Business Practices Which Have the Greatest Influence on Retention as it relates to Wired Boomers in the Aerospace Industry in Huntsville, Alabama

by

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We the undersigned committee hereby recommend that the attached document be accepted as fulfilling in part the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration.

“Business Practices Which Have the Greatest Influence on Retention as it relates to Wired Boomers in the Aerospace Industry in Huntsville, Alabama”

a dissertation by Karen L. Newsom

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Abstract

Business Practices Which Have the Greatest Influence on Retention as it relates to Wired Boomers in the Aerospace Industry in Huntsville, Alabama

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the business practices which have the greatest influence on retention as it relates to wired boomers (born 1956-1964) in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama, and was directed toward maintaining technical expertise, job skills, experience, and knowledge within the organization. Baby boomers (born in 1946-1964) represent the largest generation in U.S. history to reach the traditional age of retirement and prepare to leave the workforce, vacating approximately 152 million jobs by 2030. Researchers have suggested the baby boomer cohort is actually two separate groups, with the second half (1956-1964, presently 53-61) being called the wired boomers because they were the first generation to be introduced to computers and related technology.

The changing demographics of the United States (U.S.) shows the population is aging. Competition in the future for all organizations will rest on the productivity and performance of an aging workforce. The business practices identified within this study which incentivize wired boomers to remain in the
workplace longer than individuals from prior generations are working from a remote location, working flexible hours, and offering age-specific benefits (grandparent leave, job-sharing, phased approach to retirement and sabbaticals are a few examples). Those individuals who desire to continue working past the traditional retirement age are identified as ralliers and the definition of this cohort is a direct result of this study.

_Keywords:_ ralliers, rallier cohort, wired boomers, business practices, aging population, incentives, delay retirement, retirement intentions, retention
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Dedication

To my children, Payton Maxine Ambrose, Evan Douglas Ambrose, Hope Karena Ambrose, Jana Marie Newsom, and Fran Alexis Newsom – I am blessed every.single.day God gave you to me! Jana and Fran, you have accepted me into your life when you didn’t have to – thank you, thank you, thank you! You are amazing women and I am so grateful you let me share in your lives, dreams, and future! Your mom and dad did an amazing job in raising you both!

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incentive and motivation for each of you to always continue your own educational endeavors!
Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter one provides an overview of this study, the background and rationale of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and explains the significance of the research. This chapter also contains the definition of terms used throughout the paper, assumptions and limitations related to the study, and the worldview and theoretical foundation.

Overview

The workforce research suggests labor shortages are projected for the coming decades (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Cutler, 2011; Dychtwald, 2016; Fry, 2015; Fuertes, Egdell & McQuaid, 2013; Lutz, 2009; Ortman, Velkoff & Hogan, 2014; Span, 2016; Tishman, Van Looy, Bruyere, 2012). Workers who are presently over the age of 50 will be needed to fill the knowledge gap in corporate America (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Cutler, 2011; Fry, 2015; Fuertes et al., 2013; Lutz, 2009; Ortman et al., 2014; Tishman, Van Looy, Bruyere, 2012). This gap was created from the early boomers who already retired or plan to retire in the near future, followed by the continued aging of wired boomers and subsequent generations, living longer and healthier lives than previous generations (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Cutler, 2011; Dychtwald, 2016; Fry, 2015; Fuertes et al., 2013; Lutz, 2009; Ortman et al., 2014; Tishman, Van Looy, Bruyere, 2012).
The workforce is aging, as a collective, due to the decline in fertility rates coupled with increased longevity (Bjelland, Bruyere, von Schrader, Houtenville, Ruiz-Quintanilla & Webber, 2010; Brough, Johnson, Drummond, Pennisi & Timms, 2011; Jenkins, 2016; Laplante, Tougas, Lagace, & Bellehumeur, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016; Vasconcelos, 2015). In 2015, the United States (U.S.) labor force was composed of over 44 million baby boomers, over 52 million gen Xers and over 53 million millennials (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Fry, 2015). By 2035, 75 percent of the workforce will be millennials (Fry, 2015; Turner-Parker, 2013) and in 2050, over one-third of the population will be over the age of 50 (Brough et al., 2011). The fastest growing population segment in the U.S. is people 85 years of age and older, and the second fastest growing segment is people 100 and older (Jenkins, 2016). These two growing segments are representative of the overall increased longevity of the U.S. population (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Fries, 1980). The delay in morbidity has created a natural increase in the number of years individuals remain active, healthy and productive (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Fries, 1980; Woolever, 2013). More than half of the babies born today will live to be 100 and this advancement in increased longevity is one of the greatest success stories of this century (Jenkins, 2016).

The growth of the workforce is expected to continue the slow growth pattern in the coming years as wired boomers age and many choose to retire from work altogether (Bjelland et al., 2010). Firms now implementing plans for
retaining wired boomers recognize the financial value brought to the business in the validation of human capital resources (Ployhart, Nyberg, Reilly & Maltarich, 2014).

According to Cappelli (2009), the Director of Human Resources at the Wharton School of Business, wired boomers’ workplace performance is superior across a spectrum of germane performance indices - sharpened skills, particularly interpersonal skills, superior attendance, and more conscientious. Some organizations have strategized on how they can incentivize wired boomers to delay retirement and implement plans to encourage wired boomers to stay with their organization longer (Armstrong-Stassen & Cattaneo, 2010; Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Jenkins, 2016). However, the idea of delaying the transition to retirement for wired boomers is uncharted territory for most firms (Armstrong-Stassen & Cattaneo, 2010). In recent decades, firms have opted to push older employees out of the workplace, believing the stereotypes and bias about workers over the age of 50 (Armstrong-Stassen & Cattaneo, 2010). With the realization of the workforce aging, businesses are rethinking previous stereotypes and bias against wired boomers (Jenkins, 2016; Laplante et al., 2010). Throughout history, businesses have been forced to change in order to survive and remain competitive (Newcott, 2016). Change is at the heart of innovation and imperative for the firm to survive long-term (Leong & Anderson, 2012). The boomer generation has dominated
society since they were born and have redefined every stage of life through which they have passed. It appears this will also be the case as it relates to retirement.

A shortage of employees to meet the needs of organizations has created a contest for talent (Phillips & Edwards, 2009; Tishman et al., 2012). The number of available candidates is declining yet talent is needed in order to continue to increase productivity (Phillips & Edwards, 2009). Brenner (2010) posited the age wave as a looming financial crisis for U.S. firms and retaining wired boomers provides a strategic benefit. Approximately 80% of wired boomers are employed in professional, management, law, financial consulting, health care, sales, and support functions (Cappelli & Novelli, 2013). The shortage of experience in the workplace will be measured in the loss of productivity and profitability (Cooper, 2013; Goldberg, 2000; Preece, 2011). Wired boomers leaving the workplace will create a void of decades of knowledge, skills and experience which cannot be replaced by inexperienced employees regardless of their respective grade point averages or civic activities (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Kogovsek and Kogovsek (2013) cited a shortage of knowledge-intensive skills will require employers to rethink their strategy when considering the retirement intentions of wired boomers if they plan to remain competitive.

Schultz (1961) introduced the theory of human capital and Becker (1964) further developed the theory stating physical capital is only a small portion of potential growth in income for the firm. Human capital resources serve as an asset
to the firm, just as technology, inventions, buildings, and firmware (Becker, 1964; Melton, 2015; Phillips & Edwards, 2009). Many human capital scholars have focused on the theory from the viewpoint of the individual and the capital provided to the business from each person, such as Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964). More recent research examined human capital as a collective resource of the firm, not only at the individual level but also at the unit-level (Ployhart et al., 2014). Human capital emanates from the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAOs) garnered from each individual employee in order to benefit the business purposes of the unit (Ployhart et al., 2014). Recent research cited human capital is a realized asset for the business unit as a whole where the KSAOs prove to be relevant to maximizing the productivity, efficiency, revenue, and lowering costs of the firm (Melton, 2015).

Wired boomers have an opportunity to dispel the negative perceptions associated with age in the workplace by keeping their skills current and continuing their education using self-training courses and participating in training offered by the firm (Laplante et al., 2010). Demonstrating a high level of flexibility and adaptability provides employers with the benefit of the continued mental growth of these employees and higher levels of productivity (Morrow-Howell & Greenfield, 2010). Negative stereotypes and bias against older employees abound in the American workplace and many individuals view age in terms of mental and physical decline as opposed to experience and stability (Blackstone, 2013).
Additional negative bias includes inflexibility, lack of enthusiasm, and an unwillingness to learn new technology (Butler & Berret, 2012). Keogh (2009) argued wired boomers are difficult to train in technology and employers give up in attempting to train these individuals, preferring instead the younger generations who come to the workplace technologically astute.

The problem identified in this research is from the perspective of the firm (in the private sector), as the realized consequence of an aging workforce opting for retirement and increasing costs for the firm if these employees are not retained, coupled with too few candidates to fill the number of available positions in order for aerospace companies in Huntsville, Alabama, to remain productive and profitable. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the relationships between the elements revealed in this study, and how those elements interrelate and support one another.
Background and Rationale of the Study

In May 2016, the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics released a report stating the job vacancies in the U. S. reached 5.8 million (a rate of 3.9 percent) (U. S. Department of Labor, 2016b) in March 2016 (see Figure 2), an all-time high, surpassing the 5.78 million job vacancies in July 2015 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016b). During 2015, there were 5.3 million job openings on average per month. From November 2015 through March 2016, the job vacancies continued to escalate and employers stated the job skills gap is the major reason jobs are not being filled (U. S. Department of Labor, 2016b).
The entire workforce is aging due to longer life expectancy, healthier lifestyles, better self-care, and declining birth rates (Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Furlong, 2007; Jenkins, 2016). The baby boomer cohort is the largest group of employees to reach traditional retirement age in U.S. history (Jenkins, 2016; Tacchino, 2013; Wise, 2010). Many early boomers have already retired from the workforce; however, wired boomers (presently aged 53-61) continue to remain in the workplace for a number of reasons and researchers suggest this trend will continue for the foreseeable future because they (Jenkins, 2016; Ng & Feldman, 2010; Nishii, Langevin & Bruyere, 2010; Tacchino, 2013; Tishman et al., 2012):

- Enjoy their job
- Are engaged in their current position/employer
- Need additional retirement savings
• Are not yet to full retirement age
• Enjoy the social aspects of working
• Want mental engagement and challenges

Wired boomers remaining in the workplace longer than individuals from previous generations has promoted economic growth, increased government revenue, and improved financial security for individuals (Regan, 2011). Other researchers, however, warn the growing vacancies in the workplace will leave a gap in knowledge, skills, and experience which will be detrimental to the overall productivity and profitability of organizations across the country (Avanzi, Fraccaroli, Sarchielli, Ullrich, & Rolf, 2014; Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Corwin, 2015). Employers have been unable to find enough qualified candidates to fill vacancies left by the early boomers who have already opted for retirement (Jenkins, 2016; Tishman et al., 2012).

Table 1 defines the cohort names applicable to this research instrument, the birth year associated with each cohort and the relative age of those individuals which comprise the cohort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort Title</th>
<th>Birth Year</th>
<th>Age (in 2017)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GI Generation</td>
<td>1901-1924</td>
<td>93-116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalists</td>
<td>1925-1945</td>
<td>72-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Boomers</td>
<td>1946-1955</td>
<td>62-71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wired Boomers</td>
<td>1956-1964</td>
<td>53-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen Xers</td>
<td>1965-1980</td>
<td>37-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennials</td>
<td>1981-1999</td>
<td>18-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Z</td>
<td>2000-Present (2017)</td>
<td>17 and under</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2010; Drake, 2014)
Statement of the Problem

The workforce is aging and as wired boomers consider retirement, organizations will be left with a gap in knowledge, skills and experience which will reduce productivity and profitability for employers (Brooke, 2012; Phillips & Edwards, 2009; Taylor, McLoughlin, Meyer, & Brook, 2013). In years past, traditional retirement age was 65. However, current research warns employers there are not enough qualified potential candidates to fill the positions being vacated by the early boomers (Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Corwin, 2015). Furthermore, the younger prospective candidates lack the skills, knowledge and expertise to fill the vacancies (Ospina, 2015; Tishman et al., 2012). There are more job openings available in the U.S. today than at any time since December 2000, when the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) first began tracking data related to vacant positions (Litzinger & Dunn, 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a). The unemployment rate has declined from 7.2% to 5.3% (Litzinger & Dunn, 2015); however, the labor force participation rate is also declining (Litzinger & Dunn, 2015). Therefore, researchers suggested employers incentivize wired boomers in an effort to retain these individuals in the workforce longer than in previous generations and develop a retention plan for keeping wired boomers with their respective employers longer than individuals in previous generations (Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Jenkins, 2016; Perera, Sardeshmukh & Kaluk, 2015; Perry, 2010; Phillips & Edwards, 2009; Shacklock & Brunetto, 2011; Vasconcelos, 2015).
Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser (2011) argued the reason employers have not implemented practices to retain wired boomers was because they do not understand how to effectively do so. The literature offered an array of suggestions for retaining wired boomers; however, Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser (2011) argued most of this literature is “atheoretical and prescriptive in nature” (p. 320) and did not offer a specific solution or suggested business plan.

Figure 3 represents the labor force participation rate by age as of 2015. In 2015, the millennials were age 16-34, gen Xers were 35-50 and wired boomers were 51-59. Millennials comprised 34% of the labor force. Gen Xers comprised 34% of the labor force and wired boomers were approximately 22% of the labor force (Pew Research, 2015; U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b). During the “baby boom,” 1957 was the year with the greatest number of births reaching 4.3 million, the second year of the wired boomers (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Erickcek, Pittelko, Robey, & Timmeney, 2013; Koravos, 2015). From 1956 – 1960, 21.1 million babies were born, which is almost 1.5 times more than the number of babies born between 1941 – 1945 and accounts for the largest growth in the population for any 5 year period in the 20th century (Williams, 2014; Williams 2015; Wolf & Amirkhanyan, 2010).
In a study performed by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, employers identified the current talent needs for the coming decade (2015-2025) which will be most important in order to remain competitive and profitable. The current talent needs are technical skills, willingness to work flexible hours, attitude of continuous learning and soft skills (such as leadership and effective communication skills) (Erickcek et al., 2013). Companies need to be creative in the engagement of employees in order to encourage individuals to continue to be interested in their work for the long-term. Flexible work arrangements was one of the issues specifically cited in the research regarding incentivizing wired boomers to remain in the workplace and was one of the key
elements which motivated wired boomers to remain with their employer longer (Ciampa & Chernesky, 2013; Perera et al., 2015). Additionally, wired boomers desire access to continuous learning opportunities but employers deny them access to such opportunities (Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Ciampa & Chernesky, 2013; Corwin, 2015; Maurer & Weiss, 2010; Perera et al., 2015; Vasconcelos, 2015; Woolever, 2013). Training and educational opportunities made available to wired boomers will enhance technical skills and afford the benefit of continuous learning (Pesapane, 2013; Woolever, 2013). Seiptert and Baghurst (2014), Ospina (2015), and Deery and Jago (2015) argued the poor soft skills from the younger cohorts, particularly the millennials, present a problem for employers as it relates to lack of organization skills, leadership, problem-solving, writing, and customer service but these are some of the characteristics specifically associated with wired boomers (Woolever, 2013).

A cooperative poll conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) revealed eight out of ten Human Resource Directors stated the loss of talented wired boomers is a problem or potential problem for their organization (Flannery, 2012; SHRM, 2012). Firms implementing business practices for the retention of wired boomers stand to reduce the negative financial impact realized by the loss of these skills and experience (Furlong, 2007; Jenkins, 2016; Schacklock & Brunetto, 2011). SHRM (2012) stated that firms that have implemented business practices to
retain wired boomers stand to benefit from those organizations which have failed to do so. This is due to these firms being able to target these individuals by initiating a recruiting plan to hire wired boomers which eliminates the potential knowledge and skills gap being created by boomers opting for retirement and leaving the workplace. This scenario creates a competitive advantage for firms who preemptively strike to maintain knowledge, skills and expertise of those workers who are motivated, individual contributors, and desire to continue their careers well past traditional retirement age (SHRM, 2012; Ospina, 2015). Paullin (2015) argued the skillset of wired boomers (and future generations as they also mature in the workplace) have been sharpened and refined over decades of employment. Retaining talented wired boomers and hiring new ones makes excellent business sense and leveraging these individuals gives employers a competitive advantage (Paullin, 2015).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the business practices which have the greatest influence on retaining wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama. This study seeks to facilitate firms in implementing these business practices in order to retain wired boomers past traditional retirement age, keeping current positions filled with knowledge, skills, and expertise, and turning silver into gold (Furlong, 2007).
Nature of the Study

The research for this study was conducted using qualitative research methods in order to collect the data necessary for this study. Phenomenological research (Husserl, 1913) and content analysis (Krippendorff, 1969) methods were used as the platform for the data analysis in the in-depth interview qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Krippendorff, 2012; Maxwell, 2013). Using this approach enabled the researcher to analyze the data and develop the data into an accurate analysis and interpretation of the study (Creswell, 2014). The researcher interviewed 12 wired boomers from four aerospace firms in Huntsville, Alabama (five females and seven males). The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with each participant, asking ten open-ended questions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). Each interview was recorded using two audio recording devices to ensure a backup was available in the event of hardware failure of one of the devices (Creswell, 2014). The resulting interviews were transcribed into Word documents (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Maxwell, 2013). The researcher exercised the content analysis (Krippendorff, 1969) method to contextualize the interpretations of the transcribed documents produced from the audio recordings of each interview and systematically classified, categorized, and coded the data resulting from the interviews such as themes and frequently used
Definition of Terms

This section provides the reader with clarity as to the meaning of the words and terms used herein. The definition of the terms are supported by research and provide a framework of reference for how the terms are used within this particular study related to the impact of retaining wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama.

Aging. The process of growing older with the passage of time, specifically the accumulation of the number of years in an individual’s life (Fries, 1980). Aging is also referred to as senescence as it relates to the gradual deterioration of the individual and inevitable mortality (Comfort, 1979; Williams, 1957).

Baby boomer (Boomer). An individual born from 1946 to 1964 (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2010; Drake, 2014).

Business practice. A documented method, process, procedure, rule, benefit, or policy implemented within an organization in order to sustain employment and pursue the firm’s objectives (Cobb & Johnson, 2012). Business practices go beyond any rule or policy which is required by law. These business practices are implemented to ensure longevity and well-being in the workplace (SHRM, 2012; Tishman et al., 2012). Business practices are designed to assist workers in their ability to better manage their work-life and family life (Swanberg,
James, Werner, & McKechnie, 2008; Woolever, 2013). Business practices vary between industries and may also vary between individual firms within the same industry. Examples of business practices as it applies to this research study included work-life balance programs, flexible work arrangements, working remotely, career development, initiatives to motivate and engage employees, training, and education. (This list was not all inclusive and age-specific benefits was one of the business practices revealed during the study to incentivize wired boomers to remain with their employer past traditional retirement age.)

**Early boomer.** An individual born from 1946-1955 (Seaman, 2012). As of 2017, these individuals are 62-71 years of age.

**Generation.** A cohort of individuals who share the same historical, social and chronological parameters (Mannheim, 1953; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

**Generation Jones / Jonesers.** Another name for wired boomers and a term coined by Jonathan Pontell in 1999 (Williams, 2014; Williams, 2015). These individuals are the younger age group at the end of the baby boomer generation, born from 1956-1964. This label is related to “keeping up with the Joneses” as it relates to competitiveness, as well as the slang term “jonesing” (related to a craving or yearning).

**Generation X (Gen Xers).** A cohort of individuals born from 1965 to 1980 (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2010; Drake, 2014).
**Generation Y (also known as millennials).** A cohort of individuals born from 1981 to 1999 (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2010; Drake, 2014).

**Generation Z (also known as homeland generation).** A cohort of individuals born from 2000 to present (Novak, 2012).

**Human capital.** The cumulative value of the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by the employees within the organization (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). Physical capital is only a small portion of potential growth in income for the firm. Human capital resources serve as an asset to the firm, just as technology, inventions, buildings, and firmware (Becker, 1964; Melton, 2015; Phillips & Edwards, 2009).

**Incentivize.** To motivate or encourage an individual to do something, perform a particular action, or induce a specific response and offered as a reward as a result of the behavior (Merriman, Sen, Felo, & Litzky, 2015).

**Individual contributor.** A non-management employee of the firm who contributes to the overall mission and goals of the business. The development of the individual contributor cohort is the result of firms adopting a flat organizational structure and reducing the number of managers, as well as level of managers, within the business. The individual contributor is defined as an employee who can effectively organize and plan assigned tasks. They are noted as having strong interpersonal skills and extremely competent in creating a rapport with others. They are proficient at collaboration with other team members and able to work in a
timely manner to directly contribute to the overall goals of the team. Individual contributors deliver results, prioritize tasks, finish what they start, and take responsibility for outcomes associated with assignments (Calvert, 2014).

**Knowledge.** The intellectual capital, human capital, and knowledge capital within the organization creating a sustainable competitive advantage for the firm (Fragouli, 2015). Explicit knowledge is the information which can be documented as part of the policies of the organization and easy to transfer from one individual to another. Tacit knowledge is the mental data an employee has about the organization, policies, and procedures (Mohr, Young, & Burgess, 2012).

