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Knowledge Transfer Strategy Implementation in Contract Organizations

Delano Clyde Hudson
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Delano C Hudson

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Review Committee

Dr. Annie Brown, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Rocky Dwyer, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Yvette Ghormley, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2019

Abstract

Knowledge Transfer Strategy Implementation in Contract Organizations

by

Delano C Hudson

MS, American Intercontinental University, 2011

BS, American Intercontinental University, 2010

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2019

Abstract

Despite economic perils of government shutdowns, foreclosures, bankruptcies, and employee layoffs, some contract leaders consistently fail to implement knowledge transfer strategies that could improve production and profitability and maintain operational readiness when employees transition in and out of the organization. The conceptual framework for this descriptive research study was Nonaka and Takeuchi's socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization model for knowledge creation. A purposive sample of 20 leaders from 2 contract organizations within the south central United States with at least 10 years of experience in contracting were interviewed. Member checking was used for reliability of the synthesized interviews, and triangulation was accomplished by a review of the organization's policies and standard operational procedures that confirmed the implemented processes. Thematic analysis was used to determine the 5 key themes identified in this study: cross-training, right-seat riding, after-action reviews, job shadowing, and surveying. By understanding the value of knowledge transfer strategy, business leaders and employees may benefit by establishing future business relationships and associations that create positive social change through established processes.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study first and foremost to God, my loving wife, and our three children. Without God's grace and mercy, and without the support of my family this journey could not have been accomplished. To my family, I am grateful to have you. I will forever continue to make life a better place for you.

I would also like to dedicate this study to the scholars on whom shoulders I have stood to accomplish this study. Your tireless commitment to adding to the body of knowledge and creating new scholars is commendable. I challenge you all to continue to reach out and share your wisdom with future scholars.

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I want to thank God for giving me the strength and discipline to accomplish the DBA program. I am honored to have attended Walden University in my quest for academic excellence. This has been a long and challenging journey. To all of those whom have supported me along the way, I thank you; Dr. Kat, the Walden faculty, fellow students, family and friends. I hope that my accomplishments will inspire others within my circle to pursue higher educational goals. When this happens, I will be available to support all who call upon my help.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Organizational learning depends on how well knowledge transfer is distributed throughout the organization (Kurland & Hasson-Gilad, 2014). Knowledge exchange can occur in many transactions, and reception and comprehension are vital transfer components to each transaction (Kurland & Hasson-Gilad, 2014). Leaders of organizations use training, individual experiences, and business structure to sustain continuous workflow of operation through knowledge transfer (Agarwal & Islam, 2015). Leaders may incorporate knowledge transfer programs for their employees to maintain or improve organizational production and profits.

Background of the Problem

The U.S. labor force commission reported an approximate 70% decline in employment rates between the turn of the 21st century and today (Frazis, 2017). With increasing budget cuts, layoffs, and competitive career advancements being active components of an organization, knowledge transfer between employees became challenging (Connell, 2013). To an employee, budget cuts could mean loss of job security (Tarus, 2014). The fact that layoffs occur might lead some employees to believe that they must increase their value to the organization. For career progression, employees often strive to improve their education, job performance, and overall skills (Münderlein, Ybema, & Koster, 2013). Education, job performance and overall skills each present leaders with the challenge of extracting the knowledge and experiences from employees that might be valuable assets for future business strategies.

Some leaders rely on individual skillsets to accomplish tasks rather than build from the displacement of the knowledge of outgoing individuals (Joe, Yoong, & Patel, 2013). Even though an employee may possess certain skills, organizational knowledge comes from experience (Memon, Salleh, Baharom, & Harun, 2014). In August 2016, the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics released a report that 36.1 million employees quit their jobs (Frazis, 2017). Tortoriello (2015) posited that organizational knowledge losses may occur without a knowledge transfer strategy of critical processes that achieve business productivity and profit. When leaders exercise knowledge transfer strategies, operational readiness is sustainable and organizational productivity and profits may increase (Menges, 2016). Nevertheless, leadership and management of operational knowledge and knowledge transfer between employees may influence the success of both small businesses and larger organizations (Menges, 2016).

Problem Statement

Organizational budget cuts and increasing contract company layoffs from 2010 through 2016 in the information technology industry resulted in a decrease in knowledge transfer between transitioning contracted employees (Connell, 2013; Frazis, 2017). Frazis (2017) posited that the U.S. labor force declined 68.2% between 2000 and 2016. The absence of critical strategies that ensure knowledge transfer occurs between transitioning employees has cost contract organizations as much as \$1 million to replace 10 experienced employees (Memon et al., 2014). The general business problem is that inadequate knowledge transfer between employees adversely affects an organization's

productivity and profits. The specific business problem is that some leaders of contract organizations fail to implement knowledge transfer strategies for transitioning employees.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive research was to explore the knowledge transfer strategies that leaders of contract organizations implement for transitioning employees. I interviewed 20 senior-level participants with at least 10 years or more experience from five contract organizations that work with the Department of Defense in south central Texas. This research may contribute to social change by providing organizational leaders with new approaches to implementing knowledge transfer strategies that build and improve organizational cultures or create new training practices. Furthermore, knowledge transfer is a social bridge that contract organizations may use to build new hiring practices to help develop business opportunities and social engineering advancements (Lin & Atkin, 2014).

Nature of the Study

Qualitative research is one of three methods used to conduct research; quantitative and mixed methods are the other two (Yin, 2014). A qualitative research method is appropriate for conducting studies of which no conclusive or inconclusive evidence exist for the subject under study (Yin, 2014). Qualitative research also requires a composite collection of rich data to determine the context of that data and uses judgmental sampling to explore various perspectives concerning the data (Tracy, 2013). Quantitative research relies on statistical data to determine differences and relative values between two or more variables (Guercini, 2014). A mixed methods research approach combines both

qualitative and quantitative research approaches and synchronizes the two methods to draw certain inferences about the subjects (Bettany-Saltikov & Whittaker, 2014). No comparison of relationships or significant aspects to draw conclusions exists in this research; participant leaders informed the research with the details of how they implement knowledge transfer strategies. Therefore, quantitative or mixed method research techniques did not apply for this study of knowledge transfer strategy implementation by leaders of contract organizations. Qualitative research may help leaders understand the impact a strategy implementation has on knowledge transfer as employees' transition.

Descriptive research based on a single area of interest served as the selected research design for this study of knowledge transfer. According to Memon et al. (2014) descriptive research studies consist of areas of interest where the center of focus is stable throughout the research. Descriptive research is an illustration of the nature of an experience or experiences in each environment (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). The nature of the transfer of knowledge can be explained through a descriptive research design by extracting the details of the event from research participants.

Other designs of consideration included case study and ethnography. However, case study research is contemporary and focuses on real-life events that warrant *how* or *why* answers (Yin, 2014). Ethnography research focus is on cultural groups and seeks understanding of how the culture works, more specifically the behavior patterns of the individuals of a community (Robinson, 2014). Both case study and ethnography approaches to research are more individualized and selective in nature, and the

characteristics of the phenomenon are subject to change (Lewis, 2015). Furthermore, case studies and ethnography studies approach research differently by participant selection and mode of inquiry directed towards various groups and locations (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

Research Question

The central research question for this study was: What knowledge transfer strategies do leaders of contract organizations implement for transitioning employees?

Interview Questions

The interview process consisted of individual interview sessions with selected participants. The interview questions were as follows:

1. What knowledge transfer strategies have you implemented to support employee transitions?
2. What knowledge transfer training do you provide transitioning employees?
3. What knowledge transfer development tools (such as video conference, chat, email, Microsoft SharePoint) are used for tacit knowledge exchanges?
4. What knowledge transfer development tools (such as video conference, chat, email, Microsoft SharePoint) are used for explicit knowledge exchanges?
5. How do you determine what knowledge to transfer during employee transition?
6. How do you extract the knowledge of an employee and transfer that knowledge into doctrine?

7. What would you do to improve the current knowledge transfer strategy implementation?
8. What other information would you like to contribute to this interview about the current knowledge transfer strategies and implementation?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization (SECI) model developed by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). The SECI model represents an orderly and continuous method for the transfer of tacit to explicit knowledge. The process of knowledge transfer existed when there was a conventional bonding between groups or individuals as collaboration efforts were required to reach predefined goals (Connell, 2013). The SECI model consists of a spiral process that incorporates both tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge to form four distinct knowledge phases.

Socialization is the first phase of the SECI model; it is also known as the tacit to tacit knowledge sharing stage where individual experiences resemble. Externalization, also known as tacit to explicit knowledge sharing, is the second phase of the SECI model that converts the undocumented, tacit knowledge into a formal organizational process (Auernhammer & Hall, 2014). The combination phase is the culmination of the SECI model where articulation of explicit knowledge transfers from source to a recipient (Connell, 2013). The final phase, internalization, is an expression of how knowledge converts from a theoretical context to an actual translation (Lievre & Tang, 2015). Emerging views of knowledge form through the different experiences that individuals

have as progression occurs through each stage of the SECI model leading to the internalization phase (Allal-Chérif & Makhlouf, 2015).

The discovery and transfer of knowledge is a diverse and complex process that affects (a) communication, (b) trust, (c) organizational relationships, (d) values, (e) corporate culture, and (f) job security (Lee & Kelkar, 2013). The applicability of the SECI model ranged from organizational leadership development, to a single business process failure (Gao, Yang, Gao, Page, & Zhou, 2014). In either situation—organizational leadership development or a single business process failure, the SECI model is a scalable framework suitable for exploring the knowledge transfer strategy implementation of different organizational leaders (Gao et al., 2014).

Operational Definitions

The following definitions of terms explicitly related to the research problem of knowledge transfer. Six key terms were specific for this study. Each term related to the SECI model identified in the conceptual framework. The terms are debatable; with respect to individual experiences and perspectives of issues with knowledge transfer.

Explicit knowledge: The specific knowledge of a literary context that is openly available and commonly shared within a community (Connell, 2013).

Knowledge brokering: A process of intermediation aimed at developing relationships and networks with all actors engaged in knowledge transfer (Waring, Currie, Crompton, & Bishop, 2013).

Knowledge management: A continuous, coordinated program that directs and instructs the paths of information within an organization that improves the development of an organization's knowledge (Mahendrawathi, 2015).

Knowledge sharing: The dissemination of organizational knowledge and experiences shared between individuals or groups (Bilińska-Reformat & Sztangret, 2013).

Knowledge transfer: The current transfer of previously experienced knowledge by a person or group to others that maintains an efficient and productive organization (Burnett, Williams, & Grinnall, 2013).

Tacit knowledge: The undocumented knowledge residing within experienced individuals through observations and personal experiences (Zaim, Gürcan, Tarım, Zaim, & Alpkın, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations were the markers that guided the construction and execution of this study. They are general in nature and may not apply to other research studies. Their application is specific to the research design and the participant's ability to respond to the interview questions.

Assumptions

A research assumption is a theoretical idea presumed to be true based on past research outcomes (Grant, 2014). One assumption was that contract organizations experience the same knowledge structures and human factors as other agencies or companies. Another assumption was that education and expertise requirements for

leadership positions were the same based on organizational roles. A third assumption was that employees with experience would be willing to share their knowledge with other employees. A final assumption was that knowledge transfer strategies were universal and may fit any organizational need.

Limitations

A limitation is the introduction of clear bias that has the potential to distort results (Vilminko-Heikkinen & Pekkola, 2017). The first limitation of this research was participants' time schedule for interviews. Some participants may not be available or would have had to cancel interviews due to conflicts in schedules. Selecting 20 valid participants to talk about organizational knowledge transfer may attribute to a limitation. The possibility existed that the members interviewed would not make up an adequate sample for obtaining valid results. Another limitation was that of the participants' knowledge of contract attrition. Finally, not sampling a larger number of contract organizations with varied participant experiences, skills, learning capabilities, and experience levels may have influenced the results of the current research study.

Delimitations

A delimitation is a voluntary control measure used to focus on a specific topic or area (Svensson & Doumas, 2013). The scope of this study was limited to 20 contracting professionals possessing 10 years or more contracting experience that support the same Department of Defense organization. Qualifying factors were also delimiters when purposively selecting participants with certain levels of contracting experience and availability to participate in the interview process. The study was further limited in scope

by using Nonaka and Takeuchi's SECI model of knowledge transfer as the only model. Because the discovery of knowledge is a diverse and complex process, the SECI model was one of the many applicable conceptual models that supported this current research study's focus and the procedures for obtaining and transferring knowledge that helped to understand knowledge sharing.

Significance of the Study

Business leaders may find value in descriptive research studies by gaining an understanding of the impact that knowledge transfer strategy implementation has on production and profitability as employees' transition in and out of an organization (Memon et al., 2014). Transferring accurate knowledge, especially organizational knowledge, is critical to the growth and success of any business, but cultural differences could stunt progress (Song, 2015). In practical terms, this research provides an in-depth view of the knowledge transfer strategies and mechanisms that aid leaders in making decisions on performance and production as employee transitions occur. Each organization may benefit differently from using a certain transfer strategy. The overall significance of this study may raise awareness of the benefits of knowledge transfer strategy implementation such as sustained workflow and improved performance as they relate to organizational production and profit.

Contribution to Business Practice

The findings of this descriptive research may strengthen the understanding and effectiveness of knowledge transfer strategy implementation by which businesses may achieve greater profits and productivity (Memon et al., 2014). Business leaders may also

learn from the perils of failed implementations of strategies for knowledge transfer between transitioning employees (Ahammad, Tarba, Liu, & Glaister, 2016). When business leaders discover new strategies, they often change their operational processes, effectively causing an organizational culture shift to the adopted strategy as being a normal activity (Jacobs et al., 2013). Corporate leaders may benefit from understanding how knowledge transfer between transitioning employees affects the organization as a critical component to sustaining business productivity (Nica, 2013).

