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Frontline Managers' Perceptions and Lived Experiences in the Execution of Diversity Management Programs

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James O. Rodgers

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Frontline Managers' Perceptions and Lived Experiences in the Execution of Diversity

Management Programs

by

James O. Rodgers

MBA, University of Alabama in Birmingham, 1977

BSEE, Howard University, 1970

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

December 2018

Abstract

For over 30 years, organizations have engaged in programs to address the growing presence of diverse populations in their ranks, and researchers have attempted to identify and quantify a link between diversity and enterprise performance. The problem was a lack of understanding of how organizations benefit from increased diversity and the role of frontline managers in that process. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to address the research question aimed at the perceptions and lived experiences of frontline managers and to gain insights about how they are navigating the challenges of increased diversity to enhance their ability to produce high-performance outcomes. The three conceptual frames used were (a) diversity management, (b) managing people, and (c) team performance. The data collection process involved interviewing 12 frontline managers from a variety of industry sectors using a semistructured, conversational interviewing protocol. The open hand-coded analysis revealed patterns of thought and behaviors relating to managing individuals, managing the complexity of diversity, and managing diverse teams for high performance. The original concept of diversity management was in response to the growing diversity in the workplace and was intended to develop the capacity among managers to manage the resulting diversity mix. The study findings indicated that a common definition of diversity management is possible, that managing diversity requires a competence with all dimensions of diversity, and that there are a set of management skills that can yield better performance with teams of diverse composition. The results of my study can have positive impact on theory, practice, and general social acceptance of diversity.

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Dedication

This is for the hundreds of diversity management pioneers who tried to make American businesses more productive and for the thousands of great managers who balance the reality of diversity with the requirement for high performance without recognition or fanfare. It is time to move to the next level.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the last few decades, few countries have been left untouched by the rapid diversification of the modern workplace. As a result of increasing workforce diversity, companies are faced with a fundamental concern about how to balance increasing levels of diversity with the need to maintain and increase firm performance (Carstens & De Kock, 2017). Workforce diversity and the question of how to manage diverse groups have become increasingly important (Hansen & Seierstad, 2017). The problem of managing today's diverse workforce, however, does not stem from the diversity of the workforce itself but from the inability of corporate managers to fully comprehend its dynamics, divest themselves of their personal prejudicial attitudes, and creatively manage the potential benefit of a diverse workforce (Barak, 2017). Today's employees are more likely than ever before to work with people of different backgrounds (Aquino & Robertson, 2017). However, the research has not kept up with the need for tools and processes to manage the increasing levels of diversity in the workplace.

The subject of my research was *diversity management*, which is distinguished from other forms of diversity study by the intent to affect business performance. The original conception of diversity management suggested the presence of a diversity–performance link, which is often referenced in the literature (Thomas, 2011). Other forms of diversity study have been added to the literature that involve social, psychological, and political issues and may or may not be relevant to improving business performance. My study was designed to return to the original conception and explore whether managers can realize better business results at the team level using diversity management as a

management discipline. To explore the possibilities for business performance, I also examined elements of team performance and management skills.

In this chapter I provide a summary of research on diversity management, identify the gap in knowledge and scholarly contributions on the topic of diversity management, provide the problem statement, explain the purpose of the study, identify the research questions, explain the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study, define the terms related to the topic, describe my assumptions for the study, explain the scope and delimitations that bound the study, identify limitations of the study approach, and express the potential social significance of the study.

Background

The study of diversity, diversity management, cognitive diversity, inclusion, or cultural diversity is more than an academic exercise. There are millions of practitioners (managers, leaders, and team members) who need the benefit of scholarly inquiry into what has been called the most complex human resource challenge of the 21st century (Heitner, Kahn, & Sherman, 2013). For more than 20 years, researchers have been attempting to confirm the relationship between diversity and performance (Kochan et al., 2003). The results have been mixed. There has yet to be consistent, replicable, and sustainable evidence in the scholarly literature that supports the relationship, which leaves managers and leaders in the field uncertain about the efficacy of diversity management as a management skill or organizational strategy (Thomas, 2011). Researchers have studied diversity topics with a detached attitude and the academic literature that has been produced is hard for practitioners to understand (Guillaume,

Dawson, Woods, Sacramento, & West, 2013). As a result, organizations and frontline managers have not realized the benefit and competitive advantage they may have expected from diversity management (Thomas, 2006).

Sabharwal (2014) noted that most researchers working in the area of diversity, cognition, and performance are aware of the contradictory findings of prior studies (diversity both improves and impairs performance), which puts many organizations in the bind of balancing seemingly incompatible goals of increasing diversity and maximizing performance (Newman & Lyon, 2009). Field managers and executives have a limited view of the impact of diversity in their organizations (Kravitz, 2010). Workforce diversity is not a transient or static concept (Barak, 2017). A better understanding of the impact of diversity management on organizational performance would help managers in developing the models, tools, assessments, and management principles that will make diversity management a mainstay of modern management practice. Without such tools, managers will be unable to understand or identify the constructive business benefits of diversity (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, & Monga, 2009). I performed qualitative phenomenological research to explore several aspects of the real world experience of managing team performance with a diverse and multicultural population of employees. The goal was to identify practical insights from working managers, previously lacking in the scholarly research that may lead to diversity management becoming a practical strategy and skill set.

The existing literature on diversity management covers decades of research on the social (Polzer, Crisp, Jarvenpaa, & Kim, 2006), psychological (Guillaume et al., 2013),

political (Richard, Murthi, & Ismail, 2007), and cultural (McKay, Avery, & Morris, 2008) aspects of diversity. The literature also covers the impact of diversity on public (Choi & Rainey, 2010), private (Rupprecht, Birner, Gruber, & Mulder, 2011), and community-based (Hur & Strickland, 2012) organizations and institutions. Some studies cover U.S. organizations (Goode, 2014) and others cover non-U.S. organizations (Mohammed & Nadkarni, 2011). Diversity research has utilized units of study such as individual, team, firm (Milliken & Martins, 1996), top management team (Buyl, Boone, Hendriks, & Matthyssens, 2011), and entrepreneurial ventures (Zhou & Rosini, 2015). Diversity has been studied as a unitary concept and it has been dissected into a wide range of dimensions for more discrete analysis. The number of attributes that can engender diversity perceptions is almost infinite (Guillaume et al., 2013).

The extant scholarly research on diversity is missing a focused approach to discovering how to deliver the benefits of diversity management. The reason for the dearth of research on the business implications of diversity may be the myopic focus on diversity-related inputs and outcomes, rather than diversity management as a process (Carstens & De Kock, 2017). My review of the existing literature revealed that the focus has not been moving in the direction of process. However, the literature does suggest that achieving the objective of learning how to make diversity management a valuable skill will require a common definition, a common construct, a consistent unit of study, and more use of empirical study methods supported by researchers and practitioners alike (Guillaume et al., 2013). My study began that effort.

Problem Statement

Successful management of today's diverse workforce is among the most important global challenges faced by corporate leaders (Barak, 2017). Line managers are under considerable pressure to manage diversity in the workplace (Kulik, 2014). According to Madera et al. (2017), the success of diversity management programs depends on frontline managers. Yet, practitioners know very little about which diversity management practices work best (Guillaume et al., 2013).

The general management problem in my research was that organizations are spending billions of dollars annually on diversity management efforts and there is still little evidence that they are benefitting from them (Madera et al., 2017). Kulik (2014) claimed that diversity management can deliver organizational benefit but only if it is managed effectively. However, when the increasing diversity at work is not being managed effectively, it can result in lower revenues, higher costs, and greater disruptions to business operations (Guillaume et al., 2013).

The specific research problem was the lack of knowledge and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of frontline managers and in the execution of diversity management programs. Current academic research on the impact of diversity management is quantitative and is focused on the firm (Gonzalez, 2010); top executive teams (Homberg & Bui, 2013), or human resources (Shen et al., 2009) as the unit of study. What is lacking are the perspectives of frontline managers who are tasked with managing diversity while delivering effective performance. As a result, there is a need to

investigate the perceptions and lived experiences of frontline managers related to diversity management.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of frontline managers and their role in the execution of diversity management programs. Because there is a dearth of qualitative research to determine if diversity management can improve team performance, this qualitative phenomenological study was aimed at identifying knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and practices of line managers in order to increase the scholarly understanding of the lived experience of managers of diverse teams.

I used semistructured interviewing to determine what team managers know and were willing or expected to do to benefit from diversity management. I investigated how team managers perceive the concept of diversity management and explored how they think it is or could be useful in improving team performance and what specifically they need to do to get that benefit. I proposed to get the first-hand experience and perspectives of people who profess a belief in diversity management and have responsibility for achieving business goals with a diverse team composition.

Research Question

The central research question for this phenomenological study was as follows: What are the perceptions and lived experiences of frontline managers and their role in the execution of diversity management programs? The intent of my inquiry was to discover new insights into the link between diversity management and performance; and to

identify patterns of potential tools and techniques that might make diversity management a more effective, performance-oriented discipline.

<div align="center">**Conceptual Framework**</div>

Three distinct concepts grounded my research: (a) diversity management as a business performance concept, (b) the impact of management skills on organizational outcomes, and, (c) team performance.

Diversity Management

Diversity management is a relatively new concept of organizational management. As a management practice, diversity management originated in the United States in the late 1980s and changed the focus from affirmative action to the benefits of diversity (Hansen & Seierstad, 2017). The expected explosion of diversity that accompany trends in globalization, knowledge workers, demographic shifts, the feminization of management, and complexity has extended the impact of diversity management. My research was based on previous research on diversity management, but from the perspective of line managers.

The diversity management movement was initiated and first articulated by Thomas (1990) in 1985. Thomas (1991) based his research on direct observation of the changing attitudes of young college students. That observation translated into an insight about the nature of talent management as the world changed.

Page (2007) furthered the study of diversity management based on his intense work in complex problem solving and prediction. His insights about the power of

diversity evolved from his frequent experiments involving group response to complexity.

Management Skills

Kotter (2001) explained the difference between leadership and management, which may help managers apply the right skills to the process of diversity management. Kotter said that leadership is about coping with change and that management is about coping with complexity. In many organizations, diversity management is treated as a change effort since it represents a departure from normal management practice. Once the change has been executed, it then becomes the normal management practice. Diversity in the workplace contributes to complexity. Managing complexity is a management issue (Kotter, 2001). The distinction is key to developing an effective response to the increasing diversity and producing a process to manage it.

The literature on management as a discipline is well established. There are principles and tools developed in the academy and practiced in the field to help managers do their job better. I cover this point in Chapter 2. Those principles and tools include hard skills, such as project management and soft interpersonal skills, such as self-management, communications, conflict management, and motivation (Beenen & Pichler, 2016). Development of the right interpersonal or people skills was a central focus of my study.

Team Performance

Some of the current research on team performance is based on the I-P-O (input-process-output) model (McGrath, 1984). The I-P-O model conceptualizes a

team as a social entity comprised of people who are interdependent because of mutual tasks. Rubino, Avery, Volpone, and Ford (2014) extended the model to include team diversity. More recent literature has suggested that teams are complex, adaptive, and dynamic systems with a variety of diverse compositions that must be managed (Van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004). The literature on team effectiveness has followed the principles of the original model, has landed on a common set of success factors, and has adopted an equal balance of objective and perceptual measures of effectiveness (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). For my study, the team was the unit of study upon which the inquiry was based. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship of the three conceptual arenas to be explored.
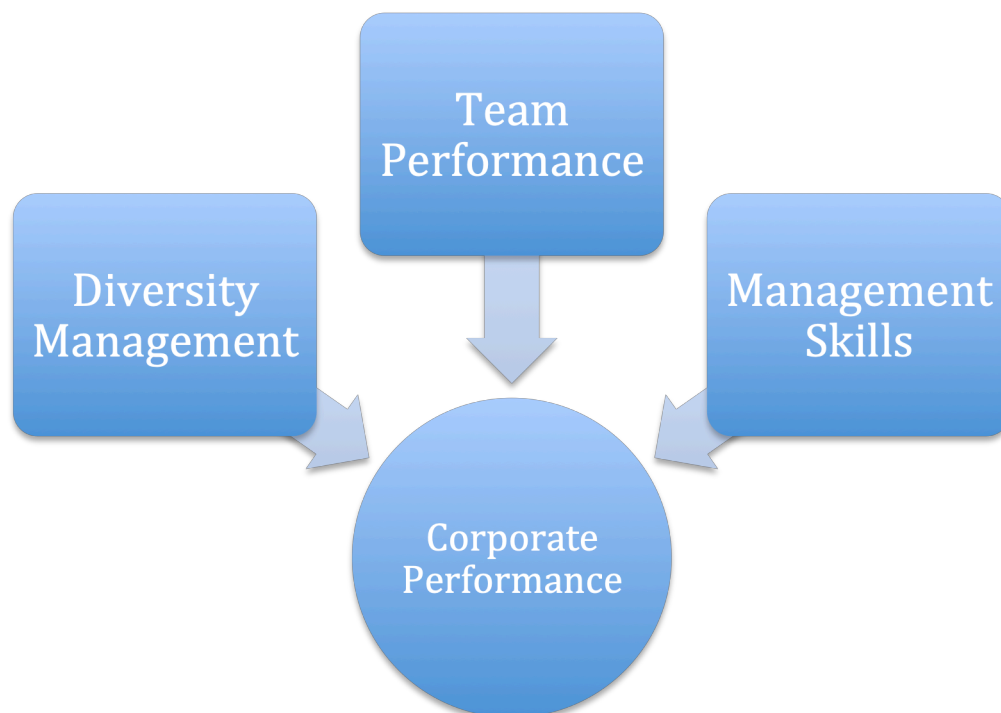
Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the study, which combines the three study disciplines pertinent to the research.

Nature of the Study

I used a phenomenological design for my study. In my literature review (Chapter 2), I demonstrated that other researchers have not asked questions such as, How do you understand diversity management? How do you practice diversity management? How do you use diversity management as a part of your mix of management techniques? The scholarly literature indicates that the lack of inductive study is why we continue to get equivocal results from the bulk of research in the field of diversity management (Mello & Rentsch, 2015). Creating new knowledge and

theory suggests the need for a reassessment of the lived experience of frontline managers and the tools they use to achieve high performance on teams.

My approach was to interview and summarize the experiences of 12 managers from a variety of industry sectors and then interpret their responses to make meaning of their collective experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Therefore, I chose a phenomenological study to allow me to explore the experiences of line managers in order to recognize patterns of experience that pointed to practices that can be applied by managers in the field. My study made use of my experience and perspective as a long-term practitioner and observer in the field of diversity management and drew from the perspectives of the participants who live with the issues every day.

A phenomenological study is counter to the dominant trend in diversity management research because it relies on direct empirical input from practitioners rather than limited study of discrete elements of diversity using quantitative analysis (Heitner et al., 2013). The benefit of diversity management derives from operating teams that can make better decisions, solve problems, capture innovation, improve productivity, make more accurate predictions, and become more efficient and effective using well-managed diversity as an asset (Aquino & Robertson, 2017). The people who carry out diversity management programs and who know best what is needed to make diversity management work are frontline managers (Madera et al., 2017), not researchers, not HR, not top managers (executives), and not firm-wide statistics.

Kochan et al. (2003) recommended clear steps for realizing the promise of diversity management. Unfortunately, those steps have not been examined fully in

subsequent research so that a gap remains between the promise of diversity (what) and the specific practice of diversity management (how). My research may offer value to field managers (practitioners) by producing practical recommendations that managers need to implement and practice effective diversity management.

Other designs were considered and passed up in favor of a phenomenological approach. There is a need for sustainable theory in the field of diversity management (grounded theory), but there is not yet enough relevant foundational knowledge or extant data from organizations to produce theory (Kochan et al., 2003). A case study method was deemed to be too limited and not generalizable. The same was true of an ethnography study. The phenomenological method allowed me to identify a class of participant and explore the perceptions of managers across a number of industry sectors (Patton, 2015). I asked how team managers perceive the concept of diversity management and explored how they think it could be useful in improving team performance and what specifically they need to do to get that benefit.

The phenomenological approach allowed me to get first-hand experience and perspectives of line managers who profess a belief in diversity management and who have responsibility for achieving business goals regardless of team composition. In addition, it focused on the experience of frontline managers in a variety of industry sectors who contribute directly to the performance of their company. The results provide guidance for future studies focused on ways to confirm the diversity-performance link at the team level.

Definitions

There is a wide range of terminology in the field of diversity management, which is part of the reason there is not a convergence on sustainable ways to demonstrate the positive attributes of diversity management as a performance tool. Each of these terms has been defined differently in the academic literature and there are a plethora of new terms entered into the conversation about diversity and performance. I defined the terms needed to inform this inquiry.

Diversity: The broad mix of human and organizational differences and similarities (Thomas, 1990).

Diversity management: A management discipline designed to produce better business results with a diverse mix of employees (Thomas, 1990).

Cognitive diversity (deep-level): The unique combination of perspective, heuristics, interpretation, and predictive modeling that distinguishes the worldview of different people (Page, 2007).

Identity diversity (surface-level): The demographic and psychographic characteristics that lead to the perception that another person is different from self. (Page, 2007)

Inclusion: The practice of providing a sense of belonging to all individuals so that they are welcomed, respected, encouraged and valued as an employee to the point of being confident as they contribute their best work (Ferdman, 2017).

Team: A collection of individuals who are interdependent, who share responsibility for outcomes, and who represent an intact social entity inside a larger

social system (Cohen & Bailey, 1997).

Team performance: The output of a team effort (McGrath, Arrow, & Berdahl, 2000).

Management: The one-on-one, face-to-face, day-to-day effort to make sure every person has what he or she needs to perform at his/her best. (Rodgers & Hunter, 2004)

Leadership: The act of selling an idea, concept, or vision in a manner that causes people to willingly follow. (Rodgers & Hunter, 2004)

Strategy: The unique position that we need to command in the marketplace in order to assure our success. (Porter, 1980)

Assumptions

I assumed that when managers know better they do better (even if they do not call it diversity management). In my study design, I assumed that I could construct the right language to promote common understanding of the concepts between the participants and myself. I assumed that the participants would give me candid, insightful, and honest answers to the questions and that they were already familiar with the concept of diversity in the workplace. Furthermore, I assumed I would be able to manage my biases as a seasoned practitioner in the field and allow my interpretations to be based solely on the responses of the participants.

Scope and Delimitations

I addressed a number of aspects of the problem and the research question, including the perceptions and attitudes of line managers, the level of investment in diversity efforts, and the key skills needed to manage a diverse mix of employees. My

study was limited to managers with five or more employees in U.S. corporations with a publicly expressed support for diversity management as indicated by their corporate website. The public expression of support for diversity management increases the likelihood that frontline managers were familiar with the language and principles of diversity management. In addition, my research focused on teams and team managers who have direct impact on firm performance (nonadministrative). The study involved frontline managers from industry sectors like technology, telecommunications, and energy, enterprises that have clear measures of performance. I did not consider public sector or nonprofit organizations because of the difficulty in measuring the direct impact on results.

The study concentrated on the perceptions and attitudes of frontline managers regarding diversity management as it relates to business effectiveness. My approach considered soft issues such as cohesion, attitudes, trust, etc., which have been shown to facilitate team performance. My intent was to assess the possibility of a diversity-performance link.

My research could point to a way to address the diversity-performance link. The results may be indicative of the general case but are certainly not transferable across all industry sectors or organizations. Diversity, diversity management, diversity and inclusion, and cognitive diversity are concepts that are deployed within nearly all companies, organization, and institutions in the U.S. My study covered only managers of teams that design, manufacture, market, sell, or deliver products and services.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations of my study. First, I targeted a purposeful sample of 12 managers. The findings of my study are partial (indicative but not complete) and not necessarily generalizable to a broader group of frontline managers. The implications must be understood in the larger context of the many ways organizations currently approach diversity-related efforts.

Secondly, there are many varied concepts and definitions used under the label of diversity management. As a result, participants expressed thoughts using definitions different from mine, which required that I interpret their responses in the context of their frame of reference. I mitigated that limitation by being very clear about any concepts and definitions I used during interviews, and by clarifying with the participants any definitions that appeared to diverge from my own.

Next, participants expressed concepts that represent their company's approach, which may have altered their viewpoints over time or which may have prevented them from expressing their own thoughts. I emphasized the confidentiality of the interview process and encouraged independent, personal thinking on the subject.

Finally, qualitative research methods collect data that may reflect a very specific and unique situation. As a result, it may be difficult to replicate my findings in other situations, which could affect the credibility and dependability of the study.

Significance of the Study

Researchers in the field of diversity management (for example, Zhou & Rosini, 2015; Jayne & Dipboye, 2004) recognize the dearth of evidence produced in the

academy to prove the efficacy of diversity management. There is currently a gap

between research findings in the academy and managerial practice in the field (Kulik,

2014). Without validated tools and models, managers are not able to understand the

power of diversity management or to identify the constructive benefits of cognitive

diversity on teams (Shen et al., 2009). The business case for diversity management has

been justified by rhetoric rather than evidence (Carstens & De Kock, 2017). My

research may contribute to positive social change by adding empirical evidence to the

field, increasing the knowledge and understanding of those responsible for the

efficacy of diversity management as a performance improvement approach.

Significance to Society

Society as a whole is in need of evidence that increasing diversity is generally

good for all members of society, and also how diversity programs can be implemented

most effectively. My research could point to ways to unleash the benefits of a diverse

society in new ways that matter to all people, not just the currently underrepresented.

Recent events (Brexit and the 2016 presidential election) illustrate the increased political

and social divisions among citizens based on identity politics. In the last 3 decades the

business community has taken the lead in promoting diversity as a social good and a

positive attribute (Kochan et al., 2003). Both researchers and practitioners had hoped that

the success of diversity efforts in business would translate into more success with

diversity in the larger society (Thomas, 2006). My study may add evidence of the

efficacy of diversity management as a business strategy and may further enhance the

acceptance of diversity as a social good. Social change will occur when there is

consistent evidence of the value of diversity, and practitioners are provided the insights and tools to most effectively harness the power of a diverse workforce.

