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# Strategies for Identifying and Transferring Displaced Manufacturing Workers' Skills for Nonmanufacturing Sectors

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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by

Pamela Ann Stanfield Jackson

MBA, Walden University, 2010

BA, Winston-Salem State University, 1982

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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## Abstract

Between 2000 and 2011, the United States suffered the loss of manufacturing jobs 6 times faster than the rate in the 20 years prior. North Carolina ranked first in manufacturing employment in 1992; however, in 2012 it ranked fourth. The loss of manufacturing jobs created a trend away from manufacturing industries to services industries. The purpose of this study was to explore strategies that nonmanufacturing managers use to facilitate the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries. To address the problem, a purposeful sample of 3 nonmanufacturing managers in service industries was obtained from a major manufacturing city in North Carolina. The human capital theory was used as a conceptual framework. Data for this case study were collected from face-to-face, semistructured interviews and review of company documents. Data were coded and analyzed using a qualitative analysis software to identify recurring themes. The 4 prominent themes that emerged were: (a) characteristics that displaced manufacturing workers possessed for employment in service industries, (b) workers' willingness to obtain training and education, (c) managers' specific strategies, skills, and experience for hiring displaced manufacturing workers, and (d) workers' transferable skills. The findings from this study could contribute to social change by defining strategies nonmanufacturing leaders could use to identify and transfer skills from displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing labor sectors, thereby introducing transferable skills for diverse labor sectors for increasing employment and increasing the standards of living for employees and families.

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# Dedication

I dedicate my doctoral study to my parents, the late Johnnie Earl Stanfield Sr. and Ardelia Dalton Stanfield. These two individuals taught me from different perspectives but it helped shape who I am. My daddy came from the coal mines of West Virginia and he didn't graduate from high school but had one of the most beautiful and brilliant minds I knew. He taught me to work with excellence, he always challenged me academically, he told me class was nothing you could buy, and he called me from birth, his "Queen of Sheba". My momma was a one of a kind and the greatest compliment I would get is when those that knew her say I remind them of her. This magnificent woman taught me by example about the love of Jesus the Christ, she fed her neighbors, visited the sick, didn't see race, and shared anything we had with those that needed it. I also dedicate this work to my siblings who learned from these parents to always love and support one another. I also dedicate this work to my wonderful husband Dr. George Bernard Jackson, who challenges me, encourages me, and have been my greatest support during this study. I pray this work will be an encouragement and reminder to our children and our grandchildren that perseverance yields a great return.

# Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ whose plans for me are good. I would like to thank my late parents, Mr. and Mrs. Johnnie Earl Stanfield Sr., for always telling me I could. To my husband Dr. George Bernard Jackson thank you for not letting me stop until seeing it to the end. To my children (Marquis, Antoine, Monica, Phillip, Ashton, and Martin) thank you for your love and support. To my grandchildren a "special love". A special thank you to Dr. Janice Witt Smith from the first time you met me challenged those things in me I didn't know were there. Coming from such a big clan I would like to thank the Stanfield, Fraizer, Dalton, and Jackson families for all you have poured into me! The village of Stoneville, North Carolina, growing up on Simpson Street there are not words to express my thankfulness for all of you! I say a special thank you to all my friends and coworkers for your encouragement and cheering me on. Tami Davis, I would like to say thank you because you challenged me when you lost your manufacturing job to help you find better, do better, and to make a difference not only for myself but for others; that challenge shaped this study.

Dr. James F. Savard, hats off to you Sir for being an attentive, encouraging, and supportive chair, a special thank you to my committee members Dr. Neil A. Mathur, Dr. Yvonne Doll, and Dr. Susan Davis. Thank all of you for pushing the best product out of me!

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# Section 1: Foundation of the Study

North Carolina's economic development leaders discovered that, while using the North Carolina Economic Index (2011), a tool designed to assist the state's leaders in capitalizing on North Carolina's strengths, the state's industries were changing. The state was transitioning from traditional manufacturing industries (e.g., furniture, textiles, etc.) to service industries (North Carolina Department of Commerce [NCDC], 2013). From 2000 to 2011, the loss of manufacturing jobs declined six times faster than the rate in the prior 2 decades (Atkinson, Stewart, Andes, & Ezell, 2012). Caliendo, Dvorkin, and Parro (2015) argued that the loss of manufacturing jobs reflected the trend away from manufacturing industries to services and construction industries. The data from this study determined nonmanufacturing managers could benefit by developing strategies to identify and transfer displaced manufacturing workers' skills to nonmanufacturing industries.

## Background of the Problem

An employment crisis in the United States was caused by the outsourcing of manufacturing processes (Bailey & Bosworth, 2014). Bailey and Bosworth (2014) argued that the primary factor that led to the U.S. manufacturing employment crisis was the trade deficit in Asia. In 2012, the United States manufacturing sector had a $460 billion trade deficit concentrated in Asia (Bailey & Bosworth, 2014). The decline in manufacturing jobs left displaced workers whose skills might be transferrable to nonmanufacturing sectors.

Oesch and Baumann (2013) researched an industrial company that downsized and displaced workers, exploring whether displaced industrial workers could transition their skills into other industries. Oesch and Baumann (2013) suggested that an ideal setting to support their research was the phenomenon of a manufacturing plant closing, leaving the entire work force to find new sources of income. This presented itself in one of the major manufacturing cities in North Carolina where the preeminent furniture plant closed. The company outsourced its entire industry to China, leaving over 5,000 employees displaced, and as of May 2013, left only 50 employees at the corporate headquarters (Sexton, 2013). I conducted a qualitative multiple case study on nonmanufacturing leaders having strategies to transfer the manufacturing skills of displaced workers to nonmanufacturing labor markets.

## Problem Statement

During the 1960s, the manufacturing industry employed 33% of U.S. workers (Kemeny, Rigby, & Cooke, 2015). As of January 2013, less than 9% of the United States labor market was in manufacturing (Kemeny et al., 2015). Between 2000 and 2011, North Carolina lost 42% of its employment in the manufacturing industry (Freyer, 2013). Economic displacement and transition challenged the communities that housed the manufacturing industries (Kemeny et al., 2015). The general business problem was that plant closings have negatively affected the manufacturing labor force. The specific business problem was that some nonmanufacturing managers lacked strategies for transferring the skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to identify strategies that some nonmanufacturing managers used to facilitate the transfer of skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries. The population for this study consisted of three nonmanufacturing managers from three labor sectors in the Triad region of North Carolina: healthcare services, wholesale and retail trade industries, and other service industries. Likewise, the managers of these nonmanufacturing industries have hired employees while in a nonmanufacturing management position. This study has implications for positive social change: It could bring economic gains to the communities where manufacturing plants have shut down, and increase the potential resource pool of transferable employee skills available? to nonmanufacturing industries.

## Nature of the Study

Bailey (2014) stated that qualitative research is a method for exploring and understanding human behavior, using analytical and interpretive practices that make the world visible. A qualitative methodology was preferable to a quantitative approach in this study because the aim was to interpret the experiences of nonmanufacturing managers who had successfully used strategies to identify and transfer displaced manufacturing workers' skills. Smith (2015) stated the qualitative researcher focuses more on the experiences of the participants and less on finding numerical values as do quantitative researchers. Using a qualitative method allowed me to observe the participants, analyze, and interpret the data that a quantitative approach would not have allowed (Bryman, 2015). Alternatively, the quantitative method was not appropriate for this research study

because I was not trying to disprove or prove a hypothesis (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013; Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2015). A mixed-methods study includes both quantitative and qualitative methods (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013; Thomas et al., 2015), therefore, a mixed methodology would not have been suitable.

A researcher using the qualitative research design has options to choose from: case study, phenomenology, or ethnography. Yin (2014) described a formal case study as an in-depth and up-close analysis that explores detailed accounts of companies, industries, people, and projects. Case studies would be used in exploring existing conceptual models or for developing new roadmaps to pursue in qualitative research (Freeman et al., 2015; Yin, 2014). I chose a multiple case study design to explore certain insights and perceptions of the participants using multiple sources of data. Single, explanatory, or exploratory case studies are also options(Singh, 2014). I used a case study research design so that I could answer what, how and why questions about a phenomenon (Freeman, Gergen, & Josselson, 2015; Yin, 2014). A limitation of case study research is that it affords  little opportunity for transferability due to the small number of participants (Yin, 2014). Yet, case studies remain a strong tradition in business and management disciplines when trying to explore real-world experiences (Freeman et al., 2015; Yin, 2014).

Phenomenological and ethnographic designs were not appropriate because I was not focusing on the phenomenon from the point of view of? participants' perceptions and lived experiences (Charmaz, 2014; Hammersley, 2014). The phenomenological research design was not appropriate for this study because it limits data collection to the meanings

of experiences of the participants as the only data source (Charmaz, 2014). Ethnographic research was not appropriate for this study because, as the researcher, I was not focusing on the culture of a particular group (Charmaz, 2014; Hammersley, 2014). The multiple case study was appropriate for this study because I used interviews, company documents, and company website to explore and understand the strategies nonmanufacturing managers use for identifying and employing the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries.

## Research Question

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) suggested that the researcher of a qualitative study should begin the interview questions with what, why, and how in order to support the collection of participants' insights. The research question for this study was: What strategies do nonmanufacturing managers use to enable the transfer of skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries?

### Interview Questions

1. What perceived business skills are transferable from displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries?
2. What strategies do you use for transferring the skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries?
3. What skills and experiences are necessary for nonmanufacturing leaders to hire displaced manufacturing workers?
4. What are the perceived qualities the displaced manufacturing worker must possess to gain employment in nonmanufacturing sectors?

5. What additional information would you like to provide on nonmanufacturing managers having insight on transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers?

## Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework in qualitative research is formulated from the lived experiences of individuals that encountered a phenomenon and theories the researcher draws on when contemplating the study (Anfara & Mertz, 2015). The conceptual framework in this study was the human capital theory. Schultz (1961) developed the human capital theory by positing that individuals have marketable skills. The theory focuses on individuals' acquired and innate skills and knowledge that are transferable throughout labor sectors (Vomberg, Homburg, & Bomemann, 2015). Therefore, using Schultz's human capital theory as a foundational tenet, one would conclude that there would be opportunities for nonmanufacturing leaders to transfer the suitable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries. I believed the general human capital theory was suitable because the theory builds on the idea that individuals' knowledge, skills, and values were transferable assets that would result in companies' profitability (Schultz, 1961; Ployhart, Nyberg, Reilly, & Maltarich, 2014).

## Operational Definitions

*Deindustrialization:* Deindustrialization is the process that identifies the social and economic changes caused by a reduction in a country's heavy industry and manufacturing (Rodrik, 2013).

*Dislocated/displaced worker:* A dislocated or displaced worker are individuals laid off from a business, which closed, down-sized, or discontinued employment through no fault of their own (NCCWD, 2011).

*General human capital*: General human capital is individual skills that are broadly applicable outside a specific industry (Campbell, Coff, & Kryscynski (2012).

*Human capital:* Human capital is when an individual's knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) would add value to the labor market (Nyberg & Wright, 2015).

*Metropolitan counties:* Metropolitan is defined in North Carolina research as the region with an urban area of 50,000 people or more (NCCWD, 2011).

*Micropolitan counties:* Micropolitan is defined in North Carolina research as the region with 10,000 to 50,000 people (NCCWD, 2011).

*Skills gap:* Skills gap is trying to bridge the gap between employer expectations and applicants' realities (Cappelli, 2015).

*Thick skill:* The term used to define the structural changes from the deindustrialization era was *thick skill* (Iversen & Cusack, 2000). Moreover, Iversen and Cusack posited that the service industries would be the prime industries for displaced manufacturing workers.

*Transferable skills:* Transferable skills are knowledge and skills acquired through the years that transferred to an emerging occupation (Sgobbi & Suleman, 2015).

## Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

### Assumptions

Leedy and Omrod (2015) defined assumptions as realistic expectations researchers assume that are accurate and true. A fundamental assumption was the participants interviewed had information that was viable to this study. Another assumption I had was participants answered the interview questions truthfully and honestly.

### Limitations

Patton (2015) suggested limitations can vary from one qualitative study to another. Simon and Goes (2013) defined limitations as aspects in a study that were weaknesses beyond the control of the researcher. Limitations of the study included the availability of the participants and time constraints to meet participants for interviews. Another limitation was the opinions from the participants would not reflect the perceptions or experiences of all nonmanufacturing managers. Flicke (2014) argued that a small sample was a common limitation in the validation of any study, regardless of the research method.

### Delimitations

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2015), the researcher controls the delimitations, which are the boundaries of the study to narrow its scope. The geographical restriction sample for this study was limited to 3 nonmanufacturing managers of the Triad area of North Carolina. Therefore, the results may not be

transferable to other nonmanufacturing industries in the state or other areas of the United States with displacement of manufacturing workers.

## Significance of the Study

### Contribution to Business Practice

Ciegis, Nakciunaite, and Mikalauskiene (2013) suggested that displacement and unemployment would always exist in a free economy. Ciegis et al. suggested that between 2002 and 2012, the United States had a steady increase in unemployment. Between 2000 and 2011, North Carolina, a major manufacturing state, lost 42% of its manufacturing employment (Freyer, 2013). Individuals were displaced in the Triad region of North Carolina like other rural and micropolitan communities in North Carolina, as well as other deindustrialized regions of the United States. Furthermore, identifying the displaced manufacturing workers' skills in this study would be instrumental in managers of nonmanufacturing sectors developing strategies for using those skills. One of the goals of this study was to help managers of nonmanufacturing industries identify and transfer the skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanfacturing labor sectors.

### Implications for Social Change

Displaced workers, and offshoring and outsourcing of manufacturing jobs could result in social upheaval and disturbance. The 2008-2009 recessions underlined the need for developing and identifying a skilled workforce for employers throughout North Carolina and the nation (NCCWD, 2011). Findings in this research may be beneficial for managers in the hiring process if they equate human capital with individual performance

and skills (Crocker & Eckardt, 2014). The implications for positive social change from this study include an opportunity for managers of nonmanufacturing industries to ascertain skills that are transferable from the manufacturing industries, as well as the possibility for transferable skills of displaced individuals and employers are brought together.

## A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The literature review is a systematic process used by researchers to review existing literature conducted by scholars and practitioners (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016). The research included in this literature review provided the groundwork to explore what strategies nonmanufacturing managers use in the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries. The literature review begins with an overview of manufacturing in a U.S. industry sector, North Carolina's labor force and industries (NCCWD, 2011), North Carolina's decline from manufacturing industries to service industries, exploring transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers, and possible management strategies for the transferability of designated skills. Other topics include the origins of human capital, human capital theory, human capital value, and the Oesch and Baumann (2013) study.

The academic and business literature in this review may lay the groundwork for nonmanufacturing managers to find strategies to identify and transfer the skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries. I used an array of academic resources for this study. To meet the Walden Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) requirements, I focused on articles published from 2013 to 2017. I

retrieved the literature from scholarly professional articles, academic journals, business journals, peer-reviewed journals, dissertations, as well as books, and websites. Research databases used to find the literature included, Walden University Library, SAGE, ProQuest Dissertations, ERIC, Google Scholar, Google Books, and EBSCO (Academic Search Primer and Business Search Primer). The literature review yielded over 260 articles, of which 166 were relevant. Of the 166 articles, 85.5% (142) were published in 2013 or after; 14.5% (24), were published prior to 2012; 89.8% (149) were from peer-reviewed or government websites. Eighty-seven peer-reviewed articles are cited in the review. Keywords included *displaced workers, dislocated workers, manufacturing plant closings, transferrable skills, human capital assets, deindustrialization, outsourcing, human capital theory, general human capital, manufacturing skills, North Carolina, nonmanufacturing sectors, general skills, nonmanufacturing sectors, nonmanufacturing manager, hiring practices,* and *marketable skills*.

