An Exploration of Inclusive Management Practices: Through the Lenses of Public Managers

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Dissertation submitted to the faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
In
Public Administration and Policy

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September 2020
Arlington, Virginia

Keywords: inclusive management, inclusion, diversity, inclusive practices, U.S. federal government agencies

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how public managers think about and understand the practices of inclusive management (IM) in the workplace. Specifically, the research explores the lived experiences and perceptions of public managers and their implementation of inclusive management practices. The federal government is among the largest employers in the United States. Past and present presidential administrations recognize the importance of employee inclusion, engagement, and performance management as the foundations for building and sustaining the 21st-century workforce. This dissertation explores the intersection of inclusive management and diversity management. Although inclusive management practices have evolved into diversity management programs, government organizations continue to contend with implementing complex, inclusive practices in the workplace. Executive Order 13583 (2011) established a coordinated government-wide initiative to promote diversity and inclusion in the federal workforce. Changes in inclusive legislation and policies in President Trump's 2019 Management Agenda and the Office of Personnel Management's Strategic Plan 2018–2022 may indicate a shift in diversity and inclusion priorities.

The Strategic Plan directs the Office of Personnel Management to provide federal supervisors enhanced public management tools that allow success in the workplace. As in previous years, the 2019 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) identified areas of concern in the workplace. Respondents expressed concerns about how their agency evaluates job performance, processes, merit promotions, and respondents' ability to influence

organizational practices. Respondents also were concerned the results of the survey will not improve workplace practices.

This research explores the meaning and understanding of inclusive practices through the lenses of eight public managers. Although relying on eight interviews limits the study's generalizability, closely focusing and reflecting on a handful of distinctive voices, this study enabled a greater sensitivity to the lived experiences described by study respondents. The research examines the massive changes taking place in workplaces and societies. The narrative inquiry explored the question: *How do public managers and leaders think about and understand inclusive management practices?* The literature review guiding the study focuses on theories and concepts related to inclusive leadership, inclusive management practices, inclusion and diversity programs, and theory-to-practice models. Analyzing the eight participants' lived experiences provide a meaningful way of identifying patterns or different ways of doing the same things with inclusive practices, public managers' motivation, and professional training.

Overall, inclusive management studies linked historical knowledge of inclusion with current inclusive management practices to enhance public management in the 21st century. The accumulated experiences and perceptions of participants in this study contribute to the existing knowledge of inclusive management practices. The research expands the landscape of inclusive concepts, theories, and practices by focusing mainly on public managers' lived experiences and inclusive management views. This study's results indicate the participants' actions align with the literature related to inclusive leadership concepts and the value of employees' perception of belongingness and uniqueness in the workplace.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Although U.S. government organizations have advanced toward a broad view of inclusion, many public managers continue to grapple with an inclusiveness that requires listening, engaging, and supporting all employees in completing core tasks to improve public management services. Most contemporary government work focuses on improved efficiencies and outcomes. Simultaneously, the government workforce demographics have broadened, and inclusion is fundamental to an organization's core values. Inclusion refers to employees' perception that they are part of the organization and its processes. In this paradigm, the employee participates in decision-making, employee work is essential to the team, has adequate access to organizational information, and commands the resources needed to achieve the organization's mission and goals.

Massive public management policy changes are taking place in public organizations and societies more generally. Yet, many employees express concern efforts to ensure inclusive practices in public management lack genuine commitment to fostering shared-decision-making, open-communications, trust, fairness, and the ability for employees to contribute to the organization. Inclusive management has emphasized the importance of inclusiveness for the advancement of the workforce in the future. There is limited historical knowledge about *how* public managers share their practices and learn from experiences of inclusiveness.

The existing literature examines the need for managers to practice inclusiveness in the workplace. Additionally, researchers addressed the need for employees to have a sense of belongingness and uniqueness. Despite these queries, relatively little is empirically known about

how public managers enact inclusive practices in public management. This exploration seeks to close this gap. Specifically, the inquiry sought a deeper understanding of eight participants' expertise, activity, and knowledge in relational encounters related to inclusive practices. A primary objective is to create a more powerful narrative around the many aspects of the participants' individuality.

The results of this study suggest inclusive practices such as inclusive leadership, open-communication, managing workplace challenges, and valuing employees as an asset helps shape the perception of how managers think about and understand inclusiveness. In this study, participants emphasized promoting employee engagement through trust, fairness, and equality for all workplace employees. The study provides a better understanding of inclusive practice patterns that align with existing literature related to inclusive management, diversity, inclusion, and other inclusion literature.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As a young person growing up during the era of Jim and Jane Crow, I never imagined that higher education was possible nor was it ever presented to me as an option. Even as an adult with a successful career, I thought, completing doctoral studies was unattainable. Nevertheless, I enrolled and began my courses with hesitation and reservation. I kept praying, working, and trusting myself. What I found amid my perseverance was a supportive community to help me succeed. When my will declined, my daughter, Dr. Courtney V. Buggs, and my niece, Dr. Inez Moore, provided mentorship and prayers. They cheered for me and would not let me quit. I am deeply grateful for their support and that of Dr. Shantana Robinson, for helping me move forward with my academic pursuits. The continuous encouragement of colleagues, friends, and other acquaintances throughout my years of study inspired me to keep going during my periods of self-doubt. Thank you.

I also would like to convey sincere appreciation to my long-time advisor and Co-Chair, Dr. Matt Dull, for his encouragement, understanding, and critique during the arduous dissertation process. Dr. Dull and Dr. Karen Hult (Co-Chair) ensured that I progressed appropriately and provided guidance when needed. Dr. Hult's attention to detail and critical feedback is a gift to my work. Many thanks to Drs. Anne Khademian and Patrick Roberts, for their intuitive remarks and questions that challenged me to focus on a deeper meaning for my research. To my editor, Keresa, thank you for your hard work and a keen eye. My appreciation for your commitment during the final stages of my writing cannot be overstated.

I am most grateful to my husband, Thomas; my children: Ms. Sha-Rone Reyes, General Vincent Buggs, and Mrs. Francessca Vasquez; to my granddaughter, Mrs. Dominica McLendon; and to my sister, Dr. Clara Mosley, for their unwavering belief in me throughout the writing of this dissertation. When I questioned my ability to write academically, your kind words encouraged me not to give up. Finally, this achievement would not have been possible without my mother, the late Bertha Morris White; father, Silas Morris; and mother, the late Clara Kelly Moore. You are forever cherished and missed. Thanks be to God.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Traditional public management emphasizes popular control with delegated authority and expertise. As public management transforms in the 21st-century to meet the demands of policy changes and changing demographics, public managers seek options to accomplish the goals and objectives of government organizations using available resources. In the United States' political environment in the 2020s, the concepts of inclusive management practices in public organizations are complex and subjective. Some U.S. public managers struggle to understand and implement inclusive practices as a tool in public management.

One of the organization's core purposes is the practice of inclusive management in ways that will ensure an evolving sense of purpose (Feldman & Khademian, 2007). For many public agencies, an evolving focus on organizational diversity and the development of diversity management practices indicate the practices and processes of inclusive management. Public managers face persistent problems such as the perceived lack of appropriate use of merit principles related to promotion and rewards decisions in the workplace, as reported in the 2019 Federal Employees Viewpoint Survey (FEVS; Office of Personnel Management [OPM], 2019). Changing the public management environment to reflect the practical application of inclusion in the 21st-century remains an area of significant challenge. Sabharwal (2014) suggests, after much public debate about diversity and affirmative action, diversity policies are insufficient alone to improve workplace inclusion.

One reason for encouraging inclusiveness involves the frequent assumption that having diverse demographics in an organization is enough to produce an inclusive workplace. Diversity, however, does not constitute inclusiveness. Inclusion requires public managers' accountability to employees and sharing information. Inclusiveness is associated with leaders'

effectiveness to invoke agility, adaptability, and speed of service of government organizations. Based on the associations, it might be possible to see how public managers create cultures of inclusion.

In the business world, and particularly in public organizations, understanding, and thinking of inclusiveness is under review. Downey, van der Werff, Thomas, and Plaut (2015) define inclusion as employees' perception that they are part of the organization and its processes, and included in decision-making and essential working teams. Employees feel included when they have adequate access to organizational information and the resources they need to complete their tasks effectively. Inclusion in the workplace occurs when employees feel treated fairly and amicably; it encompasses professional growth for all employees and contributes to the organization's values and vision (Andrews, 2017).

The extent of implementation of inclusive management (IM) practices in U.S. public management is a subjective and challenging topic. Inclusive management practices involve asking for and valuing individual employees' contributions at all levels in an organization (Cottrill, Lopez, & Hoffman, 2014). In an organizational context, inclusion is essential. Employees' perceptions of inclusive practices are critical to their sense of belonging in the workplace, thereby increasing their engagement and job performance (Shore et al., 2011).

The concept of inclusion has garnered amplified attention in recent years, yet little consensus exists on its definition (Shore et al., 2011). Even though the concept of inclusion is ambiguous, it provides public managers with the capacity to organize resources to accomplish the organization's core tasks. When faced with ambiguity, the role of the public manager is to address challenges and embrace different ways of understanding the practical applications of inclusion in public management. In practice, the experience of inclusion is enacted when all

employees "regardless of social, cultural or physical backgrounds" (Jin, Lee, & Lee, 2017, p. 314) feel valued and share in decision-making. Public managers must also comprehend the importance of linking public service and practices with a work environment that leverages all employees' skill sets (Sabharwal, 2014).

Conceptual ambiguity limits the effectiveness of government inclusion programs. For example, public managers may perceive implementing fair and equitable treatment for all employees in different ways. Inclusion ambiguity is of particular concern when it comes to employees' gender and minority employees versus nonminority employees. Employee inclusion is a move toward considering employees' views and fosters a sense of worth, which may contribute to enhanced performance management (Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018). Agreement among managers and employees related to inclusion practices can often seem obscure. As a result, public management inclusion has reached a point where public managers may seek to embrace all public management tools supporting efficiency in public services.

There is a broad focus on the concept of inclusive management practices in government organizations in the United States, as depicted in the FEVS (OPM, 2014, 2015, 2019). To understand the rationale for inclusive management practices and appreciate the practice framework, public managers must first understand the context of significant government reform initiatives (OPM, 2018). Changing the public management environment to inclusiveness requires supportive leadership, sharing information with employees, and public manager accountability (Shore et al., 2011).

A limited body of scholarship has explored the lived experiences and perceptions of public managers and their perceptions of implementing inclusive practices in public management. This study adds to the literature with an examination and analysis of inclusiveness

practices through the lenses of eight public managers' lived experiences. Although many researchers (e.g., Cottrill et al., 2014; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011) conducted extensive studies of inclusion and inclusive management, space remains for expanding the knowledge of inclusive practices to the lowest levels of organizations. The examination here seeks to ascertain how the participants in this study understand IM practices. Learning about public managers' perceptions regarding employee inclusion in organizational processes, decision-making, teams, and access to resources allows this inquiry to move beyond consideration of diversity to look at factors that promote practices of inclusiveness.

Problem Statement

Existing research on inclusion and inclusiveness demonstrates organizations struggle to ensure inclusive practices have a sustained foundation (Cottrill et al., 2014; Jin et al., 2017; Shore et al., 2018). In the United States, the federal government mandates practices implementing workplace fairness, equality, performance, and employee engagement in public management (OPM, 2019). Other government agencies at other levels and those in other countries implement similar policies for the workforce. There is limited research on how public managers think about and understand inclusive practices in public management. Yet the need remains to understand better, how public managers comprehend and perceive inclusive management practices and gain insight into managers' ability to encourage moving inclusion beyond diversity and implement strategies for changes in public management.

This study explores eight public managers' inclusive management philosophies, applicable policies, and practices that influence employee engagement and performance management in the workplace. Integrating people and processes and technology allows leaders to align and improve an organization's performance management and solve complex problems.

Sabharwal (2014) contends public managers face significant challenges in assimilating and using a diverse workforce to achieve organizational goals.

The 2019 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (OPM, 2019) revealed a continued pattern of skepticism among respondents about inclusive practices. Respondents expressed concerns related to poor performance, merit promotions, and rewards. Only 41% of respondents indicated a belief that the survey results would have a positive impact on their work environment (OPM, 2019). This growing concern suggests a lack of practices (e.g., trust, fairness, equality, and shared decision-making) are at the core of creating an inclusive workplace.

Public managers face the dynamics of inclusive policy, politics, and expertise in public management. Managing the dynamic structures of public management creates many inclusion challenges. The ability of public managers to understand how social and relational dynamics influence an inclusive workplace climate is critical to employee workplace performance and organizational successes (Fredette, Bradshaw, & Krause, 2015). Regardless of the level of government, overseeing the practices of inclusive management is the responsibility of public managers (Clark, 2015). Results of federal government surveys underscore the importance of diversity, inclusion, and engagement (OPM, 2018, 2019). The range of values and beliefs held by individual managers' guide inclusive practices; nonetheless, there will always be tensions and differences in the interpretations of morals and values in public management (Ekins, 2017).

Managers who lead organizations with purpose should continuously seek ways to understand and implement policies and programs to guide the work of the organization (Khademian, 2010). Such thoughtful leadership includes a concerted effort and attitude of ownership toward infusing inclusion in every part of the organization (Clark, 2015; Khademian, 2010). An organization's capacity to adapt to inclusive practices depends on leaders' willingness

to establish meaningful and useful structures and actions in the workplace. Existing scholarship reveals a need to shift away from dependence on policies and instead to work on efforts to foster an inclusive environment (Sabharwal, 2014). Other scholars (e.g., Ekins, 2017; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011) examine inclusive climates in the workplace studying the theory of inclusive leadership, asserting leaders can build a culture where the perceptions of followers are considered related to fairness and reward within the workplace (Jin et al., 2017).

Public managers face challenges of attracting, retaining, and inspiring younger colleagues, or those who are part of the "Millennial" generation, which includes persons born between 1980 and 1996. By 2025, this cohort will make up about 75% of the workforce (OPM, 2014). The challenges noted by Millennial employees include mixed perceptions with hierarchical structures and organizational boundaries. According to the OPM (2014), Millennials desire to work for forward-thinking organizations that practice innovation, promote a positive work environment, establish clear objectives, offer training, and provide employees with flexibility and work-life balance.

As managers reflect on possible generational gaps in the workplace, more emphasis on inclusive leadership and practices may accommodate the challenges associated with younger colleagues' expectations. Because support for inclusive practices in public management is unclear, this research explored eight public managers' lived experiences and inclusive practices to identify patterns and contributions to reframing the dialogue in existing inclusion literature.

Research Question

Research questions arise from many sources. The development of research questions requires stimulating content to foster exploration and discovery (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). This qualitative study's central research question focuses broadly on the phenomenon of public

managers' inclusive practices: *How do public managers think about and understand inclusive management practices?* Creswell and Poth (2018) describe "qualitative research questions as open-ended, evolving, and non-directional…restate [ing] the purpose of the study in more specific terms and typically starting with a word such as *what* or *how* rather than why to explore a central phenomenon" (p. 137).

Through exploration of the lived experiences of eight public managers, this study enriches and broadens research on inclusive management practices. The answers to the research question in this study reflect a more profound meaning from eight public managers' lived experiences and policies contributing to their philosophy and values related to inclusive practices. The study seeks to reveal how the managers engage and connect with employees. Although similar studies have been conducted in the context of inclusion and inclusive management (Cottrill et al., 2014; Fredette et al., 2015; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2018), scholarship on inclusive practices is still limited in the extent to which leaders operationalize inclusive management practices in ways to improve public management. This study builds on a broader definition of inclusive management than Feldman and Khademian (2007) Inclusive Management Cumulative Model. The research question emerged from my experiences with inclusive practices and graduate studies related to the topic. Additionally, engagement with inclusion literature and theories informed the development of the research question.

Background of the Study

The inclusion notion has garnered amplified awareness in the first decades of the 21st century; yet inclusion is a concept with little consensus on its premise or theoretical foundations (Shore et al., 2011). Although many organizational leaders have evolved toward practices of inclusiveness, others continue to struggle with the concept. Despite federal mandates such as the

Civil Rights Act of 1964, affirmative action, and equal employment legislation, which brought diversity into the workplace, no integrated theory of inclusion exists. Policies created for inclusion often fall short of helping organizations create a culture of inclusivity where all employees are encouraged to develop their full potential (Cottrill et al., 2014). Randel et al. (2018) and Shore et al. (2011) suggest creating theoretical inclusion concepts designed to assist public managers with the implementation of workplace inclusion and promote bridging the gaps in the literature on understanding inclusive practices and leadership in public management.

In the United States, inclusive practices in public management are about more than day-to-day management. They also include broader workplace transformation. The transformation of public management in the 21st century may confront new demands for governance structures and governance in public organizations, such as embracing inclusiveness and less hierarchical decision-making structures (Fredette et al., 2015). The convergence and transformation of transparency and some partisan political deadlock in public management have profoundly affected individual information creation at all levels in organizations (Shore et al., 2018). For example, a whistleblower protection policy might be in jeopardy when employees express concerns or views not aligned with senior leaders. This view also situates the employee where they may be relieved from duty or fired. These actions may create a lack of employee information sharing and creativity.