**Knowledge capital (also known as intellectual capital).** The information, experience, on-the-job learning, and skills possessed by the employees within the organization which improve business efficiencies (Saulais & Ermine, 2012).

**Knowledge management.** The strategies, policies, and procedures used within an organization to identify, share, convey, and preserve knowledge in order to maintain the experience and insight required in order to complete the work task (Turner-Parker, 2013).

**Knowledge worker.** Individuals who are involved in the use of specialized knowledge or skills, and requires a higher level of learning to be applied to the position (Joy & Haynes, 2011; Ware & Grantham, 2007).

**Millennial.** An individual born between 1981 and 1999. This cohort is also known as Generation Y (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2010; Drake, 2014).
**Ralliers.** Individuals reaching traditional retirement age and having the desire to continue working. They desire to rouse or revive their career, either by continuing with their current employer or re-careering in an effort to pursue a different interest.

**Retention.** The percent or number of employees that remain with the organization (Phillips & Edwards, 2009). The retention of employees is a systematic effort to encourage performers to remain employed with the firm (SHRM, 2015). Retention in this research study was related to retaining the wired boomer (age 53-61, as of 2017) beyond traditional retirement age and past the age of retirement of their predecessors in order to reduce the negative financial impact to businesses as a result of the loss of knowledge, skills and expertise if wired boomers opt for retirement.

**STEM.** An educational program to prepare school students for college-level study in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

**Talent.** Employees who possess critical expertise and knowledge related to their position and make a significant impact on the performance of the organization (Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Phillips & Edwards, 2009).

**Traditional retirement age.** The traditional age of retirement is 65 years of age in the United States (U.S.) (SSA, 2015; Tishman, Van Looy & Bruyere, 2012).
**Traditionalist.** An individual born from 1925 to 1946 (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2010; Drake, 2014).

**Wired boomer.** An individual 53-61 years of age (as of 2017, for the purposes of this study), born from 1956-1964 (Furlong, 2007; Goldberg, 2000). The wired boomer is the younger age group at the end of the baby boomer generation and is named such because they were the first generation to develop, be introduced to, and extensively use computers and related technology (Furlong, 2007; Goldberg, 2000). The growing vacancies in the workplace being created by the early boomers retirement has created a gap in knowledge, skills, and experience and has shown to be detrimental to the overall productivity and profitability of organizations across the country (Avanzi, Fraccaroli, Sarchielli, Ullrich, & Rolf, 2014; Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Corwin, 2015). Employers have been unable to find enough qualified candidates to fill existing vacancies left by the early boomers who have already opted for retirement (Jenkins, 2016; Tishman et al., 2012). The wired boomer who is the focus of this study possesses at least a bachelor’s degree (or higher) and is presently working in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama (Sinclair, 1906; Dymock, Billett, Klieve, Johnson & Martin, 2012).

**Young boomer.** Another name for wired boomer (Aronson, 2015; Griesdorn & Durband, 2016; Panday, 2013). These individuals are the younger age group at the end of the baby boomer generation, born from 1956-1964.
Significance of the Study

The findings from this research will facilitate firms in implementing business practices for retaining workers of all ages, but especially wired boomers in order to keep positions within aerospace companies in Huntsville, Alabama, filled with knowledge, skills, and expertise. As of 2012, Tishman et al. (2012) argued there is presently no accepted or recognized business process, policy, or plan to outline the specific business practices within the organization which would best motivate and incentivize wired boomers to choose to remain in the workplace longer as opposed to opting for retirement, as many of the early boomers have already chosen. The research findings from this study will provide management with specific business practices for retaining the wired boomers longer than in previous generations, turning silver into gold (Furlong, 2007).

In 2017, wired boomers comprised 22 percent of the current talent pool (Jenkins, 2016; Pew Research, 2015; U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b). Firms encouraging and incentivizing wired boomers to continue working allowed companies to take advantage of the human capital of the employees (Becker, 1964; Melton, 2015; Phillips & Edwards, 2009). It is less expensive to retain individuals currently in place than it is to replace those employees with individuals who possess less skills, experience, and technical expertise (Butler & Berret, 2012). Tacchino (2013) argued boomers have modified every institution across the country to include education, investing, labor force participation, housing, and social
establishments. The change in retirement intentions is an expected result of the largest cohort in the history of the U.S. reaching the traditional retirement age combined with longer life expectancy (Tacchino, 2013; Wise, 2010). Individuals are working longer because they can, due to lengthening life spans and advances in healthcare (Span, 2016).

Previous research related to wired boomers has been conflicting, with some researchers suggesting wired boomers are more costly to the firm due to increased healthcare costs associated with aging (Bailey, 2014; Cardoso, Guimaraes & Varejao, 2011; Lallemand & Rycx, 2009; Van Dalen, Henkens & Schippers, 2010; Van Ours, 2009). Additionally, researchers stated wired boomers show lower levels of productivity (Bailey, 2014; Cardoso, Guimaraes & Varejao, 2011; Lallemand & Rycx, 2009; Van Dalen et al., 2010; Van Ours, 2009). Other researchers argued the loss of knowledge, skills and experience of wired boomers is costly to the firm, lowers productivity and profitability, and threatens their competitive advantage (Armstrong-Stassen & Cattaneo, 2010; Artiach, Lee, Nelson & Walker, 2010; Preece, 2011; Flannery, 2012).

Assumptions and Limitations

There were four assumptions relevant to this research study. The first assumption was participants will relay experiences associated with employment in their present position. The researcher also made the assumption the participants would respond openly and honestly to each question and minimize any bias when
answering the interview questions. The researcher relied on the interview data to be reliable and accurate, and expected to find themes and patterns emerging from the interview to allow for the identification and categorization of the responses in order to present the business practices which have the greatest influence on retaining wired boomers in the workplace longer than their predecessors.

The scope of the study was among the limitations of the research, as it was specifically directed at the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama. This limitation consequently limited the number of participants as well as firms from which the participants were chosen. The period for gathering data was limited to four months. If the research were conducted for a longer period of time, it may have resulted in different outcomes.

**Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study was limited to 12 participants from four aerospace companies in Huntsville, Alabama. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews of 12 wired boomers (five females and seven males) (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). The interviews were recorded in order to capture the entirety of the interview and to allow the researcher to acknowledge the participant during the interview process as opposed to being distracted by attempting to capture the complete conversation manually and potentially missing important points made by the participant (Creswell, 2014). The objective of interviewing wired boomers was to determine whether these individuals plan to
retire at the traditional retirement age, whether they plan to remain in the workforce longer than previous generations, what their employer could do to encourage the individual to delay retirement, and why they desired to work past traditional retirement age, if in fact that was the case.

**Worldview and Theoretical Foundation**

The world’s population is aging and creating a shortage of talent not only for the U.S., but for other countries around the globe such as Japan, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Italy (Vasconcelos, 2015; Znidaric, Penger, & Dimovski, 2011). Researchers argued many wired boomers will retire at traditional retirement age, negatively impacting employers by the loss in talent (Turner-Parker, 2013).

Human capital theory was the theoretical framework for this study (Becker, 1964; Homans, 1958). Prior research related to wired boomers’ value within the organization cited human capital as providing a financial benefit to the firm just as other notable assets like technology, inventions, buildings, and firmware (Becker, 1964; James & Mathew, 2012; Melton, 2015; Phillips & Edwards, 2009).

Researchers such as Schultz (1961), Becker (1964), Kogovsek and Kogovsek (2013), Melton (2015), Ployhart et al. (2014), Spain, Mohundo and Banks (2015), and Tishman et al. (2014) argued the relevance of human capital within the firm presents the justification for encouraging wired boomers to delay retirement. This study contributed to the existing literature by identifying the business practices
which have the greatest influence on retention as it relates to wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama.

As it relates to the five elements of Merriam’s (2009) theoretical framework, the topic of this study was to examine the business practices which have the greatest influence on retention as it relates to wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama. The workforce is aging and researchers argued a shortage in knowledgeable, skilled, and experienced individuals to replace wired boomers as they retire will create a negative impact on the productivity and profitability of organizations (Cooper, 2013; Goldberg, 2000; Preece, 2011). The gap in the existing literature was the lack of research as it relates to business practices which incentivize wired boomers to delay retirement in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama, in an effort to avoid a shortage of knowledge, skills and experience in the coming years and the lack of qualified individuals to fill the positions vacated by retiring wired boomers. Tishman et al. (2012) insisted the lack of attention given to the number of workers approaching retirement has negatively impacted productivity and revenue, and there exists an imperative need for businesses to develop business practices which will encourage wired boomers to remain in the workforce longer than their predecessors.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This chapter has served to provide an overview of the study. The remainder of the study is organized by chapters two through five. Chapter two presents the
literature review relevant to this study. Chapter three discusses the research methodology and the design of the study by explaining the population, the process for data collection, and the procedure used for data analysis. Chapter four presents the results of the data analysis. Chapter five presents the relative contribution and value of the study, and provides suggestions for future research.
Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Chapter two contains a review of existing literature related to wired boomers and the elements related to the retention of wired boomers. Over 300 scholarly articles and books were reviewed in order to develop a theoretical and conceptual perspective related to the business practices which incentivize wired boomers to remain in the workforce longer than previous generations instead of opting for retirement. Encouraging wired boomers to delay retirement benefits the firm in the retention of knowledge, skills, expertise, and sustained productivity (Gatt, 2014). This chapter discusses the conceptual framework which illustrates the relationships between the elements relevant to the research question. Figure 4 is a graphical representation of the relationships between the elements which are revealed in the literature review and the potential negative financial impact to employers if wired boomers retire when they are eligible.
Overview

In 2016, the leading edge of boomers turned 70 (Newcott, 2016). Research has suggested fewer wired boomers will be taking early retirement and many will
delay retirement until an age past traditional retirement age, later than previous
generations, either by choice or because of economic necessity (Flynn, 2010). The
retirement age in the U.S. is on an incremental scale, increasing the number of
years in age an individual must attain before full retirement benefits will be
available from the Social Security Administration (SSA). Ultimately, the revised
traditional retirement age is 67 for individuals born after 1959 (SSA, 2015). Table
2 represents the full retirement age according to the SSA for wired boomers.

Table 2: Age of Full Retirement Eligibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth Year</th>
<th>Full Retirement Eligible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>66 years, 4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>66 years, 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>66 years, 8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>66 years, 10 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960 and later</td>
<td>67 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Social Security Administration, 2015)

The retirement age in the U.S. was established at a time when life
expectancy was much lower than today (Lutz, 2009). The concept of retirement
was first introduced in Germany in 1889, under Chancellor Bismarck as “old age
insurance” (McDonald, 2013). In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt inducted
the Commission on Economic Security to implement a plan for payment to aging
workers as they exited the workforce (McDonald, 2013). The age of 65 was
selected due in part because the Federal Railroad Retirement System used 65 as
their retirement age in order to receive a pension, and also because actuarially 65
was feasible to manage payments to individuals given the life expectancy at that
time (Wise, 2010). The United Kingdom eliminated the default retirement age of
65 in 2014 as individuals may now work as long as they wish (Regan, 2011). For the purposes of this research, retirement eligible and traditional retirement age in the context of this document is 65 years of age because the research participants indicated they have the financial resources to retire at that age and are not dependent on social security.

As Brenner (2010) cited, every “old” person does not get sick, become disabled, or prefer to spend their days fishing or knitting. Span (2016) argued the idea of pure leisure day-in and day-out is not appealing to everyone. Older individuals are not a homogenous group as it relates to health and functional ability (“Benefits of Engaging,” 2010; Flynn, 2010). Eighty-five percent of older individuals are physically and mentally able to do exactly what they want to do when they want to do it and continue to be valuable resources to their family, community, and country (Brenner, 2010; Jenkins, 2016). Older adults are a larger proportion of the world’s population than ever before (Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2011). The most recent century realized a revolution in longevity and this transition in the demographic of the population will result in the old and young having equal shares of the population by 2050 (Jenkins, 2016).

The shifting change in the age demographic of America has been referred to as the “age-quake” and “silver tsunami” (Kunze et al., 2011); and managers and organizational cultures have not properly prepared for the impact these transformations will have in the workplace. If all wired boomers retire and create
an overwhelming, un-fundable burden on Social Security and Medicare, the taxes for both employers and employees will rise substantially (Reid, 2015). The need for employers to manage policies as it relates to encouraging wired boomers to delay retirement is imperative if employers are to avoid the loss in productivity and profitability moving forward as the U.S. population continues to age (Fuertes et al., 2013; Manger, 2014).

**Wired Boomers**

The baby boomer cohort is argued to actually consist of two separate generations: early boomers and wired boomers (Furlong, 2007; Goldberg, 2000; Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2007; Williams, 2014). The early boomers were born from 1946 to 1955 and the wired boomers were born from 1956 to 1964 (Furlong, 2007; Goldberg, 2000; Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2007). The wired boomer is an individual 53-61 years of age (as of 2017) (Furlong, 2007; Goldberg, 2000; Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2007). The wired boomer is in the younger age group at the end of the baby boomer generation and is named such because they were the first generation to be introduced to computers and related technology (Furlong, 2007; Goldberg, 2000).

Williams (2014) argued the identity of this group of individuals is “sandwiched” between the stereotypes related to the gen Xers and the boomers, and not directly correlated to either generation on either side. Jonathan Pontell (a social commentator) coined the terms Generation Jones and the Jonesers in 1999 to
identify the individuals in this age range (Wassel, 2011; Williams, 2014; Williams, 2015). This label is related to “keeping up with the Joneses” as it relates to competitiveness, as well as the slang term “jonesing” (related to a craving or yearning) (Wassel, 2011; Williams, 2014; Williams, 2015). The generation Jones label is meant to describe a lost generation which represents a large, anonymous group of people with no particular identity (Williams, 2014). Wassel (2011) refers to the individuals born during this same period as late boomers. Griesdorn and Durband (2016), Panday (2013) and Aronson (2015) refer to this group of individuals as young boomers and referred to the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79) as the basis for the construct of analyzing this particular grouping.

The NLSY79 was sponsored and funded by the U.S. Department of Labor’s BLS, in conjunction with the Ohio State University Center for Human Resource Research (CHRR) and the independent research organization NORC at the University of Chicago (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015a). Eligible respondents of the NLSY79 were selected to represent a cross-section of the population of young people and were the original “youth” (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015a). They were born in 1957-1964, making them 14-22 years of age when they were first surveyed (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015a). Respondents were interviewed annually from 1979 to 1994 and then biennially from 1996 to present (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015a). The study reports over 80% of original respondents
continue to participate in the ongoing survey and these respondents are expected to be followed for years to come (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015a). The NLSY79 is a nationally representative sample of 12,686 young men and young women, which now consists of a sample of just over 9,600 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015a).

Researchers use the data collected from these surveys in order to understand the labor market, investments in education, family decision making, and the nation’s employment needs, just to name a few (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015a).

The wired boomer who was the focus of this study was born from 1956-1964, possesses a bachelor’s degree or higher, has 25+ years of professional experience, and was presently working in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama, with at least five years of experience specifically related to the aerospace industry (Sinclair, 1906; Dymock et al., 2012).

**Question Which Guided the Research**

The research question which guided this study is:

What are the business practices which have the greatest influence on retention as it relates to wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama?

**Method for Reviewing the Literature**

The articles selected for the literature review were primarily chosen from scholarly, peer-reviewed journals, to include dissertations. Additional data was selected from AARP, Upjohn Institute, Social Security Administration, U.S.
Department of Education, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and the U. S. Census Bureau as it relates to population totals, population projections, and wired boomers. Several books were also used to gather additional data related to topics initially evaluated in research articles in order to gain a broader perspective on the topic. Over 75% of the information collected to conduct the literature review was published within the last seven years.

Key terms used to search for relevant research articles included: wired boomer, mature-age worker, older worker, age discrimination, ageism, stereotypes, bias, aging population, traditionalists, baby boomer, generation x, generation y, millennial, young boomer, generation jones, joneser, employee retention, recruiting, human capital, aerospace industry, cost of employee turnover, and knowledge management. The researcher reviewed the abstract of articles resulting from the search to determine whether the information in the article proved to be relevant to the study. Some articles which resulted from the search were deemed to be irrelevant, such as an article specifically related to wired boomers which focused on gender differences in wired boomers in the workplace or research related to human capital in a non-profit environment.

Articles which refuted the premise of this study included Bailey (2014) who argued healthcare costs are higher for wired boomers. However, research from other seminal authors, such as Ng and Law (2014) insisted wired boomers cost less
than their younger peers because they take fewer sick days, they don’t take
maternity or paternity leave, and they are not taking time off to tend to the needs of
young children.

The researcher reviewed over 300 peer-reviewed research articles to include
doctoral dissertations, as well as numerous books, blogs, newspaper articles, and
magazine articles all published within the last seven years. Almost 200 references
(with the preponderance of these references being peer-reviewed scholarly articles)
are included in this study in order to provide background, gaps in the existing
research, and an analysis of business practices which have the greatest influence on
retention as it relates to wired boomers in order to avoid the loss of knowledge,
skills and experience in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama.
Organization of Studies According to Themes

Six themes emerged from the review of the literature. The themes identified are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Emerging Themes from Literature Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The workforce is aging, in the U.S. and globally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>A knowledge gap is being created by an exit from the workforce of early boomers and is expected to continue as wired boomers follow suit, as well as the follow-on cohorts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>There are not enough individuals to fill the vacancies created by wired boomers with intentions to retire at traditional retirement age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Retaining the knowledge, skills and experience possessed by wired boomers is in the financial best interest of the firm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Younger workers (such as gen Xers and millennials) do not possess the knowledge, skills, expertise, or experience to fill the vacancies being created by retiring wired boomers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Human capital is a more valuable asset to the firm than real estate, buildings, computer hardware and software, technology, and inventions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Synthesis

The intent of this qualitative research study was to explore the business practices which have the greatest influence on retention as it relates to wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama. The researcher intended to add to the body of knowledge of the business practices which could be effectively implemented within organizations in order to motivate and incentivize wired boomers to remain in the workforce longer as opposed to opting for
retirement at traditional retirement age. Business practices as cited by participants provided a framework for the implementation of a business model which would address these preferred business practices in order to retain the knowledge, skills and expertise possessed by wired boomers.

**Background and Historical Information**

The entire globe is experiencing a major shift in the distribution of older individuals across the world’s population (Arnone, 2006; Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Shacklock & Burnetto, 2011; Znidaric et al., 2011). A major contributor to this fact is the increase in life expectancy (Arnone, 2006; Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; CDC, 2015; Cutler, 2011; Lutz, 2009; Shacklock & Brunnetto, 2011; Wise, 2010; Yaylagul & Seedsman, 2012). In 1900, the average life expectancy was 48 (Cutler, 2011; Cappelli & Novelli, 2013). As of 2015, life expectancy in the U.S. stands at 78.8 years (CDC, 2015, Jenkins, 2016). These additional years of life expectancy are anticipated to be more healthy and active for all individuals due to the easier working lifetime of many individuals and improved medical technology (Ahtonen, 2012; Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Cutler, 2011; Fries, 1980; Lutz, 2009; Phillips & Edwards, 2009; Wise, 2010).

By the year 2030, the number of Americans over the age of 64 is expected to double, reaching an average of one out of five Americans being over the age of 64 (Arnone, 2006, Colby & Ortman, 2015; Ortman et al., 2014). According to Cooper (2013), by 2030, there will be half as many individuals aged 20-29 as those
aged 55-75. Fries (1980) is a pioneer in healthy aging (which was previously thought to be an oxymoron) and theorized active and vital years of life will continue to increase and the onset of chronic illness which induces morbidity will be delayed. Known as the compression of morbidity, individuals are healthier longer and the first occurrence of chronic illness has been increasingly delayed as compared to previous generations (Fries, 1980).

The U.S. population is expected to reach 400 million in 2017; however, the growth of the population is expected to slow in the coming decades due to a decline in fertility rates (Brough et al., 2011; Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Colby & Ortman, 2015; Turner-Parker, 2013). The population is already older than it has ever been, and this trend is projected to continue (Ortman et al., 2014; Shacklock & Brunetto, 2011).

Tacchino (2013) argued that baby boomers have modified every institution across the country to include education, investing, labor force participation, housing and social establishments. The change in retirement intentions is an expected result of the largest cohort in the history of the U.S. reaching the traditional retirement age combined with longer life expectancy (Jenkins, 2016; Tacchino, 2013; Wise, 2010). Encouraging and incentivizing wired boomers to remain in the workforce will reduce costs for firms related to turnover, unemployment insurance, and training of new employees (Phillips & Edwards, 2009). As wired boomers leave the firm, the organizational knowledge will be
proportionately diminished (Turner-Parker, 2013). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015a), employers will need approximately 30 million college graduates by 2030 to fill the gap left by retiring wired boomers; however, less than 23 million individuals will graduate from college during this same period (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a), leaving employers with fewer workers to fill job openings. These younger graduates do not possess the necessary job skills to perform the work required by these open positions (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a).