**Manufacturing as a U.S. Industry Sector**

Manufacturing industries have been declining in the United States since the early 2000s. In the 2000s, the U.S. manufacturing sector endured its worst execution in American history (Baily & Bosworth, 2014). The United States manufacturing industry lost 5.5 million jobs, a decline of 31.7% (Baily & Bosworth, 2014). Therefore, the manufacturing job loss between 2000 and 2010 was 13 times greater than between 1990 and 2000 (Atkinson). The decline in the automobile industry led Michigan to have a decline in manufacturing jobs, and Detroit accounted for a loss of 150,000 jobs between 2000 and 2008 (Atkinson). Almost every state accounted for a decline in the

manufacturing industry, and North Carolina ranked second in manufacturing jobs lost between 2000 and 2010 (NCDC, 2013). The decline of manufacturing jobs in the United States leaves an opportunity for nonmanufacturing leaders to strategize in the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacting industries.

A myriad of manufacturing-related industries in the United States have been declining due to offshoring and outsourcing. In 1992, the United States manufacturing textile industry encompassed 53,754 businesses and had a labor force of over 1.8 million people (Center on Globalization, Governance & Competiveness (CGGC), 2012). By 2012, there were 35,206 manufacturing businesses and 575,900 employees in the United States (CGGC, 2012). From 1992 to 2012, there was a 35% decline in the number of manufacturing industries, and a 69% decline in the number of manufacturing employees (CGGC, 2012). While employment has fallen and North Carolina's percentage of employment has decreased by 10%, the North Carolina labor force remained the leader in the textile manufacturing sector from 1992 – 2012 (CGGC, 2012). The dramatic loss of the number of manufacturing industries resulted in job losses to U.S.- based workers. The decline in North Carolina manufacturing industries left displaced manufacturing workers with possible transferable skills to nonmanufacturing labor sectors.

Manufacturing has been a major labor sector in North Carolina. In 2012, North Carolina represented 9% of the U.S. employment as the fourth largest employer in manufacturing industries, and the fifth largest in the number of businesses (CGGC, 2012). In 1992, North Carolina ranked first in manufacturing employment but by 2012 had fallen to fourth (CGGC, 2012). While North Carolina's stake of U.S. employment

has decreased by 10%, North Carolina remained the leader in the textile manufacturing sector from 1992 – 2012 (CGGC, 2012). The loss of manufacturing industries in North Carolina may leave displaced workers with transferable skills to nonmanufacturing sectors.

**North Carolina's Labor Force**

Labor force is the number of employed individuals and people seeking employment (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Between 2008 and 2013, North Carolina's labor force grew 3.1%, but in 2013 the labor force participation rate was 61.6%, the lowest in 20 years (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). In May 2017, North Carolina's unemployment rate rose in 67 counties of the 100 (North Carolina Department of Commerce (NCDC, 2017). Furthermore, North Carolina's unemployment increased in 13 of the 15 metropolitan areas (NCDC, 2017). The strategies nonmanufacturing leaders discover in the transferability of skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing labor sectors may benefit North Carolina and the U.S.

The demographic structure of North Carolina's work force is experiencing change. North Carolina's labor force is between 25 and 54 years old (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Predictions are that as the population ages, individuals will remain in the work force because of economic necessities (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). In reviewing, NCDC (2013) statistics, North Carolina's industry work force changed in several areas:

- Manufacturing industry losses were 137,100, resulting in all the other sectors had a net gain of 113,400 jobs during this period (U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2011).
- North Carolina's public sector is the largest employer (U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2011).
- North Carolina's traditional manufacturing industries declined from 29% to 24% (U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2011).
- North Carolina transitioned from the traditional industry sectors to service industries (U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2011).
- Between 2005 and 2010, the service industries increased 91%. Meanwhile, manufacturing sectors declined by 56% (U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2011).
- The manufacturing industry lost over 100,000 jobs since 2007, and only five industries have experienced job growth. Growth was concentrated in only five sectors accounting for 90,000 additional jobs; and a 97% increase was in service industry sectors (U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2011).
- North Carolina's public sector accounted for 50% of job growth between 2005 and 2010. The public sector employed 22% of North Carolina's employment, which exceeded the national average of 18% (U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2011).

**North Carolina's Unemployment**

North Carolina segments into 14 metropolitan areas for reporting statistical data. All 14 metropolitan areas unemployment rates increased in January 2012 (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau Labor of Statistics, 2012). In Figure 1, from February 2011 through February 2012, North Carolina's monthly unemployment rate was higher than that of the average of the United States (State Library of North Carolina, 2012).

Therefore, I expect that the majority of the unemployment came from manufacturing industries. In Figure 1, Thomasville-Lexington (Davidson County) had a 10.1% unemployment rate in December 2012 which was higher than the state's average

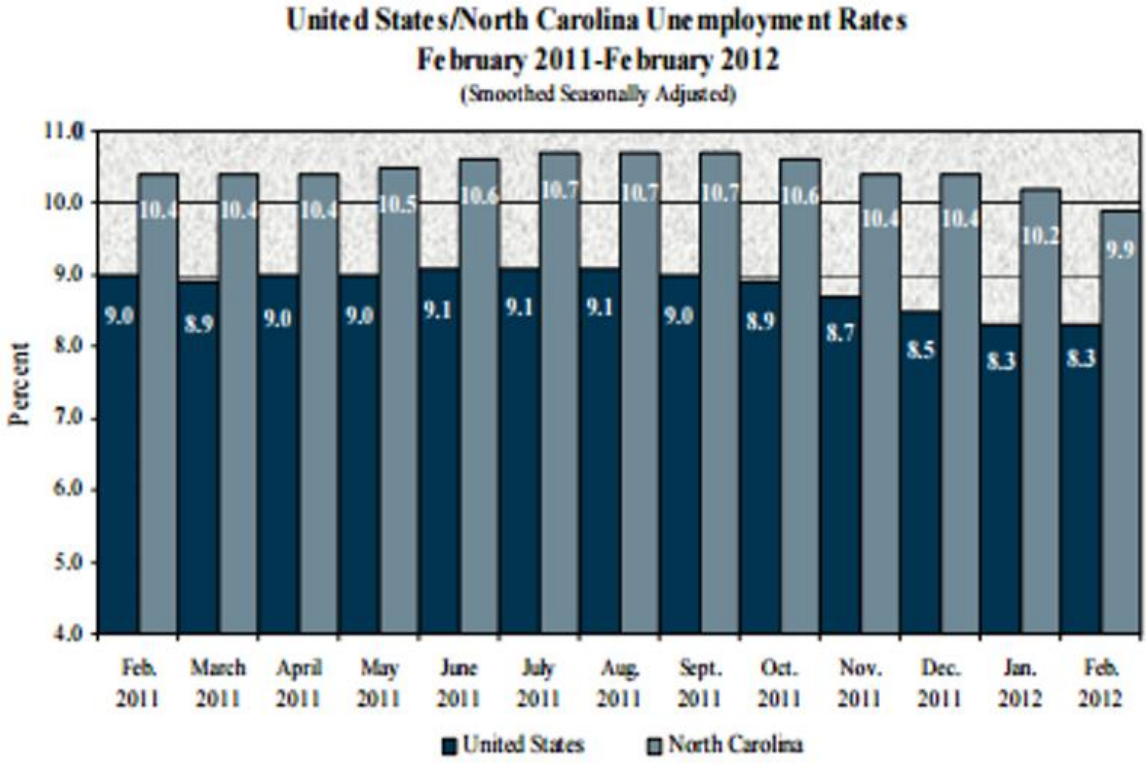


*Figure 1.* United States/North Carolina unemployment rates February 2011 – February 2012. Retrieved from State Library of North Carolina, 2012.

unemployment rate of 9.5% (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau Labor of Statistics, 2012). Additionally, since this major manufacturing city in North Carolina faced high unemployment rates, I explored if nonmanufacturing managers have strategies to transfer skills of displaced manufacturing workers.

Table 1

*Micropolitan Statistical Areas multicounty small labor market area monthly and yearly unemployment rate changes*

| Micropolitan Statistical Area | December 2012 | November 2012 | December 2011 | OTM Change | OTY Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ALBEMARLE | 9.4 | 9.1 | 10.8 | 0.3 | -1.4 |
| BOONE | 8.5 | 7.9 | 8.7 | 0.6 | -0.2 |
| BREVARD | 10.1 | 9.3 | 10.5 | 0.8 | -0.4 |
| DUNN | 10.6 | 10.2 | 11.4 | 0.4 | -0.8 |
| ELIZABETH CITY | 10.6 | 9.9 | 10.4 | 0.7 | 0.2 |
| FOREST CITY | 13.6 | 12.7 | 14.6 | 0.9 | -1.0 |
| HENDERSON | 13.4 | 12.6 | 14.4 | 0.8 | -1.0 |
| KILL DEVIL HILLS | 15.9 | 12.0 | 16.1 | 3.9 | -0.2 |
| KINSTON | 10.2 | 9.7 | 10.9 | 0.5 | -0.7 |
| LAURINBURG | 16.6 | 15.9 | 17.7 | 0.7 | -1.1 |
| LINCOLNTON | 10.1 | 9.5 | 11.3 | 0.6 | -1.2 |
| LUMBERTON | 12.8 | 12.2 | 13.7 | 0.6 | -0.9 |
| MOREHEAD CITY | 9.3 | 8.3 | 10.2 | 1.0 | -0.9 |
| MOUNT AIRY | 10.1 | 9.6 | 10.6 | 0.5 | -0.5 |
| NEW BERN | 10.0 | 9.5 | 10.6 | 0.5 | -0.6 |
| NORTH WILKESBORO | 10.9 | 10.1 | 11.7 | 0.8 | -0.8 |
| ROANOKE RAPIDS | 12.8 | 12.3 | 13.4 | 0.5 | -0.6 |
| ROCKINGHAM | 12.7 | 12.2 | 13.6 | 0.5 | -0.9 |
| SALISBURY | 9.7 | 9.2 | 11.1 | 0.5 | -1.4 |
| SANFORD | 12.1 | 11.6 | 12.8 | 0.5 | -0.7 |
| SHELBY | 10.6 | 10.0 | 11.3 | 0.6 | -0.7 |
| SOUTHERN PINES-PINEHURST | 8.9 | 8.3 | 9.4 | 0.6 | -0.5 |
| STATESVILLE-MOORESVILLE | 9.7 | 9.1 | 10.9 | 0.6 | -1.2 |
| THOMASVILLE-LEXINGTON | 10.1 | 9.5 | 11.1 | 0.6 | -1.0 |
| WASHINGTON | 11.1 | 10.3 | 11.7 | 0.8 | -0.6 |
| WILSON | 12.2 | 11.6 | 12.7 | 0.6 | -0.5 |

*Note.* Reprinted from "North Carolina's December county and area employment figures released.", by North Carolina Department of Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2013, 1, p. 4.

Due to offshoring, employment layoffs, and manufacturing plant closings in North Carolina, there have been dramatic alterations in the lives of community residents. Mass layoffs and plant closings take economic and social tolls on individuals, families, and communities, particularly in rural communities where the opportunities for

employment that pay a living wage are few (NCCWD, 2011). The misfortune of North Carolinas manufacturing jobs loss was that some displaced workers will not be able to find employment in other manufacturing industries (NCCWD, 2011). Offshoring was a common business strategy used by some manufacturing companies trying to cut labor costs (Anderson, 2014). However, for companies pursuing a sustainable U.S. business model, there was a focus on redesigning current processes (NCCWD, 2011). North Carolina's manufacturing job losses leaves the nonmanufacturing leaders in the State an opportunity to find strategies in transferring skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries.

**North Carolina's Manufacturing Industry Decline**

The decline in manufacturing has introduced challenges for some North Carolinian businesses. As the dual forces of technology and globalization cause industries to change the way they manufacture, corporations have eliminated thousands of jobs since the 1990s (NCCWD, 2011). North Carolina's manufacturing industries are expected to decline in those related to furniture, tobacco, and technology intensive industries (NCCWD, 2011). From 2006 to 2010, North Carolina's economy shed 72,000 manufacturing jobs, three-quarters of which were in textiles, apparel, furniture, and computer electronics (NCCWD, 2011). Although North Carolina has suffered major manufacturing job loss there are possible transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries.

A continual loss of manufacturing job positions in North Carolina is anticipated. Mature manufacturing industries account for a major portion of the North Carolina economy, and some anticipate eliminating jobs during the 2020s (NCCWD, 2011). From 2007 to 2011, North Carolina manufacturing industry lost more nonfarm jobs than any other labor sector (NCCWD, 2011). Figure 2 reflects North Carolina's employment in 2011 for selected manufacturing industries. Declines in these industry zones occurred throughout North Carolina, and the greatest challenges were in smaller communities that once relied on the closed or downsized manufacturing corporations (NCCWD, 2011). Declines in manufacturing industries in North Carolina offers opportunities for nonmanufacturing leaders to find strategies in the transferring of skills of manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing sectors.

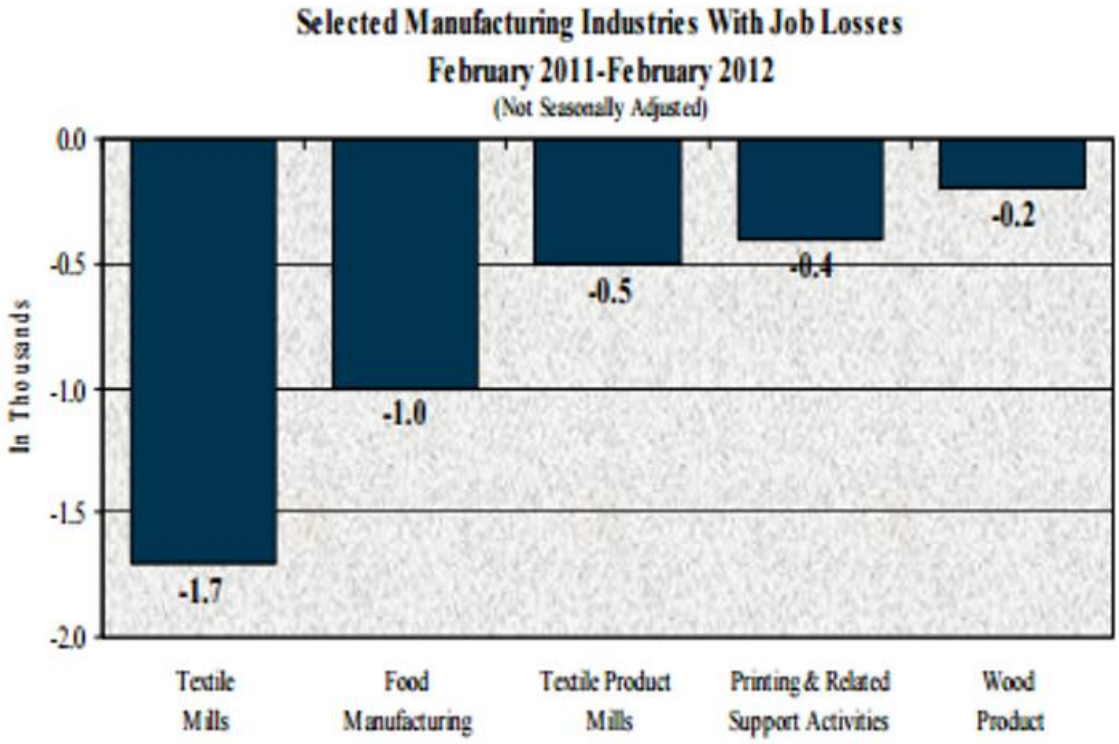


*Figure 2.* Selected Manufacturing Industries with job losses February 2011 – February 2012. Retrieved from State Library of North Carolina, 2012.