Implications for Social Change

When employees transition in or out of an organization, the culture of that organization influences knowledge transfer (Shuck & Rose, 2013). Social change is a by-product of knowledge transfer (Rudito, 2014). The results of this descriptive research study may have a direct, positive effect on the internal social dynamics and structure of organizational culture building, an impact that could introduce new hiring practices and training methods for employees and leaders. Because knowledge transfer encourages socialization within internal and external venues, leaders may establish more creative means of collaboration between employees as transitions occur (De los Rios & Charnley, 2016). The research findings of this study may contribute to new methods of hiring and training practices for employees. The more leaders understand the significance of implementing knowledge transfer strategies in their organizations, the more productive and efficient they can make their organizations (Lin & Atkins, 2014).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The content of this review consists of peer-reviewed research articles, seminal books, government sources, and dissertations from Walden University Library databases. To obtain an extensive view of the knowledge transfer methodology and concept as a strategy, a multi-source search for data was in order. Developing and identifying common themes and patterns within the various data sources was the first task in the literature analysis. To enhance understanding, a critical review of the advantages and disadvantages of the references led to easier analysis and synthesis formation. Research began with gathering data on knowledge transfer and the SECI model as the conceptual framework. The primary databases supporting this review include (a) ProQuest Central, (b) ABI/INFORM Complete, (c) Emerald Management Journals, (d) Thoreau, and (e) Science Direct. Secondary databases include (a) EBSCOhost Web's Academic Search Complete, (b) Business Source Complete, (c) Education Research Complete, and (d) ERIC. The initial search criteria range from 2012-2016. The main word searches included (a) knowledge transfer, (b) knowledge sharing, (c) information management, (d) qualitative research, (e) employee transition, (f) turnover, (g) conceptual framework, and (h) SECI model. This research consists of 216 references. Approximately 195 peer-reviewed references support the combined research with 92% of the journals dating from 2014-2019. The literature review contains 91 references, with 87 peer-reviewed journals accounting for 97% between 2014 and 2019.

Understanding that knowledge transfer strategies exist at various levels of communication between individuals within organizations, the idea is to explore the

organizational strategies used when, where, and how knowledge transfer between transitioning periods occur in a given conceptual framework. Leaders must understand that strategy selection is an essential ingredient to successful knowledge transfer. Based on the concept of knowledge transfer as a strategy, the SECI model serves as a bridge to the acquisition and dissemination of tacit and explicit knowledge about the organizations explored in this study.

The five themes in this review are representative of the top-level headings in Table 1, with corresponding subthemes listed below. Each subtheme in the list addresses a different aspect of how knowledge transfer occurs. This review represents an exploration of the research of knowledge transfer literature, focusing mostly on studies conducted within the past five years. These themes and subthemes are not all inclusive as each theme is relative to the common practices found in most organizations.

Table 1

Literature review Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Knowledge Transfer	Employee Transition	Conceptual Model	Organizational Learning	Knowledge Transfer Challenges
	Information Management	Aging Workforce	SECI Model	Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)	Cultural/Customs Differences
	On-the-job-Training	Job Rotation	Contrasting Theories	Cooperative Learning	Language Barriers
	Mentoring	Worker-Turnover	Supporting Models		Perishable Skills
	Coaching				
	Teaching				
	Information Technology				
	Individual Learning				

Application to the Applied Business Problem

The goal of this review was to explore knowledge transfer strategies that leaders implement as employee's transition in and out of contract organizations. The research contained in this report is a view of how various researchers approach the meaning of knowledge transfer within organizations. Furthermore, this study includes a conceptual framework of knowledge creation where the transfer is a spiral process formed explicitly through documented means or from the tacit generation of individual experiences. An in-depth literature search of the various components surrounding knowledge transfer and the SECI model consists of scholarly peer-reviewed and seminal sources.

The SECI model conceptual framework for this study consists of four key processes to achieving knowledge transfer: socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Furthermore, the research focus is on the SECI model as the conceptual framework for knowledge transfer strategy implementation. Assuming that knowledge exists in two forms: tacit and explicit, the SECI model provides a revolutionary concept to the evolution of business leadership. Use of the SECI model is sufficient for achieving some level of knowledge transfer as a management strategy (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The task is to execute and implement a management strategy at the appropriate level and time.

Knowledge Transfer

Knowledge transfer strategy is arguably a valuable organizational asset, perhaps one of the most important aspects of any organization. Skelton (2015) argued that many leaders of small business enterprises and contract organizations fail to identify the

connection between knowledge transfer and underperformance in revenue generation based on managing business practices and knowledge assets. Through a series of multiple case studies and interviews, Skelton (2015) concluded that a knowledge-based view (KBV) approach could improve business performance and revenue generation. However, a mixed method study would serve better at exposing the hidden ties and connections to the organizational performance and income generating issues. A KBV is indicative of organizational changes that accompany leadership changes in thinking to support strategic knowledge transfer processes that generate revenue and increase performance (Skelton, 2015).

Chiles (2015) posited that leader slash subordinate relationships have close ties to job satisfaction and worker turnover. Both are contributing factors to establishing knowledge transfer practices within an organization. When leaders and subordinates have close relationships, organizational performance and knowledge are receptive to influence during transitional periods (Mahr, Lievens, & Blazevic, 2014). Unlike Chiles (2015) who studied the subordinate relationships between leadership and employees, Mahr et al. chose to focus on the measurements of performance and knowledge when transitions occurred.

Leadership style is one of the main contributors to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Chiles, 2015). However, when workers are dissatisfied with leadership, knowledge transfer becomes challenging during turnover periods, and organizational production suffers (Mahr et al., 2014). Considering the baby boomer generation, Chiles sought to identify the type of leadership style that produced the best employee job

satisfaction requirement based on expectation. Nevertheless, Chiles made no mention of the impact that this relationship had on knowledge transfer during employee turnover. Because knowledge transfer is necessary, especially with transitioning employees, leaders should understand the importance of information management and the strategy of its implementation. However, in this study of past and present research, the issues with (a) information management, (b) information technology, and (c) individual learning form a basis for knowledge transfer strategy exploration.

Information management. The management of information implies that a systematic process is in place to capture, distribute, and store data for a given purpose. The fact that information systems affect every part of our business and personal lives proves the need for information management systems still exists. Consequently, Shiau, Chen, and Tsai (2015) analyzed some of the key issues surrounding the top management information systems and the steps involved in the operational processes. Technology acceptance, trust in information technology (IT), and knowledge management make up the 10 primary issues identified in the research findings (Shiau et al., (2015).

Business owners use information technology to gain competitive advantages in operational functionality (Shiau et al., 2015). By harnessing massive amounts of data and information, leaders face challenges with finding consistent and creative ways of managing information with computers and other electronic devices (Patton, 2014). Although recognized as a form of technology, the digital age of information management has moved into the business arena as a service. Consequently, the advancement of information management as a service opens doors that the conceptual procedure of the

dated model could never open (Patton, 2014). The realization of this digital transformation sets the stage for new and improved data management systems.

The incorporation of new technological management systems should accompany business planning and implementation phases as part its operational strategy (Shiau et al., 2015). By addressing the management system's strategy issues and others like them, business leaders may be able to understand the challenges with knowledge transfer and employee transitions that hurt the production and profits of the organization.

Nevertheless, the introduction of a new management system will often present an unpleasant welcoming (Dulipovici & Robey, 2013). Continuing the argument, that skewed social interaction and user perception often accompany the introduction of new management systems, Dulipovici and Robey (2013) posited that new systems often provoke negative responses as well as organizational strategy misalignment. Although most leadership welcomes new management systems, the systems seldom correct the misalignment of organizational transitions and are useless without providing on-the-job training (De Grip & Sauermann, 2013).

On-the-job-training. According to De Grip and Sauermann (2013), on-the-job training is about the human capital theory where the transfer of training to the workplace and the learning of new skills increase workers' productivity. Human capital expands the education and political bounds of entrepreneurship as well as corporate development processes involving on-the-job training (Lauder, 2015; Martin, McNally, & Kay, 2014). Consequently, turnover and hiring processes, as well as job demands ultimately,

influence consumer satisfaction regardless of training (Reilly, Nyberg, Maltarich, & Weller, 2014).

Jackson, Brooks, Greaves, and Alexander (2013) argued that on-the-job training has two primary objectives: being involved in and being a part of research and situation improvement. Unlike De Grip and Sauermann (2013), Jackson et al. proposed a continuous improvement approach to gaining knowledge and learning new skills in the work environment as a way to create added capability and efficiency. Learning new skills is paramount to making improvement and realizing organizational growth, and facilitation is possible through a mentoring style of training (Jackson et al., 2013).

Mentoring. According to Marshall, Lawrence, Williams, and Peugh (2015), mentoring's basis is a service-learning perspective that meets a community need while providing a broader understanding of the interests. Ortiz-Walters and Fullick (2015) added that mentoring was a critical tool used for promoting career success for protégés of color in particular. Helgevold, Næsheim-Bjørkvik, and Østrem (2015) conducted a small study of mentoring focused on the conversations between the mentor and intern without regard to the learning process or development associated. Alternatively, Redmond (2015) offered an online perspective to mentoring used to support secondary pre-service teaching. In each approach, a single focus viewpoint resembled coaching. The similarity of mentoring to coaching ends in concept and further separation exists within method and application (Marshall et al., 2015).

Coaching. According to Kolodziejczak (2015), coaching is a gradual process to change rather than a revolution. Although the term coach associates closely with teacher

or trainer, a coach has an entirely different perspective that involves a more proactive engagement. Coaching brings out the autonomous ability within individuals, especially in times where changes occur in organizational culture (Kolodziejczak, 2015).

Ensminger, Kallemeyn, Rempert, Wade, and Polanin (2015) took a different approach to investigating coaching by using evaluations. Ensminger et al. contended that personal coaching was more involved than other learning approaches. Ensminger et al. concluded their arguments with evidence provided by the roles of an evaluator and the evaluation capacity found in knowledge and skills coaching. In contrast, Solstad, van Hoye, and Ommundsen (2015) proposed a quantified perspective of self-determination through autonomy-supportive coaching and the relationships with athletes. Although autonomy-supportive coaching does not specifically address any particular aspect of knowledge transfer, participation, and close relationships are included in the roles of coaching as well as any form of teaching.

Teaching. Teaching requires an evidence-based management process of specific assignments and activities to further the adaptation and innovation of educators (Donche, Maeyer, Coertjens, Daal, & Petegem, 2013). Dietz et al. (2014) introduced a focus on teaching that produced limited evidence of analytical data composed of performance and production metrics designed to address specific business problems through evidence-based management. According to Joy and Poonamallee (2013), the role of the teacher in the traditional sense should change to more of a facilitator of learning. Joy and Poonamallee concluded that facilitating learning through inductive approaches was equally effective at empowering students if not more effective than traditional lecturing.

Alternatively, Taras et al. (2013) introduced a study on a global virtual teaching environment that allowed for an extended learning capability for greater numbers of students. Consequently, cultural differences become key factors in determining functional success in teaching within virtual environments.

By adapting to the growing challenges of teaching, advancements in technology can support the learning process. Because the learning process is vital to the success of knowledge transfer facilitated in business processes, education and technology may also help the dependency of strategy selection involved in research and development for new generation of business.

Information technology. According to Shaqrah and Husain (2014), information technology is web-based training and a corporate owned training tool used to help employees better understand their jobs and improve work performance. This exploration of learning does not consider the knowledge transfer process; the focus is on the method of information technology used. Oztaysi (2014) presented an exploration of the use of information technology from a content management perspective. Notwithstanding the benefits of web-based instruction, Oztaysi made a case on explaining the impacts to learning with information technology based on analytical hierarchy processes (AHP). Batalla-Busquets and Martínez-Argüelles (2014) surveyed more than two thousand executives to find out what factors they determined as critical information technology to aid their decision to use on-line training for their employees. Between 2010 and 2013, on-line employee training programs were only prevalent in organizations that invested in their employees as organizational assets (Batalla-Busquets & Martínez-Argüelles, 2014).

Presumably, smaller organizations depend on employees that already possess the working skills either through formal training or individual learning experiences.

Individual learning. Wang, Nie, and Huang (2013) explored learning from a self-taught viewpoint based on image observation statistics. Arguably, this method would still require a transition between individual learners. Depending on the organizational situation, statistics may be unrealistic. However, Stenlund, Jönsson, and Jonsson (2017) took to evaluating learning outcomes of individual learning, programmatic, and community-level key issues surrounding personality characteristics as their research focus. By basing their study on the individual learning outcomes, the contributors to the learning issues were unexplored. Further investigation would help corroborate the evaluation results.

Jayasimman, Vijayalakshmi, Kumar, and Jebaseeli (2015) introduced a new up and coming collaboration method of individual learning called cloud computing. Although cloud computing is productive, security and management issues plague the system's productivity. Some organizations are reluctant to accepting cloud computing for fear of loss of control of their data, a familiar phenomenon to employees transitioning out of an organization that used data as a primary service (Jayasimman et al., 2015).

Employee Transition

Employee transition is an inevitable fate of an organization (Smit, Maloney, Maertz, & Montag-Smit, 2016). The factors that contribute to employee transitions vary with some commonality between individuals and agencies. In this review, three common factors are an aging workforce, job rotation, and Worker turnover. By probing current

research, the intent is to discover gaps and new possibilities that can ease the loss of organizational knowledge within the workforce. More importantly, discovering how to effectively achieve good knowledge transfer when employees transition.

Aging workforce. Loepke et al. (2013) posited that the perceived crisis of an aging workforce was not as detrimental to an organization as previously thought. However, employee retention issues appear to be rising. Loepke et al.'s research limitations included a specified employer's threat to knowledge loss through older workers and retirement. Weaknesses to the study included the case study design that lacks the personal experience of engagement with the environment and the individuals exposed to the phenomenon.

Alternatively, Anderson (2013) proposed a management perspective for older workers retention in the workforce. Although older workers are increasingly occupying many areas in the job market, the challenges with knowledge transfer remain at the heart of organizational production (Anderson, 2013). Unfortunately, stereotypes and discrimination against older workers still exist, and in part has a strong influence on tenured employee transitions (Anderson, 2013; Bairi, Murali Manohar, & Kundu, 2013). From this perspective, no conclusive evidence indicates or validates the intentions of older workers towards their current employment. However, logical conclusions result from the overwhelming incidents reported throughout the general workforce, especially in the American sectors. A possible mitigating technique to the discrimination would be to add job-rotation as an operational process for all employees.