Researchers cited the decline in birthrates has been linked to contemporary couples’ preference to have fewer children, especially those who have pursued a higher degree of education and were experiencing growth and advancement in their professional careers (Vasconcelos, 2015). This translated into a workforce which was aging and leaving the workforce coupled with a shrinking population of individuals available to perform the work (Taylor et al., 2013).

In 2015, the eldest of the gen Xers cohort turned 50 and the oldest millennials will reach 50 in 2030 (the millennials peak population is 83 million individuals) (Fry, 2015). The aging of the workforce will continue in the coming decades as people live longer, healthier lives; therefore, organizations will need to address business practices which will incentivize wired boomers to remain in the workplace longer (Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Corwin, 2015; Taylor et al., 2013).
In 2015, AARP launched a campaign to disrupt aging (#disruptaging). Jenkins (2016) explained that #disruptaging is meant to reduce, and eventually remove, the stereotypes surrounding aging and to call those individuals over the age of 50 to action by dispelling the myths associated with getting older. Jenkins (2016) argued the aging population is the very reason to disrupt aging in order to change the context in which people over the age of 50 are stereotyped. Jenkins (2016) purposefully used the hash-tag nomenclature to label the campaign to identify the technological awareness of this age group. Past biases against wired boomers are no longer relevant because what was previously considered old is old, in and of itself (Jenkins, 2016). Wired boomers are not aging, they are living (Jenkins, 2016) and they are able to view the workplace through a lens shaped by organizational ups and downs, and the wisdom gained from each experience (Dobson, 2013). Wired boomers don’t want to be 30 or 40 again (Jenkins, 2016). These individuals are empowered by their professional successes and cannot relate to the previous generations which have reached this age under far different circumstances as it relates to health, longevity and vitality (Flynn, 2010). Retaining talent past traditional retirement age is an opportunity to maintain a competitive advantage and avert a shortage of experienced and technically skilled employees (Cooper, 2013; Goldberg, 2000; Preece, 2011). The aging workforce will continue to age and the boomer generation is the first cohort to encounter the intersection of more individuals leaving the workforce than there are candidates to replace them.
(Van Dalen et al., 2010). The declining talent solution for firms is found in encouraging wired boomers to remain in the workforce well past what has previously been known as the traditional retirement age (Beck, 2013; Rani & Reddy, 2015; Reid, 2015; SHRM, 2014b). The problem identified in this research was from the perspective of the firm (in the private sector), as the realized consequence of an aging workforce coupled with the planned retirement of many wired boomers which will result in too few candidates to fill the number of available positions in order for aerospace companies in Huntsville, Alabama, to remain productive and profitable.

Research continues to show age itself is not related to work performance (Cox & Barron, 2012; Jussim, 2012; Schniter & Shields, 2014). Snape and Redman (2003) argued wired boomers are viewed as lazy and unmotivated. They are inflexible, complacent, resist change, avoid new technology, and lack aggression (Tishman, Van Looy, & Bruyere). Conversely, younger workers are viewed as disloyal, slackers, narcissistic, and lacking work ethic (Dishman, 2015; Fry, 2015; Seppanen & Gualtieri, 2012). Some researchers suggested wired boomers rely on seniority in an effort to remain employed (Ng & Feldman, 2010). However, low performing employees can be found at any age across all four generations in the workplace (Powell, 2013).
Stereotypes and Bias

Millennials are presently the largest growing cohort in the workplace (Fry, 2015). Common stereotypes about this group of individuals included being socially conscious, cynical, and narcissistic (Dishman, 2015; Fry, 2015; Seppanen & Gualtieri, 2012). They are said to have been raised by “helicopter” parents who are determined to protect their child’s self-esteem while creating entitled young adults (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015). This practice of assigning labels and creating stereotypes about groups of people based on their age or generation may be a reckless repeat of history as seen in the following quote:

“If you can get them, pick young married women… they usually have more of a sense of responsibility than do their unmarried sisters, they’re less likely to be flirtatious; as a rule, they need the work or they wouldn’t be doing it… General experience indicates that “husky” girls – those who are just a little on the heavy side – are likely to be more even-tempered and efficient than their underweight sisters. Be tactful in issuing instructions or in making criticisms. Women are often sensitive; they can’t shrug off harsh words the way that men do. Never ridicule a woman – it breaks her spirit and cuts her efficiency.” (Sanders, 1943, p. 233).

The one key element in limiting individuals because of their age is every individual will ultimately face the same limiting factors if they live long enough (Rippon, Kneale, de Oliveira, Demakakos, & Steptoe, 2014). By 2040, there will
be more people over the age of 65 than under the age of 18 (Colby & Ortman, 2015). According to Ortman et al. (2014), over 30% of the population will be 65 or older by 2050.

Negative stereotypes are developed in the workplace and employees have been typecast as contrary from the “ideal worker” (James, McKechnie, Swanberg, & Besen, 2013). This attitudinal disposition stands in contrast to the empirical evidence with findings exhibiting wired boomers evident higher job commitment, lower voluntary turnover rate, and lower rates of absenteeism (Roscigno, Mong, Byron, & Tester, 2007). Some researchers suggested wired boomers are resistant to change; however, research showed all ages of employees experience discomfort related to change in the workplace and wired boomers actually embraced change more readily than workers in younger cohorts (Smith, Smith, & Smith, 2010). The same scenario was true with regard to commitment to the firm. Research argued wired boomers were more committed to remaining with an employer for a longer period of time than are their younger peers (Smith et al., 2010). However, this characterization was not true for all members of the millennial cohort (Dishman, 2015; Fry, 2015; Seppanen & Gualtieri, 2012). The wired boomer demonstrated a higher level of employee engagement (Vasconcelos, 2015); however, contrasting research suggested millennials bring greater enthusiasm to the workplace (Dishman, 2015; Fry, 2015; Seppanen & Gualtieri, 2012).
Gaillard and Desmette (2010) posited wired boomers who encounter positive stereotypes related to age were less likely to retire early and it boosted motivations and aspirations within the workplace. Wired boomers desire to remain active and involved in the workforce for a multitude of reasons; however, each reason for each individual is valid within its own merit (Ahtonen, 2012). The benefit to the firm is having the experience, expertise, temperament, servitude, and motivation of older employees who are at work because they desire to be at work (Butler & Berret, 2012). Research showed workers who were deemed to be overqualified for a given position performed better than other employees and they did not leave their jobs any earlier (Kunze et al., 2011). Wired boomers are working for reasons other than supplemental income and businesses across the country will benefit financially due to the desire of the experienced individual to continue working and sharing knowledge with others in the firm (Butler & Berret, 2012).

Wired boomers are expected to retire in order to make room for younger employees because of perceived expectations about the appropriate retirement age (James et al., 2011). However, the shift in the age demographics of the U.S. exemplifies the need to dissuade the negative typecasting regarding any age in order to support the continual interests of the organization and ensure productivity and profitability of the firm (Levanon & Cheng, 2011). As the demographic composition of the workforce continues to change, business practices must be
changed to respond to the changing needs of the workforce in order to maximize productivity and remain competitive (Tishman et al., 2012).

**Human Capital**

Schultz (1961) introduced the theory of human capital and Becker (1964) further developed the theory stating physical capital is only a small portion of potential growth in income for the firm. Human capital resources serve as an asset to the firm, just as technology, inventions, buildings, and firmware (Becker, 1964; Melton, 2015; Phillips & Edwards, 2009). Most human capital scholars have focused on the theory from the viewpoint of the individual, such as Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964). But more recent research examined human capital as a collective resource of the firm (Ployhart et al., 2014). Human capital emanates from the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAOs) garnered from each individual employee (Ployhart et al., 2014). Recent research cited human capital is also a realized asset for the business unit as a whole where the KSAOs proved to be relevant to maximizing the productivity, efficiency, revenue, and lowering costs of the firm (Ployhart et al., 2014).

Human capital is the aggregate of a person’s knowledge and skills as it applies to the work performed for an organization (Ployhart et al., 2014). It can be enhanced by gaining additional tacit and explicit knowledge via formal training, education, and work experience (Mohr et al., 2012). Kogovsek and Kogovsek (2013) argued businesses’ growth can no longer be dependent on improving
efficiency, but must instead focus on the capabilities of the workforce. In particular, human capital is a key component in generating economic growth for any organization (Tishman et al., 2012). Traditional financial reporting standards failed to consider the knowledge-intensive skills of the developing workforce which have evolved during the last six decades (Dymock et al., 2012). An employee who possesses knowledge-intensive skills is a “knowledge worker” and commands problem solving abilities which require a high level of intellectual capital (AARP, 2015; Mitchell & Meacheam, 2011). The acquisition of human capital is an ongoing process and requires continual professional development of the entire workforce, young and old (Kogovsek & Kogovsek, 2013; Tishman et al., 2012).

Due to the current change in employee demographics as it relates to age, human capital is argued to be the most significant form of wealth for firms in the U.S., and worth three to four times more than all other assets combined to include stocks, bonds, and real estate (Brenner, 2010; James & Mathew, 2012; McCooey & McCooey, 2009; Melton, 2015; Phillips & Edwards, 2009). The absence of human capital has been more destructive to businesses than a deficiency in financial capital (Grima, 2011; “Invest in Human Capital,” 2013). Executives understand having the right employees to fill skilled positions is competitively advantageous to the organization and a key factor to the success of the business (“Invest in Human Capital,” 2013). Forward-thinking companies have benefited from investing in
human capital and recognizing the practical knowledge, skills acquired on-the-job, and the learned qualifications of wired boomers generates productivity and in turn profitability for the company (Brenner, 2010).

The human capital of the firm is critical to the overall success of any organization (Phillips & Edwards, 2009; Ployhart et al., 2014). Investors place a prodigious value on the individuals employed by firms because in today’s competitive markets, financial capital can be frozen by economic downturns and a technological advantage is difficult to maintain in a society surrounded by continual advancements in information technology (Volpone & Avery, 2013). Strategic advantage can be developed depending on the resources within the firm (Vaca, 2015). Stated another way, no organization has been successful without the support of human capital (McDonald, 2013).

The growing population of workers who are “too good” for their position has proved to be an excellent opportunity for corporate America (Kunze, Boehm & Bruch, 2013). It is counterintuitive for any firm to eliminate wired boomers in favor of younger employees if the strategy of the firm is to provide shareholders with a return on equity at year-end (Artiach et al., 2010). The wired boomer is part of an extremely large talent pool and firms recognizing that resource are benefiting (Jenkins, 2016).
Wired Boomers Postponing Retirement

The financial crisis and housing crash in 2008 devastated the retirement assets of many wired boomers who were moving toward a selected date for retirement (Ho-Kim & Taylor, 2014). After calculating their losses, wired boomers have decided to continue to work in order to recoup their retirement nest-egg (Culter, 2011). Other research suggests the recession started in December 2007 and has little to do with wired boomers continued labor participation rate as the rise in participation rates started in the mid-1990s when employers moved from retirement pension plans to employee contribution retirement plans (Sok, 2010; Timmerman, 2011). Span (2016) argued older individuals are staying in the work force longer for non-pecuniary rewards. “Over 16 years, employment rose not only among 65- to 69-year olds (close to a third now work), but also among those 70 to 74 (about a fifth now work). In the 75-plus population, the proportion still working has increased to 8.4 percent from 5.4 percent” (Span, 2016).

Perry (2010) asserted two in five workers age 50-64 plan to continue working past 65 years of age. Research also showed continuing to work past 59 improved the overall mental health and well-being of individuals (“Benefits of Engaging,” 2010; Flynn, 2010; Jenkins, 2016). If a single person retires at 70 instead of 65, he or she can almost double their annual retirement income (“Benefits of Engaging,” 2010). More than 80% of wired boomers surveyed by AARP (2012) indicated they desired to continue working past the traditional
retirement age (even if they didn’t need the income) and were willing to take a lower salary. Stynen, Forrier, and Sells (2014) argued the salary wired boomers are willing to work for is directly linked to their labor participation rate. The reservation wage is the amount an individual considers to be financially worthwhile (Stynen et al., 2014; Yamada, 2010). Pay flexibility is directly linked to an individual’s reservation wage and indicates a person’s willingness to accept a job which pays less than a person’s previous wage (Stynen et al., 2014; Yamada, 2010).

Working is considered to be of high importance in a person’s life when compared to other aspects and choices available to individuals such as leisure time, community work and religion, and noted as being second only to family (Shacklock & Brunetto, 2011). Conversely, others prefer to discontinue working as soon as possible because they do not place the same level of importance on their work (Shacklock & Brunetto, 2011).

There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach as it relates to retirement because the age demographic of the population is different from any previous generation (Flynn, 2010). Economic reasons are most often argued to be the reason wired boomers desire to continue working; however, Shacklock and Brunetto (2011) argued other factors influence the intentions of wired boomers’ desire to remain in the workplace. Firms have routinely rejected wired boomers due to the perception of an abundance of younger workers who are thought to provide better performance (Shacklock & Brunetto, 2011). However, recent research indicated experienced,
knowledgeable, and skilled workers were actually in short supply, thereby indicating strategies, practices and policies of old were no longer applicable (Shacklock & Brunetto, 2011).

As cited by Dymock et al. (2012), wired boomers in professional and administrative roles reported feeling appreciated by their employer and were given opportunities for education and training at a level they believed to be commensurate with their younger counterparts. The research respondents possessed a higher level of education (beyond high school) and employers indicated they valued the wired boomers’ continual desire for development and professional growth (Dymock et al., 2012). Individuals with a higher level of education are working longer, they have jobs which are mentally challenging, and less physically demanding (Span, 2016).

McCarthy (2012) argued wired boomers are not “seniors,” but individuals who bring dedication, commitment, knowledge and skills to the organization. Employers who have hired wired boomers report they are pleased with the performance of the employee(s) and elated to see the benefits these individuals add to the overall organization (McCarthy, 2012). Perry (2010) argued employers who hired wired boomers subsequently reported they are more seasoned, reliable, adaptable, loyal, experienced and have the desire and motivation to work.

The employment of wired boomers, possessing knowledge, skills and expertise has provided a resolution for businesses related to their disappointment
with the Generation Y segment (Tishman et al., 2012). The young adults presently graduating from school have less than a basic education (Salb, 2015). Businesses can turn to the wired boomer with ample experience to fill the skills breach because employers are recognizing the younger generation cannot meet the requirements of the job (Tishman et al., 2012). Some of those skills include a greater ability to compromise, higher order of reasoning, and an ability to view problems from different perspectives.

Retention of Wired Boomers

There is ample research regarding employee turnover related to factors such as employee satisfaction, intention to leave, and job commitment; however, the research devoted to the actual consequences and costs of such actions is relatively small (Mohr et al., 2012; Shacklock & Brunetto, 2011). Regardless of the reason employees leave a firm (by choice or otherwise), there are direct costs associated with the departure and the replacement of employees (Mohr et al., 2012; Phillips & Edwards, 2009; Pritchard, 2011). Employee retention is always more financially advantageous to the firm than the cost of replacing talent (Fuertes et al., 2013). Speculation regarding this research limitation is argued to be due to corporations either having the information but are unwilling to share the details or because executives prefer to justify the loss in revenue as a part of doing business in order to usher out the “old” and ring in the “new” (Grima, 2011). In the specific case of the loss of wired boomers, there proves to be a negative effect on organizational
performance, particularly as it relates to the tacit knowledge of the workers given this type of knowledge is not easily transferred (Lopez-Nicolas & Merono-Cerdan, 2011; Mohr et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2010). Transfer of tacit knowledge is costly, time consuming, and difficult to measure (Chen, Huang, & Hsiao, 2010).

According to Cooper (2013) (with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce), the changing age demographics of the workforce will specifically impact such industries as utilities, aerospace, transportation, and local, state and federal governments. Individuals, states, and businesses benefit (financially and otherwise) when wired boomers remain employed and engaged in the workforce (“Benefits of Engaging,” 2010; Smith et al., 2010). Most economists have concurred the surge in wired boomers will be a windfall for employers, a boost to the economy, and reward for workers (Brooke, 2003; Reid, 2015; Wolf & Amirkhanyan, 2010). The downturn in the economy during the last decade has caused a decrease in productivity across the board. Retaining wired boomers will enable firms to maintain a workforce population to continue to increase productivity (Cooper, 2013).

Wired boomers have been recognized as possessing strong workplace attributes: strong work ethic, higher level of workplace knowledge and experience, dedicated, loyal, emotionally mature, resilient, lower attrition and absenteeism, courteous, and customer-service oriented (SHRM, 2012). Brenner (2010) stated wired boomers are detail-oriented, more organized and focused, as opposed to younger generations. The younger cohorts are cited as having a reduced work
commitment and are less willing to allot personal capital to the workplace in preference for more work-life balance (Corwin, 2015). Wired boomers have worked hard to achieve career success. They are results-oriented and they are accustomed to a hierarchical approach in the workplace. Research states employers have found it difficult to retain gen Xers and millennials for longer than three years (Fry, 2015). On the other hand, wired boomers have been noted for staying with their employer for 10.5 years (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a). Grefe (2011) argued the method to correct the separation between the generations in the workplace is to create an environment for intergenerational connections in order to reduce generational differences, incorporate diversity, and build a comradery of support for all employees within the organization.

Many wired boomers desire to continue to produce meaningful work and learn new technical skills (Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Corwin, 2015; Maurer & Weiss, 2010). However, some managers have believed investing in and training wired boomers does not yield a positive return on investment (Corwin, 2015; Maurer & Weiss, 2010). Tishman et al. (2012) argued the loss of expertise through retirement will negatively impact profits due to the cost of filling vacant positions. Wired boomers will have an estimated four to six jobs during their career, gen Xers will have 10 – 20 jobs, and millennials are estimated to change jobs every one to two years (Tishman et al., 2012).
Employer’s Perspective

Dobson (2013) stated employers must move past the idea younger is better. Wired boomers bring years of experience, informal networks, and a wisdom which provides a competitive advantage to the firm. These individuals are able to “hit the ground running” and be a productive team player almost immediately, whether a new-hire or a transfer within the company (Dobson, 2013). Many wired boomers have been with their employer for an extended period of time, many having remained with their employer for their entire career (AARP, 2012). As wired boomers retire, they will leave the organization taking with them their knowledge and skills. Rebuilding the lost knowledge and skills will be both costly and time-consuming for employers (AARP, 2011). A small percentage of companies presently have a program or plan in place to assist in the transfer of knowledge and skills from wired boomers to retained employees (AARP, 2012).

The business environment of today is complex and turbulent, and firms are required to be innovative, flexible, and proactive in developing a strategic approach (Fragouli, 2015). Some employers are beginning to recognize and respond to the eminent challenge presented by the largest group of individuals to reach retirement age (Tishman et al., 2012). Seventy-three percent of the companies surveyed acknowledged their organizations perceive this shift in the workforce presents either a crisis or problem for their respective firm (Fragouli, 2015).
The current dilemma for organizations across the U.S. is finding younger individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to fill the positions being vacated by wired boomers (SHRM, 2012). Retaining wired boomers is a financially responsible response for firms because the customer base is also aging and consumers are more likely to respond positively to the more affluent 50+ individuals as it relates to customer service, wisdom, and expertise (Coffey, 2013, Dahling & Perez, 2010, SHRM, 2012; Rani & Reddy, 2015). Wired boomers are argued to be more likely to understand and appreciate the needs, wants, and desires of those customers who share the same cohort (SHRM, 2012). Dahling and Perez (2010) referred to this important aspect of customer service as emotional labor and argued the benefit to the employer is the resonating effect on the customer. Professionals working in a customer service capacity are paid in part to show customers the business is caring, enthused about providing good service, and has a sincere desire to be helpful. Wired boomers are argued to be better suited for emotional labor positions which require the individual to respond to the demands of the organization. The wired boomer is cited as being more capable to suppress internal feelings and generate an outward observable emotional expression which is pleasing to the customer, whereas a younger employee may display an inauthentic smile while attempting to disguise their agitation in dealing with customers and their questions.
For those firms who have implemented a program to retain wired boomers, they stand to benefit from those organizations who have failed to do so and can target these individuals by initiating a plan to identify the business practices which have the greatest influence on retaining wired boomers in order to eliminate the potential knowledge and skills gap being created by wired boomers opting to retire (SHRM, 2012). This scenario creates a competitive advantage for firms who preemptively strike to maintain skills and expertise of those workers who are motivated and desire to continue their careers well past traditional retirement age (Flannery, 2012, Ospina, 2015). Wired boomers are realized as being an arsenal of relational value, with years of experience in dealing with customers, suppliers, and partners (Brenner, 2010). As the working population continues to age, firms will be faced with resource competition due to the lack of younger resources prepared to fill vacant positions left by wired boomers (Ospina, 2015).

Executives and management should inventory present talent within the firm and determine the future needs of the business (Flannery, 2012). It is beneficial for firms to analyze the cost to the business in allowing or encouraging wired boomers to retire at the traditional retirement age (which was initially established at a time when individuals lived on average 20 years less than individuals today due to healthier lifestyles and advancements in medical technology) (Fragouli, 2015). Businesses which provide compensation and benefits to attract wired boomers will garner a workforce which is highly knowledgeable and position the firm in a
segment to be recognized as the employer of choice, gaining and retaining the best
talent, regardless of age (Brenner, 2010; Maurer & Weiss, 2010). Brenner (2010)
cited contrary to stereotypes, research showed wired boomers easily learn new
skills to include technology. The aptitude of the individual was not dependent on
age but more on the desire and motivation of the person as to whether new skills
and abilities were obtained by any worker (Brenner, 2010; Maurer & Weiss, 2010).
The largest segment of individuals quitting their job has been between the ages 25-
30 (the heart of the millennials) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a). These
individuals are reported as not trusting large corporations and prefer instead to
work for smaller organizations or go into business for themselves (Dishman, 2015;
Fry, 2015).