The plethora of displaced manufacturing workers in North Carolina appears to provide both challenges and opportunities for leaders of nonmanufacturing companies. The difficulties facing the displaced manufacturing labor force include: (a) there are high demand jobs created in a few urban locations, but the job losses in the manufacturing industry are occurring throughout the state, and (b) the jobs created are in the nonmanufacturing industries (NCCWD, 2011). Decline in manufacturing jobs represented some of the *middle jobs* that offered family supporting income (NCCWD, 2011). However, manufacturing is on the decline and nonmanufacturing industries in these communities are on the incline (NCCWD, 2011). The displaced manufacturing

labor force may have transferable skills (knowledge, previous work history, and other skills) that nonmanufacturing managers requires and needs.

**North Carolina's Economic Transition**

The transition of North Carolina's economy highlighted the need for opportunities for the displaced manufacturing industries' labor force to transition to nonmanufacturing industries. Manufacturing, once North Carolina's top industry, ranked fourth by employment size in 2011 (NCDC, 2013). North Carolina's employment is concentrated in four labor sectors: government, health care, retail trade, and manufacturing (NCDC, 2013). These four industries account for 55% of employment in the State (NCDC, 2013).

The opportunities to employ the skills of displaced manufacturing workers in nonmanufacturing job positions warrant exploration. The managers of nonmanufacturing industries may need to leverage the skills of displaced manufacturing workers of North Carolina in the state's top five occupations: administration, food services, production, sales, and transportation (NCDC, 2017). Health care occupations are growing across North Carolina and creating other service industries jobs (NCDC, 2013). All of North Carolina's seven economic development regions experienced growth in social and community services occupations, and health care support occupations during 2009-2010 (NCDC, 2013). Manufacturing is no longer the leading labor sector in North Carolina. Therefore, nonmanufacturing leaders of North Carolina may explore transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers for the top industries in North Carolina.

**North Carolina's Global Economy**

Globalization has increased economic possibilities in North Carolina. An important indicator for North Carolina's economic health is the degree the state is engaged in the global economy (NCDC, 2011). The long-term economic growth for North Carolina will need to expand and diversify exported industry sectors (NCDC, 2011). North Carolina's ability to compete for domestic and international export markets is critical for the growth and retention of employment opportunities. The foreign direct investment (FDI) is an important gauge of a state's ability to interest foreign investors, and is one of the key factors of a region's ability to attract new labor markets, workforce skills, job opportunities, and global relationships (NCDC, 2011). North Carolina's economic growth relies on expansion outside of the manufacturing industries.

Foreign investments in products produced in North Carolina have a positive trend. North Carolina is attracting foreign investors because exports of goods continued to grow in 2010, totaling $24.8 billion dollars, increasing 13.8% from 2009 (NCDC, 2011, p. 25). Moreover, North Carolina's top export country was Canada; however, exports to Canada dropped 4.5% while exports to China increased 157.2% between 2005 and 2010 (NCDC, 2011). North Carolina's major foreign direct investment comes from Europe, with Asian countries showing interest, and Japan being the primary investor (NCDC, 2011). Gaining dollar value in FDI growth creates job opportunities, and North Carolina has approximately 206,000 workers employed by foreign owned industries (NCDC, 2011). Other countries investing in North Carolina goods would be a benefit economically and socially.

## Manufacturing Labor Force Transition to Nonmanufacturing Industries

Displaced manufacturing workers in North Carolina have practicable skills that could be transitioned to nonmanufacturing positions and industries. President Obama called displaced manufacturing workers *sparks* that could help ignite the economy (Parsons, 2011). There are industries looking for employees and workers looking for jobs, and President Obama felt that gap could be closed (Parsons, 2011). Employers need to consider the skills of displaced manufacturing workers across the U.S. as potential employees that may have been overlooked (Parsons, 2011). Newton (2012) dispelled the myth of manufacturing workers not being able to transition to other diverse sectors in North Carolina. A major unemployment gap could be closed in North Carolina when leaders of nonmanufacturing industries recognize the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries.

## Origin of Human Capital

The literature found on human capital has a long and prominent history that expands back to the earliest economists. Smith (1776) described human capital as the acquired talents gained in study, education, or apprenticeship becomes the capital in a person. Smith also noted that human capital provided returns that related to probability of employment and job security after an individual invested in education, training, and experience. Furthermore, Smith suggested all individuals in a society have acquired and useable skills that may be viewed as capital. Additionally, Ricardo (1817) suggested that human capital was the main factor used to determine the value of all goods. Moreover,

Ricardo suggested that the value of a good was dependent upon the labor (raw materials, machinery, and skills) required to produce the product.

The term human capital was identified prior to the latter part of the 19th Century, because there were periods of history when humans were traded in labor markets (Ricardo, 1817). I am not speaking of this inhuman practice to condone the behavior but to associate the labor market assessment of human capital. Calomiris and Pritchett (2016) noted that slave prices measured human capital. Calomiris and Pritchett further clarified that the market price of a slave did not adequately correspond to that of a free worker because of other factors that need to be considered such as punishment, shirking, and incentives are some of the obvious differences. Yet, Calomiris and Pritchett (2016) posited that human capital was based on market prices. Furthermore, Calomiris and Pritchett concluded that human capital was probably the dominant component of wealth for most individuals.

The measurement of the value of human capital is critical in the measurement of an accurate market portfolio. Manuellia and Seshradi (2014) suggested that the accurate market portfolio cannot be measured without including human capital value, and without considering it may lead to inaccurate conclusions. Research conducted by Jones (2014), Manuellia and Seshradi (2014), and Lucas (2015) posited that human capital impacted economic growth and impacted the wealth differences among countries. Furthermore, the human capital impact had been researched concerning gender economics (Beneria, Berik, & Floro, 2016), immigration, in the context of college value (Vomberg, Homburg, & Bomemann, 2015), and many other areas. Berger, Pukthuanthong, and Roll (2016)

suggested the breadth and depth of literature found on human capital accentuated the importance of accurate information presented on the value of human capital. Likewise, Berger et al. identified the unresolved issues found within the literature that suggested the inaccurate estimates on the value of human capital. Human capital cannot be adequately measured from a single dimension but different factors should be considered to determine human capital value.

There is a variance in the assessed value of human capital versus that of physical capital. Berger et al. determined the estimated value of human capital exceeds that of physical capital. Furthermore, Le, Gibson, and Oxley (2003) projected, from a population of 18 to 64, that the mean per capita value of human capital assets was estimated at $372,000 in 2001. From 1983 to 2003, the value of working human capital grew by 54% (Le et al., 2003). Human capital value, compared with physical capital value in New Zealand, doubled and the ratio increased in 2001 from 1 to 2.7 (Le et al., 2003). Leaders in the workforce should consider human capital value in multiple facets of the individual where physical capital may be limited to a specific task.

**Human Capital Theory**

Human capital theorists provided additional elucidation on the definition of organizational capital. Schultz (1961) introduced the human capital theory in the late 1950s and early 1960s as part of the economic climate (Klein & Daza, 2013). An organization's failure to recognize individual assets as a form of capital implied that labor was simply physical performance requiring very little education or skills (Schultz, 1961). Schultz suggested, as part of economic growth, companies needed to invest in human

capital in five areas: schooling, adult education, on the job training, migration, and health (Schultz, 1961). Becker (1964), an economist, defined human capital as an individual's skills, value, knowledge, and health, which were integral assets. Tan (2014), stated the criticized concept of human capital became a popular economic topic, which afforded Becker the Nobel Prize in 1992. Moreover, Tan (2014) suggested that due to negative overtones associated with slavery, the term *human capital* was heavily criticized. The term human capital has survived the negative overtones of slavery and is more viewed as individuals' assets.

Human capital theory encompasses numerous defining paradigms. Vomberg et al. (2015) suggested the key propositions/constructs explaining human capital theory were (a) human capital is knowledge, (b) human capital is characteristics, (c) human capital is behaviors the worker has (acquired or innate) that contributed to productivity, and (d) human capital becomes the labor forces marketable skills. Knowledge was defined as capabilities and competencies that increased an individual's ability for productive outcomes (Alavi & Leidner, 2014). Comprehensive research has occurred on the individual level of the impact of human knowledge (Carrington & Fallick, 2015; Crocker & Eckardt, 2014), as well as the individual value within organizations (Alavi & Leidner, 2014). Composition derived on human capital highlighted the advancement of organizational performance and human capital (Buller & McEvoy, 2012; Jiang et al., 2012). Frank and Obloj (2014) stated that there was a significant correlation of the constructs of human talent and organization skillset requirements. Furthermore, Frank and Obloj posited that human capital, along with monetary incentives, generated

complementary results. According to Kryscynski and Ulrich (2015), managers seek ingenious ways to increase competitive advantage. Furthermore, Kryscynski and Ulrich suggested an organization achieved competitive advantages when focus was on individual talent, culture, and leadership. Moreover, Kryscynski and Ulrich posited that solving problems in theory rather than in practice presented significant challenges to practitioners because the research led them further away from complex organizational realities. Investing in human capital is most beneficial when leadership used it in the recruitment and hiring stages (Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013; Ployhart et al., 2014; Mackey, Molloy, & Morris, 2014). Nonmanufacturing managers that have strategies in recognizing human capital value may hire displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries.

**Human Capital Value**

The value of human capital is a definitive metric in organizational revenue generation. Human capital was considered a valuable asset for a company to gain competitive advantage (Shaw, Park, & Kim, 2013). A company that increased revenue because of human capital created value (Nyberg & Wright, 2015; Prajogo & Oke, 2016). Ployhart et al. (2014) suggested the unique and rare qualities of individuals were what made human capital valuable. Human capital was described as any measure of skill, ability, knowledge, or quality the worker elucidated that exhibited his or her productivity (Ployhart et al., 2014). Human capital is the summation of an individual's knowledge, skills, capabilities, aptitude, judgment, and commitment (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2014). The human capital individuals' exhibited was a result from the knowledge that was

attained or knowledge that was innate (Anca-Ioana, 2013; Ployhart et al., 2014). Workers possessed the knowledge and acquired skills that companies required to achieve performance (Campbell et al., 2012). Companies cannot own human capital, only individuals would (Campbell et al., 2012). Human capital value is an asset for any company that may only be exemplified through individuals.

The implementation and use of human and intellectual capital are critical to corporate development and improvement. Human and intellectual capital is an important resource for the advancement of companies; however, leaders must not only practice but give directives to capture such value (Campbell et al., 2012). Companies' value becomes the human capital within the organization that works cohesively with the companies' physical capital resources and the shared knowledge of the workers (Campbell et al., 2012). Schultz (1961) was among the first to acknowledge the value associated in the human capital investment. Both researchers conjectured an earlier theory by Fisher (1906) to show a relationship to human capital. Fisher (1906) concluded that use of the human capital theory was beneficial only when attuned to value producing usage or revenue. The correlation that Fisher's theory had to human capital comparable to influencing nations, communities, companies, and individuals was also authenticated by Schultz (1961). Companies are as successful as the human capital value of the individuals that are employed.

The explicated values of human capital are diverse and affect entire corporate structures. Administrative duties were initially viewed by researchers (Fratričová & Rudy, 2015) as the only value of human capital found in companies. Neiberline,

Simanoff, Lewis, and Steinhoff (2015) suggested that companies could measure and capture the financial value that individuals may generate. Likewise, researchers (Nyberg, Moliterno, Hale, & Lepak, 2014; Ployhart et al., 2014; Nyberg & Wright, 2015) who focused on more of a business perspective perceived human capital as not just the individual worker, but value associated with workers as a unit. The literature findings validated the importance managers should have for valuing and respecting the human capital assets of a company's workforce. A company's performance provided a framework for the asset value-based view that company holds on human capital (Nyberg & Wright, 2015). The literature I found further corroborated that exploring the cohesiveness between a company's objectives and their human resource practices was applicable to human capital.

Displaced manufacturing worker skills may be channeled into specific nonmanufacturing situations. Dix-Carneiro and Kovak (2015) measured how skills acquired in one industry sector were valued in other industry sectors. An example Dix-Carneiro and Kovak demonstrated was if an individual had 10 years of experience acquired from a manufacturing company and was assigned to an office and business support services industry, the skills and experience from the manufacturing industry would yield a low return. However, if the individual was assigned to a transportation industry the skills and experience would yield a higher return. Likewise, Dix-Carneiro (2014) conducted a study focusing on how Brazil's labor sector effected trade liberalization. Dix-Carneiro and Kovak (2015) and Dix-Carneiro (2014) found multifariousness degrees of transferability of manufacturing skills and experience across

other industry sectors. Additionally, Dix-Carneiro and Kovak, and Dix-Carneiro showed the skills of the manufacturing worker yielded less return transferring to the construction and retail industries; however, the yields produced higher returns when the skills were transferred to the agriculture and transportation industries. Leaders of nonmanufacturing sectors should have specific strategies to help identify the transferable skills from manufacturing industries to nonmanufacturing industries.

**How the Labor Market Affects Human Capital**

The labor market of displaced manufacturing workers consists of individuals who possess transferable skills that may be used by managers in nonmanufacturing industries. The labor market consists of potential individuals seeking a paid work position and employers seeking to fill existing vacancies (Ciegis, Nakciunaite, & Mikalauskiene, 2013). Furthermore, the labor sector introduced industry or occupational specific skills, as well as general skills, workers acquired in the labor market as skills that could be transferable throughout various industries (Hanushek, Schwerdt, Woessmann, & Zhang, 2017). The labor market becomes flexible when the ability and willingness of employers and workers responded to any fluctuations that arose, and their abilities to adjust to a constant changing economic environment (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013; Zribi, Temmi, & Zrelli, 2014). Leaders in nonmanufacturing sectors should be able to distinguish between general skills and occupational skills that would transfer from various industries.

There are distinct differences between the constructs of labor market, labor supply, and labor demand. The labor market was different from other markets because there were different players seeking different results (Ciegis et al., 2013). Ciegis et al.

stated that the labor market had a definitive labor supply, which was a population of individuals of working age employed or looking for employment; while the labor demand referenced individuals hired for a certain pay in the labor market. While investigating the changes in labor demand, Knox, Agnew, and McCarth (2014) suggested the change occurred through commodity chains of product demand, number of employers, labor productivity, and cost of resources. Displacement and unemployment added to the labor supply and labor demand (Ciegis et al., 2013). Leaders of nonmanufacturing and manufacturing sectors both seek to employ individuals to fulfil the labor demand.

