowledge regarding perceived factors relating to skilled employees' workforce acquisition and retention.
3. Record the interviews or focus group on personal iPhone.
4. Upon completion of the interview or focus group, verify that recordings were clear and complete.
5. Transfer information from digital audio to a Word document and save in multiple locations.
6. Confirm transcribed data and recorded data match.
7. Conduct transcript review by emailing verbatim transcripts to participants to confirm the accuracy of the transcript documents.
8. Input data into the evaluation software.
9. Share a summary of results with participants to confirm that I accurately captured their experiences.

Data Organization Technique

Starting in the 1960s, qualitative researchers used audio recording devices to assist in the capturing of data (Yin, 2104). Electronic data provided additional information, but also created the need for new data organization techniques. Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), such as NVivo 10, is useful to a qualitative researcher who wishes to manage and organize data in a meaningful way. A researcher should use NVivo 10 to aid in the data analysis process (Bernauer, Lichtman, Jacobs, & Robinson, 2013; Castleberry, 2014; Franzosi et al., 2013).

After the interview process, focus group, and document review the data were stored and then organized in NVivo 10. I placed all information and data in a primary folder titled Research Data. I filed individual interviews in numerical order and assigned them a label beginning with IND1 (Individual 1). The data for the focus group began with the assigned label, FOC1. I numbered questions consecutively starting with Q1. Using this labeling method, the first participant's answer to the second question included the corresponding label, IND1Q2. The system enables data analysis features for comparing emerging themes for each participant, group, and question. Abbreviated and sequential labeling is an analytical process necessary for qualitative research (Yin, 2014). The use of a modified van Kaam method, a proven analytical tool, assisted me in organizing data (Mandlebe, 2014; Moustakas, 1994).

To ensure the protection of the participants' confidentiality, only I had access to the raw data. The raw data are located in a digital format and exist in two locations. One location is on a separate server located at my personal house. The backup is on a thumb drive stored in a personal bank lockbox. Both the server and thumb drive have password protection, only known by myself. I will destroy the raw data 5 years after the publication date of this doctoral study.

Data Analysis

I chose to use qualitative data in my research because it enables the researcher to offer complex accounts of how individuals experience the research topic. A researcher using a qualitative design accomplishes this analysis by providing information from the human perspective of the issue (Miles et al., 2013). The data acquired from the interview

and focus group processes are the result of the participants' interpretation of life experiences regarding any phenomenon under study (Houghton et al., 2013). In this study, I used both interviews and focus group.

Denzin (1970) broadened the scholarly concept of triangulation by classifying four different types. In the study, I used methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods for gathering data (Denzin, 1970). I gathered data from interviews, focus group, and document review to accomplish methodological triangulation. I selected methodological triangulation because it elucidates corresponding aspects of the phenomenon (Davis, 2013; Mandlebe, 2014; Yin, 2014). I used the research questions to explore the acquisition and retention of skilled employees by human resource professionals. The first section of questions pertained to the aging workforce. The second section of questions dealt with workforce retention. In the final section, I focused on succession planning. I compiled the following list that of the questions used for the interviews and focus group.

1. What processes do you use to motivate your skilled employees?
2. What processes do you use to retain skilled employees?
3. What strategies do you use to retain skilled employees?
4. What process and strategy are the most effective in retaining skilled employees?
5. What processes do you use to hire skilled employees?
6. What strategies do you use to hire skilled employees?

7. What process and strategy are the most effective in hiring skilled employees?
8. What processes do you use for succession planning?
9. What strategies do you use for succession planning?
10. What process and strategy are the most effective in succession planning?

A subgroup analysis in research involves evaluating the existence of disparities or differences between the groups. A difference in subgroup effect signifies a disconnect between manufacturing human resource professionals from different organizations (Yin, 2014). Distributing the raw data into primary themes is necessary (Yin, 2014). One method for identifying themes and patterns involves the use of word-based techniques. Word-based techniques are crucial because language is the primary form of communication. Word repetition may identify keywords and the frequency of occurrences in the process (Bernauer et al., 2013). Computer programs can create the word frequency information from data to identify themes (Bernauer et al., 2013; Castleberry, 2014). Once key themes became apparent, I compared and contrasted the keywords found within each theme.

Researchers use NVivo to perform a qualitative data analysis to assist in the processing of data (Bernauer et al., 2013; Castleberry, 2014). The NVivo software facilitates the researcher's management and organization of the data (Franzosi et al., 2013). In addition, NVivo software for data analysis assists in coding and theme selection (QSR International, 2013). The software program enabled the identification of trends and frequencies within the dataset for this study. I was able to sort interview and

focus group responses by different categories and subcategories using NVivo 10. Through categorization and labeling of the collected data, the researcher can identify themes and ascertain the thematic structure of the analysis (Castleberry, 2014).

All forms of research involve collecting information. A researcher must be able to analyze the data to understand the information (Bernauer et al., 2013). Researchers use data coding to condense data sets into smaller units or categories to facilitate the analysis of the data (Bernauer et al., 2013). Data coding using NVivo 10 facilitated the process of theme development. Once the themes became apparent, I was able to analyze the participants' responses and compare and contrast them to the experiences as listed in the questions. After analyzing all of the questions individually, I compared reoccurring themes. I used Maslow's and Herzberg's theories to cross reference the reoccurring themes to the conceptual framework. The coding process helped me to obtain knowledge of how the data connects to the conceptual framework (Chowdhury, 2015).

As the final step in the data analysis process, I gathered documentation from the companies involved in the study. These documents included surveys, website data, employee benefit summaries, wages, glassdoor.com reviews, e-mails, succession planning documents, and flyers. I reviewed to documents to see how they supported the emerging themes. I then summarized each document and compared the summaries to the coded and themed results.

Reliability and Validity

In this section of the study, I provide insight regarding the internal and external methods for reliability and validity. The definitions of reliability and validity in scholarly

studies include a wide range of terms and theories. A researcher's topic is often a multidimensional and complex issue that covers an array of content (Chowdhury, 2015). To ensure the work is reputable, the scholar must ensure reliability and validity (Elo et al., 2014). Reliability and validity verification approaches are dependent on the methodology of the study. In qualitative research, achieving verification establishes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Bernad, 2013).

Reliability

Reliability addresses the dependability of a study (Noble & Smith, 2015). A study has dependability when the results are consistent and repeatable by the use of an inquiry audit, by having outside researchers who are not involved in the data collection process review the data and results to ensure that the results and findings support the available data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability occurs when the researcher accounts for and describes changes within the setting or environment and the possible effects on the study (Houghton et al., 2013). I examined the truthfulness and trustworthiness of my study to make it reliable. The proceeding processes ensured that the data were relevant, reliable, and consistent to the topic.

I elected to establish dependability of the study by interview protocol, focus group protocol, verbatim transcript review, and document collection. A researcher uses an interview or focus group protocol as guidelines and rules for collecting data and improving the study's dependability (Houghton et al., 2013; Noble & Smith, 2015; Yin, 2014). I created a protocol and followed it for both the individual interview and focus group. Transcript review is another way to enhance dependability (Lincoln & Guba,

1985; Noble & Smith, 2015; Yin, 2014). I addressed dependability using transcript review by providing all participants with a verbatim transcript of their responses and giving them the opportunity to clarify any of their responses.

Validity

Credibility. The purpose of qualitative research is to understand a phenomenon through the participants' lived experiences (Tracy, 2013). Credibility establishes that the participants of the study find the results believable. Credibility depends on the wealth of the information collected, rather than the quantity of data gathered (Davis, 2013).

I used methodological triangulation and transcript review to establish credibility in the study's results and findings. Data triangulation raises the credibility and confirmability in qualitative research (Davis, 2013; Houghton et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). Triangulation is a creditability concept, which is the collecting of multiple data sources and finding congruence or consistency (Mandlebe, 2014). Triangulation helps to establish numerous views on a phenomenon. Four common forms of triangulation include data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Houghton et al., 2013; Noble & Smith, 2015; Yin, 2014). I used methodological triangulation in the study by gathering data from interviews, focus group, and data collection. I then compared the interviews to each other and the focus group. I collected documents from the companies in the study and did a document review. I then compared the results of the analysis to ensure triangulation. Scholars use transcript review to improve credibility in a qualitative study to ensure that the finding is from the participants' perspective (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Noble & Smith, 2015; Yin,

2014). I addressed dependability using transcript review. I provided all participants with a verbatim transcript of the results. I asked for feedback to ensure that the results accurately represented their experiences and perceptions.