Previously, federal agencies implemented inclusiveness aligned with Executive Order 13583 (The White House, 2011) and the OPM's (2011) strategic plan. The policies define inclusion "as a culture that connects each employee to the organization; encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness; and leverages diversity throughout the organization so that all individuals can participate and contribute to their full potential" (OPM, 2011, p. 5). The

strategic plan broadly defined "diversity characteristics such as national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structures" (p. 5).

OPM's (2018) strategic plan for fiscal years 2018–2022 highlights public managers' need for tools and concepts to improve performance management in the workplace. Most notable is the plan's limited reference to inclusive language or programs (OPM, 2018). Even so, individual federal government agencies continue to publish policy and guidance focused on employee inclusion in the workplace. In this study, the inclusion policy and guidance documents for state and local level governments are limited, with few details on how leaders should implement and sustain public organizations' inclusivity.

Despite the federal government's effort to introduce inclusion and engagement policy and provide guidance on inclusive practices in the workplace, and even with an abundance of research on inclusive management practices, organizations still experience bias and struggle to eliminate barriers to inclusion for all employees in the workplace (Grissom, 2018). The call for greater inclusivity arises from employees' responses to the 2019 FEVS. OPM (2019) found respondents from the FEVS had concerns about how poor performance is addressed in the workplace. Specifically, 39% of the respondents perceived the lack of proper application of merit principles to promotion and reward decisions. The survey results are consistent with the possibility managers are not engaging, sharing, or communicating performance decisions that represent fairness and equality to all employees.

In the federal government, there appears to be a lack of integration when comparing the existing Executive Order 13583 (The White House, 2011) and the strategic plan for fiscal years 2018–2022 (OPM, 2018). There is no mention of the Executive Order in the 2018-2022 Plan.

Even though the Executive Order had not been rescinded at the time of this study, the disparity could create tension and ambiguity when interpreting IM practices in public management (OPM, 2019).

Hartmann and Khademian (2010) propose that an organization take a practical approach to organizational culture, guided by well-informed leadership. The scholars focus firmly on leaders' efforts to create an inclusive culture rather than emphasizing the organization's tenets of culture. In this study, I adopt a similar approach to elicit details about inclusion and the meanings associated with inclusive practices in the workplace from eight public managers' perspectives.

Previous scholarship related to topics on authentic leaders, inclusive leadership, and IM challenges approached inclusive practices through identifying the differences in how employees feel about belongingness and uniqueness in the workplace (Cottrill et al., 2014; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011). The results varied. Yet the core belief highlighted inclusion and inclusive leadership behaviors as essential factors in the workplace for reflecting fairness and equality (Cottrill et al., 2014; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011). Miller and Katz (2002) assert a need exists to have diverse voices at the heart of vision planning and organizations' execution. In the most effective inclusive settings, diversity and inclusion mean making sure managers hear employees with different voices and values and acknowledge their employees' contributions to shared decision-making (Gurchiek, 2018). This research focuses on public managers' efforts to encourage employees' self-esteem in the workplace and employees' subsequent desire to invest in their organizations as a matter of citizenship (Vohra et al., 2015).

One approach to addressing multifaceted issues is to create a setting for employees to reflect and work jointly in original and groundbreaking behavior (Katz & Miller, 2018). The

broad range of choices of inclusion means making inclusive practices more complex for public managers searching for a comprehensive solution to increase inclusion in their organizations. Building on this assertion, Vohra et al. (2015) suggest a primary barrier to inclusivity occurs when organizational leaders fail to recognize the culturally diverse makeup of their employee base and minimize differences between gender, race, and cultural values.

Dempsey and Brafman (2017) maintain leaders should empower every member of their organization to help understand problems and proper ways to achieve desired outcomes. Whether managers engage or include employees in shared decision-making, Katz and Miller (2018) point to a mounting body of evidence recognizing the strength of inclusion to influence organizational productivity and growth through a human-focused approach. As public managers seek the best options to build an inclusive workforce, they may find other leaders' practices will enhance their efforts. Shore et al. (2018) contend inclusive management is considerate of individual differences in the workplace related to employees' primary culture, values, and beliefs. When creative leaders' selection of inclusive practices focuses on employee interactions, relationships, and empirical evidence, diverse knowledge is unleashed throughout the organization (Morse, 2010).

Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the existing literature on inclusion and inclusive management practices, an area with no unified definition (Cottrill et al., 2014; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2018). The study highlights the deepest meaning of IM practices, philosophy, and the actions of eight professional managers or leaders working in federal, state, and county government agencies. Because previous federal surveys identified employee concerns related to fairness,

equality, and shared decision-making in the workplace, it is necessary to explore the depth of inclusive management practices in public management.

This qualitative study points to the importance of exploring practices among public managers in leadership positions in organizations that place a high value on diverse teams and work together for the organization's general good, the citizenry, the locality, state, or country. No one public management tool provides managers with the means to get different perspectives among diverse individuals, in different settings, and at different periods. Implementing appropriate public management processes is critical for completing core tasks and resolving complex issues related to achieving an organization's mission and goals. Policies and actions supporting an inclusive environment in the workplace allow managers to manage complexity, increased work volume, and the shifting of priorities in government work.

The existing literature on inclusion indicates researchers differ considerably in understanding the meaning of inclusion and, in some cases, inclusion's value (Downey et al., 2015; Ekins, 2017; Katz & Miller, 2018). Citing Mor Barak's (2011) definition of inclusion, Cottrill et al. (2014) describe inclusion as the degree to which individuals feel included in significant workplace processes such as shared decision-making, admission to information, and connection to workgroup members. Early definitions described inclusion as the extent to which colleagues treat an employee as an insider (Geiger & Jordan, 2014). Yet, for most, inclusion involves more than just recognition of membership. In comparison, "organizations with less inclusion … [may have] barriers to substantive communication and fewer opportunities for sharing unique information among group members" (Moon, 2018, p. 223). The circles of power in an organization must apply to all employees to advance the development of inclusive management policies and apply practices in public management. The importance of inclusive

practices suggests open communication and inclusive leadership actions increase an understanding of a leader's propensity to embrace an inclusive management style (Randel et al., 2018).

While there are many successful models for driving inclusion, the people factor strategy (Blimes & Gould, 2009) may be among the most applicable to U.S. government agencies. This strategy suggests education and training is the number one factor for transforming an organization (Blimes & Gould, 2009). The people factor is applicable because the OPM (2018) has the responsibility to establish a framework (e.g., for education and training) and "programs that enable Federal agencies to meet their human capital needs today and into the future" (p. 9).

Shore et al. (2018) note that inclusion incorporates equal opportunity for all organization members, both socially marginalized and non-marginalized individuals. It encourages authentic engagement by everyone at all levels of the organization. Miller and Katz (2002) maintain inclusion is about building an inclusive and diverse culture because old styles and approaches to barriers or challenges are not sufficient in public management, where inclusive practice policies are somewhat unclear.

Knowledge of inclusive management practices informs public interest in understanding how government agencies practice inclusiveness and engage with employees to effectively reduce the organizations' operational cost, increase efficiency, capitalize on existing assets, resources, and service delivery. This study is significant because it aligns with the continual reframing of the inclusive practice conversation to enhance 21st-century public management. All employees in U.S. government positions, regardless of race, gender, color, faith, age, or sexual orientation, must be treated with fairness and equality. The study addresses how public

managers seek to respond to the demand to accomplish high-quality public service expectations and balance workplace inclusiveness.

Overview of Methodology

This study's theoretical and conceptual frameworks are nested in scholarship, focusing on inclusion, inclusive leadership, and inclusive management practices. Viewing the practices of inclusive management through the lenses of public managers' lived experiences is at the core of this study and positions this research in the public administration literature. Established criteria guided the interviews and audio recordings of eight public managers working in federal, state, and county government agencies. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) assert narrative research does not lead to certainty and conclusions; instead, "narrative research offers meaning and understanding" (p. 51). The narrative inquiry method explores *how* questions and highlights participants' proficiency, relationships, and community practices (Clandinin, 2013), how questions allow an interpretive paradigm through dialogue analysis and in-depth interviews to explore perceptions and personal experiences by actors (e.g., managers and employees) in organizations (Greener, 2008). The questions should avoid yes/no response options and not infer quantitative type measurement. Inserting interrogatives such as *what*, *how*, and *in what ways* ensure the questions remain open-ended during the interviews (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016), overall, how questions come together to focus on perceptions and factors that may illuminate or contribute to the participants' perceptions.

Dissertation Overview

This qualitative study seeks to identify patterns based on eight public managers' individual experiences and perceptions of inclusive management practices. The research highlights inclusive management practices and public management inclusion policy. This policy

area has declined in priority and by 2017 had a limited scope, which aligns with the President's Management Agenda (Executive Office of the President, 2019).

Through this study, insights gained from participants' inclusive practices contribute to overall knowledge about inclusiveness and the significance of building communities of practices where employees feel connected to the workplace. The results from the study build on the stories participants told based on their lived experiences. The participants value employees and consider them assets that contribute to the mission and goals of the organization. The public managers illustrate that anyone can receive information via inclusion policy and guidance, but it is how they interpret the information that matters.

This dissertation is composed of five chapters. Chapter 2 contains a review of the theoretical frameworks and literature informing the study. The chapter explores scholarly literature focusing on inclusiveness at all U.S. government levels and one international organization's perspective. The international organization serves to show the strength and span of inclusiveness worldwide. Chapter 3 presents the methodology employed to explore public managers' experiences and perceptions of inclusive management. Chapter 3 represents the research blueprint and steps in conducting the study. The chapter also highlights the study's limitations, ethical considerations, creditability, and validity.

Chapter 4 presents significant findings from the seven emergent themes (e.g., interviews and documents) to highlight the participants' perceptions and practices of inclusive management in the workplace. Chapter 5 interprets the findings, implications, and conclusion and presents recommendations for future research. The results indicate the participants perceive inclusiveness as a way to enhance inclusive awareness, and continuous efforts to move forward with employees' voices for shared decision-making practices.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

During the first two decades of the 21st century, inclusion, inclusive management theory, and inclusive practice research have focused on individual employees and their perceived actions of inclusiveness related to their immediate supervisor and senior leaders. Limited research focuses on public managers' lived experiences and the outcomes of their thinking and understanding of inclusive management practices. This study explores how public managers' lived experiences and core values contribute to inclusive practices in public management. Specifically, this research examines how managers create inclusion and inclusive practices in the workplace and create a shared understanding among employees while exhibiting inclusive leadership actions (Randel et al., 2018). The study builds on the reviews of U.S. federal, state, and county governments' inclusion policies, gaps within those policies, and areas of concern identified by government employees in surveys.

This qualitative study involves various sources from university library databases, professional journals, books, dissertations, periodicals, and the Internet as the main exploration tools for the literature review. Keywords helped identify relevant materials related to inclusion, inclusive management practices, inclusive leadership, diversity, and inclusion. The selected documents support this research into inclusive practices in public organizations. Flick (2011) asserts "the selection of available documents both published and unpublished, [on this research subject] contains information, ideas, data, and evidence written from a particular standpoint" (p. 38).

The referenced inclusive management literature informs this research, emphasizing how public managers interpret the practices of inclusiveness. In general, the literature reveals,

"leaders must view and treat others as unique and different, engage individuals and groups in genuine dialogue, model appropriate behaviors, and actively address resistance to diversity efforts" (Cottrill et al., p. 278). Additionally, Clark (2015) contends individuals working in inclusive climates tend to report higher engagement, perceived fairness, and inclusion. A valuable pattern of an inclusive practice may consist of looking at how individual dissimilarities can open innovative planned viewpoints. Hence, the objective is to recognize patterns and study procedures to understand inclusive practices by analyzing organizational policy documents and public managers' inclusive philosophies and values about public management.

Inclusive Movement

The history of inclusion in the United States dates to early legislative documents such as the U.S. Constitution (Rossmann & Shanahan, 2012). The trajectory of inclusive practices and a controversial atmosphere in public management related to inclusion suggest that public managers who facilitate inclusion initiatives face barriers and resistance to organizational changes affecting the 21st-century workforce. Since the mid-1960s, a boom in information and communication technologies, presidential executive orders, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Workforce 2000, and other legislation have focused on diversity to create a climate for broader inclusive practices in public and private organizations (Cottrill et al., 2014). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 authorized the creation of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, n.d.). The EEOC's purpose is to interpret and enforce federal laws prohibiting discrimination (EEOC, n. d.). Equal employment opportunities, anti-discrimination policies, and rules may not always have their intended purpose and may appear to support efforts to address discrimination against White employees (Jin et al., 2017).

In recent years, the inclusion research reflects broader changes in the opinionated understandings of inclusion. Scholarly inquiry moved from a narrow focus on integration and employees' need to a broader assessment of barriers, influencing employee involvement, and potential. The "inclusion movement reflects [on] economic, political, cultural, and philosophical changes" (Westby, Watson, & Murphy, 1994, p. 13), over more than half a century. New approaches to inclusive practices "are necessary to meet the needs" (p. 13) of all workplace employees.

As the IM literature indicates, many public organizations recognize the workforce's changing face, and enhanced public management tools may significantly balance the workplace transformation of diversity and inclusion. Katz and Miller (2018) state, "At the very roots, diversity and inclusion have been interwoven into the fabric of organizational development from its beginning" (p. 16). Although the value of diversity is rigorously debated in academic circles, many conclude diversity has both noticeable and understated value to organizations (Vohra et al., 2015).

Embedded in the policy and guidance surrounding diversity is the concept of inclusiveness in the workplace. Through the lenses of the eight participants, this study aligns with Jin et al.'s (2017) view that the study of "policies may be the first major step [toward] increased awareness of inclusive organizational culture" (p. 305). The inclusion movement emphasizes developing an inclusive culture and engagement practices in the workplace that are dependent upon innovative and creative leaders. Even though scholars and practitioners are still assessing the concept of inclusion, the existing literature suggests inclusiveness may improve government work (Bae, Sabharwal, Smith, & Berman, 2017; Cottrill et al., 2014; Moon, 2018; Pitts, 2009). The exploration of individual dissimilar experiences and perceptions of inclusion

by public managers in this study revealed patterns in the connection between participants and inclusiveness in the public workplace.

During the 1980s and 1990s, inclusion Advocates highlighted the lack of inclusion in the public education system. These movements focused on the need to include all students in classrooms, including children with mild disabilities. The United States and Canada spearheaded the movements. Their objectives were for "all students with disabilities" to be included and associated with "a partnership between regular and special education" (Westby et al., 1994, p. 13). Ekins (2017) argues inclusion is a broad concept characterized not by precision but by abstract difficulties, slippage, and uncertainty in terms of its definition and usage nationally and internationally.

The response to workplace inclusion and the connection to equality, anti-discrimination policies, and diversity prompted some companies and government organizations to create offices specifically to manage diversity and inclusion (D & I) programs. Staffers managing these programs sometimes refer to the position as Chief Diversity Officer, Chief Inclusion Officer, or Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer. Regardless of the title, the officer's primary duty is to manage diversity and inclusion within the organization (Shore et al., 2018). Civil service organizations in the United Kingdom recently "shifted away from the use of diversity target titles and other mechanisms for promoting equality" (Andrews & Ashworth, 2014, p. 286). Instead, the focus is on restructuring civil service and becoming a "female-friendly employer, expand[ing] parental leave, and [banning] all-male shortlists" (p. 286).

The inclusion movement reflects each organization's mission, requiring a comprehensive "approach across the organization's policies and practices" (Vohra & Chari, 2015). The fundamental nature of inclusion elements is to create, support, and deal with unfamiliar

workforce issues. Inclusion initiatives in U.S. public organizations suggest managers be aware of employee engagement and performance management and take actions to improve how employees engage with their jobs, organizations, and missions (OPM, 2019; OPM, 2018).

Current State of Inclusion Practices

Recent studies have demonstrated that the current inclusiveness state focuses on public managers' ability to be inspiring, forthcoming, and resilient when making policy decisions and implementing innovative inclusion programs (McCotter, Bulkley, and Bankowski (2016). This study's assessment of scholarship suggests some organizations view the implementation of inclusiveness as radical rather than seeing policy and guidance as a means to educate people in the workplace. Throughout the literature are ways in which theories and concepts connect to inclusiveness.

In public management, the inclusion concept emphasizes the need to consider individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds, geographic regions, and higher learning institutions to create an environment that includes the best individuals in executing the organization's mission (Katz & Miller, 2018). Many workforces today are diverse on the surface, but in practices, the demographics' voice does not extend to the voice, thoughts, and distribution of power for all employees. As Andrews (2017) asserts, "inclusion is the achievement of a work environment in which all" employees "are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organization's success" (p. 13).

The practice of inclusion is about leveraging diversity and embracing the similarities and differences among colleagues. The goal of inclusive practices in the workplace is to create opportunities for employees to feel appreciated and supported. The premise for these actions is employee success and achievement of organizational goals. Public managers face challenges

meeting current federal and state mandates related to inclusion. Current scholarship suggests workplaces that focus on D & I will have the best opportunities to attract, retain, and develop a large pool of talent (Moon, 2018; Pitts and Wise, 2010; Shore et al. 2018). For example, some organizations manage D & I by transforming from expecting employees to "fit in" when hired while other organizations manage D & I by "changing the organization's policies, practices, and cultures so *all* people (including those who were already represented) can fully have a say and do their best work" (Katz & Miller, 2018, pp. 18–19). Pitts and Wise, 2010 advocate employment practices implemented to embrace inclusive culture in the workplace broaden opportunities for experiences and points of view that may enable an organization to achieve its goals with successful outcomes.