As a collective, wired boomers initially planned (earlier in their careers) to
retire early (Cutler, 2011). However, research now shows these same individuals
have changed their minds in preference for continuing to work at jobs which are
physically easier than in previous generations and technologically rewarding.
Crampton, Hodge, and Mishra (1996) stated Polaroid implemented a “test
retirement” plan allowing employees six months of unpaid leave in order to
determine whether they truly wanted to retire. Approximately 50 percent of those
individuals who took advantage of the trial retirement returned to full-time
employment at the end of the six month period. The ability for wired boomers to
live a longer life with markedly improved health has created a new longevity and
“50 is the new 50” (Jenkins, 2016). Fifty and older in previous generations looked much different than today’s 50+ and just as the boomers were cause for social and economic change when this cohort arrived, this same cohort will be the trailblazers creating change in the way employers think and strategize in order to tap into the resources of this talent pool (Jenkins, 2016).

Current research suggested the following benefits or incentives are important to wired boomers when considering whether or not to retire or continue working past traditional retirement age:

**Employee engagement** – Employee participation is directly linked to employee performance. If employees do not feel valued or respected, they will have lower levels of engagement. Three elements are crucial in order to encourage employee engagement: partnership in decision-making which affects the individual’s work; options to develop new competencies and proficiencies for individuals across all age groups; and access to flexible working arrangements (SHRM, 2014a; Tishman et al., 2012)

**Phased or modified approach to retirement** – This offers wired boomers a gradual transition into the role of retirement, while continuing to remain engaged in the workplace, mentoring and passing on institutional knowledge in a manner that is equitable for the organization and the wired boomer (Brough et al., 2011).

**Job and workplace flexibility** – Allowing the wired boomer to adjust their work schedule to hours which better suit their needs. Some examples include
telecommuting, compressed schedules (for example, four 10-hour workdays), and job-sharing with another wired boomer who is also interested in more flexibility (Tishman, Van Looy, & Bruyere, 2012).

**Flexlocation** – Allowing wired boomers to fulfill job responsibilities at a location away from the office (Woolever, 2013).

**Retirement testing** – Polaroid implemented a “test retirement” plan allowing employees six months of unpaid leave in order to determine whether they truly wanted to retire. Approximately 50 percent of those individuals who took advantage of the trial retirement returned to full-time employment at the end of the six month period (Crampton et al., 1996, Tishman et al., 2012)

**Comprehensive benefits plan** – Firms offering additional benefits beyond health insurance and 401k provide additional incentives for wired boomers to remain in the workplace. Examples of this include family support programs (EAP (Employee Assistance Program)), health and wellness opportunities, investment counseling, and grandparent leave (Allen, 2010; Tishman et al., 2012). Offering “cafeteria plans” allows individuals to only purchase the components of the insurance which meet their specific needs.

**Professional growth and development** – Offering formal training opportunities, tuition reimbursement, reverse mentoring, and sabbatical opportunities (Beck, 2013).
**Ergonomics** – Providing ergonomic evaluations in order to lower the risks associated with job-related injuries (Perry, 2010). This includes ergonomic mouse pads, keyboards, office chairs and programs which are automatically initiated to cause the employee to take a five minute break from typing or mousing (Ciampa & Chernesky, 2013).

**Wellness** - Access to a dietician, smoking cessation, exercise facility, and weight management can play an instrumental role in reducing healthcare costs (Ibidunni, Osibanjo, Adeniji, Salau, & Falola, 2016).

In order to avoid the high cost of employee turnover, the implementation of a retention plan will assist employers in determining the factors which incentivize all workers, at any age, to remain in the workplace (Duxbury & Halinski, 2014). Flexible work arrangements, ergonomic improvements, telecommuting, job redesign, flex time, and compressed work schedules are all examples of benefits which appeal to all generations in the workplace but specifically appeal to the wired boomer (Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Perera et al., 2015; Perry, 2010; Phillips & Edwards, 2009; Shacklock & Brunetto, 2011; Vasconcelos, 2015). None of the previously mentioned factors cost the firm any additional monies and some of them actually save money by reducing overhead costs such as office space (to include the cost of furniture), electricity, and potential shrinkage in office supplies (Phillips & Edwards, 2009; Tishman et al., 2012).
Shacklock and Brunetto (2011) argued employers may be aware of the loss of knowledge and experience facing businesses as wired boomers leave the workplace, but many lack the knowledge regarding appropriate policies for retaining these employees. The additional financial reward for businesses will be found in employees who are motivated by job satisfaction because they are less likely to leave their employer in search of a more accommodating work environment (Tishman et al., 2012). Dissatisfaction is cited as a reason wired boomers leave their current position; however, they do not leave the workforce altogether and in some instances have moved to a competitor (Perera et al., 2015).

Technology can be used to attract and retain wired boomers (Salb, 2015). Salb (2015) argued assistive technologies are devices or systems which enable employees to remain productive in the workplace and overcome issues such as vision, speech or auditory limitations. Vasconcelos (2015) identified other factors and elements which motivate and incentivize wired boomers to remain with their respective employers: flexible work options, job design, additional training and educational opportunities, development opportunities, recognition and respect. Implementing age neutral benefits also creates additional motivation for wired boomers to remain in the workplace with such issues like grandparent leave (Brenner, 2010).

Mentoring has provided for the transfer of knowledge and allowed the more experienced employee to share information and ideas with the less-experienced
employee (Joy & Haynes, 2011). Creating a multi-generational office design has been beneficial to all ages in the workplace. Ergonomic assessments in organizations has allowed for the prevention of repetitive movement injuries, reducing the total number of lost workdays.

Retention of wired boomers is becoming more of a necessity (Brough et al., 2011). Current research provided recent evidence wired boomers are as valuable of a human resource as any younger worker (Brough et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2010).

**Costs Associated with Turnover as Opposed to Retention**

Many organizations use the terms “retention” and “turnover” interchangeably while others view one as the inverse of the other (SHRM, 2014b). The turnover theory (March & Simon, 2014) stated an individual’s perception of job alternatives and a desire to leave the current job (which is linked to the level of job satisfaction) lead to the individual opting to leave the organization. If the motivation exists to negatively impact the individual’s turnover intention, the employee will remain with the organization. However, if the individual believes leaving the current position is more desirable (low level of job satisfaction), they will leave the organization. In this research study, the costs associated with turnover were investigated, as turnover is the failed attempt at retention and, thus, a failure to retain the wired boomer leads to direct and indirect costs associated with turnover.
High turnover in any business is costly to the productivity, morale, and profitability of the firm (AARP, 2011; James & Mathew, 2012; McCooey & McCooey, 2009; Phillips & Edwards, 2009). The actual cost associated with turnover is the most underestimated expense in any organization (Phillips & Edwards, 2009). Turnover statistics are rarely tracked, but when they are captured, they are typically tracked by management. In order to derive the actual costs associated with turnover, a firm must consider all the costs which comprise the fully-loaded turnover profile (James & Mathew, 2012). The following paragraphs detail the categories for accumulating turnover costs.

**Exit costs** are incurred when an employee leaves the organization. There are costs related to the termination, severance, or possibly litigation related to the departure. If the departure is involuntary, this expense could be significant. Retained employees are involved in this step and their salaries must be included when calculating the fully-loaded costs (Cabral, 2014; James & Mathew, 2012; Phillips & Edwards, 2009).

**Recruiting costs** are those expenses related to the cost to attract potential candidates using marketing resources, advertising, and traveling to locations for the purposes of conducting interviews. This category can also include additional expenses such as signing bonuses or payment to outside companies for assistance with recruiting. Retained employees are involved in this step and their salaries
must be included when calculating the fully loaded costs (James & Mathew, 2012; Phillips & Edwards, 2009).

**Employment costs** are all costs related to selecting a candidate, extending an offer, issuance of the offer letter, processing of paperwork, printing of materials related to insurance and all associated benefits, and the cost of labor to conduct these steps. Retained employees are involved in this step and their salaries must be included when calculating the fully loaded costs (Cabral, 2014; Phillips & Edwards, 2009).

**Orientation or On-boarding** are those expenses related to the initial orientation, and is dependent on the amount of time delegated to this process. Typical orientation can be measured in several days, or sometimes take as long as weeks or months. It is the period of time it takes for a person to become fully adjusted to the organization and the culture. Retained employees are involved in this step and their salaries must be included when calculating the fully loaded costs (James & Mathew, 2012; McCooey & McCooey, 2009).

**Job-related training costs** are those expenses associated with training the new employee to a level where the individual can be as productive as the previous employee. This includes training in a classroom setting as well as online training. Additional costs in this category may include travel to another location if training is being offered is not where the new employee is located. In the instance where the new employee is attending classroom training (either local or requiring travel), the
cost associated with the instructor must also be included when calculating the fully loaded costs (Cabral, 2014; James & Mathew, 2012; McCooey & McCooey, 2009; Phillips & Edwards, 2009).

Compensation while training are the costs related to the time the new employee is in training and not providing any services or development to the organization. The organization is paying the salary and benefits to the new employee (James & Mathew, 2012; Phillips & Edwards, 2009).

Lost productivity is the cost associated with the lost productivity due to a disruption in service. Every departure results in some effort not being accomplished and productivity being eroded. (AARP, 2015; Phillips & Edwards, 2009)

Quality problems are the costs associated with errors and mistakes which can occur during the training period. These costs can bleed over into costs associated with maintaining existing customers and also cause costs from other resources within the organization as they attempt to assist the new employee in order to resolve the quality issues (Phillips & Edwards, 2009).

Customer dissatisfaction is the cost associated with internal or external customers being displeased with the loss of a customer-focused individual, replaced by someone new who does not know the products or services and is unprepared to answer questions or concerns (James & Mathew, 2012; Phillips & Edwards, 2009).
Loss of expertise / knowledge is the expense associated with replacing lost expertise and industry experience. In a knowledge worker, this cost can be extremely high when the departing individual possesses a high level of skills and experience (McCooey & McCooey, 2009; Phillips & Edwards, 2009).

Management time for turnover reflects the costs associated with the administrative time required to handle turnover problems and process required paperwork. Supervisors, managers, team leaders and coworkers are involved in different phases of the replacement process and the time of each individual spent in the replacement effort is a direct cost to the organization (Phillips & Edwards, 2009).

Temporary replacement costs is the cost to employ temporary labor, if a permanent employee cannot be found in a timely manner (Phillips & Edwards, 2009).

The worksheet displayed in Table 4 lists each individual expense within the categories listed above and represents an actual expense in the departure of a wired boomer and the hiring costs associated with a new employee (Cabral, 2014; James & Mathew, 2012; McCooey & McCooey, 2009; Phillips & Edwards, 2009).
### Table 4: Steps in the Turnover Process and the Associated Actual Cost

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Departure/Exit Costs Defined:</th>
<th>Actual Cost:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exit Interview</strong>&lt;br&gt;Downtime for exiting employee and person conducting the exit interview. This category should include any materials, processing, analysis, and reporting data needed for the exit interview.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administration Costs</strong>&lt;br&gt;Cost of total hours dedicated to the separation, departure, and exit. This category is most likely related to human resources personnel and the process of completing paperwork and overseeing the departure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management Costs</strong>&lt;br&gt;The cost of the time in which management, supervisors, executives, and stakeholders must invest in the departure process. This figure should include actual hours dedicated to the departure process as well as time in meetings to discuss the departure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits Termination / Continuance</strong>&lt;br&gt;The cost to continue benefits for the departing employee for a designated period of time or the cost to remove the employee from all benefits programs. In this category, include the cost of ongoing maintenance for any programs such as 401(k) after the employee has departed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pay Continuation / Severance</strong>&lt;br&gt;Depending on the policy of the firm, the costs in this category can be substantial. To determine the associated number for the departing employee, calculate the amount of pay still to be issued to the employee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unemployment Tax</strong>&lt;br&gt;The unemployment tax rate may increase as a result of the employee exit. Some states pay unemployment for both voluntary and involuntary departures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal Expenses</strong>&lt;br&gt;Calculate the cost of litigation, if applicable. This expense is usually related to involuntary departures, but not always. If the expense is applicable, calculate the expense and note here.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outplacement</strong>&lt;br&gt;Costs associated with counseling services and job placement assistance offer to the departing employee in an effort to obtain a new job.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Replacement Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recruitment / Advertisement</strong>&lt;br&gt;All marketing and advertising costs related to attracting new candidates (includes marketing materials, letters and all other tools to advertise the brand of the firm).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recruitment Expenses</strong>&lt;br&gt;Expenses for travel to interview candidates in other locations, job fairs, and seminars held to promote the firm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Phillip & Edwards, 2009)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recruitment Fees</strong></td>
<td>Fees paid to third-party firms to assist in the recruiting of new employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Signing Bonus</strong></td>
<td>Bonuses paid to the new employee as an incentive to join the firm such as cash, expense account, stock options, company car, cell phone, gas card, computer, and electronic tablet. These types of incentives are oftentimes used in recruiting highly specialized individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews</strong></td>
<td>Expenses related to the interviewer’s time, materials and all other expenses related to the actual interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Export Compliance</strong></td>
<td>Costs associated with a license application to the Department of State when hiring a non-U.S. person (DSP-5 or TAA).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Security Clearance</strong></td>
<td>Costs pertaining to the application and processing in order to obtain a security clearance for the employee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Employment Testing</strong></td>
<td>Expenditures related to administering and evaluating an exam as well as physicals, drug screening, background check, and any additional required tests/examinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel Expenses</strong></td>
<td>Expenses associated with the candidate traveling to the interview (if they are company-reimbursed) such as airfare, rental car, mileage, hotel, meals and any other approved costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moving Expenses</strong></td>
<td>All costs associated with relocating an employee and includes the fees for a relocation firm. Such expenses include house-hunting trips to find a new residence, assistance in selling a current home, closing costs for a new home, moving company expenses, temporary lodging and meals, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative Costs</strong></td>
<td>Overhead expenses for administrative support related to the coordination of all of the expenditures identified as part of Replacement Costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management Costs</strong></td>
<td>Costs associated with the time managers dedicate to the hiring process such as identifying the strategy for recruitment, participation in the interview process, making an offer, and negotiating the offer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation / Training Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Employment Training</strong></td>
<td>Training prospective employees for some period of time before making a final offer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Phillip & Edwards, 2009; U.S. Department of State, 2016)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Costs associated with developing the training program and the updates of each subsequent revision of the materials. Calculate this cost per individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>Expenses associated with the actual instruction and facilitation. Meals and refreshments (if applicable) should also be included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Costs of expendable items as part of the training such as guides, manuals, handouts, reference cards, etc. Include any equipment rental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Expense associated with the training facility to include electricity and security guards. Calculate this cost per individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Expenditures related to the instructor’s travel including airfare, lodging, meals, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead</td>
<td>Overhead expenses for administrative support related to the coordination of all of the expenditures identified as part of Pre-Employment Training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation Program</td>
<td>Expenses related to the orientation class, training, employment meetings, self-study materials and on-the-job coaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Costs associated with developing the orientation program and the updates of each subsequent revision of the materials. Calculate this cost per individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>Expenses associated with the actual orientation program. Meals and refreshments (if applicable) should also be included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Costs of expendable items as part of the orientation such as guides, manuals, handouts, reference cards, etc. Include any equipment rental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Expense associated with the conference/meeting room to include electricity and security guards. Calculate this cost per individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Expenditures related to the employee traveling to another location for orientation or the person directing the orientation program traveling to the firm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead</td>
<td>Overhead expenses for administrative support related to the orientation program for all of the expenditures identified as part of the Orientation Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Training</td>
<td>Expenses in this category will vary greatly depending on the job-type.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Phillip & Edwards, 2009)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Costs associated with developing the training program and the updates of each subsequent revision of the materials. Calculate this cost per individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>Expenses associated with the training program including the instructor and any related travel expense for the instructor. Also include any fees for the meeting room, meals and refreshments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Costs of expendable items as part of the training such as workbooks, guides, manuals, handouts, reference cards, etc. Include any equipment rental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Expenses associated with the conference/meeting room to include electricity and security guards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time off the Job</td>
<td>Cost associated with the new employee being away from the job in a “non-productive” role (salary and adjusted benefits).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Expenditures related to the employee traveling to another location for training or the person directing the training program traveling to the firm. Include airfare, mileage, rental car, lodging, meals, and any other related costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead</td>
<td>Overhead expenses for administrative support related to the initial training program for all of the expenditures identified as part of the Initial Training Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal On-the-Job Training</td>
<td>Expenses related to training once the employee is at the job site and may involve a supervisor, manager, coach, mentor, or coworker. The costs related to lost productivity are included here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Costs associated with developing the material relevant to the employee’s on-the-job needs and any subsequent revision of the materials. This expense is per employee as the on-the-job training for each individual will vary depending on their skillset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Aids</td>
<td>Costs for developing materials to teach the requirements of the position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>Expenses associated with on-the-job training including time of the coworker, manager, coach, mentor, team lead, or supervisor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Costs</td>
<td>Costs associated with the time managers dedicate to the on-the-job training effort.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Phillip & Edwards, 2009)
Overhead
Overhead expenses for administrative support related to the on-the-job training for all of the expenditures identified as part of the **Formal On-The-Job Training**.

**Consequences of Turnover**
Hidden costs which are more difficult to calculate but impact productivity, customer service, customer dissatisfaction and may lead to decline in sales.

**Work Disruption**
Costs associated with a disrupted workplace or shortages in experienced staff.

**Lost Productivity**
Actual lost work due to the absence of the individual who previously performed the work.

**Quality Issues**
Costs related to errors, mistakes, and rework associated with the inexperienced employee.

**Customer Dissatisfaction**
Estimate the loss of income as it relates to customers who have expressed dissatisfaction in the firm’s products or services.

**Management Hours**
Time spent by management to address issues related to turnover, operational problems, shortage in staff, and the problems which arise from the turnover.

**Loss of Expertise / Knowledge**
Estimate the costs associated with the loss of knowledge related to the products, services, projects, company policies and procedures, and processes.

(Phillip & Edwards, 2009)

It would be prudent for firms to identify the critical talent within the organization based on developed skills, knowledge, and expertise (Ciampa & Chernesky, 2013). These employees go above and beyond their normal job tasks to ensure the success of the organization. The critical talent does not necessarily have to be the employees who are at the helm, but typically are those who are in support positions who have a relationship with the customers of the firm (Ciampa & Chernesky, 2013).
When employees leave the firm, there is a residual negative impact on the productivity for the remaining employees (Mohr et al., 2012). When an employee voluntarily leaves the organization, there is an immediate gap in productivity from the departing individual (James & Mathew, 2012). In cases where the employee was an integral part of a development team, team members also are negatively impacted by the departure and decreases the level of productivity for the group (Mohr et al., 2012).

Reduced employee engagement is argued to cost U.S. firms over $300 billion a year in lost productivity (James, McKechnie & Swanberg, 2011). Employee engagement is defined as the “harnessing of organizational members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). Employees who are engaged are typically willing to work harder to ensure the success of the organization (Brough et al., 2011; Morrow-Howell & Greenfield, 2010).

Lack of experience or knowledge leads to mistakes, delays and or frustrations from customer base, possibly resulting in the customer going elsewhere (Mohr et al., 2012). According to Brenner (2010), replacing an experienced employee costs a firm more than 50% of the individual’s salary. For professional skilled employees, this figure is shown to be as high as 150% of the individual’s salary (Brenner, 2010; Phillips & Edwards, 2009; Seidl, 2011).
Aerospace Industry in Huntsville, Alabama

Huntsville was founded by John Hunt in 1805 (for whom the city is named) when he moved to the area from Tennessee (Pruitt, 2005). By 1819, Huntsville was a flourishing city, bustling with commerce, and was granted statehood (“Chamber of Commerce,” 2013; Pruitt, 2005). In the 1840s and 50s, Huntsville was the bedrock of cotton trading in the south (“Chamber of Commerce,” 2013; Pruitt, 2005). Wealthy merchants and planters moved to the area because of the growth in the cotton industry, building beautiful southern-plantation homes (“Chamber of Commerce,” 2013). By 1950, Huntsville had 16,437 residents and remained a city centered on the cotton industry (Wicks, 2010).

The city is located in the far northern region of the state, between the Tennessee River and the Tennessee state line (“Chamber of Commerce,” 2013). It is the fourth largest city in the state of Alabama and the current population of the metropolitan Huntsville area is 441,000, with just over 10 percent of the population being natives of other countries speaking languages other than English (“Chamber of Commerce,” 2013). Huntsville has the highest per capita income in the southeast, outranking cities like Atlanta, Nashville, and Tampa (“Chamber of Commerce,” 2013).