Transferability. Transferability is the extent that the results from one study will have applicability to other contexts (Lakshmi & Mohideen, 2013). Researchers performing qualitative studies can determine transferability by asking progressive questions and comparing responses to previous works (Baillie, 2015). A researcher can improve transferability by adhering to the techniques of the research design and having an interview and focus group protocol (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Noble & Smith, 2015; Yin, 2014). I adhered to the research design and followed the interview and focus group protocol I created. Through using multiple sources of data and documenting my processes, I provided enough information for an individual to make a determination about the transferability of this study.

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to establishing the findings and results from the study based on the participants and respondents instead of researcher bias (Yin, 2014). If a study is confirmable, the results may corroborate, and others could choose to confirm the findings (Baillie, 2015). I used data triangulation and transcript review to guarantee confirmability.

One method of ensuring a study's confirmability is to employ data triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Noble & Smith, 2015; Yin, 2014). Data triangulation is the processing of multiple data collections from a variety of sources to cross-check an

interpretation (Davis, 2013). I achieved data triangulation by accumulating data from interviews, a focus group, and document reviews.

Researchers can use transcript review in a qualitative study to establish confirmability by reinforcing the participant's perspective (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Noble & Smith, 2015; Yin, 2014). I conducted transcript review by e-mailing interpretive verbatim transcripts to participants to confirm the accuracy of the documents before beginning the analysis. Once I completed the initial analysis of the data, I shared a summary of the results with the participants to receive confirmation that I had accurately portrayed their experiences and perceptions.

Data saturation. I ensured data saturation within the interview responses, focus group, and document review. Data saturation refers to the point at which the inclusion of additional participants no longer produces new themes within the data (Firmin, Bouchard, Flexman, & Anderson, 2014; Davis, 2013). I used methodological triangulation during the data gathering process. The methods used were interviews, focused group, and document review. I continually assessed for data saturation throughout the data collection and analysis. Nelson, Onwuegbuzie, Wines and Frels (2013) stated that data saturation occurs when no novel themes appear within the dataset. I examined each identified theme for completeness and reviewed the data to look for any remaining underdeveloped themes. I provided all participants of the interviews and focus group with a verbatim transcript and gave them an opportunity to clarify any of the responses. There were no changes to the verbatim transcripts for the interviews or focus group.

When the focus group and document review could not produce new themes within the data; I determine that I had achieved data saturation.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2 of the study, I detailed the research procedures. I presented the role of the researcher, the participants' roles, research method, research design, population, sampling, ethical considerations, data collection processes, data analysis procedures, and methods for maintaining reliability and validity. In the first portion of Section 2, I outlined the role of the researcher in the study, the qualifications for participants, and the process for selecting samples from the population. Next, I offered descriptions of the procedures and processes of the data collection process to provide rigor to the study. Section 2 also included an explanation of why a qualitative, multiple-case study was superior to other methods and designs. The last topic discussed in Section 2 was the steps necessary for both reliability and validity. Section 3 encompasses documentation of the findings, application to professional practice, the prospects for social change, and the suggestions for action and potential future studies.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore the strategies and processes that manufacturing human resource professionals used to acquire and retain skilled employees. In the study, the data came from interviews, focus groups, and documents collected from human resource professionals in three manufacturing companies in Giles County, Tennessee. The themes identified as a part of the study included finding new employees, incentives, and retaining employees operated on a localized level. The themes contained information regarding global policies and decisions, as well as the execution of the policies on an individual employee level.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question used to guide this study was the following: What are the strategies and processes that manufacturing human resource professionals use to acquire and retain skilled employees? I present the six themes found to answer the research question in the following section. All presented participant responses are from semistructured interviews. Once I reported the themes, I conducted a document analysis and summarized the information from the documents. I then compared and contrasted to the themes to ensure the accuracy and triangulation of the results.

Theme 1: Company Culture

Creating a company culture to retain employees was a method all three companies employed. The participants spoke about the culture of their companies in significant detail. All six of the participants spoke about this theme. I identified 14 codes with 33

responses during the data analysis. Participant 1 spoke about the importance of onboarding new hires and indicated that it was the new employees' first formal introduction to the company. Participant 1 said:

> Now, when we hire someone, there's a packet. It's ready. Everything is boom, boom, boom and we can just knock through that. We go back in a month's time, and we talk with our new hires, and we ask them, "How's the last month been for you? During your hiring process, what could we have done differently? As you were being interviewed by other companies versus us, what were the things that you saw? What could we do differently to make this an easier process?" We just kind of try to benchmark ourselves against other companies to make sure that we're doing things better. And to put us in the forefront, you know, "What can we do, so the next time we're looking for someone we're going to beat out that competition, we're not going to beat out by them. "What made you chose us over someone else?"

Having an onboarding process enabled Participant 1 to create a logical flow that allowed the human resource department to follow up in a consistent manner with new hires. The hiring managers were able to receive feedback during the beginning, middle, and end portion of the onboarding process. They could make changes in real time based on the feedback that they received from the new hires.

Four of the six participants spoke about the importance of receiving direct feedback from the employees. The participants mentioned several surveys conducted on a regular basis. One of the companies used a survey to assess salary levels and employee

engagement. Manufacturing human resource professionals used the salary survey to assess salaries on the local, state, and national level. The company's manufacturing human resource personnel wanted to ensure that they were paying competitive wages to retain skilled labor. Participants 1 and 4 spoke about a recent employee engagement survey conducted by the company. The company upper management administered this anonymous survey to find what levels of engagement were present in the company. The information gathered allowed me to identify areas of dissatisfaction and disengagement within the company. A part of the culture of the companies was to create a team atmosphere that allowed for employee growth and satisfaction; these surveys were used to enhance and improve this culture. Participant 1 indicated that the goal of the study was

> To see how engaged our employees are ... by learning what level of engagement they have in the company, what things they feel we aren't meeting their needs ... we'll be able to better have interaction and engagement and motivation.

Participant 4 spoke about the results of the study:

> It opened our eyes. And it was not surprising the departments that were disengaged because I could already read it. I figured, Okay, we have trouble with this department, so I know that they're not going to be engaged because they're just going to go through there and click negative the negative answers. And sure enough. And so now, [a member of the management team] will be following up with the managers, and the managers will have to present their percentages to their group or department and see how they can have the corrective action to improve.

The companies took the information gathered from the survey to improve company culture and to increase employee engagement.

The participants in the survey spoke about the significance of having a positive company atmosphere. Participant 6 stated that it was important that "people enjoy what they do. Otherwise, they don't do it for very long." Participant 6 believed one way to increase employee retention was to make sure that people enjoyed going to work. Participant 2 supported this statement and remarked, "So for me, that's key. A happy worker is going to stay here." Participant 2 understood the importance of retaining skilled employees and believed enjoyment of their job was key to their satisfaction.

To motivate employees, as per their company culture, three of the six participants spoke about the necessity of constant communication. Participant 4 stated:

> So of course, you're going to do reinforcement with communication. The constant communication, whether that be in the plant meetings, whether that is on my communication boards. I'm going to constantly be giving them the information. It's always right there in front of them.

Participant 4 found that sharing information consistently enabled employees to feel as if they understood what was happening in the company. This sense of inclusion increased employee dedication and buy-in. Participant 5 also spoke about the importance of involving employees and having them feel a sense of empowerment. Participant 5 spoke about the company and said, "making them [employees] feel like they are part of the team and a family, which means keeping them involved with communications, such as the new plant building, and how it's coming along." Participant 5 believed that the

ability to share pertinent information would increase employee engagement, which in turn, would lead to higher levels of retention.

Participants 1 and 2 also spoke about the use of communication in building a corporate culture. Their company had recently switched from using bulletin boards for company announcements and information to the use of flat-screened television monitors. Participant 1 stated:

> It's our bulletin board now. Instead of having just postings on a board out in the hallway, this TV monitor runs in several different areas of our plant. They're in different departments, they're in the break rooms, shipping has one, pattern shop, maintenance department. So any activities that we're having, any meetings that we're having, any promotion giveaway things that we're having; they're all put on there. I shared the information across the plant, which enabled all employees to get information promptly.

Participants elaborated on the use of the monitors and stated:

> I think people see things that sometimes they would miss, just on walking through the board, because it plays while they're in break eating and things like that. And we put the pictures and things like that on there, which help to catch your eye, or whatever.

Some of the information shared on the board included the notice of company events, meetings, anniversaries, and birthdays. The participants' companies also distributed information shared on the TV monitors that included activities, meetings, promotions, contests, and training classes. Having monitors placed in selected areas throughout the

building enabled the management team to ensure that all employees were able to have access to the information.

The television bulletin boards were also a means of public employee recognition for different achievements. Some examples included graduation from school or training programs, information on goal achievement, and recognition of departments as well as individuals. Participant 2 felt this was especially important, stating:

> They like to be told they're doing a good job. And they should be told they're doing a good job. Most employees need to hear that. We’re always quick to point out what's wrong, but you have to come back and give them a pat on the back when they do a good job.