Although numerous policies, procedures, and training are in place to support inclusiveness in public organizations, in the end, how employees in the workplace perceive inclusion comes down to a manager's actions. Most importantly, policies that create equal access for all employees contribute to accomplishment, inspiration, constant learning, and problem-solving. This study explores two factors: (a) inclusion is a practice that can build on existing IM practices and culture and (b) how public managers think about and understand inclusive practices in public management. Additionally, the inclusiveness vision is to develop a community of practice operating in a shared space that cuts across vertical stovepipes, challenges, and barriers in the workplace.

Review of the Literature

This literature review examines several concepts, theories, and frameworks related to inclusion and inclusive management. In the early movement of D & I, theoretical and empirical studies related to theories and practices significantly influenced moving beyond diversity to

implementing inclusion policy changes. Many scholars used organizations' inclusion data to evaluate workplace climate and make changes where needed (Andrews & Ashworth, 2014; Choi & Rainey, 2010; Pitts & Wise, 2010). D & I is an element, goal, or focus of inclusive management. The values of D & I inform inclusive management. Moon (2018) describes inclusive management as a set of plans aimed at distinguishing "all employees as valued organizational insiders with unique identities" (p. 218). Moon contends inclusive management strengthens racial diversity, innovative behavior, "positive relationship between gender diversity, and turnover behavior" (p. 218).

This literature review facilitates the exposure of opportunities and perceived challenges involved in IM practices by recognizing the many ways in which dimensions of inclusive management practices and leadership interact. Inclusion practices are not static but fluid, depending on the situation. The practices do not occur in a vacuum. Inclusion practices require leaders' approaches to facilitate employees' involvement in a way that considers "their views and promotes self-esteem" (Sabharwal, 2014, p. 197). The literature reveals a combination of individual and collective decision-making based on concepts such as inclusiveness (e.g., belongingness and uniqueness), shared objectives, and mutual trust between managers and employees. While acknowledging the many distinctive views and application of inclusion, the exploration emphasizes their shared roots.

Diversity and inclusion concepts. Clark (2015) suggests U.S. diversity is one of our most significant resources, and diversity extends well beyond superficial differences. The influence of greater polarization nation-wide has an impact on public managers. Public managers face challenges and barriers in operationalizing an inclusive environment that emphasizes values and principles to support workplace changes. In this view, "diversity [is the

first] awareness that introduces inclusion as the challenge of change in behavior and practice" (Reynolds, 2017, p. 44). Choi and Rainey (2010) assert that diversity management policies and practices aim to decrease negative impact and construct a positive impact on organizations' diversity.

Shore et al. (2018) acknowledge that "workplace diversity and inclusion are expansive topics that cover many themes (e.g., unconscious bias, inclusive leadership), and groups (e.g., LGBT professionals, people of color, women, and men)" (p. 243). Throughout all of the efforts extended on these topics, public managers are encouraged to construct and maintain inclusive teams. Public managers are encouraged to promote D & I not merely to motivate but also to meet the organization's vision and goals (Tapia, 2009). Shore et al. remark, "Perhaps the most salient distinction between diversity and inclusion are that diversity can be mandated and legislated, while inclusion stems from voluntary actions" (p. 177).

Despite the perception of inclusion *tiredness* in public management, many government organizations and companies have removed barriers affecting inclusion and diversity in the workplace by adopting highly successful inclusive practices or alternatives. Examples of inclusive practices include increasing the representation of society in the workplace and helping employees feel some control or influence in organizational decision making about core tasks that are likely to affect their lives. The inclusion piece of diversity focuses on "making sure that those with different voices are heard and valued and that they contribute to the performance" of the organization (Gurchiek, 2018, p. 39). Quick and Feldman (2011) contend inclusion is a comprehensive "and ongoing framework for interaction that uses the opportunities to take action on specific items in the public domain as a means of intentionally creating a community engaged in [a continuous] stream of issues" (p. 274).

The development of inclusive practices depends upon a multifaceted and distinctive interplay between the manager's experience and perceptions. According to Mitchell et al. (2015), "leader inclusiveness encompasses behaviors that promote the inclusion of all team members in discussions and decisions, in which their divergent perspectives are explicitly valued and encouraged" (p. 220). The frameworks, models, and concepts in this literature review provide data related to where the management of diversity and inclusive practices will or will not work. Inclusion policies are necessary; however, inclusion may be hugely influenced based on individuals' mindset (Vohra & Chari, 2015). Research on diversity and inclusion has a straightforward approach toward the importance of inclusive leadership behaviors and the need for action in the workplace.

In general, the literature review focuses on inclusiveness and the association between theory and practice, which is a followers-based construction that stresses individual experiences. According to Shore et al. (2018), much inclusion work needs to be done. Shore et al. reflect on the importance of considering the diverse" legislative, social, and historical contexts in which inclusion can occur in various nations" (p.182). The scholars suggest studying general aspects of inclusion, and localized methodologies are significant investments towards an inclusive climate.

Inclusion Concepts/Studies. The literature review examines interrelated factors that may influence current views of inclusion. Those factors may contribute to broadened notions of inclusive practices in 21st-century public management. Factors of inclusion relate to representation, authentic leadership and inclusion, optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT), and practice theory.

Representation. Bae et al. (2017) define inclusion as "the degree to which individuals feel part of critical organizational processes" (p. 5). Bae et al. examine inclusion from the

perspective of the "relationship between diversity or representativeness and inclusion" (p. 5). This approach demonstrates that public organizations increasingly work together and with other people and organizations from multiple areas to solve common social problems (Choi & Choi, 2012, p. 229). Actively governing and considering how employees connect to the organization creates a sense of belongingness and uniqueness. A fundamental factor influencing public managers is the "repeated calls for a shift from a government to governance" approach (p. 229).

One aspect of governance for public managers is to understand inclusion is about "the degree to which an employee perceives that [they] are an esteemed member of the workgroup through experiencing a treatment that satisfies [their] needs for belongingness and uniqueness" (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1265). Inclusion consists of a variety of dynamics "that can cause employees to feel" disengaged "from an organization" (Bae et al., 2017). Understanding the philosophies of public managers' inclusive practices was an essential purpose of this study. Additionally, the context extends to how public managers respond to various practices such as fairness, equality, hiring practices, awards, and merit promotions in the workplace. Awareness of employees' physical and cultural dissimilarities may allow public managers to align their inclusive actions in a meaningful way and create an inclusive climate.

Andrews and Ashworth (2014) conducted a study focused on 97 United Kingdom civil service organizations and examined the perceptions of workplace inclusiveness, discrimination, and bullying from the perspective of gender (e.g., women) and minority ethnicity. Using surveys with inclusion measures, Andrews and Ashworth assert from the perspective of workplace groups, gender and minority representation of the population in the workforce implies an organization is more inclined to embrace an inclusive work climate. Findings suggest group representation of "the society (for this study, e.g., women/gender and minority) in public

organizations contribute to perceptions of inclusion, reduction of discrimination, and bullying" (p. 279). Andrews and Ashworth conclude representation plays a significant role in managing inclusion when related to diverse groups.

In contrast, Bae et al. (2017) examined the relationship between observable individual-level characteristics (gender) and status of demographic groups (e.g., dissimilarity based on employee tenure and the "association between individual dissimilarities and organizational inclusion in the public sector" (p. 5). Based on a survey of Bae et al. collected data from a national survey on human resources issues from state agencies in Florida and Texas, Bae et al. find individual identifiable characteristics such as different genders that are readily observable influence organizational inclusion's perceptions negatively when associated with an employee's decision-making capacity. Bae et al. (2017) assert,

> traditionally, men have occupied positions of power and have dominated the workplace, and they feel anxious when they are a minority; therefore, men hold negative feelings about the workplace, which leads to reduced organizational inclusion-decision-making influence, information access, and job security (p. 8).

Inclusion and dissimilarity related to top senior leaders and employees with longer tenure show positive organizational inclusion (Bae et al., 2017). Bae et al. (2017) postulate "serving a progressively diverse workforce and the public will require organizations that are not only descriptively representative but are also inclusive in their practices within the organization" (p. 17). Bae et al.'s study focuses on gender, tenure, and education. Of particular note, the findings revealed men feel less secure when there is more significant gender dissimilarity. This revelation highlights the need to acknowledge and have conversations about gender and inclusion. Based on 21st-century public management ideals, organizations may consider demographics (e.g., gender and minority) to address differences and ensure all employees perceive they belong and are connected to the organization. Employees may perceive inclusion

and diversity differently; it is essential public managers show a commitment to a workforce that is descriptive of society's demographics.

Choi and Rainey (2010) view the concept of diversity as a contemporary form of organizational management that is complex and tied to organizational effectiveness. Diversity and representation are factors that enhance "social justice" and have a "measure of legitimacy" (p. 109). Choi and Rainey examined how diversity management influence employees' perceptions of organizational performance in U.S. federal agencies. Using data from the Central Personnel Data File and the 2004 Federal Human Capital Survey published by the OPM, Choi and Rainey measured three variables: diversity, diversity management, and perceived organizational performance. The findings revealed contextual variables such as organizational culture and demographic characteristics (e.g., racial diversity) of group members and supervisors contribute to differences in improving organizational performance.

Additionally, the findings suggest that effectively managing diversity policies, practices, and team processes contributes positively to racial diversity and organizational performance. In contrast, with no diversity moderation, racial diversity appears to relate negatively to organizational performance (Choi & Rainey, 2010). Pitts (2009) remarks that "controlling for diversity management reduces the substantive disparity between the races, indicating that the cause of dissatisfaction for people of color is likely a lack of appropriate management practices" (p. 334).

Recent scholarship claims indicate observable demographic characteristics are important factors in the realization of managing diversity and inclusion programs individually and collectively (Andrews & Ashworth, 2014; Bae et al., 2017; Choi & Rainey, 2010). Researchers acknowledge the significance of the connection between race, gender, and managing policies,

procedures, and actions that treat all employee groups fairly. Additionally, these studies highlight the importance of existing workforce diversity scholarship in the context of representative bureaucracy issues (Andrews & Ashworth, 2014; Bae et al., 2017; Choi & Rainey, 2010).

Representative bureaucracy theory (Pitts & Wise, 2010) proposes that employee diversity contributes to the workplace by increasing different ways of knowing and resolutions to problems and making organizations more likely to encounter employee conflict, lack of communication, and distrust. Public managers are the builders of managing diversity and inclusion for the new millennium. Ideally, public managers have a holistic view of the workplace and the potential to move public management toward fundamental principles of fairness and equality in the workplace (McCotter et al., 2016).

Pitts and Wise (2010) assert little existing research contributes to usable knowledge for diversity management policies and programs and contend many factors influence workforce diversity and inclusion such as the demographic silhouette of government employees, pay gaps between gender, and the influence of employee diversity on work performance (p. 45). Pitts and Wise analyzed a core set of 12 public administration journals from 2000–2008 focused on a broad representation of public-sector workforce issues in the United States. Examination of the publications revealed limited diversity-related studies. Only a small percentage of research provided "practical, action-based findings for public managers and human resource practitioners" (p. 62). The studies reviewed by Pitts and Wise were limited in scope and did not inform public managers about what practices would work for managing diversity. Nevertheless, the literature demonstrates workforce diversity is an inherent factor of representative bureaucracy research and

relevant for public administration (Andrews & Ashworth, 2014; Bae et al., 2017; Choi & Rainey, 2010; Jin et al., 2017; Pitts & Wise, 2010).

Pitts (2011) emphasizes researchers should focus on language highlighting how equity, diversity, cultural competence, and representation differ in practice and social science concepts. For example, Andrews and Ashworth's (2017) study on representative bureaucracy suggest, "there has been minimal focus on how minority employees are excluded from networks of information and opportunity" (p. 280). Therefore, inclusive management may require managers to stay relevant to inclusion concepts and view diversity and inclusion as a full package toward creating an inclusive workplace.

Inclusive leadership. A large body of literature addresses leadership; this study focuses on inclusive leadership and creating a climate for positive employee opportunities. Shore et al. (2011) propose organizations create a "climate for an opportunity" (p. 1276) when they demonstrate to employees the perception of fairness, actions to allocate opportunities, fairness in interpersonal treatment, and the fair distribution of opportunities. Scholars such as Randel et al. (2018) and Vohra et al. (2015) examine inclusive leadership's role. Randel et al. describe "several existing leadership styles that have the potential to incorporate an inclusive component to facilitate employee buy-in and dedication to a common goal" (p. 194). Randel et al. contend the theoretically grounded conceptualization of an inclusive leadership model poses an understanding of the factors that contribute to group members' perception of "belongingness and uniqueness" (p. 190) in an organization as they engage in workgroup performance.

The theoretical model of inclusive leadership (Randel et al., 2018) suggests three individual factors contribute to leaders' philosophy of inclusive leadership. The insight from the theoretical model of inclusive leadership highlights that leaders with a pro-diversity belief

encourage and celebrate diversity in the workforce. Having a pro-diversity belief mindset (first factor) shows an openness toward diversity and providing a space where employees feel they belong (Randel et al., 2018). The second factor, humility, suggests that inclusive leaders should recognize their position within their relationships with their employees. Leaders with humility, practice self-awareness, and other awareness and seek to promote the group's good rather than self in decision-making know the importance of workplace inclusion (Randel et al., 2018). Cognitive complexity relates to the leader's ability to step away from the group to recognize each employee's individuality, strengths, and weaknesses. For example, cognitive complexity elevates the unique characteristics individuals bring to the group experience and allows employees to express those characteristics positively within the group (Randel et al., 2018).

The literature on inclusion places great emphasis on the role inclusiveness plays in relationship leadership. Shore et al. (2018) stress,

> the immediate manager plays a critical role in creating experiences of inclusion, especially in the case of employees who are members of social categories that are more likely to be excluded or when similarity among team members or between the employee and supervisor is low. (p. 4)

Additionally, Reynolds (2017) asserts, "chief executives' values and philosophy opinions influence the formulation and promotion of inclusion" (pp. 37–38). Mitchell et al. (2015) state, "inclusive leaders, focus on a specific strategy of openness and accessibility to create a dynamic that promotes a diversity of opinions in the context of collective team goals" (p. 221). These researchers view inclusive leadership as interlocking circles of inclusive management, practice, and engagement that contribute to achieving organizational inclusion (Mitchell et al., 2015; Reynolds, 2017; Shore et al., 2018).

The implication of inclusive leadership noted by Offenbacker (2010) suggests that inclusive management is comprised of "thinking, knowing, and practicing engagement" (p. 18).

Inclusive management "actively creates and seeks out opportunities to reify information, relationships, and a larger responsibility to one another, in service to better problem solving, governance and public value" (p. 118). A fundamental "practice of effective leadership in such circumstances is helping people stay in a productive zone between avoiding a problem without easy answers and being overwhelmed by the stress of tackling it" (Bryson, Quick, Slotterback, & Crosby, 2013, p. 28).

Authentic leadership and inclusion. Cottrill et al. (2014) suggest managers with characteristics worthy of trust, and who portray factual and genuine information align with the elements of authentic leadership (AL). This viewpoint implies *trust* in the workplace may be a critical factor in determining the magnitude to which employees feel valued within an organization in which they work. Cottrill et al. highlight that leaders should (a) be aware of one's self as an individual, (b) show sound judgment, (c) balance and promote harmony and stability in the workplace, and (d) portray behaviors from a moral perspective. Cottrill et al. argue, "AL connects to inclusion and, ultimately, to positive outcomes such as" organizational citizenship behavior (p. 279). Furthermore, "leaders who are self-aware, communicate openly, and integrate others' perspectives at work are more likely to motivate co-workers to support group and organizational effectiveness" (p. 276).

Based on a review of the literature, the perceived premise in this study is that authentic leadership moves toward an inclusive climate and encourages communities of practice as well as improved employee performance. The literature review highlights that authentic and effective inclusive management involves aligning strategic plans, inclusive executive orders, and inclusive actions to meet the mission and goals of an organization and recognize employees' contributions. These factors may allow for self-aware leadership and quick program execution.

Optimal distinctiveness theory. ODT explores and emphasizes valuing and encouraging employees in the workplace. Scholars such as Cottrill et al. (2014), Randel et al. (2018), and Shore et al. (2011) built their studies around ODT. The researchers emphasize belongingness and uniqueness associated with workgroups as values that create an employee's perceived experience of inclusion (Cottrill et al., 2014; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011).

ODT "explains tensions associated with human needs for validation and similarity to others (on the one hand) and a countervailing need for uniqueness and individuation (on the other)" (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1264). According to ODT, "an individual seeks to balance these two needs through an optimal level of inclusion in groups to which they belong" (p. 1264). Inclusive practices legitimize bringing people together and the perception of fairness and equality in public management. ODT enhances the view that practitioners may participate in some planning and decision-making to influence inclusiveness in their lives and public management. Shore et al. (2011) state ODT "draws on the implications of the encouraging influences of inclusiveness, acceptance, and the perception of employee uniqueness" (p. 1276).