Significance to Practice

The business community has provided leadership in exploring the value of diversity for the past 3 decades, but that work remains incomplete. Page (2014) contributed research indicating that cognitive diversity improves problem-solving and prediction abilities for small groups, but only when managers have knowledge of how to manage that diversity. Page illustrated what was possible when research was translated into practice. Carstens and De Kock (2017) suggested that the study of diversity management be investigated from a process view (what you do) rather than a state view (what you have). My study focused on the process of managing teams with diverse composition. Aquino and Robertson (2017) pointed out that effectively managed diversity could boost performance. My study explored how frontline managers use diversity management as a performance tool and uncovered new ways to extract the benefit of diversity management to produce positive social change. My study also supports development of evidence-based knowledge on diversity management by demonstrating a practical method to gain access to organizational samples (Guillaume et al., 2013). The field of diversity management is in need of a set of practical skills that have been demonstrated, in practical terms, so that the benefits of well-managed diversity can be realized. Managers are generally favorable to the idea of diversity; they simply need to know how to make it work.

Significance to Theory

After 3 decades of study and practice in the field of diversity management, there is still no unifying theory, there are no common definitions and no accepted principles of practice (Nelson, 2014; Hansen, 2003). My research will help fill the gap in the literature by increasing the scholarly understanding of the role of frontline managers in executing diversity management programs. According to Erwin and Kent (2005), there is a lack of agreement on the difference between leading and managing. Understanding that difference may enable the separation and distinction of the concepts so they can be properly applied to practice, such as diversity management. My research may spark more interest in diversity management as a management discipline and reignite direct empirical study on the practice of diversity management and its relationship to organizational performance.

<div align="center">

Summary

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Despite years of effort, there is little evidence of benefit from the increasing diversity within organizations (van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Diversity management began as a performance improvement concept but was quickly reconstructed as a social issue (Thomas, 2006). Research over the past 3 decades has failed to advance knowledge of how to realize the positive benefits of diversity. The specific problem is the lack of scholarly understanding about the role that frontline managers play in the execution of diversity management programs.

In this phenomenological study, I sought to understand how frontline managers deal with teams of diverse employees and what they can learn that will help unleash the

positive benefits of well-managed diversity. In the process, I uncovered a different way to increase the base of knowledge about how the diversity–performance link can be realized. The study has implications for the creation of a unifying theory (researchers), for the development of tools, techniques, and measures of effectiveness (practitioners), and for the adoption of healthier attitudes about diversity in an increasingly global society.

In Chapter 2, I present the literature that supports the multidisciplinary approach to the research question.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of my study was to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of frontline managers and their role in the execution of diversity management programs. The focus of my study was the role of the line manager in executing diversity management and getting business results from a diverse team of employees. That focus has been missing in the literature (Madera et al., 2017). Current literature on diversity and diversity management has focused on discrete elements of diversity and has used top management teams, firms, and HR managers as the unit of study. According to the original definition and construct for diversity management, it is line managers who execute and practice diversity management as a management discipline. This section covers the literature search strategy, the conceptual frame of the study, a detailed literature review, and a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature reviewed in this chapter was drawn from three distinct areas: diversity management, management skills, and team performance. Diversity management is a subset of diversity that is focused on business performance. Both the foundational literature and recent studies were examined. Other elements of diversity study (dimensions of diversity, cognitive diversity, functional diversity, etc.) will be reviewed in order to contrast them with diversity management. Management skills are often confused with leadership. My research required a focus on the role of line operations managers who must get results from a diverse mix of employees. Some leadership-related literature was reviewed to contrast the roles. Operating teams were the preferred unit of

study for my research. Team performance was the area of interest that informed me of how team managers get benefit from a diverse mix of employees. These areas of study constitute the backbone of the study model that I described in Chapter 1.

In order to identify relevant literature for my study, I searched multiple databases and reviewed articles, books, and anthologies on the topic. After reading hundreds of articles relating to the topic, a pattern emerged that led to a focus on three distinct areas to guide my study. The search strategy evolved so as to provide more precision in finding relevant scholarship to inform the approach of my research. The three areas were diversity (including diversity management, cognitive diversity, inclusion, etc.), team performance, and managing people (leadership v managing, skills, roles, outcomes, relationships, etc.).

Both individually and in combination, I searched the following terms using Boolean logic: *diversity, diversity-performance link, diversity management, cognitive diversity, teams, team performance, teams and firm performance, leading diverse teams, managing diverse teams, team effectiveness (*and *cohesion).*

I searched the following databases to identify classic and recent literature that addressed the terms of interest: Business Source Complete, Thoreau (for exact article titles), EBSCO, ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the Bing search engine to identify sources of articles. In addition, I reviewed the reference lists of several recent articles and dissertations and discovered other articles and books that were regularly cited. Other articles were found using the Google scholar feature that identifies related articles. Those also became part of my universe of references.

Conceptual Framework

Diversity Management

The primary conceptual bases for the literature review were the early works that introduced diversity management and cognitive diversity concepts to the business community. The original goal of managing diversity (diversity management) was to develop our (firm's) capacity to accept, incorporate, and empower the diverse human talent of the most diverse nation on Earth (Thomas, 1990). Since that time, there has been a divergence of thought in the field and in the academy about the intent of diversity management practice and study efforts. Both enterprise managers and researchers have advanced an agenda on diversity based on their own interests without regard to the interests of others (Kulik, 2014). Ivancevich and Gilbert (2000) called for a new agenda that demanded collaboration between researchers and administrators. Still the evolution of the field continued in separate silos (scholars versus practitioners). Kravitz (2010) attempted to define the cause of the gap between researchers and practitioners. The core cause was the inconsistent incentives and motives. Researchers simply want to get published and to add incremental knowledge to the base. Practitioners simply want to experience ways to improve performance (results) using what they have. The tension between those competing interests has created a mishmash of efforts in two separate camps, neither of which has managed to advance the field of managing diversity for the purpose of promoting organizational goal achievement.

After reviewing the literature, several observations became apparent. There are two patterns worth noting about the literature on diversity management (and related

topics). One is chronological and the other is thematic. They often overlap but still assert a clear pattern of thinking about the subject.

The 1980s and 1990s saw the beginning of a new approach to people management called managing diversity (Kulik, 2014). The new approach gave rise to research that described the transition from social and political aspects of diversity to business interests (Thomas, 1990). Then came the rise of efforts to confirm the efficacy of diversity management (i.e., is it a legitimate business management discipline?) (Kochan et al., 2003), and the rise of rhetoric declaring the inherent value of diversity (Carstens & De Kock, 2017).

The 2000s have been characterized by a near abandonment of the diversity performance assumption (researchers became discouraged that the link could never be confirmed) (McMahon, 2010) and more examination of discrete elements of diversity against known performance factors for teams, firms, and individuals (VanAlstine, Cox, & Roden, 2013; Haon, Gotteland, & Fornerino, 2009; Buyl et al., 2011).

Recently there has been a return of interest in exploring the performance aspects of diversity management and asking different questions (Roberge & van Dick, 2010). Rather than asserting that diversity does/does not contribute to performance, researchers began asking about the conditions that cause diverse teams to over/under-perform a more homogeneous team (Olsen & Martins, 2012). My study contributes to the latter conversation.

Management Skills

The discussion of management and leadership is relevant to my research. The conception of enterprise (business) management began with the work of Taylorism and continued through the work of Maslow, Drucker, and others. The last three decades have seen a near abandonment of management as a topic in favor of leadership as a topic. There is confusion about the meaning and application of leadership and/or management. Zaleznik (1977) was the first to assert that leadership and management are not the same. Later, Kotter (2001) and Vroom (2007) summarized the difference based on actual focus. Kotter suggested that leadership is about coping with change and management is about coping with complexity. Erwin and Kent (2005) defined a process to separate, distinguish, and integrate the concepts so they could be applied in practice. Diversity management in theory is identified as a change initiative (Gonzalez, 2010). For that reason it could be characterized as a leadership issue. Diversity management in practice involves the day-to-day interactions of teams and managers. If frontline managers do not embrace diversity management programs, the diversity management effort will be disrupted (Madera et al., 2017).

Team Performance

The final concept addressed in my study is team performance. The concept of teaming and teams has been around for decades and a large number of studies have focused on what makes teams effective. As with management, the scholarship on teams has benefitted from the practical application of teamwork practices by field managers. Cohen and Bailey (1997) defined *team* as a collection of individuals who are

interdependent, who share responsibility for outcomes, and who represent an intact social entity inside a larger social system. The use of intact entities (teams) to accomplish organizational goals is of increasing importance to business enterprises (Rubino et al., 2014). The simplest depiction of team dynamics is the Input-Process-Outcomes (IPO) model advanced by McGrath (1984). IPO and its minor derivative Input–Mediator–Outcomes (IMO) have provided the framework for studying team effectiveness for the past four decades (Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp, & Gilson, 2008).

A common variable in the study of team effectiveness is the level of team cohesion (Casey-Campbell & Martens, 2009). Team cohesion occurs more readily when the team is composed of more homogeneous members and social loafing results from greater diversity (Rubino et al., 2014). These concepts in the literature represent the current trends on team effectiveness. However, recent trends are beginning to treat teams as complex, adaptive, dynamic systems (McGrath et al., 2000). Performance of diverse teams fits with that trend of study. I reviewed the literature based on the thematic constructs outlined in this section.

Literature Review

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said, "The most fundamental form of human stupidity is forgetting what we were trying to do in the first place" (Solomon, 2000, p. 49). The arc of scholarship on diversity management seems to have fallen into that trap. The original conception is barely recognizable in the studies that have been performed in recent decades. I traced the arc of scholarship and the different foci of

diversity management studies over the decades. Some of the differences align with the time period of the studies; others follow themes that have endured for decades.

Diversity Management: In The Beginning

The Hudson Institute published a study in 1985 entitled Workforce 2000 (Johnston, 1987) that predicted the United States was facing a massive shift in the demographic and psychographic makeup of its available workforce. The finding was not presented as a desired future, but as an inevitable future (Gilbert, Stead, & Ivancevich, 1999). The prospect of a major change in the composition of the workforce was a catalyst for rethinking the management of large enterprises. In response to the set of facts outlined in the Hudson Institute study, companies began looking for ways to be proactive regarding the projected change in workplace makeup. Thomas (1990) summarized the impact of the change and proposed an outline for responding to the change. The diversity management movement was born with a clear intent to be a disciplined management response to inevitable change (Gilbert et al., 1999). The literature suggests that diversity management failed to gain traction due to lack of practical ways to execute it (Thomas, 2006).

Thomas (1990) introduced the concept of managing diversity and described the goal. "The goal of managing diversity is to develop our capacity to accept, incorporate, and empower the diverse human talents of the most diverse nation on earth" (p.15). The intent of the goal is a desire to manage what already exists (diverse employees), not to increase the numbers of diverse employees. According to Johnston (1987), Workforce 2000 painted a new emerging reality that was the foundation of the need to develop new

management skills for an inevitable future that included increasing diversity and an increase in the types of diversity. The challenge for managers, therefore, was how to manage diverse employees in such a way that the managers get the same or better productivity, quality, and profit with the diverse teams as they got from a more traditional homogeneous team (Thomas, 1991).

Ivancevich and Gilbert (2000) reinforced the original view of managing diversity (now diversity management) by looking back over the decade of the 1990s and summarizing ways that the arc of study was deviating from the original intent. Among their observations and recommendations was that (a) there was still not a solid theoretical or empirically based standard to anchor the work, (b) evidence was being supplanted with rhetoric, (c) implementation must be supported by business results, not social or political goals, and (d) diversity management is a strategy and capability designed for managers of business enterprises.

Before diversity management became the new response to the new reality, there were other social and political movements that affected people in the workplace. Those movements included affirmative action (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998), equal employment opportunity (Anand & Winters, 2008), cross-cultural understanding (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & Jonsen, 2010), pluralism (Shen et al. 2009), racial equality (Thomas & Ely, 1996), and gender equity (Milliken & Martins, 1996).

Redefining diversity management. The concept of diversity management is by nature very diverse. The word diversity connotes different things to different people. Researchers are no exception. There was an early effort to categorize different types of

diversity in order to organize thinking about different types of diversity (Milliken & Martins, 1996). That began the process of introducing more complexity to the study of diversity management. Milliken & Martins (1996) looked at three levels of impact from diversity (individual, group, and organizational). Others have attempted to organize the study of diversity management by various means. Van Knippenberg et al. (2004) proposed a categorization-elaboration model (CEM) that incorporated mediator and moderator variables to perspectives on work-group diversity and performance. Still, it remained difficult to determine what constitutes success with diversity management work in organizations.

Introduction of diversity management responded to a changing workplace, which is more nonhierarchical, flexible, collaborative, and knowledge-based. Shen et al. (2009) reviewed the literature on managing diversity through HRM. They revealed that HRM has focused on compliance and that most organizations have not unleashed the potential of the diverse workforce they employ. Key observations included recognition that a nonhierarchical, flexible, collaborative workforce requires more competence and an increase in tolerance for individuality. There has still not been any empirically proven association between diversity practices and diversity results (representation or performance). The tendency has become to assign diversity management to the HR department so that the development of new competencies can be managed (Shen et al., 2009). Still, the challenge of diversity is the new reality for 21st century leaders and managers, not just HR teams.

Implementing diversity management at any level became difficult for two important reasons. (a) Humans prefer working with people like themselves, and (b) humans and corporations generally avoid and resist change (Begec, 2013). Efforts to treat diversity management as a strategy and a capability had to face the uncomfortable fact of human reaction to differences. The very presence of more diversity created a new phenomenon called social faultlines (Polzer et al. 2006), which made implementation of diversity management even more difficult.

Multiple disciplines. Diversity management as a study area crosses a variety of fields of study, not just business management and leadership. Research from the fields of psychology and sociology revealed a natural tendency of humans in groups to gravitate to other group members who share some social identity with them (Gover & Duxbury, 2012). The faultline phenomenon further complicated the simple path to implementing diversity management as a team performance tool because it identified another barrier to the proposition that more diverse teams would lead to more creativity, innovation, and positive outcomes (Gover & Duxbury, 2012).

The impact of racial diversity on organizational performance has been studied with an affirmative action focus. Richard et al. (2007) used data derived from the Fortune magazine diversity survey (used to select the 50 Best Companies for Minorities) as a study sample. The data from the Fortune survey was analyzed against a dependent variable of firm performance (specifically productivity and Tobin's q, a measure of long term profitability). The independent variable was racial diversity. The findings suggest a

linear relationship between diversity and performance. The focus of Richard et al. was diversity, not diversity management.

Formal human resource diversity programs have experienced rapid growth; yet research on how these initiatives influence organizational effectiveness remains insufficient (Richard & Johnson, 1999). The research explored formal diversity programs' influence on organizational effectiveness using universalistic and contingency frameworks. Their findings show that universally, diversity practices strongly and negatively relate to turnover. Organizations with innovative strategies coupled with formal diversity practices had improved productivity and market performance supporting contingency notions. Future research should employ both the universalistic and contingency theories in combination for a more in-depth understanding of construct relationships.

Hong and Page (2001) and Hong and Page (2004) added to the discussion about the efficacy of diversity management from the field of complex problem solving. Based on their laboratory studies, they concluded that a team of randomly selected agents would outperform a team of best-performing agents. The research findings were a strong endorsement for diversity, but left open the fact that as the managers of the experiments, they provided the management skills necessary to realize the improved performance. Diversity management requires management.

Legitimate business issue? Efforts to confirm that diversity management is a legitimate business issue tied to performance began with a report by the Diversity Research Network who operated under the auspices of the Business Opportunities for

Leadership Diversity (BOLD) initiative (Kochan et al., 2003). The report of the Diversity

Research Network raised the profile of the diversity-performance link and recommended

(with implications for management) how the diversity-performance link could be realized

and strengthened (Kochan et al.). My study drew on the actions suggested by those

implications, which a review of the literature revealed to be sorely missing in both the

academic and practical literature. Some of those actions are:

Modify the business case. There is still no sustainable evidence for the simple

assertion that diversity is inevitably either good or bad for business. To get value from the

reality of diversity requires a sustained, systemic, long-term commitment that focuses on

learning.

Look beyond the business case. Managers should focus on developing the

practices and managerial skills to translate diversity into positive organizational, group,

and individual results.

Adopt a more analytical approach. Rather than trust that diversity will yield

better (or worse) results, practitioners should examine the conditions that result in diverse

teams outperforming or underperforming more homogeneous teams and what exacerbates

and mitigates the effects of diversity.

Support experimentation and evaluation. Design and evaluate specific

interventions or experiments aimed at creating a positive link between diversity and

performance. It will require executives willing to commit to a type of experimentation

and learning within their own organizations.

Train for group-process skills. Training programs must help managers develop the leadership and group process skills needed to facilitate constructive conflict and effective communication. Management skills are needed to produce collaboration and consensus on a team composed of people with diverse opinions.

The downside. There are a number of points of agreement by researchers working in the area of diversity and performance. One point is that increased diversity when left unchecked (not deliberately managed) can have a negative impact on group effectiveness (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Homberg & Bui, 2013). Teams with high levels of diversity have the potential for high knowledge but low social integration (Cavaretta, 2007). Social integration (also called cohesion) is a key component of team performance (Casey-Campbell & Martens, 2009). A second point is the changing complexity of increased diversity in the workplace. Teams are becoming more multicultural and people differences are too numerous and too dynamic to capture in simple terms (Stahl et al, 2010). Stahl et al. pointed out that both organizations and teams have a natural tendency to drive out diversity; teams encourage conformity and organizations reinforce similarity. Finally, many researchers agree that the main idea behind the concept of diversity is to get the most out of the human capital at every level of the organization (Morales & Rahe, 2009). Better team performance is the main reason for having more diversity, but it will only obtain when team members get along and take advantage of the broader range of knowledge (Cavaretta, 2007).

The BOLD study (Kochan et al., 2003) led to other efforts to identify and confirm the diversity-performance link. Jayne and Dipboye (2004) reviewed empirical research

into the relationship between workforce diversity and organizational performance to determine if diversity helped organizations perform better. Jayne and Dipboye reviewed studies from industrial and organizational psychology and other disciplines as well as the claims of several leading institutions that published their diversity goals, activities, and aspirations. The best Jayne and Dipboye could conclude from their analysis was that simply having a diverse workforce does not produce positive outcomes. They further concluded that some forms of diversity actually have negative impact on performance.

Diversity and performance have both a direct and adverse relationship. The presence of broad diversity increases the information available for decision-making and problem solving (Pieterse, van Knippenberg, and Dierendonck, 2013). At the same time, diversity increases the potential for task conflict and for relationship conflict (Stahl et al., 2010). These findings suggest that efforts to establish a clear diversity-performance link will have to face the reality of the positive and negative effects of broad diversity. The two goals of increasing performance and managing diversity are often at odds (Kemper, Bader, & Froese, 2016).

Choi and Rainey (2010) sought to expand the study of the effect of diversity and diversity management on employee perceptions to the public sector. Diversity in the workplace is a central issue for contemporary organizational management. They contended that managing diversity deserves greater interest in public, private, and nonprofit organizations. The study addressed the effects of diversity and diversity management on employee perceptions of organizational performance in U.S. federal agencies by exploring three variables: diversity, diversity management, and perceived

organizational performance. They analyzed data from two federal surveys and developed a number of hypotheses to extract insights about the perceptions of federal employees regarding the effect of diversity on organizational performance. Choi and Rainey suggested that racial diversity relates negatively to organizational performance and concluded that contextual variables have a significant influence on the relationship. The study by Choi and Rainey was based on secondary data and focused on opinion and attitudes not actual performance. It offered limited utility for the larger question of getting actual tangible business results by managing diversity effectively.

Performance differences due to race may be dependent on the diversity climate, which presumably is affected by diversity management. McKay et al. (2008) studied employee sales performance in a large national retail organization. They observed race effects, with whites having higher sales than Hispanics or Blacks. However, the effect was eliminated or reversed in stores with positive diversity climates**.** The study has implications for interpretation of meta-analyses of race differences in performance (not due simply to individual differences/race) and for practice (diversity management has bottom line implications).

Missing data. The BOLD study (Kochan et al., 2003) suggested that there was a lack of data inside companies to fully assess the value of diversity management. Business leaders recognized the lack of data as a deterrent to confirming the diversity-performance link. For instance, the former CEO of Hewlett-Packard declared the need for data to prove that diverse groups do better than homogeneous groups (Armstrong, Flood, Guthrie, Liu, MacCurtain, & Mkamwa, 2010).

Efforts to address the need for internal data have proven inconclusive. Armstrong et al. (2010) surveyed 241 companies and compared results of using a diversity/equality management system (DEMS) in conjunction with a high performance work system (HPWS) against using HPWS alone. The study showed a positive relationship when DEMS was used, but could not demonstrate a causal relationship. Like many other studies (e.g., van Knippenberg, van Ginkel, & Homan, 2013), Armstrong et al. (2010) focused on preventing unfairness and discrimination rather than promoting performance benefits.

Business leaders continue to assert the efficacy of diversity management even in the face of evidence to the contrary. Hunt, Layton, and Prince (2014) found that moving the needle on diversity management is harder than any other transformation effort, yet they continued to promote the correlation, not causal link between diverse leadership and financial performance. Groysberg and Connolly (2013) suggested ways for leaders to make the mix work by following a formula of steps. Both academics and managers continue to look for ways to confirm what they all hope to be true, that diversity produces performance (Roberge & van Dick, 2010).