**Human Capital Strategy in Hiring**

Using the foundational tenet of human capital theory, nonmanufacturing leaders have an opportunity to acquire the valuable skills offered by displaced manufacturing workers. A key human capital strategy was the ability for managers to hire the right employees (Collins, 2014). Talent management was a vital part of human capital that promoted sustainability and productivity (Green, Albanese, Cafri, & Aarons, 2014). According to Sharma (2014), a critical requirement for managers was to recognize employees' human capital assets. Managers who hired employees that had skills and assets that fit the company's objective helped the company gain competitive advantages (Sharma, 2014). A manager should be able to understand the needs of the company and the skills, characteristics, and knowledge of potential candidates to meet the company's needs (Lee, Hwang, & Yeh, 2013; Ciuhureana, Fuciu, & Gorski, 2014; Sharma, 2014). A company's success may depend on the decision making of the hiring managers (Beck & Harter, 2014). Additionally, the managers within a company should focus on the talent

management and human capital assets, which could help promote a competitive advantage (Beck & Harter, 2014). In addition, Beck and Harter (2014) suggested hiring managers lacked the skills needed to interview potential employees. Moreover, Beck and Harter (2014) stated that due to the lack of interviewer skills, qualified candidates were overlooked for employment opportunities. Nonmanufacturing leaders that lack strategies in recognizing the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers may overlook qualified individuals.

The responsibility of hiring managers is to explore the understanding and definition of the term *qualified workers*. In June 2015, there were 4.7 million available jobs and more than half of employers who had open positions stated they could not find qualified workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Leaders around the world suggested it was challenging to find the right workers in a changing and complex environment (Hsu, 2016). Kaur (2014) suggested one third of company failures were because of managers' poor hiring skills and their inability to identify the necessary candidate qualifications to meet company objectives. Managers discovered challenges when seeking workers with a specific skill as well as having competencies in other general skills (Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013). Therefore, the manager should position the worker with the most applicable skills (specific and general) to the most qualified position (De Vos & Dries, 2013; Meyers, van Woerkom, & Dries, 2013; Cappelli & Keller, 2014). Managers of nonmanufacturing sectors may need strategies that would identify transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries.

Hiring managers of nonmanufacturing industries should explore the transferable work skills and leadership capabilities of displaced manufacturing workers. Minbaeva and Collings (2013) discovered human potential became a catalyst driving the changes in the labor force. Hiring managers of nonmanufacturing industries should explore the transferable work skills and leadership capabilities of displaced manufacturing workers. Teti and Andriotto (2013) posited because of pressure put on managers to fill vacancies workers were hired with inadequate skills. Hiring the right workers involved having qualified candidates available, at the right time, and in the right location (Thunnissen et al., 2013; Gelens, Hofmans, Dries, & Pepermans, 2014; Cappelli, 2015). Companies introduced practices to observe their workforce in order to manage and improve the process of hiring individuals with specific human capital (Teti & Andriotto, 2013; Zaharie & Osoian, 2013). From an analytic view, nonmanufacturing managers that have strategies in the hiring process by recognizing human capital potential and value may add competitive advantages for those companies.

Human capital in any labor sector adds to a company's competitive advantage. Past researchers (Wright, Coff, & Moliterno, 2014; Vomberg et al., 2015) indicated that human capital was a factor in the growth and sustainability in competitive advantages for company ventures. Human capital encompassed diverse elements including education, work experience, and skills (Hanushek et al., 2017). Industry experience added essential value to an individual's human capital (Ormiston, 2014; Hanushek et al., 2017). Hanushek et al., (2017) posited that an individual with industry experience substantially

improved the profitability and growth for a company. Individuals with work experience in any labor sector add human capital value.

**Oesch and Baumann Study**

The scope of the results of closed manufacturing industries had a devastating negative effect on both the economy and the people of North Carolina. Oesch and Baumann (2013) posited that deindustrialization and the consistent loss of manufacturing jobs had profound impact on economic trends and social change. Likewise, 90% of the manufacturing sectors outside of the computer and electronics sectors have seen slow productivity growth and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fall substantially (Bailey & Bosworth, 2014). Political economic scholars found it alarming that manufacturing employment dropped by 5.7 million between 2000 and 2010 and had pessimism about displaced manufacturing workers finding reemployment (Bailey & Bosworth, 2014). The continued manufacturing job loss throughout the U.S. challenges leaders of nonmanufacturing industries to develop strategies in transferring skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries.

There appears to be a demarcated line between the acquired skills of displaced manufacturing workers and the required work aptitudes of nonmanufacturing workers. The pessimism pervaded the concept that most manufacturing acquired skills had low transferability to service industries (Iversen & Cusack, 2000). Therefore, it was suggested that it was difficult for *low-skilled* manufacturing workers to transfer to low-skilled service jobs (Iversen & Cusack, 2000). Moreover, since the labor market growth was in service industries, reemployment for manufacturing workers was limited (Iversen &

Cusack, 2000). The outcome of displaced manufacturing workers gaining employment in nonmanufacturing industries does not seem promising.

Oesch and Baumann (2013) posed the question whether displaced manufacturing workers were permanently unemployed or if the displaced manufacturing workers skills were transferable to other labor sectors. Oesch and Baumann (2013) suggested an ideal setting to explore this question was the closing of a manufacturing plant, which led to the dismissal of the entire work force. Oesch and Baumann (2013) conducted a study to explore where workers go after plant closure. The Oesch and Baumann study was conducted among five manufacturing plants in Switzerland on an individual level survey focused on the sociodemographic characteristics that contributed to reemployment of individuals. The objective of the study examined 1) did displaced manufacturing workers find employment, 2) did displaced manufacturing workers remain unemployed, 3) did displaced manufacturing workers retire, or 4) did displaced manufacturing workers exit from the labor force completely (Oesch & Baumann, 2013). Displaced manufacturing workers are challenged with reemployment, some will find work in other manufacturing industries, some will find work in other sectors, and others will leave the work force all together.

Two factors that enhance opportunities for displaced manufacturing workers to obtain reemployment are education level and age. Worker categories were affected differently because of mass reduction in the manufacturing labor sector (Oesch & Baumann, 2013). The political economic view expected white collar men and displaced women to fare better than blue collar workers and displaced men in transferring skills to

other labor sectors (Faggio & Nickell, 2003). The reason for the political economic premise was the work categories were more favorable for women to transfer skills to the service industries, and that the labor sectors demands had shifted to service industries (Faggio &Nickell, 2003). Likewise, white collar workers appeared to transit easier to service industries than blue collar workers because of occupational transferable skills (Faggio & Nickell, 2003). However, according to Berman, Bound, and Machin (1998), two other factors may have been more substantial for reemployment of displaced workers than occupation and gender. First, labor economists considered education in the skill biased technological era as being paramount for reemployment (Berman et al., 1998). Therefore, this suggested that the more education an individual had, the easier it was to reintegrate in diverse labor markets. Second, Deelen, de Graaf-Zijl, and van den Berge (2014) posited that sociologists determined older workers were employed in labor sectors but industries did not hire older employees. Additionally, when manufacturing industries closed, the group that found it most difficult to be reemployed were individuals older than 50 years, and not the low educated (Deelen, de Graaf-Zijl, & van den Berge, 2014). Displaced manufacturing workers have several factors that need to be considered when transferring manufacturing skills to nonmanufacturing sectors. These factors consist of age, gender, education level, and specific occupational skills.

**Oesch and Baumann Findings.** There is a definitive need to delineate the required skills necessary for displaced manufacturing workers to attain reemployment. Oesch and Baumann (2013) analyzed where employees go after plant closures. The objective was to determine how many workers were reemployed, and to identify the skills

and qualities displaced workers possessed for successful transition in new employment (Oesch & Baumann, 2013). Oesch and Baumann (2013) developed three main results: (a) a substantial number of displaced manufacturing workers were reemployed, (b) one out of six displaced manufacturing workers was unemployed, and (c) one out of nine displaced manufacturing workers took early retirement.

As a researcher, I explored strategies that some nonmanufacturing managers use to facilitate the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries. Oesch and Baumann (2013) argued that displaced manufacturing blue-collar workers were not unemployed long-term, and found other employment. Furthermore, Oesch and Baumann (2013) did not support the presence of either sex-biased or skill-biased technological changes. Oesch and Baumann posited that a tertiary degree improved the job opportunities of displaced workers, but reemployment rates did not differ dramatically between workers with tertiary education and those having lower education. Likewise, little evidence supported that there was gender bias in service industries. Oesch and Baumann noted that women were more likely to find employment in service industries (i.e. consumer and social services) but reemployment rates differed little between genders. Furthermore, Oesch and Baumann (2013) revealed a major age barrier in reemployment of displaced manufacturing workers. Oesch and Baumann discovered reemployment among displaced manufacturing workers varied more between age than between gender, education, or occupational level. Displaced manufacturer workers between 55 and 59 years (who made up 12% of the Oesch and Baumann sample) had between 5 and 10 years to retire after 2 years of plant closure; one

half were reemployed, one third remained unemployed, and the remainder had retired. In summary, Oesch and Baumann concluded age played a major factor in the reemployment of displaced workers, more than education or gender. Additionally, Oesch and Baumann noted that company leaders needed to revisit retirement policies and suggested a fixed number of jobs should transfer from older to younger employees. Furthermore, suggested leaders of companies needed to understand dismissing or displacing workers before retirement age imposed a disproportional cost on the worker. Oesch and Baumann concluded that when large manufacturing companies shut down, policy efforts should be in place to help displaced workers find reemployment based on age rather than education or gender.

**Displaced Manufacturing Workers Job Prospects**

Industry specific required qualifications appear to limit the spectrum for individuals seeking employment. Becker (1964) suggested that industry specific human capital limits workers' mobility to acquire work outside of specific industries whereas *general human capital* does not. Campbell, Coff, and Kryscynski (2012) posited that general human capital encompassed individual skills that were broadly applicable outside a specific industry. Furthermore, Campbell et al. argued that individuals may have general skills that were transferable; however, labor market leaders may have incorrect perceptions that may cause discrimination against certain industries.

The premise of the concept of a *thick skill* boundary is that displaced manufacturing workers do not have transferable skills for employment in service industries (Iversen & Cusack, 2000). Moreover, Iversen and Cusack posited that

manufacturing workers lacked transferable skills into the service industries because of a *thick skill* boundary. According to Iversen and Cusack, low-skill blue-collar workers found it difficult to adjust to low-skill service sector jobs because they lack social skills, and the lack of social skills represented a particularly *thick skill boundary*. Additionally, since manufacturing workers' productivity in service industries were expected to be low, these individuals would only be hired when the low-end service industries expanded (Iversen & Cusack, 2000). North Carolina transitioning from manufacturing sectors to service industries analytically poses challenges if manufacturing skills are transferable to nonmanufacturing industries.

Displaced manufacturing workers are associated with the paradigm of a *thick skill* boundary. Iversen and Cusack (2000) posited that the term *thick skill* focused on structural change from the deindustrialization era and suggested the service industries were the prime industries for displaced manufacturing workers. Furthermore, Iversen and Cusack (2000) noted that gender and occupation type were major factors for reemployment from manufacturing industries to service industries. Technological change has jeopardized low-skilled men more than low-skilled women in the reemployment process (Iversen & Cusack, 2000). Socially, the industries labor demands had increased for tasks typically assigned with women (i.e. teaching, personal services, cleaning, and caring) (Eichhorst & Elgar, 2016). Likewise, the tasks typically performed by men in manufacturing industries had proven easier to automate (Autor, Levy, & Murname, 2003). Therefore, Autor et al. (2003) suggested women had the advantage in employability in the expanding service industries and would have better job opportunities

after plant closures. Autor et al. suggested the expansion of job opportunities in the service industries were favorable for white collar workers because of occupational skills (Autor et al., 2003). Furthermore, workers that have occupational transferable skills have advantage over individuals with only manufacturing transferable skills (Autor et al., 2003). Administrators, managers, supervisors, accountants, and bookkeepers were examples of occupational skills, and assemblers and welders were examples of manufacturing skills (Autor et al., 2003). From an analytic view, displaced manufacturing women workers may have a better opportunity to transfer skills than those of their male counterparts.

In West Germany in the early 2000s, there was a migration of manufacturing workers to service industries. Korpi and Mertens (2004) conducted a study of West German manufacturing sectors and found 18% of the work force left the manufacturing sector to find jobs in private services. Likewise, Korpi and Mertens revealed 14% of individuals that left private services found employment in the manufacturing sector. It is in this framework that the analytical findings provided by plant closure and displaced manufacturing workers proved useful for my doctoral study. Manufacturing was the industry sector where employees were most likely to experience layoffs, displacements, and plant closures (Oesch & Baumann, 2013). Additionally, since all personnel were displaced with plant closures independent of job performance, the displacement process eliminated the threat of selective bias of termination of the least productive workers (Oesch & Baumann, 2013). The analytic findings of the study presented from Oesch and

Baumann should present an accurate picture of what happens to displaced manufacturing workers as the Oesch and Baumann study focused on individuals from plant closings.

Rationally and practicably, it is important to explore a myriad of inputs that may contribute to the chances of reemployment for displaced manufacturing workers. While gender and occupation mattered in reemployment chances, education and age have proven to be other factors to consider (Oesch & Baumann, 2013). Oesch and Baumann (2013) posited that technological skills suggested the value of education had increased in the labor market. According to Fallick (1993), education improved job opportunities more in a new industry sector than in an existing industry sector that the individual had worked. In the existing industry sector, the individual's employer recommendations and work history were of great relevance (Fallick, 1993). In contrast, in the new industry sectors, education was a distinct signal for current productivity and the future ability to learn (Oesch & Baumann, 2013). Therefore, Oesch and Baumann (2013) explained the difference in reemployment between white collar and blue-collar manufacturing employees was based on education levels (Oesch & Baumann, 2013).

Finally, another explanation was that the biggest challenge to reemployment for displaced workers was age (Deelen, de Graaf-Zijl, & van den Berge, 2014). Reemployment for older workers was difficult for two reasons according to Ichino, Schwerdt, Winter-Ebmer, and Zweimüller (2017). First, older workers possessed knowledge and experience that was viewed as nontransferable to other industries, and secondly, hiring older workers prohibited career ladder movement for internal workers (Ichino et al., 2017). Thus, displaced older workers were faced with long terms of

unemployment, involuntary early retirements, or massive wage losses (Deelen, de Graaf-Zijl, & van den Berge, 2014). Analytic findings seem to suggest that displaced manufacturing workers have transferable skills but not for all people as age and education are factors that may make these individuals unemployable.

## Summary and Transition

With manufacturing industries downsizing and closing, a pool of displaced manufacturing workers has been created. Nonmanufacturing industries' managers, who understand skills and knowledge as a portfolio of marketable skills, might have strategies for hiring displaced manufacturing workers. Managers who understand the benefits of individual employee skills have better insight into hiring employees from diverse labor sectors. North Carolina has downsized and closed plants, leaving thousands of displaced manufacturing workers. North Carolina's nonmanufacturing leaders who have strategies for the transferring skills may be successful in hiring displaced manufacturing workers.

Section 1 of this qualitative multiple case study provided the foundation for the central research question, methodology, design, and the concepts that supports the business problem. The literature review highlighted four basic areas in discovering strategies to identify and transfer the skills of displaced manufacturing industries: human capital theory, human capital value, how the labor market affects human capital, and human capital strategy in hiring. In Section 1 I analyzed the strategies of nonmanufacturing leaders to determine the job prospects in nonmanufacturing industries for displaced manufacturing workers.

In Section 2 I analyzed the methods of exploring, understanding, and validating observations of the phenomena of nonmanufacturing managers having strategies in transferring the skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing labor sectors. The information in Section 2 covers the following: (a) the design method, (b) participant selection criteria, (c) data-gathering techniques, (d) data analysis strategies, (e) and the rationale for selecting case study as the research design for this qualitative study.

Section 3 revealed the findings and conclusions into qualitative themes about the study's phenomena. Section 3 includes: (a) the application of the study to business practice, (b) an outline the implications for social change, (c) recommendations for action and further research, and (d) findings that may help leadership of nonmanufacturing labor sectors identify transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing labor industries.