In comparison, Randel et al.'s (2018) theory emphasize the importance of inclusive leadership. Randel et al. describe the antecedents to "inclusive leadership to understand the role of leader individual difference characteristics in predicting inclusive leader behavior" (p. 199). Shore et al. (2011) indicate, "The direct supervisor is often the key organizational agent determining access to rewards and opportunities for subordinates; [therefore], the supervisor must behave in ways that create a sense of inclusion" (p. 1278).

Practice theory. Another area of the literature on inclusion focuses on practice theory. Practice theory emphasizes the importance of understanding how practices are used (Feldman & Khademian, 2007). Anfara and Angelle (2008) acknowledge, "A community of practice

involves a group of people" who are socially mutually dependent and "who share mutually defined practices, beliefs, and understandings over an extended timeframe in the pursuit of a shared project" (p. 53). The literature reflects an awareness of the relationships between managers and employees to support the significant formation and implementation of a more inclusive and diverse workforce. Communities of practice are about learning and change through practices employees enact (Quick & Feldman, 2011, p. 273).

When public managers construct a policy or put a policy into practice, they produce a community of participation. As Miller and Katz (2002) describe, "An inclusion breakthrough is required to leverage the diversity of all people and build an inclusive culture" (p. 3). The scholars conclude "old assumptions, old styles, old approaches to problem-solving, and old line-ups are insufficient to help an organization survive and thrive in a turbulent environment" (p. 3). Implementing the right public management processes is significant for resolving public problems such as sharing information, resolving complex issues, and including the public in the policy decision-making process.

Previous inclusion literature has explored the practical challenges surrounding processes of inclusion arising from the toxic "us" versus "them" theoretical debate related to students who receive special education services and the critical conversation about particular education issues (Zaretsky, 2005). Zaretsky's research attempts to "create spaces where multiple and varied interpretations of inclusion could be expressed and accepted" (p. 74). According to Zaretsky, there is value in considering how individuals make sense of the concept of inclusion. Zaretsky recommends listening and attending to individuals' "shared beliefs and practices, as well as personal and professional experiences" (p. 81) to grasp the meaning of inclusion fully.

Shore et al. (2018) argue the goal of researchers who study inclusion is to "establish ways in which organizations can create inclusionary environments and invoke practices such that diversity is not a disadvantage, and can provide an organizational change" (p. 178). A comparison of inclusion studies emphasized the importance of managers driving efforts toward policies and practices that recognize inclusive practices, ongoing discourse, and achievement in advancing inclusive practices in public management (Randel et al., 2018; Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2018). Many scholars and practitioners share ideas and studies about inclusive management practices as a means to provide managerial strategies to influence an inclusive environment in public management and create public worth. Clark (2015) suggests creating an inclusive organizational culture is challenging; however, single managers' actions can move the inclusive needle in the workplace climate.

A former global leader and inclusive practices. Christine Lagarde, a former global leader and the first female appointed as the International Monetary Fund leader, embraced inclusive management practices. By 2020, Ms. Lagarde was no longer in this position. Nonetheless, I find her journey compelling because "research has shown that on average, females are more likely to be appointed to lead a company at a time of extreme corporate challenge and distress" (The Human Capital Specialists, 2018, p. 3), "thus increasing their risk of failure and magnifying the media interest if they do indeed fail" (p. 2).

In describing Lagarde's leadership style, Beattie (2011) reveals elements of IM practices indicating the importance of teams working together. Beattie suggests Lagarde's approach to her new position fostered inclusive practices related to leadership, speaking the voice of inclusiveness, and focusing on employee engagement. Lagarde's predecessor issued orders and relied on a narrow coterie of advisers. Lagarde, however, took pains to consult a broad group of

people. From the perspective of diversity, Lagarde was the first female managing director of the IMF to hold a commanding position in global finance (Beattie, 2011).

Beattie (2011) writes Lagarde's "management style is more inclusive, and she hears many ideas before rushing in ...." Lagarde focuses on "engagement practices that would shape the financial and political process of planning and making policy for the IMF; [her] leadership has a multidimensional nature" (p. 1). Lagarde's approach allows people on the team to have different ways of thinking and to know. Tapia (2009) suggests as the "emerging workforce becomes increasingly diverse, leaders must reflect people's needs in everything we design, develop, and deliver for our clients" (p. 181).

Inclusive management practice as a critical resource. Shore et al. (2011) state, "Several types of practices have emerged as likely to enhance inclusion such as information access, participation in decision-making, conflict resolution procedures, and communication facilitation" (p. 1278). It is also important to ensure that employees and managers have the skills needed to execute inclusion in the workplace effectively (Shore et al., 2018). When a lack of attention is given to managing diversity and inclusion practices in the workplace, an organization's ability to move inclusiveness forward is reduced.

McCotter et al. (2016) argue, "high-quality leadership programs must be deliberately structured to provide the experiences that will cultivate leadership qualities" in public management (p. 653). Shore et al. (2011) highlight the "importance of leaders in creating an organizational culture of inclusion, suggesting," leaders establish a "meta-narrative, or story, that supports the culture of inclusion" (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1278). Even though no united definition of inclusion exists, "social identity theory, social comparison theory, and ODT" (Sabharwal, 2014, p. 198) are used to advance the concepts of other theoretical studies of inclusion.

IM challenges or barriers. The dynamics of inclusion are essential considerations in the context of the difficulties public managers face when creating a work environment. Inclusion reflects straightforward changes in the political understandings of inclusion, moving from a narrow focus on integration to a broader examination of barriers, which may affect any public servant's participation and potential. As Miller and Katz (2002) suggest, "most organizations are filled with a barrier–rigid structures, poor training processes, and outmoded equipment" (p. 7) that keep employees from attaining their full potential. Additionally, organizations have "misguided incentive programs and discriminatory promotion and assignment practices that keep people from contributing the full breadth of their skills, ideas, and energies to the organization's success" (p. 7). Therefore, the development of employee relationships with each other advocates for a combination of shared learning experiences.

Shore et al. (2018) highlight "inclusion requires a leveling of the playing field and providing opportunities through organizational and managerial practices that offer real prospects of equal access to valued opportunities for all employees" (p. 177). Scholarship reflects practices of "openness, accessibility, and leaders' availability in their interactions with followers" (Randel et al., 2018, p. 192). Democratic ideas, representation, and participation are fundamental to inclusiveness. The effect of public managers' leadership on inclusiveness depends on their way of conceptualizing and practicing inclusion. This study's end goal was the conceptual foundation of the structures and actions essential to inclusive management practices. Even as "theories and models" "abound for what constitutes" [successful inclusive practices,] "actualizing this democratic norm is difficult even for the trained, reflective practitioner of public administration" (Rossmann & Shanahan, 2012, p. 1).

Summary

This chapter included a presentation of scholarly literature on the inclusion movement implications and theoretical and empirical studies related to inclusive management practices. Throughout the literature, scholars illustrate the importance of inclusive leadership and building relationships with employees or workgroups, which help shape employees' workplace engagement and performance. The literature indicates managers with philosophies and characteristics that support diversity and inclusion may have a more perceived balance approach to enacting inclusive management practices in the workplace.

Existing research examines the concepts, actions, and behaviors needed to create greater equality and fairness in an inclusive work environment (Ekins, 2017; Moon, 2018; Shore et al., 2018). The literature identifies managers' support as an important area in maintaining voices to the reality of what happens in the workplace. The reviews suggest collective participation requires organizations to institutionalize new approaches focused on inclusive management practices. Inclusion is not a simple concept (Sabharwal, 2014). Inclusive management practices are strongly related to the perceptions of all employees feeling connected in the way of belongingness and uniqueness in the organization. The literature emphasizes the importance of inclusion and the substantial impact on people of color (Shore et al. 2018). Therefore, public managers may face some concerns about how they address social equity and strategically benefit from workforce diversity (Pitts, 2009).

The literature reveals a limited understanding of how public managers engage in inclusive practices in public management. According to Randel et al. (2018), "exploring how leaders balance the desire for developing a common understanding among group members while exhibiting inclusionary leader behaviors" (p. 200) is an exciting possibility for future scholarly

inquiry. Overall, the literature review emphasizes the importance of inclusive management practices in the workplace and the challenges associated with managing diversity and inclusion programs. Chapter 3 is a presentation of the study's methodology.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

To address public managers' experiences with and perceptions of inclusiveness, I used a qualitative narrative inquiry approach informed by the existing inclusion literature, interviews, and inclusive management policy documents. The narrative inquiry is essential to exploring the views of public managers who manage, lead, and participate in inclusive management practices. Qualitative research focuses on "not trying to estimate things about a population; it is about trying to understand or relate the data to theory or ideas" (Greener, 2008, p. 53).

This inquiry moves beyond diversity to capture the practices of inclusion through the lenses of eight public managers. Based on previous work exploring inclusiveness and theoretical frameworks in which individual differences contribute to inclusive leadership behaviors, this research examines how participants' individual lived experiences are associated with their perceptions about IM practices. Exploring managers' philosophies and meaning may help comprehend certain impediments in the function, progression, and consequences for inclusive practices.

Research Design

Qualitative research explores the understandings and meanings people attribute to particular events (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative studies are not standardized and designed to be as open as possible; the goal is to disclose the what, how, and why. Creswell and Poth (2018) contend qualitative research methods support research problems where the variables are unidentified and need further exploration. In this study, the participants' thinking and understanding of IM practices were unknown.

Yin (2011) suggests qualitative research has five features. Several of the features appear during the participants' interviews and other discussions. They include:

1. Studying the meaning of people's lives under real-world conditions
2. Representing the views and perspectives of the people in the study
3. Attending to the context of the people
4. Contributing insights into existing concepts that may help explain human social behavior
5. Striving to use multiple sources of evidence (p. 7)

This study's participants illustrated inclusive practices and the problematic integration of policy changes associated with 21st-century public management. Qualitative research aims to help the researcher uncover patterns of behavior through an experiential understanding of the phenomenon arrived at through studying the unique commonalities of participants' shared experiences (Ryan, 2005). Qualitative research is about exploring complex systems to explain how those systems persist (Ryan, 2005).

The examination of the relevant data in this study revealed seven emergent themes. The themes are relevant because the participants provide a deeper meaning of inclusive practices. They present how the participants interact in the workplace; asserting such, practices need to happen to create inclusion. The research underscores the importance of knowing how public managers think about and understand inclusive management practices. Qualitative research allows the researcher to listen to views of the research participants while "collecting data in a natural setting" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 42) rather than in "sterile" (Ryan, 2005, p. 1) environments such as laboratories.

Most importantly, qualitative narrative research's characteristics highlight exploration, discovery, and description of a phenomenon, a genre that makes space for examining the "meaning of the lived experiences of individuals" and people groups (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 101). The qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because narrative studies

tend to "focus on a single individual" or a small number of "individuals whereas case studies often involve more than one case" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 103).

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative approach addressing a subject matter's deep understanding of all its real-world complexity. It provides the ability to describe, explain, and communicate that understanding (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), narrative inquiry assumes individuals find meaning in their realities by telling their stories. During the qualitative interviews in this study, most participants often laughed and became personal in their dialogue. Participant Olivia spoke about family values and illustrated with laughter what she calls discussion debates, feedback received from internal climate assessments, and challenging issues.

Throughout the interview process, I was mindful of some of the participants' carefully worded responses, evidently designed not to imply negativity focused on the workplace. Real-world complexity makes a significant difference in how the participants describe their experiences; nevertheless, the narrative inquiry was a suitable choice for this investigation. Narrative inquiry has a place in the scholarly inquiry because it focuses on participants' voices and how many factors shape those voices (Vohra et al., 2015).

Narrative research design has assumptions similar to phenomenological approaches given the goal of telling one's story. As narrative strategies burgeon, the design blends a focus on individual experiences and the phenomenon's attention to self-arising expressions from the story-telling (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The narrative approach is "interpretive, as written and verbal data collected [and] transcribed so that the texts can be fragmented into ideas, categories, and themes by the researcher" (Greener, 2008, p. 35).

Theoretical Perspectives/Frameworks

Inclusive management serves as the framework for this research. The practices of inclusive management described through public managers' lived experiences are at the core of this investigation and positions this study in the public administration literature. Qualitative inquirers may use theory to explain actions and approaches and provide a positioning lens for the study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 42).

This study defines inclusive management around public servants' experiences, and the results are somewhat more expansive and varied than concepts developed in scholarship. However, the ideas of inclusive management nonetheless form the study's intellectual genesis. Feldman and Khademian (2007) argue "inclusive management provides a means for bringing people together from different perspectives in ways that allow them to appreciate one another's perspectives, which will enhance the design as well as the implementation of policies" (p. 310). The practice of inclusive management allows exploring issues such as marginalization, discrimination, fairness, equality, shared decision-making, and trust in public management. These broad modes of inquiry align with Feldman and Khademian's suggestion that a "fundamental practice of inclusive management" is creating an inclusive "community of participation" (p. 310). Feldman and Khademian further state, "The theory that guides developing the concept of a community of participation is a theory of practice"; the theory emphasizes the relations between structures" (e.g., laws or organizational hierarchies) and "actions" (p. 310). This ongoing interaction represents the commitment to bridging the gap between theory and practices.

The method and practice of inclusiveness in public management are increasingly concerned with providing a sense of connection and value for employees in the workplace. To that end, public managers enact practices to reach out to employees and demonstrate open communication lines between team members to include federal, state, and local managers. Qualitative theoretical perspectives of inclusiveness contend,

> Employees bring to public processes new information, self-interest, motivation to address problems, and new ways of understanding issues. These processes can be used to uncover new understandings, generate better projects and policies, secure buy-in for decisions, and limit delays, mistakes, and lawsuits. (Bryson et al., 2013, p. 28)

The complex reality for public managers/leaders and inclusive management is how to create processes to include and engage everyone in the workplace in their core tasks.

The theory and practice of research demonstrate that inclusive management hypothesizes that integrating people, processes, and technology contributes to the problem of not aligning and improving an organizations' changing environment. Researchers' continuing interest in inclusion stems from creating and sustaining a highly engaged workforce. The interest in an inclusive workplace environment suggests public managers and leaders must have a broader idea of what it takes to have a united effort and a thriving organization.

As indicated by the guiding literature, developing and sustaining interpersonal relationships and understanding how a public manager enacts core tasks and resolves or minimizes uncertainties through an inclusive community is relevant to this study's research question. Inclusive leadership informs this study. Randel et al.'s (2018) theoretical model related to inclusive leadership emphasizes understanding how leaders can increase diverse work group effectiveness. Specifically, the inclusive leadership perspective illustrates "behaviors that collectively facilitate all group members' perceptions of belongingness to the workgroup and that encourage group members contributing their uniqueness to achieving positive group outcomes"

(Randel et al., 2018, p. 195). The danger with public management messaging on inclusion is that it quickly becomes monotonous if managers do not see changes and outcomes. Therefore, "qualitative research involves closer attention to the interpretive nature of inquiry and situating the study within the political, social, and cultural context of the researchers, and the reflexivity or 'presence' of the researchers in the accounts they present" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 43).

The epistemology of inclusive management informs this study. The aim is to bridge theory and practice. Epistemology is the construct of reality between the researcher and the participants and formed by individual experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The social constructivist approach suggests knowledge creation in this study resulted from the researcher and all participants. This research has value through the knowledge gained from the participants' lived stories. The knowledge creates a space where all participants' standpoints provide a sound basis for the interview process. Finally, the "procedures for qualitative research, or its methodology, are characterized as inductive, emerging, and are formed by the researcher's experience in collecting and analyzing the data" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21).

Methodology

Here, inclusion refers to the "degree to which employees feel part of essential organizational processes including influence over the decision-making process, involvement in critical workgroups, and [having] access to information and resources" (Downey et al., 2015, p. 37). While other definitions of inclusion are available, scholars (Andrews & Ashworth, 2014; Randel et al., 2018; Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2018) define the flexibility and viewpoints most useful to this study. Their definitions express various concepts of inclusion related to employees feeling valued, being involved and engaged in the workplace, working on a level

playing field having equal access to opportunities and decision-making, and receiving responses to needs for a sense of belonging and uniqueness in the workplace.

This study explores what it means to be a public manager, their management styles, perceived challenges in creating a freethinking and positive workplace, and implementing employees' viewpoints as recounted through eight participants. The research design involved the intentional recruitment of participants in leadership positions and formal responsibilities in public management.

Clandinin (2013) states that, "narrative inquiry is a fluid inquiry, not as a set of procedures or linear steps to be followed" (p. 33). Narrative inquiry is a practice that tells the story of individuals re-counting in a sequence of events of their experiences, set within their personal, social, and historical context, and including the critical themes in those lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, narrative inquiry assumes public managers enter the public management process with their own experiences, history, and understandings, which shape their experiences within the workplace. The lived and told stories of the participants in this study are distinctive and require a more in-depth investigation than would occur in a quantitative study.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "The plot, or storyline, may also include three-dimensional narrative inquiry space: the personal and social (the interaction); the past, present, and future (continuity); and the place (situation)" (p. 72). These dimensions provided the basis for capturing embedded information about the stories' context in data collection, analysis, and writing. This study probed participants' perceptions of how they influence inclusive management practices in the workplace. Additionally, the inquiry examines how participants

shape employees' opportunities to participate in shared decision-making processes and have a sense of connection to the workplace.