By focusing on the positives, and reinforcing good work, Participant 2 believed retention of good employees would increase.

Participant 6 spoke about a companywide incentive program. Participant 6 described the program, stating that the upper management created the program so that any employee could offer a suggestion that could lead to cost savings or ideas for improvement. Participant 6 stated:

> We also have an incentive program for submitting suggestions or ideas for improvement. Every month, we do a drawing for a gift card, somewhere between 50 and 100 dollars. So, it's not a large amount, but it's a little bit of an incentive to submit ideas for improvements.

Participant 6 thought the potential for process improvement and supporting company culture was worth the small monetary investment.

Another aspect of corporate culture described by the participants included opportunities to serve on different teams or projects. Employees were encouraged to become involved to build team cohesion across departments and sections. Three of the six participants spoke about different teams available for employees. Participant 1 said:

> We have programs inside the company like our ERT, which is our Emergency Response Teams. We have audit teams, which are 5S and stop audits and things of that nature. Therefore, employees either are asked or request to be on these teams.

Participant 6 spoke about the importance of the teams and stated:

> In most cases, the job on our production floors is almost an independent job. Somebody is working on a cell. They're working on their own … other than team leaders and materials handlers or other tooling individuals. So, in most cases, they're relatively isolated other than a little engagement. So, getting involved in team projects . . . helps promote that team atmosphere [and] it gives you that sense of inclusion, I guess. So, that, again, helps with employee retention.

As many of the positions within the company required employees to work independently, participants welcomed the ability to interact with peers. Participant 6 felt that by building a sense of cohesion, employee retention increased.

The most important factor identified by the participants was aiding in creating the company culture through the many events held by the companies. Participant 6 stated, “We have a lot of employee relations and benefits, what we call ‘social events’ that are

driven by employee focus. Things such as birthday cake every month." Participant 6 spoke in more detail and stated:

> The family atmosphere. The fact that we do continue to carry on these traditions and we interact outside of work as much as inside. If you go back to our TV screens, when an employee has a birth of a child, we post that with pictures. We have … anytime your child or anyone in your family does something, like they're going to their first prom, or they're graduating or something, there's a posting put up about that. If someone in your immediate family passes away, we post that, what day the funeral is, where it's going to be. We know each other's families.

Participant 6 believed that by creating a sense of family, employees felt valued. Participant 6 felt being valued displayed the company values, which included respect, teamwork, innovation, and communication. Participant 2 spoke about the company as a family organization. Many people worked with siblings or cousins; the group employed was "close-knit." This feeling of connection helped increase employee satisfaction and retention levels.

Participant 4 spoke about many of the different events planned and offered to employees. Some of the events included a Santa Claus for children, company picnics, and other events throughout the year. The company managed to sponsor at least one family-style event every month. During the Christmas season, the company provided each employee "an actual 18-gallon plastic tote, and then it's a cooler tote of food."

Another way that the management team showed appreciation for these skilled employees was during the heat of the summer months. Participant 6 said:

> In the summertime, when it … because if it's hot out there, it's 10 times hotter at [e company]. So we're bringing in popsicles, watermelon. We have free events in the summertime. We're constantly checking to see, "You need a cooling rag? You need something for your hard hat?" Just back to back. And that personal interaction means a lot to lots of employees out here. And as you'll see, we have employees that have been out here for full 43 years.

By creating a distinct family atmosphere as a part of their corporate culture, each of the companies was able to gain employee loyalty and commitment, with a sense of being part of a family, which led to long-term employee retention. Participant 6 reported that every year each employee received hand-signed birthday cards. During various activities, there were drawings for money and gift cards. The company's local manufacturing human resource personnel planned various outings for employees where they could invite a guest with the company picking up the cost. Overall, the company offered many activities and gifts to let employees know that they were valued and that the company cared and was involved in their lives. This sense of family and closeness engendered employee loyalty with individuals working for the corporations for many years.

In an analysis of the focus group responses, I found no variation from the individual interviews. In their responses in the focus group, the participants confirmed what the participants stated individually. The information triangulated with the individual responses from the interviews and focus group about the importance of company culture in acquiring and retaining skilled employees.

A review of documents included flyers about corporate events, photographs from various gatherings, survey results, and glassdoor.com reviews. The companies provided photographs from various events. These photographs showed employees enjoying golfing outings, a barbecue, and other events. The employees and their families were able to relax and enjoy themselves with coworkers. A series of flyers advertising different events such as cookouts, food drives, and safety recognition exemplified how the companies used events to reward employees and encourage team building. Most events included families, and employees were urged to take part. Flyers included information about different opportunities to participate in drawings for gift cards and other presents. Two glassdoor.com reviews found online stated, “friendly environment to work in” and “family friendly work environment.” Overall, the documents reviewed aligned with the results of the interviews and focus group. The companies strove to create a culture where employees felt valued, in a family friendly atmosphere. The results of the document analysis supported the responses of the participants and triangulated with those results.

Researchers who have studied effective business practices support the culture theme and how it is important to skilled workforce acquisition and retention. An organization that creates a family-oriented and flexible culture has an increased opportunity for acquiring talent from organizations that do not have such a culture (Tishman et al., 2012). Gargoline (2012) conducted a phenomenological study on leading a multigenerational workforce and concluded that professional organizations that create a proactive and beneficial culture similar to that of a family should experience a

more positive corporate culture. By understanding and acknowledging the differences and similarities between the two genders, employers should promote a better organizational relationship and loyalty, similar to a family (Yang et al., 2012).

In a review of literature published after the proposal, I found support for the findings of this study. Morganson, Major, Streets, Litano, and Myers (2015) used the embeddedness theory to determine what anchored students to the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. The perception of connections with others and the anticipation of having to make an emotional sacrifice if they left an organization is what keeps people on a career path (Morganson et al., 2015).

Herzberg's two-factor theory has two groups known as hygiene and motivation (Herzberg et al., 1959). A hygiene factor includes company culture (Bailey & Madden, 2016). Maslow (1943) suggested that all individuals have a need for an evaluation of their own and others' esteem. Gargoline (2012) identified the importance of managers evaluating their workforce to determine their current level of needs. Having a connection between an employee and an organization could explain why culture plays a role in the skilled labor acquisition and retention. The conceptual framework of this study supported this theme.

Theme 2: Succession

The theme of succession addressed one of the main issues faced by the companies that participated in this study. The companies had an aging workforce approaching retirement. It was essential to train younger employees and gather the information held by employees on the verge of retirement. During the individual interviews, all six of the

participants identified succession as a central concern. Five codes with 26 individual data units formed to create this theme.

One of the main issues faced by all of the participants in this study was the aging of their workforce. The companies were all in the midst of succession planning, as a large number of their current employees were approaching retirement. The participants expressed the difficulties they faced in locating younger, qualified, skilled workers. Participant 2 spoke about the steps the company was taking to ensure that they retained the information possessed by employees who were getting ready to retire. Participant 2 said it was important to “Hav[e] knowledge written down. If you don't have that, you're starting over on a bunch of things.” Participant 2 indicated that the company had just completed a year-long project to update all of the company’s manuals, complete with instructions, pictures, and safety concerns. To accomplish this task, the company managers asked employees, “How do you do the job?” Based on the responses, the company updated the manuals.

Participant 3 was also involved in a similar project:

> We are making a big push to develop [and] create work instructions through our ISO systems ... A skilled position would be someone that's re-lining a furnace. It's critical on how you re-line a furnace for many reasons. So, we are developing work instructions to make sure that, "Okay, if we have a skilled person that does that job, but we have work instructions with something written, pictures, the data that shows this is how we do it.” And so, if that if something happens to that

> person, we have a strategy to handle that. So that you bring the next person in, they're more able to quickly to perform those tasks.

By creating updated organization manuals, the participant was able to bank a wealth of knowledge possessed by the employees who had worked in their positions for many years. The manuals made it easier to train new employees and to ensure continuity.

Participant 3 spoke about how the company was planning to have a skilled workforce in place as older workers retired. Participant 3 said:

> We don't have that formal plan for our hourly workforce, but we do have that conversation and that was part of our strategy for developing the apprenticeship program was taking a look at the number of expected retirements that we were anticipating and saying, "Okay, not only are we going to lose skilled workers who perform their work," and those are people that understand a lot about the company so by keeping people internally and then promoting into skilled position, they also have some experience, not just skilled experience but knowledge of our products, our processes, equipment, how it runs. So, that's again probably more ... There's no official formal plan for succession planning for our hourly workforce but it's part of our conversation, it's part of ours ... As we look to replace someone we consider these sorts of ... So it's an informal, more informal process.