Job-rotation. Michalos, Makris, and Chryssolouris (2013) conducted a case study of assembly line production performance with job rotation. Their investigation monitored how the application of fatigue distribution in the work environment affected operator performance. The specifics of the study reside in vehicle assembly, but the adoption technique of job-rotation significantly enhances product quality and reduces assembly errors (Michalos et al., 2013). Consequently, job-rotation can be a mitigating technique to reducing health conditions concerning job performance.

Tarus (2014) investigated job-rotation as a strategy to achieve high performance in the workplace through a graphic survey design using a quantitative method of research. Focused on job-rotation perception by employees, Tarus hypothesized that job-rotation had no significant effect on workplace performance. In turn, this could lead to a poor strategy design if adopted on statistics alone. By reporting this statistical data, organizations may find job rotations advantageous as a workplace strategy.

Alternatively, Moreira and Costa (2013) examined job rotation through a scheduling process using a quantitative analysis of a three-step scheduling model for job rotation planning consisting of (a) single-period scheduling, (b) a mixed-integer selection proposal, and (c) a post-optimization routine improvement solution. Moreira and Costa considered the problems of job-rotation based on a scheduling perspective. Although the outcome of the study indicates a positive result, the focus of the research was more on the method of measurement than the impact of job rotation or worker turnover in organizational performance. Neither instance of the scheduling process provides for knowledge transfer consideration.

Worker-turnover. Glock and Jaber (2014) developed a mathematical formulation for a group-learning model attempting to predict performance improvement in groups with and without worker turnover. The formula had no indication of impact to knowledge transfer. Additionally, the model was dependent upon the characteristics of the participant groups, as each group's behavior was different whether with or without worker turnover. In contrast, work characteristics have more influence on worker turnover intentions than retirement plans (Münderlein et al., 2013). This conclusion is a direct result of differing definitions between retiring and changing careers. In both instances, worker turnover occurs, but one is transitional, and the other is terminal. Although turnover intentions influenced by work characteristics had a greater impact on retirement decisions, intentions to share knowledge during or pre-transition were unknown (Eckardt, Skaggs, & Youndt, 2014).

Limitations to Münderlein et al., (2013) findings include a lack of examining actual worker behavior intentions with the turnover. The turnover rate reflects statistical data involving the number of employees hired and fired from an organization over a specified period. Another limitation of this study is that information reported as record data is subject to incomplete reporting, which often result in some uncorroborated occurrences of employment and firing. Alternatively, Flint, Haley, and McNally (2013) offered organizational sustainability as closely tied to employee satisfaction; which in turn reduces worker turnover. Although the number one reason for employee transition noted in Flint et al.' research was career progression, job dissatisfaction had the strongest influence. Based on this evidence, a framework for worker turnover corroboration should

be adaptive and conclusive. Therefore, the SECI model appears appropriate for the task of following knowledge transfer.

Conceptual Model

According to Hallinger (2013), a conceptual framework provides a defensible and robust synthesis of the participant's experiences of a given phenomenon. Spencer et al. (2013) presented a two-part conceptual framework targeted at planning and improving evidence-based practices that met with limitations due to the challenges of different variables identified in what should have been a quantitative study based on the objective measurements expected. To mitigate such annoyances in this study, I chose the theory of knowledge creation by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) as the framework for exploring how leaders of organizations implement knowledge transfer strategies for transitioning employees. The framework consists of four primary phases of communication: (a) socialization, (b) externalization, (c) combination, and (d) internalization. Because of such high regard for the SECI model within the realm of qualitative research of knowledge management, many of the arguments against its validity are unrecognized. Throughout this study, several arguments for and against the SECI model's identity exist within the different framework models associated with knowledge transfer.

Conceptual model. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) first introduced the SECI model as a concept of creating new knowledge as an attempt at helping managers better understand how knowledge is generated and managed as assets within an organization. Nonaka and Takeuchi introduced *The Knowledge-Creating Company*, by arguing for change in the original SECI model's four phases based on the absent changes of signs in

one form to the other within the framework. Although Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) present a strong argument for using the SECI model, Auernhammer and Hall (2014) argued that the SECI model is flawed and questioned the contribution to the learning theory. Auernhammer and Hall further claimed, to identify process complexity, questionnaires with prior research is needed to validate measures. Cannatelli, Smith, Giudici, Jones, and Conger (2016) argued that surveys could not produce a measurable analysis of all four modes, and the research method and design at best could only support two of the modes of the SECI model.

Auernhammer and Hall (2014) maintained the claims that the SECI model was a comprehensive management process based on the SECI model's applicability in a German cultural context. Additionally, Auernhammer and Hall proposed an analytical three-level framework consisting of (a) basic cognitive processes, (b) societal and organizational conditions, and (c) managerial tools for organizations of differing cultures and operational variables to substantiate the use of the SECI model. Based on the findings of the 3-level framework, Auernhammer and Hall proposed an extension of research into the culture of an organization as well as the organization's knowledge management processes. In contrast, Hammami and Alraja (2015) argued that the SECI model was two-dimensional with individual and collective interactions separated by the type of media used in the process execution of sharing knowledge. Wu and Chen (2014) argued that a gap existed in the understanding of how knowledge-based views affected knowledge sharing and creation within an organization.

Using a knowledge-based view on a select group of organizations, Wu and Chen (2014) indicated (a) network ties, (b) a shared vision, and (c) trust are relative characteristics shared with the SECI model in the knowledge management process. Likewise, Richtnér, Åhlström, and Goffin (2014) posited that both the individual and organization's library of knowledge evolves into a productive ecosystem through collaboration and learning processes described in the SECI model. Bressan and Boom (2014) shared this same idea and added that (a) know-how, (b) expertise and capacity, (c) innovation, knowledge networks, and (d) creativity were responsible for sustainable growth through the application of the SECI model's processes.

The SECI model may be one of the most cited theories of knowledge management since the 1990s. Tian, Guohui, Fei, Rui, and Gong (2013) argued that the SECI model was outdated and structurally incomplete and required a degree of knowledge innovation through the ascension of the spiraling mechanism outlined within the concept. The basis of such claims was objective facts about the academic theory of knowledge innovation in China's science and education integration of SECI (SEI-SECI) model (Tian et al., 2013). The use of the SEI-SECI model is an attempt to create a new perspective on how to improve the existing knowledge innovation system, and not merely discredit the applicability of the SECI model and its effectiveness.

Lievre and Tang (2015) used the SECI model to explore the knowledge transfer obstacles associated with cultural differences between healthcare organizations. However, Lievre and Tang's (2015) research consisted of shortcomings in environmental conditions surrounding the socialization mode of the SECI model and an analysis of other

market segments besides the healthcare market regarding knowledge transfer activity.

Because of the complex nature of knowledge transfer and individual behavior, one could argue the effectiveness of the SECI model.

Attempting to measure the efficiency of the SECI model, Allal-Chérif and Makhoulf (2015) used the SECI model concept with customized video gaming as part of a benchmarking mechanism for knowledge management at multinational financial organizations in France to show the effectiveness of the model's processes. Concluding that the use of video gaming would improve the organizational learning objectives as well as build better employee relationships; Allal-Chérif and Makhoulf (2015) further claimed, that the highlight of using video gaming with the SECI model for knowledge management was the fun and excitement experienced during role play to affect change.

Contrasting theories. Argote and Guo (2016) posited that the Transactive Memory System (TMS) contrasts that of the knowledge creation found in the SECI model by research methodology and design but accomplishes similar results with knowledge transfer. While taking a quantitative approach to describe TMS, Argote and Guo (2016) sought to measure the quality of memory recall that the individual and organizational processes of knowledge transfer generated. However, the TMS approach did not specify the nature of knowledge as explicit or tacit. The procedure, relationships, and Information Technology/Information System outsourcing were the primary variables that contributed to the organizational learning and fundamental structure for organizational knowledge transfer in the TMS conceptual model.

In retrospect, Hammami and Alraja (2015) contended that the SECI model acquired its principles from the Japanese concept of *BA*, meaning that knowledge creation could be physical, virtual, and mental or any combination. According to Cannatelli et al. (2016), the SECI model has achieved a classic status; although the SECI model's use is increasing by authors in various sets of disciplines, no empirical evidence substantiates the soundness of the principles, and some of the conversion modes are incoherent. Alternatively, Khodakarami and Chan (2014) explored the challenges associated with customer relationship management theories through a critical analysis of the SECI model's principles based on the hidden behavioral assumptions and cultural values of a Japanese organization. The primary individual complaints within the organization involved differences between implicit and tacit knowledge relationships. Khodakarami and Chan (2014) further contended that the SECI model had unresolved epistemological ambiguities.

Supporting models. Knowledge brokering intervention is a similar conceptual framework to that of the SECI model. According to Waring et al. (2014) conceptual framework processes, like those found in the SECI model have outgrown the traditional linear research approaches used to translate knowledge transfer processes of past time. Instead of using a traditional approach to conceptualizing knowledge exchange, Waring et al. sought to establish a practical framework for practice and policy using real-time knowledge brokering intervention within a mental healthcare organization. This brokering intervention has many of the same characteristics of the SECI model, even though the activity differs in the application of the processes. Nonetheless, individual

teams that lead the knowledge brokering activities control the intervention (Waring et al., 2014).

The brokering intervention distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge exploit is similar to the separated quad and spiral formation found in the SECI model. Saarela and Rinne (2016) claimed that knowledge concepts lack integration into translated documentation; knowledge concepts require more reasonable and practical models to understand how knowledge exchange works and how formal knowledge translation interventions add value. Like the SECI model, knowledge brokering intervention provides value through an application process (Saarela & Rinne, 2016).

The Choo model for knowledge management is also similar to that of the SECI model with regard to knowledge transfer. According to Ilvonen, Jussila, and Kärkkäinen (2015), knowledge and the transfer of knowledge are two critical components that give organizations a competitive advantage in business. By using the Choo sense-making model, Ilvonen et al. sought to describe the security concerns with managing knowledge. Risk factors involving knowledge security may exist when knowledge sharing occurs. The choo sense-making model is applicable to three areas of knowledge management, (a) sense making, (b) knowledge creation, and (c) decision-making skills (Ilvonen et al., 2015).

The WIIG model (Wiig, 2002) is another knowledge management perspective that an organization may use to capture tacit and explicit knowledge through a quad-phase approach. The four phases of the Wiig model include (a) completeness, (b) connectedness, (c) congruency, and (d) perspective and purpose. The descriptive

meaning of each phase is indicative of how knowledge transfer flows as a process. Similar to the SECI model, the WIIG model uses a well-organized and synchronized process to manage knowledge (Foote & Halawi, 2016). Foote and Halawi claimed knowledge assets are typically undiscovered by most leaders of information technology organizations. Undiscovered knowledge in one perspective may be more valuable than operational knowledge in another perspective (Borjigen, 2015).

Organizational Learning

Li, Chen, Liu, and Peng (2014) posited that organizational learning enhances through collaborative knowledge sharing. To improve production or service, organizations should learn how to make their processes efficient (Li et al, 2014). Weick (2016) concluded that dependency of work culture and a willingness to share information through collaborative means must exist. Weick (2016) also argued that organizational learning processes masked with disruptions of failures cause the natural learning process to breakdown. Although the specific causes of declines are not clear, by analyzing the aftermath of the crisis, learning could improve (Weick, 2016). Furthermore, past lessons learned and those learned from long projects afford adaptations to the organizational learning process (Weick, 2016).

Pourdehnad and Smith (2012) examined how experiences from an aviation community could potentially help other organizations with sustainability and organizational learning through an adaptive system of learning and support approach. This system concentrated on (a) focused learning, (b) detecting and correcting errors, (c) system memory as a knowledge repository, and (d) accidents and lessons learned.

Although the adaptive learning system designed is unique to the aviation community, the basic practices apply to any organization that wishes to seek improvement within its industry. Real, Roldán, and Leal (2014) reminded researchers to consider the roles, culture, technology, structure, communication and environment when applying an adaptive learning system to an organization.

In contrast, Santos and Steil (2015) used an information system approach that analyzed and described the organizational learning process through a series of interviews and case documents. The contribution added to organizational learning depends on the conceptual relationship between organizational learning processes and the various modes of power within the organization (Santos & Steil, 2015). In this particular case, organizational learning existed in two learning cycle processes, individual and cognitive/social. The individual learning process is more independent and reserved, while the cognitive/social learning process is dependent and needs collaborative efforts to be sustainable.

Unlike traditional methods of knowledge sharing between individuals, organizational learning requires sensemaking (Brix, 2017). Brix suggested that organizational learning first begins with a decision. The individuals that hold creative ideas and initiatives are the ones responsible for stimulating the organizational learning process (Brix, 2017). The challenge to leadership is to deliver proper guidance in capturing lessons learned.

Standard operational procedures. Vogel, Ponce, and Wagner (2017) argued that operational practices and operational capabilities were critical but distinct elements

to forming an organizational strategy. The chief argument here is that the lack of investments in one practice cannot offset by increasing investments in other practices. Furthermore, establishing operational guidelines and adhering to resource allocation and compliance may improve organizational performance (Vogel et al., 2017). This study has no indication of whether knowledge transfer exists or is effectively part of the organizational strategy process.

Gamme and Aschehoug (2014) sought to discover how a lean concept to operational procedures affected a partial Norwegian market based on an international research context. The lean theory supports *operational integration*—an interactive collaboration process that originated from a bottom-to-the-top organizational flow. The contributing elements within the process include visual replicates of performance recordings in team areas, meetings, and audits. However, the lean process would be useless without leadership support and presence to solicit cooperation in the learning process Gamme and Aschehoug (2014). Not only does the lean theory lack foundation in support of knowledge transfer, the collaboration process utilized a unidirectional flow of information exchange. Furthermore, the exchange of knowledge was not leader driven and standards were subject to change.