Recent research designs related to D & I suggest how managerial strategies to promote diversity and inclusion may promote new types of differences and exclusions (Dahl, 2014). From this perspective, "inclusion is a normative goal and consists of various management measures" (Dobusch, 2014, p. 221). For instance, one of the emergent themes in this study emphasizes the significance of participants promoting and practicing inclusiveness in the workplace. Reflecting on 21st-century public management, transcending exclusions in the workplace may require a manager to have a clear sense of IM policy and clarity of the organization's IM mission. Creswell and Poth's (2018) view is:

> Knowledge developed from narrative inquiries is textured by particularity and incompleteness, and knowledge that leads less to generalizations and certainties; and that narrative inquiry is about creating change when the phenomena under study are understood in new ways, in this way, new theoretical understandings emerge. (p. 71)

There is a renewed interest in inclusive leadership-based resolutions in the decision-making process focused on a framework that will deliver capabilities centered on the unity of effort through inclusive management practices (Randel et al., 2018).

Research suggests inclusive management practices can leverage resolutions to transform new governance processes and practices in public management. In principle, "governance is a broader term than government because it focuses not only on the state and its institutions but also in the creation of rule and order in social practices" (Otsuki, 2016, p. 1558). Greener (2008) states,

> Different methods have been developed and introduced to explore inclusive practices within organizations, there is an important assumption that human actions are too complex to hold still and isolate. . . . Most importantly, human actions change regularly, and they can offer various magnitudes of themselves to different audiences. (Greener, 2008, p. 80)

Evolving designs allow for changes in research questions and shifts in data collection methods as the researcher engage more fully with the research participants. Hence, the "technique to interpret text material systematically is to filter out specific parts to assess material according to the criteria" (Shore et al., 2011). Ellett (2011) explains experience involves change. According to Ellet, "unless this change is connected to a consequence, which can be either positive or negative, it is then a meaningless transition, and little or nothing is learned" (p. 4).

A quantitative approach to research is typically associated with testing theory, often using numbers and statistical analysis. In contrast, "a qualitative approach to research is likely to be associated with generating theory, often using an interpretive model" to allow "the existence of multiple subjective perspectives and constructing knowledge rather than seeking to 'find' it in 'reality' (Greener, 2008, p. 80). Quantitative methods use statistics to clarify relationships, whereas qualitative methods use words to illustrate relationships. A qualitative approach was the best choice for this research because it allowed flexibility, a hallmark of qualitative methodology (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The context in which the participants explained their stories reflects their understanding of inclusive management practices. The narratives were not linear; they emerged as partial recollections evoked by semi-structured interview questions. Collectively, the life stories of participants' leadership and the connection to their values, experiences, and philosophy are central to this research.

Role of the Researcher

The nature of qualitative research necessitates the researcher act as the primary research instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Yin, 2011). During the research preparation phase, I prepared all necessary institutional review board (IRB) documents. The recruitment phase excluded any interested parties who were not working for a government organization. The data

collection phase consisted of interviews and a review of available IM documents from websites. During the data analysis phase, I analyzed the data using Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis process. I was impartially familiar with some of the participants involved in this study, as fellow personal contacts through professional dialogues.

The nature of qualitative research and design introduces energy with which the researcher and study participants must contend. Therefore, this study was vulnerable to bias and partiality. While I had no affiliation with a government office during data collection as I am retired, it was unrealistic for me as the researcher to disconnect myself from this study. I do not serve as a government employee; however, my previous roles give me an inherent degree of thoughts and experiences that run comparable with my participants. Consequently, I am familiar with some of the participants from a professional perspective. Therefore, my association in this study is strength and risk.

My experiences, personal beliefs, and values informed my interest in this study. Both positive and negative experiences in public organizations and higher education institutions reflected my choice for the topic selected to study. Researching inclusive management practices allowed me to formalize countless talks with public managers of different demographics in casual and formal settings. It is essential to keep an ongoing inclusion conversation among scholars regardless of how 21st-century public management operates. My goal was to concentrate on the participants. I acknowledged my perceptiveness could serve as a liability, biasing my judgment regarding research design and interpreting findings.

To mitigate the impact of bias during the research, I took the following actions:

a. At the onset of the study, I identified the factors that could potentially affect this particular study, such as race, familiarity, participant status, and personal background.

b. During the recruitment phase, I purposely selected interested persons with limited contact or contact that did not involve discussions regarding my research interests. I was able to recruit some participants who did not know my status as a doctoral student.
c. At the start of each data collection session, I reminded the participants of my role as the researcher interested in their views for the specific research study. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to respond openly.

Target Population

Participants in this study work for government organizations located across the United States. The specific participants selected related to the conditions that made answering the research questions possible while controlling the procedures (Flick, 2011). Controlling the procedures meant maintaining consistency in the research process while allowing differences in the research participants' responses. This research focuses on public managers and leaders who may have experience in inclusiveness in this context and who formed opinions about inclusive management practices. The participants work for federal, state, and county government agencies. The professional managers or leaders in this research are responsible for core tasks such as information technology, administration, acquisition, safety, communications, social services, wellness center, and public affairs.

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest the inquirer selects individual participants for a study because each individual can purposefully inform an understanding of the study's research problem and central phenomenon. Having diverse participants provided multiple perspectives for the study. For this study, the participants selected have a similar context for their leadership in public management. Of high priority in this regard, Yin (2011) suggests participants should include those who might offer contrary evidence or views, especially given the need for rival

explanations. Study participants were required to meet the following criteria: be a current public manager with three-plus years of leadership experience, work for any government organization in the U.S., and be empowered to implement change in a public organization. Participants must be responsible for two or more employees, be over 18 years old, and have varying demographic attributes (e.g., racial/ethnic background).

Procedures

The following paragraphs detail the procedures for conducting the study. The procedures primarily followed qualitative research scholarship guidelines, as published by Marshall and Rossman (2016), Creswell and Poth (2018), Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), and Yin (2011). Data collection in the study involves interviewing and analyzing documents. Reynolds (2017) cites Woolcott's (2001) suggestion that visualizing these two research approaches as roots that enter into everyday events.

Notification of study. I sent an email (see Appendix A) recruitment email/flyer with pre-approved notification of research with an attached consent form (see Appendix B) to individuals in my professional personal contact list. The notification included the study's topic, my professional intentions, and the study's criteria for participation. I directed interested persons to contact me directly for more information. Upon receiving responses of interest for participation, I contacted the individuals and scheduled the research activities.

Participant selection. Following the study's message, I used criteria-based (see Appendix C) strategies to collect the preliminary names and contact information of interested and eligible persons. I verified eligibility through emails and telephone, and I discussed interview schedules and timelines with the participants. Interviews were conducted in a private setting determined by the participants at their convenience.

This research uses a purposive sampling technique to identify experienced public managers well informed about public management. With purposive sampling, there are fewer worries in drawing inferences from the sample to the larger population (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The purposive sampling method supports selecting candidates across a broad spectrum relating to the topic of study. The idea behind purposive sampling is to concentrate on people with particular characteristics who will better assist with the relevant research (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). It seeks to select "information-rich cases, to yield insight and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 148). Purposive samples are chosen as a process that does not give all the participants or units in the population equal chances of being included (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Ten people were contacted from the list of interested, qualified persons; eight expressed a willingness to participate. Six females and two males were selected to be participants. Years of experience as a public manager and individuals' race were critical determinants in participants' selection. I did not consider sex/gender relevant to this study. The target participant base was government public managers. Snowball sampling and network contacts presented opportunities to select a person and increase the likelihood that the "findings will reflect differences for the different perspectives—an ideal in qualitative research" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 158). It is important to note snowball sampling was used to "purposively fill the data needs" of a study. (Ellett, 2011, p. 8). All selected participants completed the study once it began.

Qualitative research offers no single standard for determining sample size. Goodsell (2019) contends, "if the sample is small and not random, generalizing from it is not possible, but since the depth of qualitative inquiry is so great, there is much to learn, to say the least" (p. vii). The research analysis explored whether the number of years of experience as a public manager

affected their perception of, dismissal of, or ambivalence to inclusive management practices. The number of interview participants' generated sufficient data for this study.

Data Collection

Interviewing, observing, collecting, examining, and feelings are the primary means of data collection (Yin, 2011). The execution of these techniques may take various forms, such as systematic, structured, or unstructured. While a given research method may call for resources such as interview guidelines, recordings, and other text-based resources, it is ultimately the qualitative researcher's role to immerse him or herself directly into the study and collect the data he or she needs (Terrell, 2016). The data collection processes for this research consist primarily of interviews and available documents from websites. Once it was evident the data collected were consistent and identified in various forms, I determined a saturation point had been achieved, and the sampling terminated.

Interviews. The interviews in this research generated detailed accounts of the participants' lived experiences rather than brief answers or general statements (Riessman, 2008). For the most part, some form of data analysis coincided with data collection. Very little scholarly research is available related to the research question; therefore, the research question is appropriate for this type of primary data collection technique, which allowed for flexibility throughout the research process. Participants determined the time and location for the interviews. Data collection took place over 60 days, based on the availability of all participants. Each participant's schedule was coordinated to make the interview experience as comfortable as possible. The interview instrument facilitated discussions with the participants; the conversations were allowed to progress organically, as a "social relationship" (Yin, 2011, p. 134).

The interviews contributed to a more complete understanding of the phenomenon under study. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest nine validation strategies to consider in qualitative research, two of which are used in this study—clarifying researcher bias and corroborating evidence through triangulation. The first of these strategies has been discussed in the section on the role of the researcher. The latter demonstrates the detailed descriptions of the inclusion practices, policy, and guidance documents that contributed to the creation of themes or perspectives, as well as the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

During the data collection, notes were corroborated, and evidence gathered to code themes to draw an understanding and meaning of the phenomenon. The descriptions contained in the study tend to enable transferability to differing contexts while maintaining awareness of the particular conditions that made this study possible. Here, two data collection methods allowed for triangulation and validation of the perceived findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

While the number of interviews conducted for this study limits the findings' generalizability, focusing on a handful of informants enabled a better understanding of the lived experiences. After multiple interviews, I found that I was beginning to hear similar stories and gain little new information. The lack of new information is a point of "data saturation" in qualitative research. As in much small-N research, the limited numbers of interviews limit statistical generalizability Yin (2011), though analytic generalizability of a more encompassing view of inclusiveness may still be possible

This study's data were collected primarily through individual semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C) with participants. The interviews allowed participants to expand on or depart from the questions with personal anecdotes at will (Flick, 2011). Recounting narratives of experience is a significant way humans make sense of their experiences throughout recorded

history (Seidman, 2013). The time commitment involved approximately one interview session with a follow-up session if needed. Interviews were about one hour in length, and all sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed. E-mail data collection was used to follow-up when necessary for content clarification. As Seidman (2013) suggests, in-person contact is not always practical, resulting in reliance on other communication methods such as telephone and e-mail to engage with participants.

Qualitative interviews tend to be informal, conversational, and guided by the researcher's pre-existing topic or concern. This interview process entails asking specific interview questions to encourage participants to extrapolate on the subject with depth and details. The interview process is a relationship marked by respect, interest, attention, and good manners on the interviewer (Seidman, 2013). Interviewers listen for and hear narratives, as opposed to more concise and straightforward answers. At all times, I was alert to what was appropriate for the situation. The interview process established mutual trust and willingness to listen intently "to hear the meaning of what [was] being said" (Yin, 2011, p. 135).

Qualitative interviews describe the "construction sites of knowledge" where two (or more) individuals discuss a "theme of mutual interest" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 147). The voice of the participants was particularly significant in this qualitative study. Participants' open conversations proved crucial in their willingness to grapple with questions they admittedly either had not considered before or discussed. As in teaching, the interviewing relationship can "be friendly but not a friendship" (Seidman, 2013, p. 99).

Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggest an interview technique "yields data in quantity quickly" (p. 150) and provides data that is rich in breadth and depth. The interviews in this research allowed participants' views on the phenomenon to emerge and develop as they delved

into interview questions. Participant Zoe explained, "I allow my employees to lead ahead of me, and I guide them. Yes, a lot of autonomy." The interview aimed to elicit participants' views of their lives, as portrayed in their stories, and gain access to their experiences, feelings, and social worlds (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). I paid careful attention to identifying information redundancy and the lack of new emerging data during collection and analysis (Lang, 2017).

Documents. I collected the second form of data for this study from websites where the participants work. One participant provided an internal flyer listing cultural awareness events supporting perceived inclusion in the workplace. The documents are filed in a folder with a pseudonym. I reviewed seven inclusion policy and guidance documents dated 2011–2019. The materials include information communicating the organization's diversity and inclusion policy and guidance for public management. Due to confidentiality, no specific organization's name was assigned to the documents. The documents examined are shown in (Appendix E) along with the year of their publication.

The interviews and documents were particularly significant in this qualitative study. The link between the interviews and documents yielded various perspectives on inclusive practices in public management. Table 1 describes the participants.

Table 1

Participants: Descriptive Data

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Years as Public Servant	Age	Education Level	Type of Task	Federal/State/ County Governments
Allison	F	AA	27	60–63	Graduate	Administration	Senior Level
Elizabeth	F	AA	7	35–40	Graduate	Public Affairs	Director
McKenzie	M	C	14	33–39	Graduate	Info. Technology	Director
Meghan	F	AA	8	50–57	Graduate	Safety	Senior Level
Monty	M	AA	15	55–59	Graduate	Communications	Director
Olivia	F	AA	12	55–59	Graduate	Acquisition	Director
Sidney	F	C	25	50–55	Graduate	Wellness Center	Director
Zoe	F	C	6	33–39	Graduate	Social Services	Director

Note. Gender: F = Female, M = Male; Race: AA = African American, C = Caucasian

The descriptive data provide a broad-brush picture of the social characteristics of the participants. The initial participation attributes of the study were years of experience and race. Analysis of the study also considered years of experience, race, sex, and age. I assume educational level contributes to the participants' perceptions and may be useful in further research.[1] At the beginning of the interviews, participants were asked questions about race and years of experience, if that information was unknown. The descriptive information explores factors that may influence the participants' perceptions. To ensure anonymity, I assigned each participant a pseudonym. Even though participants manage different programs, this study sought not to compare programs but to use individual participants' interpretations and narratives of their own experiences as the focus of analysis.

[1] On June 26, 2020, President Trump signed an executive order "that will overhaul the government's hiring practices so that a job applicant's skills will be given priority over a college degree. [According to] administration officials, this shift will allow the government to hire a more inclusive workforce based on skill instead of a person's education level" (Collins, 2020, para. 1–2). EO 13950: Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping Signed: 09/22/2020; Published: 09/28/2020; FR Citation: 85 FR 60683 placed temporary halt on diversity training in federal agencies.

The purpose of the various categories of information requested from the participants was to provide a glimpse of their social individuality and professional identity. I analyzed the participants' years of experience and looked for possible relationships based on descriptive attributes. The findings in this research highlight generational gaps among the participants that influence their management practices.

Interview protocol instrument. The interview protocol served as a channel to conversations revolving around the central research question. The conversational nature of the interviews allowed the interviewees to share openly in manners consistent with the study, and at the same time, allowed me to capture the participants' expressions of feelings in their language through laughter, tone, and comfort associated with the personal stories of themselves. Participants were advised there are no right or wrong answers to the questions. Participants were encouraged to make every effort to speak freely. The protocol consisted of asking questions or probes, follow-up questions, and voice recording. Participants responded to a series of questions (see Appendix C). The interview questions are to gain insight into the participants' perceptions, stories/lived experiences, years of formal experiences, individual coaching, and their daily experiences in inclusive management practices.

Without insight into the inclusive management narratives of the participants, the study findings would be insufficient. The interview instrument included the research question, demographic attributes, and interview questions broad in nature, allowing patterns and themes to emerge from the participants. With the participants' signed informed consent (see Appendix B), all interviews were audio-recorded and saved on digital storage media.

Semi-structured interviews, like those used in this study, "allow a systematic and iterative gathering of data where questions are arranged in a protocol that evokes rich data but is also

focused for efficient data analysis" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 147). Using a semi-structured format, the participants began the initial sessions with a response to what it means to be a public manager. This question served as a starting point, with follow-up questions probed more in-depth into the research topic. The probes determined how participants came to understand inclusive management practices.

In this research, participants responded to a series of questions (see Appendix C), and participants responded without restraint and as broadly as they wished. The interviews provided rich data, from which I extracted the most significant findings in this study. Managing the amount of data proved more challenging than anticipated in that each additional review of the data pointed to more findings for exploration.

Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggest practice pilot interviews will help the researcher understand the process. Additionally, Marshall and Rossman suggest, "piloting will yield a description of initial observations useful to demonstrate not only one's ability to manage this research but also the strengths of the genre for generating enticing research questions" (p. 105). Even without a pilot study, role-playing with friends provided strong respect for participants' possible concerns. A sample of interview questions for this study was role-played with people in similar positions. Based on the role-playing interviewees' feedback, I had high confidence in interviewing techniques and using a digital audio recorder.

In this study, it was essential to have criteria in place, so understanding the decisive factors for the participants was understood. In-depth interviews play an essential role in many qualitative research designs. The in-depth interviews have a constraint, namely, collecting massive amounts of data in a controlled timeframe. "Like any method that relies on participants' accounts, the narrative may suffer from recalling selectively, focusing on subsets of experience,

filling in memory gaps through inference, and reinterpreting the past" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 157). Marshall and Rossman (2016) explain, researchers "need to follow their nose and reconstruct their narrative of inquiry after the fact" (p. 158). Qualitative research is about narratives combined, compared, and analyzed to gain insight into particular topics or phenomena.

Data Management

Digital recording protocol. I obtained written consent to voice record interviews via the IRB confidentiality and consent forms signed by each participant (see Appendix B). Participants were digitally voice recorded for each interview session using a personal-purchased portable voice-recording device (Sony Sound Organizer version 2.0). At the opening of each session, I thanked participants for returning their signed consent form, reminded them of the voice recording intention, and gave each participant the option to opt-out if they chose not to be recorded. At the end of the session, the voice recording ended.

Digital voice recordings of each data collection session are secure on the voice recorder. I downloaded the files to my home computer after each interview. The data files are password protected on the computer, and the computer requires a password for access. Consistent with the IRB-approved protocol for this research, the data recordings will be held for three years following this research project's completion.

Transcription. I produced transcriptions of the digital recordings for this research manually over three months. I utilized Express Scribe Pro 7.03 distributed by NCH software, a for-purchase software solution to transcribe each interview recording. The software enabled note-taking, time stamping and the use of a foot pedal during the transcription process. The software allowed saving the transcripts in searchable formats such as .doc, .docx, or .pdf, integral

to the coding process. Each transcript was labeled and stored separately from the list of pseudonyms. The transcripts are secured on my home computer in a password-protected file (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). One cannot underestimate the complexity of capturing the awareness of a recorded session during transcription.

The interview sessions captured laughter, pauses, and other nonverbal communications, which were documented during the transcription process. The transcription lacked the picture cues to help make sense of a speaker's objective. Each transcript was prepared and reviewed against the voice recording for accuracy. Overall, the spoken words directly link to the written words; punctuations are rough, as I was mindful of participants' unintentional interjections when speaking. Finally, transcriptions were triangulated with other notes to prepare the complete data documents for analysis.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis is an examination of words to identify units of information that may contribute to themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The primary data in my study were the transcriptions of public managers' interviews. The essential task in the initial stages of analysis is to reduce data to convenient chunks of data directly or indirectly responding to the research question. This process involved making decisions about how and which story or stories told. Qualitative data analysis is an exploration of broad-spectrum statements about relationships and underlying themes. Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggest,

> Each phase of data analysis entails the following: (a) data reduction, as the reams of collected data are brought into manageable chunks and (b) interpretation. The researcher brings meaning and insight into the words and acts of the participants in the study. (p. 217)

Saldaña (2016) suggests creating codes to symbolize or translate data to attribute interpreted meaning for later representation. Figure 1 shows the overarching data analysis

strategy suggested by the analytic procedures presented by Marshall and Rossman (2016). The data analysis strategy includes managing, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data.

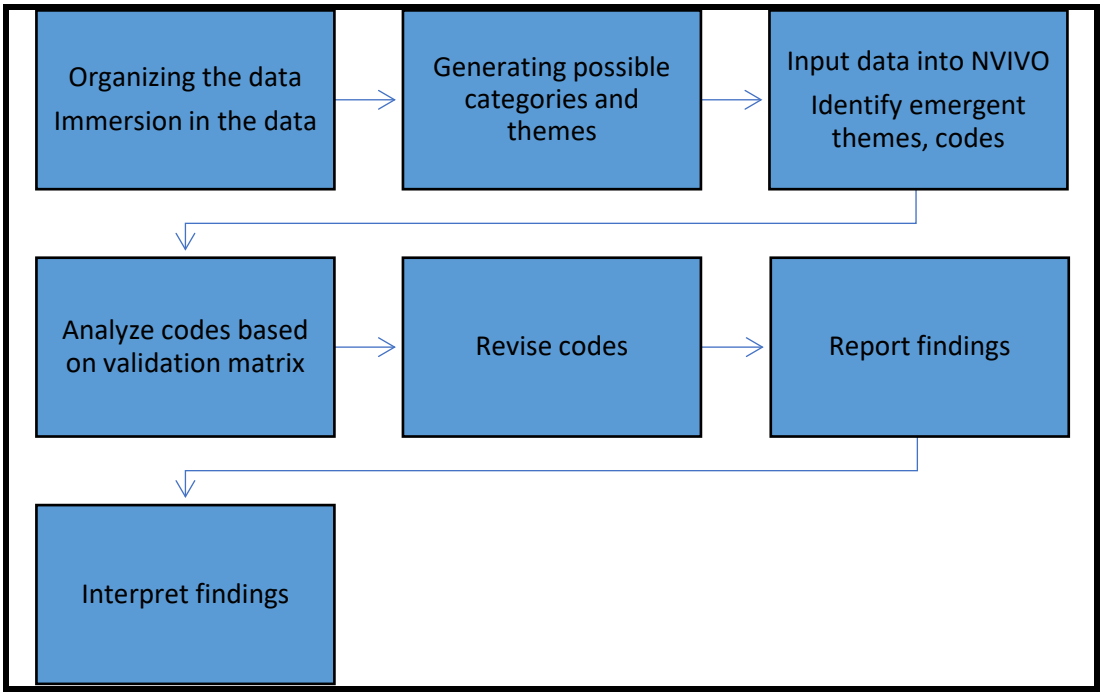

Figure 1. Data analysis strategy.

Coding strategy. I printed a hard copy of each interview transcript, and each transcript was read to gain an initial sense of the data. The transcripts were read several times and highlighted. The second review of transcripts involved using the Microsoft Word *comment* feature to mark similar responses to the research questions directly. I created annotated lists of reactions with a possible connection separately. The third review of the transcripts was to group comments under summary themes, referred to as coding or indexing. The coding strategy captured the contextual conditions such as social, institutional, and environmental conditions within which the participants' lives occur. For instance,

> The analytic approaches for most of these coding methods do not ask you to count. They ask you to ponder, to scrutinize, to interrogate, to experiment, to feel, to empathize, to sympathize, to speculate, to assess, to organize, to a pattern, to categorize, to connect, to integrate, to synthesize, to reflect, to hypothesize, to assert, to conceptualize, to abstract,

> and—if you are really good—to theorize. Counting is easy; thinking is hard work. (Saldaña, 2016, p. 46)

According to Creswell and Poth (2018),

> The process of coding is central to qualitative research and involves making sense of the text collected from interviews, observations, and documents. Coding data involved aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for each code, and then assigning a label to the code. (p. 190)

For this study, I used lean coding. Lean coding reduces the data markings to five or six themes, comprised of four to nine words each (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Most qualitative research follows an inductive approach, meaning it allows the data to lead to emerging concepts or themes (Yin, 2011). The coding process is fundamental to qualitative analysis as it enables the researcher to engage controllable chunks of the data in efficient ways.

In this research, the themes emerged based on the informed literature review, documents, and the participants' specific language, known as *in vivo* code (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The process of reviewing the transcripts for clarity was ongoing throughout the writing process. Following the manual coding of the transcripts, I used NVIVO data analysis software by QSR International.[2] Using computer-assisted analysis allows researchers to discover themes and commonalities that may be less visible with manual coding. The software may assist in noticing overlapping themes, anomalies, or standard terms or phrases. NVIVO helps with clarifying new ideas, subthemes, and comments of interest and validating the manually identified codes. Moreover, the software enabled me to discover concepts that may have been significant but was not prevalent across the data. According to Saldaña (2016), "all coding is a judgment call" since we bring "our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions, [and] our quirks" to the process (p. 482).

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[2]NVIVO is for purchase software option used for qualitative and mixed-methods data. https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/shat-is-nvivo.

Identifying emergent themes. Emergent themes are concepts woven throughout the data that respond to the research question. I identified the emerging themes through repeated review and analysis of participants' transcribed verbatim interviews. This analysis was conducted both manually and electronically using Microsoft Word and NVIVO software. In the first phase, I reviewed each interview at least two times and annotated words and phrases in the margins. In the second phase, I compiled all the words, phrases, and duplications removed to eliminate redundancies, which reduced the number of emerging themes. A review of the annotations revealed repeated themes. Short verbatim quotes from the raw data served as examples of the annotations. I then sorted these annotations into themes.

The list of emerging themes was reviewed once more to identify and eliminate redundancies and create a final list of themes. After the definitive list of themes was generated, the next phase involved re-reading all of the transcribed interviews, codes, and assigning the data to each of the emerging themes. NVIVO software was used to code and analyze the transcripts. The coding process involved reading the data in context and identifying sentences, phrases, words, and names aligned with the research question (Reynolds, 2017). Foster (2015) notes how annotations based on the frequency in which a theme is mentioned during an interview contribute to the exploration of a particular topic and the number of times participants' bring up the idea in the overall conversations.

The NVIVO analysis supported the creation of multiple codes that could be interpreted simultaneously. Figure 2 is an example of the code words used to identify the following theme: Perception of employees as the biggest asset to public managers. Using NVIVO, themes were color-coded to indicate emergent themes and comments of interest. Emergent themes formed the

basis for data analysis and discussion of key findings. I based the theme validation on a combination of transcripts and references.

Figure 2. Example of words extracted from participant interviews.

Ethical Considerations

Before recruitment, this study received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix D). Various precautions were taken to ensure participants would experience no more than minimal risk while participating in the study. I followed strict protocols with participants upon approval from IRB to conduct the study. At this point, data collection began. The data collection included semi-structured one-on-one interviews and documents relevant to inclusion when available and releasable.

The precautions to ensure confidentiality included avoiding the storage of identifiable information such as names and email addresses along with study data. As the research, I saved all data and email addresses on a password-protected laptop stored in a locked office. Consenting procedures were presented to each potential participant with the informed consent

form (see Appendix B) before starting any research activities. The informed consent form outlined for participants that participation was voluntary and would have no bearing on a participant's relationship with their respective employer. Participants were encouraged to respond honestly and thoroughly; participants were free to decline participation in the study at any point. I provided contact information for myself as the researcher and the IRB.

Trustworthiness

This study used narrative inquiry analysis to fully understand how public managers think about and understand inclusive management practices. To establish the trustworthiness of qualitative research, Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) suggest using the terms "credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Regardless of the terminology used, qualitative researchers must continue to seek to control for potential biases that might be present throughout the design, implementation, and analysis of the study" (p. 176). This study used narrative inquiry to identify patterns during a time of strategic changes in public management. When it might appear to some entities, inclusion, and diversity are no longer a priority.

The narrative inquiry approach, coupled with the participants' lived experience, yielded consistent data with current scholarship, and pushed the boundaries of how public managers have historically understood inclusive practices. Participants described enacted practices such as flexibility, promoting inclusive practices, listening to employees, and open communication as efforts toward creating and sustaining an inclusive work environment.

Limitations of the Study

As with all research projects, this study had some limitations. The sample size was small; thus, the findings have no statistical generalizability (Yin, 2011), although the results have perceived transferability. The findings are based on my interpretative analysis of the data

collected. There are limits to the degree of certainty with which I interpreted the narratives of participants. The words spoken by each participant reflect the individual participant's consciousness. My relationship with some of the participants and my experience with the study topic introduced the potential for bias. There is no absolute control or filter for bias that may occur based on familiarity; nonetheless, I relied on attentiveness and identification of potential to help ensure lessening of any bias.

Summary

As in most qualitative scholarship, the goal of this research is to understand the phenomena of inclusive management practices as performed by public managers in the context of the selected participants and their narratives. Each participant has perceived experience viewed as valid and significant to the study. This study does not represent all public managers' perceptions across U.S. government organizations or with other attributes. The research did not focus on a particular site. Over a period, one's present experience is a function of the interaction between one's past experiences and the current situation (Ellett, 2011).

This chapter presented the research design, procedures, sampling plan, data collection, data analysis, transferability, and trustworthiness for the study. Chapter 4 presents the significant findings of the study described by the emergent themes.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Analysis

Introduction

This study explores eight public managers' and leaders' lived experiences and perceptions related to how they understand inclusive management practices. The research examines the interconnected factors that may sway current views of public managers and leaders and how they may contribute to broadened concepts of inclusive practices in creating workplace inclusion. This chapter describes the participants, their workplace diversity and inclusion policies and programs, and their experiences in terms of their characteristics and identities and how they communicate their approach to inclusive practices in public management. As Chapter 3 discussed, the research examined two data sources: one-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with eight public managers and leaders, and seven inclusion policy and guidance government documents. Several of the participants work in the same agencies but different organizational divisions, units, and branches making duplicate documents unnecessary. The documents illustrate the policy and guidance for inclusion programs and practices to promote a strong team-building, cohesive environment encompassing and leveraging all employees and workplace culture's distinctiveness.

The theoretical concepts informing the research question and the interview questions focused on inclusive leadership, inclusion, and diversity in workgroups, facilitating belongingness and uniqueness in the workplace, and theory and practice frameworks. As inclusion policies and guidance shift in the federal government, it is essential to have a civil discourse/conversation with individual public managers or leaders to obtain their inclusion policy perspectives. The interviews and review of inclusion policy documents revealed seven major emergent themes.

Inclusion Policy and Guidance Documents

The inclusion policy and guidance documents date from 2011–2019. The data analysis process included coding sentences, phrases, and words from the seven documents related to inclusion initiatives and leaders engaged in and accountable for pertinent aspects of diversity and inclusion practices. There are open-ended impressions about the document contents that link to the research question, and emergent themes were coded (Saldaña, 2016). The examination of the documents revealed the overarching policy and guidance for the target population to support their day-to-day efforts at developing their subordinates' opportunities for accomplishment and employee satisfaction and workplace inclusion.

Analysis of the government documents identified data related to inclusion programs, visions for creating possibilities, changing lives, promoting inclusion, and full employee participation in organizations that create institutional inclusion policy or guidance. The research question guided the data; I identified the most common words, phrases, topics, and sentences for examining how public managers understand inclusive management. Through analysis of the seven inclusion policy and guidance documents, two inclusive themes emerged as an inclusive unit: (a) the implements inclusion-focused programs and practices to foster an inclusive environment, and (b) develops and maintain a comprehensive inclusion initiative.

The themes identified in the documents (see Appendix E) focus on government inclusion policy and guidance related to D & I. Table 3 reports the number of documents (i.e., files) in which the ideas are found, and the number of references to the theme in the documents. The documents are not consistent across organizations. Some of the documents are detailed, whereas others provide a brief statement about inclusion through reports and memos. The federal

government documents offer the most detailed information, while state and county governments have concise policies related to inclusion.

Table 2

Emergent Themes from Inclusion Policy and Guidance Documents

Themes	Files	References
Implements inclusion focused programs and practices to foster an inclusive environment	4	4
Develops and maintain comprehensive inclusion initiatives	3	4

Note. NVIVO nodes are the same as codes.

Most of the documents provide an implied overarching direction that encourages direct leadership involvement and commitment to an inclusive workplace. The inclusion documents provided policy direction for creating alignments, allowing inclusion efforts in a coordinated, collaborative, and integrated manner supported by measurable outcomes. Documents came from good data sources available through the agencies' official public websites. Table 4 provides an example of how I coded the inclusion documents.

Table 3

Example of Inclusion Documents Coding

Code	Quote from inclusion document
Code based on government document (agencies names not identified) Implements inclusion focused programs and practices to foster an inclusive environment	This plan provides an overarching direction, encourages direct leadership involvement and commitment, and creates alignment, allowing inclusion efforts in a coordinated, collaborative, and integrated manner supported by measurable outcomes.

Foster inclusive environment. The policy documents highlight the organizations' vision and the importance of total force diversity and inclusion and where there are unnecessary barriers to success. Inclusion data are embedded as a separate topic in the D & I policy and guidance documents. In public management, "the way that inclusion is defined and interpreted through

government policy directly influences the development of inclusive policy and practice" (Ekins, 2017, p. 55).

Develop and maintain inclusion initiatives. Under inclusion, the guidance documents identified inclusion as a culture that connects each employee to the organization and encourages fairness and flexibility. Participant Meghan provided an internal memo highlighting cultural observances and awareness schedule. The memo suggested supervisors would ensure and allow personnel to participate in such opportunities if desired. The policy and guidance documents' themes suggest public managers and leaders are to implement inclusion through programs and practices to foster an inclusive environment, develop, and maintain comprehensive inclusion initiatives. All of the documents for each participant's organization had similar language supporting and promoting organizational inclusiveness at top senior levels.