One method used to confirm the prevailing belief (diversity improves performance) is to conduct studies that demonstrate correlation but cannot be said to be causal. Boehm et al. (2014) found a positive correlation between diversity climate and workgroup performance, but acknowledged that surprisingly little is known about how such effects happen. With so many possible combinations for diversity dimensions and performance factors (especially with the addition of moderating factors), it is likely that

some sample of data will show a positive correlation. The next section explores the combination of dimensions idea further.

Testing at Discrete Levels

McMahon (2010) surveyed the empirical studies from 2000-2009 and developed a model to explain the link between workplace diversity and firm performance. He discovered that there are as many dimensions of firm performance as there are dimensions of diversity. The growing trend toward matching and testing diversity dimensions against performance factors is supported by his findings. There are hundreds of dimensions of diversity and dozens of factors that affect firm performance. The combinations for study are vast and varied.

Diversity management has been studied broadly as a general concept for U.S. and non-U.S. organizations and for both public and private institutions. There is a pattern in the studies in this section in which they all begin with a desire to show a clear relationship between diversity and performance and many of them conclude or demonstrate that the connection between diversity and performance is inconclusive (van Knippenberg et al., 2013; Pitts, 2009; McMahon, 2010). As a result, there is a new approach that focuses on discrete dimensions of diversity and a variety of team or company performance factors (van Knippenberg et al., 2004). It implies a question quite different from the original intent of diversity management. Researchers have begun to ask when and how does diversity increase group performance. (Roberge & van Dick, 2010). The combinations of such inquiries are nearly endless and inexhaustible. I reviewed a

number of these studies and discuss the pattern they have established for diversity management scholarship.

A new pattern of study. Some examples of the pattern of discrete analysis of diversity and performance show up in studies like VanAlstine et al. (2013), which focused on religious diversity (discrete dimension) and economic performance (moderating variable). Haon et al. (2009) looked at the moderating effect of competence diversity and the mediating effect of familiarity. Other studies include comparisons of TMT functional diversity and CEO characteristics (Buyl et al., 2011); temporal diversity and team performance (Mohammed & Nadkarni, 2011); entrepreneurial team diversity and team performance (Zhou & Rosini, 2015); religious diversity and moderating influence on engagement, vigor, and dedication (Roof, 2015); TMT diversity and firm performance (Nielsen & Nielsen, 2013); and the impact of board diversity (background and personality) on board creativity and cognitive conflict (Torchia, Calabro, & Morner, 2015). In most of these cases, the direct influence of diversity on performance was still not confirmed. Morales and Rahe (2009), for instance, found that gender, as an independent variable, does not have any influence on perceived team performance. McCormick (2006) showed only marginal links of religious diversity and managerial ideology.

Mitchell et al. (2015) investigated professional diversity against leader inclusiveness with moderating factors of status and team identity. They found support for the moderating role of professional diversity while acknowledging that social

categorization in professionally diverse teams often lead to bias, conflict, and poor outcomes.

The impact of cultural diversity on team performance is a worldwide interest. Pieterse et al. (2013) examined the role of team member goal orientation as an influencer of the diversity-performance relationship. The authors were interested in developing and testing theory about the conditions that release the performance benefits of cultural diversity. The study was confronted with the double-edged sword of cultural diversity (potential positive and likely negative impact).

Loyal behavior is an important element of team performance and a positive diversity climate may affect faultline behavior. Chung et al. (2015) examined the joint effects of diversity composition (faultline strength) and diversity management (diversity climate) on loyal behavior. They found a positive relationship between diversity climate and loyal behavior and alerted readers that creating a positive diversity climate is no small matter.

The broad range of diversity dimensions that can be paired and studied against team performance factors includes cognitive factors like time urgency, pacing style, and time perspective. Mohammed and Nadkarni (2011) studied temporal diversity and its impact on team performance for a company in India. They concluded that time-based individual differences should be considered when selecting team members and assigning roles. Ellison and Mullin (2014) extended the range of dimensions to include the provision of social goods and found that the perception that a firm supports diversity is positively associated with social capital and has no payoff for revenue performance. They

also observed that employees like the idea of a diverse workplace but are actually more comfortable in a homogeneous setting.

Cognitive diversity. Newman and Lyon (2009) suggested targeted recruiting strategies as a means to satisfy both the diversity and performance goals simultaneously. Targeted recruiting uses separate criteria (cognitive ability or personality) for recruiting minorities in order to increase diversity and reduce the adverse impact of diversity conflict.

Cognitive diversity and demographic diversity have been reframed and called deep level and surface-level by some researchers. One application of that language showed up in a study of entrepreneurial team diversity and performance. Zhou and Rossini (2015) found that the mechanism that links team diversity and entrepreneurial team performance needs further study. They proposed an integrated model to direct that study approach.

Cheng, Luckett, and Schulz (2003) explored how cognitive style diversity affects the decision quality performance for complex decision tasks. Personality types such as Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) can approximate cognitive styles. Cheng et al. found there was significantly better decision performance for cognitively diverse teams over homogeneous teams.

Similar efforts to assess the impact of cognitive diversity on team performance have been conducted. Tegarden, Tegarden, and Sheetz (2009) developed a process that explicitly identifies cognitive factions within top management teams (TMT). The study began with the assumption that cognitive diversity can positively affect team

performance. Tegarden et al. found that cognitive factions were related to task diversity and went on to develop causal maps to illustrate the existence of cognitive factions. The tool (causal maps) is limited to surfacing and analyzing cognitive diversity and does not demonstrate a positive relationship to performance.

Another example of the quantitative approach to analyzing the effect of cognitive diversity is the study by Martins, Schilpzand, Kirkman, Ivanaj, and Ivanaj, (2013), which examined the relationship between psychological safety, expertness, expertise diversity and team performance. Like many studies of this type, the definitions of cognitive diversity and team performance are selective based on the literature of preference to the researcher. It (selective definitions) further adds to the confusion and complexity of the field.

Macro studies. There is a contextual relationship between diversity and organizational performance. Richard, McMillan, Chadwick, and Dwyer (2003) explored the influence of diversity on a firm's performance. They studied 177 banks and found that racial diversity of the workforce was not related to performance overall, but the relation was moderated when the bank had an active innovation strategy. When the bank did not have an innovation strategy, increased diversity was associated with poorer financial performance. Richard et al. limited their research to one sector and demonstrated that there was no direct connection between diversity and improved financial performance.

The discussion of the value of diversity management extends outside of a Western context. Magoshi and Chang (2009) contended that even *non-diversified* companies need

to pay attention to diversity management as a competitive resource. Their study involved

data collected from 370 employees from 19 companies in Japan and Korea. The scope of

the inquiry was on employees' commitment and perception of procedural justice due to

their company's diversity management practices. They concluded that diversity

management practices trigger positive effects on employee commitment, but the result

was mediated by their perception of procedural justice. The authors made note that

diversity management is not well established in these two countries, which was a limiting

factor for the study as an indicator of how diversity management has direct impact on

organizational performance

Public sector. A number of organizations across sectors have begun efforts

toward managing workforce diversity. At the federal level in the United States, almost 90

percent of agencies report that they are actively managing diversity. However, very little

empirical research has tied diversity management to work group performance or other

work-related outcomes. Choi and Rainey (2010) used a survey of U.S. federal employees

to test the relationships between diversity management, job satisfaction, and work group

performance. The findings indicate that diversity management is strongly linked to both

work group performance and job satisfaction, and that people of color see benefits from

diversity management beyond those experienced by white employees.

One of the first large sample studies using public sector data to link diversity

management with work-related outcomes was described by Pitts (2009). It was an

attempt to include the public sector in the conversation about the value of diversity

management as a contributor to organizational effectiveness. The study analyzed data

from a major federal survey and included 140,000 responses, which were considered representative of the profile of federal government employees. The dependent variables were work group performance and job satisfaction. The independent variable was extent that employees felt diversity management was being practiced. The findings indicated that the perception of diversity management was strongly linked to both work group performance and job satisfaction. The link was particularly true for people of color. Pitts acknowledged the limited utility of his study as an indicator of the real value of diversity management due to its limited scope and because it was based on secondary data and focused on employee opinion and attitudes and not on direct empirical data.

Frink et al. (2003) conducted studies that investigated how firm performance was related to the percent of employees who are women. Both studies found support for a curvilinear relationship (rather than linear), with performance maximized around 53% women, though the second study found the effect in only one of five industry sectors. They speculated about the inconsistency and suggested that future research focus on the intermediate effects by which gender effects are generated.

Beyond country differences, diversity-related studies examined differences between private and public sector workplaces. Hur and Strickland (2015) examined the impact of diversity management practices (DMPs) on outcomes in local governments in North Carolina. They found that DMP adoption was not a big help for achieving traditional goals and that more study at the local government level is needed to discover what does and does not work for managing diversity.

Non-U.S. settings. The practice of diversity management must be moderated when applied in less developed countries. The tradeoff between the costs and benefits of diversity cannot be easily mitigated without the necessary institutional support (VanAlstine et al., 2013). The often-neglected dimension of diversity called religion cannot be neglected and warrants special attention in less developed countries.

There are other elements of diversity management study that differ when applied in non-U.S. settings. Shin, Kim, Lee, and Bian (2012) theorized and tested conditions under which cognitive team diversity was positively related to individual team member creativity with employees from several Chinese companies. They found that the relationship held up only when individual creative self-efficacy was high and when transformational leadership was high. Liao and Long (2016) likewise studied team members in China to test the effect of cognitive diversity on team performance with alertness as a moderator. They found that cognitive diversity increased alertness, which in turn increased team performance. They suggested that the results might have been peculiar to cultures like the Chinese.

In a similar study, Wang, Kim, and Lee (2016) theorized and tested an integrated model for the relationship between cognitive diversity and team creativity with employees from South Korea. Again, they found that the relationship held up only when transformational leadership was high. Buyl et al. (2011) used a data set of Dutch and Belgian IT firms to investigate the moderating role of CEO characteristics on the relationship between TMT functional diversity and firm level performance. They also

found a positive effect of CEO traits in unleashing the performance benefits of functional diversity.

The effect of country culture on diversity management outcomes is becoming increasingly apparent. The demographic (surface-level) dimensions of diversity that are relevant in a U.S. context may not apply in other countries. Rawat and Basergekar (2016) used employees of organizations in India to test whether demographic diversity led to differences in perception of a supportive work environment and if that perception influenced the performance scores of individual employees.

Deep-level diversity was used examine the relationship between board diversity, board creativity, and cognitive conflict. Torchia et al. (2015) chose specifically to go beyond surface level diversity to determine what triggers cognitive conflict of board members. They used samples from Norwegian companies for the study. They found that the level of member interactions played a significant role in mediating board relationships. Here, deep level (cognitive) diversity was a necessary choice because there is little surface level (demographic) diversity present in Norway.

Talke, Salomo, and Rost (2010) hypothesized that top management team (TMT) task-related diversity affects the strategic decision to focus on innovation fields, which, in turn, increases innovation and firm performance. The sample consisted of about 106 publicly traded manufacturing firms with a single-product business, mostly from Europe (79%) and North America (18%). They found that TMT diversity had a strong impact on a firm's decision to focus on innovation. The conclusions they drew were limited in scope and not directly related to the area of diversity management.

A Return to Early Success Principles

The ability to move a field to the next level often requires going back to the beginning and rebooting the success principles discovered when the field was in its nascent stage. Many organizations are failing to reap any business benefits from their diversity efforts (Rawat & Basergekar, 2016). Considering the level of investment in the field, Hansen (2003) expressed a need for a change that produces reliable, predictable and sustainable benefits in return for the time, attention, and investment in diversity efforts.

The lack of progress in confirming the diversity-performance link is also due to the variety of conceptual and operational definitions that have evolved in the field. Mello and Rentsch (2015) examined the various ways that researchers talk about cognitive diversity and team functioning and concluded that direct comparisons across studies are impractical and uninformative. Many studies (for example, Newman & Lyon, 2009; Tegarden et al., 2009) involve quantitative analysis of cognitive diversity using a variety of variables (including job attitudes, values, perspectives, perceptions, work styles, thinking styles, learning styles, personality, goal orientation, skills and abilities, background, preferences, and assumptions).

Van Knippenberg et al. (2004) continued the call for recognizing that the management of diverse group processes is the challenge of diversity management. They added that none of the meta-analytical integration studies have successfully linked diversity with performance and that the nature of the expected performance is not well defined. They concluded that the study of specific dimensions of diversity should be abandoned in favor of an assumption that all dimensions of diversity have positive and

negative effects. Van Knippenberg et al. (2004) supported the need to carefully manage diverse teams in order to get benefit and value from them.

The body of knowledge in the field of diversity management has focused almost exclusively on defining diversity in its many dimensions and searching for the right combination of performance factors to assert a correlation relationship. There has been very little field study to determine how to manage diversity to get the benefits touted by researchers and practitioners alike. Rupprecht et al. (2011) suggested that HRD practitioners should choose to deliberately put together teams using informational diversity as a criterion. That idea of deliberate infusion of diverse perspectives on teams points to a new possibility for research and practice of diversity management. Harrison and Klein (2007) urged researchers to specify the type of diversity (separation, variety, or disparity) they are studying and test them in practice (operationalize them). Homberg and Bui (2013) concluded that diversity should be actively managed to become an asset. They added that the large body of literature heralding the positive effects of diversity on corporate performance (with no evidence of empirical effect) indicates the presence of publication bias (conducting studies that are likely to be published).

There is a great deal of discussion by practitioners about the value of inclusion (a successor concept to diversity management). For example, Sabharwal (2014) suggested that diversity management alone is not sufficient for improving workplace performance; organizations should foster inclusion. This idea mirrors the traditional notion that diversity alone is insufficient for improving workplace performance; managers should practice diversity management. Sabharwal (2014) claimed that organizations need to

foster inclusion in which individuals feel a sense of belonging and part of critical processes.

Focus on managers. A significant gap exists between the rhetoric espoused by diversity management policies and the reality experienced by employees (Soldan & Nankervis, 2014). The ability to implement the principles of diversity management and convert them to action is the next big step in the evolution of the field. The lack of line management involvement and accountability is the biggest barrier to effective implementation of the principles of diversity management (Soldan & Nankervis, 2014).

Diversity management research has generally not translated into practice. Researchers need to turn their attention to the concerns of organizations, which are looking for ways to administer the principles and to focus on performance with data-driven, numerical, measurable processes (Holck, Muhr & Villeseche, 2016). There is logic to diversity management that can be activated by deliberately using individual diverse expertise to solve complex, nonroutine problems (Phillips, 2014). This may call for a new way of approaching the topic of diversity management as a knowledge management and skill based effort (Donnelly, 2015).

Goode (2014) provided a comprehensive literature review and analysis of the field of diversity management. He examined the impact of diversity management on performance at the organizational level. It called for expanded study of the direct impact of effective diversity management practices on corporate performance and for including effective practices such as defining relevant results, being inclusive in scope, and professionalizing the field of diversity management.

Managing People

Since the advent of the leadership movement, research on organizational management has limited the definition of management to the transactional functions such as monitoring, evaluating, predicting, and controlling systems (Charlton & Andras, 2003). That approach overlooks the human resource components of managing, which are most relevant to my study.

Leadership and management have benefitted greatly from the collaboration between researchers and practitioners. Much of the scholarship on enterprise management has been quickly converted into practice and has resulted in convergence between academic and organizational management practice. Even the early scholarship on management science (Taylorism) enjoyed participation by both researchers and field managers (Chung, 2013). Recently, management (people) has taken a back seat to leadership. Research on leadership often blurs the line between leadership and management (Omran, Mahmood, & Hussin, 2009). In the academy, leadership studies are trending toward the concept of transformational leadership (Barker, 1997) with little effort to differentiate management from leadership. My research required clarity about the two roles (management and leadership) and favored management over leadership (managing complexity over managing change).

Effective managers needed. Gallup research indicated that only about one in ten people naturally have the necessary traits to perform as an effective manager (Beck & Harter, 2014). That study also revealed that companies fail to choose the right candidate for managing people 82% of the time. Often, managers are chosen from the best

tacticians. According to Beck and Harter (2014), being a successful coder, salesperson, customer rep, or engineer is not in any way an indication that someone will be adept at managing others.

Diversity management can be seen as an extension of the discipline of management. Unlike leadership, management requires behavioral competences and personal skills like encouragement, communication, development, teambuilding, problem solving, empathy, equanimity, delegation, and support in order to be effective (Omran et al., 2009). Line managers play a significant role in the link between HRM practices and individual team member performance (Alfes, Truss, Soane, Rees, & Gatenby, 2013). The implementation of diversity management must by implication focus on the role of line managers and the practice of management skills.

Managers provide encouragement, support, and development to help individuals increase their motivation to perform (Shoura & Singh, 1999). The humanistic movement, while somewhat chaotic and experimental, paved the way for Coaching Psychology today and the rise of positive psychology, appreciative inquiry, and human systems theory as underpinnings for 21st century personal and business coaching (Williams, 2012). The humanistic approach is not a radical departure from management theory, but may radically transform management practice (Adler, Forbes, & Willmott, 2007).

Diversity management requires new skills and the ability to explain the value of diversity to the team and to recognize and develop the team's ability to bridge faultlines (Hall, 2013). Delegation is a core management skill (Rees & Porter, 2015). One obstacle to effective delegation is the social discomfort arising from sharing power with people

who are not cast in your own image; that is, more cognitively and culturally diverse than the manager is accustomed to (Rees & Porter, 2015).

The global challenge. Managing people becomes even more complex when viewed in the context of international and intercultural encounters. Success in intercultural relationships involves cultural metacognition, which has been associated with affective closeness and creative collaboration (Mor, Morris, & Joh, 2013). Intercultural relationships are one of many diversity related challenges of modern management. It must be mastered with skills just as much as project management, planning, predicting, and all other management activities.

The globalization of business requires managers to negotiate, collaborate, and communicate across cultures (Mor et al., 2013). That is true even when business is conducted domestically. People from different cultures are represented on many work teams in the United States. That makes it inescapable that team managers and team members will encounter a need for cultural intelligence (Mor et al.) and will need new skills to navigate those situations.

Increasing complexity. Today's business is very complex and requires managers with sophisticated skills such as motivation, influence, clear expectations, conflict management, mentoring, and sharing knowledge (Jain & Anjuman, 2013). These soft skills require a deeper understanding of human beings such as their diverse perspectives (Mintzberg, 1992 as cited by Jain & Anjuman, 2013).

Leadership and management are different (Zaleznik, 1977). Leadership is a process of influence (Vroom & Jago, 2007) and the act of selling ideas, visions, and

concepts in such a way that people willingly follow (Rodgers & Hunter, 2004). It is not to be confused with the practice of management of people. Management (people) is the one-on-one, day-to-day, face-to-face act of making sure every employee has what he or she needs to be effective (Harvey & Buckley, 2002; Rodgers & Hunter, 2004). Kotter (2001) clarified that leadership is not better than management; they are two distinct and complementary roles. Management is about coping with complexity–leadership is about coping with change (Kotter, 2001).

There is some interest in the literature regarding the role of leadership as a function of diversity management. There is a tendency to label all managerial behavior as leadership; however, management behavior is designed to manage the everyday complexity of business operations while leadership behavior is only triggered in response to change (unexpected occurrences and urgent situations) that invokes strategic thinking (Holmberg & Tyrstrup, 2010). The practice of framing everyday interactions as leadership contributes to sustaining the notion of leaders as central actors in organizations, which boosts their identity and self-esteem (Holmberg & Tyrstrup, 2010). Managers are content to be in a support role and allowing the workers to be the stars of the operation (Harvey & Buckley, 2002).

Competence required. Desirable managerial competencies include such management interpersonal skills (MIPS) as: being able to control one's own emotions, being transparent and trustworthy, taking action and using opportunities, being flexible to changes, focusing on the positives, inspiring-leading and motivating with vision, employing a variety of methods to support others, developing others by providing

constructive criticism and promoting responsible behavior, initiating, resolving conflict, networking, and working together with others (Beenen & Pichler, 2016). The acquisition of those skills involves traditional formal training and non-traditional development activities like reading fiction in order to gain exposure to the complexities managers encounter with a diverse base of employees (Holley, 2016). Today's business is very complex and requires managers with sophisticated skills and a deeper understanding of human beings (Jain & Anjuman, 2013).

Unfortunately, managers like those needed for the complexity of increasing diversity are rare. Talent for managing people is innate but that does not preclude others from developing the skills to manage people effectively and control their own emotions. How one chooses to deal with not only one's own emotions, but the emotions of others as well, will determine a great deal about the experience one has both in life and in management situations (Ingram & Cangemi, 2013).

Team Performance

The study of teams and teamwork has been strong for decades and substantial knowledge has accumulated about teams (Mathieu et al., 2008). The most prevalent framework for team effectiveness has been the IPO framework advanced by McGrath (1991) and its adaptations, such as IMO. Cohen and Bailey (1997) presented an alternative model that added design factors and group psychosocial traits to explain group effectiveness. Of great interest to my research is the tradition of studying teams using laboratory experimentation along with empirical field observations (McGrath et al., 2000). That tradition may be the reason that congruency between academic study and

field practice with teams has been more natural. Teamwork, team effectiveness, and group management have long been a part of the lexicon of field management.

The traditional study of teams was advanced by the notion that teams are complex, adaptive, and dynamic systems and must (a) be studied at different levels (group and intergroup), (b) recognize the uniqueness of each team, (c) acknowledge the diversity of members, and (d) account for the temporal dimension of team development (McGrath et al., 2000). Marks, Mathieu, and Zaccaro (2001) extended the content domain for team processes and confirmed the temporal dimension of team effectiveness with the idea of "episodes" (distinguishable periods of time over which performance occurs and feedback accrues).