The state of Alabama has a long and illustrious history in helping to build and support the aerospace industry (Garner, 2016; Wicks, 2010). The aerospace industry is represented throughout the entire state with over 400 companies
employing over 83,000 individuals (Alabama Department of Commerce, 2013).

Over 100 years ago, in 1910 the Wright brothers opened their first civilian flying school on a cotton plantation near Montgomery, Alabama (Ennels, 2013).

In 1950, Dr. Werner von Braun, the German scientist responsible for inventing the V-2 rocket for Nazi Germany, moved to Huntsville, Alabama, and was instrumental in the development of America’s rocket program (Saturn V) (Laney, 2015). In the early 1950s, Huntsville became the premier location for the nation’s brightest aerospace scientists and engineers (Garner, 2016). The area was referred to as “Rocket City” and gave the initial meaning to the term “rocket science” (“Chamber of Commerce,” 2013). Today, almost 40 percent of the population of Huntsville has a college degree, compared to 30 percent of individuals across the rest of the country (U. S. Department of Education, 2014).

The major activities of an aerospace firm include research, design, manufacturing, operations and maintenance of aircraft and spacecraft, for both commercial and military purposes (AIA, 2016). These companies provide passenger airplanes to commercial airline companies as well as fighter jets to the U. S. Department of Defense (AIA, 2016). Almost half of the revenue for aerospace companies is directly related to providing military equipment, components, and support to the U. S. government and supporting the warfighter in the field (AIA, 2016). Individuals employed within the aerospace industry are technically adept and many of the positions are engineering or programming related (AIA, 2016).
However, additional careers in the aerospace industry also include positions which support analysis, design, testing, field service, manufacturing, materials, purchasing and contracts, just to name a few. The list below identifies several aerospace firms located in Huntsville, Alabama (“Chamber of Commerce,” 2013). To garner a professional position with any of these firms requires a minimum of a bachelor’s degree, and many firms now require a master’s degree, given the educational level of competition in the area.

- BAE Systems
- Boeing
- Northrop Grumman
- General Dynamics
- PPG Aerospace
- Sikorsky Aircraft
- Bell Helicopter
- Lockheed Martin
- Raytheon

Cummings Research Park is located in Huntsville, Alabama, and is the second largest research and technology park in the U.S., boasting over 300 aerospace and defense contracting firms and employing over 30,000 individuals in the area (Alabama Department of Commerce, 2013). Redstone Arsenal provides a federal campus for more than 60 government agencies providing the most advanced
level of technological development for the country’s defense and space exploration (Garner, 2016). The Arsenal is one of the most critical key posts for the U.S. Army. The personnel employed on post are responsible for the research, development, production and support of aviation, rockets, missiles and related defense programs. Additional support provided by the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama, includes intelligence functions and homeland security support (“Chamber of Commerce,” 2013). Huntsville, Alabama, represents one of America’s leading technological cities with the highest concentration of engineers and technology professionals than any other city in the U.S. (Wadman, 2010).

The average age of individuals employed in the aerospace industry is 50 compared to the average age of 45 for all working Americans (AIA, 2011; U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b). The most concentrated area of aerospace engineers is found in Huntsville, Alabama (Wright, 2014). There are 5.1 times more aerospace engineers per capita in the Huntsville metropolitan area than the national average.
Chapter 3 – Methodology

Chapter three provides a detailed explanation of the qualitative instrumentation, ethical considerations, research questions, research design, research approach, quality management, population and sample, selection of participants, instrumentation, procedures, data collection and analysis, and the reliability and validity of the study. Additionally, this chapter will reference the scholarly literature which supports the research method and data collection method.

Overview

This chapter focuses on identifying, designing, and implementing a qualitative research study using the phenomenological method and conducting in-depth interviews to determine the business practices which have the greatest influence on retention as it relates to wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Husserl, 1913; Maxwell, 2013). The phenomenological approach to research promoted the investigation of the meaning of the life experiences of people in order to identify the foundational basis of the human experience as explained by research participants. Phenomenology was initially defined by Husserl (1913) whereby he analyzed the intentional framework of mental acts to determine how these acts are directed at the real self, self-image, and the ideal self, how we want to be; an idealized image of ones’ self.
The research as part of this study was conducted in a manner to minimize the potential for harm to any participant involved in the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Petre & Rugg, 2010). It was the intent of the researcher to produce an ethical research design which was intellectually meaningful. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to assess potential ethical issues. Safeguards were implemented in order to protect participants’ rights, ensure anonymity, and provide confidentiality. The researcher provided a template of the informed consent form in Appendix A.

**Ethical Considerations**

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was completed for this study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Petre & Rugg, 2010). The researcher completed the IRB form and submitted the completed form to the appropriate authority. The researcher did not initiate any in-depth interviews with any participants until IRB approval was received (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). Participant recruitment included both males and females.

The risk level to any of the participants in this research was reported to be minimal on the IRB application and no reports of harm or discomfort was received from any of the participants of this study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Petre & Rugg, 2010). Finally, as stated in the IRB
application, an executive summary of the results of the study were provided to all participants of this study.

Organization of the Remainder of this Chapter

The organization of the study is described in the following sections within this chapter. The first section outlines the research question which is the focus of this study. The second section discusses the proposed research design and includes an overview of qualitative research, explains the in-depth interview method for gathering the data, and the rationale for selecting this research methodology. The third section discusses the rationale for selecting the participants for this research. The fourth section describes the proposed methods used in the data collection and includes the interview questions which will be asked in the interviews with the wired boomers employed with aerospace firms in Huntsville, Alabama. The fifth section defines how the data will be analyzed.

Research Question

The following research question was the focus of this study:

What are the business practices which have the greatest influence on retention as it relates to wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama?

Research Design

This qualitative study used in-depth interviews with the phenomenological approach and content analysis to determine the business practices which have the
greatest influence on retention as it relates to wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama, in an effort to avoid a gap in knowledge, skills and experience (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Husserl, 1913; Krippendorff, 1969; Krippendorff, 2012; Maxwell, 2013). This qualitative research also utilized data triangulation to understand frequent themes, trends, and findings which served as an indicator to assist firms in recognizing the positive impact of wired boomers remaining in the workplace longer and avoiding the potential loss in skills, knowledge and expertise being created by wired boomers’ retirement (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). Triangulation allowed for the check between different methods, in this case phenomenological and content analysis, to increase the validity of the study and to test if different methods supported the same conclusion (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013).

This study was grounded in phenomenology and content analysis (Husserl, 1913; Krippendorff, 1969; Krippendorff, 2012). The phenomenological approach to research promotes the investigation of the meaning of the life experience of people in order to identify the foundational basis of the human experience as explained by research participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Husserl, 1913; Maxwell, 2013). Content analysis is the process which was used to decipher the linkage between data sets in order to code themes revealed in the in-depth interviews and categorize this data to produce valid and reliable
interpretations (Krippendorff, 1969; Krippendorff, 2012). The elements under study in this qualitative research are the business practices which have the greatest influence on retention as it relates to wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama. The independent variable is business practices and the dependent variable is the retention of wired boomers.

Overview of Research Approach Used in this Study

The study drew on 12 in-depth interviews (seven males and five females) conducted with individuals employed with aerospace companies in Huntsville, Alabama. In-depth interviews offered the opportunity to capture descriptive data from the participant, without restrictions on their response and enabled the further elaboration of the individual’s attitudes and perceptions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). The purpose of this study was to identify the business practices which have a greater influence on retention of wired boomers. The research sought to identify both positive and negative business practices employed by aerospace firms in Huntsville, Alabama, in order to provide a baseline for employers as a plan for implementing these practices which lead to retaining wired boomers in an effort to maintain the present knowledge, skills and expertise within the organization.

The qualitative research method was better suited for this particular study because the phenomenological approach promotes the investigation of the meaning of the life experience of people in order to identify the foundational basis of the
human experience as explained by research participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Husserl, 1913; Maxwell, 2013). Content analysis as a research tool allowed the researcher to identify the presence of certain words and identify patterns within the transcribed text. Using content analysis enabled the researcher to decipher the linkage between data sets in order to code themes revealed in the in-depth interviews and categorize this data to produce valid and reliable interpretations to be used by firms to increase retention levels of wired boomers (Krippendorff, 1969; Krippendorff, 2012). Additionally, the use of content analysis allowed the researcher to inferentially explore themes and patterns (Krippendorff, 2012). The researcher was able to quantify and analyze the existence of words and concepts collected from the in-depth interviews. The researcher then explored the meanings and relationships of the words and concepts in order to make inferences about the data collected from each participant.

**Population and Sample**

The research conducted as part of this study included in-depth interviews of 12 individuals, 53-61 years of age, working for an aerospace company in the private sector in Huntsville, Alabama (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). The 12 individuals were comprised of seven male participants and five female participants. Each individual participating in the in-depth interview had at least a bachelor’s degree or higher and 25+ years of professional experience.
Participants and the firms where they are employed remained anonymous. A pseudonym was given to each aerospace company and each participant.

**Selection of Participants**

The researcher contacted multiple individuals who are 53-61 years of age, currently employed with a private sector aerospace company in Huntsville, Alabama, in order to obtain consent from 12 individuals to participate in an in-depth interview. The researcher used networking relationships in order to obtain contact with individuals who were 53-61 years-of-age and desired to provide input to the study as it relates to the retention of wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama.

**Procedures**

After the researcher received certification and approval from the IRB, in-depth interviews were scheduled with participants from aerospace firms in Huntsville, Alabama (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Petre & Rugg, 2010). The timeline for completing all in-depth interviews was July – September 2016. The interviews were recorded and transcribed into Microsoft Word documents after the interview was complete (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Maxwell, 2013). The transcripts were reviewed in detail using content analysis to look for emerging themes and trends (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Krippendorff, 2012).
Data Collection

Data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews with 12 wired boomers presently employed with aerospace firms in Huntsville, Alabama (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Maxwell, 2013). The interview lasted no more than 45 (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Maxwell, 2013). The entire interview was recorded using an audio recording device purchased by the researcher specifically for the use of collecting data for this study (Creswell, 2014). Upon completion of each interview, the audio recordings were transcribed into a Microsoft Word document which contained the entire interview (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Maxwell, 2013). The electronic documents were stored on the researcher’s personal computer and on a thumb drive (to serve as back-up) (Creswell, 2014). The researcher’s personal computer and thumb drive were both password protected. The thumb drive was stored in a locked file cabinet at the researcher’s residence (Maxwell, 2013).

Data Analysis

The intent of this research design was to contribute evidence to answer the research question and address the existing gap in the literature. Phenomenological research and content analysis methods were used as the platform for the data analysis in the in-depth interview qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Husserl, 1913; Krippendorff, 1969; Krippendorff, 2012; Maxwell,
Phenomenological research method allowed for the study of the lived experiences of the participants as they revealed those experiences in the in-depth interview (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Husserl, 1913; Maxwell, 2013). Content analysis was the process for contextualizing interpretations of the information gathered from the in-depth interviews and producing valid and reliable inferences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Krippendorff, 1969; Krippendorff, 2012; Maxwell, 2013). The researcher read through each of the transcripts multiple times and made notes on the hardcopy documents. After the transcripts were loaded into NVivo, the researcher added the hand-written notes to the online documents. The notes helped in identifying the nodes/categories for delineating the data and moving pertinent text to each applicable node within NVivo. This enabled the researcher to compare and contrast both major and minor categories of data. The researcher reviewed each of the nodes and the companion data for each which resulted from the data analysis allowing the revelation of themes to emerge. Some of the nodes originally thought to be pertinent in the end revealed no relevant data. As such, those were deleted. Some of the nodes were merged and others were further refined into sub-categories. Using both the phenomenological and content analysis methods allowed the gathered data to develop into an accurate analysis and interpretation of the study (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013).
A computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program was used as part of the data analysis of the research gathered during the in-depth interview process in order to increase and improve the rigor of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The CAQDAS program facilitated in storing, coding, and sorting the data collected for this study in order to categorize the data (Maxwell, 2013). NVivo 11 Pro for Windows was the CAQDAS tool used for this research study. While there are many qualitative software tools available, NVivo was selected due to the ease-of-use and the available training tools on the internet.

**Reliability and Validity**

Using the in-depth interview enabled the researcher to ask the open-ended questions of the participant and allowed the participant to respond with an answer using as much or as little time as the participant desired (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Maxwell, 2013). The open-ended questions allowed the participant to respond openly and candidly to the questions without being limited to yes or no answers. Furthermore, the questions contained on the interview instrument were worded in such a manner as to avoid suggesting any subjects or topics which may “lead” the participant to provide a particular answer or avoid a particular topic (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). The researcher did not prompt the participant for any feedback and only asked the questions as identified in this study (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). The
researcher provided anonymity to the participant and to the company in order to encourage honest feedback from the participant and decrease fear of reprisal (Maxwell, 2013). Both participants and the name of the business were assigned an alias (Maxwell, 2013).

The in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face and the meeting for the interview was scheduled for a neutral location and time which was convenient to the participant (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). The researcher obtained permission from the participant for the purposes of recording the interview. The researcher captured the complete dialog of the entire in-depth interview.

As it related to research bias, the researcher earnestly listened to the responses of the participants while the interview was being conducted (Creswell, 2014; Petre & Rugg, 2010). The in-depth interviews were recorded, using two recording devices, in order to capture the entirety of the conversation and to eliminate assumptions by the researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). Two recording devices were used in order to ensure adequate backup in the event one recording device failed (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher asked for the participant’s permission prior to starting the recording devices. The researcher used the recording as well as notes captured during the interview to compile the data collected from each of the in-depth interviews. The researcher only asked the identified interview questions previously outlined in this
chapter and did not attempt to lead the participant’s responses in any direction. Each recorded interview was transcribed into Microsoft Word documents and stored on the researcher’s personal computer (Herr & Anderson, 2015). By listening to the entirety of the in-depth interview from the recording device after the interview was completed, the researcher was able to intentionally focus on the participant’s verbal response, tone, and inflexion. A backup was saved on a thumb drive and locked in a file cabinet at the researcher’s residence (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher’s personal computer and thumb drive are both password protected.

**Pilot Study**

A pilot study, also referred to as piloting, allowed the researcher to test the research questions and methodological approach prior to attempting to gather actual data as part of the data collection and analysis of the study (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Piloting allowed for a small-scale version of the larger research study and enabled the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of the research instrument, test the methods for collecting data, and make adjustments to the overall study based on the lessons-learned during the pilot (Maxwell, 2013). The results of the pilot study were not used as part of the final report but to assist in identifying and resolving bias and expose disparities.

The researcher interviewed three individuals who are 53-61 years of age, in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama. The interviews were face-to-face and recorded in order to test the recording devices planned to be used in the larger
study. The pilot study allowed the researcher to ascertain the amount of time each interview would take and the flow of the interview questions as it related to the ease of transition from one to the next. The researcher used the pilot study to determine the clarity of the interview questions, the relevance of each of the interview questions, and based on input from the participants whether additional questions were needed or existing questions needed to be eliminated.

**Summary and Synthesis of the Data**

This chapter provided an explanation behind the reasoning for selecting the phenomenological research method and content analysis, as well as outlining the process for conducting this qualitative research. The lived experiences of wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama, was the focus of the study. As outlined earlier in this chapter, 12 participants provided the data for this research study. Baker and Edwards (2012) argued the amount of participants can vary greatly in qualitative research; however, consideration must be given to the time necessary for transcribing each interview. As such, Baker and Edwards (2012) asserted that 12-60 participants is adequate to reach saturation and to provide substantial evidence to support the phenomenon.

Chapters four and five were written after the research study was conducted. These chapters provide the details related to the implementation of the study, findings, themes, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.
Chapter 4 – Findings

Chapter four provides discussion of the pilot study, research study, themes which emerged from the study, and the contribution to the existing body of research. This chapter also contains a description of the NVivo software tool which was used in order to analyze the data resulting from this study and provide a more structured method of coding the data.

Overview

The workforce is aging and as wired boomers consider retirement, organizations will be left with a gap in knowledge, skills and experience which will reduce productivity and profitability for employers (Brooke, 2012; Phillips & Edwards, 2009; Taylor et al., 2013). In years past, traditional retirement age was 65. This gap has been created from the early boomers who have already retired or plan to retire in the near future, followed by the continued aging of wired boomers and subsequent generations, living longer than previous generations (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Cutler, 2011; Fry, 2015; Fuertes, Egdell & McQuaid, 2013; Lutz, 2009; Ortman et al., 2014; Tishman, Van Looy, Bruyere, 2012). Furthermore, the younger prospective candidates lack the skills, knowledge and expertise to fill the vacancies (Ospina, 2015; Tishman et al., 2012). As of December 2016, there were more job openings available in the U.S. today than at any time since December 2000, when the BLS first began tracking data related to vacant positions (Litzinger & Dunn, 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor
Statistics, 2015a). The unemployment rate has declined from 7.2% to 5.3% (Litzinger & Dunn, 2015); however, the labor force participation rate is also declining. Therefore, researchers suggested employers incentivize wired boomers in an effort to retain these individuals in the workforce longer than in previous generations and develop a retention plan for keeping wired boomers with their respective employers longer than individuals in previous generations (Cappelli & Novelli, 2013; Jenkins, 2016; Perera et al., 2015; Perry, 2010; Phillips & Edwards, 2009; Shacklock & Brunetto, 2011; Vasconcelos, 2015).

The following research question was the focus of this study:

What are the business practices which have the greatest influence on retention as it relates to wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama?

The in-depth interviews with each participant fostered interaction with each individual while facilitating context-rich accounts from both a personal and professional level, allowing the individual to describe their own perceptions and perspectives. The interviews were “semi-structured” in that the researcher engaged the participant in a formal interview where 10 questions were asked of each individual. These questions provided a guide as to how the interview would proceed but also allowed for the participant to direct the discussion into a related topic to the original question. The interview process employed in this research for the purposes of gathering data allowed participants to explain and describe complex
processes and interactions as experienced within the context of their current position, working as a wired boomer in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama.

The remainder of this chapter covers the implementation of the pilot study, implementation of the research study, profiles for each research participant, participant demographics, research findings, business practices, summary of the data, themes, outliers and the contribution to applied practice.

**Pilot Study Implementation**

In-depth interviews were held with each pilot study participant at a date, time and location which was convenient for the individual. Two different restaurant locations (these locations are identified as P and W) were used to conduct the interviews in order to provide a neutral location for gathering data. Two pilot study participants were interviewed at P and the third pilot study participant was interviewed at W. The pilot study revealed W was the more preferable location. The restaurant offered two seating areas and the smaller room allowed for more privacy and reduced background noise.

Two of the pilot study participants accepted the financial award for participating in the interview; however, the third participant declined accepting the financial award, stating he wanted to provide input to the data collection process in order to help with the research process and did not want to take any award. The financial award for the participants was originally outlined to consist of a $25.00
Visa gift card. However, the researcher later realized there is a $4.00 to $5.00 service fee (activation fee) for each gift card. The researcher subsequently decided to provide $25.00 in cash to each participant as a financial award for their time in the interview process.

Only one question out of the ten interview questions was revealed to need a slight revision to the wording as a result of the pilot study. Question five was previously worded as follows:

What benefits does your employer offer which specifically meet your needs as a wired boomer?

The pilot study participants were not clear on what the term “benefits” included. During the pilot study interviews, the researcher clarified “benefits” also included “perks.” The interview question was updated as follows:

What benefits and/or perks does your employer offer which specifically meet your needs as a wired boomer?

The researcher initially thought the time needed to allow each individual to complete the interview questions would range from 45 minutes to one hour. As a result of the pilot study, the researcher realized each interview takes approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete the interview questions. However, there is approximately 5 to 10 minutes before the interview begins which is devoted to introductions, explaining the informed consent form, and implementing the associated signatures on the form. The researcher explained the use of two
recording devices for the interview process (one served as a backup in the event the primary recording device failed). The researcher then provided a copy of the questions to the individual for their review as each question was asked and the recording devices were turned on and set to “record.”

During the pilot study process, the researcher realized the need to allow sufficient time for each participant to elaborate their response as it relates to each individual question in order to encourage the respondent to answer with as much or as little information as they desired. The process of conducting in-depth interviews required the researcher to pay close attention to the rhythm of the respondent’s answer in order to allow each person time to complete their thought with the corresponding response to the question.

At the conclusion of the in-depth interview process for the pilot study, each individual was given an opportunity to provide any additional information for which the researcher did not ask a specific question. In every instance, each participant had additional information to share which provided a continuation of the topic but each respondent’s input was different from the others. After the recording devices were paused and the devices were turned off, the conversation with the participant continued as a matter of “politeness” to avoid abruptly ending the conversation. Additionally, the researcher did not want to capture anything in the recording (and later, transcription) which was not specifically identified as part of the study and identified as part of the interview questions. The researcher
participated in a two-way dialog with the participant after the audio recordings were complete. It should be noted that a dialog of this manner may have an affect (either positive or negative) on the results of the data if included in the data analysis for the research. (Any potential impact related to the additional discussion during the pilot study was not be applicable because the data gathered during the pilot study was not included in the data analysis for the overall study.)