At this point, the company did not have a formal program in place to ensure a smooth transition. However, they were aware of the upcoming changes and had begun a discussion about what steps they needed to implement to ensure knowledge retention. Participant 3 continued to say:

> I would say this conversation comes up every time we have an opening or we hear about a retirement. We hear, "Oh, employee John or whoever, they may be retiring in a year. What are we going do if they leave? Because they know all about XYZ equipment. They fix that equipment. Okay, who's our backup? Well, let's make sure we have a backup.

In many instances, they were operating on a case-by-case basis. An earlier incident reinforced the importance of planning for these changes. Participant 3 said:

> We had one of our electronic technicians, the person that handles our PLCs and a lot of the programming and stuff. That person left, and we had one other person that was kind of there ... Didn't have the same position but worked with maintenance, so we promoted that person up into a new position and then we backfilled his position.

The employees were fortunate that they had someone who could train them to take the available position. Participant 3 spoke more about succession planning and stated:

> So again, succession planning is part of our ongoing thought process, and we have that whole, "Well, what if you get hit by the bus?" or "What if so and so leaves?" or we think that so and so is going to leave in a few years or somebody gets sick and then we start going, "Oh, gosh." If somebody goes on a leave of absence. When you have a workforce that's been around for 40 years, that's a continuous conversation.

This issue was important, the participant's company was in the early stages of assessing the situation to make some informed decisions. Participant 3 said that the most important facet of succession planning was to

> Make sure that your senior leadership understands succession planning, and supports and participates in a regular conversation or planning session. Maybe once a year, we have an official succession planning meeting. But it's real important for the senior leadership to be asking the questions about succession planning, and asking the question to his management team, "Are you prepared? What is your plan?" I think that that's the key. Someone has to drive this and remind the organization that succession planning is critical activity. Otherwise, everyone's going to be busy with the day-to-day routines and activities.

As Participant 3 noted, it was easy to be caught up in day-to-day activates and not see the long-term picture. Succession planning is an essential step for any organization no matter what the size to assure smooth transitions.

On a personal level, Participant 4 prepared in case something happened. Participant 4 made an effort to ensure that

> Somebody here knows this is the path we follow, this is how we do this, this is who we contact. I don't want you to be just left in the dark. I'm great working alone, but I love working as a team. And that way, if something did happen, [someone] could walk in here tomorrow, open up my emails, and say, "Okay…I know exactly this contact, and they will guide me and help me."

Participant 4 understood the value of ensuring that someone understood their day-to-day responsibilities and that person could step in at a moment's notice if necessary. Participant 1 said that managers were aware of the importance of planning. Participant 1 remarked,

> The managers ... are obviously looking and focusing on this. They're looking at what areas do they think there are going to be changes or retirements coming in? What are key areas that it would be a very pivotal moment if something happened?

Participant 1 indicated that company managers were assessing this issue and were focusing on ensuring that a backup existed for all positions.

Participant 3 spoke about the formal process embedded at their workplace for succession planning. Participant 3 described process in detail and said:

> From a corporate group, we have succession planning for our salary workforce. It's coordinate people in where they are and the potential for promotion, and desire, and abilities, and identifies everybody and put them in that coordinate. And we do a little bit of planning, annually, to evaluate the risks of our salary workforce and more the key positions, such as production manager, as an example, plant manager, other more key positions. And so we try and identify that, and then we try to put in some plans that prepare for who we might develop, and grow, and have as a potential backup or successor to each position.

Although human resource professionals had plans for salaried workers, less planning existed when it came to addressing the skilled labor force. Senior management was

aware of the need for succession planning. Senior management and the manufacturing human resource professionals had not arrived at a conclusion or standard direction to take in dealing with the issue.

Participant 5 spoke about succession planning at the company. Participant 5 described the current path that the company was following and stated:

> We are currently working on a program through corporate to where we have a person in place for every job ... from the General Manager down to the last new hire employee, so that we wouldn't have any lapse in coverage or knowledge in any particular job. So that's actually a program we're doing now at the corporate level, and a lot of that's due to the fact that we have a lot of 30-plus year employees that are starting to retire, and they are seeing to where they've going to start preparing for that, to have people to replace them so they can retire

Participant 5's company understood that with the impending retirement of many skilled workers, it was essential to have a plan to ensure that a backup was in place for each position.

The participants did not note any variation during the focus group. After I had reviewed the answers from the individual interviews, neither the focus group nor the document review provided any novel information to offer. The focus group participants felt that I had described the subject of succession planning during the individual interviews. Their responses confirmed what the participants had stated individually. Because of this level of triangulation, the trustworthiness of the information gathered and analyzed for this study was accurate.

A review of two PowerPoint presentations illustrated the process of succession planning. The PowerPoint presentations provided a blueprint for succession planning. A systematic succession procedure was in the documents. Included in this process was an explanation why succession planning was essential, the purpose of succession planning, the goals, and objective of the succession planning program, and the elements of the program. Included were methods for managers to identify potential candidates and also a pathway for career planning for employees.

Employees were encouraged to set career goals and outline the steps necessary, including training or education, required to meet those goals. Career ladders were laid out, and human resource professionals educated employees about the steps and stages needed to achieve goals. All planning was in the open. The managers and employees communicated throughout the process and the measures were objective based, with a series of defined steps. A review process allowed all participants to assess the readiness and ability of the potential candidates.

This process matched the results of the interviews, focus group and document review. The processes that were in place showed that succession planning was important, and for some of the companies involved, in the forefront of their planning process. Employees had a voice in this process, and the methods for advancement were laid out. The analysis of the study documents supported the results of the interview, focus group, and document review supporting the triangulation of the results.

Succession in the workplace is a process of conveying information in multiple forms to unite all members' activities when members leave (Atan et al., 2015). Montesi

(2014), as well as Moutray and Swift (2013), found that succession planning and manuals from the organization were important to all generations in the workforce. Succession is a complex process that requires communication and willing participation (Montesi, 2014).

Researchers have discovered additional supporting documents while reviewing the most recent studies that have emerged since I conducted the literature review. Succession planning is a necessary part of business. Succession planning is not only useful with leadership changes but can be useful before any real need exists to implement such changes. The process should be continually changing and require both written and unwritten communication on all levels of an organization (Jalloh et al., 2016).

The topic of succession in this study is the same subject matter represented as esteem, which is in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The same subjects are a motivating factor in Herzberg's two-factor theory. I found that an organization's use of succession also engaged employees and could be a strategy or procession of workforce acquisition and retention, which is in alignment with the findings of Gargoline (2012) and Atan et al. (2015).

Theme 3: Benefits

In this theme, I address the benefits offered to employees. During the individual interviews, all six of the participants identified this as a central concern. Six codes with 35 individual data units formed to create this theme.

Retention of skilled workers was an essential component of the businesses' successes. One of the methods used to ensure employee satisfaction and retention was the benefits offered by the companies. A benefit of primary importance was employee

pay scales. Five of the six participants in the study spoke about salary. Three of the five participants directly related salary to the retention of skilled workers. Two of the participants indicated the use of annual wage surveys. The employees at the companies conducted an annual wage survey on a yearly basis at local, state, and national levels. Participant 3 described these surveys and said:

> We do a regular survey, salary surveys. Those include local surveys, state. We belong to a trade association, Steel Founders' Society of America, as an example. And we participate and receive survey results. And through that, we understand where we fit in the spectrum of companies and how competitive we are.

By taking part in these surveys, the employers can measure how well they compensate employees and ensure that they stay competitive to retain skilled labor. Participant 5 also mentioned the use of annual wage surveys and said, “one thing we do is we always participate in annual wage surveys with other sister plants to be sure that our pay is competitive compared to other plants.” The human resource professional’s goal is not to pay the least amount possible, but rather focus on maintaining a competitive wage to retain their employees.

When speaking about benefits packages, the participants acknowledged that it was important to be competitive in a market where finding and retaining skilled labor could be challenging. Three of the participants spoke about this subject. Participant 6 indicated that “competitive wages…is a good incentive to get people in the door.” Participant 3 stated, “To retain skilled employees ... I think you have [a] total compensation package that's good. So, you've got [to] pay.” Participant 3 understood

that to keep skilled labor, the organization's management must ensure that the benefits they received were good. Participant 3 continued and said, “Employees are here primarily to support their families and their personal livelihood. So, one strategy is to be competitive with our total compensation package.” Participant 3 understood that employees have responsibilities outside of work, and for the company to keep the labor force, employees needed a benefits package that enabled them to care for their families and other responsibilities. Participant 3 also understood that

> the number one thing that keeps people here is…the right total compensation. They know that ... for their skills and their work they're rewarded above average in this area ... I think that's important, but I think that's a basic requirement.