# Section 2: The Project

Section 2 covers the following topics: (a) the purpose statement, (b) the research method and design, (c) the role of the researcher, (d) the population, setting, sample size, and participants, (e) the ethical procedures, (f) the data collection techniques, (g) the data analysis and coding techniques, (h) the reliability and validity, and (i) the rationale for selecting a qualitative research method for this case study. The central research question for this study was as follows: What strategies do nonmanufacturing managers use to facilitate the transfer of skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries?

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies nonmanufacturing leaders use to identify and transfer displaced manufacturing workers' skills to nonmanufacturing sectors. The specific population consisted of nonmanufacturing managers from three nonmanufacturing industries in the Triad area of North Carolina. Nonmanufacturing managers who have hired individuals may have firsthand insight into the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing labor sectors. This study has implications for positive social change: It may bring (a) a potential resource pool of employees with transferable skills to nonmanufacturing industries and (b) economic gains in the communities where manufacturing plants have shut down.

## Role of the Researcher

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that in qualitative research the researcher is part of the research. As the researcher, I engaged in conversations with participants, collected and analyzed the data, observed the participants, translated the data into common themes, and ensured the data reached saturation. Thus, as the researcher I adjusted, adapted, and responded to understanding the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My professional experience provided a solid foundation to my research. As a senior applications analyst, I have had the opportunity to gather data, analyze data, and group and cluster data to explore trends and behaviors. Likewise, as a senior manager and director of Information Systems, I had the opportunity to interview individuals which helped me in my interviewing process.

In the study, I adhered to the guidelines outlined in the Belmont Report (1979) protocol by following the basic ethical principles: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice. I applied the following protocol: (a) created a selection process for participants, (b) provided a consent form to ensure participants were informed of the purpose of the proposed study, (c) and provided an assessment of benefits and potential risks of participating in this study. Using the Belmont Report as a guide, I provided an assessment of potential risks such as (a) loss of privacy, (b) psychological distress, (c) physical harm, (d) economic loss, (e) and damage to professional reputation.

I ensured participants that I would minimize risks by using pseudonyms for the participants during the interview, throughout the study, and at the conclusion when I presented my findings. Yin (2014) outlined interview protocols to minimize risks and to

ensure the participants protection. Participants should not suffer economic loss or damage to their professional reputations because the data collected is confidential and private. Participants should not endure risks of psychological distress or physical harm other than those associated with the discussion of a challenging and thought-provoking topic.

I conducted 30–45-minute face-to-face interviews as the data collection method for the study with three nonmanufacturing managers who have held a hiring management position for a minimum of 3 years, and have hired employees while in a nonmanufacturing management position. For each interview, I adhered to a definitive interview protocol (see Appendix B). Prior to interviewing the participants, I requested permission from each participant via a consent form and explained the purpose of the study. Moreover, I provided a statement of the basis behind the study and the time required of the nonmanufacturing managers (Bryman, 2015).

As the researcher, I was responsible for defining any necessary terms, processing the information gathered, and reviewing the collected information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, I reviewed information with the participants to ensure validity and accuracy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2014) suggested that interpretive research aid researchers in the process of interpreting and reinterpreting themes that are discovered during interviews. Furthermore, as the researcher and using a semistructured interview technique, I allowed flexibility from a structured interview script when spontaneous responses occur (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014). This flexibility is permissible in qualitative research because as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) indicated, the researcher is the primary research instrument.

The conceptualizations of qualitative validity have two characteristics in common, first to do research in a professional, accurate, and systematic manner, second, to state how research is developed. Qualitative research gains validity when the researcher would present professional candor, methodological proficiency, and intellectual accuracy (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014). Moreover, a researcher trained in interviewing skills, interpretive inquiry, and data triangulation presents credibility and integrity to the topic studied and minimizes bias (Thorne, 2016; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014). The goal of the qualitative researcher is to maximize data trustworthiness by minimizing researcher bias (Elo et al., 2014, Siedman, 2013). I was trained in interviewing techniques, Professional Records Information System Management (PRISM), and Diversity and Inclusion, which benefited in my data interpretation. Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2014) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested researchers should be aware of personal biases and attempt to monitor during data collection, analysis, and interpretation. As the researcher, I was aware of my personal biases and attempted to monitor during data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Prior to entering the Walden University DBA Program, I interviewed displaced manufacturing workers from a major manufacturing city in a pilot project to explore if the displaced workers had regained employment. This training helped me gain experience in interview question development, understand the role of interpreter and listener during the interview, recognize and identify my personal biases, collect, analyze, and categorize coded data, and recognize when data saturation was reached. Although the information from the conversations was similar to the subject of this study, the information was

anecdotal because this study focused on managers' insights on the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers.

## Participants

The Chamber of Commerce of Thomasville, North Carolina (TCC) promotes or advocates local business interests in front of state or local lawmakers and policymakers. TCC is an advocacy organization for businesses and individuals working to improve the community and promote a healthy economy (TCC, 2015). Some of the initiatives of TCC are networking and referrals for the local businesses (TCC, 2015). Likewise, the TCC have a business directory that would be accessed via their website or from their place of business. The TCC has a board of directors meeting on a monthly basis. Upon completion of this study I will share the findings with the board of directors that could possibly benefit the community. The solicitation of participants for interviews for my study was thoughtful and nonrandom. The industry targeted for this study was nonmanufacturing. The TCC was the targeted organization I used to help identify eligible nonmanufacturers from their business directory. The participants represented the top three nonmanufacturing labor sectors in North Carolina healthcare services, transportation, retail trade industries, and other service industries. Eligibility criteria for participants included nonmanufacturing managers who have held a hiring management position for a minimum of three years, and who have hired employees while in a nonmanufacturing management position.

Case studies require multiple sources of data collection (i.e., documentation, observations, participant observations, archival records) thus; in some cases an interview

sample size of two is adequate (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). Selection sampling used in qualitative research relies on detailed information obtained from a small number of participants (Crocker et al., 2014; Williams, Burton, & Rycroft-Malone, 2013). Leedy and Omrod (2015) posited that a small sample size is appropriate when conducting qualitative research. I used the purposeful sampling technique to select primary participants. Palinkas et al. (2015) suggested purposeful sampling requires attention given to (a) who or what is sampled, (b) how many people should be a part of the sampling, and (c) what form the sampling should take. The selection of participants was based on eligibility criteria I developed before beginning the study. I selected participants based on the interview criteria to provide a well-rounded view of the problem of what strategies nonmanufacturing leaders have on the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers. After receiving Walden University Institutional Review Board (Approval Number is 03-12-18-0152997), I obtained access to the participants.

I provided anonymity to all participants. I used coding (e.g., NMM1, NMM2), known only to me, to encrypt any information that may identify a participant. I sought to develop a positive relationship with participants as Haahr (2014) suggested is needed for a successful qualitative study. Furthermore, I did not force participants to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable answering. Participants did not receive any remuneration for participation in the study. Participants were free to terminate participation at any point, without any negative implications by contacting me. I requested, prior to conducting an interview, all participants consent to have their

interviews recorded. All interviews took place in a secure and private environment to ensure confidentiality, while assuring that the participants were comfortable.

## Research Method and Design

### Research Method

Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods are three methodologies used in business research (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). Punch (2014) stated, quantitative researchers focus more on numbers and qualitative researchers focus more on the empirical information about the world. Bryman (2015) provided further explanation on the differences between quantitative and qualitative research by highlighting that qualitative researchers strive for understanding and the researcher is more involved, while quantitative researchers strive for explanation. The qualitative research methodology consists of the interpretation and understanding of a phenomenon; whereas, the quantitative research methodology consists of a hypothesis and an explanation and statistical analysis to support it (Erriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Punch (2014) noted one of the major differences was that quantitative research focused more on how data is measured, and qualitative research focused more on the lived experiences of the participants in their natural settings. Quantitative methods were not appropriate for this study. Excluding the quantitative methodology from my study also eliminated the mixed methods methodology because it is composed of both quantitative and qualitative research methods (Goldman et al., 2015; Newman, Lim, & Pineda, 2013).

I found the qualitative research methodology more suitable for my study. Maxwell (2013) concluded that qualitative research supported research to understand the

experiences of individuals, which was not the primary focus of a quantitative method. Frantz and Rowe (2013) suggested that, by using the qualitative method, one seeks to understand the phenomenon from the lived perceptions of the individuals. The qualitative researcher focused more on the problem and the lived experiences of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), which allowed me an opportunity to explore the strategies nonmanufacturing managers have on the transferability of skills of displaced manufacturing workers in North Carolina. Qualitative research allowed me an opportunity to gather data through observations, interviews, and literature reviews (Frantz & Rowe, 2013).

**Research Design**

Understanding research design is essential for the researcher to frame questions that validate the purpose of the study (DePoy & Gitlin, 2016). After reviewing an in-depth analysis of research designs, I chose the multiple case study design for this study to explore the strategies nonmanufacturing managers have on the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers. The case study design was more feasible and provided an advantage over ethnography or phenomenology designs because it allowed me an opportunity to explore the complex relationships among the participants within a smaller time frame (Njie & Asimiran, 2014). In ethnography, the researcher seeks to understand a specific culture within the participants natural setting (Hammersly, 2014; Vesa & Vaara, 2014). An ethnographic design was not be suitable for this study because the researcher becomes a part of the daily activities for an extended period to understand the cultural characteristics of a whole group (Vesa & Vaara, 2014). In phenomenology, the researcher

seeks to understand the lived experiences of the participants (Freeman et al., 2015). Unlike other methodologies, phenomenology emphasizes the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants using a minimum of 20 participants without using secondary sources (Finlay, 2013; Gill, 2014; Kafle, 2013). The phenomenological design did not meet the need of this study. Using a multiple case study design enabled me an opportunity to generate a comprehensive picture to review the strategies gained from the nonmanufacturing managers experiences in identifying transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers (Robinson, 2014; Yin, 2014). Case study research allowed multiple data collections strategies that enhanced the information for discussion and analysis.

Data saturation occurs when the ongoing collection of data generates no new information or additional benefit (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Fusch and Ness (2015) described data saturation as when there was little or no change in themes or codes when collecting data. Three nonmanufacturing managers, coming from three different nonmanufacturing sectors, participated in the interview process. This approach to sample size, aligned to the study and ensured an in-depth understanding of the nonmanufacturing managers strategies on the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing labor sectors. Based on the case study design, and using the member-checking technique to verify the data, I concluded that three participants provided assurances to support the study and allowed me to achieve data saturation. To ensure data saturation achievement, I would have performed additional interviews if deemed necessary. The nonmanufacturing industries of the Triad area of North Carolina confined

the research scope of this study; and this limitation could have helped achieve appropriate saturation.

## Population and Sampling

Manufacturing was a major industry in North Carolina. The major manufacturing employer in Thomasville, North Carolina went from downsizing in 2001 to completely shutting its doors in 2010 (Sexton, 2013). By 2010, the parent company of the major manufacturing company in Thomasville had displaced close to 9,000 workers in North Carolina (Sexton, 2013). In my study, I conducted exploratory research to determine if nonmanufacturing managers have a strategy on transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers. I selected the participants based on the following criteria: (a) number of nonmanufacturing industries in North Carolina, (b) number of displaced manufacturing workers in North Carolina, (c) participants holding management positions in nonmanufacturing industries, (d) participants have hired workers while in management positions in nonmanufacturing industries, (d) and the participants' experiences in having strategies for transferrable skills of manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries.

In a qualitative study, the researcher should determine who and how many participants are deemed necessary for the study. Likewise, the researcher must determine what to explore, and what is credible (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). A study population is the group of individuals upon which a study is focused (Guest, 2015). The sample size used in qualitative research methods is often smaller than that used in quantitative research methods (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2015). Guest (2015)

posited that the researcher defined the study population based on the research study objectives. Therefore, in my qualitative case study, participants representing three nonmanufacturing industries were sufficient for identifying strategies used in identifying transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers. I gathered adequate information from the participants that may aid leaders in the nonmanufacturing industries in facilitating strategies in transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers.

The central research question and the aim of the study determined the information to be gathered. Malterud et al., (2015) proposed the concept *information power* to guide adequate sample size for qualitative studies. Information power indicated that the more information the sample holds, relevant for the actual study, the number of required participants was lowered. Moreover, Malterud et al. suggested that the size of a sample with sufficient information power depended on (a) the aim of the study, (b) sample specificity, (c) use of established theory, (d) quality of dialogue, and (e) analysis strategy. Furthermore, Malterud et al. presented a model where these elements of information and their relevant dimensions were related to information power.

Choosing an adequate sampling design further helped me in the selection of participants. Bryman (2015) suggested purposeful sampling was an accurate method to use for sampling participants. Furthermore, the technique was less expensive and was faster to meet research objectives (Bryman, 2015). Purposeful sampling should add value to the results of the study through in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the qualitative data (Palinkas et al., 2015). I used the purposeful sampling design for selecting participants, and understanding a phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposeful

sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to identify information rich cases (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2013; Sinthunava, 2014; Yin, 2014). Purposive sampling methods were more suitable than the random sampling method because of the defined boundaries that comprise the specifics of my case study (Yin, 2014). Palinkas et al. (2015) posited there are six types of purposeful designs used when the emphases are on finding similarities (a) criterion-i; (b) criterion-e; (c) typical case; (d) homogeneity; (e) snowball; and (f) extreme or deviant case. In using the homogeneity purposive sampling I was able to focus on companies in North Carolina that are nonmanufacturing sectors in the service industries. The information gathered using the homogeneity purposive sampling allowed me to explore similarities in the strategies leaders in the nonmanufacturing industries use in recognizing the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers.

In my study I looked for similarities, commonalities, and depth in information gained from the selection of participants. The sampling mirrored the phenomena in the selection of participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated the researcher should select diverse sampling to ensure a broad range representation of the phenomenon. Purposeful sampling was extensively used in qualitative research for seeking information related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). Moreover, Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested the importance of the researcher choosing how, where, and whom to interview would meet the objectives of the study. Purposive homogeneity strategies placed greater emphasis on similarity and depth and was better suited when the researcher was seeking

commonalities in a phenomenon (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015; Palinkas et al, 2015). Neither, criterion-i, criterion-e, snowball, or typical case was suitable purposeful sampling designs for this study even though they all emphasized similarities that focused on a predetermined criterion or subgroup to be evaluated (Palinkas et al., 2015). Moreover, the extreme or deviant case purposeful design emphasized both the unusual and the typical in a phenomenon, and that was not my focus in this study (Palinkas et al., 2015). Selecting participants was a critical component of my study and several of the purposive sampling methods were considered but I wanted to select participants that had the best information to address my central research question. I wanted participants that could give rich data and information that helped in identifying the strategies nonmanufacturing managers use in recognizing the transferable skills of manufacturing workers.

The researchers, using qualitative research methods, are concerned with the richness of the data to meet theme saturation (Bryman & Bell, 2015). There was no specific sample size for qualitative studies because the sample size depends on the purpose of the study, the research questions, the richness of the data, and if the results reached saturation (Elo et al., 2014). Saturation, in the context of a case study, means that the data reviewed presented no new relevant information, perspectives, and experiences from additional interviews (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Moreover, saturation occured when the results of the data of the most recent interviews were so consistent with the interview data already collected, that it would be reasonable and logical to believe that further interviewing would be unlikely to produce different data associative with the lived

experiences of the participants (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Furthermore, if data saturation was not achieved by that time, I would have continued in the interviewing process, which may have resulted in more than three participants.