Emergent Themes from Participant Interviews

Five themes emerged from the data collected from the interviews. Table 5 includes the emergent themes and the numbers of participants' responses and references to the transcripts' themes. After reviewing audio recordings and completing all of the text's analysis, various connotations became apparent within the same codes (references). For example, within the theme of *employees or people are the most significant assets to a public manager or leader,* the words, sentences, and phrases included practices indicating managers value employees' input and promote successful inclusion.

Table 4

Emergent Themes from Participants' Interviews

Theme	Files	References
Perception of employees as the biggest asset to public managers	8	25
Practices of open lines of communication and listening to employees' input	8	18
Statements that suggest public managers' flexibility and adaptability are important in public management	7	17
References for promoting and supporting inclusive management practices	8	15
Perceptions of workplace challenges	8	11

Table 4 provides an example of the text used for coding how public managers think about and understand inclusive management practices using words, sentences, and phrases.

Table 5

Themes and Examples

Emergent theme	Example from the Interviews
Perception of employees as the biggest asset to public managers	There is a correlation there, and what I mean by that is [clearing throat] you are a manager, you have people you supervise, you are taking care of, and you have to recognize that your biggest asset and your most valued asset is your people. (Allison)
	I believe that it is good to build people up and let people know when they have done something (...) well. (Sidney)
Practices of open-lines of communication and listening to employees inputs	As I said before, teamwork and collaboration [are] the key to me. The other big key is ensuring that communication from the bottom from the top to the bottom and two-way communication is very important. (Allison) If you get everybody communicating from the top and [you] are not receiving anything from the bottom, which is a problem within itself and vice versa. (Allison)
Statements that suggest public managers flexibility and adaptability are important in public management	You have to be open to criticism, you have to open to new ideas, and you should always work with people who are smarter than you because when you are in the public eye, people look at you in a certain way (Elizabeth)
References to promoting and supporting inclusive management practices	(*Excitement in tone*) "One of the best things to get people talking is to look on their desk and see a Cowboys [football team] thing. I would [say] do you think the Cowboys are going to be great today and then I would talk trash, I would talk about my Bengals [football team], and I let them make fun of my Bengals because I wanted them to see I was not a staunch manager. (Olivia)
Perceptions of workplace challenges	I would say that the biggest challenge would be cultural, backgrounds, umm people specific backgrounds, where they came from, what their lens is, that is probably the most challenging. (Sidney)

There are many similarities in the experiences and perceptions of the eight participants. Throughout the interviews, participants described their essential roles and daily operations, noting it is impossible to disentangle the connection between public managers and inclusive practices. The findings revealed no notable differences in the participants' enacted IM practices related to their race/ethnic backgrounds; however, there was much discussion about the participants' experience and differences based on age.

Employees as the biggest asset to public managers. Participants express the value of employees in public management as quite important. Participants believe they play an essential role in executing policy, organizing staff, interpreting policy, providing for employees' well-being, providing excellent customer service, being open to change, and achieving successful outcomes. These factors are significant considerations related to the participants' inclusive management beliefs and actions. The following paragraphs present the participants' views in understanding inclusive management practices.

I found it incredibly valuable to hear the participants express their views on aspects of inclusive management, such as employees' value to the organization, being a great leader, and taking care of employees. Most important is how they enact the attitudes in the workplace. An overview of participants' responses suggests having in place processes where each employee can feel valued, assisted, and gain knowledge from each other for the common good of the mission might contribute to a feeling of connection to the organization. The participants' interviews suggest they work hard to hire a diverse and open-minded workforce.

One perspective for participants in this research is that employees are the biggest asset for public managers in the workplace; for some participants, this view supports the President's

Management Agenda (Executive Office of the President, 2019) priority for managing employees' engagement and performance. Participant Meghan stated,

> To be a public manager, it means to be a great leader, listen, and know the people who follow you. Understand what you are about and what you are trying to accomplish and help everyone to work together.
>
> Managing performance requires inclusiveness, rather than exerting power over others.

As Participant Olivia noted,

> I learned early on and passed it along when I became a manager, that everybody adds some value to the organization. Often, people are not given a chance to voice their concerns or anything like that because they have a bad reputation.

All participants spoke with emotion and compassion when describing their relationships with employees. For instance, Participant Elizabeth stated, "I can only be so strong by myself. I may be able to lift two bricks, but with you helping me, and somebody else helping me, I can lift 20 or 30 pounds." Other participants recognized a shared belief system, supported by caring for one another, is essential for living and working with irresolvable situations (Ekins, 2017).

Participant McKenzie emphasized, "Being a public manager fosters a 'service mentality.' For example, as public managers engage in core tasks, they may discover "efforts to practice inclusion may fizzle, stalemate, or even heighten differences between employees for any number of reasons, some of which might be related to the breadth of inclusion" (Feldman & Khademian, 2007, p. 15). Participants used a differing way of thinking about inclusive management practices in their day-to-day operations. The participants validated IM policies and guidance with inclusive practices through annual evaluations and survey reports.

Participants illustrated an understanding of IM practices as organizations shift from explicit language of inclusion to broader language to understand that one size will not fit all when attempting to implement inclusive practices. Participant narratives suggest that as managers, they guide and include employees in a shared decision-making process and emphasize

the importance of "I am open to the fact that people like to implement ideas and bring [them] to the table" (Elizabeth).

Participant McKenzie indicated, "Wow...umm...I never thought about what it means to be a public manager." One of the factors that seemed to connect the participants to employees was an ethical sense of wanting to make a difference in their employees' lives. The participants openly provided opinions, beliefs, and explanations of how they think and understand IM practices. I interpret the participants' actions as being consistent with professional development related to *effective leadership* in the sphere of being a public manager or leader.

The participants' actions reflect that communities of practice are central to creating an inclusive workplace. This description is consistent with Ekins' (2017) finding that communities are built through the principles of inclusive teamwork, and "make connections between different voices, policy, practice, and organizational values" (p. 90). For instance, participants expressed the following sentiments:

> I thought you should know that (laughter) I am a millennial. We are a group of progressive individuals. I formulated my team very intentionally to be diverse, to be open and freethinking. I did it based on my work values and ethics. (Zoe)
>
> My perception is this, working as a public leader in government, you have to recognize that your biggest asset—your most valued asset [are] your people. (Clearing throat) You are a manager; you have people that take care of and supervise. (Allison)
>
> As a leader, there are certain things that you have to do to ensure that you take care of people, as well as making sure that you take care of your mission. That means working with the employees, understanding their goals, making sure that they understand the mission. (Allison)

Participants noted that as individuals distinctively placed to have a holistic view of an organization and promote relationships, it is crucial to building inclusive practices. For instance, Participant Zoe stated, "Helping the employees find meaning in what they are doing requires me to stay engaged with them, and touch base with them, call them, meet with them periodically, ask

for their opinion, and how is it going." Zoe shared how she promotes relationships; "[I] keep [employees] educated on what is happening at the state or federal level that impacts us, at the bottom, which empowers them, makes them feel and remain connected to what we are doing."

Without using the specific language of "*inclusive management practices*," participants' narratives emphasized how they think about and understand inclusive practices. Ultimately, the eight participants considered getting buy-in from employees to achieve the organization's mission and goals is a critical factor in inclusive management practices. Participant Elizabeth stated, "I believe that to be a good manager and a public figure that you should be somebody with the education, experience, and somebody who is open-minded, you can be a good manager and not be approachable." Participants' responses center on the value of employees to the organization. This theme reflects the importance of detailed discussions of the benefits inclusive practices may provide to meet all employees' needs. Participant Olivia commented,

> What I have done in the [workplace] a couple of times—well, I can think of three people that people considered them a lost cause. [However], I would talk with them, find out what their interests are and all that, umm, and then I would ask. "As far as the job, what do you think are your strengths, weakness, what do you want to do?"

While the interviews show a belief in an organization's mission and goals, the participants stressed the value of respect for employees as the primary way they try to create greater employee inclusiveness and engagement in the workplace. The findings also suggest that the participants with fewer years as public managers leaned more toward an inclusive form of public management practices. In contrast, the management style of more experienced participants, such as Monty and Olivia, was more traditional with a blend of inclusiveness.

The actions and beliefs of the participants in this study align with literature that conceptualizes "inclusive leadership as a set of positive leader behaviors that facilitate group members perceiving belongingness in the workgroup while maintaining their uniqueness within

the group as they fully contribute to group processes and outcomes" (Randel et al., 2018, p. 190). As participants expanded upon initial responses, they emphasized including, or engaging employees extends beyond formal governing policies or guidance, to everyday public management of core tasks.

This finding is significant because it implies a commitment to looking at different public management tools that can create synergy with current resources using inclusive management practices. Regardless of race or age, all the participants view employees as the biggest asset to the workplace and to generating successful outcomes. This study's specific interview questions challenged participants to look beyond public management to how their values and practices support inclusive practices.

Open lines of communication and listening to employees' input. Open communication and listening to employees' input are critical practices in inclusive management among the participants interviewed. Participants expressed broad support based on past and present experiences when explicitly asked about including employees' suggestions in shared decision-making processes. Participants elaborated about the practices they use to encourage communication and inputs.

Several participants stated they implement strategies focused on inclusive practices by listening to opposing opinions, engaging from a genuinely unique role, having conversations with employees that are not work-related, and showing respect for the capabilities employees bring to the job. Participants described "inclusive" practices throughout the interviews. Their descriptions enabled me to determine if the perception of inclusive management practices related to organizational policy and guidance; their values, assumptions, and connections; or both.

The participants' narratives indicated they take the concept of inclusive practices as essential and often go beyond a simple manager-employee relationship. Several participants identified open communication lines and listening to employees' input are critical practices used for leadership and inclusiveness to be successful.

> As I said before, teamwork and collaboration are key to me. The other big keys are ensuring that communication from the bottom to the, from the top to the bottom and the two-way communication are very important. If you get everybody communicating from the top and the [leaders] are not receiving anything from the bottom, which is a problem within itself and vice versa. (Allison)

> Open-communications should include old and new forms of communication, such as technology and primarily face-to-face dialogues. (Monty)

> I talk to my contractors or employees, off-hours, and we text each other, talk to each other, we travel together [and] go out together. We seem to enjoy each other even though I do the manager and leadership role. (McKenzie)

Allowing employees to have an open dialogue with public managers about problems can be complicated and multifaceted. Participants consistently responded to their perceptions about open communication with employees. The findings indicate an inherent assumption about communication within public management to collaborate and improve inclusive management practices through discussions. Supportive leaders are sensitive to the employees' needs and practice open communication and fairness (Jin et al., 2017).

Interviewees explained how they promote communications in the workplace. Several participants indicated:

> I think a giving person the opportunity to speak up empowers them, and once they see that, it ensures for me, they felt heard, they see I take their point of view seriously, and then you will see them begin to follow through with what we wanted to execute as a team. (Zoe)

> I am always looking for a more efficient way to get the job done. My [organization is a] particular place. We have [many] gears in motion [simultaneously], so if someone has a better, more efficient way, I have no ownership in that for myself. (Sidney)

> You have to be open to criticism, you have to open to new ideas, and you should always work with people smarter than you are. Because when you are in the public eye, people look at you in a certain way. (Elizabeth)

Participants reported they often use communication as a mechanism for sharing within workgroups. Open communication and listening to employees' input gives the employees a space to talk and say what is on their minds. Participants noted they must encourage various points of view. Sidney stated, "You have to listen to people [and] I am always eager to hear of a better way. I make sure [employees] get the credit as we implement [their suggestion]."

As Cottrill et al. (2014) suggest, authentic leaders must build benevolence and integrity with their followers by encouraging open communication. Participant Sidney emphasized, "It is crucial to get feedback from the workers instead of just pushing policy down [from the top leaders with no employee input]." The inclusive concepts and practices touch upon the interpersonal aspect of building relationships to make a collective decision. Despite the 2019 Federal Employees Viewpoint Survey's lack of reference to inclusiveness, this study's findings revealed participants embrace getting to know their employees. Participant Olivia stated, "Letting [employees] know you see them and hear them as people and that their opinions matter contributes to an employee's perception of trust and transparency" in the workplace.

Based on the participants' actions, the perceptions of inclusive practices gave the appearance of an on-going personal assessment. Having two-way open discussions, demonstrating respect for others, sharing information, listening to and consulting with skilled and functional experts are behaviors to encourage employees to feel a sense of organizational commitment.

It is significant to note that all of the participants agreed that open communication allows secure interconnection among inclusion, fairness, and social support that may contribute to employees not feeling excluded from the decision-making process. The results of this study are

associated with literature suggesting public managers "lead with their voice and bring their voice to situations where it will enhance the conversation and interaction, even if it means taking a risk" (Katz & Miller, 2018, p. 20). Frequently, strategy, practice, and specific actions are the most significant aspects of inclusive management. The importance of "inclusiveness varies in scope and importance across cultures, and it is a challenge to those involved in inclusion initiatives to be creative, open and flexible in their approaches, programs, and policies" (Vohra et al., 2015, p. 360).

Flexibility and adaptability are important in public management. Participants discussed the value of flexibility and adaptability in public management. Meghan stated:

> I know everyone [has] differences, and we are not going to all agree on everything. [However], if we can all at least hear everyone's different ideas, which would be good, you have to want to hear everyone's suggestions they are making. When you are excluding people, they are not motivated to want to participate.

The participants' understanding of inclusive practices categorizes both institutional and interpersonal concepts. Participant responses illustrated allowing "employees to retain their distinctive identities and enact culturally distinct behaviors yet avoid casting differences as deviant from an established norm or as (tolerable) exceptions" illuminates behavior supporting IM practices (Janssens & Zanoni, 2008, p. 7). Most of the participants indicated their decisions are flexible and depend on situational awareness.

When questioned about the nature of shared decision making in the workplace, participant Sidney stressed, "I like to get input from many different sources." Participants reported they work with employees by providing them the tools to be successful in the workplace, whether it is mentoring or working with employees to keep them feeling included in the decision-making process or as part of the team. Participant Olivia stated being a public manager means one has to motivate employees to meet the organization's mission and goals.

Participants conveyed a confident expectation for employees to do their jobs and be accountable for their actions. It is essential to understand inclusive environments are not "fixed and static" (Ekins, 2017, p. 77). For instance, Participant Meghan expressed:

> We [Meghan and her employees] tend to work together as a team, so I am not the one making all the decisions. I am always seeking their advice for everything because, to me, it is not about one person to make all the decisions. Sometimes it is, but when you are trying to accomplish a big task, you need everyone's support, because everyone is valuable, you know.

Leaders are responsible for providing structure and support so that employees may grow, but leaders cannot take personal responsibility for [their] individual growth (McCotter et al., 2016). Even though "it is clear that experiencing inclusion holds promise, such experiences are dependent in part on effective leadership" (Randel et al., 2018, p. 191). This finding is important because it indicates the participants are aware of the historical evidence of employee exclusion from the decision-making process. There are no significant discrepancies among the participants in how they described being flexible and adapting to shared knowledge.

Participants' interviews indicated a clear relationship between inclusive practices, and the theme *implied public managers' and leaders' flexibility and adaptability are essential in public management.* Workplace discussions reflected several participants' perspectives and provided useful information that can influence their practices when conducting their daily operations. There appeared to be an understanding that working together is a key component in helping participants understand the dynamics of situations that may negatively affect inclusive management practices.

Working together and building teams. According to Ekins (2017), "if people are working together, decisions and implementation of decisions will tend to be better as there will be a higher level of trust and morale" (p. 89). Participants in this study assert failure to work together and build teams diminishes workplace engagement and limits contributions to

successful outcomes. Working together facilitates the inclusive process and affects employees' attitudes and sense of worth.

During the interview dialogue, several participants identified the value of working together. Participant Olivia commented, "I believe if you get the employees who are doing the work involved in a project, it allows them to have some say in what needs to be done." She continued,

> I think if we have meetings and we have team huddles, different things like that, I think that a good place to say look our brainstorming meeting ... "We have this project coming up, and I need your input. What do you [team] think we should do in terms of bringing [on board] this new policy? I want to brainstorm."

The participants suggested they have good relationships with their employees. All participants consider themselves personable with an open-door policy. They have high expectations for their employees; and believe they practice an enthusiasm for listening. Participant Olivia emphasized, "That when reaching out to employees [who are] labeled to be a problem, it gives the employee a sense of value and supports building the team spirit." Other participants responded in the same manner:

> You should always treat people the way you want to be treated. Also, manage people how you want to be managed based on [their talent] and what they bring to the table. (Elizabeth)

> You know it is not like a hierarchy thing. It is an "*us*" thing. There is always some of that just by title, but that is not where I want to be with my team. (McKenzie)

> However, if you bring people, sincerely bring them in and let them know that they are valued, that their opinions are valued, and make them part of the team, your organization will flow a lot better. You will have a more cohesive unit because you are fostering teamwork. (Allison)

The participants' actions reflect their inclusive values and suggest they have found a way to balance inclusiveness and policies. Participants illustrated leadership support is fundamental for inclusiveness to be sufficient. Participant Monty described intervening "when a higher-level

employee did not respect the contributions of a lower-level employee while both were working on an assigned core task." This statement indicated the participants' inherent assumptions related to workplace fairness and equality. When working together and building teams, several of the participants remarked:

> You have to allow people to want to come not only to tell you when problems exist, but if they need a better understanding of what direction you have given them or if [they are] given another task. (Monty)
>
> I always treat the team like they [are] an extension of [my] family. (McKenzie)
>
> I believe it is really good to build [employees] up and let them know when they have done something really well. (Sidney)

When working together and building teams, the findings revealed that inclusive management occurs through practices that foster social inclusion, ethical values, and policy structures designed to limit barriers to an inclusive workplace.