Participants 5 and 6 mentioned other benefits. Participant 6 listed many of the benefits that employees received, which included “paid holidays, paid vacation, insurance, 401K contributions, things like that that are incentives, and comparable to industry.” Participant 6 further stated, “Once we get with an individual and interview, there may be things such as relocation expenses, incentives like that, that we may offer along with temporary housing.” If an employee had to relocate to accept a position, Participant 6 would even “reach out a little bit, call up a couple of the rental landlords or rental management companies around the area to help house somebody we've recruited.”

Because skilled employees could be challenging to locate, employers were willing to go above and beyond to meet employee needs. Participant 5 indicated that the company offered “a competitive pay scale ... a clean and safe [work] environment ... 401K and company-paid disability plans, and company-paid life insurance.” Participant

5 remarked that employee turnover was “less than 1%, plant wide.” Participant 5 felt that the benefits they offered, along with the company culture, created a workplace where employees were satisfied, and thus, chose to stay.

Another benefit mentioned by five of the participants was training. The participants viewed this benefit as essential. Offering training and education to employees helped create a workforce that could meet the demands of the industry. Participant 1 stated:

> We do offer tuition reimbursement programs ... we have people currently who are going to ... [a] maintenance electrician program. We have people in our accounting department who are going to college to get their Bachelor's ... We have an employee who is in our engineering department that is currently working for their Bachelor's in Engineering.

By supporting the employees and providing the opportunity for further education, the company’s human resource professionals were able to help employees get the education they needed for advancement and, in turn, they were able to ensure that they could access the skilled workforce necessary for the company’s success.

Participant 2 also spoke about employee training. Participant 2 felt that this was an urgent matter because

> We realized that we have a workforce that is getting older, and it's going to reach a point where some of them are going to leave. So we started in-house training programs to help improve their skills now and the younger workforce that will be performing those jobs, improved our work instructions, that type of thing.

Participant 2 spoke about the realization that their workforce was aging and that it was essential to pass on knowledge to maintain a workforce that had the requisite skills needed for the company to function. Participant 4 spoke about in-house training subjects, such as safety. Participant 4 indicated using a variety of measures, including free lunches, prizes, and drawings to motivate employees and keep them engaged in the internal seminars.

Participant 6 spoke about the importance of training to ensure that more than one person was capable of managing a position. Participant 6 also spoke about formal training and education, stating

> We'll say, "All right, here's some literature. Here's what the tech school offers, here's what the local college offers. These are the programs we recommend to help you get there. Now, you've going to go out and start the program, get the information. We'll reimburse if you want to utilize the company's reimbursement program." But then again, like I said, we kind of leave some of that to them, but we guide them in how to get through that to get to the position they want, but it's a two-lane road.

Participant 6 indicated that the opportunity for advancement through education was available for employees. Participant 6 indicated that support and guidance were available for employees interested in advancing their careers through education and training. However, the employees needed to invest and contribute their time and effort into the program.

In an analysis of the focus group responses, I found no variation from the individual interviews. All responses confirmed what the participants had stated individually, and thus triangulated with the individual responses during the interviews and increased the trustworthiness of the information gathered and analyzed for this study.

The document review included an exploration of benefit, wage, and growth responses on a manufacturer survey. Most of the manufacturers indicated that they were growing and had some issues recruiting skilled workers. Wages varied from a minimum of $7.25/per hour for nonskilled employees (administrative assistants, apprentices, etc.) to a maximum of $19.75/per hour for skilled employees (accountants, CDL drivers, welders, etc.). The manufacturers reported an average annual wage increase of 2 to 5%. Employees who worked evening and nights received extra pay through shift differentials. The companies offered paid vacation and medical insurance benefits, with eligibility determined by the length of services. Most companies offered some retirement and education benefits. The manufacturers included in the survey all offered similar benefits. In the e-mails included in the document review, I found that employees received bonuses for safety and Christmas. These documents confirmed the responses found in the interviews and focus group.

The benefit theme aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, which has several levels, starting with the biological and physiological needs and ending with self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). As an individual meets each level of the hierarchy, such as physiological and biological needs or safety needs, he or she can move through to the next level (Maslow, 1943). Although individuals may take a job to fulfill the two first

levels of needs, an individual may require further gratification through the sense of belonging from the work environment (Ramprasad, 2013). If an individual's needs remain unfulfilled through the opportunities that a company provides, then an employee may decide to move on to another opportunity that fulfills that need (Maslow, 1943). Bartlett and Ghoshal (2013) also discussed the benefit theme, noting that what an organization does to acquire people does not necessarily keep them in the organization.

The benefit theme aligns with other studies (McCarthy et al., 2015). McCarthy et al. (2015) addressed the shortage of general surgeons in rural areas. Though the industry is different from this study, McCarthy et al. explored the importance of pay and benefits that appear magnified in rural areas. Residents in rural areas typically pay less because the cost of living is less than other areas (McCarthy et al., 2015).

Previous researchers refuted this theme, suggesting that compensation is not a part of the hiring and retention process (Bailey, & Madden, 2016; Crisan, 2016; Gargoline, 2012). With the number of strategies involved in acquiring and retaining a skilled workforce, what works for one industry, demographic, or region may not work in another (Cook, 2012). The participants indicated that compensation is a theme, as well as a core strategy of the process in the acquisition and retention of skilled labor in Giles County, Tennessee.

Theme 4: Finding New Employees

The finding new employees theme addressed techniques employed by the manufacturing human resource professional to find and assess new hires. During the

individual interviews, all six of the participants identified this as a central concern. I identified 14 codes with 33 individual data units to create this theme.

A concern addressed by the participants in the study was finding appropriate and skilled new hires. Although the respondents stated that any positions they listed received many inquiries, their issue was not in the number of applicants, but rather in the quality of applicants. Participant 3 said, “It's become difficult to find skilled workers ... outside [of the company]. So we have worked to promote internally ... for example ... I think the last five or six skilled maintenance technicians we've hired internally.” Participant 3 saw some advantages for the company and the employee when promoting from within and said:

> We've got employees here; they've got a proven track record. They have a commitment to the company already, and the incentive is, for them, if they could stay with the company and significantly improve their personal financial situation quite a bit. Just say, as an example, from production to maintenance is probably a $10,000 a year differential.

For Participant 3, dealing with a known quantity was an advantage when seeking employees to fit positions. Although this strategy was successful for the company, it did not address the issue of losing experienced employees to retirement or other positions. Participant 4 also preferred to hire from within, but spoke about new hires and stated,

> We have had some excellent direct hires. Excellent. So I don't think it's a win-lose situation when it comes to this company, but I see a lot of growth. They

> stress, and they push you internally. I think that's excellent. At the same time, if we don't have any potential candidates, we go outside.

Although the organization's manufacturing human resource professionals initial strategy was to search internally; managers were open to going outside if necessary.

Three of the six participants indicated that one of their prime concerns when seeking out new employees was finding individuals who fit into the company culture. Participant 1 stated, "Our main goal at the end of the day when we're searching for that skilled right fit is the right fit, and it has to be the right fit for the employee as well as for [the company]." Participant 1 believed that it was important to screen for the goodness of fit during the initial interview. When speaking about the interviews, Participant 1 stated,

> When we're doing our interviews, we're looking to make sure that the person is excited about the position as their fit is for the position. It has to be a win-win or else, nobody wins ... You're finding the right talent for the requirements that you have, so you're looking at their skills versus what your job requires, but it has to be a good fit both ways.

Participant 1 believed that if there was not a correct match between employee and position, it would result in higher turnover. During the interview process, Participant 6 mentioned listening for the potential hire to say, "Things like that give you an idea of how they're going to fit into the company, and in a lot of cases, how they're going to fit into the team." Participants 1 and 2 echoed these thoughts about listening to a potential employee to assess the person's longevity with the company.

Four out of the six participants also indicated that interviews were an important part of the hiring process. Some participants found having a set list of questions helpful, while others were not as sure. To learn basic information about potential employees, some participants used a questioning process. Two of the participants indicated that they used the interview questions as a complete assessment. Participant 4 said,

> Anytime that you're going to bring the potential candidate in, you want to make sure and pay attention to every little detail. That goes from whether it starts with their appearance, and then it goes to how they're describing their job history.

Participant 4 also paid attention to what the candidates did say and what they did not say. Participant 4 focused on posture, body language, and attention levels.

For Participant 2, the interview was only the beginning of the process. Participant 2 remarked,

> Normally we have a set-out sheet of generic questions ... It's the interview process and then the trial period of, "How do they work?" You can hear something all day long but until the rubber meets the road, how they perform.