## Ethical Research

Ethical research requires guidelines that were developed, adopted, and enforced by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the university and the researcher followed ethical practices to protect human participants (Wilson, Kieburtz, Holloway, & Kim, 2014). I adhered to the ethical and legal requirements, as outlined in the Belmont Report (1979), by ensuring participants were protected from risks or harm. I submitted the IRB form electronically and included descriptions of (a) the study, (b) data collection tools, (c) participants, (d) potential risks and benefits, (e) potential biases or conflict of interest, (f) informed consent agreements, and (g) electronic signatures to ensure compliance with the ethical standards of Walden University and U.S. federal regulations. I did not offer participants incentives for participation in this study. I did not collect any data until the IRB granted the study approval. The IRB Approval Number was 03-12-18-0152997.

Researchers who want their work reviewed as credible must exemplify moral conduct and an ethical approach to research. Researchers are required to display credibility, integrity, and moral conduct throughout the research process (Yin, 2016). Credibility focused on how well the data address the intended focus of research (Elo et al., 2014). According to Thorne (2016), the researcher should collect suitable data for validity and content analysis. Carter et al. (2014) argued that the methodology to provide

trustworthiness of content analysis started by choosing the best data collection tools to answer the research questions of the proposed study. Data collected from my interviews was suitable data to meet the central research framework.

I ensured that I explained to the participants the part they played in the study. Each participant was required to sign a consent form before participating in the study, and could withdraw from the study at any time. I used the following participation protection methodology, as outlined by O'Reilly and Parker (2013):

- Participants' information (e.g., names, numbers, and responses) are kept confidential by using pseudonyms that are not traceable to a specific participant.
- All participant data collected was password protected and stored on a computer or stored in a file cabinet under lock and key that is only accessible to me as the researcher.
- All participant data collected will be kept for five years and will be deleted from my computer and all documents kept in a file cabinet will be shredded.

## Data Collection Instruments

This heading includes specific information regarding the tools I used to gather data in my study. The qualitative research interview was the primary instrument used in my multiple case study for data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The interviews helped to uncover the participants' strategies to understand the phenomenon explored. I served as the principal instrument in this qualitative study, and I inquired through a series of questions (see Appendix A) that focused on the *why* and *how* of insights of the

participants (Freeman et al., 2015; Tomkins & Eatough, 2013). O'Reilly and Parker (2013) suggested that qualitative research interviews satisfied three objectives: (a) ability to abstract an aggregation of data from interviewees, (b) ability to reveal the essence of the phenomenon that would not be identified on his or her own, and (c) ability to excerpt participants' perceptions. It is imperative a researcher identify any assumptions that could influence the data collection and analysis for the study. Therefore, as the primary instrument I used an interview protocol (see Appendix B) that set the tone and guidelines for my interviews.

I used the qualitative research method to conduct semistructured interviews with three nonmanufacturing managers from a major manufacturing city in North Carolina. Using a semistructured interview technique, I explored how nonmanufacturing managers perceive the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers. I used observation, documentation, and interpretation of the participants' responses to ensure accuracy, reliability, validity, and nonbiased activity in the study (Yilmaz, 2013). Using a semistructured interview technique, I listed questions guided by broad themes in a structured methodology (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Moreover, a semistructured interview technique offers flexibility; thus, the interviewer may modify the flow of interviews with different participants, depending on the answers of the respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

It is essential that the data collected from participants meets reliability and validity standards. I used member checking to validate that the information collected from participants was accurate. Member checking is the process of researcher sharing the

findings and interpretation with the participants (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). This process allowed participants an opportunity to review the findings and provide feedback for accuracy (Harper & Cole, 2012). According to Elo et al. (2014) a researcher should allow participants an opportunity to check the validity of the research findings through member-checking. Furthermore, member-checking is a tool used to further augment the process to ensure participants trust, and the process adds creditability to the study (Elo et al., 2014). I informed the participants during the interview process that I would like them to also participate in the member-checking process and coordinated accordingly.

## Data Collection Technique

My selection of case study design allowed me to use multiple procedures to collect data that enhanced the information and knowledge presented for discussion and analysis (Robinson, 2013; Yin, 2014). Data triangulation in qualitative research is the use of several different sources in your data collection to add to your credibility and trustworthiness (Carter et al, 2014; Yin, 2014). Additionally, combing data and methodological triangulation also assured trustworthiness. I have included an in-depth interview protocol (see Appendix B) which for assuring the consistency of the interviewing process (de Ceunynck, Kusumastuti, Hannes, Janssens, & Wets, 2013; Hlady-Rispal & Jouison-Laffitte, 2014). Yin (2014) clarified that by implementing an interview protocol, the researcher aided in solidifying the reliability of a study. One of the data collection techniques used in this multiple case study included interviewing three managers from the nonmanufacturing industries in the Triad region of North Carolina.

The five interview questions (see Appendix A) were open-ended questions, which allowed me to ask follow-up questions, to observe the participants, and to understand the insights and perceptions of the participants. The data collected from open-ended interview questions allowed the opportunity for me, as the researcher, to observe and document participants' responses (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Speer & Stokoe, 2014). Advantages to use face-to-face interviews for my study allowed me to capture verbal and nonverbal information, behaviors, and emotions during each interview (Speer & Stokoe, 2014). The disadvantages of face-to-face interviews are the limited time, smaller sample size, and the researcher's inexperience in conducting qualitative interviews (de Ceunynck et al., 2013). Therefore, in realizing there are advantages and disadvantages in the qualitative research method the qualitative research method better suits my central research objective.

I scheduled interviews for all participants in an environment that promoted privacy, confidentiality, comfort, and ease for the participants to speak freely about the phenomenon in question. Likewise, I assured the confidentiality of all the collected participant data. The questions designed for the interviews helped me understand the diverse personal insights that nonmanufacturing managers have in the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing sectors. I conducted 30–45-minute semistructured face-to-face interviews. I used a voice recorder to record each interview to ensure that I accurately captured the tone and perception of the participant. I informed the participant that the interview would be recorded and allowed each participant an opportunity to decline the interview. Building trust was a vital component

when recording the participants (Speer & Stokoe, 2014). I ensured the recorder was visible to the participant and notified them accordingly when the recording started and ended. Having the opportunity to record interviews allowed me, as the researcher, the opportunity to observe any behavior I could have missed if I was bogged down with taking notes. I avoided interfering with the integrity of the data by refraining from personalized comments, gestures, or facial expression (Hyden, 2014). Upon completion of transcribing and analyzing participant data, I looked for similarities that developed into themes. I used Dragon Naturally Speaking® voice recognition software to transcribe the recordings to a word document that aided in future searches. Tellado, Lopez-Calvo, and Alonso-Olea (2014) suggested the researcher should continue in the data collection process through a transcription of member-checking or interpreted interviews until saturation was reached. As the researcher, I determined saturation when there was no new data discovered from the interviews (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Palinkas et al., 2015). The interviewing process continued until data saturation had been reached, which resulted in three interviews.

## Data Organization Technique

I used systems for keeping track of data, emerging understandings such as research logs, reflective worksheets, and cataloging/labeling systems. I journaled to examine any preconceived ideas and assumptions I had about the phenomenon, which is known as bracketing (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). In qualitative research, it is imperative for the organization of the data collection to be structured (Anyan, 2013). This process should happen before any interviews take place to ensure the technological

devices and instruments used will perform as intended (Potter, Mills, Cawthorn, Donovan, & Blazeby, 2014). The data collected is stored in a directory with folders on a password protected Universal Serial Bus (USB) flash drive and computer for 5 years. This strategic process should allow easy accessibility and less opportunity for misplaced or lost data. I named the subfolders with a code from NMM1 through NMM3 that does not reveal the identity of the participants. I also kept a research worksheet log that I updated as data was collected. The information collected for this study is securely stored and password protected on technological devices that are only accessible to me. The data collected is stored on two separate devices for backup purposes should one data set be corrupted or misplaced. Moreover, as required, the data collected is secure and will be kept for 5 years, after which all electronic documents will be deleted and documents stored in a locked file cabinet will be shredded.

## Data Analysis

The purpose of data analysis was to discover themes and to answer the central research question. Qualitative data analysis permits a researcher to identify and evaluate the implication of the data collected (Yin, 2014). Data for this study were gathered by using five open-ended interview questions (see Appendix A) administered through semistructured interviews, and I also analyzed company documents. I analyzed the data seeking to discover common themes, descriptions, and categories.

Triangulation is the use of certain protocols to analyze data to ensure the accuracy of data collected (Denzin, 2012; Yin, 2014). Using triangulation enhanced the richness of my research, added confidence of the findings, and established credibility and validity

(Elo et al., 2014; Kaczynski, Salmona, & Smith, 2013). These resources helped me triangulate data in this study. There are five types of triangulation (a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, (d) methodological triangulation, and (e) environmental (Denzin, 2012; Yin, 2014). Multiple researchers using the same qualitative methods independently and compare the findings to broaden the understanding of the problem is investigator triangulation (Archibald, 2015). This would have be an effective method to use but the cost and time constraints did not meet the objective of my study. Likewise, theory triangulation allowed multiple researchers from diverse disciplines to work together to gain information based on theoretical ideas (Burau & Andersen, 2014). Theory triangulation posed the same constraints of time and cost as investigator triangulation, therefore, not meeting the needs of my study.

Denzin (2012) posited environmental triangulation involves the use of different settings, locations, and other factors related to the environment where the study took place (i.e., the time of the day, the day of the week or the season of the year). The researcher identifies which environmental factor may influence the data received during the study (Denzin, 2012). Environmental triangulation was not appropriate for my study because my focus was not on environmental factors or influences but on strategies nonmanufacturing managers use in transferring skills of displaced manufacturing workers.

Data triangulation was one of the methods I used for assuring validity and reliability, which involved interviewing multiple participants. In methodological triangulation researchers use multiple types of data collection to assure the validity and

reliability of studies' results (Burau & Andersen, 2014). Likewise, the methodological triangulation was appropriate for my study because I used multiple types of data s to gather information to answer the central research question. I collected data using interviews, observation, and company documents. Moreover, using Yin's five step process (as described below) I conducted data analysis to discover important themes, codes, categories, and descriptions (Campbell et al., 2013; Pierre & Jackson, 2014; Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015).

Using NVivo® 11 software, I analyzed data that were collected from the interviewing process from five open-ended questions (see Appendix A). This software allowed me the ability to discover patterns and themes found in the data collected (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Additionally, accuracy and consistency were assured throughout the analysis process when NVivo® software is used (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Yin (2014) detailed five steps to analyze data: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpretation, and (e) narration. Moreover, Corbin and Strauss (2015) outlined the following elements necessary for an efficatious data analysis process: (a) collecting data from open-ended questions, (b) preparing and understanding the data collection, (c) analyzing data and text images, (d) forming a more in-depth knowledge of data gathered, and (e) interpreting the data collected.

## Reliability and Validity

Establishing credibility and trustworthiness of my study was essential. Research quality standards are important in both quantitative and qualitative research (Yin, 2014). Reliability is the process used in research to validate the findings (Morse, 2015; Perakyla,

2016). Quantitative researchers rely on experimental approaches and empirical data to test and examine hypotheses (Gough et al., 2012). Reliability and validity are concepts used in quantitative research and do not have the same meaning when used to describe qualitative research (Kornbluh, 2015). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are four concepts used in qualitative research that establishes the quality of the case study and supports the trustworthiness of the data (Cope, 2014; Yin, 2014). Addressing these four concepts ensures a rigorous qualitative process (Kornbluh, 2015). I outlined how these four concepts were used in my study.

**Credibility**

Researchers use internal validity to establish the credibility process of data collection, analysis, and findings. Likewise, member checking establishes credibility by sharing the interpretations with the participants for accuracy (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Cope, 2014; Harper & Cole, 2012). To complete this process, I scheduled follow-up interviews with each participant to share my preliminarily interpretations to allow for feedback to ensure I had correct interpretations of the participant interview responses.

Triangulation requires the researcher use multiple data sources to review, compare, contrast, and determine the alignment with the central research question. Therefore, the use of data triangulation helped to establish credibility of the data I collected (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Denzin, 2012). Yin (2014) identified ways to ensure validity and credibility in the data triangulation process. The data triangulation process includes documentation, interviews, and participant observations that should help for case study verification (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, I triangulated the interview data

with the member checking sessions along with the company records collected to ensure validity.

**Transferability**

I worked to ensure transferability by providing case selection, participant criteria, geographic location, and detailing my analysis and findings. In qualitative research, transferability is determined by the external audience of the research and not by the researcher (Cope, 2014). I worked to enhance transferability by providing a thorough description of the research objectives that are fundamental to the research (Cope, 2014). Using transferability criteria allows new researchers an opportunity to explore the strategies nonmanufacturing leaders use in transferring skills of displaced manufacturing workers. I used the standardized interview protocol (see Appendix B), the guidelines I used in the interviewing process.

**Dependability**

Dependability is related to reliability in quantitative research and occurs when researchers would replicate the decision path of another researcher's study (Cope, 2014). Likewise, dependability in qualitative research occurs when researchers would replicate previous research by using similar resources in a similar background (Venkatesh et al., 2013). Additionally, the interview protocol (see Appendix B) contributed to the rigor of the study and demonstrated dependability. The interview protocol provided clear procedures to allow other researchers the ability to replicate similar steps in order to achieve a similar conclusion. Koelsch (2013) posited ensuring the interview protocol is consistent makes the results dependable. Member checking is another technique I used to

mitigate my bias and to ensure the authenticity of the data. Member checking allowed the participants an opportunity to review the data for accuracy (Harper & Cole, 2012; Koelsch, 2013; Kornbluh, 2015).

**Confirmability**

Confirmability is linked to dependability and objectivity and occurs when other researchers would confirm the data collection (Elo et al., 2014). Yin (2014) suggested that triangulation increases confirmability in qualitative research. Qualitative researchers support confirmability by ensuring the accuracy of the data (Cope, 2014). I used NVivo® 11 software to enhance the rigor of the research by providing a detailed track of decisions I made (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). NVivo® 11 also allowed me to review findings and guard against bias. I demonstrated confirmability by providing an audit trail that showed a rationale for each decision.

**Data Saturation**

Data saturation is required for all qualitative research. An advantage of using a case study design was that I could narrow the scope of my study to one company or a few companies (multicase study) and with a smaller population made it easier to reach data saturation. O'Reilly and Parker (2013) stated that data saturation occurs when additional interviews are conducted and provide no additional benefit to the researcher. The data saturation concept is fundamental to qualitative research because it addresses whether the research has an adequate sample to demonstrate validity and reliability (Fusch & Ness, 2015). For this study, I used a small sample size of nonmanufacturing industries professionals with experience providing strategies for hiring displaced manufacturing

workers with transferable skills. Delimitation to my study was the nonmanufacturing industry sector restricted to North Carolina which confined the research scope of this study. Data triangulation, using multiple data sources, aided in ensuring the data collected was rich and helped in reaching data saturation (J. Campbell et al., 2013; Lancaster et al., 2012; Pierre & Jackson, 2014). I committed to perform additional interviews to achieve data saturation, if necessary.

## Summary and Transition

In Section 2 I provided a discussion of the research methodology and design, and highlighted the role of the researcher in the qualitative multiple case study. The section included a description of the selection of the three participants from the nonmanufacturing industry. Interviews were the primary tool for data gathering and were supplemented by reviewing company documents. In addition, I discussed the data collection and analysis techniques for both the interview document data.