**Research Study Implementation**

In-depth interviews were held with each research participant at a date, time and location which was convenient for the individual. The 12 interviews were conducted at a restaurant (previously identified as W), one interview was conducted at another restaurant location (identified as S), two interviews were conducted in an office conference room, and one interview was conducted at a personal residence. Location P (used during the pilot study) proved to be too noisy and not conducive to the interview process.

The pilot study revealed W was the more preferable location. However, every research participant was not able to meet at this location. The S restaurant location was used only after an attempt was made to conduct the interview at W and the wait for seating exceeded the time available for the research participant. The conference room location (for two participants) and a personal residence (for one participant) proved to be the most desired location for these individuals
because it better suited their schedule in order to support work and personal
demands on their time. W offered two seating areas and the smaller room allowed
for more privacy and reduced background noise.

Two of the research study participants accepted the financial award for
participating in the interview; however, the other ten participants declined
accepting the financial award. The researcher provided $25.00 in cash to two of the
research participants as a financial award for their time in the interview process.

Each interview took approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete the
interview questions. There was an additional 5 to 10 minutes before the interview
began in order to address introductions, explain the informed consent form, and
implement the associated signatures on the form. The researcher explained the use
of two recording devices for the interview process (one serves as a backup in the
event the primary recording device fails). The researcher then provided a copy of
the questions to the individual for their reference as each question was asked and
the recording devices were turned on and set to “record.”

At the conclusion of the in-depth interview process, each individual was
given an opportunity to provide any additional information for which the researcher
did not ask a specific question. Most of the research participants did offer
additional information. After the recording devices were paused and the devices
were turned off, the conversation with the participant continued as a matter of
“politeness” to avoid abruptly ending the conversation.
Research Participants

Research Participant 1 – (Research Study)

Profile

Research Participant (RP) 1 is a Caucasian male. He presented for the interview with enthusiasm. He is in the process of completing his doctorate and expressed his desire to assist in my research because he understands how difficult it is to get research participants. He declined the financial award for participating in the research study because he wanted to participate given his difficulty in gathering his own research for his dissertation. RP1 was extremely forthcoming in answering all of the interview questions and appeared to be completely at ease providing input. He plans to retire as soon as he is retirement eligible, but could be incentivized to stay longer. RP1 is an individual contributor in his present position.

Research Participant 2 – (Research Study)

Profile

RP2 is a Caucasian male. He presented for the interview with enthusiasm. He provided excellent insight as it relates to his experiences as a wired boomer in his organization and genuinely seems to be highly satisfied with his current position as well as with his employer. RP2 did not feel comfortable receiving the financial award for his participation in the research and stated he was glad to provide input without a monetary award. At the conclusion of the interview (as an additional comment), RP2 stated he did not believe companies want to keep wired boomers;
however, when he understood the issue regarding the number of individuals leaving
the workforce versus the number available to fill vacated positions, he confirmed
the need for businesses to address the issue. He plans to retire as soon as he is
retirement eligible, but could be incentivized to stay longer. RP2 has 36 years of
experience and is a first line manager in his current position.

Research Participant 3 – (Research Study)

Profile

RP3 is a Caucasian female. She has been with her employer longer than
any of the other participants (37 years). At present, she is an individual contributor.
She has witnessed the “ebb and flow” of the aerospace industry over almost four
decades. RP3 has seen the business explode with growth and large profit margins,
as well as shrink from downsizing, reorganizing, and voluntary layoffs. She
specifically addressed the termination and layoff of older employees who had spent
their entire career with the company only to be encouraged to retire early or be laid
off before they were ready to leave. She believes older employees are not valued
the same as younger individuals. She specifically highlighted her discontent with
required annual training, uneventful meetings and any tasks which take away
valuable time needed to complete the job. RP3 plans to retire in the next two years
(well before she is 65) and nothing could incentivize her to stay longer.
Research Participant 4 – (Research Study)

Profile

RP4 is a Caucasian male. He indicated he is extremely pleased with his employer and his current position. He found it difficult to think of anything negative related to his work and specifically highlighted how important it is to him to work with coworkers who he respects and genuinely likes. He plans to retire as soon as he is retirement eligible, but could be incentivized to stay longer. He has over 35 years of experience and has worked at various levels of management. At the present time, RP4 is a team lead.

Research Participant 5 – (Research Study)

Profile

RP5 is an African-American female. She is extremely satisfied with her employer and with her current position. She feels grateful to have her position, stating she has had times in her career when she has been worried about not having a job due to layoffs. RP5 also finds great satisfaction in working in an environment where she believes the work she performs on a daily basis is important and makes a difference. She finds her job mentally challenging which provides job satisfaction and she plans to retire when she is retirement eligible, but could be incentivized to stay longer. RP5 has over 34 years of experience and is an individual contributor.
Research Participant 6 – (Research Study)

Profile

RP6 is an African-American female. She is very satisfied with her employer and with her current position. She is grateful for the numerous opportunities she has experienced with her employer and is hopeful about the continuation of additional opportunities in the years to come before she chooses retirement. She is motivated and energized by the amount of work to be performed and likes the feeling of being needed because she is never able to be completely caught up with all of the requirements of her position. She plans to retire when she is eligible, but could be incentivized to stay longer. She has 25 years of experience and is presently an individual contributor.

Research Participant 7 – (Research Study)

Profile

RP7 is a Caucasian male. He is very satisfied with his current position and with his employer overall. He enjoys the autonomy of his job and stated he does not want or need continual praise and recognition for doing the job he was hired to do. He believes the younger employees have too high an expectation for continual and repeated validation and recognition for doing the very job they are already being paid to perform. He stated concerns regarding the decisions made by executive level management which do not seem to indicate the individuals at that level have a complete understanding of what is going on down in the trenches.
They are so removed and oftentimes make business decisions which financially damage the company in both the near and long term. He plans to retire when he is retirement eligible, but could be incentivized to stay longer. RP7 has 34 years of experience and is an individual contributor.

**Research Participant 8 – (Research Study)**

**Profile**

RP8 is a Caucasian male. He was inquisitive about the study. He was forthcoming with details related to his position and seems to be very satisfied with his employer as well as his current position. RP8 believes he has been treated extremely well by his employer and is grateful for his long career with the same company. RP8 plans to retire as soon as he is eligible and plans to re-career (Nakai, 2011; Rice, 2015). (Re-careering is defined as launching a new career in an industry different from the one where an individual has spent most of their working years. He is presently working to develop another business while in his current position and looks forward to continuing to work after retirement but not remain with his current employer. Nothing could incentivize RP8 to stay longer. He has 35 years of experience and is a manager.

**Research Participant 9 – (Research Study)**

**Profile**

RP9 is a Caucasian male. He is grateful for his position, is satisfied with his employer and with his current position. He does not have any plans for retirement
in the near term and is not certain how long he would like to continue to work. However, retirement is not a near-term option. Due to life circumstances, he will work as long as he is able due to financial reasons. He has 32 years of experience and is an individual contributor.

**Research Participant 10 – (Research Study)**

**Profile**

RP10 is a Caucasian female. She is extremely dissatisfied with her current position and with her employer. Management at the higher levels within the organization are refusing to listen to the lessons-learned from the project team members and the current project is in a downward spiral. The team has already lost many key individuals because they have left the project or left the company altogether. The project is a sinking ship and she does not want to be one of the last employees to witness the demise of the effort. She is actively looking to leave her employer. She plans to retire when she is eligible and nothing could incentivize her to stay longer. RP10 has 33 years of experience and is an individual contributor.

**Participant 14 – (Research Study)**

**Profile**

RP11 is a Caucasian male. He is somewhat satisfied with his employer but not sure how long he will remain in his current position. The people on his project have all been relocated to work from home and he believes this is negatively impacting the synergy of the team. He feels isolated from the teammates and
thinks this will lead to slowing the development of the project and subsequent deliverables. He plans to retire when he is eligible and nothing could incentivize him to stay longer. RP11 has over 35 years of experience and is an individual contributor.

**Research Participant 12 – (Research Study)**

**Profile**

RP12 is a Caucasian female. She rated her level of satisfaction with her employer and with her job as a 5 on a scale of 1 to 10. She plans to retire as soon as she is able and nothing could incentivize her to stay longer. She believes her employer does not provide adequate pay for the position, citing she was given a promotion this year without any additional monetary incentive. She was given more responsibility and more work with no additional income. RP12 plans to re-career (Nakai, 2011; Rice, 2015) after she retires from the aerospace industry in order to continue working for the mental challenges employment offers. She has over 30 years of experience and is a team lead.
Participant Demographics

The specific demographics related to the research participants included in this study are displayed in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP8</td>
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<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP9</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: \( N = 12 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White = 10 (83%)</th>
<th>Black = 2 (17%)</th>
<th>Asian = 0 (0%)</th>
<th>Hispanic = 0 (0%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>W = 5 (42%)</td>
<td>M = 7 (58%)</td>
<td>White = 10 (83%)</td>
<td>Black = 2 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asian = 0 (0%)</td>
<td>Hispanic = 0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted no African-American males participated in this study. Additionally, there were no Asian or Hispanic individuals who participated in this study. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015a), women (across all ethnicities) comprise 19.7 percent of individuals employed in the aerospace industry, 6.5 percent of the individuals employed in aerospace are Black or African-American (male and female), 7.8 percent of aerospace employees are Asian (male and female), and 13.4 percent of aerospace employees are Hispanic or Latino (male and female). The researcher invited multiple individuals from both genders and
multiple ethnicities to participate in the study. The research participants in this study reflect those who were willing to participate.

**NVivo for Data Analysis**

The researcher used NVivo 11 Pro for Windows to aid in the data analysis for this research. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software tool which facilitates the analysis of unstructured or non-numerical data from interviews, surveys, notes, and scholarly articles for the purposes of garnering the relevant data in a qualitative research study. This tool is used primarily by academic, health, government, and commercial researchers across a broad range of fields.

NVivo allowed the researcher to classify, code, arrange and sort the information gathered during the data gathering phase of the research. The tool accommodated a varied range of research methods and included phenomenology which is the research methodology employed in this study. NVivo is a qualitative research tool and does not favor any particular methodology.

NVivo allowed and supported an iterative process for reviewing the data which resulted from the data collection portion of the research. The first step was to import transcribed documents from each interview into the tool. Vanan Online Services provided the transcription service for each audio file generated from each in-depth interview. The transcribed files were presented in Microsoft Word document format. The researcher opened each of the files in order to visually explore the document contents. If words were missing from the transcription or
words were misspelled, the researcher made corrections to the files. The next step was to “code” the transcriptions in order to gather and collect information by topic or theme. These codes were housed in “nodes” which served as containers for the codes. Automated queries provided in the tool allowed the researcher to run queries or text searches to find all of the participants who talked about a particular topic. The researcher recorded insights as memos in the tool in order to synthesize the results of the data. Table 6 provides additional details related to the NVivo 11 Pro for Windows software tool.

**Table 6: NVivo**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NVivo Pro 11 for Windows</td>
<td>Student Edition, purchased for $120.00 for a 12- month license</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.qsrinternational.com">http://www.qsrinternational.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Information:</td>
<td>QSR International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A software developer for qualitative research headquartered in Melbourne, Australia. The company is the developer of Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) software solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Information:</td>
<td>The application (NVivo) provides assistance to researchers in organizing, coding and analyzing non-numerical data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While other qualitative research tools are available to support the data collection and data analysis in this qualitative study, NVivo was specifically selected due to recommendations from professors and classmates.

Limitations associated with using NVivo or any software tool for analyzing data includes preventing the researcher from getting up-close with the data and may cause the researcher to lose touch with participants. The use of a software tool also
increases the time and energy required during the data analysis process because the researcher must commit to learn how to use the application, how to code the data, and how to analyze the results. There is also a concern that any software tool used for data analysis actually distracts from the pure form of analyzing the data in its raw form.

**Research Findings**

The perspective which emerged from the data analysis in this study resulted in the research providing a chronological insight to the participant’s life which introduced a narrative research paradigm. Additionally, the research also provided participant’s descriptions related to their experiences which conveyed the phenomenological approach. The coding of the data gathered in the in-depth interviews was a result of the codes emerging as a response to the data analysis. The codes were not predetermined but instead a realization of the emerging information collected from the research participants.

The research question which guided this study was:

What are the business practices which have the greatest influence on retention as it relates to wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama?

**Business Practices**

As previously noted, a total of 12 individuals participated in this study. (Three individuals participated in the pilot study but are not included in the
research findings presented herein.) The sampling strategy implemented for this research was criterion-based sampling because individuals were chosen based on their experience of the same phenomenon (i.e., born from 1956-1964, working in the aerospace industry, and living in Huntsville, Alabama) (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Only one participant indicated they could not retire at traditional retirement age due to a lack of financial resources which was the result of life circumstances and not for lack of planning. However, this participant indicated he did not necessarily want to retire and planned to work as long as his company would allow.

Five (42%) of the research participants highlighted money as a motivator and a tool for providing satisfaction in their current position (see Table 10, Benefits and Perks Related to Current Position). While some research studies have argued money is not a motivator (Singh, 2016; Tuch & Hornbaek, 2015), this argument does not seem valid within the context of this study. Miller (2014) argued an employee’s pay and increases in pay increase overall job satisfaction. Seven of the research participants (58%) stated an increase in pay would incentivize them to stay with their employer past retirement age. Three of those seven (43%) identified additional incentives, beyond monetary, which would incentivize them to stay with their employer past retirement age (see Table 11, Suggestions for Employer to Delay Retirement). These included working part-time, working a flexible schedule and/or flexible hours, working from a remote location, offering age-specific
insurance benefits, reducing bureaucracy in the workplace, offering additional vacation, and listening to employees. Only two individuals said there is nothing their employer could do to incentivize them to remain with the company past traditional retirement age, and both of these individuals are satisfied with their current employer (RP8 and RP11). RP8 is re-careering and RP11 is looking forward to a slower pace of life. This translates into 83% of wired boomers can be motivated and/or incentivized to remain with their employer past traditional retirement age, and 43% of these individuals are willing to delay retirement for reasons other than financial incentives. Furthermore, every suggestion offered outside of monetary incentives actually reduces costs for the employer.

Two of the research participants (17%) indicated their respective employer has a large population of the current workforce which is retirement-eligible. One research participant stated just over 40% of the workforce with their current employer is retirement-eligible and the other research participant stated 57% of the workforce with their current employer is retirement-eligible. Both research participants stated they were not aware of any programs currently being implemented by their employer which would incentivize employees to stay longer with the company. Both participants were in a position within the organization to have access to this data. These same research participants also noted the rapid turnover related to millennials and addressed the expense to the company in having these individuals trained for a position only to leave the organization in short order.
Table 7 details the response from the research participants regarding their level of satisfaction with their employer.

**Interview question 1:** Describe your level of satisfaction with your current employer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP1</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP2</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>RP3</td>
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<td>RP4</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>RP5</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<td>RP6</td>
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<td>RP7</td>
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<td>RP10</td>
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<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>RP11</td>
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<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP12</td>
<td></td>
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<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>7 (58%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the two research participants who noted they are currently dissatisfied with their current employer, both identified incentives which the employer could offer which would delay their retirement intentions. RP10 is frustrated with her current position because she believes her employer and management is not listening to employees’ input. RP12 is frustrated with her employer because they have promoted her to a position with additional responsibility but did not provide any additional pay. Both of these situations can be rectified if the employer chooses to correct the situation.
The following list details the response from the research participants regarding the most satisfying attribute of their current position.

**Interview question 2:** What is most satisfying to you related to your current position?

1. RP1: “I am most satisfied with doing what I’ve been in school for these last six years. Being able to apply the knowledge I received from my education in my professional career.”

2. RP2: “Being able to build my team and hire individuals who each bring something different to the table. We have been able to create a diverse team just by hiring those people who best fit what we are looking for.”

3. RP3: “My job is consistently challenging and rewarding. It’s rewarding from a perspective of being able to solve customer’s problems and handle tough issues. And I have to add to that that I really enjoy my coworkers.”

4. RP4: “My company is people-oriented. It’s like one big family. And they treat you like family. They always take care of you, any problems or issues you have. Everybody supports everybody.”

5. RP5: “The important work that we do. The things I work on make a difference every day.”
6. RP6: “The opportunity to develop and grow into a new position with a senior manager taking me under her wing and helping me to grow.”

7. RP7: “I’m learning. I’m learning new things about the company, about products I have not worked on previously and things I didn’t know anything about before now. I’m also working with new people – mostly younger people – and that’s nice.”

8. RP8: “The variety of work. It’s not the same thing over and over again. I never know what’s going to happen from one day to the next. It’s the constant spontaneity that makes it interesting.”

9. RP9: “Learning the levels of diplomacy necessary when dealing with foreign governments and foreign diplomats.”

10. RP10: “The people I work with. And also we have very flexible work hours. So I can work from home when I need to.”

11. RP11: “I have a lot of autonomy. And I also now work from home and I like that a lot.”

12. RP12: “Autonomy. My boss allows me to do my job without constant interruptions. I have a flexible schedule, I can come and go as I please because my manager knows I am going to get the job done so she doesn’t hover over me and lets me work independently.”
Half of the research participants gave similar input regarding interview question 2, responding with the following four responses:

- Autonomy
- Flexible working hours
- Working from home
- Coworkers

The other half of the participants gave individual responses, each one different from all other participants, as outlined above in 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9. Table 8 provides a graphic illustration of the input from each participant as it relates to the most satisfying attribute related to their current position.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>Autonomy</th>
<th>Flexible Working Hours</th>
<th>Working from Home</th>
<th>Coworkers</th>
<th>Individual Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP1</td>
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<td>RP2</td>
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<td>RP3</td>
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<td>RP11</td>
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<td>RP12</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>6 (50%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The following list details the response from the research participants regarding the least satisfying attribute of their current position.


**Interview question 3:** What is least satisfying to you related to your current position?

1. RP1: “They have recently taken away our ability to access personal email at work. So even during my lunch hour I am not able to review my emails. They expect me to integrate my business life into my personal life by taking work-related calls during my time away from the office and I am expected to answer emails for work during my personal life. Yet I am not allowed to multi-task at work to handle my personal emails while I am at work. The corporate policy is a bureaucracy and you are just another cog in the wheel.”

2. RP2: “Working on short-term contracts [for the government] and having to let contractors go at the end of the contract. I don’t like screwing around with people’s lives. I’m honest and upfront because I tell them that’s what’s going to happen. So they know. But then when I get another contract, I have to call them to come back and they can only come back if they are available.”

3. RP3: “There is a constant bombardment to get you out the door. There seems to be constant voluntary layoffs, involuntary layoffs, email notifications, relocating jobs to different places and if you can’t move, you are out of a job.”
4. RP4: “My workload. I have a really heavy workload. I work nights, weekends – just to try to keep up with everything. I travel a lot which also keeps me away from my family.”

5. RP5: “I don’t really have anything that is not satisfying to me in my job. I really like what I’m doing and the people I work with so I would have to say I don’t have anything right now.”

6. RP6: “The position I have does not have any promotion opportunities at this site. I would have to relocate to another city if I were to be promoted, so that’s really a problem with the site and not the position. The position itself has given me opportunities to grow.”

7. RP7: “I have issues with some of the upper level management decisions but the immediate level of management I have no problem with.”

8. RP8: “I don’t have a window. So I never know what the weather is like outside until I leave at the end of the day.”

9. RP9: “Downtime. I don’t like where there is nothing to do and you have to think of things to keep busy.”

10. RP10: “Management. There is no support to get my job done.”
11. RP11: “I think there is a level of complacency in the business. Management could be pushing harder to get more work but we have gotten comfortable.”

12. RP12: “I would have to say it’s my pay. I received an “outstanding” on my appraisal and I got a bump in my title and no additional money.”

RP7, RP10, and RP11 specifically cited issues with management as the reason for their lower level of satisfaction with their current position. However, RP10 is the only one of these three who specifically stated she is dissatisfied with her current employer. RP7 and RP11 both state they are satisfied with their current employer. All of the other participants cited individual reasons related to their least satisfying characteristic in their current position.

The following list details the response from the research participants regarding their level of support or lack of support in their current position.

**Interview question 4:** Describe the type of support or lack of support you experience in your position.

1. RP1: “When you have a computer problem, you have to log a ticket with the IT department and they just hand it off to someone else. And then maybe in three or four days, your problem gets solved.”

2. RP2: “We don’t get the attention of the CEO because training materials are just not sexy.”
3. RP3: “I don’t feel like management engages with us.”

4. RP4: “They are people-oriented. It’s like a big family and they treat you like family.”

5. RP5: “I don’t like the teleconference meetings because I can’t see people’s faces. And you don’t have the opportunity to look somebody in the eye. And you don’t get the body language that helps you understand what they’re talking about even more.”

6. RP6: “I get lots of support from my manager. I am included in meetings that my manager has to travel to and she encourages me to speak up in the meetings and voice my opinion about things.”

7. RP7: “We are not getting resolutions to questions quickly and that delays the whole project. We work to stay on schedule but then when you need some information from somebody else, there’s just no way to maintain the schedule.”

8. RP8: “I get fantastic support. Management is very hands-off. I know what needs to be done and I do it.”

9. RP9: “Well the level of support I receive depends on the level of knowledge of the people I am working with. Most of them don’t have a clue about the products we sell.”