Cooperative learning. As a method of cooperative learning, many organizations develop instructional learning strategies for their teams based on the roles and tasks required for each project (Laguador, 2014). Xie and Wang (2017) associated cooperative learning with four broad perspectives: (a) motivational, (b) social cohesion, (c) cognitive, and (d) developmental. Consequently, the findings indicated that setting group goals

could potentially enhance the learning outcomes between team members. Alternatively, Yamamoto (2013) investigated individual learning through gaming with the perspective of how long-term relationships between two people survived under unknown circumstances. The intent was to determine if the people would continue to cooperate with one another, based on selected gaming scenarios. However, individual players' strategically concealed learning points of past play activities from one another in the study, making common knowledge sharing difficult (Yamamoto, 2013).

According to Aggestam (2015), the evolution of the learning organization and knowledge management are comparable to the *chicken and the egg question of which came first*. Consequently, learning organizations rely on a culture of innovation and learning by individuals and organizations (Aggestam, 2015). Furthermore, the main difference between learning organization and knowledge management is the focus; learning organization focuses on processes and knowledge management focuses on the results from the processes (Aggestam, 2015). Based on these conclusions, learning organization and knowledge management exists in organizational cultures where individuals willfully share information.

Berger and Hänze (2015) argued that a cognitive load hinders cooperative learning. Kyndt et al. (2013) explained that cooperative learning originated from a need for educating people of various age groups, experiences, and levels of mastery in specific skills. Sharan (2014) posited that cooperative processes more than individual study methods enhanced learning. Chen, Hua, and Ge (2014) argued that issues of control

plagued cooperative learning and learning is dependent upon the information necessary for the exchange.

Jurkowski and Hänze (2015) introduced a transactive communication approach to cooperative learning, where learners were both examinee and examiner. Controlled learning methods with mitigation between cooperative teams using a transactive approach allows for effective communication (Jurkowski & Hänze, 2015). When communication skills develop through computer-based systems with small group sizes, the cooperative learning process reveals a hidden capability in the performance between interdependency and individual accountability (Desai & Kulkarni, 2016). Like any inherent ability, discovering ways to improve knowledge transfers are challenging. The transactive approach lends to obtaining knowledge more than exchanging knowledge.

Knowledge Transfer Challenges

The transfer of knowledge at one time or another is challenging in every organization. However, in this research three major challenges existed. The first challenge dealt with the different cultures and customs of the (a) individual, (b) group, (c) organization, and (d) social affiliation. The second challenge dealt with language differences and the methods of communication within the organization. The third and final challenge was a discussion about the perishability of skills necessary to perform specific tasks. According to Nidhra, Yanamadala, Afzal, and Torkar (2013) knowledge transfer challenges are of two kind, art and practice. Art is the theory of application and practice is the reality of utilization.

Cultural/customs differences. An organization's culture is a major part of its success (Berthoin Antal & Sobczak, 2014). By conducting an analysis of how organizational culture and innovation strategy relates to global responsibility, Berthoin et al. (2014) found that an innovative strategy was a derivative of an organization's culture. Moreover, informal establishments foster innovation and rank structured establishments foster imitation (Berthoin et al., 2014). Managers should consider incorporating new values and norms within their organizations when duplicating similar marketing products or services. To add to the cultural differences associated with innovative strategy, Song (2015) explored the relationship between organizational learning, absorptive capacity, imitation, and innovation within a Chinese context. Song (2015) used structural equation modeling (SEM) and maximum likelihood (ML) estimation procedures to test his hypotheses about the benefits that organizational learning, imitation, and absorptive capacity have on innovation. Although imitation relates positively to absorptive capacity, the absorptive capacity mediates imitation and innovation (Song, 2015).

According to O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, and Doerr (2014), senior pioneers fundamentally decide an organization's way of life and the cultural identity evolves as vital authoritative results. Leaders are responsible for building a cohesive culture within the organization (O'Reilly et al., 2014). Finding the soft spots in firm performance is just one of the many challenges in an organization's culture. Leadership personality is arguably the greatest factor that influences the culture of an organization (Brill, 2013).

Hornstein (2015) posited that employees hold various levels of resistance to changes in the workplace. Inadequate manpower and poor direction add to the resistance

to share information (Hornstein, 2015). Operationally, organizational success is in part related to the amount of resistance present (Hornstein, 2015). The lack of support from top level management is possibly the greatest factor in the failure of knowledge transfer within an organization, no matter how diverse the culture.

Nemoto (2013) extended the argument of organizational culture gender differences by exploring the boundaries of organizational masculinity and the inequality with Japanese women based on a legitimized structural workplace culture where women have minimum leadership influence within the organization. Nemoto (2013) further explained that previous studies of gender segregation related to the Japanese employment system; however, her contribution to the subject is that of exploring the experiences of both career and non-career-track workers based on the organizational processes dictated by the predominately male-led infrastructure currently promoted in Japan. Although the challenges of organizational culture raised in the review predominately focus on different sources of data, the issues surrounding the transfer of knowledge are relatively the same. So much so, that, one of the most challenging aspects of many organizations with employees of different nationalities is the language barrier.

Language barriers. Most organizations have a dominate language that is the primary communication method regardless of the many different employee nationalities associated. Froese, Kim, and Eng (2016) posited that *language* is a critical element to engaging in international business activities. Inadvertently, multi-cultural organizations develop multiple language communities that hold severed communication ties. Therefore, a system of language management was required to produce a positive climate

of diverse languages. However, the relationship between a common language and a community of different languages has no foundation of extensive research validity. Froese et al. (2016) focused on language that included visual, value, and information diversity of the relationships within organizations to substantiate the research. The communication of group members and the management of group communication positively associates with openness in one or more areas of information diversity.

Fang, Wade, Delios, and Beamish (2013) explored how knowledge resources and performance of foreign subsidiary in multinational enterprises link. Fang et al. (2013) research primarily analyzed the connections between several sources of knowledge from the parent organization to the subsidiary. The primary argument was that an effective transfer of knowledge is only possible if the sender's knowledge resources are valuable to the receiver, and the receiver can absorb those resources and effectively employ them (Fang et al., 2013).

Likewise, Tenzer, Pudelko, and Harzing (2013) explored how language barriers affected trust relationships within multinational teams. In this investigation, both cognitive and emotional reactions associated with language barriers were indicators of the perceived trustworthiness and intention to trust of team members (Tenzer et al., 2015). Because the research foundation is language diversity, perceptions towards trust between multinational teams may reach into deeper dimensions of trust theories; thus, requiring a re-examination of other team processes that influence language barriers.

Nichols, Horner, and Fyfe (2015) deposited several inferences to cultural diversity associated with the communication between multicultural aged workers. Racial and

national stereotypes, as well as technical inhibitions, plague a global organization where members are of different backgrounds (Nichols et al., 2015). Even though technology can increase organizational production, miscommunication and false identification of organizational processes have the potential to hinder performance (Nichols et al., 2015). Either way, language is just like any other skill, it needs nurturing and efficient used, or it perishes.

Perishable skills. Most leaders look for skilled workers to support their organizational goals and strategies. However, Cetin, Demirçiftçi, and Bilgihan (2016) discussed whether a specific skill could maintain relevancy or contribute to revenue loss. By using both static and dynamic models to examine the relationships between technological change, skill obsolescence, training, on-the-job training, and labor market exit, notable differences emerged. Some of the differences included predictions of early market exiting by older workers in the static model and no predictions of exit in the dynamic model based on skill obsolescence.

Contrary to skill obsolescence, Joe et al. (2013) posited that job competition among employees with high education and employees with lower education was responsible for unemployment fluctuations and crowding out of jobs within the workforce. When educated workers begin to saturate the marketplace, less educated or skilled workers fall out of contention for mainstream employment (Joe et al., 2013). On the other hand, Kim, Williams, Rothwell, and Penaloza (2014) proposed that the performance of individual skills relate to task complexity in production functions where patterns of talent management issues exist. In conclusion, Kim et al. (2014) argued that

talent management constitute higher earnings for agents that operate under production functions based on assignment patterns. Nonetheless, skill degradation can be a challenging aspect of any organization that incorporates both human and technology as a means of servicing a given market (Kim et al., 2014).

Summary

Section 1 includes a brief background discussion and formation of the specific business problem that drives the purpose for conducting this study. Based on a qualitative method and descriptive research design, the SECI model was chosen as the preferred conceptual framework. Key terms and definitions are provided along with research assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. The contributions to social change (organizational culture building, new hiring practices, and improved collaboration methods) were added to represent value to the body of knowledge as conclusive and inconclusive comparisons of an extensive literature review that validates the breadth and depth of inquiry. The description of this qualitative descriptive research study covers the leadership strategies and challenges used by contract organizations for employees as they transition. The issues and challenges associated with the transfer of tacit and explicit knowledge among employees found in section 1 represent the SECI model's conceptual framework designed by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). The review of the foundation on which organizational leaders established knowledge transfer strategies includes organizational culture and environment.

Transition

In Section 2, I explain the details of contract organizational leader's implementation of knowledge transfer strategies for transitioning employees within their organization as captured through interviews with the individuals participating in this study. The focus of Section 2 is to establish (a) the role of the researcher (b) research method, (c) research study and design, (d) participant selection and protection relative to ethical considerations, (e) population sampling, and (f) data collection. Also, provide explanations to ensuring reliability and validity of the collected data. Section 2 primarily describes the execution of research and by what means. The impact of each component in this document is in consideration towards a social change to any business focus area through the implementation of a knowledge transfer strategy by leaders of contract organizations as their employee's transition. A potential social change may include new hiring practices.

In Section 3, a brief introduction of the purpose and summary of the findings is presented followed by a detailed account of the research's applicability to the professional practice. An explanation to the implication to social change as well as recommendations for action, further research contribution, a reflection of the Doctor of Business Administration journey, conclusion, and appendices/table of contents mark the end of task few complete.

Section 2: The Project

Organizations must incorporate transitioning employees into their knowledge transfer strategy to remain productive and profitable (Skelton, 2015). Some leaders of contract organizations fail to implement knowledge transfer strategies for transitioning employees thereby causing a loss of production and profits without understanding the particular cause (Skelton, 2015). The lack of knowledge transfer possibly creates a gap in achieving and sustaining production and profits.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive research was to explore the knowledge transfer strategies that leaders of contract organizations implement for transitioning employees. I interviewed 20 senior-level participants with at least 10 years or more experience from five contract organizations that work with the Department of Defense in south-central Texas. This research may contribute to social change by providing organizational leaders with new approaches to implementing knowledge transfer strategies that build and improve organizational cultures or create new hiring and training practices. Furthermore, knowledge transfer is a social bridge that contract organizations may use to build new hiring practices to help develop business opportunities and social engineering advancements (Lin & Atkin, 2014).

Role of the Researcher

As the primary instrument for this study, I was responsible for (a) capturing and recording data; (b) coordinating interview dates, locations, times; and (c) identifying other collection instruments used in the selection process. This qualitative descriptive

research is explanatory and contains a detailed account of a phenomenon in common terms, with the role of the researcher typically being the interpreter of the described experiences of participants in the data collection process like that found in Pettigrew (2013). Having experienced several transitions within different contract organizations, I have found knowledge transfer issues to be prevalent with each position change. According to Malone, Nichol, and Tracey (2014) personal bias is difficult to avoid in qualitative research. Narag and Maxwell (2014) posited that using qualitative, descriptive research helps obtain specific experiences of participants opposed to personal bias, and aid in a unique description of the phenomenon experienced in the research.

According to McDermid, Peters, Jackson, and Daly (2014), ethical research may reduce or mitigate risks to workplace research. Fiske and Hauser (2014) stated that the Belmont Report is designed to protect human research participants. Ensuring compliance with the ethical research practices outlined in the Belmont Report protocol for selecting participants, I only engaged participants covered in the approved letters of cooperation, accessed facilities and resources granted, and made every effort to protect interviewing participants in the study. Appropriate protocol was a requirement upon identification of any ethical and personal concerns relating to each participant during the interview process (Johnson, 2014). Each participant received notification by invitation letter (Appendix A) along with consent forms before the interview, which explained the intent and purpose of the study. Participants were required to return signed consent forms via email prior to interview sessions. According to Cascella and Aliotta (2014), consent forms should include a detailed description of participation in the current research study

as being a volunteer endeavor and termination of involvement could occur at any time in the interview process. Individual names of organizations and participants were identified by alias names (e.g., P1 for Organization 1, N1 for Organization 2, G1 for Organization 3, and C1 for Organization 4) to protect and maintain the confidentiality of participants and associations.

Šimundić (2013) argued that the researcher must conduct research from a personal perspective to mitigate bias. To this end, I relied on participant data over personal observations. Because of ethical concerns, *selection bias*, where some participants may or may not be reluctant to participate in achieving a representative sample of the general population, was my primary concern. To mitigate further ethical concerns, establishing an interview protocol (Appendix C) is good practice before starting the research sampling (Johnson, 2014). Creating a script of all the critical information that involves the research process that allows for rapport building with study subjects as well as organizing the tasks that led to participant selection was the method of establishing protocol (Johnson, 2014). An interview protocol was vital to collecting and organizing participant information. The protocol provided direction, guidance, and purpose for collecting data for research.

Participants

The main eligibility criterion for participants in this research consists of individuals serving in a leadership position within a contract organization that serves the Department of Defense. Participants were required to have employment with the current organization for more than 10 years and have worked in a non-leadership position within

the government contracting industry. Participants also had to have a certain level of expertise to be able to answer the interview questions (Harkins et al., 2015). Participant qualification was essential to understanding an area of interest through firsthand knowledge from experienced individuals within the environment (Lee, 2014). Holgate, Pollert, Keles, and Kumarappan (2014) used experiences and impressions as a method of participant selection criteria. According to Marsh and Bishop (2014) participant selection has four criteria, (a) working relationships with the participants; (b) personal communications, (c) social media, and (d) professional associations are key strategies for establishing the selection criteria.

To gain access to participants, I employed a purposeful selection process recommended by Killawi et al. (2014) that proposed researchers requisition the organizational leadership for access to the facilities and potential personnel involved in the study as part of the recruiting process. If additional interviews were necessary, email and personal delivery of letters of cooperation and invitations were optional. The participant selections came from within other contract organizations that support the same or similar missions. According to Marsh and Bishop (2014), participants may only inform the researcher to the level of the relationship established. Invitations were the first level of participant access. Having first level access made the leaders informants as well as interviewees (Albuquerque, de Lucena, & Neto, 2014). To minimize conflicts, I assured all parties involved that no personal gain existed by conducting the research. I held no position of authority or influence over any participant. Each participant was encouraged to provide accurate and honest responses to the interview questions.