Participant 6 spoke of the interview as a process as well. However, Participant 6's company used a series of interviews with different people to help assess the potential hire. Participant 6 described the process as follows:

> One thing we do here when we're looking at somebody that's a highly-skilled individual that we're looking to add to the team, they may go through four or five or six interviews with different other manager or pure-level individuals to make sure that there's a compatibility. Because one person is interviewing, it's not

> enough, because they're not going to necessarily see things that somebody that's going to have to sit next to them at a desk for the next five plus years is going to have to see. So, it's always important to have that different perspective when you're interviewing. You don't want to make the commitment to hire somebody if not everybody's that is going to get along, or they're reservations on either side of it, as well.

Because of the difficulty in finding appropriate candidates; the participants indicated that being through was essential. The participants wanted to ensure, to the best of their abilities, that any hire made would be likely to stay with the company. When speaking about the interview process, Participant 5 shared an expectation for interviewees to ask questions. Participant 5 used those questions to gauge their level of interest, and as an opportunity to understand what the potential employee's motivations were in seeking the position.

When seeking new employees, the participants indicated that they used a variety of methods to locate qualified candidates. Two of the participants spoke about the value of employee referrals. Participant 1 said, "We take recommendations from our current employees." Participant 5 spoke in more detail and remarked, "we'll use recommendations from current employees ... a current employee is not going to recommend somebody to work beside them who's not going to be a good worker." Participant 5 felt that the quality of potential employee would be higher because they had already been through an unofficial vetting process. Participant 5 continued to state

> One of the most effective is recommendations from current employees because obviously, they're not going to bring someone who's not going to carry their load of the work. So that's been very effective for us. I'd say that's probably been our most effective.

Other methods to locate potential employees included using agencies, job fairs, resumes, local resources, and temporary firms. Two of the participants mentioned using temporary firms. Participant 6 said, “[we use] recruitment agencies to help us find skilled labor, at times” and Participant 5 agreed remarking “[we] utilize services such as the Tennessee Career Center and also temp agency.” Participants 1 and 4 spoke about using job fairs. Participant 4 spoke in detail about job fairs:

> My first and foremost, anytime I'm at a job fair over at the career center, and I can interact with you and get a first impression because you can read a first impression within 15 seconds to me. I can pretty much tell you how they're going to fit ... my favorite process is seeing somebody with their first appearance and receive an application from them and talking with them briefly over their application. Give them at least 10 minutes, 10 to 15 minutes ... Give them a chance to tell you about themselves. Of course, you're going to review [the applications]. And when the processes have started, when I first come here with another human resource person we had a good, fair, bad, and poor, and we had four categories. We collected the applications; I did their pre-screen, they could automatically file them. So whenever we come back to the facility, We have 50

> that were just out of this world. Let us start [interviewing] with them ... So that's probably my favorite process to hire.

Participant 4 appreciated having the ability to prescreen potential hires and to assess their goodness of fit. Of all the accessible methods, Participant 4 found the job fairs to be the most useful. The participants also spoke about using national job boards, such as Monster and Career Builder.

Although a shortage of skilled labor exists, the participants indicated how members of the local community fought for a position. People would leave full-time positions to take a temporary offer to work for these companies. The organization's reputation was evident when they spoke about hiring temporary workers. Participant 1 said,

> And when we learn of that [leaving a permanent position], we'll talk with the employees and explain to them, "This is not what we want because we can't guarantee that there's going to be something here for you." Of course, it's their decision at the end of the day if they wish to get their foot in the door.

Participant 4 identified hiring temporaries as the participant's favorite method to use, stating, "My favorite process is to have temporaries ... So this way ... I could just see their job performance and their attendance, and I get to see how they interact with everybody here." Participant 4 used the temporary positions as an assessment period to determine if the employees would be a good fit for the position and company, and if so, offer a full-time position. Participant 6 also used the temporary hire process in the same way. By

doing this, they were able to assess the employees' fit and aid in reducing high rates of turnover.

In an analysis of the focus group responses, I found no variation from the individual interviews. All of the participants confirmed what the participants had stated individually, and thus triangulated with the individual responses during the interviews and increased the trustworthiness of the information gathered and analyzed for this study.

The Manufacturer's General Business Survey indicated that many of the manufacturers in the areas were planning to increase their work staff. One of the respondents said, "We are having trouble finding drivers with a CDL that meet our insurance requirements and who would like to work out of town on a regular basis." The participants in the survey listed the skills that employees lacked, which included welding, fabrication, basic literacy and math, writing, and basic computer skills. Other skill mentioned included problem-solving, business communication, active listening, critical thinking, and conflict resolution. The participants needed to find employees and could have difficulty locating candidates with the skills required. The results of the document review all triangulated with the interviews and focus group.

This theme correlates with Becker et al.'s (2013) study of attracting new hires in remote Australia. Becker et al. described how the lack of an adequate workforce in the area created a concern for the local organizations' human resource professionals. In this study, I also expanded on Becker et al.'s findings in that the theme is not only a concern to organizations in Australian rural areas but also in the rural United States. Litzinger and Dunn (2013) discussed the concern of human resource professionals, hiring methods,

and the increasing use of temporary agencies in a study on the decline of manufacturing in the United States.

Håkansson and Isidorsson (2015) studied a temporary agency for manufacturing plants in Sweden. Håkansson and Isidorsson investigated job satisfaction and security for employees who were performing the same task as those directly employed by the organizations. Håkansson and Isidorsson's discussion relates to the theme of finding new employees because all of the organizations participating in the study used temporary staffing companies. Håkansson and Isidorsson concluded that the longer a person stays on a temporary staffing company's payroll, the more likely that individual will feel as if the position is a long-term buffer. This feeling of a long-term buffer is true even if the person is receiving benefits. In the case of an economic downturn, these individuals may leave the organization (Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015). Håkansson and Isidorsson's findings do not support the findings of this study because two of the participating companies kept personnel with temporary staffing companies for more than 90 days.

Litzinger and Dunn (2013) confirmed this theme as a continual business practice and concern in their review of the demographic future of the United States. Human resource professionals are spending more time attempting to acquire new skilled labor to replace individuals who leave the organizations (Moutray & Swift, 2013). Both Herzberg and Maslow's theories align with this theme because both are the foundation for acquisition theories (Damij et al., 2015).

Theme 5: Incentives

The incentives theme included a variety of incentives that the different company's human resource professional offered to employees to increase retention, engagement, and satisfaction. During the individual interviews, four of the study participants spoke about these incentives. I identified four codes with 19 individual data units to create this theme.

The participants spoke about many different incentives offered to employees. Participant 1 mentioned a variety of giveaways the company provided to employees. These giveaways included

> Signup sheets for Titans tickets that we give out every game or Valentine's gifts that'll be given away, one for your spouse. So there's a gift for you as a couple, a gift for a male by himself or a female by herself, and then the spouse gets a gift as well. We constantly buy tickets to promote school functions and activities like fundraisers, and we give those tickets away.

Participant 1 went on to speak about different health-related incentives the company offered to employees:

> We have different lunches and events like ... breast cancer awareness. We do heart health. We have a health fair once a year where we have local doctors and dentists and things coming in and work with our employees, and they check free their cholesterol levels and things of that nature. We have Star Physical Therapy here once a week, and they're here free of charge to the employees. You can ask them any questions; have them work with you on anything, give you exercises and things of that nature.

The company provided these incentives to employees and their families. For example, Participant 1 spoke about the physical therapist and remarked, “You can even ask questions for your children. If your child plays a sport and they've done something, then you can talk with the person about that.” By offering benefits to the employee and family, the company was able to build on the company culture of the family to increase employee loyalty.

Participant 4 spoke about the importance of the incentives: “Anytime that we offer any engagement, whether it be lunches or prizes or giveaways, I see a lot more engagement when it comes to the motivation of our employees.” Participant 4 could see a direct relationship between incentives and employee engagement and felt that this was significant in creating employee loyalty, which increased retention and satisfaction. Another strategy employed by Participant 4’s company included the day company events. The company changed the day of all company events to Sunday, to enable all employees and their families to attend if they wished. This day was the only day that the majority of the employees did not work. The maintenance employees who worked on Sundays did so on a rotating basis, so they had the opportunity to attend events as well.

Participant 4 also spoke about incentives offered as a reward for longevity. Participant 4 said, “We have our Service Awards for any employees that have been here five, 10, 15, 20 [years and in] 25 years, you start getting a money amount, a check, straight to you.” That company’s management presented these awards publicly at an awards event. Spouses were also included in the event, creating another bond with the company.