10. RP10: “There is no management support to get the job done.”
11. RP11: “I get support when I need it but like I said, I am fairly autonomous.”

12. RP12: “Lack of management support. I was given a promotion in title but my manager didn’t fight for me to get more money.”

The answers to this question could also apply under “most satisfying” and “least satisfying” related to the participant’s current position. For example, RP5 (in list item 5 above) identified her issue with teleconferencing meetings as an issue where she believes support is lacking in her current position. However, when she was asked if there was anything “least satisfying” related to her current position, she was unable to think of anything. Table 9 illustrates whether research participants feel supported, feel a lack of support, or whether it varies given the situation (as identified by RP9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Lack of Support</th>
<th>Varies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP1</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>RP2</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>RP3</td>
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<td>RP4</td>
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<tr>
<td>RP12</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Support / Lack of Support Related to Current Position

Total: 4 (34%) 7 (58%) 1 (8%)
Table 10 details the response from the research participants regarding the benefits and/or perks provided by their employer.

**Interview question 5:** What benefits and/or perks does your employer offer which specifically meet your needs as a wired boomer?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>Flexible Hours / Flex Schedule</th>
<th>Remote Work Location</th>
<th>Feeling Accounted For</th>
<th>Additional Hardware Resources</th>
<th>Time Off / (Vacation / Camp) Time</th>
<th>Autonomy</th>
<th>401K</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP1</td>
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<td>RP2</td>
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<td>RP7</td>
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<td>RP12</td>
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</table>

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate percentages.
The most important benefit identified by 58% of the participants is *Feeling Accomplished*. This benefit is an intangible (“soft”) benefit and one that is not listed as part of the Benefits Package for any Human Resources department. However, it is the most important benefit with their current employer. The researcher identified these individuals as ralliers. Ralliers are those individuals reaching traditional retirement age and having the desire to continue working. These individuals desire to rouse or revive their career, either by continuing with their current employer or re-careering in an effort to pursue something of which they had only previously dreamed. The rallier cohort is a by-product of wired boomers reaching retirement age and living longer and healthier lives than previous generations. Therefore, these individuals have different expectations about retirement intentions. While generations are defined as a group of people who share birth years, life events, and critical development stages, the ralliers are formed because they share the common position of age and life experiences which bring an experienced person to the age of 65 and beyond. As a child is born into a generation, with a “clean slate” (boomer, generation X, millennial, generation z), ralliers have lived long enough to make decisions for themselves based on their personal and professional experiences and share the cohort made up of age and experience coupled with the desire to rouse and/or revive their career.

Ralliers enjoy their work and work because they are motivated by feeling accomplished in the work they are performing and providing. This indicates these
individuals are actually working and providing a benefit to the employer. They are not retired-in-place.

*Insurance* benefits (to include medical, dental, and vision) and *Salary/Financial* were identified as the second most important benefit related to the individual’s current position. Over 33% of the research participants mentioned *Co-Workers* as a perk in their current position and twenty-five percent of the research participants mentioned *Autonomy* as a benefit related to their current position. As with *Feeling Accomplished*, *Co-Workers* and *Autonomy* are intangible benefits. Employees appear to be grateful to have these intangible benefits and recognize the intrinsic value of these attributes because they have worked in positions where these attributes were absent.

*Salary/Financial* tied with *Insurance* (at 42%) as the second most important benefit. When calculating the cost of an employee, employers combine these numbers as part of the overall cost of employing the individual. However, the research participants did not consider these to be the same given their responses. While 42% of the participants identified *Insurance* as an important benefit and 42% of the participants identified *Salary/Financial* as an important benefit, only one person mentioned both as important.

RP1 specifically mentioned his own research for his dissertation which indicated employees are more satisfied overall when they are allowed to work around issues outside of the office such as doctor’s appointments and the like. RP8
and RP10 were the only two participants who solely listed intangible benefits as the most important benefit related to their current position (feeling accomplished and coworkers, respectively). RP8 plans to retire and re-career while RP10 could be incentivized to remain with her current employer if management would simply listen to input from employees. Ironically, the researcher believed RP8 to be the most satisfied with his current position as compared to all of the research participants, and RP10 was the most dissatisfied out of all of the research participants based on the tone and mood of the interview. RP8 was very engaged in the interview and interjected humor throughout the interview process. Conversely, RP10 was clear about her complete dissatisfaction with her current position and with the employer.

Additional Hardware Resources include laptops, cell phones, internet access, office supplies, and equipment for the purposes of working from a remote location.

Table 11 details the response from the research participants regarding the suggestions for the employer which would cause an individual to delay retirement.

Interview question 6: What suggestions would you make to your employer which would encourage you to stay with the company past traditional retirement age?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>More Money</th>
<th>Work Part-Time</th>
<th>Flexible Hours / Flexible Schedule</th>
<th>Work from Remote Location</th>
<th>Reducing Bureaucracy</th>
<th>Age-Specific Insurance Benefits</th>
<th>More Vacation</th>
<th>Listen to Employees</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP1</td>
<td>•</td>
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<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(58%)</td>
<td>(33%)</td>
<td>(8%)</td>
<td>(17%)</td>
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<td>(8%)</td>
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<td>(17%)</td>
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</table>
Fifty-eight percent of the research participants suggested employers offering *More Money* would encourage individuals to delay retirement to work past traditional retirement age. The suggestion of *More Money* is not because they need the money, because those participants who plan to retire when they are eligible have saved for retirement and/or they have a pension. They value their ability to retire, to make the choice to retire, and if they are going to delay this long-awaited opportunity, additional money would be the main reason. RP2 stated additional income is not ever going to be offered so he believes he is safe in making this the incentive to stay longer, then there is no choice to be made.

Research has previously suggested wired boomers will want to work or need to work past traditional retirement age because they won’t have the financial resources to retire. However, this study indicates those individuals in the aerospace industry, particularly in Huntsville, Alabama, are prepared financially to retire and their impending departure will create the gap in knowledge, skills and expertise forecasted in previous research, especially as it relates to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) professions (which comprise the aerospace industry).

*Working Part-Time* was the second most important suggestion for employers to encourage individuals to stay past traditional retirement age. Employers who offer a part-time option to wired boomers may be able to incentivize more than 33% (according to this study) of individuals to remain with
their employer past traditional retirement age. This would not require the company to spend additional money, and it would reduce the costs associated with turnover.

*Age-Specific Insurance Benefits* was mentioned by two (over 16%) of the research participants as a suggestion for employers to encourage individuals to delay retirement. Age-specific benefits include any or all of the following, and provides just a few of the possible ideas for employers:

- Grandparent leave
- Females dropping medical coverage for maternity care
- Job-sharing
- Flexible work schedules (to include working earlier in the day)
- Employees to return as contractors
- Phased approach to retirement
- Sabbatical (paid or unpaid)
- “Testing” retirement (taking unpaid leave to determine if retirement is the correct choice)
- Wellness programs
- Annual financial planning
- Long-term-care insurance
- Concierge service to help with personal errands
- Legal services for wills and estate planning
• Elder care to pay for an advocate or home care for older parents of
  the employee

One participant stated grandparent leave would be of particular interest to
her because it would allow her the opportunity to spend more time with her
grandchildren, or have time off when a new grandbaby is born. Companies pay for
maternity benefits for all female employees; however, once a woman decides she
no longer wants that coverage (either because she doesn’t want to have children,
she can’t have children, or she is past childbearing age), it would financially benefit
the company to eliminate that coverage from the female’s policy. When
grandchildren become a possibility, men and women may opt for the possibility to
take time off for the birth of the baby (helping their daughter or daughter-in-law
post-delivery) or they may prefer to have additional time with older grandchildren
to attend school plays, take their grandchildren to lunch, or take them on a vacation.
Grandparent leave is time away from work in order for grandparents to spend
additional time with their grandchildren. Offering such a policy does not
necessarily mean additional expense to the company because this benefit could be
offered “without pay.”

Working from a Remote Location was also mentioned by two (over 16%) of
the research participants as a suggestion for employers to encourage individuals to
delay retirement. RP5 stated it allows individuals the opportunity to avoid traffic to
and from work, allowing them to start their workday earlier. It also allows
individuals the opportunity to work more frequently if necessary because their work is at home and available at any time the position calls for their input.

Two (over 16%) of the individuals could not think of anything the employer could do to encourage employees to delay retirement (RP8 and RP11). These two individuals also stated there was nothing that would incentivize them to delay retirement. They are both satisfied with their current position and with their employer but they are opting to retire when eligible. As mentioned previously, RP8 interjected humor throughout the interview process and when asked interview question 6, his response was:

“Faster horses, younger women, older whiskey, and more money!”

He laughed and went on to explain this is a line in a country music song titled Faster Horses, performed by Tom T. Hall. While he is very satisfied with his current employer, RP8 has no intention of remaining with his current employer past retirement age and plans to re-career. He has a farm and horse stables, and plans to continue working by investing in his own business.

The outliers regarding suggestions for employers were Flexible Hours/Flexible Schedule, Reduced Bureaucracy, More Vacation, and Listen to Employees. While Flexible Hours/Flexible Schedule and More Vacation can be added to the overall benefits package, Reducing Bureaucracy and Listening to Employees are intangible (“soft”) benefits and require implementation by the management and within the culture of the organization. Out of the four participants
who identified each of these suggestions, three also cited *More Money* as a suggestion. RP10 does not want more money, but would be motivated to remain with her employer if she believed management listened to their employees. As it relates to those individuals who cited *More Money*, these participants did not provide a “weight” for each suggestion so it is not known if one would have been more important than another.

RP7 stated “I don’t need daily or weekly recognition because I’m doing my job. And I don’t need a corporate gym or a gym membership. I can pay for that on my own. If I am going to be tempted to delay retirement, it will be because they offer me more money to stay. I have saved for my retirement and I am financially prepared to take that next step.” However, RP7 indicated working part-time, age-specific insurance benefits and more vacation would all incentivize him to stay.

The following represents the retirement intentions of each research participant.

**Interview question 7:** How long do you plan to stay with your current employer?

1. RP1: “That’s a good question. I don’t actually know when I will retire.”
2. RP2: “The short answer is when I retire. But I don’t have a specific date in mind yet.”
3. RP3: “Three to five years.”
4. RP4: “My plan right now is four to five years.”

5. RP5: “I don’t have a particular date in mind. I just know I want to retire when I can.”

6. RP6: “I can retire in 11 years and that’s exactly what I plan to do.”

7. RP7: “Until I’m 65.”

8. RP8: “I was thinking until Tuesday. [Laughter] I don’t know exactly. I want to retire sooner rather than later because I want to work at my farm.”

9. RP9: “I plan to work until I’m 59.”

10. RP10: “Not very long.”

11. RP11: “Until I’m 62.”

12. RP12: “When I win the lottery. [Laughter] I haven’t given myself a timeline but it will be as soon as I am eligible.”

Only three research participants gave a specific time or age of when they expect/plan to retire. As shown in Table 12, Retirement Intentions, all of the research participants plan to retire when eligible except one. Ultimately, none of the participants are retiring immediately, thus employers still have time to strategize and implement a plan to retain these individuals longer in order to avoid the loss of knowledge, skills and expertise.
Table 12 represents the retirement intentions of each research participant and whether any incentives offered by the employer would entice the individual to stay longer, past traditional retirement age.

**Interview question 8:** What would make you stay longer?

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>Retiring</th>
<th>Work Past Traditional Retirement</th>
<th>Re-career</th>
<th>Delay Retirement IF</th>
<th>Working Past Traditional Retirement because:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP1</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in pay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP2</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in pay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP3</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in pay</td>
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<tr>
<td>RP4</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Work part-time</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>RP5</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Work part-time / Work from home / Age-Specific Benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP6</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in pay / Work part-time / Flexible Hours and/or Flexible Schedule / Work from home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP7</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in pay / Work part-time / Age-Specific Benefits / More Vacation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP8</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>RP9</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Finances</td>
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<tr>
<td>RP10</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Listen to employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>RP11</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP12</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary:</strong></td>
<td>11 (92%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
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</table>
Of the 11 (92%) research participants who intend to retire upon eligibility, 82% (nine individuals) indicate their current employer would be unable to incentivize them to remain with the company past traditional retirement age. Of the 92% who plan to retire, 17% plan to re-career, indicating they are not ready to stop working altogether but prefer to do something they believe to be more satisfying and fulfilling. One research participant stated he plans to work past traditional retirement age and named the need for additional financial support as the number one reason for this choice.

Of the 92% of the research participants who intend to retire upon eligibility, over 55% indicated their current employer would be able to incentivize them to remain with the company past traditional retirement age if their pay was increased. Scholarly research related to Organizational Behavior indicates individuals are not motivated by money. However, this study indicates over half of those individuals who are retirement eligible could be motivated to remain with their employer past retirement age if their salary were increased. RP2 stated:

“There are times you will tolerate anything in a relationship, whatever that relationship is based on. So it can be a personal relationship, or a family relationship or a business relationship. So right now I can tolerate an awful lot of crap because of the money they are paying me.”

RP2 can retire and plans to retire, indicating the only thing that will incentivize him to stay longer is more money.
RP4 stated:

“I think there is a big struggle for companies and they don’t realize just how many people are leaving and how few there are to fill those positions. I think corporate America has not been awakened yet to the issue.”

Unanimously, all research participants agreed to participate in a follow-up interview if one were necessary (interview question 9); however, none were necessary.

Interview question 10 offered the opportunity for research participants to offer additional information or input they may have thought of but the researcher did not ask.

**Interview question 10:** Do you have anything you want to add or is there anything you wanted to say that I didn’t ask?

1. RP1: “No. None at this time. However, I would like to read your paper when you are finished.”
2. RP2: “No – but I don’t think employers will keep us.”
3. RP3: “I worry about retiring and not staying mentally sharp.”
4. RP4: “Delaying retirement may be the most important way to keep your brain active.”
5. RP5: “I don’t think employers want to keep older workers. They want younger ones because that also means cheaper.”
6. RP6: “No.”
7. RP7: “Because I have worked all of my life, I can’t imagine not having a responsibility to get up each day and go to my job.”

8. RP8: “No.”

9. RP9: “Being the parent of millennials, I can see my daughter going to work but she’s not going to work in this field. My son is not going to work in this field.”

10. RP10: “No, I don’t think so.”

11. RP11: “No, but I am curious if anyone thinks companies will keep older workers longer.”

12. RP12: “Not right now off the top of my head.”

Godfrey (2015) provides several statistics which don’t bode well for many American companies, but especially STEM-related corporations, which include those in the aerospace industry:

- The majority of American students from either minority or low-income homes have the greatest gap related to STEM knowledge (Godfrey, 2015).

- Growth in STEM jobs builds a nation of global competitiveness and innovation because it launches new ideas and drives the creation of new industries (Godfrey, 2015).

- The U.S. is ranked 52 in the world related to the quality of mathematics and science education (Godfrey, 2015).
• The U.S. is ranked 5 in overall global competitiveness (Godfrey, 2015).

• The U.S. is ranked 27 among nations with regard to the number of collect students receiving undergraduate degrees in STEM (Godfrey, 2015).

• There are more foreign students studying in U.S. graduate schools than the number of U.S. students (Godfrey, 2015).

• Over two-thirds of engineering PhDs earned in the U.S. are by non-U.S. citizens. That means those individuals are studying at the best educational institutions and taking their knowledge home to compete against us (Godfrey, 2015).

**Synthesis and Summary of Data**

In-depth interviews provided an intricate and detailed approach which supported the responsibility which must be exercised in the study in order to ensure rigor, complexity, and consistency within the research (Creswell, 2014). The researcher asked questions of the participants in order to gather descriptive details and contribute direction to the existing body of research (Staller, 2010). The data analysis was comprised of in-depth interviews, transcribing audio recordings of the interviews, and evaluating codes (looking for patterns) to find implications from the data gathered from participants (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The data gathered during the in-depth interview process produced codes, patterns, and themes which
resulted in relevant meaning to give voice to each participant (Maxwell, 2013). As outlined previously, 12 participants provided the data for this research study. Baker and Edwards (2012) argued the amount of participants can vary greatly in qualitative research; however, consideration must be given to the time necessary for transcribing each interview. This research study supports the argument by Baker and Edwards (2012) and provides a platform for having reached saturation with 12 participants.

**Themes**

This qualitative research study, using a phenomenological research method and conducting in-depth interviews with each research participant revealed the following most significant themes as presented in Table 13. These themes are presented in order of applicability to the participants who participated in this study.

Ninety-two percent of the participants indicated they plan to retire when they are retirement eligible because they are financially able to do so. The discovery of the rallier cohort is a direct result of this study and the 84% of participants who stated they could be incentivized to work past traditional retirement age. For 58% of the participants, an increase in salary was the primary incentive which would motivate them to remain with their employer longer. However, 43% said a secondary incentive would also motivate them to remain with their employer, outside of financial incentives. Only 16% of the participants (2 individuals) plan to retire and leave their respective employers regardless of any incentives directed at wired
boomers. One participant (8%) is committed to retiring because he plans to re-career. Ultimately, 11 individuals out of 12 can be incentivized to remain with their employer past traditional age and the preferred incentives do not require the employer to spend any additional financial resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Number</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Applicable Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Retiring when retirement eligible.</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Belonging to the Rallier cohort.</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Increasing salary is primary incentive.</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Working part-time, working from home, and providing age-specific benefits are secondary incentives.</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Committing to retirement and no incentive will change their mind.</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Committing to retirement in order to re-career.</td>
<td>8%</td>
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**Table 13: Themes Revealed from the Study**

**Theme 1. Retiring when Retirement Eligible**

For those individuals who have a pension and/or 401k (to include other retirement savings options) and can retire comfortably (92% of the individuals who participated in this study), they plan to retire, leaving the employer with a gap in knowledge and skills. Prior research has suggested that wired boomers will want to work past traditional retirement age because they don’t have the financial resources to retire, but that does not appear to be case across all industries. In the aerospace industry, where there is a known gap in STEM qualified applicants, the wired boomers who participated in this study indicate they can retire when they are eligible because they have managed their resources and planned for this life event.
Some of the participants have pensions and others have 401k investments (along with other retirement savings options). They are not forced to work, but some choose to work by re-careering. Research indicates the lack of younger individuals pursuing careers in the STEM fields will mean too few people to fill the jobs being vacated by wired boomers.

**Theme 2. Belonging to the Rallier Cohort**

The identification of the rallier is a direct result of this study. These individuals plan to live life differently from the age of 65 and beyond because people are living longer and healthier lives. The Rallier cohort has been created by the wired boomers reaching an intersection of three points: retirement eligibility, individuals living longer, healthier lives, and a desire to work in order to remain mentally challenged and feeling accomplished. As each subsequent generation ages to 65 and beyond, they will join the rallier cohort. It is the contention of the researcher that while people are born into a generation, previously defined because of birth year and critical events during their youth, ultimately everyone belongs to the rallier cohort if they live to the age of 65 and beyond, and have a desire to continue working past traditional retirement age. After a life lived of personal and professional experiences (good, bad, ugly, tragic, and all other potential possibilities), individuals join a cohort which is shared because of age, healthier lifestyles, and a desire to remain mentally challenged while feeling accomplished in the workplace. They are not arriving at the age of 65 as a “clean slate” (as a child
enters the world and by default becomes part of the current generation). They come to this cohort with experiences which have shaped them and the decisions they will make moving forward due to living longer, healthier lives.

While many of the individuals interviewed in this research study indicate they plan to retire when they are eligible because they are financially able to do so, there were two groups of individuals who were identified comprising the rallier cohort: those who desire to re-career in order to continue a work-life but in another field, and those who could be incentivized to work past retirement age with their current employer because they are satisfied with their current position and feeling accomplished is the greatest satisfaction related to their current position.

**Theme 3. Increasing Salary is Primary Incentive**

An increase in salary is the primary incentive to keep wired boomers in the workplace, specifically the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama, past traditional retirement age. Seven research participants (58%) identified more money as one of the suggestions for employers to incentivize employees to delay retirement. However, businesses are trying to reduce costs. As such, it is unlikely an employer would be willing to increase an individual’s pay in order to incentivize them to delay retirement.
Theme 4. Working Part-Time, Working from Home, and Providing Age-Specific Benefits are Secondary Incentives

Even though 11 individuals (92%) plan to retire when they reach retirement age (if not sooner), 83% indicate they can be incentivized to work longer. The ability to work part-time, work from home, and age-specific benefits are incentives which encourage individuals (ralliers as identified in this research) to remain in the workplace past traditional retirement age. Working part-time allows the employer to reduce costs associated with the employee’s salary, retain the individual in order to take advantage of their knowledge, skills and expertise, and potentially reduce costs associated with health benefits (if the employee is working under the 30 hours per week threshold), as well as reducing costs associated with vacation/sick/holiday pay. This strategy then avoids the costs associated with turnover.