I established a working relationship with the participants through a process called self-disclosure and interpersonal communication used by Abbe and Brandon (2014) to conduct investigative interviews. Additional provisions included a detailed letter of informed consent that explained how individual participation in this research addressed unique issues and concerns of the organization like those in Cascella and Aliotta (2014). Compensation and rewards were options to developing working relationships that persuade individuals to participate in research (Killawi et al., 2014). Nevertheless, due to ethical concerns such as payoffs and coercion, the use of monetary incentives for participation in this study was prohibited. Holgate et al. (2014) identified a rational token of appreciation through a monetary voucher approved by an appropriate ethics committee that addresses exploitation issues with participant selection based on compensation. Lee (2014) argued that use of a monetary voucher was unethical and causes harm to the socio-economic research community. Participation in this study was voluntary only, no compensation for any aspect. Avoiding selection bias was top priority when considering identifiable options for establishing a working relationship with research participants (Simundic, 2013).

Research Method and Design

The research method and design are perhaps the two most important aspects of conducting any investigative study. The chosen method and design were representative of the particular purpose and study of knowledge transfer for transitioning employees. A qualitative research method was chosen to compliment a descriptive study design.

Together, the method and design were instrumental in constructing a complete review of the knowledge transfer between transitioning employees.

Research Method

Qualitative research isolates and describes a phenomenon in terms specific to events while providing an understanding and discovery mechanism for the underlying issue of a given situation based on perceived experiences (Barnham, 2015; Johnson & Rasulova, 2017). Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) posited that qualitative research is an artistic endeavor requiring an imaginative approach with rigor to the following four areas: (a) credibility, (b) dependability, (c) confirmability, and (d) transferability. Although knowledge transfers may be difficult to execute, the strategies used by leaders result in analyzed qualitative research that captures the area of interest details of the individuals affected (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Tracy, 2013). This section covers the qualitative research method based on a social constructivist worldview.

The exploration and investigative nature of some experience as seen through individual perceptions form the basis of a constructivist's view of qualitative research (Bell, 2014; Cleaver & Ballantyne, 2014; Gioia et al., 2013). A proper exploration of the knowledge transfer issues in this study required qualitative research methods for several reasons. First, the idea of exploring the occurrences of knowledge transfer issues was not taking inventory of the frequency, as with quantitative studies, but rather tried to understand the nature of the experience as employees' transition in and out of an organization (Elo et al., 2014; Smith, 2015). The intent was to provide a better understanding of the causes and shortcomings of knowledge transfer strategy

implementation as they may or may not happen. The number of times issues occurred is not as critical as understanding why the issues occurred and the complexity surrounding the experience (Gioia et al., 2013).

Barnham (2015) noted that a desirable assessment using qualitative research would consist of making observable examinations of the knowledge transfer issue in its natural environment. Causes of knowledge transfer issues can be hard to identify, but by personally experiencing the event and interviewing individuals that have also experienced the same event, a qualitative method would provide a more realistic view of the knowledge transfer issues (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van de Ven, 2013). Rather than hypothesizing the causes with quantitative assumptions, qualitative research should expose knowledge transfer issues from individual perspectives.

Quantitative research questions involving knowledge transfer rely on statistical data to determine differences and relative values between two or more variables (Merriam, 2014). Cleaver and Ballantyne (2014) argued that the differences between the three research methods are the perspectives in worldviews. Mixed methods research would combine both qualitative and quantitative research approaches and synchronize the two methods to draw certain inferences about different knowledge transfer strategy issues (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015; Mertens, 2014; Van Griensven, Moore, & Hall, 2014). The focus of this study was to explore the area of interest of the individuals exposed to the knowledge transfer issues through employee transition. The complexity of knowledge transfer exploration requires a well thought out approach to research design.

Research Design

Descriptive research is a form of phenomenological design based on a single sociological phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I chose a descriptive research design as the selected approach for this study of knowledge transfer as it related to describing the nature of sociological experiences in a given environment (Nassaji, 2015). The purpose of using descriptive research was to describe the nature of knowledge transfer strategy issues encountered when employees transition by extracting the details from research participants. Designs such case study and ethnography are suitable DBA designs. However, their approaches to research differ by participant selection and mode of inquiry directed towards various groups and locations. Designs such as narrative and grounded theory are more suited for doctor of philosophy types of research, where individual researchers focus on building or testing formal theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Lewis, 2015).

A case study did not meet the need for this research design for several reasons. One reason was that a case study approach takes a thorough examination of data collection involving various sources of information obtained from observations, personal interviews, and reports (Elechi, Piper, Morris, & Sherill, 2014). Yin (2013) argued that case study research has broad recognition through publications and currently is trending upwards.

Ethnography includes a cultural focus on a selected group, mainly through individual participant observations where the researcher experiences the daily activities of those exposed to the phenomenon (Bamkin, Maynard, & Goulding, 2016).

Ethnography was not appropriate for this study because the intent is to address contract organizations in general as an entire population. Future research may require special investigations by groups to show comparisons, but this study did not require such inquiry.

Narrative research consists of various sound practices grounded in different social and humanitarian disciplines (Lewis, 2015). This descriptive study relied specifically on tacit knowledge that only existed within an individual participant. Therefore, research based on a phenomenological design was the most appropriate kind of research to probe the minds of the participants to understand the problem (Moustakas, 1994).

A grounded theory approach is not limited to its method of data collection; grounded theory combines various sources to include interviews, observations, and previous research (Rosenbaum, More, & Steane, 2016; Wolfswinkel, Furtmueller, & Wilderom, 2013). According to Lewis (2015), a grounded theory approach seeks to gather and compare data to determine similarities and differences. Because the problem addressed in the current study varied with every individual, there was no certainty that previous data collection could have substantiated a reasonable cause. Conlon, Carney, Timonen, and Scharf (2013) argued that grounded theory research was a product of emerging processes and interactions observed or personally experienced. Thus, a grounded theory approach was not appropriate.

A descriptive (phenomenological) approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the problem behind employees' perceptions regarding knowledge transfer between transitioning employees within an organization (Hepworth, Grunewald, & Walton, 2014). While conducting descriptive research, researchers should have some

degree of appreciation and understanding of the events perceived by the participants as the transition occurs (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Recognizing and understanding the activities that occur as participant transitions occur helped with the population and sampling selection process.

Data saturation is the final construct to establishing a qualitative research design that addresses the problem under investigation (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). I continued to conduct interviews with 20 participants until no new data or themes emerged, thereby ensuring data saturation. Fusch and Ness (2015) argued that data saturation was achieved once no new data emerged from data collection. Although the number of interviews does not determine saturation, conducting several interviews are indicative of the saturation process (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016).

Population and Sampling

In this study of knowledge transfer strategy and implementation issues between transitioning employees, a purposeful sampling method helped accomplish the acquisition of participants. A purposeful sampling consists of individuals who have firsthand knowledge of the area of interest (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2014). I purposely selected 20 participants for the population sampling of data to reach the depth and saturation requirements for this qualitative inquiry. Sampling size is important when trying to achieve saturation (Malterud et al., 2015). I reached data saturation when the details of the knowledge transfer strategies leaders implemented when employees transition in and out of the organization remained constant in each participant organization. For the purpose of this study, transition means—when an employee enters

the organization, moves to another section or department, and when the employee is terminated.

To minimize challenges and save time for this study, a *purposeful sampling* of leaders that have mutual associations with leaders of other contract organizations was the sole selection method. The sampling process consisted of selecting individuals who were known by or closely affiliated with organizational leaders in the contracting environment but were not under direct supervision or subordinate to the leaders. Each member chosen came from the availability of a selected organization's participant pool with a random choice of picking.

In conjunction with the purposeful sampling selection, the participants for this population consisted of 20 leaders with 10 or more years contracting experience. The projected number of interviewees for this sampling consisted of leaders from each organization that served in a supervisory capacity. The intent was to select individuals with a broad range of experience within the organization in leadership and operation. The participant job roles consisted of leaders of (a) analyst, those who review data and provide results; (b) operators, those who input and capture data in real time; (c) technicians, were those who troubleshoot and correct the issues related to the systems that provide data; and (d) developers, those who design and write the code that produces the data. Sale et al. (2015) argued that some investigators of qualitative research failed to conduct an in-depth analysis and provide advance interpretations of the listed themes and categories identified in their research. The number of 20 participants were in line with

Connell's (2013) sampling criterion for exploring knowledge sharing in the Department of Defense, in which this study is based.

The primary interview method for each participant was face-to-face. The face-to-face interview sessions took place at the participant's on-site designations. Van Der Velden and El Emam (2013) argued that people were more likely to participate in interviews of a social environment or setting opposed to individual interviews. I used semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to inquire about individual experiences with knowledge transfer strategy implementation as each participant transitioned into their assigned job roles. Understanding that some participants might be reluctant to talk about personal experiences, a more social approach such as grouping would have been necessary to make participants comfortable enough to share their thoughts (Simundic, 2013; Vanclay, Baines, & Taylor).

According to Lambertson, Damiani, Might, Shelton, and Terry (2015), a purposeful sampling is similar to matchmaking. As with matchmaking, a forged sampling strategy consists of selecting and surveying in depth for the right individuals (Rhodes, Batchelor, Lee, & Halm, 2015). Palinkas et al. (2015) proposed a conventional purposeful sampling method known as *criterion*—a method of selection based on a relationship between the participant and the area of interest. Closely associated with the criterion method is *random purposeful*—a method designed to add credibility and reduce judgment of the findings by selecting from a select group or area and at random (Acharya et al., 2014). Alternatively, a *stratified purposeful method* serving a special group of participant selections for possible future research comparisons may suffice. However,

this combination of *random* and *stratified purposeful sampling* would have result in segmenting or sectioning off the different groups of individuals into common work areas; thereby providing each team with its perspective of the research questions without mixing issues with other work areas. Each purposeful method extended to the other with regards to sampling and reaching saturation.

The data saturation measurements were fulfilled by the researcher asking the same multi, semistructured interview questions to each of the participants. The intended outcome was no new information, no new themes, no new coding, which equated to data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation occurs when enough information exists so that the study could be replicated (Malterud et al., 2015; Marshall et al., 2013). Saturation was not dependent upon the number of interviews conducted (Malterud et al., 2015). Therefore, when the major data points were consistently representative of the participant responses, no further interviews were necessary (Marshall et al., 2013). Nevertheless, data saturation was expected to occur before completing the 20 interviews. Saturation was reached at approximately interview number 12. If the specified number of interviews were not sufficient, the research would have continued with additional interviews repeating the same process (Marshall et al., 2013). Ensuring saturation is vital to conducting ethical research; participants may become at risk as ethical issues arise over the course of taking part in research studies (Morris, 2015).

Ethical Research

At no time was contact made with participants prior to IRB approval (15 May 2018, # 05-15-18-0345355; Expiration date 14 May 2019). At such time, letters of

cooperation from the prospect organizations served as the authority to solicit participants. However, in similar fashion to Irvine, Drew, and Sainsbury (2013), the participant selection process will consist of email and telephonic notifications in advance of conducting the actual interviews. Invitation letters sent to each participant (Appendix A) explained the intent and purpose of the research. Individual consent forms were provided as well. An explanation of the terms of consent was present that described the involvement and right to terminate voluntary participation at any time during the study. The opportunity to expound on other related topic concerns was made available during the interview process. All translated documents recorded from the interviews will be maintained for 5 years and securely stored in a personal safe. The interview process did not include any live video or internet video recordings, only one-on-one individual sessions, face-to-face or teleconference with audio recordings. I will share a summarized version of the research results, finding, and recommendations for future research upon request to the primary participants and stakeholders involved in the study.

Irvine et al. (2013) argued that qualitative interviews without face-to-face contact provided a small development of rapport while presenting substantial cost savings. To maintain confidentiality, the names of the participants and organizations remain confidential throughout the interview process. All documented notes and reports are stored properly in a safe along with the recorded audio transcripts of the interviews. No incentives were offered to participants for their role in the study, as participation was strictly voluntary. The data collection process is a record of all information pertaining to the research.

According to Johnson (2014), a researcher must pay careful attention to all ethical issues associated with the research study as the project is created and formalized. The researcher is also responsible for upholding all ethical standards and principles related to the research (McEvoy, Enright, & MacPhail, 2017). Ethical research requires a balanced approach to three core principles: (a) consideration and respect for the participants and associated parties, (b) providing satisfactory results with minimum participant harm, and (c) distribution of research findings (Erickson Cornish, 2014; Johnson, 2014). According to Greenwood (2016) people, places, and procedures are the core principles of protecting the research from ethical issues. Researcher credibility, research authenticity, and personal privacy issues involving participants are significant concerns to conducting ethical research (Johnson, 2014).

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument and used semistructured interviews to collect data for this research study. The semistructured interviews were adaptable to the participant's level of explanation of the open-ended interview questions, a form of interviewing recommended as an analytic strategy by both McLeod (2014) and Morse (2015). I ensured that interview participants were serving in leadership positions as a method of qualification identified in the participant criteria selection process to address the research questions. This method of qualification provides clarification and responsiveness based on a process adapted by Irvine et al. (2013). The interview protocol for this study was used to (a) introduce the study to the interviewee, (b) to capture nonverbal cues; (c) to probe the interviewee for more in-depth questioning, (d) to ask the

interview questions, and (e) to conclude the interview. An example of the interview protocol is in Appendix C.

I used member checking to enhance the reliability and validity of the interviews to avoid common pitfalls and add trustworthiness to the research, a method prescribed by Harvey (2015) and Reilly (2013). Harper and Cole (2012) defined member checking as a logical four step process. Step 1- consists of reviewing and interpreting of interview transcripts. Step 2- involves writing out each question followed by a succinct synthesis and providing a printed copy of the synthesis to each participant. Step 3- requires a researcher to ask participants if the synthesis represents the answers or if there is additional information. Step 4- is where a researcher repeats the process until there is no new data to collect (Harper & Cole, 2012). I used email to facilitate the member checking process.