Another area of interest is the use of interprofessional teams as a tool to improve effectiveness. Mitchell et al. (2015) found that interprofessional teams (members of different professions collaborating on service delivery and decision making) can be the source of conflict and poor performance as well as an important contributor to effectiveness due to the advantages of broad professional expertise. Balancing these two possibilities is the challenge of managers who want to find new ways to improve performance. The key is to try using the tool and demonstrating the efficacy of its use. It takes commitment and skill to attempt new approaches to managing projects and team operations.

Eesley, Hsu, and Roberts (2014) expanded the assessment of team effectiveness to the makeup of start-up ventures and the performance of those ventures. They found

that among founding teams, technically focused teams perform higher with a cooperative venture and diverse teams perform higher with a competitive venture.

The advent of multicultural teams (both real and virtual) produced another hurdle for team effectiveness. In effect, teams consisting of members with diverse cultural, professional, and personal backgrounds achieve either excellent or miserable results (Berg, 2012). The difference appears to be in how well the teams are managed and how the team leader both takes into account and takes advantage of the cognitive differences among team members. One of the management techniques that seem to improve team performance for multicultural teams is to use anonymity (virtuality) in the early stages of team development before allowing the team to operate in a traditional face-to-face manner (Berg, 2012). Anonymity seems to override the natural reaction to differences until each member has established him/herself based on competence and contribution.

Team cohesion is alternately at odds with and predictive of team effectiveness. There is a generally accepted positive association between cohesion (group members inclinations to forge social bonds, stick together, and remain united) and performance. But cohesion is not a unilateral concept. Mach, Dolan, and Tzafrir (2010) found that team member trust had a direct and indirect effect of team performance and that team cohesion played a mediating role. Liang, Shih, and Chiang (2015) found that team-helping behavior is negatively affected by both surface-level (demographic) diversity and deep-level (trait) diversity and that team cohesion will mediate that effect. Even in the field of diversity management, research has found that the negative relationship of functional

diversity and team performance is mitigated by team cohesion (Tekleab, Karaca, Quigley, & Tsang, 2016).

The advent of multicultural teams has also influenced the literature on team performance. Moon (2013) explored performance changes over time with multicultural teams and found that teams with higher levels of cultural intelligence (a component of diversity management) exhibited more performance improvement.

The final arena of team performance addressed in the literature has to do with the concept of virtual teams. It is becoming common for companies to have teams with members located in different geographic locations (Lu, Watson-Manheim, Chudoba, & Wynn, 2006). Lu et al. showed that geographic distribution is not a negative influence on team performance while a variety of communication, information, and task practices have a negative influence. There are clear advantages, disadvantages and barriers to success with virtual teams and firms who develop the capability to form virtual teams will be able to respond to change quickly and capture a competitive advantage (Bergiel, Bergiel, & Balsmeier, 2008). Culturally diverse virtual teams tend to exhibit higher performance than culturally diverse face-to-face (F2F) teams when appropriate communication tools are used (Staples & Zhao, 2006). The faultline phenomenon discussed in these studies can be mitigated by use of virtuality and making sure that natural faultline groups are not collocated (Polzer et al., 2006).

An interesting extension of the team effectiveness argument is the notion that team diversity may produce low performance over time. Rubino et al. (2014) found that performance diversity had an increasingly negative effect on team performance the

longer the team was together. Similarly, Lee (1996) illustrated how executive team effectiveness waned over time as cohesiveness diminished the positive effects of team diversity.

Summary and Conclusions

Diversity management is distinguished from other forms of diversity research by the intent to demonstrate positive links to business performance. This literature review examined three distinct areas of scholarship that inform the proposed phenomenological study of diversity management as a business performance tool. I reviewed literature on (a) diversity management, (b) management and leadership and (c) team performance and effectiveness.

Literature related to diversity management falls into four categories based on the evolution of the field. The beginning of the field involved moving from the social and political emphasis of scholarly inquiry to an emphasis on the potential for positive business impact. This phase of study ended with the gradual but definite departure from the original intent. The next phase of scholarly inquiry about diversity was the exploration of the link between the inevitable increase in diversity and performance at the firm, team, and individual levels. These studies included some laboratory studies that confirmed the potential for diversity to positively affect performance, but generally these studies concluded that the dual goals of managing diversity and increasing performance are often at odds. Once researchers recognized the vast array of diversity dimensions, there was an effort to relate discrete elements of diversity to the many factors that affect performance. Each of these studies (almost exclusively quantitative) began with the intent

to demonstrate a positive diversity–performance link and each reported that that relationship is inconclusive or negative. Finally, recent studies have made efforts to return to the original construct and to expand the knowledge base regarding diversity management as a management discipline. Researchers have become more openly critical of past efforts and are proposing more empirical studies with a focus on skills, practice, and direct impact. My research attempted to follow that path.

Diversity management includes the word management for a reason. The literature on the management of teams and firms is well developed and extends from Taylorism to modern concepts of human interaction at work. I tried to make a clear distinction between the role of leadership and the role of management so that it is clear why the conceptual framework of my study is called diversity management.

Finally, I reviewed the literature on team performance. There is a rich legacy of cooperation between the academy and the field to develop and use practices that make teaming and teamwork more effective in producing positive outcomes. Recent scholarship tends to explore different types of teams that have evolved with the advent of globalization, technology, and virtuality. We know a lot about what makes teams work with homogeneous composition. There is a gap in understanding how high levels of diversity affect team effectiveness.

This literature review revealed some overlap among the three areas of interest (diversity management, management skills, and team performance). However, it showed little research effort to combine the three to produce practical ways to manage diversity at the team level using available tools and effective practice. Given that gap in the literature,

my research focused on the lived experiences of line managers in the field who have

responsibility to produce positive outcomes with a team of highly diverse employees.

In Chapter 3, I outline my approach to closing the gaps in knowledge and practice

using a qualitative research plan.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions

and lived experiences of frontline managers and their role in the execution of diversity

management programs. Because there is a dearth of qualitative research to determine if

diversity management can improve team performance, this qualitative phenomenological

study was aimed at identifying knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and practices of line

managers and to increase the scholarly understanding of the lived experience of managers

of diverse teams. In this chapter, I present the research design, including the rationale for

selection of phenomenology, the role of the researcher, methodology, including the

sampling strategy, the criteria for selecting participants, the data collection and data

analysis process, issues of trustworthiness, and a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question for my study was the following: What are the perceptions

and lived experiences of frontline managers and their role in the execution of diversity

management programs? The question grew out of a desire to know what line managers

thought about diversity management and how it could benefit team and firm

performance.

One of the principles of LEAN manufacturing is that every management problem

can be solved with information from workers on the shop floor (Balle' & Balle', 2005).

In the case of the diversity-performance link and finding ways to gain benefit from

diversity management, line managers (on the shop floor) are held accountable for getting

the best from an increasingly diverse workforce. As indicated in Chapter 2, the current

pattern of inquiry regarding diversity management is focused on discrete dimensions of diversity and known variables affecting team or firm performance. The most prevalent units of study in the current pattern of inquiry include firms, HR departments, and top executive teams. Those foci exclude the people who are closest to the action and responsible for delivering results. My research design specifically included that population.

The focus of my study was the idea that well-managed diversity triggers improvement in team performance, which in turn affects overall firm performance. Research in controlled environments has confirmed that the presence of a broad range of perspectives (cognitive diversity) is more important than expertise in solving complex problems, making decisions, projecting more accurate predictions, and promoting overall team performance (Page, 2007). The fact that those outcomes have not been realized in field operations (i.e., companies have not realized benefit from increased diversity) was the motivation for my research.

I used a phenomenological approach to address the central question of how line managers perceive and respond to the reality that increased diversity is part of the landscape of business in which they must operate. I arrived at this approach after consideration of several other qualitative study designs. Qualitative research was the obvious choice based on the nature of the research question and the need for more empirical data regarding the management of diversity in the workplace. Rather than impose preconceived notions or theories on the topic, I wanted to know what the participants (line managers) were thinking. Participants knew more about the thing I was

studying and had important insights that I would have missed if I had not taken their

perceptions seriously (Maxwell, 2013). Those perceptions are real and inform the daily

behaviors and beliefs of the managers (Maxwell, 2013). A quantitative study is very

structured and would not give me the freedom to explore the variety of insights that

emerged from a free exchange with experienced line managers.

I was initially drawn to the grounded theory (GT) approach to qualitative inquiry.

For many good reasons, GT has become the most commonly used qualitative research

method for doctoral theses and dissertations (Wu & Beaunae, 2014). The desire to

contribute significant scholarship to my field of practice would have been served by a GT

study as it provides a rigorous scientific way to seek out novel perspectives (Patnaik,

2015) and an approach free of preconceived assumptions that could have distracted me

from the insights I was seeking (Piko, 2014). However, the research question I crafted did

not require the level of rigor and time involved in a GT study.

Both the philosophy and practice of phenomenology as a research approach

extend from the tradition of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and Martin Heidegger (1889-

1976). These two philosophers conceived phenomenology as an examination of

consciousness and as an examination of what Heidegger called *Dasein* or "being there"

(Solomon, 2000). The idea is to study things, as they are experienced, not as we propose

they should be. Phenomenology is a way to access the world as we experience it before

reflecting on how we experience it and to give meaning to what we observe (Van Manen,

2016).

Several descriptors have evolved to further define the practice of phenomenology as a study approach. Hermeneutic phenomenology requires the researcher to surrender to a state of wonder and to abstain from any theoretical attachment while reflecting on the lived experience of other humans (Van Manen, 2016). Empirical phenomenology is aimed at safeguarding the perspective of those studied, exploring their meaning before the researcher's meaning (Aspers, 2009). Descriptive phenomenology invites researchers to put aside their presuppositions in order to manage bias (Connelly, 2010). Interpretive phenomenology recognizes that biases cannot be put aside; the researcher must acknowledge them and document the effect they have on the study (Connelly, 2010).

According to Friesen, Feenberg, and Smith (2009), the goal of phenomenology is to make commonplace activities and the meaning associated with them objects of explicit reflection. It requires observation and description rather than explanation and analysis. Phenomenology tends to look at data thematically to extract the essence and essentials of participants' meaning (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Phenomenology was the best approach for my research because it provided a straightforward methodology to learn from the lived experience of participants with as little researcher bias as possible. It opened up the possibility through simple interviewing and observation to gain a parsimonious insight that fits, that works, is relevant, and is transferable (Piko, 2014).

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative methods, the researcher is the instrument (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher brings his/her own paradigms, perspectives, experience, knowledge, and expectations to the research process. The resulting bias should be acknowledged and

documented and the potential impact identified (Connelly, 2010). In my study I employed interviews using open-ended questions to elicit authentic descriptions of the lived experiences of line managers with high levels of diversity among workers. As the interviewer, I was triggered to probe or request clarifications in order to get the most complete description I could. I acknowledge that I am a 30-year veteran practitioner in the field of diversity management and as such, I bring a wealth of knowledge and experience (and bias) to the process of defining and describing what effective diversity management could entail.

I mitigated the impact of my biases, not put them aside, by basing all this inquiry on the content of the existing literature and focusing on the theories and perspectives of the study participants. I recognized that it requires a level of skill to elicit the detail needed to answer the research question. That skill has been garnered over 20 years of conducting qualitative studies involving corporate culture analysis. That experience has also taught me to subjugate my expectations in favor of the data gathered from the study subjects. The study subjects were drawn from frontline managers with experience managing teams composed of diverse members. There should be no conflicts of interest or power differentials evident in the data collection process.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The sampling frame for my study consisted of successful line managers who have responsibility for achieving business goals with a diverse team composition. In addition, I focused on the experiences of frontline managers who had knowledge of diversity

management and who contributed directly to their company's performance. The sampling strategy for this qualitative study was purposeful sampling using criterion-based samples and key knowledge samples (Patton, 2015). For this inquiry, it was important that the participants were aware of diversity management as a concept and that they had some experience managing a diverse team. These participants were identified and drawn from a pool of frontline managers using a LinkedIn advanced search procedure. The criteria for selection included the following: the participant (a) had been a frontline manager for 5 years or more, (b) managed a team composed of diverse members, (c) was aware of diversity management as a concept, and (d) produced direct benefit to company performance. Participation was voluntary and the selected managers gave informed consent in order to be interviewed.

Each candidate was contacted by email and by phone and invited to participate based on their response to the invitation letter (Appendix A) or their nomination by a member of my network of acquaintances. After participants responded to the contact, I sent a copy of the Study Overview and Consent Form, and then selected the respondents who best fit the criteria and who submitted signed consent forms to produce a list of 12 participants. They were scheduled for a 1-hour interview. According to Patton (2015) the target sample size could grow if greater breadth is required, or it could be reduced if saturation is achieved earlier in the study. I analyzed data after each interview to determine when I reached the point that no new ideas or concepts were emerging to determine if saturation or redundancy has occurred. I planned to interview at least 10 participants whether or not saturation was evident.

Instrumentation

Appendix C is the interview protocol for the study. It was a researcher-developed instrument based on the literature review and the inferences from the research question of my study. These questions have been crafted in a facilitative format that evoked rich discussion. I conducted the interviews using a technology-enabled video-conferencing tool (zoom.us) and speakerphone.

Technology has become an enabling factor for qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Technology makes it possible to collect data for research without being bound by place or time. Face-to-face interviews allow the researcher to explore the words, the inflection, and the body language of the respondents. Any of these may trigger a follow up or probing question that enhances the depth of the inquiry. When situations precluded the use of face-to-face interviews (participants were drawn from a variety of locations), alternative methods were employed. According to Creswell, the use of online data collection is an alternative that must be considered even though there are increased ethical concerns (privacy, ownership, authenticity, trust) by using that method.

Procedures for Pilot Studies

I conducted a pilot study using the proposed interview protocol as a means to validate the instrument. The interview protocol was found to be sufficient to answer the research question: What are the attitudes, perceptions and lived experiences of frontline and middle managers in their role of executing diversity management programs? The pilot study helped to establish that sufficiency. For convenience and to avoid the possibility of having pilot participants show up as participants in the main

study, I recruited two managers who met the criteria using my network of connections on LinkedIn. The request for participants included the nature of the study and outlined the requirements of the participants and the expectations of the researcher. The intent of the pilot study was to determine if the interview questions as listed (based on experience and bricolage) would elicit the types of rich responses needed for this inquiry (Patton, 2015). The results allowed me to make adjustments as needed.

Procedures for Participation and Data Collection

Participants sat for an interview with the researcher in a face-to-face meeting or through technology tools that allowed visual and auditory communication between the parties. The study overview and participant consent form included sample questions, which helped participants prepare mentally for the interview session. The interview was intended to be conversational and low-impact. I used interview techniques like open-ended questions, probing, follow-up, and reflection to insure a more complete collection of data regarding the perceptions and experiences of the participants in their role as managers of teams with diverse composition.

I recorded interview questions, responses, and follow-up dialogue using a DVR device or the recording feature of the online and teleconference services. In addition, I took physical notes as a trigger for follow-up and probing questions (Patton, 2015). The physical notes and the recordings were transcribed for review and comparison as part of the data analysis process. At the close of each event, I thanked the participants and allowed them to ask any questions about the topic and about the study. As a safeguard, I

requested their agreement to allow me to follow up in case any of their responses required clarification or confirmation.

The means of data collection may vary, but the skills to perform are the same. We interview to find out what we cannot observe directly (Patton, 2015). We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, or intentions. A skillful interviewer must exercise the skills of rapport building, being nonjudgmental, showing interest without appearing pushy, and being authentic and trustworthy. The quality of information gathered in an interview is dependent on the interviewer (Patton, 2015). A skilled interviewer must master the skill of facilitation. The respondent is assumed to be interested in sharing what they know (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The interviewer must work to produce well-crafted questions that allow the respondent to provide the most useful information.

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of the interview questions was to elicit insights about the research question: What are the attitudes, perceptions, and lived experiences of frontline and middle managers in their role of executing diversity management programs? The expected data were narrative and expansive. It covered a broad range of managerial experiences and touched on a number of themes relative to diversity management, management skills, and team performance. I used a modified Van Kaam method as outlined in Moustakas (1994) to analyze the data. That method helped me get the full value of the insights from participants by considering the entire transcript of the interviews and to use both categorizing and connecting strategies to parse the data (Maxwell, 2013).

The interview session was transcribed in its entirety for each participant. My task as the researcher was to review the data and identify related responses and general themes. I began by hand-coding the data. Once I determined that the number of themes was too large for hand coding, I used a Qualitative Data Analysis System (Nvivo) to organize the data and to assist in managing the process of categorizing and connecting themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The final product was coded and summarized by theme with verbatim examples from the various participants, first by industry sector and then by generic insight.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I have identified and acknowledged my personal biases as a 30-year practitioner in the field of diversity management. Qualitative research uses indicators of validity different from quantitative research. It is the responsibility of the researcher to demonstrate scholarly rigor and data integrity for the readers of the research. That is generally accomplished through the process of rich description. Rich description attempts to take the reader on the same journey of discovery as the researcher encountered in order to suggest that the reader would code the data and come to the same conclusions as the researcher. The credibility of the study is demonstrated by methodological validity and interpretive validity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). I tried to demonstrate methodological validity by a careful and detailed description of the steps and rationale for the study process. In addition, I followed Maxwell's (2013) validity checklist to ensure I had covered all the elements of rigor in the study. Interpretive validity was demonstrated by

allowing professional colleagues to review a few interview scripts discussing their sense

of the themes and findings. Two additional methods were employed to further enhance

the credibility: member check and triangulation of data.

Transferability

According to Miles et al. (2014), external validity, or transferability, of qualitative

inquiry should consider the following factors: (a) full description of the people, settings,

processes, and context so as to permit comparisons to other groups, (b) thick description

of findings so that readers can assess the potential transferability, and (c) a range of

readers report the findings are consistent with their own experiences. I attended to these

considerations by conducting studies with managers in different industries and different

management structures. This element of the study did not guarantee the generalizability

of the data, but supported the likely applicability of the findings to other situations under

similar conditions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

In the recent past, research on diversity management in the workplace has not

focused on the role of frontline and middle managers. The focus of my study was the

perceptions, attitudes, and lived experiences of frontline and middle managers in a variety

of industry sectors. There is growing interest among researchers and practitioners in

understanding the role of middle manager attitudes in gaining benefit from diversity

management programs (Madera et al., 2017). I presented a thorough description of the

components of my research and used techniques like member checking to confirm that

my interpretations were valid and transferrable. The general interview protocol was

revised and improved during the study and served as a general guide for future study on this topic.

Dependability

Establishing dependability in qualitative research requires the researcher to ensure application of consistent and stable processes throughout the entire study. I selected a purposeful sampling method in order to establish a tight set of criteria for participation. I used tested practices to ensure the ability to capture real impressions and lived experiences of participants. Those practices included face-to-face interviews, semistructured interview format, a digital audio recording device, and open-ended questions. I provided a clear audit trail and used member checking procedures and detailed records of the entire study process. That was a dependable check against the bias of the researcher and a confirmation that the conclusions reached are logical, reliable, and transparent.

Confirmability

The findings of the research should be directly related to the data and not the bias or subjectivity of the researcher. The reader needs to be confident that bias and subjectivity of the researcher are not the basis of the findings. According to Van Manen (2014), the validity of a phenomenological study depends on the originality of insights and the soundness of the interpretive processes. I used rich description of process and rationale (the audit trail) to help the reader understand the findings of my study.

Miles et al. (2014) listed the considerations to follow in order to ensure confirmability. Those considerations include (a) rich description of methods and

procedures, (b) the sequence of data collection can be followed, (c) the researcher is self-aware of biases and self-objective about the ability to manage biases. I tried to adhere diligently to those considerations.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions of line managers regarding the connection between higher levels of diversity and improved team performance. Phenomenological methodology is the right approach for my study, which seeks to gain insights about diversity management from the people who are living the experience of managing diversity daily. The proposed participant population for my study was non-administrative line operations managers in enterprises with clear performance measures.

The role of the researcher was that of interviewer and interpreter of the responses to deliberately crafted questions. Participants were recruited from managers in enterprises with 5 or more years experience in the role of manager. The data collection instrument was the researcher using an open-ended interview protocol designed by the researcher. Data analysis followed the validity checklist outlined by Maxwell (2013). Issues of trustworthiness were the subjects of attention in each phase of the research in order to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the pilot study, research setting, participant demographics, data collection, data analysis process, strategies for ensuring trustworthiness, and a summary of the findings.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of my study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of frontline managers and their role in the execution of diversity management programs. Because there was a dearth of qualitative research to determine whether diversity management can improve team performance, this phenomenological study was aimed at identifying knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and practices of line managers who do the work to make diversity management a benefit for the enterprise.

The central research question for this phenomenological research study was as follows: What are the perceptions and lived experiences of frontline managers and their role in the execution of diversity management programs? Chapter 4 includes a description of the pilot study, research setting, participant demographics, participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and the strategies I used to ensure trustworthiness. The chapter ends with a summary of the results and main findings, as well as an introduction to Chapter 5.

Pilot Study

I submitted the study outline and the interview protocol for comment by two practitioners (one chief diversity officer and one senior line manager). The purpose was to determine if the questions, as crafted, would be understood by managers and would elicit the kind of rich sharing of experience they were designed to. Their feedback suggested that Question 1 be presented in two parts to (a) explore what happened in the participants' careers so that they became managers, and (b) learn why they think they should have become a manager. The reviewers also thought I should connect Question 6

back to the answers and reflections in Question 3. Finally, they suggested that I use a ten-point scale to assess the response to diversity management programs (Question 8).