Working from home also allows the employer to reduce costs by freeing up space in the workplace. While it may be minimal, it also reduces costs for office supplies, electricity, water, and any other resources used by employees when working at the physical office location. Providing age-specific insurance benefits also provides a financial savings for the employer. Ralliers don’t need maternity or paternity benefits. However, they may be interested in grandparent leave and willing to take one or two weeks without pay just to be afforded the opportunity to have more time to spend with their grandchildren.
Theme 5. Committing to Retirement and no Incentive will Change Their Mind

Ninety-two percent of the research participants plan to retire when retirement eligible. To individuals are committed to retirement and leaving their employer and nothing can change their mind (RP8 and RP11). RP11 plans to retire, not re-career, and is not incentivized to be a rallier. He did not provide specific details regarding what his plans are after retirement (and there was no research question directed at capturing post retirement plans). RP8 is part of the rallier cohort because even though he is leaving his current employer, he is re-careering. They are committed to retirement because they have the financial resources to make the choice to leave the workplace.

Theme 6. Committing to Retirement in Order to Re-Career

Of the two individuals (17%) who stated nothing would incentivize them to delay retirement, RP8 plans to re-career. He has a private business he has been developing for several years and plans to grow that business after retirement. RP12 also plans to re-career but can be incentivized to stay with her current employer longer if given additional financial incentive. RP12 knows she wants to continue to work in some capacity but desires to do something that she is passionate about as opposed to her current position. She is not yet certain what that will be but does not want to “do nothing” for fear she will “give up on life.”
**Outliers**

One research participant recommended employers offer a *nap room*, and specifically identified the use of the room for when you are feeling under the weather (such as a migraine) and you want to lie down to nap in order to allow the sick feeling to pass. He believed it was not always necessary to go home when you don’t feel well but a nap room would allow for rest in an attempt to wake refreshed and able to continue the work day.

*Working in order to stay mentally sharp* was mentioned by several of the research participants but outside of the parameters of the first nine specific interview questions. This concern is validated by a Pfizer (2014) research study conducted in 2014 which stated 87% of those surveyed had fears related to some aspect of aging, with the most common concern being fear of memory loss. Skerrett (2012) argued recent studies indicate there is a link between retirement and the onset of dementia.

*Training* as a topic was only mentioned by 2 participants (RP6 and RP7). Training is not a motivator to either who brought up the topic. Each indicated training themselves on the job and/or seeking outside learning opportunities at their own expense (in order to gain personal development) was sufficient in order to meet their needs as it relates to continual training.
Contribution to Applied Practice

The literature review performed as part of this research examined the existing body of scholarly work. Current and historical literature addressed the baby boomer cohort as one group of people. However, the early baby boomers (born 1946-1955) have already made retirement decisions; hence, the realization by employers their knowledge and expertise is leaving the organization without an adequate replacement or a backup plan. Wired boomers still remain in the workplace and are on the cusp of the next wave of retirement. Simultaneously, existing research states there are not enough qualified candidates to fill the positions which will be vacated, and of those who are qualified, they are not staying with the employer more than two to three years.

Existing research also stated employers in STEM related businesses are even more concerned because they have seen evidence in the shortfall of individuals who are pursuing STEM careers. This is of particular importance in Huntsville, Alabama, because this geographic location is noted as the third largest region for employing aerospace engineers.

Summary

Existing research argued wired boomers are not the desirable employee to hire or keep in the workplace. Yet research also stated millennials won’t remain with employers beyond two to three years. According to Brenner (2010), replacing an experienced employee costs a firm more than 50% of the individual’s salary.
For professionally skilled employees (as within the aerospace industry), this figure is shown to be as high as 150% of the individual’s salary (Brenner, 2010; Phillips & Edwards, 2009; Seidl, 2011). Therefore, the employer incurs the cost associated with turnover, over and over, and is also taking the gamble they can find a knowledgeable and experienced replacement. The identification of the ralliers provides employers with an answer to avoid the impending gap in knowledge, skills and expertise if plans are developed and implemented in order to incentivize these individuals to remain with their employer past traditional retirement age.

Employers have spent untold resources in an attempt to encourage younger individuals to pursue a degree and career in one of the STEM fields. However, research suggests those efforts are not having the needed impact in order to bring in enough employees to fill the gap being created by the wired boomers who intend to retire when they are eligible. Many employers have opted to encourage wired boomers to exit the workplace, incurring the costs of turnover associated with the wired boomer leaving the workplace coupled with the expense of hiring a younger employee. The employer is incurring the costs of turnover again in two to three years, and again in two to three years, and so on. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2015b), Alabama is recognized as one of nine states which employ the greatest number of aerospace engineers in the country. Alabama is also noted as one of eleven states where employers offer the highest median wage for
aerospace engineers. Huntsville, Alabama, is ranked third in the country for the highest employment in aerospace engineering (U. S. Department of Labor, 2015b).

There are four incentives which were identified as incentivizing employees to remain with their employer past traditional retirement age. Seven respondents (58%) indicated additional money would incentivize the individual to postpone retirement. Three of the seven (43%) stated additional incentives which the employer could offer would entice the individual to delay retirement intentions: working part-time, working from a remote location, and age-specific insurance benefits. All four of these suggestions for employers are seen as equally important to the research participants and were seen to be of significant enough value they would incentivize employees to consider staying with their employer past traditional retirement age. Paying individuals more money to postpone retirement may be financially prohibitive for many employers. However, the other three suggestions (working part-time, working from a remote location, and age-specific insurance benefits) can actually be of little to no cost to the employer. These suggestions may in fact reduce costs for the employer while allowing the company to avoid a gap in knowledge, skills and expertise, and allow additional time for wired boomers to effectively transition their position to a qualified individual and providing ample time for thorough knowledge transfer.

Wired boomers will at some point still choose to retire, and if employers have not implemented a plan for the transition of losing so many while being
unable to find replacements, revenue will be negatively impacted. Generation X will at some point become ralliers, as will millennials and generation Z. Putting a plan in place now to retain ralliers will benefit employers in the near future and in the long-term. The benefits and perks which are identified as being relevant for wired boomers may not be the same ones preferred by subsequent cohorts (generation X, millennials, generation Z, and so on). Ongoing assessments moving forward will allow employers to offer the benefits and perks which will incentivize upcoming ralliers. Ultimately, employers cannot afford to lose the knowledge and expertise which will soon leave the building. Revenue will be negatively impacted if a plan is not put in place to avoid the loss of knowledge and expertise, and abstain the costs of turnover by those leaving and the inability to keep younger employees past two to three years.

The following chapter will provide a discussion of the research study and recommendations for moving forward.
Chapter 5 – Discussion and Recommendations

Chapter five details the contribution of this study to the existing body of research. Also included in this chapter is the implications of the research, recommendations for employers in order to incentivize ralliers to remain with their employers past traditional retirement age, and suggestions for future research.

Overview

The workforce is aging and as wired boomers consider retirement, organizations will be left with a gap in knowledge, skills and experience which will reduce productivity and profitability for employers (Brooke, 2012; Dychtwald, 2016; Phillips & Edwards, 2009; Taylor et al., 2013). This gap has been created from the early boomers who have already retired or plan to retire in the near future, followed by the continued aging of wired boomers and subsequent generations, living longer and healthier lives than previous generations (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Cutler, 2011; Dychtwald, 2016; Fry, 2015; Fuertes, Egdell & McQuaid, 2013; Lutz, 2009; Ortman et al., 2014; Tishman, Van Looy, Bruyere, 2012). Furthermore, the younger prospective candidates lack the skills, knowledge and expertise to fill the current and approaching vacancies (Ospina, 2015; Tishman et al., 2012). There are more job openings available in the U.S. today than at any time since December 2000, when BLS first began tracking data related to vacant positions (Litzinger & Dunn, 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a). Researchers suggest employers incentivize wired boomers in an
effort to retain these individuals in the workforce longer than in previous
generations and develop a retention plan for keeping wired boomers with their
respective employers longer than individuals in previous generations (Cappelli &
Novelli, 2013; Jenkins, 2016; Perera et al., 2015; Perry, 2010; Phillips & Edwards,
2009; Shacklock & Brunetto, 2011; Vasconcelos, 2015).

Wired boomers are the first cohort to produce the ralliers because
individuals are living longer, healthier lives and expect to implement a different
retirement strategy (Dychtwald, 2016). Ralliers are individuals reaching traditional
retirement age and having the desire to continue working. These individuals desire
to rouse or revive their career, either by continuing with their current employer or
re-careering in an effort to pursue something of which they had only previously
dreamed. The rallier cohort is a by-product of wired boomers. These individuals
have different expectations about retirement intentions. Ralliers don’t want to
leave a legacy; they want to live a legacy. These individuals want to live all of the
years of their life and not simply coast into an earthly exit. By default, these
individuals may actually leave a legacy (albeit, unintentional) because of how they
lived differently than generations before them. However, ralliers are physically,
emotionally, and mentally thriving and plan to keep that position until the final
curtain.
**Contribution of the Study**

This phenomenological qualitative in-depth interview research study contributed to the existing body of knowledge by defining four specific benefits and/or perks which will incentivize wired boomers to remain with their employer past traditional retirement age. Furthermore, this study has provided the identification of the rallier cohort which is being created by wired boomers reaching retirement age, but because they are living longer and healthier lives, they are not following the previous path to retirement and instead considering working longer with their current employer or re-careering.

Research has previously argued the retiring early boomers are leaving a gap in the knowledge, skills and expertise in the workplace because there are not enough younger qualified candidates to fill the vacancies. In this study, ralliers identified four suggestions for employers in order to incentivize individuals to remain with their employer longer: increased salary, working part-time, working from home, and age-specific benefits. Of those who cited increased salary would be the factor which incentivized them to work past traditional retirement age, 43% identified additional incentives, beyond monetary, which would incentivize them to stay with their employer past retirement age (working part-time, working from a remote location, and offering age-specific insurance benefits).

Employers are more likely to offer benefits to their employees which do not negatively impact revenue. Given 43% of the individuals who participated in this
study are amenable to three benefits which incentivize the employee to stay with their employer longer and which cause little to no financial cost to the employer (and possibly creating a cost savings), employers have alternatives to offer to employees in order to avoid the loss of knowledge, skills and expertise.

Human Resources departments within organizations who are experiencing the loss of wired boomers should distribute a survey or questionnaire to the employees to identify those individuals within the company who would be incentivized to remain in the workplace longer by working from a remote location, working a flexible schedule and/or providing age-specific benefits. Working from a remote location and working a flexible schedule may appeal to all employees (regardless of age), and therefore, reduce turnover costs across the entire organization. As listed in Chapter 4, there are many age-specific benefits which may prove to be enticing to sway ralliers to remain with their employer past traditional retirement age. Employers should ask their employees which of these options are most appealing and would motivate individuals to delay retirement. Pensions are a remnant from the past and are not likely to ever return to the American workplace. However, working for an employer who provides incentives directed at retaining their employees for the long-term will motivate individuals to reconsider a decision to leave.
Discussion and Implications

Previous research suggested wired boomers would want or need to work beyond traditional retirement age because of the economic down-turn which began in 2008 with the housing crash and an economy which has not yet quite recovered. However, the data gathered in this research study indicates wired boomers in the aerospace industry, specifically in Huntsville, Alabama, have the financial resources necessary to retire when they choose to do so. Fifty-eight percent (58%) and 25% indicated they are very satisfied or satisfied (respectively) with their current employer. These individuals are engaged in their work and are not retired-in-place. They are individual contributors, enjoying the mental stimulation of their current position, and they appreciate the opportunity to make a difference on behalf of their employer.

Existing research has warned employers there are not enough younger qualified candidates to fill the current vacancies presented from the early boomers who have already retired. Furthermore, the approaching retirement of wired boomers will create a wider gap. However, employers can implement the following three incentives in order to motivate at least 43% of these individuals to remain with their employer longer:

1. Working part time
2. Working from home
3. Age-specific benefits
The ralliers want to work longer than their predecessors because they enjoy their work and they appreciate the mental stimulation offered by their current position. These individuals do not plan to take the same retirement path as those individuals who are categorized as senior citizens. Senior citizens are defined as those individuals who retire from the workplace and the typical age associated with senior citizens is 65 years of age (Jenkins, 2016). Ralliers do not see themselves as falling into this category.

There is a solution for employers to avoid the negative financial impact associated with wired boomers exiting the workplace at traditional retirement age. Employers will continue to be faced with this same dilemma moving forward, as long as each generation continues the trend which is already in place – individuals living longer and healthier lives. While the incentives which motivate wired boomers to remain with their employer longer may not also be the same incentives which motivate future generations, this research study indicated there is a means by which employers can encourage employees to stay with their employer longer because they like what they do and they enjoy working for their employer. It is not only about the money.

**Recommendations**

The research gathered from this study indicated 43% of the participants would be motivated to remain with their employer past traditional retirement age if offered the opportunity to work part-time, work from home, or their employer
offered age-specific benefits. These incentives are not financially negative for the employer, and may actually prove to be a financial gain. Employees working part-time means a reduced payroll for the employer. Furthermore, these employees may no longer want or need health benefits if they opt for part-time employment. Those employees working from home reduces overhead associated with the employee.

Also, age-specific benefits offered to wired boomers enables employers to provide incentives particularly related to the needs of individuals within the wired boomer segment.

As outlined previously, age-specific benefits could also include any of the following, and provide just a few of the possible ideas for employers. Employers should survey employees in order to determine which benefits best meet the needs of their particular business. The Human Resources department could provide a description of each potential benefit and the parameters associated with each in order to meet the needs of the business. For example, an employer may define grandparent leave as time taken off from work as leave without pay and may be taken in eight hour increments, from 1 day to 2 weeks, in order to spend time their grandchildren.

- Grandparent leave
- Females dropping medical coverage for maternity care
- Job-sharing
- Flexible work schedules (to include working earlier in the day)
• Employees to return as contractors
• Phased approach to retirement
• Sabbatical (paid or unpaid)
• “Testing” retirement (taking unpaid leave to determine if retirement is the correct choice)
• Wellness programs
• Annual financial planning
• Long-term-care insurance
• Concierge service to help with personal errands
• Legal services for wills and estate planning
• Elder care to pay for an advocate or home care for older parents of the employee

As discussed previously, women within this age group don’t need obstetrical care but may desire the opportunity to take time away from work to assist with the care of a newborn grandchild. Because these individuals are financially able to make the choice to retire, they quite possibly are also willing to take this time away from work without pay. If employers provide these benefits as potential options, they may prove to be the benefits which incentivize their employees to remain in their current position past traditional retirement age.

The population is aging around the world. While the wired boomers are the first to reach this crossroads where employers are faced with losing valuable
knowledge, skills and expertise and having limited qualified candidates to fill the approaching vacancies, this dilemma will continue in the coming decades because future generations will also become ralliers. Millennials are causing employers to rethink current policies regarding retention and wired boomers are causing employers to rethink current policies regarding delayed retirement intentions.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The three benefits which current ralliers identified as incentives for the individual to remain with their employer past traditional retirement age may also prove to be recognized as beneficial to all employees within the organization. Future research may be conducted to determine if these same benefits (when made available to ralliers) would positively impact generation Xers and millennials, and incentivize them to remain with their employer longer. Particularly the research should focus on millennials who are presently argued to only remain with their employer, on average, two to three years.

Additional research into the rallier cohort may prove to be helpful not only in a business setting, but also other areas such as marketing, healthcare, wellness, nutrition and travel. The ralliers are a new cohort and until this group is studied more closely, we have yet to understand the implications of this group of individuals on the overall economy of the country.

This research study was conducted with individuals in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama, and all of the participants have at least a
bachelor’s degree and some participants have advanced degrees. Future research would be helpful to identify whether retirement intentions are tied to an individual’s level of education.

In 2029, the youngest of the wired boomers will reach 65 years of age. A longitudinal study regarding the actual retirement age of wired boomers will provide insight as to whether individuals are actually delaying retirement as a result of individuals living longer. A study of this nature would also allow for the discovery of whether the specific incentives identified in this study proved to be the actual incentives which were realized to be beneficial for retaining wired boomers beyond traditional retirement age.

Additional research is needed to adequately define and create a theoretical consensus of the human capital theory and identify the level (firm, group, individual), content (skills, education, health), theoretical framework (resources, KSAOs), and outcomes of human capital resources in an effort to provide clarity of the science of human capital and generate substantive evidence related to the financial benefits to the firm related to human capital. A longitudinal study of the actual retirement path chosen by wired boomers in conjunction with a financial analysis of the employer will provide insight regarding the actual monetary implications of retiring employees and the lack of available qualified replacement employees.
Summary

Chapter five provided a discussion of the research study and recommendations for practitioners as a result of the data gathered during the in-depth interviews. Also included in this chapter is the explanation of the contribution of the study, implications of the study, recommendations for employers, and suggestions for future research. The purpose of the qualitative in-depth interview phenomenological study was to determine the business practices which have the greatest influence on retaining wired boomers in the aerospace industry, particularly in Huntsville, Alabama. This study identified three possible incentives employers can offer to wired boomers to incentivize them to remain with the company past traditional retirement age, these incentives cost the employer no additional expenditures, and they may prove to be beneficial to the entire workforce as it relates to retention. Ralliers were identified as a group of individuals who reach retirement eligibility but have a desire to continue working with their current employer or re-career.

Human resources and top level management must be better informed regarding the benefits received from the talent and experience of wired boomers, and the cost savings derived in eliminating the need for hiring and training for new, replacement employees. Businesses benefit from a healthy economy and the research shows the economy is stronger when wired boomers are working.
There are plenty of individuals who look forward to retirement and many people will retire this year. However, there are also people who don’t want to retire and they are known as the ralliers. Harnessing the knowledge and expertise of everyone, regardless of age, is the most effective way to improve the financial viability of the firm.
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Appendix A – Sample Informed Consent

The following figure provides the template of the Informed Consent Form used as part of this study. The signed copies of the Informed Consent Forms are not included in this study because of the anonymity provided to each participant.
Informed Consent

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study. The researcher will answer any questions before you sign this form.

Study Title: Business Practices Which Have the Greatest Influence on Retention as it Relates to Wired Boomers in the Aerospace Industry in Huntsville, Alabama

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to explore the business practices which have the greatest influence on retaining wired boomers in the aerospace industry in Huntsville, Alabama. This study seeks to facilitate firms in implementing these business practices in order to retain wired boomers past traditional retirement age, keeping current positions filled with knowledge, skills, and expertise, and turning silver into gold.

Procedures: The interview process will take between 45 minutes and 1 hour. The researcher will ask 10 open-ended questions of the participant and the participant can provide as much or as little detail as they desire. The interview will be recorded using 2 audio recording devices (one serves as a backup in the event of failure of one of the devices).

Potential Risks of Participating: There are no risks associated with participation in this research study – no more risk than an individual’s participation in everyday life.

Potential Benefits of Participating: Participating in this study allows individuals to voice the business practices which incentivize them to remain in the workplace past traditional retirement age in order to financially benefit firms by reducing the mass exodus from the workplace as wired boomers move toward traditional retirement age.

Compensation: $25.00 Visa Gift Card

Confidentiality: The identity of each survey participant will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your information will be assigned a pseudonym instead of using any personally identifiable information. The list connecting your name to this pseudonym will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home (address, city, state, zip). When the study is completed and the data has been analyzed, the list will be destroyed as well as the audio recording. Neither your name nor your employer’s name will be used in any report.

Voluntary participation:
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating. You may also refuse to answer any of the questions I may ask you.

Right to withdraw from the study:
You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequence or retribution.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:
Name of principal investigator, phone number, email

Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:
IRB Chairperson
Street Address
City, ST ZIP
Email: Phone:

Agreement:
I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Figure 5. Sample Informed Consent Form (Page 1).
Figure 6. Sample Informed Consent Form (Page 2).
Appendix B – Interview Protocol

The in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face and individually with each participant. The researcher obtained permission from the participant for the purposes of recording the interview. The researcher captured the entire in-depth interview using two recording devices (in the event one device failed, a backup would be available) (Creswell, 2014). The researcher asked the participant the following questions:

1. Describe your level of satisfaction with your current employer.
2. What is most satisfying to you related to your current position?
3. What is least satisfying to you related to your current position?
4. Describe the type of support or lack of support you experience in your position.
5. What benefits and/or perks does your employer offer which specifically meet your needs as a wired boomer?
6. What suggestions would you make to your employer which would encourage you to stay with the company past traditional retirement age?
7. How long do you plan to stay with your current employer?
8. What would make you stay longer?
9. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview if necessary?
10. Do you have anything you want to add or is there anything you wanted to say that I didn’t ask?

These questions were formulated based on the literature review performed by the researcher and related to suggested areas for additional research as well as revisions to questions asked by other researchers in dissertations used as a reference for this research study. The researcher provided, in advance, a copy of the questions to the participant so the participant was informed of the questions being asked during the interview and was able to refer back to any particular question after the question was posed. The researcher took notes during the interview to ensure all comments were captured (Creswell, 2014). The in-depth interview was scheduled for 45 minutes, but concluded earlier if the participant had responded to all of the questions or lasted longer if the participant indicated he/she would like to continue the interview process and provide additional input (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Maxwell, 2013).

At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher ended the recording and thanked the participant for their time (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used Vanan Services to transcribe the audio recording into a Microsoft Word document which contained the entire interview dialog (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Maxwell, 2013). The transcript from each in-depth interview was stored on the researcher’s personal laptop as well as stored on a
thumb drive and stored in a locked file cabinet (serving as a secure backup) (Creswell, 2014).