Variation aids the data collection process (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). By constructing the diversity of participants from multiple organizations, and situating the interviews, screening participants informed the data collection process (Dana, Dawes, & Peterson, 2013; McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The data collection process also consisted of reviewing the organization's policies and standard operational procedures for triangulation between the interviews and the documented procedures. Doody and Noonan (2013) suggested that interviews be conducted person to person at designated site locations to try and uncover the private experiences that participants are unlikely to share.

Data Collection Technique

Face-to-face semistructured interviews were the prescribed technique for data collection in this research to answer the research question, *what knowledge transfer strategies do leaders of contract organizations implement for transitioning employees?* McIntosh and Morse (2015) proposed situating and constructing diversity of participants in semistructured interviews as a strategy. Before collecting any data, meeting sites were coordinated in advance to ensure availability and confidentiality. Pre-scheduling with interviewees for availability were also conducted. The collection sites for this study were locations where regular business activity occurs based on designated areas within each organization. Castillo-Montoya (2016) introduced a four-step protocol refinement framework for writing successful interview protocols. Step (1) the researcher ensures that the interview questions align with the research questions, step (2) the researcher constructs an inquiry-based conversation, step (3) the researcher gathers feedback on interview protocols, and step (4) the interviewer pilots the interview protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

Teusner (2016) argued that designing and planning interviews through answering a series of questions was vital to establishing an interview protocol. The interview protocol, found in (Appendix C), served as guidance on the collection of data. Each interview recording (audio) and transcription took place during data analysis to verify reliability and validation. The collection size consisted of 20 semistructured personal interviews with 10 leaders from each of the two contract organizations under study. The total data collection points were 20 transcripts. A combination of 20 individual

interviews served as the primary source for identifying knowledge transfer strategies implemented for transitioning employees of the participating organizations. A review of the organization's policies and standard operational procedures was conducted to add triangulation into the process.

Some advantages to using semistructured interviews include an ability to reach a large sample base. Semistructured interviews potentially become representative samples of the transcript statements. Interview questions were structured and asked in the same way so that respondent answers can be more easily analyzed (Morse, 2015). Interviews can occur in the absence of electronic devices, and the interviewer can make sure questions are fully understood (Morse, 2015). Interviews, site visits, and observations can elicit individual participant responses for clarity in the area of interest impacting the employees (MacDonald et al., 2013). According to Conlon et al. (2013) researcher's perspectives are irrelevant to conducting interviews, instead creating an environment that is conducive to presenting a narrative inquiry is more important for data collection. Participants will always be swayed by some form of social justice or injustice (Conlon et al., 2013). Nevertheless, a multi-construct of data sources enhances the reliability and validity of qualitative research (Morse, 2015; Doody & Noonan, 2013; Trainor & Graue, 2014).

A disadvantage to using semistructured interviews is that the process forces respondents to choose between the alternative answers that the interviewer provides without options (Da Silva et al., 2014). Interviews may be difficult to obtain reliable data on attitudes, opinions, and values. The interviewer must stick to the agreed questions

even though interesting lines of inquiry might emerge in an interview. Semistructured interviews may yield distorted data collections when conducted over the telephone (Vogl, 2013). However, telephone interviews may occur to mitigate privacy concerns or distractions (Drabble, Trocki, Salcedo, Walker, & Korcha, 2015). Moriarty, Manthorpe, Stevens, and Hussein (2015) argued that some participants show more enthusiasm when conducting interviews over the telephone than those carried out face-to-face. Furthermore, gathering stakeholder perspectives may be limited due to availability constraints (MacDonald et al., 2013).

One way to ensure that a data collection method is enough is to use a check and balance sampling system (Harvey, 2015). Member checking is a process whereby the researcher attempts to improve accuracy, credibility, and validity (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). The process allows summarizations of interview recordings through a quality control process (Reilly, 2013). The member checking process consisted of providing research participants the opportunity to review my summarized interpretations, so they could reflect on and verify the accuracy and completeness of the interview discussions. After I review and interpreted each interview transcript, I wrote each question followed by a succinct synthesis based on my observation and review of the companies policies and standard operating procedures. I then provided a printed copy of the synthesis to each participant and ask if the synthesis represented the answers or if there was additional information needed. I repeated the process until there was no new data to collect.

Data Organization Technique

For this study, I incorporated note taking and audio recording to organize the data collected during participant interview sessions. Lee (2014) posited that organization is critical to data interpretation. According to Fritz and Vandermause (2017), a technological approach to interviewing such as using email as a venue of capturing and organizing data would be more efficient. During this study, each interview session was labeled with an identifying code that separates the sessions by organization participation. This separation code included the first letter of the organization's name and the number of the interview session for that organization. Aside from the entry in the consent forms and letters of cooperation, the real names of the participants and organizations were not used in this research study. An example of the naming convention is as follows: Gen Dyne (name of organization), GD1, GD2, etc.; Man (name of organization), M1, M2, etc. Petrova, Dewing, and Camilleri (2016) resorted to use a numerical coding system to help identify sources of data. Raw participant recordings occurred through person-to-person interviews and then were summarized for appropriateness and clarity before member checking. The data collected for this study was recorded with an audio tape recorder.

I incorporated the use of a reflective journal for note taking during the interviews. The use of the journal added to the recollection of key thoughts and ideas discussed during the interviews. As with the interview transcripts, the journal will be securely stored for five years in the same location with other research material such as audio recordings. The notes were used to supplement the summary formulation. I chose not to

use a computerized tablet to take notes because I wanted to minimize the distractions of technology.

For this research study, all data was securely locked, maintained, and stored for 5 years. Doody and Noonan (2013) posited that interviews were sensitive data and should remain protected for extended periods and disseminated with caution. According to Garbarski, Schaeffer, and Dykema (2016) standardized interview practices should identify the amount of time interview data is stored. Connell (2013) incorporated a 5 year storage plan for interview data as part of her interview protocol definition. Additional storage parameters may be required once the data analysis concludes or the sensitivity level of the data increases.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study consists of a Modified van Kaam (Moustakas, 1994) method, using a thematic approach that incorporates a technique in which to review, understand, and present collected data through a process of identifying like and unlike elements suggested by Lawrence and Tar (2013). Sandelowski (1995) proposed a maximum variation sampling process; an exploration of common and unique manifestations of specific (*content/thematic analysis*) phenomenon with widespread and differentiating situations for descriptive studies. According to Yin (2014) themes should emerge from unbiased views of the appropriate data collected. Raich, Müller, and Abfalter (2014) viewed thematic analysis as being categorical with multiple variables attributing to the synthesis of the interviews. Although this study is descriptive in nature, the purpose was to explore a phenomenon that was occurring within the contract

organizations concerning knowledge transfer. After synthesizing the data, a strict screening process (removal of non-actionable processes that are not currently in place and comments about what may work) ensured discarding of irrelevant content while preserving pertinent details for substance. The intent was to provide a clear perspective surrounding contract manager's knowledge transfer strategy selection and implementation.

Reliable analysis will follow a logical, sequential process that results in a clear view of the data by (a) collecting, (b) translating, (c) restating, and (d) coding (Raich et al., 2014). Raich et al. (2014) argued for perspective achievement, reduction, and elimination of unnecessary data in qualitative research. Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013) posited that bracketing was a means to demonstrating reliable and valid data analysis. To alleviate unnecessary data (general phrases and terms) during this analysis, I used computer software to gain better measurable results from the data that typically are missed through manual human data analysis.

FreeMind (free open source software) is a data analysis software that can be used to analyze many different data formats. FreeMind was used to facilitate the coding of the interview transcripts, the mind mapping and the organization of data into themes. Organizing data into themes serves the purpose of formulating and describing individual concepts that relate to the research topic (Neuman, 2014; Chen & Zhang, 2014). The focus of the data analysis was to identify how participants address the research question by answering specific challenges to knowledge transfer and employee transitions. The coding process included using the question number and response as symbolic

representations of the category range and dimension based on the key themes introduced by different color highlights. Each interview followed a similar process of highlighting the key words indicated as themes for the defined categories. Raich et al. (2014) proposed that coding be conducted after the organization process. Resulting analysis comparison and contrasting of knowledge transfer and the review of current research will help bridge the literature gap of issues identified with transitioning employees post-2013 studies of the SECI model.

Reliability and Validity

Salbach, Jaglal, and Williams (2013) defined research reliability as data with trustworthiness. Qualitative research further consists of data collection that is reliable and valid. Four characteristics of qualitative data measure the accuracy of reliability and validity: (a) dependability, (b) creditability, (c) transferability, and (d) confirmability. Each characteristic represents a contributive element of the data collection process. Dependability is subordinate to reliability, while the other three characteristics fall under validity. Individually the characteristics exist separately in contribution, when combined they serve as an explanation to achieving data saturation that leads to dependable research. Reliability enhances with a member checking process where participants actively review the summarized interview syntheses and provide validation feedback that will serve as the seal of approval of the reliability and validity process (Harvey, 2015; Morse, 2015). Simpson and Quigley (2016) likened member checking to a form of therapy reform that allowed personal reflection of the participants involved in the research.

Reliability

Dependability. Reliable research is a product of dependable data (Sakaluk, Williams, & Biernat, 2014). To ensure dependability of the interpreted research data, I used a replication approach that provided multiple analysis of the same data without soliciting support from other researchers. Repetitive reporting of observations of the same events develops into dependability in research (Sakaluk et al., 2014). Cho and Lee (2014) posited that audit trails may enhance dependability, potentially serving as alternative assessments of a study by which researchers may find compliance with the rules and guidelines as specified through methodological conventions. In a similar fashion, Anwar and Hasnu (2016) claimed that performance analysis conducted at preset intervals to assess interpreted data points could advance the dependability of research. Funder et al. (2013) viewed dependability as achieving repetitive interpretations over time. Either way, reliability and dependability are closely related in qualitative research.

Validity

The validity of research is made up of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation (Venkatesh, Brown & Bala, 2013). Based on the source of information and the transferability of that information, research confirmation increases with data saturation (Burchett, Mayhew, Lavis & Dobrow, 2013). Validity starts with establishing credibility (Salbach et al., 2013). The credibility of this study consists of company policy and standard operating procedure reviews along with participant interviews.

Credibility. To ensure the credibility of this study, I relied on the concept of member checking for reasonableness and believability of the data collected and presented as forms of evidence that the descriptions were credible from a validity perspective. The validity perspective is based on a general acceptance of the consensus about a phenomenon and particular member checking interpretation (Elo et al., 2014). Meenaghan and O'Sullivan (2013) noted that only the participant could evaluate the credibility of the interpretation of the phenomenon provided during member checking. The level of research credibility determines how receptive and transferrable research interpretations will be (Castillo, Mendoza, & Poblete, 2013; Mackiewicz, & Yeat, 2014).

Transferability. I considered analysis methods for transferability that were conducted on different topics to make decisions on the best model selection for my transcription process. Burchett et al. (2013) stated that data transferability in research should be assessed for applicability when taking from other research before incorporation. Upton, Upton, and Scurlock-Evans (2014) described transferability as the organization of like contexts or settings based on subjective assumptions to any given case. While the definition of transferability may be the extent to how one method of inquiry may produce the same or similar results to another method of inquiry in the validating process of data analysis, both definitions are sufficient for confirming interpreted data points (Venkatesh et al., 2013).

Confirmability. I incorporated post interview checks of the summarized transcriptions with all participants to test the interview transcriptions for confirmation, which were part of the member checking process. Confirmability is a process of getting

others to agree with or confirm the presented research findings conducted by others without distorting interpretations (Anney, 2014; Tong, Palmer, Craig, & Strippoli, 2014). The confirmability process includes rechecking data, removing redundant or irrelevant details and verifying translation and interpretation of data for accuracy as with triangulation (Tong et al., 2014). Confirmability is a precedent to achieving data saturation in research.

Data Saturation. Achieving data saturation means that a thorough understanding must be acquired through a continuous sampling of data until no significant new results are obtained (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2015). Hansen et al. (2015) added that saturation must yield reproducible results and identify peak areas. In this study, I reached data saturation by achieving the same or similar results of the details of how leaders use knowledge transfer strategies when employees transition in and out of the organization from each participant. However, validation and verification expectations happened with the extreme nature of the duplicate responses. Therefore, when the major data points were consistently representative of the participant responses, no further interviews were necessary. In this study, data saturation was expected to occur before completing the 20 interviews. If the projection number of interviews were not sufficient, research would have continued with additional interviews repeating the same process (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Saturation was not dependent upon the number of interviews conducted in this qualitative research, and the focus areas of transition included employee entrances, displacements, and terminations. Each detail represented when an employee occupied or departed a position within the organization.

Transition and Summary

The key points of this study began with exploring the knowledge transfer strategies that leaders of contract organizations implemented for employees as they transition in and out of the organization. A detailed description of the role of the researcher was provided to clarify the depth of research. A participant selection process discussion along with an extensive explanation for the selected qualitative, descriptive research method and design added further substance to the study.

The population and purposeful sampling technique were chosen based on the nature of the work environment and the participant experience level. Ethical compliance measures along with documented references list in the appendices. Data collection instruments included semistructured interviews and organizational documentation observations. The data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach and electronically organized with *Free Mind*, a computer software analysis program. Section 2 concluded with establishing reliability and validity through defining (a) dependability, (b) creditability, (c) transferability, (d) confirmability, and (e) data saturation.

Section 3 covers a brief introduction to the knowledge transfer strategies that contract leaders implement for transitioning employees. The primary research question of *what knowledge transfer strategies do leaders of contract organizations implement for transitioning employees* was also included. A discussion of each research theme with comparative and contrasting studies along with relevant findings based on the SECI model provide a practical application of knowledge transfer activities. An explanation of how the results of the research relate to existing literature or dispels the relationship to

effective business practices presented. The highlights of the study include a description of the applicability of professional business practice, implications to social change, recommendations for action, and further topic research. The section closes with a brief reflection of the DBA process and conclusion of the research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive research was to explore knowledge transfer strategies that leaders of contract organizations implemented for transitioning employees. I obtained responses from 20 contract leaders within two different organizations that support a centralized communication testing agency within Central Texas. The interviews were based on eight semistructured questions designed to solicit individual experiences from the participants. From these eight questions, three categories (process, training, and improvement) emerged. These findings were a revelation of specific techniques used by leaders to transfer tacit and explicit knowledge between seasoned employees and new employees to sustain organizational production and efficiency. Five common themes emerged from the data analysis findings; (a) cross-training, (b) after-action reviews, (c) right seat riding, (d) job shadowing, and (e) surveying.