Participant 5 mentioned a safety program that rewarded employees for achieving safety goals. If the employees were able to complete a calendar year with no lost time or safety incidents, each employee received a bonus of $500. Participant 5 spoke further about the bonus:

> If we do have a recordable [lost time incident], it reduces so that they may get a lesser amount, but ... As an example, to 2015, they got a $480 safety bonus.
>
> There were just maybe one or two incidents that came out of that pool.

The bonus was not punitive, in that it was not an all or nothing proposition. Even if an incident occurred, the employees could still receive a partial bonus.

The participants of the focus group did not mention any other incentives during the meeting. In an analysis of the focus group responses, I found no variation from the individual interviews. All responses aligned with the participants' individual responses. The results of the focus group triangulated with the individual responses during the interviews and increased the trustworthiness of the information gathered and analyzed for this study.

A review of documents including e-mails, flyers, and photographs showed that the companies in the study offered a variety of incentives to their staff. These incentives included family and employee events, gift cards and prizes, as well as bonuses. The interviews and focus group all mentioned the necessity of incentives. The document review supported the data analysis and helped triangulate the results.

The incentives theme was also consistent with Cook (2012), who explored the evaluation of employee motivation in a manufacturing environment. Cook found that

organizations with competitive incentives had an easier time acquiring employees. Participants supported Cherian and Farouq's (2013) belief that compensation is important for acquisition and retention. The idea that an organization can meet or exceed an individual's needs aligns with Hanif et al.'s (2013) case study relating to Maslow's hierarchy of needs with employee turnover and retention.

Nkomazana, Mash, Shaibu, and Phaladze (2015), not included in the literature review, used 15 focus groups but focused on Botswana, Africa to examine why skilled health care workers were leaving the rural areas. Nkomazana et al. concluded that low salaries and inadequate incentives in rural and remote areas did not equate fairly to the services provided by these skilled health care workers. Successful human resource professionals who participated in my study were attempting to address this issue by creating incentive programs.

Nkomazana et al. (2015) refute the findings of Gargoline's (2012) phenomenological study regarding leading a multigenerational workforce. The difference between Gargoline's (2012) study and this study is both geographical and position-based. Gargoline's study took place in Ohio in the White-collar-based workforce. My study was located in rural Tennessee and focused on a blue-collar workforce. The differing demographic of Gargoline's study and mine are likely the cause of the disparity in the findings.

Theme 6: Employee Attraction and Retention

The theme of employee attraction and retention includes methods used by the company's human resource professional to retain their employees. During the individual

interviews, five of the participants identified retention as a primary focus for their company. I identified 12 codes with 20 individual data units to create this theme.

The participants spoke about the many different methods they employed to ensure a high level of employee retention. Participant 1 felt that it was essential to motivate skilled employees to keep them focused and engaged. Participant 1 spoke about a leadership development program:

> We let any employees interested in joining this program apply. They had to turn in resumes. They had to turn in reasons they wanted to be [in the program], and then we interviewed them. Also, we chose from that group of people ... we're going to continue it.

Participant 1 believed that people should be able to grow and advance their careers. This program was a way for employees to show that they were interested in advancement. The program offered an opportunity to move into management and gain a new set of skills.

Participant 6 also felt that giving employees room for growth was important. Participant 6 spoke with employees and learned about their personal ambitions and goals. Participant 6 would then take that information and help them "outline a path for them to acquire that type of position." Participant 6 stated this would "start to reinforce that [option] you give them. I guess [it gave them] more of a reason to stay employed, stay working. They feel there is an opportunity for growth." The management team at the company believed in giving a voice to the employees. The employees were encouraged

to offer suggestions for improvements. The organization managers took these suggestions seriously and addressed them accordingly.

Participant 4 described a retention test that they used to increase employee knowledge. Each department had a test. Participant 4 stated that the information contained in the test included

> normal questions that for one you should know in your department, for two you should know about the company. This is stuff like our core values that we stress in our plant meetings, any type of safety information we stress.

The employees received prizes for doing well. The company's human resource professionals repeated the tests regularly, so the employees had frequent reward opportunities by expanding their knowledge base.

Participant 4 also spoke about working with employees who were having difficulties. Rather than immediately acting in a punitive manner, Participant 4 said

> If I know that, somebody is struggling with a certain issue ... Okay, let's just use attendance as a good example. I'm going to make sure I go to that person ... For one, I care. I don't want you to be in trouble with your attendance. I want you to know where you're at before you just want just to fall off and just not care about your attendance anymore. So one thing I can do to retain and help that employee grow is I'm going to personally go to them, I'm going to review the handbook one more time and just give them a little bit of an idea. And then I can promise you, usually at the end of that quarter, they're going to say, "Thank you, because I

> didn't realize I was that close," or "I had a family emergency." There's all different types of scenarios.

Participant 4 realized that a variety of reasons could explain why an employee is struggling. By making time for a one-on-one interaction offered in a supportive manner, Participant 4 could intervene and help an employee succeed, rather than losing a skilled employ because of a resolvable issue.

Participant 5 mentioned that in 32 years, the company had never had a layoff. Participant 5 believed that fact helped retain employees because they never had to worry about the possibility of not being able to provide for their families. Participant 6 said, “Employees are selected for special projects to keep them engaged and so that they could learn different facets of operations.” Participant 1 focused on the room for growth offered to employees. Participant 1 spoke about some examples of how this worked. Participant 1 recalled

> Our plant manager started out as the metallurgist here. That person was then the quality manager and now is the plant manager. Our Maintenance No Bake Manager started out as an hourly employee. I don't even know what their first job was, but then they worked their way through quality and then became the Technical Coordinator, then became the Lean Manufacturing Engineer and is now the Maintenance and No Bake Manager. So, there's always been a lot of progression within the company. And again, I think that goes back to the people who are motivated and geared toward doing that, and they're given opportunities

> and whatever schooling background, things that are needed to help get them to that level. Maybe that helps a little.

Participant 1 believed that employees could achieve whatever they wished as long as they were willing to do the work involved to achieve the positions they desired.

When analyzing the participants of the focus group responses side-by-side with the interviews, I noted no differences. The focus group responses aligned with the individual interviews. A review of the documents (the succession planning PowerPoint, the Employee career path PowerPoint, as well as a review of the benefits and wages) supported the responses of the participants in the focus group and individual interviews. The manufacturers in this study made efforts to encourage employees to find and follow a career path. They offered wages and benefits commiserate with other manufacturers to ensure that employees received competitive employment packages. The data all triangulated and supported the themes identified in this study. Because of this triangulation, the trustworthiness of the information gathered and analyzed for this study increased.

The findings in this theme correlate with Yang et al.'s (2012) study, who showed that organizational relationship and employee development increased retention and may assist employee acquisition. My study expanded on the body of knowledge from Yang et al. because they focused on the hotel industry in Taiwan, whereas my topic was on manufacturing human resource professionals in a rural area in the United States. Organizations where manufacturing human resource professionals create a family-oriented culture and allow employees to communicate with management, should see

improvement in skilled labor retention rates (Tishman et al., 2012). An organization must create a workspace and culture that promotes personal growth and fulfillment to meet the expectations of the generations. By facilitating a workspace that considers the needs and expectations of all generations, organizations can increase workforce retention (Holt et al., 2012).

While performing a critical analysis and synthesis of new literature, I found a multiple-case study about the retention of personnel in the hospitality industry. The principles of retention of employees require human resource managers to promote organizational practices and policies that encourage workers to remain with the organization. The most effective ways to retain employees are to promote communication and support employee development (Scott, 2016). The findings of my study align with Scott's (2016) regarding promoting communication and supporting employee development. Scott also concluded that compensation was the least effective form of employee retention. Because this is the second study to provide contradictory information to my study findings regarding compensation, I suggest further investigation into the topic.

I found an emphasis on security within the organizations as it pertained to both physical safety and job security. Security coincides with both Herzberg's (1959) motivation-hygiene theory and Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the second tier is the need for safety. Safety is protection from the elements, a sense of security and stability, and freedom from fear (Maslow, 1943). Security is important because as a person moves up Maslow's hierarchy of needs, they

are less likely to leave the organization. Job security is a hygiene factor by Herzberg and, if not addressed, could create dissatisfaction, which may cause the employee to leave.

Applications to Professional Practice

An emerging role for human resource professionals is in improving business practices by understanding the strategies and processes that acquire and retain skilled labor (Montesi, 2014). The acquisition and retention of skilled employees have been an increasing concern for manufacturing human resource professionals because of the aging workforce, which is expediting the skill gap (Sparrow et al., 2013). Ng and Law (2014) findings, relative to both Maslow's and Herzberg's theories, indicated that to acquire and retain skilled labor, an organization must offer more than just high compensation. The implementation of improved business practices for acquiring and retaining skilled labor will ensure business success, sustainability, and profitability (Davis, 2013).