I made note of the suggestions and included them in my interviewing notes. I chose not to change the formal interview protocol. Instead, the comments reminded to be more aware of the responses I got while interviewing so I could adjust the presentation of the questions and to be alert to the need to probe and follow up in order to get the types of responses necessary for the integrity of the study. Those reminders proved to be valuable as I experienced a wide range of perspectives and modes of expression from the participants. After a few interviews, I began opening the sessions with a statement that the overall intent was to get a free-flowing conversation going and that the questions were intended to trigger their thinking about the experiences and perceptions of managing teams with diverse compositions. This made the conversations more fluid but it complicated the process of identifying unifying themes since, in many cases, there was not a direct question-and-answer link.

Research Setting

The sampling strategy I used was a criterion-based purposeful sample. The criteria included experience as a frontline manager of a diverse team, at least 5 years of experience as a manager, and willingness to be open about the experience of managing a diverse team. All interviews, except two, were conducted using a video conferencing service (zoom.us) for video and cellphone for audio. Only two face-to-face interviews were conducted even though many of the participants were from nearby locations.

Interviews were recorded using a DVR (digital voice recorder) and copied to my

computer as .mp4 files.

Participant Recruitment

I received approval from the Walden University institutional review board (IRB)

before beginning the active recruitment of participants (IRB approval number 04-11-18-

0484945). I attempted to recruit directly from my LinkedIn connections and groups as

prescribed in the IRB application. I issued an initial announcement and monitored

responses for a week and a half. I also sent follow-up notifications every four days to

insure people had a chance to respond. Several people responded to the initial

announcement through the LinkedIn InMail feature. None of those respondents were part

of the final cohort of participants. In some cases, they failed to respond to the follow-up

InMail. Others concluded that they were not a match for the study and dropped out of the

candidate pool. Finally, several people in my network responded to the recruitment

announcement posted on LinkedIn and LinkedIn groups and agreed to refer participants

to the study. I followed up on their leads and contacted the managers directly. After

establishing initial contact with each participant by direct email, I sent each person a

consent form. They all responded by returning a signed copy of the consent form. I then

scheduled interviews using the invitation feature of zoom.us as well as my own iCal

scheduler. Each participant was notified of the scheduled date and time of their interview

and indicated their acceptance of the schedule.

None of the participants knew me professionally nor were they known by me.

Members of my network of acquaintances knew them and their agreement to participate

could have been influenced by those relationships. The final cohort of participants met and exceeded my diversity recruitment requirements. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 48 minutes and each interview covered the same general areas of content about the life and experience of managing a team of diverse employees.

Demographics

I identified 12 individuals with experience managing diverse teams for the study. They represented 10 distinct industry sectors including technology, professional service, food and beverages, telecommunications, and others. My network of acquaintances (including my LinkedIn connections) includes many people from the Atlanta area; therefore, the majority of the participants (10 of 12) resided in the Atlanta area, though most of them had worked in a variety of localities (both nationally and internationally). The other participants were from Jacksonville (FL) and Chicago (IL). The participants consisted of 4 males and 8 females. There were six Black and six White participants. Four of the managers were 30-39 years of age, five were ages 40-49, three were ages 50-59, and one was age 60+. Their tenure as managers ranged from 5 years to over 25 years. Prescribed participant demographics appear in Table 1. In addition, I noted that there were five managers of blue-collar (production) teams and seven managers of white-collar (professional) teams. The managers also represented organizations that ranged in size from less than one hundred to over fifty thousand. Overall the mix of participants met and even exceeded the diversity requirements of the design.

Table 1

Participant Demographics and Diversity Profiles

Participant	Industry	Tenure	Race	Gender	Age Group
C5-101	Transportation	16	Black	Male	50-59
C5-102	Transportation	7	Black	Male	40-49
C5-701	Consumer Products	10	Black	Female	40-49
C5-111	Technology	12	Black	Female	40-49
C5-112	Hospitality	12	White	Male	30-39
C5-141	Professional Services	5	Black	Female	30-39
C5-142	Telecom	20+	White	Female	40-49
C5-151	Consumer Products	25	Black	Female	50-59
C5-152	Food & Beverages	9	White	Male	30-39
C5-161	Non-Profit	15	White	Female	40-49
C5-171	Energy	20	White	Female	60+
C5-181	Multiple	15	White	Female	50-59

Data Collection

Twelve managers participated in a semistructured interview using the general

outline of the Participant Interview Protocol (Appendix C). The interviews began with a

summary of their professional experiences with a focus on how and why they became

people managers. That warm-up question was intended to evoke expansive responses to

the subsequent questions, which addressed philosophy, experience, observations, and

insights about the role of managing a diverse team.

Location, Frequency, and Duration

I conducted interviews during a 2-week period in May 2018. The duration of the

interviews ranged from 30 to 48 minutes. I recorded the interviews using a digital voice

recorder and immediately transferred the recordings to my personal computer in a nested

file designated for audio recordings.

The two face-to-face interviews were the first ones conducted. I was invited to

interview two managers on the same day at their place of work. We were set up in a

semi-private cubicle. Face-to-face interviewing had the advantage of increased levels of

communication (non-verbal). The disadvantage was the noise, distractions, and perceived

lack of privacy in an office setting. One participant began to speak in low tones and use

convoluted language to describe some of his experiences with race and gender issues. I

had to remind him we were recording and that all subjects were welcomed and valued.

That experience confirmed the decision to conduct all remaining interviews remotely.

The ability to talk from secure and private locations was greater using remote video and

audio tools. The interviews were recorded and I also took physical notes to identify areas that needed expansion or clarification at other points in the conversation.

Variations

Although I followed the data collection plan as presented in the IRB application, I made minor variations as I gained experience with how each question provoked responses from the participants. For example, I found that certain trigger words made it easier for participants to understand the inference of the questions. I added words like conflict, tension, and confusion to clarify the intent of challenges with diverse teams (Question 3). I also used interviewing techniques like probing, restatement, and expansion to draw out answers from participants so that the responses were as rich and detailed as possible.

Each interview began with a high-level overview of the intent of the conversation and an acknowledgement of the valuable contribution to be made by the participant to the field of management. The questions were asked in the order they were listed in the interview protocol. I used my judgment to determine when a comment needed further expansion or clarification and I used interviewing techniques to elicit rich descriptive answers to each question.

Unusual Circumstances

I experienced learning as I conducted the interviews. For example, some participants used different language to express the concepts under discussion. I had to adjust the questioning to reflect their language of choice while making sure the conceptual frame remained the same for all participants. I also noticed that some

participants got distracted by the word diversity and had to refocus their attention to the elements of people management and team performance outlined in the opening overview.

I also observed a tendency on the part of some participants to tout their own record of success as a manager more than their observation of how that success was achieved, which was the focus of my study. I had to manage that dynamic and remind each participant of the intent of the inquiry.

Interview Domains

The interview protocol included questions that elicited comments about the three major areas of inquiry: management practice, diversity management, and team performance. Questions 1, 5, 9, and 10 dealt with the general practice of management. Questions 2, 3, 4, and 8 dealt more specifically with diversity management. Questions 6 and 7 referred to the requirements of effective team performance. The interview process allowed the participant to respond freely about the experiences and perceptions of managing people in general and diverse teams in particular. There were times when a response to a single question included content related to two and sometimes all three of the domains of interest for my study.

Interpretive (Hermeneutic) Approach

I was the only researcher involved in this project. I was involved in the research design, selection of interview questions, data collection, data analysis, and interpreting the research findings. I conducted the literature review on the topic and acknowledge that I am a long-standing practitioner in the field of diversity management. There was significant potential for researcher bias in this process. Rather than suppress my

knowledge of the subject, I adopted a hermeneutic approach to the study. Lopez and

Willis (2004) indicated that phenomenology is often divided into two approaches, eidetic

(descriptive) and hermeneutic (interpretive). The word *hermeneutic* derives from the

Greek god Hermes, who was responsible for both delivering and interpreting messages

between the gods (Lopez & Willis, 2004). The original proponent of the phenomenology

philosophy, Husserl, preferred the eidetic approach. Later proponents, like Heidegger,

recognized the value of researcher knowledge in collecting and making meaning of the

expressed lived experiences of participants. While bracketing is a useful concept to

control researcher bias in both cases (Sorsa, Kiikkala, & Astedt-Kurki, 2015), the

hermeneutic approach invites and embraces researcher perspectives as a part of the study

process.

One important application of the hermeneutic approach is making meaning of

diverse expressions of content. In my study, the participants had a wide range of

communications styles that included storytelling, highly structured responses, brief

summary statements, rambling remembrances, and scholarly discourse. As the researcher,

I sorted the various expressions into thematic categories that corresponded to the coding

while maintaining the integrity of the participants' patterns of expression.

Transcription

All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder (DVR). After each

interview, the recording was transferred to a computer file in .mp4 format. I used three

transcription services to produce written narratives of the interviews. Temi.com was used

for simple electronic transcription. GoTranscript provided an electronic transcription and

a simple review by a human. TranscribeMe was a first pass human transcription augmented by electronic transcription. Each service had advantages pertaining to combinations of cost, accuracy, and turnaround time. None of them produced a "clean" transcription free of spelling and grammar errors. It was difficult to clean up the transcripts and maintain the integrity of the conversation (including unique speech patterns, idioms, acronyms, industry jargon, uhs, ums, repeats, interruptions, etc.) In the end, I opted for often-muddled expressions of experiences in the actual words of the managers instead of clean impressions by transcribers.

Data Analysis

The central focus of the study was on three factors relating to (a) people management in general, (b) diversity management in particular, and (c) team performance as the outcome. Each of the 10 questions in the interview guide related to one or more of the topical factors. Data analysis procedures relied on the modified Van Kaam data analysis method outlined in Moustakas (1994) using transcribed participant responses and a combination of hand coding and coding using NVivo 11 Pro for Mac software. The decision to use a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) in addition to hand coding was influenced by the findings by Marshall and Friedman (2012), which suggested that CAQDAS tools can uncover material that is missed by hand coding. The intent of my study was to reveal as many insights from frontline managers as possible.

The NVivo 11 Pro software program also served as the central repository for data management and storage. I used Nvivo to store audio recordings of interviews, the

transcribed interviews, memo notes, the interview protocol, and the consent form. Hand coding revealed high-level patterns that matched the pre-coding themes (management, diversity management, team performance). The analysis tools in Nvivo helped to identify other patterns that I may have missed otherwise.

Hand Coding

Using hand coding as a starting point forced me to get familiar with the data. I produced over 148 pages of transcribed data. It took several reviews to get comfortable with the variety of expressions (language, jargon, dialect, speech patterns) represented in the texts. Finally, I went through each transcript and highlighted significant passages that related to the three factors.

I used the open-coding method to identify codes. My hand-coding scheme involved following the patterns outlined in the interview protocol. By doing so, I identified recurring themes that were addressed by all or most of the participants. Those themes included (a) principles of managing people, (b) characteristics of good managers, (c) defining diversity management, (d) the benefits and challenges of diverse teams, (e) behaviors of effective team managers, and (f) the value of well-managed diversity.

In Table 2, I highlight the unique themes, number of participants who commented, on that theme, and the number of unique comments related to that theme representing common elements of the participants' experiences managing diverse teams.

Table 2

Themes, participant references, and total comments

Themes	Number Of Participants (*N*=12)	Number Of Comments (*N*=104)
Managing People		
Principles of managing people	10	17
Characteristics of good managers	11	16
Managing Diversity		
Common definition of managing diversity	11	22
Benefits and challenges of diversity	8	12
Managing Teams		
Behaviors of effective team managers	11	26
The value of well-managed diversity	8	11

Coding Using NVivo 11 Pro

Before using NVivo 11 Pro software program I cleaned and reorganized the data prior to uploading it into the software program. This process took extra time. The interview transcripts were scrubbed to remove redundant language and to create more cogent sentences. I also created pseudonyms for each of the participants before importing their data into the software program in keeping with the privacy and confidentiality requirements outlined in the IRB application. I reviewed the research question, interview questions, and participant responses before saving the cleaned interview data in readiness to import into the NVivo 11 Pro software program.

I assigned a case node identifier to each coded transcript. I also developed query nodes made up of the major themes and relevant subthemes (child nodes). I also added

memo notes to the file. These files and nodes allowed me to query relationships and discover associations quickly.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The criteria for confirming the trustworthiness of qualitative research were introduced by Guba and Lincoln (1985) in the 1980s when they replaced traditional quantitative terminology for achieving rigor (reliability, validity, generalizability) with terms like credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Since that time, the four criteria have been the default for determining the rigor and quality of qualitative inquiry. Trustworthiness simply poses the question, can the findings be trusted? (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I will address each of the criteria and describe what steps I took to establish the rigor and quality of the research. In addition to the main four factors, I will address reflexivity–an addition to the criteria that is concerned with how self-aware the researcher was in conducting the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth of the data (Cope, 2014). The test of credibility (why can I believe you?) rests on the ability of other individuals in similar circumstances to immediately recognize the experiences as described. Some of the strategies used to demonstrate credibility are persistent observation, member check, and audit trail.

I took several steps to ensure the credibility of my study. I secured IRB approval for the study on April 10,2018 and followed the approved plan religiously. I established an audit trail that included interview recordings, interview transcripts, signed consent forms, memo notes, and saved Nvivo files. In addition, I used persistent observation by

being flexible and attentive to the responses of participants and adjusting the questions to match their preferred language and their speech patterns. I also sent the transcribed data to the participants and obtained their concurrence that it represented their recollection of the data collected during the interview process. One participant added a correction. All others agreed that the transcripts were accurate.

Transferability

Transferability represents the extent to which the results can be transferred to other respondents in different contexts and settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I supported the transferability of the study by the diversity of the participants and the rich description of each person's experiences. The participants represented a broad range of ages, years of experience, industries, levels of education, and size of organization as well as an even mix of race and gender. I also made consistent use of the interview protocol and introduced definitions so that there was a common language and common understanding of the key concepts in the study.

Dependability

The data were collected using a semistructured interview process. I included some flexibility so as to customize the follow-up and probing efforts to match the language and speech patterns of each participant. I used the interview protocol consistently across all participants and I recorded field notes any time the conversation went beyond the context of the questions. The study findings could be replicated with similar participants in similar conditions (Cope, 2014) by following the protocol, the field notes, and the audit trail that I recorded.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent that other researchers could confirm the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I demonstrated confirmability with the volume of responses and the richness of the responses. Each insight I identified was supported by direct quotes from the participants. The convergence of insights (similar thoughts from a variety of participants) is further demonstration of the consistency of the data. In addition, I was careful to bracket my impressions and describe only what was derived directly from the data.

Reflexivity

I recognized from the beginning of the research process that my experience as a practitioner of management and diversity management could color my impressions of the data. I was very intentional about monitoring the effect of the researcher, at every step of the research process. As a qualitative researcher I had to be self-aware and reflexive about my role in the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data and in the pre-conceived notions I brought to the research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I was careful to make memo notes during the interviews and to make sure my inquiry was positioned as questions rather than leading statements.

Study Results

From the 12 transcripts, I reviewed 144 pages of text and highlighted 104 relevant statements or insights. The insights are arranged by the three major themes and six subthemes. The three major themes are, (a) perceptions of managing people, (b) perceptions of managing diversity, and (c) perceptions of managing teams. The six

subthemes are arranged under the relevant major theme. Further, some of the subthemes include topical themes, discussed under each subtheme.

The interviews were conducted as conversations rather than question and answer sessions. Storytelling was a major part of the narratives from the participants. The number of examples given for each insight does not reflect how often that insight was alluded to in stories. I only show instances where the insight was stated overtly by any of the managers.

The results are presented in the format outlined in Table 2 (major theme, subtheme, key insight, participant comments). I provide explanations of each major theme and interpretations of subthemes and key insights based on the participants' comments. The quotes are presented in their entirety to demonstrate that the insights derive directly from the participants' statements and stories. I follow that pattern for all the data presented here.

Major Theme 1: Perceptions of Managing People

The first topical theme of my study relates to how frontline managers get the best from each individual contributor on the team. The study participants had a broad range of insights on this topic. I discuss them under the two subthemes: principles of good management (six examples) and characteristics of good managers (five examples).

Principles of good management. The participants based their perceptions of good management skills on their experiences with managers they worked for as well as their own experience of managing others. The insights were revealed by many of the

managers in stories of successful management and stated as principles by a few. I
illustrate these insights with responses from the participants.

Get to know them. Frontline managers emphasized the importance of
understanding each individual in order to get the best from that individual. Getting to
know them is a deliberate activity designed to equip the manger to be more effective. C5-
101 said,

> You get to know what motivates them, why they're there, when you're
>
> interviewing them to start the job. And then to get the best you have to feed them
>
> mentally. You have to feed them physically, taking them out to lunch and all of
>
> that spending when right. You want to challenge them and make sure that they are
>
> always engaged. You gotta be on your game all the time.
>
> C5-151 added,
>
> I have a cookie cutter approach I treat everyone the same. I do but I also feel like
>
> in that there are some very intentional things that I do with each and every person
>
> that I manage. In my one-on-ones, the format might be the same but I feel once I
>
> get to know you as a person and once I understand what makes you tick, what
>
> makes you want to excel, I feel like I can start to then groom that person for the
>
> next level.
>
> C5-152 commented,
>
> Along the way, you learn to figure out where people are going to be most
>
> valuable, where they're going to be happy too, because at the end of the day, not
>
> only was that individual not making the right decisions to lead other people, he

wasn't comfortable in that role. You just have to pay attention to the people, have an open dialogue to find out desires, and then you'll start to pull it out of them. C5-161 commented,

And you know, if we're thinking about what managers' sort of responsibility to the team is, really, understanding what the individual strengths, limitations, sometimes even fears, of our team members and trying to regard these team members situation with compassion and humility and curiosity to try to create the conditions, take away some of the barriers, eliminate some of the fears that keep people from being able to perform.

Give them responsibility. The managers believed in developing people as quickly and fully as possible. These comments illustrate how they expressed that thought. C5-101 expressed it this way,

Not everyone can be a manager, but you can actually give him or her those lead roles so they can. So they could basically understand that it's not always about the product, it is about the people and diversity that you're working with. . That doesn't give them the title, but it gives them the role and they feel more energized. They are in charge.

C5-701 also commented,

My manager gave me the autonomy to be great. I mean, that sounds simple but-- and this is very early on in my career, there was no hovering, there was no micromanaging. I was given objectives. I was given the guide rails, if you will. I was given a budget and the autonomy to create strategies and plans that I felt

would be the best for the business. Checking in, of course, with my boss. Gaining

alignment accordingly but having their respect and being able to run with things

very early on is, I think, critical.

C5-111 expanded the idea to the concept of using strengths as well as giving

people a chance to demonstrate their strengths. She said,

> Having people with different strengths that can do different things from different
>
> viewpoints and a different base of experience, either in life or in their career. It is
>
> putting people where those strengths are best utilized as a way to capitalize on
>
> everybody's strengths to go after and tackle a problem. By utilizing people for
>
> their (unique) skills it puts them in the best positions that will allow the collective
>
> team to be successful.

Give them what they need to perform. The managers consistently expressed that

a primary role for a manager is to make sure every employee has what is needed to

perform at their best. The full range of tangible and intangible needs were discussed. For

example C5-141 commented,

> The things that I needed, my manager made sure that I got and was very
>
> supportive. Not only personal support, they supported the project I'm working on.
>
> Always just provide support to make sure that I have the right mix, I have the
>
> right resources and just being available for anything that I could need.

C5-152 put it this way,

> Like I said, it's up to me to find the best people that I can possibly find, give them
>
> the tools to succeed and support them in any way that I possibly can. That is

probably a simplified view of it, but that's how I like to think of it. My primary

goal is supporting the people around me.

C5-101 added his thoughts by saying, "I'm gonna give you everything you need to

do your job. I don't think, I know that is a manager's job. I need for you to basically have

the tools to do the job I hired you for."

C5-701 also expressed support for this principle,

They also ensured that I was well networked within the organization across all of

the different functions that I needed a relationship with, ensuring that I had the

tools and the resources that I needed as well to be successful as an individual

contributor.

Know yourself. Many of the managers recognized the need to understand their

own biases as a factor in managing people effectively. Many of them alluded to it in

stories. C5-102, C5-101, and C5-161 spoke directly to the idea. C5-102 said,

One negative side is, over time, I have formulated some pictures of people. I try to

keep that in the back of my mind, but it still is in play. Sometimes I feel bad about

that because I see it. That's my bias. For example, I manage a white female who,

for some reason, forces me to be closed when dealing with her. I'm very careful.

I've never tried to raise my voice, but I'm careful in how I say things because I

realized for her, she tends to exaggerate things and I realized that as a minority

manager, if she makes an accusation, I'm at a negative point, it shouldn't be that

way. But I realized the perception is that way. So I try to stay "up" with

everybody and I will pay a little bit more attention to what I'm saying with her based on what I've seen her doing.

C5-161 talked about her personal challenge in dealing with differences of behavioral style,

I have a team heavily weighted with C's (DISC behavioral profile. C is Conscientious). So, it's a team that is really hungry for predictability and structure with clear expectations. I want to be clear in my expectations, but not to the point of undercutting the individual adult's responsibility to contribute to direction setting. So my challenge is coming to accept some of the limitations of the C personality and try to overcome some of my negative response to that behavior. Working through those differences has probably been one of the most challenging aspects of navigating diversity and diverse ways of experiencing the world.

C5-101 was very self-objective about his style,

A lot of time I'm not a good people person. I'm not a likable person. I'm stringent. I'm hard, rigid, but I believe in people and I believe in my product, so that gives me that thing where I wouldn't talk about anything else except my work. So if I was in a place I wouldn't talk about, I wouldn't be the guy that gets out top front. No, I don't really know that subject, but I know what I know. I know no one can take that away from you and I'm good at it. Yeah, very good at it. In this process that I'm here trying to get some other people up to that level so they can be good at it if is more than just you being good at it.