Presentation of the Findings

The primary research question for this study was: What knowledge transfer strategies do leaders of contract organizations implement for transitioning employees? The five themes that emerged from the interviews reflect the various strategy implementations of knowledge transfer methods within departments of each organization. The interview questions were categorized by (a) process, (b) training, and (c) improvement, and then organized into themes. Each theme was given a synthesized category response to show participant agreeance.

Theme 1: Cross-Training

Cross-training is typically conducted prior to transitions and employs a technique of learning different skills from employees that operate in other functional roles of the organization (Gluesing, 2015). During cross-training, employee X would learn what employee Y does to accomplish the required tasks associated with the position assignment. Likewise, employee Y would learn what employee X does to accomplish the required tasks associated with that position assignment. This example of cross-training was like the *on-the-job-training* concepts employed by (Lauder, 2015; Martin, McNally, & Kay, 2014) in my research of knowledge transfer in the literature review. All 20 participants acknowledged cross-training as a primary response to the three interview question categories in Table 1. The acknowledgement emerged by all from the second interview question: What knowledge transfer training do you provide transitioning employees? Each participant responded with the use of cross-training as a primary means to transfer knowledge between employees. My observation and review of the cross-training policies within both organizations aligned with the participant's statements from the interviews. The cross-training theme was further confirmed with a 20 out of 20 participant response rating.

Although cross-training is a viable method of transferring knowledge as a process, Büke, Araz, and Fowler (2016) found that workers who learned through a formal process had a greater depth of knowledge for completing specific tasks than workers cross-trained by other employees. Participant GD1 thought that cross-training was the simplest form of knowledge extraction. Participant GD9 said “cross-training provides new employees

with an opportunity to witness the operational method of performing the required tasks, which helps the employee better apply their newly learned skills.” PPS3 commented that cross-training was a development tool itself. When each of the participants were asked for an improvement to the current knowledge transfer strategy, the methods of improvement varied. None of the participants indicated a necessity for improving or updating their current business process model when employees transitioned. Following the conceptual framework of the SECI model, the spiral flow of tacit to explicit knowledge may be experienced through cross-training employees. However, during this study, participants were not solicited during the interviews for an indication of the flow of knowledge transfer throughout the organization.

Table 2

Theme 1: Cross-Training

3-Pillars of Knowledge Transfer	Synthesized Category Responses	Supporting Participant's ID
Process	Cross-training is used to transfer knowledge between employees	GD1, GD2, GD3, GD4, GD5, GD6, GD7, GD8, GD9, GD10; PPS1, PPS2, PPS3, PPS4, PPS5, PPS6, PPS7, PPS8, PPS9, PPS10
	Cross-training supports knowledge exchanges	
Training	Cross-training is a venue for training employees	GD1, GD2, GD3, GD4, GD5, GD6, GD7, GD8, GD9, GD10; PPS1, PPS2, PPS3, PPS4, PPS5, PPS6, PPS7, PPS8, PPS9, PPS10
Improvement	Cross-training allows employees to develop through person to person interaction	GD1, GD2, GD3, GD4, GD5, GD6, GD7, GD8, GD9, GD10; PPS1, PPS2, PPS3, PPS4, PPS5, PPS6, PPS7, PPS8, PPS9, PPS10
	Cross-training supports operational improvements	

Note. ID = Participant identification

Theme 2: After-Action Reviews

After-action reviews (AARs) originated in the military as a quick means to learn from past experiences (Frese & Keith, 2015). AARs provided an opportunity to assess what happened and why. After-action reviews are learning-focused discussions that are designed to help the team and the organization's leaders discover what to do differently (Frese & Keith, 2015). I found through research of previous literature that after-action reviews had a similar impact on the learning experience as the teaching mechanism introduced by Donche et al. (2013).

Participant PPS4 said, “We found that employees were more inclined to transfer knowledge with other employees in an open forum like after-action reviews than in one on one settings.” Surprisingly, participants PPS1, PPS5, PPS6, and PPS9 were the only participants who did not mention after-action reviews as a method of knowledge transfer. This is unusual for organizations that work closely with the military. In my experiences in working with the military, after-action reviews are part of the standard operational procedures (SOP) after conducting a mission if time and resources permit.

The phrase AARs emerged as a theme based on how knowledge was transferred according to 16 of the 20 participant’s responses to the three interview question categories. The responses included after-action reviews as a strategy, covered in the process category. Furthermore, I observed after-action reviews used as a training mechanism that could be employed as a development tool. When asked about the type of knowledge to be extracted, after-action reviews were thought of as great forums for knowledge extraction and identifying needs for improvement. During my tour of both

organizations, I had the opportunity to observe four (GD3, GD6, PPS2, and PPS7) after-action review sessions within different departments. Each session consisted of the same, *what happened, what was supposed to happen, and what could we do better* format.

Because the interview questions were specific to how leaders implemented knowledge transfer, differences in the conduct of the after-action reviews were not examined. The primary focus was to confirm that the sessions occurred as the participants described. I concluded from my observations that the after-action reviews were in fact being used as a developmental tool for performance improvements. The AARs were interactive and engaged all parties involved in the project. Generated feedback led to actionable follow-on tasks to individuals working on the project.

Table 3

Theme 2: After-Action Reviews

3-Pillars of Knowledge Transfer	Synthesized Category Responses	Supporting Participant's ID
Process	After-action reviews are used to transfer knowledge between employees	GD1, GD2, GD3, GD4, GD5, GD6, GD7, GD8, GD9, GD10; PPS2, PPS3, PPS4, PPS7, PPS8 and PPS10
	After-action reviews support knowledge exchanges	
Training	After-action reviews are venues for training employees	GD1, GD2, GD3, GD4, GD5, GD6, GD7, GD8, GD9, GD10; PPS2, PPS3, PPS4, PPS7, PPS8 and PPS10
Improvement	After-action reviews allow employees to develop through person to person interaction	GD1, GD2, GD3, GD4, GD5, GD6, GD7, GD8, GD9, GD10; PPS2, PPS3, PPS4, PPS7, PPS8 and PPS10
	After-action reviews support operational improvements	

Note. ID = Participant identification

Theme 3: Right-Seat Riding

When executing a relief in place process, the incoming employee works alongside the outgoing employee to get a feel for the methods of operation that work best for accomplishing the job tasks that the new employee is assuming (Alderson, 2014). According to Alderson (2014), during the relief in place process, the outgoing employee explains the procedures during what are called "left-seat rides." The follow-on phase of the relief in place is called the "right-seat ride," when the incoming employee assumes responsibility while the outgoing employee observes (Alderson, 2014). Unlike Shaqrah and Husain's (2014) research on information technology as a learning process, the right-seat ride method described by the participants appeared to be more effective with knowledge transfer between transitioning employees. Participants GD1, GD2, GD3, GD4, GD5, GD6, GD10; PPS2, and PPS8 described right-seat riding in similar fashion. Not only do the incoming employees gain experience through interactions with the outgoing employees, I observed that the new employees got the benefit of a support system to help with conducting daily operations specific to each department. Although my time was limited with each participant, my observations of the right-seat ride process only focused on the existence of the function in accordance with the organization's policy. Each of the organizations clearly enforced the use of their policies, as I observed numerous bulletin boards with policies posted. The fact that the organizations used the right-seat ride as a training tool was an added benefit to the organization's success. Another benefit of a right-seat ride was to promote employee improvement within their organizations. Participant PPS8 stated that as a means of improvement he would "request

lessons learned prior to the right seat ride and establish a new working group to discuss possible process changes.” I recorded nine of 20 participants answering the interview question concerning training through a right-seat ride making sense as a knowledge transfer strategy. Participants also mentioned that as a development tool, right-seat riding offered employees an instant comprehension of the tasks to be performed as a process and made an excellent knowledge extraction mechanism during transitions.

Table 4

Theme 3: Right-Seat Riding

3-Pillars of Knowledge Transfer	Synthesized Category Responses	Supporting Participant's ID
Process	Right-seat riding is used to transfer knowledge between employees Right-seat riding supports knowledge exchanges	GD1, GD2, GD3, GD4, GD5, GD6, GD10; PPS2, PPS8
Training	Right-seat riding is a venue for training employees	GD1, GD2, GD3, GD4, GD5, GD6, GD10; PPS2, PPS8
Improvement	Right-seat riding allows employees to develop through person to person interaction Right-seat riding supports operational improvements	GD1, GD2, GD3, GD4, GD5, GD6, GD10; PPS2, PPS8, PPS10

Note. ID = Participant identification

Theme 4: Job Shadowing

Job shadowing is a process where an employee from one area of an organization has an opportunity to work with and gain experience of the role of another employee and potentially gain insight into that specific job (Mader, Mader, & Alexander, 2017). I observed the difference between job shadowing and right seat riding as a process between who is performing the task.

Participants GD2, GD4, GD7, GD10, and PPS1 stated that job shadowing could be used to provide an employee the opportunity to work alongside more experienced employees, so they can learn and develop within their current role. “Job shadowing is instrumental in conducting employee training,” stated participants PPS4 and PPS8. These comments were in line with Eckardt, Skaggs, and Youndt’s (2014) findings of worker-turnover. However, improvement was listed on a necessity basis, and only by participants GD2, GD7, PPS1, and PPS8. During the interview, seven of 20 participants identified job shadowing as a knowledge transfer strategy and development tool that helped employees gain and retain knowledge through collaboration and other organizational communication systems that facilitate knowledge exchanges.

My observations of the job shadowing process were that new employees were assigned to a more experienced employee and followed that employee around for a specific period during transition. The new employee would observe the experienced employee performing the expected job tasks for the prescribed position. These observations were not performed by the interview participants, they occurred through tours of the various organizational departments.

Each table contains the three interview categories and the participants that associated with each category within the job shadowing theme by participant ID. The flow of tacit to explicit knowledge between participants varied even though each of the participants acknowledged using some form of knowledge extraction. According to the SECI model, tacit to explicit knowledge exchanges are spiral (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Participants in this study identified knowledge exchanges as personal interactions

that happen through two-way communication. My observations and the interview responses were incorporated into the development of each theme presentation. I included how many participants supported each theme and what category their response was related to.

Table 5

Theme 4: Job Shadowing

3-Pillars of Knowledge Transfer	Synthesized Category Responses	Supporting Participant's ID
Process	Job shadowing is used to transfer knowledge between employees Job shadowing supports knowledge exchanges	GD2, GD4, GD7, GD10; PPS1, PPS4, PPS8
Training	Job shadowing is an opportunity to train employees	GD2, GD4, GD7, GD10; PPS1, PPS4, PPS8
Improvement	Job shadowing allows employees to develop through collaboration	GD2, GD4, GD7, GD10; PPS1, PPS4, PPS8
	Job shadowing helps identify improvements	GD2, GD7, PPS1, PPS8

Note. ID = Participant identification

Theme 5: Surveying

I observed surveying employees as a complex process. Surveys are often used to gauge individual perspectives (Scherer & Wimmer, 2014). This technique of surveying was like Tarus' (2014) job-rotation strategy, a means to achieve high performance in the workplace. Participants GD7, GD10, PPS2, and PPS9 reported that surveying their employees was a way of extracting knowledge to help improve the organization. My observation of surveying 4 of 20 participants were like that of the process for after-action

reviews. Only participant GD7 thought that surveying employees was a training opportunity for transitioning employees. Each of the four participants identified in table 5 recognized surveying as a development tool and a means to discovering improvements. Participant (GD7) communicated, “We often survey employees to find out what they are having difficulty accomplishing within their daily duties. This provides us with an understanding of the type of knowledge deficiencies that exist.”

Surveying employees before transitions may be complex for many reasons. For example, relationships between new and seasoned employees have not been created, and organizational learning is dependent upon relationships (Elswick, 2014). Surveying employees requires a direct path from which knowledge may be transferred (Scherer & Wimmer, 2014). Therefore, this theme is disconnected from the conceptual framework regarding the spiral flow of tacit to explicit knowledge transfer among new and seasoned employees and the organization’s knowledge repository. However, surveying may still be a viable means to transfer tacit knowledge from those individuals with experience to those with limited to no experience in a given situation. Chiles (2015) posited that subordinate relationships were closely tied to worker turnover and job satisfaction. Surveying may be used to identify whether employees are satisfied with their jobs, and if worker turnover is caused by certain factors within the organization. Because only four participants implemented surveying as a transfer strategy, no definitive evidence of its value could be determined.

Table 6

Theme 5: Surveying

3-Pillars of Knowledge Transfer	Synthesized Category Responses	Supporting Participant's ID
Process	Surveying is used to transfer knowledge between employees Surveying supports knowledge exchanges	GD7, GD10; PPS2 and PPS9
Training	Surveying is a venue for training employees	GD7
Improvement	Surveying allows employees to develop through person to person interaction Surveying supports operational improvements	GD7, GD10; PPS2 and PPS9

Note. ID = Participant identification

Findings Analysis

Each theme in this study can be identified as a conduit for knowledge transfer. Following the SECI model's flow of knowledge transfer, each theme was structured to allow tacit knowledge to become explicit knowledge as employees communicated. The means in which leaders employed the themes to transfer knowledge between transitioning employees may have varied, but the end goal was the same. Job tasks, personalities, and leadership styles varied between organizational leaders, but each leader was able to implement a successful knowledge transfer process. Member checking was used for reliability of the synthesized interviews, and triangulation was accomplished by a review of the organization's policies and standard operational procedures that confirmed the implemented processes stated by the participants.

The participants in this study indicated that the success of their organization was largely attributed to the knowledge transfer between employees. I observed that some business processes were simple, and some were complex, but the execution of the activities involved in accomplishing a process was not always routine and easy to follow. Krylova, Vera, and Crossan (2016) posited that worker improvisation promoted knowledge transfer in support of business processes within an organization. Furthermore, Ahammad, Tarba, Liu, and Glaister (2016) found knowledge transfer strategies to be a vital part of an organization's success. In either case, a good knowledge transfer strategy was warranted.