Section 3 includes the results of the study and a summary of the data analysis; the potential applications for professional practice and considerations for the implications for effecting social change. Finally, Section 3 includes the recommendations for action, recommendations for further research, reflections, summary, and my overall conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies nonmanufacturing leaders use to identify and transfer displaced manufacturing workers' skills for nonmanufacturing sectors. North Carolina lost 42% of its employment in the manufacturing industry to service industries (Freyer, 2013). Furthermore, plant closings distressed the manufacturing labor force, some nonmanufacturing managers needed strategies for transferring displaced manufacturing workers' skills to nonmanufacturing industries.

In Section 3, I provide an overview of the study, present a brief summary of the findings, demonstrate an application to professional practice, introduce the implications for social change, and provide recommendations that can help nonmanufacturing leaders identify strategies to help transfer the skills of displaced manufacturing workers. Furthermore, Section 3 includes discussions on how the findings of this study align with those expected from the conceptual framework and how the themes I identified from the data analysis process could apply to the professional practice.

The themes identified from this study related to the research question and were derived from the interview questions. Participants' answers from Questions 1 and 2 yielded the themes (a) willingness to obtain training and education and (b) possessing transferable skills. Answers to Questions 3 and 5 identified the theme: nonmanufacturing managers have specific strategies, skills, and experience in hiring displaced manufacturing workers. Question 4 identified the theme that the participants referenced

most frequently during the interview process: the characteristics of displaced manufacturing workers for employment in service industries.

## Overview of Study

The purpose of the qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies nonmanufacturing leaders used to identify and transfer displaced manufacturing workers' skills for nonmanufacturing sectors. After receiving IRB approval from Walden University, I used the Thomasville Chamber of Commerce (TCC) Directory to identify businesses in the healthcare services, transportation services, retail trade industries services, and other service industries. Three nonmanufacturing professionals from the top three nonmanufacturing labor sectors in North Carolina (healthcare services, transportation services, and janitorial services) agreed to be participants. I emailed the participants a copy of the consent form, including the IRB approval. Upon receiving consent from all three participants, I scheduled face-to-face, semistructured interviews. They were conducted in a nonthreatening environment where participants answered all interview questions openly and candidly. I examined the company's career planning documents, company history documents, and website. I used NVivo for data analysis and theme identification. The themes identified were (a) characteristics that displaced manufacturing workers possessed for employment in service industries, (b) workers' willingness to obtain training and education, (c) managers' having specific strategies, skills, and experience for hiring displaced manufacturing workers, and (d) workers having transferable skills.

The human capital theory was the conceptual framework for this study. The participants revealed various strategies they used to identify and transfer displaced manufacturing workers' skills. The nonmanufacturing professionals offered knowledge, practical experience, and insights of strategies in identifying and transferring skills of displaced manufacturing workers. The three participants responded to five interview questions outlined in the interview protocol (see Appendix B). Interviews lasted from 30 to 45-minutes.

To assure my understanding of the participants' responses, I applied member checking and follow-up interviews. Using data and methodological triangulation, I examined company documents that outlined the business culture, career opportunities, and the hiring procedures to assure the validity of the participants' responses and overall findings. The research findings indicated that strategies on identifying and transferring skills of displaced manufacturing to nonmanufacturing sectors varied among nonmanufacturing managers in North Carolina who were successful in hiring displaced manufacturing workers to the service industry sectors.

## Presentation of the Findings

The underlying research question that guided this study was the following: What strategies do nonmanufacturing managers use to enable the transfer of skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries? I applied a qualitative multiple case study approach using face-to-face interviews and examining company documents. Using the case study approach allowed me to collect, interpret, and explore data obtained from the participants on their experiences, perceptions, and insights.

Participants were asked five open-ended questions (see Appendix B) and also responded to follow-up questions. I used member checking and follow-up interviews to ensure the validity and accuracy in my data collection. I used pseudonyms (NMM1, NMM2, and NMM3) to code the names of the participants. I reached data saturation through the collection of data from the three interviews, member checking, and the review of company documents, which included (a) career planning documents, (b) companies' history documents, and (c) the companies' websites. According to Elo et al. (2014), employing data and methodological triangulation enhances the richness of research, adds confidence of my findings, and assures studies' credibility and validity. Moreover, Bekhet and Zauszniewski (2012) posited member checking ensures credibility by sharing the interpretations with the participants for accuracy.

Upon completion of the data collection process, I transcribed interviews of the participants and imported the data into NVivo 11 software to analyze and identify themes that emerged from the participants responses. Likewise, each sentence and some passages of the text were coded with one or more codes. The unique codes came from the participants' own words collected from interviews. When new categories or topics surfaced, I added or modified codes as deemed necessary. I developed a systematic approach by comparing each piece of text and assigning a code. The codes were rechecked and text was assigned to maintain coding consistency. I identified 23 codes that I combined and stratified into four major themes: (a) characteristics that displaced manufacturing workers possessed for employment in service industries, (b) workers' willingness to obtain training and education, (c) managers having specific strategies,

skills, and experience for hiring displaced manufacturing workers, and (d) possessing transferable skills.

Data saturation occurred at three interviews as no additional information surfaced upon completion of the coding process and theme development. The participants had a combined total of 68 years in the nonmanufacturing labor sectors that contributed to rich information cases.

**Theme 1: Characteristics that displaced manufacturing workers possessed for employment in service industries**

Theme 1 reflected the qualities nonmanufacturing leaders perceived the displaced manufacturing worker must possess to gain employment in nonmanufacturing sectors. Vomberg et al. (2015) suggested some key propositions that explained the human capital theory was human capital are characteristics and behaviors the worker possesses. Prominent keywords that emerged from participants' responses included *willingness to learn new skills, work ethic, credible references, longevity on previous employment, professional, polite and respectful, punctual* and and *self-motivated* which were reflected in 31.76% of the codes. The findings from the study revealed all participants had perceived qualities displaced manufacturing workers must possess to gain employment in nonmanufacturing sectors. NMM2 stated, displaced worker must be accountable to job; displaced work must be credible and have three letters of reference considered like a letter of endorsement.

NMM1 and NMM2 agreed that displaced manufacturing worker must possess a willingness to learn something new. NMM3 looked for qualities such as being

professional, polite, presenting yourself well, and decent math skills. All participants agreed that the work ethic that displaced manufacturing worker had on previous job is instrumental in finding employment. Moreover, all participants stated the longevity the displaced manufacturing worker had in the manufacturing industries adds value when looking for employment in other industry sectors. Table 2 displays the themes identified for qualities the displaced manufacturing workers must have to get hired in nonmanufacturing industry sectors.

Table 2

*Characteristics that displaced manufacturing workers possessed for employment in service industries*

| Codes | F | % |
|---|---|---|
| Willingness to learn new skills | 6 | 13.95 |
| Work ethic | 9 | 20.93 |
| Credible references | 3 | 6.98 |
| Professional | 6 | 13.95 |
| Longevity on previous employment | 10 | 23.26 |
| Professional | 4 | 9.30 |
| Polite and respectful | 3 | 6.98 |
| Punctual and self-motivated | 2 | 4.65 |

*Note*. F = the number of frequency of that specific transferable skill. % = the percentage of total frequency of that specific transferable skill.

This research study related to the integration of the human capital theory which focused on individuals' possessing or acquiring transferable skills. Berger et al. (2016) determined human capital cannot be measured from a single dimension to determine the value of skills. Additionally, Berger et al. posited behaviors, characteristics, and qualities should be considered when determining human capital assets and value. Moreover, Ployhart et al. (2014) suggested human capital was ability, skill, knowledge or qualities.

The participants echoed this belief as the characteristics displaced manufacturing workers possess for employment in service Industries were referenced more than any other theme.

**Theme 2: Workers' willingness to obtain training and education**

The second theme I identified was willingness to obtain training and education. All participants agreed that sometimes the displaced manufacturing worker may have to go back to school to be more competitive in the job market. Smith (1776) noted that human capital provided returns that related to probability of employment after an individual invested in education and training. The three nonmanufacturing managers echoed that on the job training was a key element of transferring skills from displaced manufacturing sectors to nonmanufacturing industries. NMM3 stated,

> We will take an individual and train to drive a truck if they have a clean driving record. NMM3 further indicated we have in-house training that all new employees are required to complete. Likewise, NMM3 stated we average 10 to 12 people every month taking in-house training and most attending customer service classes.

All participants discussed the importance of partnerships with community colleges and technical institutions. Rao et al. (2014) posited employer engagement with training and educational institutions would help shape workplace development curricula that meet the needs of industry specifics. While all three participants indicated community educational involvement was relevant to their industry, the data revealed varied levels of engagement.

All three participants suggested collaboration with educational institutions was a strategy used for identifying skills and hiring employees; however the company documents revealed only two of the three had a procedure in place with partnership in community educational training. NMM1 indicated when the manufacturing plant shut down they partnered with an agency that was federally funded that did skill assessments, resumes, and helped individuals go to community educational institutions with no or low costs. Moreover, NMM2 echoed partnering with an agency that did assessments that identified skills individuals had that could be enhanced attending a local community or technical college. NMM1's partnering agency specialized in helping businesses and individuals to navigate through the network of education and training to boosts competitiveness and profitability. All participants affirmed the use of the local community college system was a way to train employees, as well as "retool" individuals. Theme 2 frequency codes are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3

*Workers' willingness to obtain training and education*

| Codes | F | % |
|---|---|---|
| Community college and retool | 10 | 22.73 |
| Technical college | 8 | 18.18 |
| On the job yraining | 10 | 22.73 |
| Did not graduate from high school | 6 | 13.6 |
| Coaching and training | 7 | 15.90 |
| Workshops | 3 | 6.82 |

*Note*. F = the number of frequency of that specific transferable skill. % = the percentage of total frequency of that specific transferable skill.

The analysis of theme 2 indicated the willingness to obtain training and education was articulated as an important strategy for displaced manufacturing workers to transition to nonmanufacturing sectors. However, although none of the participants had direct formal agreements with any of the local community educational institutions, all 3 of the participants did have educational agreements through a third party agency that are connected to the community college system.

The results of the research acknowledged that all the participants agreed that sometimes training and attending an educational institution may be the leverage a displaced manufacturing worker needs to position them for reemployment in a nonmanufacturing industry sector. Likewise, research from a previous study by Oesch and Baumann suggested that a tertiary degree could improve the job prospects of displaced manufacturing workers but their results yielded little difference in reemployment rates of displaced manufacturing workers with no to low education and those with tertiary degrees.

**Theme 3: Managers' having specific strategies, skills, and experience for hiring displaced manufacturing workers**

Having specific strategies, skills, and experience for hiring displaced manufacturing workers represented 22.35% of the codes that emerged from interviews with the participants. All participants agreed they have hired displaced manufacturing workers but not all participants demonstrated they had documented strategies to identify the transferable skills of those individuals. Campbell et al. (2012) posited if nonmanufacturing managers understood that skills were marketable then they may have

strategies for hiring displaced manufacturing workers. Moreover, Ployhart et al., (2014) echoed the managers who understood the value of individual skills may have insight in hiring individuals from diverse labor sectors. Table 4 indicates the frequency of codes that make up theme 3.

Table 4

*Managers' having specific strategies, skills, and experience for hiring displaced manufacturing workers*

| Codes | F | % |
|---|---|---|
| Partnerships with businesses and agencies | 12 | 37.50 |
| Job fairs | 5 | 15.62 |
| Workforce development | 7 | 21.88 |
| Understanding manufacturing industry | 2 | 6.25 |
| Transition to nonmanufacturing industry | 6 | 18.75 |

*Note*. F = the number of frequency of that specific transferable skill. % = the percentage of total frequency of that specific transferable skill.

NMM1 and NMM2 both identified a primary strategy was having partnerships with outside agencies to conduct onsite workshops with displaced workers that are hired. NMM2 stated,

> While you have them in doing on the job training you open up an avenue with other leaders and business partners to help bring balance to displaced workers. NMM2 also stated, on today we had everyone come to the office, we brush up every 90 days. We also take quizzes so we can brush up on our skills, don't want people to get comfortable on the job.

Being a part of local job fairs was another strategy identified by both NMM2 and NMM3 that helped showcase skills displaced manufacturing workers had that could

transfer to nonmanufacturing labor sectors. Managers should seek ingenious ways to hire employees as it may increase employer competitive advantage (Kryscynski & Ulrich, 2015). Likewise, Kryscynski and Ulrich supported the idea an employer achieved competitive advantages when leaders recognized individual talent, skills, and value.

All participants were in agreement that a skill a nonmanufacturing manager should have to hire displaced manufacturing workers is to understand the dynamics that take place in a manufacturing sector. NMM1 indicated it was important for the employer to understand the manufacturing industry to understand the skills that were available. All participants acknowledged they knew personally individuals who were displaced from the leading manufacturing industry in Thomasville, North Carolina, and therefore had a sense of what the industry meant to the community. However, all three participants had no experience in the manufacturing industry sector even though they have hired individuals from the manufacturing sectors.

The results from the data analysis revealed that even though nonmanufacturing managers have hired displaced manufacturing individuals the strategies used to identify the individuals' skills are limited. Only one participant had in place a process of exploring the manufacturing industry sector to aid in identifying the skills of displaced manufacturing workers. Results from previous studies have indicated that nonmanufacturing managers who had strategies for recognizing human capital value may hire displaced manufacturing workers (Campbell et al., 2012). My results yielded that nonmanufacturing managers may even hire displaced manufacturing workers when the hiring managers lack having formal strategies implemented. These results confirmed

previous research in the field. Minbaeva and Collings (2013) posited that the labor market becomes flexible when both employer and workers would adjust to a changing economic environment. Therefore, when the plant was shut down in Thomasville it presented a great economic challenge. Moreover, this misfortune presented nonmanufacturing leaders an opportunity to find skills in displaced manufacturing workers. Finally, Hanushek et al. (2017) posited that leaders should be able to identify skills that would transfer from other labor sectors.

**Theme 4: Workers having transferable skills**

The participants' responses showed nonmanufacturing leaders suggested displaced manufacturing workers have various transferable skills to nonmanufacturing sectors. Predominant keywords surfaced from the participant responses provided the support of this research. The responses included *people skills, logistic skills, machinery skills, truck driving skills, basic or general skills, customer service skills, warehouse skills, and sales skills* making up 20.00% of the four codes. Table 5 contains the frequency of codes that made up Theme 4.

Table 5

*Workers having transferable skills*

| Codes | F | % |
|---|---|---|
| People skills | 8 | 20.51 |
| Logistic skills | 7 | 17.95 |
| Machinery skills | 6 | 15.38 |
| Truck driving skills | 6 | 15.38 |
| Basic or general skills | 5 | 12.82 |
| Customer service skills | 4 | 10.26 |
| Warehouse skills | 2 | 5.13 |
| Sales skills | 1 | 2.57 |

*Note*. F = the number of frequency of that specific transferable skill. % = the percentage of total frequency of that specific transferable skill.

These findings confirmed previous research by Campbell, Coff, and Kryscynski (2012). All three participants described the perceived skills that are transferable from displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries. Schultz (1961) developed the human capital theory by suggesting individuals' have acquired and innate skills, and knowledge that were transferable throughout market industries. Schultz's human capital theory as a foundational tenet, posited that there may be opportunities for nonmanufacturing leaders to transfer skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries.