The findings of my study may enable manufacturing human resource professionals to create or improve the strategies and processes within their organizations. As manufacturing human resource professionals analyze the information provided in this study, they may use the findings to create effective strategies and processes for current and future human resource professionals in the manufacturing industry. Businesses that have an adequate and sustainable skilled workforce have to spend fewer resources due to skilled workforce shortfalls, and they may be more profitable (Sparrow et al., 2013). If a company has a higher potential for profitability, then it is more likely to survive (Davis, 2013).

My study serves as a reference for future research on skilled workforce acquisition and retention in U.S manufacturing industry. I established the importance of six themes: (a) company culture, (b) succession, (c) benefits, (d) finding new employees, (e) incentives, and (f) employee attraction and retention. The review of the six themes may assist an organization in improving as a whole.

Implications for Social Change

Social change is not a microenvironment of the business, industry, or geographic location under study. Social change is the process of identifying and relating these microenvironment problems with the intent to stimulate solutions that go beyond the study (Mandlebe, 2014). In a review of existing literature, I exposed current and impending skilled workforce shortages and the potential for social change for all stakeholders in the manufacturing industry. Human resource professionals' lack of strategies and processes to acquire and retain skilled employees showed the necessity for this study. Maintaining an adequate workforce is a problem for manufacturing human resource professionals. In this study, the problem was two-sided because the companies must meet organizational goals while also maintaining a competitive advantage.

The findings of this multiple case study may lead to positive social change by providing data to human resource professionals or other business leaders to acquire and retain skilled labor. When companies are successful and have an adequate skilled workforce, the community can attract other businesses. As the community becomes more attractive to other businesses, it improves the quality of life for individuals who reside in the community.

Recommendations for Action

Current and future manufacturing human resource professionals should deliberate on the recommendations of this study. The six themes identified were finding new employees, company culture, benefits, incentives, retaining employees, and succession. I based the following recommendations on the themes and their use in companies that use strategies to acquire and retain skilled labor.

First, when finding new employees, I recommend that manufacturing human resource professionals who are having difficulty acquiring and retaining skilled labor to develop a strategy or process that evaluates the organization's total compensation based on each job description. Once the company creates a compensation scale for each job description, the organization should evaluate its compensation levels to that of other companies in the manufacturing industry within the area. After the evaluation process, and if economically feasible, the organization should adjust its total compensation packages to meet or exceed the other industries.

Second, developing a company culture is important for acquiring and retaining skilled labor. If a manufacturing human resource professional wishes to build a culture around an idea, I recommend reinforcing the idea by introducing it into the work dialogue. Once the organization uses the desired culture words in normal business activities, a manufacturing human resource professional can start to develop programs that create additional events or actives.

The next theme is benefits. A manufacturing human resource professional should remember that up to four generations could be working within the organization. Even

with this diverse group, the participants still frequently discussed direct compensation. Manufacturing human resource professionals should first evaluate their direct compensation benefit and compare it to other local organizations. Once the direct compensation benefits are equal to or higher than comparable organizations, a manufacturing human resource professional should evaluate other benefits.

From the findings, I also categorized incentives as a theme. When structuring an incentive system, a manufacturing human resource professional should not solely focus on monetary compensation. An incentive can be as simple as showing appreciation to an employee. In addition to incentivizing the employee, the process also develops a culture that shows appreciation to the employees.

The company should set a benchmark to evaluate employee retention. I recommend that manufacturing human resource professionals compare the organization's employment history to other local and comparable companies. The areas where the manufacturing human resource professional's organization performed better than others are useful as skilled labor acquisition and retention tools. If the organization performed poorly in comparison, then the manufacturing human resource professional needs to devise methods to improve or exceed other organizations in either compensation or engagement.

Last, for succession, a manufacturing human resource professional should review the organization's employee engagement. Manufacturing human resource professionals can compare the organization to other local industries or perform an internal survey or

study. Processes or strategies from other local industries or their party recommendation may be necessary if the organization's employees do not stay engaged.

My intent was to contribute to solving the business problem of acquiring and retaining skilled labor for manufacturing human resource managers. With this information, an organization may provide an environment that acquires and retains skilled labor, which is beneficial to the organization and the community. To disseminate this knowledge, I will provide the results of the study to local manufacturing, government organizations, and the participants. I will publish the study by the processes required to complete the Walden program, which will allow it to be accessed anywhere in the world.

Recommendations for Further Research

U.S. manufacturing human resource professionals have employed a variety of conceptual theories; I chose to use Herzberg et al. (1959) and Maslow (1943) because of their prominence (Damij et al., 2015). The findings of this study align with the conceptual theories in that by meeting the needs of one necessity, an individual requires more relational rewards to remain satisfied. This idea is in accord with Maslow's theory, in which individuals look for the gratification of higher level needs having to do with advancement, responsibility, recognition, achievement, and the nature of work itself (Bailey & Madden, 2016). Herzberg et al. (1959), in their two-factor theory, addressed job retention and how autonomous factors within the workplace cause dissatisfaction and satisfaction for employee retention. Conversely, companies that do not explore the need of relational rewards result in a workforce that is looking and willing to leave the organization.

A majority of the participants came from one organization. Future researchers should conduct exploration across multiple organizations and limit each organization's number of participants to address this limitation. Limiting an organization's number of participants would remove the possibility of a biased result. Another alternative is a similar study where researchers examine organizations with a lower than average skilled workforce acquisition and retention and compare those organizations to the findings of this study. Giles County, Tennessee is a small rural community, the location of future studies should incorporate areas that have a higher number of manufacturing industries with a more diverse workforce to allow a larger sample pool. A larger sample pool would provide a greater possibility of a diverse answer and richer findings. Future researchers should conduct qualitative studies to address the gaps in knowledge and limitations inherent in the interview process. Closing the gaps in knowledge provides more data on the topic and allows for a clearer understanding of the topic.

Reflections

The reason for this study was the need to understand the strategies manufacturing human resource professionals use to acquire and retain skilled labor. In contemplation of the DBA study journey, I found myself personally and professionally challenged. To complete the process, it was necessary to change my research design, topic, population, and committee. This evolution-like process presented lessons and opportunities that made me a better researcher and scholar.

All of the participants and organizations were forthcoming in providing their lived experiences and personal perceptions about skilled workforce retention and acquisition

strategies and policies. The focus group, having already answered the questions previously, remained engaged and actively involved. Throughout the data collection process, I was careful to remain focused on the task and maintain a neutral stance. I did not expect participants to be nervous, but I took extra precautions to make them feel comfortable and at ease.

I derived the findings of this study from the information provided by the participants. The themes represent the core ideas and lead to a better understanding of the research question. I found the results of the study to be enlightening and my knowledge about the subject expanded. Listening to the participants' enthusiastic recounts of their personal experiences as manufacturing human resource professionals inspired me. Moreover, I found it satisfying to assist in solving the business problem on this topic.

Conclusion

Manufacturing organizations will continue to have a need for skilled employees. As the workforce ages and the skill gap increases, any organization that requires skilled labor will have an increasingly difficult time maintaining its workforce. The themes I discovered were (a) company culture, (b) succession, (c) benefits, (d) finding new employees, (e) incentives, and (f) employee attraction and retention. The six emerging themes of the study provide a foundation for organizations to create processes and strategies for workforce acquisition and retention.

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Appendix A: Manufacturing Human Resource Professionals Questions

1. What processes do you use to motivate your skilled employees?
2. What processes do you use to retain skilled employees?
3. What strategies do you use to retain skilled employees?
4. What process and strategy are the most effective in retaining skilled employees?
5. What processes do you use to hire skilled employees?
6. What strategies do you use to hire skilled employees?
7. What process and strategy are the most effective in hiring skilled employees?
8. What processes do you use for succession planning?
9. What strategies do you use for succession planning?
10. What process and strategy are the most effective in succession planning?

Appendix B: Data Collection Process Outline

1. Set time and location; provide information regarding the consent form and copy of the signed form.
2. Interview willing participants individually or in the focus group; ask thought provoking questions to obtain knowledge regarding perceived factors relating to skilled employees workforce acquisition and retention.
3. Record the interviews or focus group on personal iPhone.
4. Upon completion of the interview or focus group, verify that both recordings are clear and complete.
5. Transfer information from digital audio to a Word document and save in multiple locations.
6. Confirm transcribed data and recorded data match.
7. Conduct transcript reivew by emailing verbatim transcripts to participants to confirm the accuracy of the transcript documents.
8. Input raw data into the evaluation software.

Appendix C: Certificate of Completion Protecting Human Research Participants

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **James Greene** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 03/08/2013

Certification Number: 1139417