The conceptual framework represented in this study was the SECI model, which consisted of a spiral flow of information to express the knowledge transfer process. Each theme in this study had a linear flow of knowledge transfer yet shared the same tacit to explicit knowledge exchanges as the SECI model. The themes could be used in combination, through socialization at both external and internal constructs. Business leaders may find that the flow of knowledge is not as important as the transfer of knowledge.

Businesses need skilled employees to provide the best service possible (Liu, Gao, Lu, & Wei, 2015). One way to get skilled employees is to have a good training program. In conjunction with the training program, businesses should maintain organizational knowledge through a documented forum of its operational processes. Through the above-mentioned comments, employees gain experience through training, and gained

experiences become tacit knowledge. One way to capture tacit knowledge is to develop a knowledge transfer strategy.

Applications to Professional Practice

The lack of knowledge transfer between experienced employees and new employees reduces job efficiency and productivity (Song, 2015). Although some leaders are aware of the impact that a lack of knowledge transfer can have on an organization, many leaders overlook the need to address it as an issue (Berthoin et al., 2014). These findings may be prevalent in any organization and not just contract organizations. The findings support the belief that knowledge transfer is a problem in many organizations. The strategy that leaders implement is dependent upon the type of industry that is being supported. Results indicate that relationships and leadership styles are two critical aspects to effective knowledge transfer between employees. No one knowledge transfer strategy provided an advantage over the other. Each strategy was appropriate for type of work to be performed.

The concentration of this research was to explore the knowledge transfer strategies that leaders of contract organizations implemented when employees transition in and out of the organizations. The research was conducted with two contract organizations that support the Central Technical Support Facility in south central Texas. The measures that helped shape this study were categorized by five focus areas of leadership developed from the interview questions; (1) transfer strategy, (2) training, (3) development tool, (4) knowledge extraction, and (5) improvement. Each focus area compliments the conceptual framework (SECI Model) and aids in answering the research

question. The five focus areas were further broken down into what I refer to as the three pillars (process, training, and improvement) of knowledge transfer.

The three pillars of knowledge transfer add value to businesses on many levels. They particularly form a basis for establishing a framework that may operate under any business model. The first pillar, *process* – explains the strategy used to extract, disseminate, and make actionable, the experiences of an individual or group. The second pillar, *training* – describes the activities that enforce or re-enforces what has been taught. The third pillar, *improvement* – explains the desired state of change from one posture to another within an environment.

The five themes listed in this study were a framework of the various strategies that existed during the analysis of the participant interviews. Relative to the SECI model, each strategy consisted of exchanges of tacit and explicit knowledge between employees. Benefits of the study may include enhanced hiring practices, better modes of communication, and improved organizational culture. To expand the existing literature, knowledge transfer should be a continuous process that aligns with an organization's vision and goals. Knowledge transfer does not just happen, it is a deliberate process. The methods and processes involved in knowledge transfer may be simple or complex. The goal is to capture relevant experience that can be applied to some solution.

Using the focus areas of leadership above, five common themes emerged as prominent means to transfer knowledge between employees. The first means was cross-training, a method of teaching other skills to employees with different job roles and responsibilities. The second means was an after-action review, a process where

knowledge is transferred from lessons previously learned. The third was a right-seat ride, where the observing employee will have the opportunity to apply what was learned with the aid of the outgoing employee. The fourth was job shadowing, a process that allows an employee to observe in real time, and the manner to which a task or series of tasks are accomplished. Surveying was the fifth means to transferring knowledge and relies on the integrity of the employees and their willingness to exchange knowledge through a series of questions. All five themes represent a venue for businesses to retain organizational knowledge.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this descriptive research study may have a direct, positive effect on the internal social dynamics and structure of organizational culture building. Thereby introducing new hiring practices and training methods for employees and leaders. Because knowledge transfer encourages socialization within internal and external venues, leaders may establish more creative means of collaboration between employees as transitions occur (De los Rios & Charnley, 2016). The research findings may contribute to new methods of hiring and training practices for employees. The more leaders understand the significance of implementing knowledge transfer strategies in their organizations, the more productive and efficient they can make their organizations (Lin & Atkins, 2014). Leaders may find that using a particular knowledge transfer strategy gives them an opportunity to expand their operations.

Recommendations for Action

Employee production is the bonding compound that holds an organization together (Rajeswari & Palanichamy, 2014). Tacit and explicit knowledge loss is occurring at a rapid pace throughout the current workforce because of volatile business practices (Almeida, Grant, & Phene, 2017). Organizational leaders may minimize these losses and retain the organizational knowledge using a transformational business model that is more employee focused. There is no single method of accomplishing the task of minimizing employee loss and retaining organizational knowledge. Regardless of the knowledge transfer strategy used, leaders still must establish a delivery mechanism suitable for both employee types; those that are transitioning out and those who are transitioning into the organization. However, I recommend a sound process for implementing three knowledge transfer practices that leaders of any industry can make use of immediately.

First, the organization should have a good training and development program for leaders and employees. Second, leaders should establish an employee knowledge extraction strategy. Lastly, the organization should have an improvement strategy. This combination should provide the leader with a baseline and objective strategy for transferring knowledge at the operational level. However, none of these recommendations will work if the leaders and employees do not have a good working relationship between one another.

Recommendations for Further Research

Research into other organizations not affiliated with the government may yield similar results and provide additional valuable insights to how knowledge transfer occurs between employees. Throughout this study, the many lessons on knowledge transfer may provide the individuals and organizations with the benefit of adding value through given processes. In turn, businesses may improve several daily operational practices. Other research may include the impact of knowledge transfer or lack of knowledge transfer on employee production. Which may also add value to an individual or organization. Also, a comparative investigation between organizations that use knowledge transfer strategies and organizations that are not using knowledge transfer strategies may uncover improvements to business practices industry wide. This comparison would expand the knowledge base of the business industry on many levels. Future researchers should plan to develop a research design and method to capture the critical factors that impact a knowledge transfer strategy selection. Sometimes researchers take on a project without proper planning and often fall short when it comes to selecting an appropriate research design. This could cost a considerable amount of time when it comes to gathering the right references, which ultimately may undermine the intent of researcher.

Reflections

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive research was to explore the knowledge transfer strategies that leaders of contract organizations implemented for transitioning employees. Prior to this study, I understood that leaders would have different methods of implementing knowledge transfer strategies for their employees as they transitioned. I

also understood that employees would have different reasons for sharing or not sharing the knowledge that they had acquired during their employment. However, I did not anticipate the similarities between operations of different organizations that leaders shared.

When I began the study, I thought since I had worked at the support site gathering participants would be easy. I knew that the potential leaders that I wanted as participants traveled frequently, but I figured that I would still have access to them. The reality was that I had to go through an on-site official to get access. Each participant provided valuable feedback on their respected interviews that helped me to complete these findings and conclusions. The experience that I am taking away from this doctoral journey will help me to better understand how to communicate through writing as well as publicly speaking.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive research was to explore the knowledge transfer strategies that leaders of contract organizations implemented for transitioning employees. Employees transition in and out of organizations all the time. The problem is that the knowledge needed to perform their new job is not always transferred. Nuemark et al (2013) posited that the current employee base was increasingly approaching retirement age, and that meant knowledge loss was imminent unless some form of knowledge transfer strategy was implemented.

For this study, 20 participants from two contract organizations that support the same government facility were interviewed to answer the research question: *What*

knowledge transfer strategies do leaders of contract organizations implement for transitioning employees? The participant responses yielded five themes; (1) job shadowing, (2) right seat riding in transitions (3) cross-training through transitions, (4) surveying pre-transitions, and (5) transitional after-action reviews. Using findings from this study, leaders and managers may be able to develop viable knowledge transfer strategies that help minimize or eliminate tacit and explicit organizational knowledge loss as employees' transition.

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Appendix A: Letter of Invitation

From: Researcher Name

Subject: Research Project

I cordially invite you to participate in a research project that I am conducting with respect to knowledge transfer within the contracting industry. Participation in this research is strictly voluntary. You may discontinue participation at any time. If you participate, I will conduct about a half-hour to an hour long interview with you. With your permission I will audio record your responses and take notes during the interview. Your identity and all of your responses will be kept strictly confidential. This research will be conducted by me in my role solely as a student at Walden University to support my doctoral dissertation. My role as a Walden student is completely separate from my role as a former contractor.

I am conducting this research to study knowledge transfer strategy implementation when employees transition in or out of organizations. To qualify for participation, you must have served in a leadership position for more than 10 years and have worked in a non-leadership position within the government contracting industry at any other time. If you are interested in participating, please answer the question below and return this email to me at researcher.name@waldenu.edu.

Based on a [YES] response to the following question: Are you willing to participate in this research study under your own free will?

V/r,

Researcher Name

Appendix B: Research Question

Primary Research Question: What knowledge transfer strategies do leaders of contract organizations implement for transitioning employees?

Interview Questions

The interview process will consist of individual interview sessions with selected participants. The interview questions are as follows:

1. What knowledge transfer strategies have you implemented to support employee transitions?
2. What knowledge transfer training do you provide transitioning employees?
3. What knowledge transfer development tools (such as video conference, chat, email, Microsoft SharePoint) are used for tacit knowledge exchanges?
4. What knowledge transfer development tools (such as video conference, chat, email, Microsoft SharePoint) are used for explicit knowledge exchanges?
5. How do you determine what knowledge to transfer during employee transition?
6. How do you extract the knowledge of an employee and transfer that knowledge into doctrine?
7. What would you do to improve the current knowledge transfer strategy implementation?
8. What other information would you like to contribute to this interview about the current knowledge transfer strategies and implementation?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol	
What you will do	What you will say–script
Introduce the interview and set the stage—often over a meal or coffee	Script: Hello, My name is Delano Hudson. I am a Doctoral Candidate at Walden University. I am conducting research on knowledge transfer strategy implementation within contract organizations. You are invited to participate in this research study at will, and you may opt-out at any time. The interview consists of 10 questions. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions, so feel free to answer bluntly, but truthfully. Assign participant identification.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch for non-verbal queues • Paraphrase as needed • Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth 	1. What knowledge transfer strategies have you implemented to support employee transitions?
	2. What knowledge transfer training do you provide transitioning employees?
	3. What knowledge transfer development tools (such as video conference, chat, email, Microsoft SharePoint) are used for tacit knowledge exchanges?
	4. What knowledge transfer development tools (such as video conference, chat, email, Microsoft SharePoint) are used for explicit knowledge exchanges?
	5. How do you determine what knowledge to transfer during employee transition?
	6. How do you extract the knowledge of an employee and transfer that knowledge into doctrine?
	7. What would you do to improve the current knowledge transfer strategy implementation?
	8. What other information would you like to contribute to this interview about the current knowledge transfer strategies and implementation?
Wrap up interview thanking participant	Script: If there are no questions, this concludes our interview session. Thank you for participating in my study. Your participation will be instrumental in providing valuable insight to the many challenges of knowledge transfer implementation throughout the contract industry and the business world.
Schedule follow-up Member Checking	Script: Dear Participant, I would like to schedule a follow-up member checking interview 1 week from today so we

interview	can address any issues or concerns about my synthesis of our initial interview session. During this next session you may provide additional information in support of the synthesized responses. A copy of the synthesis will be provided by email following the initial interview.
Follow-up Member Checking Interview	
Introduce follow-up interview and set the stage	Script: Hello, this is a follow-up of our initial interview. I would like to take this time to thank you again for participating. We will be discussing my synthesis of our last interview questions during this session. Again, I would like to remind you that this interview is strictly voluntary and subject to your discretion to continue.
<p>Have a copy of the succinct synthesis for each individual question</p> <p>Bring in probing questions related to other information that you may have found—note the information must be related so that you are probing and adhering to the IRB approval.</p> <p>Walk through each question, read the interpretation and ask:</p> <p>Did I miss anything? Or, What would you like to add?</p>	<p>Script: Before we begin, I would like to provide you with the synthesized responses to the interview questions outlined in our previous interview. Please understand that the synthesized answers are a reflection of the responses that you provided and my correlation of the answers to the knowledge transfer issues under study. Please tell me if the synthesis is representative of your responses and whether or not you have additional information to add. Here are the following responses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="643 1129 1437 1331">1. What knowledge transfer strategies have you implemented to support employee transitions? Cross-training, After-action reviews, Right-seat riding, Job shadowing, and Surveying are used to transfer knowledge between employees. <li data-bbox="643 1331 1437 1493">2. What knowledge transfer training do you provide transitioning employees? Cross-training, After-action reviews, Right-seat riding, Job shadowing, and Surveying are venues for employee training. <li data-bbox="643 1493 1437 1734">3. What knowledge transfer development tools (such as video conference, chat, email, Microsoft SharePoint) are used for tacit knowledge exchanges? Cross-training, After-action reviews, Right-seat riding, Job shadowing, and Surveying aid in the development of employee skills. <li data-bbox="643 1734 1437 1839">4. What knowledge transfer development tools (such as video conference, chat, email, Microsoft SharePoint) are used for explicit knowledge exchanges? Cross-

	<p>training, After-action reviews, Right-seat riding, Job shadowing, and Surveying aid in the development of employee skills.</p>
	<p>5. How do you determine what knowledge to transfer during employee transition? Cross-training, After-action reviews, Right-seat riding, Job shadowing, and Surveying support the necessary knowledge exchanges to perform required tasks.</p>
	<p>6. How do you extract the knowledge of an employee and transfer that knowledge into doctrine? Cross-training, After-action reviews, Right-seat riding, Job shadowing, and Surveying allow knowledge extraction to occur between employees willing to share knowledge.</p>
	<p>7. What would you do to improve the current knowledge transfer strategy implementation? Cross-training, After-action reviews, Right-seat riding, Job shadowing, and Surveying promotes process improvement through knowledge transfer at multiple levels of an organization.</p>
	<p>8. What other information would you like to contribute to this interview about the current knowledge transfer strategies and implementation? Cross-training, After-action reviews, Right-seat riding, Job shadowing, and Surveying may be under-utilized by leadership.</p>