All participants, however, indicated that they have hired or would hire displaced manufacturing workers because realized there are some skills that are transferable from manufacturing industries to service industries. NMM2 was the only participant who expressed it was a joy to hire displaced manufacturing workers to the service industry. NMM2 further elaborated because some displaced manufacturing workers did not have a

high school diploma or a college degree it may be difficult to find employment but because of the service industry, individuals may find employment in other areas. NMM1 used expressions like *compatible* and *work ethics* for transferring skills to service industries. According to NMM3,

> If there is something a displaced worker has done in the past as it relates with dealing with people we would consider them for hire; everything in our industry is a service to people, so if individuals have good people skills they could get hired, this is primary in our industry.

In Theme 4 the human capital theory was prominent as all three participants indicated they had hired or would hire displaced manufacturing workers. Human capital is considered beneficial when leadership used it in the hiring stages (Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013; Ployhart et al., 2014; Mackey, Molloy, & Morris, 2014). All of the participants identified basic (general) skills that were transferable (i.e. dock workers, sales, truck drivers, and logistics).

## Alignment of the Conceptual Framework and Literature with Strategies for Identifying Transferable Skills to Nonmanufacturing Sectors

The findings of this research study linked to the conceptual framework and to existing literature on transferability of displaced manufacturing workers to other industry sectors. After the completion of data collection, I analyzed the data and concluded that the human capital theory aligned with the concept that nonmanufacturing managers may have strategies in the transferability of displaced manufacturing workers. The human capital theory shaped the concept that individuals' skills and knowledge were transferable

value that brought profitability to a company (Schultz, 1961; Ployhart et al., 2014). Furthermore, the findings affirmed a combination of strategies used by nonmanufacturing managers to recognize and understand the skills transferable by displaced manufacturing workers. Human capital focuses on assets and skills individuals may have that are marketable and transferable (Schultz, 1961; Halling, Yu, & Zechner, 2015; Kryscynski & Ulrich, 2015).

A study of the literature revealed that nonmanufacturing managers may lack strategies in identifying transferable skills in displaced manufacturing workers. A previous study by Kaur (2014) posited 30% of companies failed because managers lacked skills in identifying the candidates that would meet company objectives. Likewise, managers were challenged in recognizing general competency skills that were transferable throughout labor sectors (Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013).

## Application to Professional Practice

The findings from the qualitative multiple case study support the potential need for more defined strategies in nonmanufacturing industry sectors for identifying the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers. This research may be beneficial to nonmanufacturing managers in cities where manufacturing was a major industry. Exploring strategic transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries might be a vital solution for the state to ensure sustainability and growth in service industry sectors.

The findings demonstrated a blend of strategies nonmanufacturing managers used to identify transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers. From the findings, key

elements of strategies for identifying and transferring skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries were identified as (a) identifying transferable skills, (b) defining required qualities of displaced manufacturing workers, (c) willingness to accept training and education, and (d) developing strategies, skills and experience for hiring displaced manufacturing workers. Understanding these identified elements could help managers in declining manufacturing cities in understanding and recognizing the transferable skills of manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industry sectors. The research findings align with those expected from human capital theory because the foundation for helping businesses is to recognize knowledge, skills, and relevant experience as marketable assets. For corporate development and improvement it is critical for businesses to recognize the value of human capital (Campbell et al., 2012). For the nonmanufacturing business community, the results of this study might provide a potential resource pool of transferable employee skills to nonmanufacturing industries that could otherwise be overlooked.

North Carolina's economic climate transitioned from manufacturing industries to nonmanufacturing labor sectors. There are workers with transferable skills looking for jobs and there are employers looking for workers with transferable skills. As one participant noted, the displaced manufacturing worker must first apply for a position and acknowledge the service industry sectors as a viable employment option. Some of the participants may have lacked having documented strategies in place for recognizing the transferable skills of displaced workers, however all participants had hired displaced

manufacturing workers as all the participants saw value in work experience and longevity in the manufacturing industry.

## Implications for Social Change

North Carolina suffered a social and economic disturbance with the loss of manufacturing jobs due to offshoring and outsourcing. The 2008-2009 recessions forced employers throughout North Carolina and the Nation to identify and develop a skilled workforce that would be sustainable (NCCWD, 2011). The U.S. manufacturing industries encountered its worst performance in the 2000s, and almost every state suffered from decline in the manufacturing sectors (Baily & Bosworth, 2014). North Carolina ranked second in the loss of manufacturing jobs between 2000 and 2010 (NCDC, 2013). Pollak (2013) described expressing a social concern that affects a broader community and to provide solutions to the concerns that intrinsically alter patterns, behaviors, and norms as social change.

Data from this study may have a positive social change on the strategies nonmanufacturing managers have on the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers and present those findings to the leadership of nonmanufacturing industries in North Carolina. Furthermore, since the manufacturing industry has been declining not only in North Carolina but also across the Nation (Bailey & Bosworth, 2014) the strategies detailed in this study may aid other nonmanufacturing employers in finding suitable workers with skills from a previous viable industry for benefiting workers, families and communities.

## Recommendations for Action

The findings of this study would assist in developing strategies for nonmanufacturing leaders to identify transferable skills in displaced manufacturing workers. When nonmanufacturing industries managers lack formal strategies to recognize transferable skills they could overlook human assets and valuable talent. Identifying one strategy fitting all for nonmanufacturing industries may not be realistic. However, the recommendations provided lay the framework for nonmanufacturing managers to find strategies that are best fits for their organizations. The recommendations for nonmanufacturing leaders include (a) developing a strategic plan to work with local community and technical colleges to develop a skills assessment for identifying displaced manufacturing workers transferable skills, (b) creating and implementing formal strategic plans for the development of displaced manufacturing workers to transition into nonmanufacturing labor sectors, (c) developing partnerships with business agencies that retool and prepare unemployed individuals to reenter the workforce, and (d) constructing a characteristics prospectus that displaced manufacturing workers should possess for employment in service industries.

The recommendation of a strategic plan to work with the local community and technical colleges would lend an opportunity for company specific assessment knowledge and processes to be created for identifying transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers. Two of the three participants identified they worked with local community colleges through third party agencies. A direct partnership with the local community colleges could be more favorable as transferable skills that meet company needs could be

developed into a curriculum. Moreover, Beck and Harter (2014) expressed hiring managers lacked interviewer skills. If companies worked with community colleges the interviewing process if hiring managers could become more standardized. Furthermore, a requirement of the manager is to understand the company needs and to be able to identify those skills for meeting those needs in potential candidates (Lee, Hwang, & Yeh, 2013; Ciuhureana, Fuciu, & Gorski, 2014; Sharma, 2014).

Likewise, I recommend nonmanufacturing managers need to have formal strategic plans in place for the development of displaced manufacturing workers to transition into nonmanufacturing labor sectors. North Carolina is faced with job losses in the manufacturing industry but job increases in the nonmanufacturing industries (NCCWD, 2011). These two characteristics need to be recognized and addressed by nonmanufacturing managers to obtain quality workers to meet their companies' objectives. Dix-Carneiro and Kovak (2015) research supported these recommendations as they suggested skills from one labor sector could be valuable skills in other labor sectors if managers could identify such skills. Furthermore, the authors suggested manufacturing skills and experience yielded a high return in the transportation industry sector. One of the participants from the transportation labor sector agreed manufacturing skills had successfully transferred to the nonmanufacturing industry. However, there were no formal strategies identified to help the transition of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing labor sectors.

Moreover, the recommendation of developing partnerships with business agencies to retool and prepare unemployed manufacturing individuals to reenter the workforce

could help reduce the unemployment rate in North Carolina. Participants suggested partnerships with agencies and businesses were instrumental in finding and hiring displaced manufacturing workers. However, none of the participants had procedures to aid in identifying what they looked for in the partnerships. Likewise, none of the participants identified the measurement of success of what was received or expected from such partnerships. Therefore, the recommendation of partnership with businesses and agencies should include expected deliverables from the businesses and/or agencies to measure success in meeting companies' hiring objectives.

The final recommendation is for nonmanufacturing managers to construct a characteristics prospectus that displaced manufacturing workers should possess for employment in service industries. It's not enough for nonmanufacturing managers to indicate they recognize the qualities and skills of displaced manufacturing workers without having the strategies documented and shared with the leadership and hiring personnel of their companies. Previous work ethics and longevity as a manufacturing employee ranked as primary qualities all the participants identified. Prior research by Vomberg et al. (2015) agreed the characteristics and behaviors workers acquired or innate would contribute to a company's productivity.

The findings of this research are important to senior management, hiring managers, and human resource personnel of nonmanufacturing industry sectors. The application of the strategies would benefit nonmanufacturing managers by identifying and transferring the skills of displaced manufacturing workers. Likewise, for all in the business community, the findings will provide a greater understanding of human capital

assets and marketable skills. The results of this study add to the existing body of knowledge on strategies in identifying and transferring displaced manufacturing workers skills to the nonmanufacturing labor sectors. The findings from this study will be shared with the president of the Thomasville Chamber of Commerce. Likewise, scholar practitioners may find this research beneficial for future research on managers' strategies in the transferability of displaced manufacturing workers skills.

## Recommendations for Further Research

The intent of this study was to identify strategies nonmanufacturing managers use to enable the transfer of skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries. Through my interviews with nonmanufacturing leaders, I gained an understanding that displaced manufacturing workers have been hired into nonmanufacturing industries. However, there still may be nonmanufacturing industries managers who have not hired displaced manufacturing workers because they are not familiar with the skills that are transferable to nonmanufacturing labor sectors.

Though it was my goal to explore on a broad perspective the skills and experiences of nonmanufacturing managers on strategies in transferring skills of displaced manufacturing workers, my recommendation for further studies is to explore what specific nonmanufacturing industries are more suitable in transferring of manufacturing skills. Such a study would be conducted using a survey and quantitative approach to identify the nonmanufacturing industries and skills that are most suitable for displaced nonmanufacturing workers.

A second recommendation is to study nonmanufacturing leaders who also have manufacturing experience to determine if the strategies that are identified as transferable to service industries are consistent with strategies identified in this study. Moreover, because North Carolina is challenged with manufacturing industries declining and since my focus for this study was on one manufacturing city, I recommend broadening the study to explore other manufacturing cities in different geographic locations. Finally I recommend future researchers address the gaps and delimitations in this study to explore if nonmanufacturing leaders in other geographical locations have similar or different strategies for employing displaced manufacturing workers in service industries.

## Reflections

Growing up in a small rural community of North Carolina I recall manufacturing industries were the main source of employment. After graduating from college and moving to a metropolitan county of North Carolina I came to realize the heart of North Carolina's economy was in manufacturing. I specifically remember being approached by a displaced manufacturing worker after a church service, asking me to help her find a job because all the manufacturing industries had shut down. The thought obviously stayed in my psyche and was the catalyst that took me on the journey of my doctoral study. I do not remember what troubled me more, the idea of the major manufacturing plant closing leaving a lot of individuals displaced, or the fact that someone thought I could do something that could influence the mindset of those that had hiring power. Either way, I stepped to the challenge and must admit my doctoral experience has impacted and challenged me academically, professionally as well as personally. I was told in the early

stages of my doctoral study to find a problem that meant something to me so I would see it through the end. Scholar-practitioners should be honest, credible and trustworthy (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Realizing we all have bias I adhered to guidelines and protocol to ensure by biases and assumptions were limited (Yin, 2014). I maintained a professional demeanor throughout my research and didn't allow personal judgments, opinions, beliefs, knowledge, and experience to affect my analysis or conclusions.

My reflections of the findings for this multiple case study gave me insights of what skills, qualities, and experiences nonmanufacturing professionals viewed as transferable from the manufacturing industry. The interviews with the participants were engaging and presented insights about how a main manufacturing city's culture transitioned to a nonmanufacturing service community. The interviews also shed light on qualities, knowledge, and skills that would transfer to any industry. Moreover, the interviews also helped me understand that nonmanufacturing industries were also impacted when the manufacturing plant shut down. I was impressed with the nonmanufacturing managers' knowledge of the subject matter and how they were committed in sharing knowledge to help identify strategies in transferring displaced manufacturing workers skills. I expected the interviews would reveal similarities in the data collected, however I did not expect to find such consistency in responses as the participants were from different service industries.

## Conclusion

More than 50% of U.S. employers with open positions stated they could not find suitable workers to fill the 4.7 million jobs were available (Bureau of Labor Statistics,

2015). This statistic alone justifies why it is imperative that nonmanufacturing managers identify and implement strategies for hiring diplaced manufacturing workers with and with skills to other labor sectors. Leaders in every industry are challenged with finding the right skills in this changing environment (Hsu, 2016). It seems managers are constantly challenged with identifying specific skills to meet their companies' objectives (Kaur, 2014).

I presented the results of a qualitative multiple case study from interviews of 3 participants and company documents that explored the strategies that nonmanufacturing managers used to identify and transfer displaced manufacturing workers skills to nonmanufacturing industries. The findings of this study revealed the key strategies that participating companies used to employ displaced manufacturing workers were: (a) characteristics displaced manufacturing workers possess for employment in service industries, (b) willingness to obtain training and education, (c) having specific strategies, skills, and experience for hiring displaced manufacturing workers, and (d) possessing transferable skills. Additionally, the principal ways these strategies have been or would be implemented are: (a) developing a strategic plan to work with local community and technical colleges to develop a skills assessment for identifying displaced manufacturing workers transferable skills, (b) creating and implementing formal strategic plans for the development of displaced manufacturing workers to transition into nonmanufacturing labor sectors, (c) developing partnerships with business agencies that retool and prepare unemployed individuals to reenter the workforce, and (d) constructing a key qualities and skills prospectus to aid in increasing the organization's competitive advantage. Once

nonmanufacturing hiring managers become more familiar with human capital assets as being knowledge, identifying the key characteristics and acquired or innate behavior an individual possesses, identifying and procuring transferable skills would become less challenging.

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# Appendix A: Interview Questions

Appendix A lists the open-ended interview questions used to capture the strategies of nonmanufacturing managers have on identifying and transferring skills of displaced manufacturing workers.

The following are the interview questions:

1. What perceived business skills are transferable from displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufacturing industries?
2. What strategies do you use for transferring the skills of displaced manufacturing workers to nonmanufactring industries?
3. What skills and experiences are necessary for nonmanufacturing leaders to hire displaced manufacturing workers?
4. What are the perceived qualities the displaced manufacturing worker must possess to gain employment in nonmanufacturing sectors?
5. What additional information would you like to provide on nonmanufacturing managers having insight on transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers?

# Appendix B: Interview Protocol

**Interview:** Nonmanufacturing Managers Insight in the Transferable Skills of Displaced Manufacturing Workers

**Protocol:**

A. I will introduce the study and set the stage at a convenient location.

B. The face-to-face interviews will begin with introductions and me introducing the proposed study.

C. I will thank participants for agreeing to participate in the proposed study, and remind participants our conversations will remain confidential.

D. I will assign each participant an identifying code to protect their anonymity and I will announce the identifying code at the beginning of each audio-recording.

E. I will communicate to the participants the following questions will be asked:

   1. Provide responses to 5 open-ended interview questions, which would last for approximately 30 to 45-minutes.
   2. Be digitally audio-recording during the interview to ensure accuracy of data gathered.
   3. Share your lived experiences or perceptions regarding the transferable skills of displaced manufacturing workers.
   4. Correct or confirm the researcher's interpretation of your body language, voice inflection, and all other nonverbal gestures you may give during the interview.

F. After I explain member-checking, I will schedule a follow-up member-checking interview to review findings to ensure accuracy of the data to ensure that it is a correct representation of participants' perceptions.

G. After I have concluded the study, I will provide a synopsis of the study findings to the participants.