Important to listen. Many managers highlighted how they gained a reputation for listening, which enhanced their ability to get results from their employees. C5-701 shared this observation,

Empathy and active listening would be the two characteristics that you don't

necessarily use as much as an individual contributor as you do as a manager so I

would ask them to hone their skills in those two areas as well as learning how to

create a story about either your team or what you do so that your work can be

prioritized amongst everybody else's teams work within the organization. You

have to influence without authority with your peers and the leadership, then

you've got to be also have an empathetic and active listening ear as a manager. Of

course, be tough when you need to be but that's not what it's all about.

C5-102 added,

I really enjoy when people will come back to me and say, you know, I think you

probably one of the better managers I've had. I liked the fact that you listened to

us. I believe we're all people first and nobody is automatically above anybody.

C5-181 commented,

The common theme that I've gotten is that I am a good listener and I'm willing to

take the time to sit and talk through problems or issues with people that I'm

leading. People will just come to me and ask for some time to sit down and talk.

Characteristics of effective managers. The managers had definite ideas about what constitutes a good manager of people. They mentioned five traits that are essential

in order to perform as people managers. They also acknowledged that managing people is not for everyone.

Be fair. Managers did not define fairness. They focused more on the perception by employees that the manager is fair. C5-102 said it simply, "First of all, you got to be fair."

C5-151 shared a key learning from experience as a leader, "It was very important to be able to communicate with people and not necessarily be everyone's best friend but that the person saw you as somebody who was fair, impartial and treated everyone the same."

Trust. The most often mentioned attribute of good management was the need to trust and to demonstrate trust. The managers learned this from their former managers and from their experience managing others. C5-102 emphasized the point, "Trust is big."

C5-142 said,

I think it was basically here are the goals and objectives and I'm trusting you, relying on you, have confidence in you to get it done and you let me know what you need along the way. So I think that that sort of confidence and trust goes a long way in stretching somebody to say, okay, this person is relying on me.

C5-181 said about managers who were role models,

Empowering me to make decisions and trusting my judgment. Giving me the opportunity to have input and share my perspective. They trusted me to put forth my best judgment and do my best work and if I make a mistake, there wasn't severe punishment or penalty.

Go the extra mile. Only one manager used this language. It reflects the idea that the manager is more responsible than the employee for overcoming performance barriers. C5-102 said it this way,

And the final thing I'll say, you gotta be willing to go the extra mile, meaning that if you try something and that employee ain't responding like you want him to respond, you got to go the extra mile because you're the manager. You're the one that has the most control about what happens in day-to-day activities. So if it comes to going the extra mile, you need to be the first one because you got to set the example too.

Coach (ask don't tell). Coaching was used to represent a style of management that is more employee-centric. C5-701 said,

I've always had a coaching mindset versus a telling mindset. I've learned that along the way from my first managers who were all great and I'm still in touch with now. It's allowing people to really come up with their own solutions versus me telling them what to do.

C5-111 also mentioned coaching as a style. She said,

[My manager] gave me positive feedback and positive coaching and pushed me to where she thought I could do things. Because I knew that I had that support, It made me feel comfortable about dealing with things and taking on tasks because I felt I had someone behind me who supported and believed in me, made me feel like I wanted to work hard because I wanted to meet her expectations. I didn't want to let her down.

She added about her own style,

I have more of a coaching, collaborative, or "we" attitude. That allows people to get on board a little bit more than an authoritative approach. I want people to see me as a leader and not necessarily as a boss. A manager says do this because I'm telling you to do it, not explaining a vision or why I want you to do it. A leader is probably more about "we".

C5-112 said,

It's all about support and allowing people to make mistakes. My manager would allow me to be my natural self. I managed the way I saw fit and if there was a mistake along the way, he would coach me on how to fix it. He wasn't a micromanager.

C5-142 responded like this,

But my coaching has always been, and this is from like leadership things that I've done is you have to look at the people that are doing that work and if they know that you care about them and they know that you've got their back and that you will support them, then the work will come, the work will get done. So, it's really a focus on people versus work.

Finally, C5-181 spoke broadly about coaching,

So I would say my style is really more coaching than directing. A coach is somebody who is more alongside you, supporting you versus somebody who is more directive. A coach wants to develop people.

I had to really do a lot of coaching and a lot of mentoring in the course of

that project. . I think it's the ability to very clearly outline your expectations and

even follow up with people and make sure they understand your expectations, but

also to be a good coach.

Have a development plan. Part of a manager's responsibility to each employee is

to develop a plan for his or her growth and advancement. C5-701 said,

The other piece is, ensuring that each individual on the team has a development

plan whether they are someone who is happy as a duck doing what they're doing

and they want to do it until they retire, or someone who's a go-getter and wants to

climb up the ladder. Ensuring that everyone has a development plan and continues

getting better on a day-to-day basis in the space that they're in. Because a lot of

managers simply don't and they're just working off the day-to-day and the

operational factors that go into a performance without really thinking about the

development factors

Not for everyone. Managing people is not for everyone as described by the

managers. C5-171 offered this observation, "It's all those things you talked about before

and if you can't manage that, then it's really hard for some people. Some people just don't

have the temperament; don't have the skill to be able to manage diverse teams."

C5-101 added this thought,

Not everyone can be a manager, but you can actually give them those lead roles

so they can. So they could basically understand that it's not always about the

product, it is about the people and diversity that you're working with. Let them see for themselves and let people know.

C5-152 spoke this idea,

Some people are just not suited for that (managing). They don't like the responsibility. This particular individual, he is very much unique character I'll say, and I think the thought of directing other employees just is something that's not desirable to him.

Major Theme 2: Perceptions of Managing Diversity

The second topical theme of my study relates to how frontline managers navigate the growing diversity in the workplace. The study participants had similar insights on this topic. I will discuss them under the two subthemes: common definition of diversity management (2 examples) and challenges and benefits if diversity (4 examples).

Common definition of managing diversity. The interview protocol included a definition of diversity management, which the participants were invited to consider (accept or reject). The managers were very open in sharing their own perceptions of the topic and offering examples of how their definition supported or did not support the protocol definition. Overall, the managers embraced the definition I offered and gave examples of how it fit with their experience at managing diverse teams. These are their responses. C5-102 offered this comment,

I define diversity management as the ability to maintain an open mind and while maintaining an open mind focusing on specific organizational goals. Right now when I say that, I look at different people and I say, OK, whatever they bring to

the table, I'm not going to close my eyes to it, I accept it and I'm going to figure

out what I can do to get through to that person.

C5-701 said,

For me, I tend not to use the word diversity in and of itself. I use inclusion

purposefully. If I may be so liberal, my definition of diversity management is

really being an inclusive leader. That means, from a diversity perspective that you

are able to attract talent from all walks of life, doesn't matter what they look like,

where they come from, what their experiences have been. See the benefit that

exists within different individuals and creating a collective team of different

individuals with different perspectives and different experiences. In that same

vein though, to ensure that diversity becomes a true benefit, we have to be

inclusive. Just peppering a room with a bunch of diverse folks tends to lead itself

to conflict because diversity means differences, and differences lead to conflict.

Unless you have some sort of an inclusive mindset, you'll never benefit from truly

what diversity offers. To me, it's all about ensuring that everyone has a voice.

Everyone's opinions, thoughts, and experiences are heard. They're also

understood, and at that point they're welcomed and ultimately used. Everyone not

only is at the table, but they have the opportunity to voice their thoughts and their

thoughts ultimately are used and respected in one way or another. That would be

my definition

C5-111 said,

When I think about diversity management, I think having a team that can provide

diversity of thought and experience and also provide an opportunity for people to

have exposure to and work with people that they may not otherwise have. It can

also help you understand a customer segment that you're trying to sell into. It can

help you look at problems differently.

C5-112 said,

When I hear the word diversity, the words diversity management, I'm really

thinking about it as you described, getting the best out of everybody regardless of

their background or their expertise or their interests. What you're looking for is a

consistent product that your customers can count on and what you're looking for

is supporting and leading a team to get to that point. I think of really maximizing

everyone's potential in the workplace.

C5-141 said,

When I think about this term diversity management, I would define it as I think

about the word management, I think about someone who's able to manage. It

could be multiple things, it could be people, and it could be a project. I look at all

of the people who are involved in that process, who are able to bring that

particular skillset. When I look at my team, I think we all have variety of

background that I might have more skillset as far as managing maybe people and

more of the execution. Then I have other people on my team that are very diverse

with managing projects with execution and making sure that we drive top delivery

to the clients. I feel like with all of those different skill sets from people

management to project management to the execution aspect of it. I feel like, my team, I feel like we all have a good mix of all that from all different levels in our career.

Some people are a little bit more senior, some people are right out of college but right out of college they bring a great way from more of the technical because they're more closely to obviously just graduating and learning a lot of that information. I guess that's a way that I would define it.

C5-142 said

I definitely think diversity management is managing people that have come from diverse backgrounds, educational experiences, work experiences, even life experiences because all of that feeds into your outlook and perspective of work and deadlines and you know, achieving an end or a goal with each other. So managing people does not mean that you launched off by yourself. You are successful in a group with that team.

C5-151 said,

I guess very similar to what you've just said. I feel like each person is unique to them and, what you might be talented in, this next person may not be but that doesn't mean that they're of less value than you and that, in my opinion, for a team to work well you need people who excel at different aspects of the business. That's the only way that the team will excel. It's just like a wheel. There are several cogs in a wheel and in order for the wheel to go forward, each cog must be in it's place going towards the same direction but there's different strings and

weight bearings on each one of those cogs at different times as the wheel is spinning. I feel that way as a team at one point, you might be the stronger right now because this might be something that we're working on and this is your response to but as we progress and we get to another dimension of what we're working on, you might not be analytical where this person might be.

C5-152 said,

Well, I think you hit that. I think that you touched on it just now, that everybody has his or her own individual strengths and weaknesses, and you've got to be cognitive of putting the right person in the right role. Sometimes, I guess I've learned that the hard way.

C5-161 summed it up this way,

I guess especially given the definition that you've given, I would call diversity management management, and it would be because all human beings ostensibly differ on lots of different factors, many of them not visible or not immediately perceptible. And so in terms of management, then it's creating conditions for a group greater than one to congeal around a common goal. And bring that goal to fruition.

C5-171 added,

I think as I progressed through business, diversity came to be people from different countries, different races, a lot of different things, but I looked at it as people with different backgrounds and experiences that I would pull together on teams, and that's what we looked for when we put teams together, we try to get

people with diverse experiences. I think from that, it makes for a little more complicated process, but I think at the end of the day, you have a better product when you have all that diverse knowledge and people coming from different angles on a project or a team. I think it's ultimately creates the best product.

C5-181 said,

I feel like it's meeting people where they are. And I look at diversity in many, many ways. Where it is managed effectively, where leaders are really leveraging those diverse talents and traits, I see a much better business outcome. I think you definitely have a better product or better results when you have different perspectives.

Response to diversity management programs. Most of the managers worked for companies with an established diversity management program (called by many different names). Here is how they responded to the idea when it was first introduced. C5-701 responded this way,

I was on board with it right away. Simply because I'm looking around, thinking, "Yes, we do need breakthrough results and we do need to break the mold because as an organization we have become quite commoditized and if that's what's going to bring new ideas to the table, absolutely." The only level of skepticism I think that existed was, again, not focusing on just diversity of appearance. I don't want to do this and just color up the room, if you will, and sparkle it up a little bit. It doesn't matter if we change the demographic makeup of the organization if those people don't stay or they don't feel valued or welcome. That was the only concern

and I think for a lot of organizations, it's the same thing because you can measure those things that tends to be what people focus on, demographics, increasing demographic awareness.

C5-141 said,

I would say that I was very receptive. I would say I was very receptive with all of my companies that I've worked for. I think all of them promote diversity inclusion and that's something that I personally think I promote as well. Yes, I've always been very receptive to it. It wasn't really anything I had to grow into. I think whenever companies mention that word, to your point; everyone kind of has their own definition. It would make sense because I think in order to have an effective outcome; you'll need people that don't think alike. I think having people that don't think alike and having different- I guess, not like-minded people, I think having all those collective thoughts and ideas and different backgrounds would give the best effective results possible.

C5-152 said,

For me, it comes naturally. So I grew up with a single parent. So my mother, and my sister, and my grandmother were a big influence in my life. I've already had a lot of female influence at a young age. I think for me, it's just very natural. It's been a part of my life since I was-- as long as I can remember. So to me, it's just common sense, it's the melting pot that I lived in. It's just part of life.

C5-161 said, "I expect the people I surround myself with to be diverse. That's what I'm most comfortable with. So my response would be probably one of empathy for anyone for whom diversity is threatening or fear inducing."

C5-181 said, "It's really just very natural for me. Plus, I've never had a problem with it. I've never gone into a situation and thought to myself, Gosh, I wish this was less diverse."

Recognize dimensions of diversity*.* The managers have definite ideas about what constitutes diversity. Some subscribe to the traditional race and gender definitions while most define diversity in broader terms. Here are some of their responses. C5-701 opens with,

> [Ways they were diverse] Multiple generations; Individuals who've been with the company for 20 plus years; individuals who have been with the company for a year; Male, female, multiple ethnicities, work-from-home contractors as well as individuals that were on the road a lot and that weren't on the road at all; sexual orientation; different backgrounds; agency versus corporate.

> C5-112 described a diversity committee as,

> One of the things I'm very proud of that we've done here at [redacted for privacy] is develop a diversity committee. What we do is we take employees from different departments; different ethnicities, different backgrounds, different ages, and they work with the human resources department and coming up with activities or team building activities. But I think one of the nice things is it really engages kind of all other groups, right? It really makes sure that there's no one being left out, whether

it's department or an ethnicity or not been able to do that on purpose. But you

know, there's a real focus on making sure that everyone feels included in the

process, that we're one big family working together to serve our members and we

just did this a year ago and we've seen some really good success with that.

C5-142 added this insight,

I definitely think diversity management is managing people that have come from

diverse backgrounds, educational experiences, work experiences, even life

experiences because all of that feeds into your outlook and perspective of work

and deadlines and you know, achieving an end or a goal with each other.

In addition, she added,

So I think that age, the women and men. I don't, I would say, most people think of

race as a real big element of diversity and I really didn't see any big differences

when it came to race on my teams. I mean I've always had a blend of different

races. Even now I have different statuses, like I have a divorced woman and a

new dad and different family situations, which actually I think tends to play a

bigger role in the workforce than many people think. I have a woman now

actually on my, not my direct team, that is actually a transgender. People's family

status or kind of what they have on their plate away from the workforce. Because

that impacts deadlines and it impacts, you know, how long we're [at the office] if

they need time off, kind of in a last minute situation and that kind of thing.

She extended the theme with this comment,

I know you've heard me talk about Myers Briggs. There are so many different, team kinds of profile instruments out there and I would just advocate, I think for anybody who is a manager that they get familiar with a few and that either they then start looking at their teams through one of those lenses. And to be able to take an instrument like that and look through a particular lens, you will be able to maximize the result that you get, by understanding everyone's differences.

C5-181 expanded the idea with this comment,

And I look at diversity in many, many ways. It definitely means cultural diversity, and then diversity of race, and then gender diversity. But it really went much further beyond that. It was areas of expertise. So we had, for instance, a finance person, a marketing person, people who were more focused on numbers and analytics, people who were more focused on relationships and people. And it was also years of experience because some of us had worked and then come back to school to get our degree and others just had gone straight from college. So I really define diversity in many different aspects, and as I've continued through my career, I've always had the opportunity to work with diverse groups of people. A lot of what I see as I get further in my career and further in my years of experience, I see a lot more diversity in terms of years of experience and generations. As the younger generation comes in the workforce, I've been in the workforce for longer and so bringing those perspectives together.

Benefits and challenges of diversity. The managers were practical about the pluses and minuses of diversity. On balance, diversity was a plus for them, but they recognized the importance of acknowledging the challenges that come with diversity.

Challenges with diversity. Several managers recounted experiences where diversity presented challenges beyond what is normal for team management. They summarized the nature of those challenges and talked about how they handled the challenges. For example, C5-701 shared two observations. The first was,

The biggest challenges were having individuals really understand each other's point of view. We need to stop and actively listen, and then once you actively listen to one another's words, collaboratively leveraging each other's experiences to the greater good. I think that's part of it. The other part of it is ensuring that there is an environment that isn't stuck in the status quo. Doing the same thing the same way. The same people are leading the ship and it is just the way that it is. Running into challenges associated with that, and people coming to the table with great new ideas and then running into a brick wall because the status quo and getting frustrated. Those were the two biggest things. I think the third piece would be around the notion of, of course, unconscious bias and how that plays into the day-to-day talent management practices as well as just the day-to-day interactions that people have with one another.

The second observation was,

I think the biggest challenge that organizations have within diversity and inclusion is in that middle management layer. Because they hold the key, they're

the glue, really, between the individual contributors and the senior leadership
team. There were also the ones that tend to have the most tactical work on their
shoulders and a lot going on in day-to-day basis. A lot of fires they're putting out;
and so even though they agree with the notion of creating a more diverse inclusive
space, they also got all this noise over here that's driving them to just take care of
stuff.

C5-112 added this realization,

It has certainly provided a significant challenge to overcome, but I think if you
embrace it fully, it can really turn into a positive. It's so cool to be able to talk to
somebody from another culture and learn about him or her. So I think to answer
your question, it can be a challenge, but it also can be a huge benefit in doing it
and lean into it a little bit.

C5-141 responded to the direct query about challenges with diversity. She said,

We all have different backgrounds; we look at things differently, so a lot of times
we could be spinning our wheels for hours trying to figure out, "Okay. How do
we get to the conclusion here? Which way are we going to go? We have a lot of
different thoughts, a lot of different ideas but which way makes sense?"
Sometimes, [the challenge is] keeping the team focused.

C5-142 spoke more specifically about gender diversity,

I mean there are obvious differences, you know, having men and women on a
team. I've managed all women teams before and all women, even if they have
different personalities, is a completely different dynamic. And so there have been

differences. Women usually, well they're the ones who get pregnant and nobody

wants them to go out on childcare leave. Sometimes they are the first ones to be

called if a child is sick or those kinds of things. So that presents a little bit

different dynamic than when I have women and men.

Finally, C5-181 describes the generic case of a diversity challenge,

The challenges are, in my opinion, some of the things that make diversity

effective. It can also make it challenging. You may have a team and you've got

somebody who just feels really strongly about doing something one way and

somebody else who feels very strongly about a different way. I know it's easy to

say when you're sitting here talking about it, but when you're working through it,

it can be very challenging.

Benefit of diversity. Just as they were honest about the challenges of diversity, the

managers expressed many benefits of diversity that make it worth having. Here are a few

of their comments. C5-111 spoke of the talent recruitment benefit,

With a millennial workforce, I would say that diversity is important to that

generation. It also helps with sustainability. So companies that can show that they

are concerned about the future environment from a millennial standpoint, those

are the companies that are going to win in the marketplace because they are going

to attract the best talent and they are going to embrace that generation.

C5-141 shared a personal reflection that spoke to the benefit of diversity,

I've worked on teams where I felt like we all came from the same place and we

all have very similar backgrounds and we all thought alike. My personal

experience from that is that there was nothing, I didn't really learn a lot from those experiences. It was very easy we all think alike we all come up with the same answers. There was really no push, it was really seamless, didn't really learn a lot, I didn't feel the outcome was very thought-provoking to your plan, I think it was very efficient, but I when I did work on those teams where it was very diverse, we had a lot of healthy debates. We went back and forth, we talked about a lot, and we went in circles a lot. We came up with so many different ideas; it was like, "Wow. I've never even thought about that." Or, "Wow. I never even was exposed to that." Or, "How did you even come up with that?" Or, "What made you even think about that?" It was those types of questions that came up. It was a lot of back and forth, but healthy back and forth. I pull from those experiences. I think that a lot of people would shy away from is those situations where everyone does think differently. Everyone thinks differently, everyone has different ideas. You can have some people who are strong-minded; some people really want to go with their ideas. You really have to have those healthy debates to figure out what is the most effective way and what's going to get great results. I walk away from those situations learning a lot.

C5-142 opined,

I think that having that diverse team can just make the end result even better because we live in a more and more diverse world. And so corporations need to reflect what is actually out there because like I said, you bring all those

experiences, whether they're educational or business or even personal experiences and those play into how you run your business.

C5-152 shared his perspective based on experience,

With diversity, you get so many more opinions, you get much more input into what you're trying to accomplish, and in our business, it could be stuff that we're trying to produce. It could be demographics that we're trying to engage with. By getting different opinions in the building, it opens your eyes to the possibilities that maybe you didn't see before. I've seen that before. I've consciously made an effort to bring a little bit more diversity into our company because I felt we were too closed-minded. We were a group of like-minded individuals, and we all agree too much I think. You need to have a difference of opinion so that you can have a deeper understanding of where you want to go and how to get there

C5-161 analyzed what and how to get benefit from diversity,

Most people think that just by having diversity, you get better decisions. No, it's when you manage that diversity that you get better decisions. It's been a positive thing to have as widely varying set of, of perspectives, experiences, levels of education, lived experience, all of those things. I think it's been an asset at the individual organizational level.

C5-181 agreed with what and how to get benefit from diversity, "Where it is managed effectively, where leaders are really leveraging those diverse talents and traits, I see a much better business outcome. I think you definitely have a better product or better results when you have different perspectives."

Major Theme 3: Perceptions of Managing Teams

The insights of the participants focused on the concept of managing diverse teams to achieve high performance. Their insights relate to the behaviors of effective managers of diverse teams and the value or benefit of well-managed diversity.

Behaviors of effective team managers. Most of the managers considered themselves effective in getting the best from a diverse team. They offered several ideas that made them effective. I have listed them and added comments that support the ideas.

Prefer diverse teams. In response to the direct question (question 7), most of the managers professed to prefer a diverse team in order to improve performance possibilities. It began with C5-101, who said,

I don't want everybody to be the same. It would be a boring place to be. I don't think it would be a good place either because you know, the work will get done, but it wouldn't be too much interaction. I wouldn't want to be a bunch of people like me. I don't think that would be a world worth living.

C5-102 expressed it this way,

I probably would choose a diverse team and the reason being when you have everybody the same, if something tilts to the right, the whole thing is going to the right, and you are going to catch it trying to get the whole area to go to the left. On the diverse group, if something tilts, you're always going to have someone on the opposite side.

C5-701 said something similar,

[I prefer] Heterogeneous (diverse) team for sure. Simply because I don't know what I don't know. That's why I believe a heterogeneous team can lead to far better results if, again, you can create that environment that allows people to bring their authentic selves to the table and ensures that everyone feels and is respected in their ideas and thoughts, perspectives are valued and realized. If that isn't there, that culture doesn't exist. It doesn't matter who you have in a room, at the end of the day, because they won't feel comfortable bringing off the wall ideas to the table. They won't feel comfortable rocking the boat or challenging the status quo because they'll be shut down.

C5-112 made brief reference to her belief that a diverse team is preferred, "I would {prefer} the more diverse team. To me, it's about self-awareness and understanding what you're really good at and what you're not so good at. You need to make sure you have a balanced team."

C5-141 also offered the opinion that a diverse team is better,

I definitely would prefer more of a diverse team and the reason why is I like challenges. I don't want a team that's just going to say yes to everything. I like to have healthy debates. That's the only way you're going to learn. To have someone challenge you, to say, "Hey. I think that's a great thought but I don't know about that. Can you consider this? I don't know how that might work with this particular project." That's the only way that you'll learn.

C5-142 shared a comment based on direct experience with both modes (diverse and homogeneous),

I would prefer the latter (more diverse). And the reason I can answer that so quickly is because I've had some experiences with more homogeneous teams. And what happens is there are big holes in the decision-making. It doesn't mean that it's not easier to work in that environment. It actually may be easier to be on a homogeneous team, where everyone is alike. And you just sort of plow down that road. Usually when you have more diversity on your team, you get more of the conversation going back and forth, sometimes at the beginning of the process, sometimes it's the very end and you've got to go back to the beginning and redo everything. So it's harder to be on a more diverse team, but your end result is always exponentially better because again, it represents a wider viewpoint and we're in a wider world and know most businesses and corporations if they don't operate nationally, they're global these days. So you have to weave that into your thinking or you're going to have major misses.

C5-151 expressed a strong opinion based on logic (not experience),

I would prefer a diverse team because, I've learned in my experiences, not only in the military but also in the corporate world that, if you're truly going to grow and develop, that it takes inclusion. I don't see how any company can talk and claim diversity when they have not included or they have not been inclusive. I just think that for me, I love to grow, learn and develop. I feel like businesses are not able to reach all over this world. When you're not one of the diverse workforce to be able to speak the languages of other countries, like right now I sit next to a team that deals with people in Nigeria and you can hear them switching from one language

to the next and it's fascinating to me. Why wouldn't you want that for your

company? The company who like you said, everyone looks the same, talks the

same, have not had any other experiences outside who they are. You're closed at

that point. You think, How did you grow like that?

C5-152 added the opinion,

Well, like I said, that diverse group, to me, is the most important because if you

got a group of like-minded individuals, you just got blind spots. There are things

that you just-- you're just not even thinking about. Having that diverse group,

you're going to open up a conversation that would have never even been on the

table before, and you've got to get outside of that box. You got to get outside of

your comfort zone to get a bigger picture of the world of your business, the

demographics that you're trying to hit. I mean, there's no question that it's better

for us and the way to go.

C5-161 was thoughtful and reflective about her opinion on the matter. She said,

When we are thinking about new ways of attacking a problem or new ways of

interpreting situations that come up, I would never want to give up that diversity.

And so I do think in the problem solving aspects of our work, of the doing of our

work, we'd be crippled if we didn't have that diversity and I suppose in the end I

could choose to be crippled, so to speak, having to spend some time ironing out

those, those individual differences, which probably you're going to end up ironing

out no matter what because people are people and we're not perfect replicas of

each other. We all have little wrinkles to iron out here and there, but I feel like we would be really losing something valuable if we didn't have it.

C5-171 supported the idea of a diverse team,

If you say that your goal is to produce a positive outcome for the enterprise or the company you're working for, you've got to say a diverse group. I just don't think that-- If I'm going to surround myself with people that thought like me, I'd just do it myself.

Finally, C5-181 said,

I would prefer the diverse team even though the more homogeneous team would be easier in terms of if you're trying to march towards something quickly because you wouldn't be taking the time to have those difficult discussions, even though those discussions are valuable. I also think it's just more interesting working with a diverse team. Because I don't know everything. I feel like every time I'm working in a diverse team, it's a growth opportunity for me. I believe with diverse perspectives, you can more effectively look at all angles of the problem because you're going to have people with different experiences.

Managing conflict, tension, and discomfort. The managers identified several distinct skills that managers needed to address the discomfort, conflict and tension that come with a more diverse team. C5-701 framed the issue with this comment, "Inherently when you have different people there's going to be conflict because they have different perspectives since they lived in alternative realities."

C5-112 said,

There was some tension, I think, between departments. We actually just addressed it head on with the employee base in an all team meeting. We talked about the fact that we're a diverse community of people and it's important that we all respect each other and work together and try to understand each other. And I think since then, you know, the community has really taken off and we've seen some really interesting things.

C5-152 said, "The diversity of the people in the room that creates tension and, I wouldn't say heated conversations, but maybe passionate conversation, with each person defending their piece of the business. I think it's important that we have open dialogue."

C5-171 spoke about the management challenge,

It's hard, and I have to say that some of my biggest difficulties and sleepless nights are trying to keep the team from getting too personal with it. Sometimes things just crumble. It's managing-- Even on that team, for example, there was a lot of conflicts. What I tried to do was to remove personal feelings. And for some people had never really done this. They just had personal feelings about how things had been done for so long. They felt very invested with that. Sometimes people have their way of dealing with conflict. That's very personal. Some people are very rough, and it doesn't matter if they're male or female or from different backgrounds, people just have their way of dealing with conflict and, sometimes, it creates problems.

She added,

I think back on projects that I've worked on, I truly think that, in retrospect, the greatest wins came when we had that diversity. We had conflict. When you can work with a group-- It's about having the right outcome, sure, but when you've gone through the trenches with these people and you've had arguments, you really worked and had those outcomes. When we look back on them today, it actually brought us all closer together. You've got to manage that conflict, otherwise, you get people talking behind the group's back, you get people, a lot of them go around you. It's all kinds of things that can go wrong when you don't deal with that properly. I think you have to set a climate for an honest and open dialogue in there, and keep it in that room. You've got to deal with it there.

And, finally, she added,

But I'll tell you, I think one of the biggest issues is people's ability to make a team work. You have to be able to deal with diversity and that's not easy. It's conflict management. It's all those things you talked about before and if you can't manage that, then it's really hard for some people.

Define team. One of the managers opined on the definition of team. C5-142 said,

In fact, I used to spend quite a bit of time distinguishing work groups from work teams because I think that in a group, they can all have the same function and they could all be assigned the same type of work, but they don't really need each other. And a team is usually a group of people that still have that same goal and whatever, but they must rely on each other to go beyond just accomplishing or meeting the deadline.

Be a role model for diversity. Several managers talked about the importance of the manager being the role model for responding to diversity so that the rest of the team could buy in to the concept. C5-701 said,

I think they have to be a role model. They have to essentially not only say it's okay but they have to show that it is okay. That can come through storytelling, being very vulnerable and honest with them about something as culturally sensitive as, "I didn't know I had an unconscious bias related to x, this is what happened and this is what I learned." Sharing their stories in who they really are will show their team members that it is okay to be themselves as well as being open and honest in a positive way.

C5-112 added a comment and said,

I think that the conversation really center around openness to learning about other people and trying to understand where other people are coming from. Don't rush to judgment. We used to have a series of team values and one of them was, "seek to understand before seeking to be understood". I always thought that was a pretty powerful message because I think in particularly organizations that are large, but then you throw in diversity on top of a large organization there could be a whole lot of understanding and only because people are open to trying to understand each other. And I think that's important particularly as a manager because a lot of times you're going to play that mediator where you're trying to help everyone understand each other and why and how we can all work together to get to the same common goal.

Be open-minded and honest*.* An effective manager of diverse teams needs to be open-minded and honest about all things including the diversity of the team. C5-141 said it this way,

> I personally believe in having diverse teams but it takes it further than that. Once I have that team, I'm really very open-minded. That's what I was saying before, that you can have the perfect mix but you got to have people who are open minded.

> C5-171 added this thought,

> You've got to be very clear with the team, what their goals and objectives are, and when you bring a team together. You've got to have open and honest dialogue in that room. I think to set clear goals and objectives. I think just creating an environment of open dialogue. I think that was the biggest thing.

> C5-181 also commented, "I would tell them to have an open mind, meaning be open to other perspectives or many perspectives because that's how you grow and develop as well."

> Finally C5-102 emphasized,

> I try to react personally with that person versus looking at them being in that group (cohort). So I try to do that and that's why I feel my definition is being open, you know, keep an open state of mind, but focusing on what your goal is for the department so that whatever they say to you, you'd never come back with anything related to their race or their gender. Your focus is back to the department and what our goals are about.

It's not personal. Several managers admonished that managers should not take the process of managing team conflict and diversity tension personally. It is simply a part of the job. C5-151 said,

I would tell him not to try to be everyone's best friend and to take the emotion out of managing. It's not personal. It's really not about you. I know when you to have to stand in your truth. You have to know that people regardless of how well you treat them and that sometimes when their back is up against the wall, that they will say and do things to hurt you just because they're trying to get to their end results. You have got to be able to know that who you are and what you stand for. I would tell my favorite niece to take the emotion out of managing people. I know it sounds weird but you cannot give in to it. My feelings very rarely get hurt at work because; I'm not here to make best friends with anyone. I'm here to do a job. I'm here as the people manager to help people get to end result and to help the business grow. How you do that is by being there, by being consistent. By making people feel as if they matter. When you do that, that's all that's going to stay. You have to maintain your character at all time.

C5-101 counseled against focusing on emotions,

First, understand your product. Managing is dealing with people, but if you don't know the product you can't understand the challenges they face. [If you just want to manage people] You're never going to be satisfied because what that's gonna do, that's gonna take you to a situation where you have no results, you're just dealing with people's emotions and that's always going to be up and down. If you

see the results of something actually being built or something actually getting

done, I promise you more satisfaction than seeing someone basically mad one day

and sad one day because all those emotions are all over the place.

And, C5-171 said,

What I tried to do was to remove personal feelings. And for some people had

never really done this. They just had personal feelings about how things had been

done for so long. They felt very invested with that.

The value of well-managed diversity on teams. The managers felt that good

management is the key to getting benefit from diversity on teams. They identified the

value of diversity when it is managed well.

Easier to manage same-ness. Several of the managers explicitly acknowledged

that a team of like individuals would be easier to manage. Their logic for the ease of

managing a homogeneous team varied. For instance, C5-101 said,

Of course I want to have four or five clones because I know the end of the day I'm

not going to have to watch them. They're going to do what's required. They walk

through the door and they're going to be functioning at warp speed like I did when

I walked into that. It'd be much easier.

C5-141 simply said, "Yes to your point, having more of a homogeneous team

makes life a lot easier."

C5-142 explained the difference this way,

I've had some experiences with more homogeneous teams. And what happens is

there are big holes in the decision-making. It doesn't mean that it's not easier to

work in that environment. It actually may be easier to be on a homogeneous team, where everyone is alike. And you just sort of plow down that road. Usually when you have more diversity on your team, you get more of the conversation going back and forth, sometimes at the beginning of the process, sometimes it's the very end and you've got to go back to the beginning and redo everything. So it's harder to be on a more diverse team,

Important to seek out diversity. The managers saw it as their responsibility to make sure their teams were diverse enough to get better results. Here is how they described that experience. C5-111 said,

You have to be open. You have to be able to have a hard conversation and you need to do it in a way that you are not tearing people down. Don't pick people who are just like you because you need people that are going to complement you. C5-142 added this thought,

Like a leadership team, if you have all of one or the other, then you really shortchange yourself. I've really noticed on the teams that I manage is how important that is. I tried to convey that and a number of the leaders that I work with recognize that probably more now than they did 15 or 20 years ago and have taken steps to ensure that they have more diversity on their team so that things don't get overlooked.

C5-152 gave a rationale for his commitment to finding more diversity for his teams,

By getting different opinions in the building, it opens your eyes to the possibilities

that maybe you didn't see before. I've seen that before. I've consciously made an

effort to bring a little bit more diversity into our company because I felt we were

too closed-minded.

We were a group of like-minded individuals, and we all agree too much I

think. You need to have a difference of opinion so that you can have a deeper

understanding of where you want to go and how to get there.

C5-171 expressed the need to seek out diversity this way,

To hire the best people out there, you got a diverse group coming in. We did try to

manage to make sure that we weren't hiring all white males, or that we did have

some diversity. But even still, hiring engineers and hiring technologists to get the

best people in there, it's a diverse group now. I always think it's kind of an

interesting thought. I think you would have to try to not be diverse if you were

going to succeed in maintaining the current mix anymore, and maybe some

people do, but it's an interesting phenomenon.

Diversity + management = performance. Nearly all the managers understood that

diversity requires effective management to produce high performance. Most illustrated

this point in the stories they told. Two of the managers stated the point directly. C5-161

said, "Most people think that just by having diversity, you get better decisions. No, it's

when you manage that diversity that you get better decisions."

C5-171 stated it this way, "We had conflict. You've got to manage that conflict, otherwise, you get people talking behind the group's back, you get people, a lot of them go around you. It's all kinds of things that can go wrong."

Stories and Additional Insights

The comments of the participants are arranged by topical area and represent times when the participants addressed that topical area directly. There were many times that the participants revealed their thinking through the stories they told. Here are a few examples to illustrate how stories were used as a conversational tool to address the topics. C5-142 told this story as an example,

I'm thinking of in particular one that happened at {co. x} when they were getting ready to put a right sizing or organization strategy into place where they were going to be losing a number of people. And I actually did a fishbowl exercise because it was a bunch of men that were making the decision in a very numbers-driven, black and white manner. They were making decisions kind of, you know, whoever is above the line is in; whoever's below the line is out. That was the way the message was going to be delivered. And so I brought in some females that I knew were high F (feelers) and I posed the scenario to them what the decision was that the men had all made on this leadership team and because they were managing a bunch of women, customer service, so the preponderance of those they managed and who were going to receive this news were women, but there were essentially almost all men that ran the organization.

I brought in other women managers, not customer service agents, but other women managers and I painted this scenario for them and those men watched them essentially debate the decision, which was done in a totally different way than everyone above the line. And so when the women left the room and then we did a little debrief on what they heard, the men were like, we never thought of that. The collective consensus was we never would have imagined that the decision we were making would've been viewed that way. Because we looked at it as we were being very fair, by the numbers and you know, how can you debate the way this very fair numerical data driven decision was being made? So in my opinion, bringing in that diversity, even though it was temporary I thought was really effective and in fact the next time they had a vacancy on the leadership team, they looked for a female so that they had more representation of the people they were managing.

In this story, the manager illustrated how thoughtful and deliberate management of diverse populations contributed to a major solution for the enterprise. The story supports the insights listed above as (a) coach (ask, don't tell), (b) recognize different dimensions of diversity, (c) benefit of diversity, (d) important to seek out diversity, and (f) diversity + management = performance.

C5-171 shared this story to illustrate the power of well-managed diversity,

I think one of my biggest projects and one of my first ones was, there was a restructuring of the company, and I had a leadership role in a particular portion of that. When you're restructuring a company, it's tough because it usually means

reduction in force in some way or another. We had to pull together a team that was able to get outside their comfort zone and look, let's say, look from the outside in to see without any personal influence. Some of these folks were looking at taking away their own positions in the company. You had to pull people that had different ideas and philosophies and thoughts about that. You have to listen to all sides and then come together with a plan, and that can be really, really tough. But it's interesting because the employees that we had working on that particular project, some of them had come from outside the company, and some of them had been with the company for years and years. That's the push and pull you have with a project like that, and what we produced is the structure of the company today, what we created back then. It was interesting.

When I say there's push and pull, sometimes you had to pull some people along with you that were not as outside the box, I guess, for a lack of a better term. We were given a blank slate. "Here is the company as it exists today, and you take it to create the most efficiencies with the company.

Little by little, it started working. Some people thought, "Oh, that'll never work." But the majority of the team came together and pulled along enough to where they could see a vision. It was a group product. Some people were clearly more adventuresome and way outside the box, and then you have some of the engineers who maybe had to be pulled along a little bit, but they would bring them down to reality going, "We have to be able to do this." It was probably a six-month project. It was pretty intense.

In this story, the participant illustrated several of the key insights listed above. Among them are (a) prefer diverse teams, (b) seek out diversity, (c) be a role model for diversity, and (d) recognize the challenges with diversity.

C5-161 summarized the role of manager as a privilege and a way to add value to the lives of other people. She said,

It really drives you to bring empathy and humility and compassion to the work of leading people. People have a finite amount of time on this earth and if they're spending part of that time in your organization in order to advance your mission, I think you have almost the divine responsibility to enable them to use that time well. I'm going to get a little bit spiritual here, but I think to glorify God to manifest their potential. That's part of the responsibility I think of what you (the manager) are doing.

Finally, C5-181 shared a profound insight that applies to all the topical areas of my study. It summarizes the spirit of managing diverse teams to improve performance.

One thing I think is inherent in all of this, whether it's being an effective manager or being an effective manager with a diverse team, is humility. Humility is like a lack of arrogance. Just because I'm a vice president or even a manager or anything in between, doesn't automatically mean that people are going to respect me unless I demonstrate the kind of behavior that earns respect. And to me, that's just the difference with me personally, that's humility. I might be a leader, but I don't certainly know everything. I want to be authentic with the people that I lead, so authenticity and humility, I think, is key.

Discrepant Case

During the interviewing process, I observed that all the participants were enthusiastic about contributing to my research. They all answered the questions fully and without reluctance. Most of their responses followed a predictable pattern that indicated a shared experience in the role of managing diverse teams in a way that produced positive results for their respective enterprises. One participant's responses differed significantly from the others. For most of the interview she focused her responses on her own experience as a minority female in the military and in a business enterprise. Her pattern of speech involved long elaborate storytelling about specific incidences where she had to overcome circumstances that made it difficult to succeed. Despite my efforts to refocus her attention on the role of managing diverse teams, she seemed prepared to present her story as an example of success against the odds. I determined that her input was important because she managed a production line with direct impact on firm performance. As I continued to probe, she eventually confessed that she might have been triggered by the word diversity rather than the focus on diversity management At that point, she offered some useful insights about the principles and approaches she used to get results with her team. Her stories about overcoming prejudices were interesting and compelling; they were just not the focus of my inquiry.

The Experience of Managing Diverse Teams

In response the central research question (What are the perceptions and lived experiences of frontline managers and their role in executing diversity management programs?), the 12 managers in my study offered a wide range of perceptions and

experiences, which converged on a set of behaviors, principles, and attitudes that allowed them to be effective as managers of diverse teams and which could be a guide for other managers of diverse teams. Among the insights they offered was a shared belief that the role of manager was a key factor for being effective with diversity management. Each of the managers believed that management was a talent, which explained why they were chosen for the role and why they accepted the role. Their insights were based on first-hand experience and practice rather than theory and they illustrated the wisdom that comes with direct involvement with a diverse team.

Their shared experiences in the role as managers of diverse teams revealed some insights that could serve as a basis for the standardized practice of diversity management. They suggested that (a) the primary focus has to be on getting better results for the enterprise, (b) each individual on the team must be managed differently, (c) the advent of a different diversity mix requires a different management response, (d) diversity on teams introduces new dynamics and new management challenges, and (e) the benefit of managing those challenges is the potential for better team performance.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented a description of the research findings in response to the research question, what are the perceptions and lived experiences of frontline managers in the role of executing diversity management programs? The 12 participants represented a broad range of ages, industries, tenures, organization sizes, patterns of expression, as well as a mix of race and gender. The insights they shared related to the three major

themes: (a) perceptions of managing people, (b) perceptions of managing diversity, and (c) perceptions of managing diverse teams.

These results indicate that the position of frontline manager is a good place to focus efforts to get benefit from diversity management and illustrates the wisdom that managers gain by operating in that role over a period of time. The perceptions and lived experiences of these managers involved philosophy, skills, practicality, commitment to results, and confidence in the ability of all employees to contribute to team outcomes.

In Chapter 5, I will comment on the interpretations and implications of these results and their application to positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The purpose of my study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of frontline managers and their role in the execution of diversity management programs. As described in Chapter 2, a lack of research on middle managers as leaders of diversity management efforts has led to a lack of knowledge about managers who navigate the reality of diversity on their teams and still manage to get positive results for their enterprises. My research led to some insights about how frontline managers perceive and exercise their role as the primary leaders of diversity management efforts in their respective organizations.

In my research, I used a hermeneutic phenomenology approach with a semistructured interviewing design to elicit rich descriptions and unfettered expressions. That approach honors the need for theory development and empirical data-driven research in the field of diversity management (Manoharan & Singal, 2017). The results of my study indicate some patterns that both confirm and disconfirm the findings of existing literature and that can be used by future researchers to provide foundations for more consistent definitions and uniform practice of diversity management. In this chapter I will discuss (a) how the findings of my research compare to the existing literature on diversity management, (b) the limitations of my study, (c) recommendations for future research, (d) the implications of my study for theory, practice, and social change, and (e) a conclusion.

Interpretation of the Results

A phenomenological approach was necessary to address the gap in the literature regarding diversity, inclusion, and diversity management. Prior research had focused predominantly on firm-level, top management teams, and human resources or diversity offices and had targeted individual dimensions of diversity and their moderating factors as the unit of study. The literature review indicated there is a growing awareness that frontline managers are the key to effectively execute diversity management programs. My research confirmed that notion and demonstrated that frontline managers are aware of their role and want to use their skills and insights to make diversity management a winning strategy for their organizations.

Managing diversity was identified by Friday and Friday (2003), as the highest level of response to the new reality that increased diversity of employees and customers was inevitable. Friday and Friday showed that a firm's response to the changing diversity of employees progresses in a continuum from (a) *acknowledging diversity*, which is the process of facing the facts of a changing demographic and psychographic landscape to (b) *valuing diversity*, which involves creating an environment that allows the diverse mix to feel a sense of belonging (now sometimes called inclusion) to (c) *managing diversity*, which involves getting the best from an increasingly diverse mix of people (the role that frontline managers must play). In Chapter 2, I highlighted how the literature began to deviate from the original intent of diversity management. Prior research and practice had reverted back to Phase I (acknowledging) and Phase II (valuing) of the diversity

continuum. My study provided a logical rationale for returning to Phase III (managing), with the focus on getting benefit from diversity through effective management practices.

It's A General Competency

The managers in my study disconfirmed the notion highlighted by McMahon (2010) that limited exploration of specific dimensions of diversity is the path to success in the field. They indicated that while specific dimensions of diversity (race, gender, personality type, age, etc.) are relevant on a case-by-case basis, it is a general competence with diversity that helps them manage the daily manifestations of diversity on their teams. The managers indicated that the general ability to recognize and acknowledge diverse perspectives (whatever the source) was the skill that helped them get positive results with teams. They also supported the notion that designated people like top management teams and human resources personnel may promote diversity management in theory, but in practice it involves all employees through diverse teams and their managers (Eginli & Narin, 2017).

A Common Language

The original conceptualization of diversity management defined it as a practice designed to leverage differences in order to support organizational goals (e.g., innovation, customer satisfaction) and to gain a competitive advantage (Manoharan & Singal, 2017). Diversity management was based on the revelations of the Hudson Institute study Workforce 2000 (Johnston, 1987), which disclosed dramatic demographic shifts (increasing diversity), and the subsequent insight of Dr. Roosevelt Thomas, who created the term "managing diversity" (Manoharan & Singal, 2017). I employed Thomas's

(1990) definition of diversity management as part of the interview protocol in my study:

A management discipline designed to produce better business results with a diverse mix

of employees. The majority of the managers in my study (11 of 12) indicated that what

they do as managers of diverse teams conforms to that definition. That finding confirms

that, as suggested by Thomas, a common language and common understanding of

diversity management is possible.

It's About Business Performance

I deliberately planned my research to focus on management, diversity, and teams

in order to direct attention away from the social aspects of diversity and more on the

benefits of diversity for enterprise management and team performance. The three major

themes I identified from the managers can be summarized in the phrase *managing diverse*

teams, which addresses the experiences and perceptions of managing people, managing

diversity, and managing team performance. I found specific insights for each theme that

are captured under subtheme headings. The insights gleaned from these themes reveal

patterns that confirm prior research by Soldan and Nankervis (2004) recommending the

inclusion of frontline managers in the practice of diversity management and that inform

the direction of future research in this area.

The first theme, perceptions of managing people, addressed the fundamental role

of frontline and middle managers and the relationship to the people they manage. The

process of managing a team, even a diverse team, begins with efforts to manage each

individual as an individual. According to the managers in my study, there are a number of

principles and characteristics that support effectiveness in managing individuals. Madera

(2018) found that social perspective taking is useful to create a sense of similarity and shared identity with others. That is one of the keys identified by the managers in my research. Rodgers and Hunter (2004) referred to the concept as *managing differently* suggesting that each employee is unique and therefore requires some unique treatment from managers. When I synthesized the observations and insights shared by the participants, I saw a potential for developing a list of principles that could serve as a theory for effective management of individual workers, confirming and evolving from the research of Madera, Rodgers, and Hunter.

It's About Managing People

My research revealed that the advent of increased diversity in the workplace brought with it additional management challenges. Among those additional challenges are tension, conflict, confusion, miscommunication, and different group dynamics. That confirms the findings of Gover and Duxbury (2012) that there are natural barriers to implementing diversity management. Many of the dysfunctions that arise with diverse groups might not be present with more homogeneous groups. For instance, the need to process differing opinions and come to consensus is often greater with a broadly diverse group with different backgrounds, points of view, and beliefs. My research confirms Ivancevich and Gilbert's (2000) findings, discussed in Chapter 2, that diversity management efforts must be supported by results and that diversity management is a discipline designed for managers.

It's About General Competency

The second major theme that arose in my research, perceptions of managing diversity, addressed the growing reality that employees are increasingly diverse in a broad sense and that many organizations are investing in diversity management efforts. From their frontline positions, the managers identified a perspective on diversity management that keyed in on a common definition as well as a realistic assessment of the pluses and minuses of having more diversity on the teams. I used Thomas' definition (a management discipline designed to produce better business results with a diverse mix of employees) that was consistent in usage among my participants. Many of the managers gave examples that demonstrated how that definition fit what they have experienced. In addition, the majority of the participants had a positive response to diversity management as a concept and as a formal company initiative. Therefore, my research confirms the notion expressed by Madera (2018), discussed in Chapter 2, that frontline managers are a viable focus for getting direct benefit from the growing levels of diversity in the workplace. It was evident from the wisdom and insights from the managers that they saw their role as essential to the effective management of diverse teams.

These managers expressed that dimensions of diversity go far beyond the traditional race and gender. They identified a broad range of dimensions that included age, personality type, marital status, childcare needs and other family situations, years of experience, functional areas of expertise, work-from-home contractors versus in-office employees, sexual orientation, and national cultures. Some of these areas of difference play a bigger role in the workforce than race and gender. Some of the managers

commented that race and gender are no longer an issue in most of their interactions with employees. That idea confirms the notion by Kochan et al. (2003) that a general competency with diversity is the skillset most managers need to develop. Kochan et al. specifically called for a sustained, systematic effort to develop managerial skills in order to translate diversity into results. That formula does not involve focus on any particular dimension of diversity. Some specific dimensions of diversity will be evident at certain moments, but will not be a predominant factor over time.

Diversity challenges require a manager to be more attentive and involved. More attention by managers is one of the benefits of more diversity. In addition, there are some specific benefits of a highly diverse group. Those benefits include better (not faster) decisions, more innovation, easier talent recruitment, more learning, broader perspectives, and stronger outcomes and results. The benefits of diversity are the reason managers endure the process of dealing with the challenges of diversity. This outcome confirms the research of Morales and Rahe (2009) and of Cavaretta (2007).

It's About Skills

The third major theme, perceptions of managing teams, addressed the process of managing a diverse team in order to get high performance and better results. The comments by the managers brought perspective to the behaviors of effective team managers and to ways to get value from diverse teams. Being an effective manager of diverse teams begins with foundational skills at managing teams for performance. This insight confirms the findings of Omran (2009) that team management requires

competence and skills to be effective. Getting the best from a diverse team requires a unique set of skills and a perspective that expects to find value in diversity.

The majority of the managers reported that they have come to prefer diverse teams, especially when the goal is improved performance and meeting objectives. The preference for diversity existed despite the realistic recognition that diversity introduces complexity and unique challenges to team management. This insight confirms the findings of Jain and Anjuman (2013) that complexity requires managers with skills and an understanding of human nature.

The reasons the managers gave for preferring diversity were practical, experiential, and philosophical. The practical reasons supported the findings of Aquino and Robertson (2017) that the benefit of diversity management derives from teams who make better decisions, solve problems, capture innovation, improve productivity, make more accurate predictions, and who operate more effectively and efficiently. The experience of managing diverse teams as an active process confirmed the findings in Carstens and De Kock (2017 that suggested that diversity management is a process (what you do) rather than a state (what you have). Philosophically, the managers almost universally held views that there is inherent value in diversity when properly managed. Those views support the findings of Hong and Page (2004) that diverse teams outperform homogeneous teams.

It's Not Personal

The advent of increased diversity may be difficult for some people to adjust to. It becomes necessary for the manager to be a role model at responding positively to

diversity. No one on the team has more influence with the team than the manager of the team. The manager has to play the mediator to help everyone else understand each other and to translate differences into similarities. This finding aligns with the findings of Kulik (2014), Madera (2017), and Hall (2013) that suggested that line managers bear the pressure of managing diversity; that without line managers embracing diversity, the efforts will be disrupted; and that line managers must explain the value of diversity to the team. That role requires a manager to be open-minded, willing to learn, and focused on the desired outcomes of the operation.

The role of manager is sometimes a one-on-one, day-to-day, face-to-face endeavor and is exercised differently with each employee. Still, the managers in my study advised that effective managers learn to remain objective and to not take the interactions with employees personally. That view resonates with the viewpoint shared by Holmberg and Tyrstrup (2010) and Harvey and Buckley (2002) that said that management behavior is designed to manage the everyday complexity of business operations and that managers are content to be in a support role and allow workers to be the stars of the operation. It also aligns with the findings of Beck and Harter (2014) that being a manager is a unique role that is different from other skilled-based functions in an organization. Being an advisor, mentor, and coach has to be balanced with being an objective arbiter of decisions and goals for the team. Most managers recognized that it (managing people) is not for everyone.

Emphasis on Management Over Leadership

Finally, the managers in my study concluded that good management (more than leadership) is the key to getting benefit from a diverse team. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Jayne and Dipboye (2004), which posited that having a diverse workforce does not produce positive outcomes. When managed well, a diverse team can yield better decisions, more innovation, high performance, and sustainable results. But managers must first acknowledge and accept that it is easier to manage a team of like individuals. Likeness yields less friction and more agreement. It also produces mediocre outcomes.

So, effective managers are careful to seek out diversity to avoid the trap of close-minded or narrow thinking. It is not simply having more diversity that improves performance; it is when you manage that diversity that you get better outcomes. This finding disconfirms the popular notion in the literature (e.g., McMahon, 2010) that testing different dimensions of diversity will find the one combination of diversity and moderating factors that will confirm the diversity-performance link. Without the exercise of effective management of teams, no element of diversity will produce consistently positive results. This idea also supports the conclusions of Berg (2012) that diverse teams will achieve either excellent (when managed) or miserable (when not managed) results.

Limitations of the Study

My study included only 12 managers, most of whom were located in the Atlanta (Georgia) area. It would have been useful to have more participants and more geographic dispersion. There was a clear potential for researcher bias at every phase of the research. Most notable was when the conversations required me to frame questions in a manner

that matched the language and tone of the participant. As an instrument of the research, I could not suppress my experience so that comments were made that could have influenced the participants' responses. This was especially true once I shared my definition of diversity management. The participants often responded as though a light bulb had gone off in their mind (an aha moment). It might be safer to simply ask what the term means for each participant and accept the broad range of potential definitions. As a result, my study produced a static response to a dynamic topic that is still in flux and still needs standardized definitions and practices. It may be difficult to replicate my study unless the researcher has a similar grounding in the field and the participants are equally forthcoming with their experience.

There was a slight inconsistency in the data collection process. Two of the interviews were conducted face-to-face while all others were conducted by phone or video conferencing. The distractions of an office setting may have skewed the responses of those two participants. While I was pleased with the broad diversity of industries represented by the participants, 10 industries do not represent all industries. It was also true that the participants represented clear distinctions as blue-collar (factory and manufacturing) and white-collar (project, sales, professional services, marketing, etc.). There are other contexts in business that need to be included in order to make the results more generalizable.

Finally, the interviewing protocol that I used reflected my interest in elevating the role of frontline managers in the diversity management conversation. I assumed that the managers were involved and aware of their companies' efforts with diversity

management. It might have been better to ask what role they actually played in diversity management programs. The execution of the interviewing protocol is also an area of concern. Interviewing styles vary and in a conversational interview, different styles may yield different responses. That also applies to interpretation of the data.

Recommendations for Future Research

My study reversed a trend by researchers in the field of diversity management of conducting quantitative research focused on dimensions of diversity, moderating factors, and elements of firm-level performance. I purposefully selected participants with direct experience managing diverse teams that contribute to firm performance. My conjecture, based on experience and research, was that firm performance is the total of individual team performances. For my study, the frontline team was the unit of study and the role of frontline managers was the primary area of inquiry.

I recommend that more studies be conducted using qualitative approaches and focusing on frontline managers to expand our knowledge about the actual experience of getting results from a diverse team. The gap in the literature that I addressed was the lack of experiential data that confirms the real life performance factors of diverse teams. Rather than continue to speculate, I recommend that researchers continue to amass enough experiential data so that substantiated conclusions can be drawn about what works to get benefit from diversity management efforts. That should include other forms of qualitative research such as case study, ethnography, and Delphi. Then research should move to a grounded theory approach to identify factors that have repeatedly proven to be important for high performance for diverse teams. That theory would then be the

foundation of future study. Then it would be safe to return to quantitative research to test that theory.

Implications

My study showed that frontline managers are important contributors to the success of diversity management efforts and are the key to getting benefit from the large investments being made on diversity-related activities. The results point to a set of useful factors that managers found relevant for their work in managing diverse teams. The results also indicate that the wisdom obtained from direct involvement with managing diversity should not be overlooked or taken for granted. Organizations can make progress and demonstrate tangible benefits from their diversity management efforts if they would heed the insights shared by these managers.

Significance to Practice

The field of diversity management has been plagued by failure to produce a consistent, replicable set of practices to insure success. In fact, diversity management continues to be a field of study rather than a management discipline because of the lack of a uniform set of practices to be used by everyone who wants to execute against a diversity management strategy. A response by executives who are introduced to diversity management principles has been, "Now what? Tell me what to do." Diversity management practitioners have been unable to answer that complaint because there is little agreement about definition, desired outcome, or standard practice.

The diversity continuum presented in Friday and Friday (2003) describes an evolutionary progression from acknowledging diversity to understanding diversity to

valuing diversity to managing diversity. The actual practice seems to be stuck at the valuing diversity level with emphasis on concepts like inclusion and appreciating cultural differences. The original intent of the diversity management movement was to encourage organizations to move to the managing diversity level, which would produce tangible results so powerful that a return to understanding diversity would no longer be necessary. The idea was to produce consistent, replicable, and sustainable evidence that well-managed diversity is a positive asset for modern enterprises. My research sheds light on the practice and benefits of effectively managing diversity for the purpose of improving performance.

Therefore, I recommend future research that uses a variety of qualitative approaches to confirm and extend the findings of my study. The next steps in the conversation about diversity management should focus on developing standardized tools, techniques, and skills that will allow managers to gain traction with diversity management using a disciplined approach to execute it.

Significance to Theory

The field of diversity management has been around for three decades and still does not have a unifying theory or uniform conceptualization. Both researchers and practitioners have been free to present a variety of constructs under the banner of diversity management with no means of checking. The premise of my study was to focus attention on a single unit of study and the set of behaviors that translate into value and benefit from the fact that increasing diversity is a new reality. In the process, my study points to the possibility of a unifying theory that emphasizes the combination of diversity

and management practice to produce improved performance (diversity + management = performance). It will take more research using a qualitative approach to amass enough evidence to validate that formula.

Here are the basic components of such a theory. The statements, stories, and experiences of the participants could be captured in a set of diversity management principles as a means to insure effective management of individuals with unique attributes. They include principles like (a) get to know them (personally), (b) give them what they need to succeed, (c) be fair to each person, (d) know yourself, (e) coach more, tell less, and (f) build trust. In addition, the participants could identify characteristics of effective managers, which included things like, (a) listening. (b) sharing responsibility, (c) working from a development plan, and (d) making sure you like being a manager (it's not for everyone). Each of these represents an insight to help frontline managers perform better as managers of people, each of whom has unique strengths, weaknesses, needs, and desires.

Significance to Social Change

Diversity in society, like diversity in organizations, must be managed with the intent to demonstrate its inherent value while acknowledging its innate disruption. The focus of managing diversity is to improve performance and to clearly demonstrate added value from increasing diversity. The social engineering approach (diversity for diversity sake) has produced backlash in organizations as well as entrenched tribalism in the larger society. The process of advantaging one group to the disadvantage of another is not a workable solution. The practice of doing things that advantage the entire team is much

more palatable. My study helps to overcome the stigma of diversity programs by providing insights and promoting more research that strive to find out what actually works to get value and improved performance from the diversity mix at work and in society, especially in light of the dynamic changes that are occurring specifically with respect to diversity in the nation and the workplace.

Conclusion

Prior research has focused on discrete elements of diversity and has assumed (without evidence) that more diversity contributes to improved performance. It is time to move beyond rhetoric and toward evidence of improved results. My research encourages more emphasis on the specific practices that are necessary to get benefit from the advent of increased diversity. My study focused on a unit of study (the team) and a set of practices (management skills) and a proponent (frontline manager) that have been missing in prior research and prior practice. The rich and deep conversational interviews with the participants in my study provided key insights to help answer the research question.

The managers in my study identified a set of principles for managing individuals, managing the added complexity of diversity, and managing diverse teams toward high performance. They further indicated that a common definition of diversity management is possible and that my working definition fits with their general experience. The data indicated that (a) a general competence with diversity is more useful than an emphasis on any particular dimension of diversity, (b) diversity brings additional management challenges, which are outweighed by the benefits of a well-managed diverse team, (c)

there are a set of management skills required to navigate the tension, conflict, and discomfort that come with increased diversity, and (d) well-managed diversity yields better team performance.

The results point to a new direction for inquiry in the field of diversity management. The new approach focuses on skills and practice rather than awareness; emphasizes management more than leadership; and targets improved performance rather than increased diversity as the desired outcome. The general outline of my study will allow future researchers to continue to collect more data about the experience of managers inside organizations and to develop a body of evidence that can serve as a foundation for theory and a basis for theory testing. My study suggests that the field of diversity management can become a management discipline with a unified theory and a uniform set of practices, which will benefit academics, practitioners, and society.

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Appendix A: Initial Announcement

Wanted: Frontline Managers to participate in diversity management study.

Study proposes to reveal the role of managers in diversity management efforts.

My name is James Rodgers and we are connected on LinkedIn (1st or 2nd level). I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am currently conducting a study on the role of frontline managers in the execution of diversity management programs.

Criteria

If you are a frontline manager at a U.S. for-profit enterprise with five or more years as a manager, a diverse team of workers and are responsible for design, manufacture, sales, or delivery of a product/service, I invite you to consider participating in this doctoral research effort. Also, if you know of someone who would be a good fit for the study, please forward this announcement to him or her.

Your Next Step: If you want to be part of this study, complete the Information Request form below or simply email me at james@jamesorodgers.com with the listed information. I will send you a study overview and official consent form. When you receive the Study Overview and Consent form, please read it carefully, sign it, and return it to me at the email address above. All respondents will be given an executive summary of the study when it is complete.

Study Information Request

Please complete this form and return it via email to james@jamesorodgers.com.

☐　　　　Yes, I am interested in knowing more about this study.

☐　　　　I affirm that I meet the criteria for consideration.

My direct contact information is:

Name:

Title:

Company:

Telephone:　　　　　　　　　email:

Appendix B: Participant Interview Protocol

Research Project: The Perceptions and Lived Experiences of Frontline Managers with Highly Diverse Teams.

Date of Interview   Time of Interview

Location of Interview   Interviewer: James O. Rodgers

Interviewee:

Questions
The subject of this study is diversity management.

1. Let's begin with your background. Specifically, how and why did you become a manager? (What skills, talents, or traits qualify you for that role?)

2. I define diversity management as a management discipline, practice designed to get the best from all employees recognizing the uniqueness of each person. What is your definition of diversity management and how did you arrive at that perspective?

3. As a manager of a diverse team of people, what have been some of your biggest challenges? What have been some of your best times?

4. In your experience, has the increase in diversity been a positive, negative, or neutral factor in achieving consistent business results? Why?

5. Think back to your own experience as an individual contributor. When you were at your best, what did your manager do to make it possible for you to thrive and succeed?

6. Now think about a typical day, week, and month as a manager of a diverse team. What kinds of situations tend come up and how do you handle them?

7. Given your responsibility to produce results for the company, if you had a choice between a more homogeneous team (e.g., all engineers from the same school and similar work experience) and a more diverse team (demographic, psychographic, function, worldview, etc.), which would you prefer? Why?

8. When your company introduced the idea of managing diversity, were you onboard immediately; did you grow to appreciate it later; were you then and are you now skeptical of the idea? Why?

9. What are the tools, techniques, models, instruments, and styles, which have contributed to your success as a manager of a diverse team? What made these tools effective?

10. Finally, if your favorite niece became a manager of a diverse team, what would you tell her to make sure she was successful? Elaborate.

(Each answer may evoke a follow up or deeper probe. Record answers as stated by the participant without editorial license. Review next steps and reassure them of complete confidentiality.)

Appendix C: Thank-You Letter

Date:

Dear <participant>

Thank you for participating in the study interview and sharing your experience as a frontline manager with a diverse team. Your thoughts and insights are of great value to this study effort.

Enclosed is a transcript of your interview. I ask that you review it and confirm that it represents your responses during the interview. After reviewing it, if you realize that it misstates your intentions or that some information is missing, please feel free to add comments at the bottom of the transcript. However, please do not edit the transcript for typos or grammar. I want to capture our conversation in the exact verbal expression we both used.

Please return your transcript with your additions and corrections within a week of this letter. If you make a physical copy, please destroy it after you submit your comments. Thank you for your contribution to this effort. If you have any questions, please contact me at 770-331-3246 or at james@jamesorodgers.com.

J.O. Rodgers
Doctoral candidate Walden University