Promoting and supporting inclusive management practices. Despite strategic plans that indicate a rejection of or hesitance about inclusive practices, this theme provides examples of references consistent with promoting and supporting inclusive management practices utilized to embrace inclusive practices. Interviewed participants consider their practices and approaches are essential factors in building relationships, collaborating, empowering employees, and allowing them to make decisions on their own for engagement in the workplace. The responses showed participants believe their role as a manager or leader is to ensure employees experience positive changes.

The perceived experiences of the participants give insight to how they get things done. Participants focus on promoting IM practices to pursue their agency's/program's mission, where there is a shared dedication to creating an inclusive climate. Additionally, the participants'

responses reveal the belief that if a manager allows the employee to do the work to share in the decision-making process, the employee might feel connected to the workplace.

Participant Olivia pointed out that acknowledging an employee's artifacts opens the possibility of earning trust and connecting with the employee. "Artifacts are the readily visible elements of culture and can be recognized by people who are not part of the culture, such as furniture, dress code, logos, and slogans" (Clark, 2015, pp. 43–44). Acknowledging and respecting employees plays a role in determining an inclusive organization. Several participants described instances where they engaged with employees encouraging workplace participation to the fullest. For example, Olivia and Zoe described how they enact practices supporting and promoting inclusiveness.

> (*Excitement in tone*) One of the best things to get people talking is to look on their desk and see a Cowboys [football team] thing. I would go do you think the Cowboys are going to [win] then I would [brag about my team and who is going to win] I let them make fun of my Bengals because I want them to see I [am] not a staunch manager. (Olivia)

> In my line of work, they believe in all levels of input, from entry-level to upper management. I have embraced and tried to do that at my level of management to make sure that everybody has a say in what is going on that everyone gives input as to what is going on. Ultimately, management makes the final decision-making. (Zoe)

Participants mentioned a range of practices that inform how they think about and understand inclusive management practices, in general, and implementing IM practices. Their descriptions of actions align with inclusive management concepts focused on being a strong advocate for enhancing existing IM policy and guidance. Several respondents energetically relayed stories associated with the importance of creating good interpersonal relationships and giving credit to employees when they have successful outcomes. Participant Zoe remarked,

> I make sure that I give credit where credit is due. [Therefore], if somebody at an entry-level made the suggestion and we adapted it, I make sure that I do not take the credit for the idea; I give credit to the person that initiated it.

While the participants' experiences are mostly positive, the inclusion laws and public management systems they must maneuver are much less reassuring. Monty stated,

> There are going to be people that are working for you that may have been there awhile. [Employees] have seen a couple of iterations of what is going on, bring them to the table, and [get] their viewpoints. It is so important.

Participants' views align with the social identity theory to assist leaders in maximizing inclusion within diverse workgroups. "Social identity theory highlights the importance of group members' similarity to the group" (Shore et al., 2018, p. 199). The interviews emphasized, "Direct and inextricable links between leadership and teamwork, which can often be portrayed in the literature as rather linear and or separate processes" (Ekins, 2017, p. 80). McKenzie commented,

> I like to build teams that like to be together, and it is always around the common purpose. I also think that everything needs to be organized so that people understand what the purpose is, like where we are going and how we are going to get there, umm, so I consider myself inclusive. (McKenzie)

Even though respondents rarely used the term inclusion or inclusive management, when participant Olivia was asked whether IM practices or a specific project ultimately benefits the organization, she responded, "So, twice I have had the Leadership 360 for managers and both times I was rated higher than normal." Most importantly, "employees liked my leadership style and, so critical and important, all employees said I was a fair leader."

To better gauge inclusive practices' execution, this study asked how the participants live out their experiences in public management. Participant Allison described how she promotes inclusive practices,

> I want you [the employee] to take ownership of this particular procedure; we are going to outline in our standard operating procedures. I want you [employee] to be the guru on [this], and I want you to report for me this week because I want you to understand and be able to do these things.

The experiences illuminated by the participants in this study reflect their perceived ability to understand how to process and create inclusion that brings together leadership philosophies and principles about inclusive management practices. Public managers who oppose changes in the workforce's makeup and who are inclined to form in-group alliances to defy changes will have challenges to overcome in public management. While traditional leadership in public management is the norm, inclusive leadership is less frequent and, at times, less desirable by some senior leaders.

Promoting inclusiveness is complex, and leaders face challenges when positioning employees typically excluded in the organization to engage in shared decision-making. It is significant to note the data showed the participants' inclusive practices have similarities regardless of their work experience. Additionally, participants did not notably differ based on their race or ethnic background. Notably, participants younger in age were quite vocal about bringing employees together and including employees in decision-making processes.

Previous researchers concluded some organizations find ways to execute inclusiveness claims through diversity statements (Leo & Barton, 2006; Pitts and Wise, 2009; Sabharwal, 2014). This view is not about meeting the mandates of diversity and inclusion; it is more about not "misinterpreting things due to cultural differences," commented Sidney. Promoting inclusive management practices is about getting educated on cultural differences, as participant Zoe explained. Similarly, participants commented on how family and social interaction traditions influence how they think about inclusive practices. Participant Monty commented on his upbringing. He described how his parents and his sister, who is an educator, influenced his thinking about treating people with respect and including employees in the conversation. Participant McKenzie shared a comparable situation about how his father, a small business

owner, influenced his concept of inclusive practices.

Perceptions of inclusive and hierarchical management styles. Employees perceive managerial practices as being more inclusive or more hierarchical, possibly affecting employees' sense of connection to the organization. A public organization's hierarchical structure is perceived as a source of validation for a manager in a formal position of authority. Most of the participants in this study emphasized the perceived actions necessary for public managers to be proficient and successful leaders, including managerial practices embedded in ethical principles of inclusion (e.g., fairness and equality).

The perceived management practices of the participants focused on seeking to establish and maintain harmony and trust. A teamwork approach highlights building relationships and identifying needed changes in the workplace. As Pereira dos Santos, Cordeiro de Melo, Santiago, and Nazareth (2017) argue, public managers in the "21st century are connected to all forms of communication, always in a hurry to acquire knowledge" (p. 11). They see the public manager-employee relationship in a very different way from 20 years ago. The participants in this research described their lived experiences to be "democratic and inclusive, while at the same time, knowing they are subject to inherent pitfalls of institutional life and the structural contexts of their institution that they are immersed" (Pereira dos Santos et al., 2017, p. 11).

The majority of participants understood behind the organization's day-to-day operations lies acceptance of the overall hierarchy of government agencies. Other participants, however, prefer a management style that looks more like a "flat hierarchy" (Ekins, 2017, p. 75). The flat hierarchy is where "everyone knows who is really in charge, but all work together to achieve a positive outcome in the organization "(p. 75). Participant Monty described his experience as, "You cannot be authoritarian unless that is required, but we [as managers] [say] to [employees]

you know my door is always open, but you have to mean that." When participants were asked about their management approach in public management, several responses included these notions:

> (Laughter) Very important and [many] times on my current team, there is no formal structure [management style]. We have tried to keep it [organization] flat, we have chats, for example, we have channels, and we talk to each other on the channels. I think it is very important, and I do not think you need formality to do it. Everyone speaks their mind, and suggestions are [discussed] in the public forum. I do not think you need formality." (McKenzie)

> I am a personal manager. I do not lead from behind. I lead from the middle to the front. What I mean by that is when I am leading from the middle, I am looking at my employees, and I am looking at the organization. How is [this] going to affect what my employees are doing? (Allison)

Trust is an essential precursor to a wide range of outcomes, such as commitment in the workplace. Several participants recounted "circumstances under which trust in organizations can be created and enhanced" (Downey et al., 2015, p. 36). For instance, participant Meghan described her "management style "right now [is that] I have trust in my employees. I do not micromanage. I give my [employees] the benefit of the doubt, and I let [my employees] accomplish the task at hand."

The participants in this study implement a variety of inclusive practices to engage employees in shared decision-making. Participants believe their management styles influence employees' perceptions of inclusion or exclusion in the workplace. For them, public managers bring their personal and organizational perspectives to the workplace. In public service and leadership, organizations are continually transforming. The participants highlighted the importance of understanding the workplace paradigms and seeing what is coming so they can get ahead of workplace issues. Participants inferred one must want to lead and serve, or it does not work. At the same time, Elizabeth expressed public leaders have to be a good example for employees.

The participants articulated how attitudes about inclusiveness in their immediate environment shaped their beliefs about and understanding the importance of allowing employees to engage and value employees' contributions. Participants consistently reported their management styles to build trust and generate considerate relationships among employees, which is vital to their job performance outcome. The participants indirectly expressed a belief that inclusiveness for all creates a positive reception for teamwork.

Perceptions of workplace challenges. The workplace challenges theme emerged during the exploration of the public managers' lived experiences. The participants described specific examples of challenges they believe impact practices of inclusion. As Randel et al. (2018) suggest, inclusive leaders face the challenge of balancing the value of employee uniqueness with other values that might serve as homogenizing forces. Complex and politically charged challenges are likely to require changes in relevant knowledge or technology, new concepts, and essential stakeholders or stakeholder relationships (Bryson et al., 2013).

Diverse kinds of problems call for appropriate responses. Several participants discussed culture, race, and low morale due to organizational changes and age gaps as being related to workplace challenges. As the factors above demonstrate, leadership actions play a deliberate role in cultivating an inclusive workplace culture. The participants emphasized their inclusive interactions with their employees.

Downey et al. (2015) propose the relationship between diversity practices and a climate of trust, central in producing high employee perceptions of inclusion. Several participants described how they engage and connect with an employee when facing workplace challenges. Sidney expressed, "[My] biggest challenges understanding the cultural, backgrounds, people specific backgrounds, where they come from, and what the lenses of the people we serve."

Participant Zoe reported challenges of trust and low morale as well as the constant change in the workplace. She stated,

> How do we build trust [with] [employees], so morale [will not be] affected? Because once [morale is low], the work is impacted [and the] families we serve. That is the main number one challenge for me.

Participant Meghan elaborated,

> I have experienced some challenges, [*laughter*], some of the older employees not wanting to do things differently. They are not open to a new individual to make a change. Sometimes I think that they think you are trying to take their position. It is not about that. It is about getting the job done together.

The participants offered specific examples of perceived challenges in the workplace. These challenges underscore why inclusive leadership should focus on removing barriers that prohibit an employee from full participation in their organization (Jin et al., 2017). Keeping all employees engaged in the organization requires genuine conversations to foster and promote existing inclusiveness communication, making employees feel appreciated and treated impartially. There is always the risk of pseudo participation: "talk the talk, but not walk the talk." The participants appeared to be part of creating a more inclusive organization and not absorbing norms of top-down control.

Perceptions of bias. Ayman and Korabik (2010) suggest, "Both gender and culture matter because they can affect a leader's style, behavior, emergence, and effectiveness in many complex ways" (p. 166). Gender and culture matter because they can affect how a manager leads. For example, when Elizabeth was questioned about the nature of perceived challenges in the workplace, she responded,

> I feel like I have challenges being a woman, challenges being Black. I find it challenging to go into a new job and not be [adequately] trained. That was very hard for me, very challenging because nobody cared that I had just [arrived in the new job] ... nobody cared.

Elizabeth's statement suggests three points: perceived racial bias, perceived gender bias, and a feeling of not being valued in the workplace by top leadership. Inclusive management practices are designed to create a climate that is "characterized by transparency and fairness and with a focus on skills and competencies of employees rather than in whom the competency resides" (Vohra et al., 2015, pp. 360–361). Inclusive management practices provide public managers with the ability to recognize biases when they get in the way of restricting an employee's perspective and competence.

Overall, issues of race and gender did not emerge as central themes in this research. Throughout the interviews, all the participants expressed employees need to feel a sense of value and belongingness in the workplace. This finding indicates the respondents' eagerness to accept the presence of biases and shortcuts in judgments openly and to recognize when they get in the way of limiting another person's potential and capability. Employee perceptions of preferences may create complaints when not openly discussed.

Summary and Conclusions

Participants indicated a range of viewpoints and experiences that informed how they think about and understand inclusive management practices. This chapter described the participants' characteristics and presented findings from the narrative analysis of the data collected. The results suggest the language of inclusive management practices is not prevalent in public managers' and leaders' day-to-day conversations. The participants viewed their expressed beliefs and actions as inclusive practices related to caring for employees, communicating with employees, working together, and listening to employees' voices.

All the participants in this study reflected on what it means to be a public manager or leader, either directly or indirectly. Six interview questions and probes captured the experiences

and perceptions of inclusive management practices through the eight participants' lenses. Explicitly, participants indicated effective public management determines the value employees contribute to accomplishing the mission and vision.

The participants' central theme centered on employees as the most valued asset to a public manager and the organization. Participants engaged in the interview process through a continued conversation. They repeated many of the same practices throughout the dialogue. For instance, participants emphasized building trust, allowing employees to take ownership of projects, supporting change, encouraging employee inputs in the decision-making processes, and managing chaos as practices that may enhance an inclusive workplace and achieve the strategic vision.

The organizations' inclusion policy and guidance documents are established roadmaps to help participants address unconscious biases and acts of exclusion and involved human resource offices that focus on inclusive hiring practices. The findings revealed that participants believe IM practices apply to all employees and add value to the organization. Moreover, in the participants' view, there is a story behind every employee. Public managers have to figure out what that story looks like because it relates to organizational commitment and employee job performance.

Ekins (2017) states, "there is a danger if a universal government perception on inclusion were to be developed, that it would be reductionist and too simplistic to meet the needs of differing settings" (p. 128). Moreover, the literature reviewed for this research highlighted difficulties in developing inclusive practices in public organizations with many challenging priorities and conflicting agendas. The findings illuminate the inclusion literature and theories

supporting inclusive practices embracing belongingness, employee uniqueness, and leaders with individual difference factors. These elements build inclusive work environments.

Participants enthusiastically identified behaviors they have experienced and implemented, as indicated in the five themes based on the interviews. This chapter's results suggest the eight participants see the key to inclusive management practices is making employees feel connected to the workplace. Despite positive experiences with inclusive management practices, the participants also encounter several challenges. Throughout the data gathering process, there were consistent perceptions of inclusive practices in public management.

In this research, two future topics that emerged focus on the perception that agencies' human resource offices should continue to improve their hiring practices to include conversations about inclusiveness when individuals enter public service. Additionally, the participants supported implementing a more robust education and training that reflects the inclusion policy and guidance. There are many ways participants encounter hindrances and challenges in public management. This research is consistent with other scholarship validating the existence of and continuous need for inclusive management practices in the workplace. Many researchers believe inclusiveness is under attack, and the guidance at the federal level is moving in the direction of ambiguity for 21st-century public management. Chapter 5 returns to these concerns.

Chapter 5: Conclusion: Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

This study explores eight U.S. public managers' lived experiences and perceptions about how they implement inclusive management practices in 21st-century public management. The research examines the interrelated experiences that influence current views of inclusive management practices and how those experiences broadened thinking about creating more inclusive workplace environments. This chapter discusses the study's findings and implications and offers recommendations for future research. This qualitative study aimed to answer the research question: *How do public managers and leaders think about and understand inclusive management practices?* Scholarship on inclusive management and inclusion informed exploration of the question, and the research sought to synthesize previous studies with data from interviews and government documents.

The literature reveals inclusive practices might provide employees a sense of belongingness and uniqueness in the workplace (Grissom, 2018; Randel et al., 2018). Additionally, existing scholarship tells public managers that "inclusive organizations, do not expect non-traditional employees to assimilate to dominant norms" (Vohra & Chari, p. 327). Findings from prior studies coupled with those here emphasize that inclusive practices are a part of public management policies and programs at all U.S. government levels. I found public managers pursue both traditional and inclusive practices to include, engage, and encourage employees' performance to produce more positive and productive organizational outcomes.

The President's Management Agenda (Executive Office of the President, 2019) focuses on employee engagement and performance management. Executive Order 13583 (The White House, 2011) requires strategies for federal agencies to create plans for inclusion in the workplace. Both of these policies illustrate the perceived need to bring employees together in

shared decision-making processes. While the participants reported mostly positive and inclusive workplaces, potentially perceived ambiguity exists with the two policies.

This research focuses on public managers at various levels of government in different workplaces. Managers understand that leadership, diversity, and inclusion include the link from institutional structures to a broader environment (Leo & Barton, 2006). These factors are inseparable. Organizations have inclusive practices, policies, and procedures, but implementation is not always a reality. Participant Allison suggested, "You have to understand you are working with people, people with different personalities and different ideas." Another means of connecting with employees and the community relates to the review of a newsletter Zoe presented, noting inclusion is a core framework for wellness services such as classes for different languages and various cultural events.

The inclusive practice phenomenon created a need to examine the public management environment to learn how it may align with developing and sustaining an inclusive workplace. Inclusive management includes understanding public managers and their concept of human connections in the workplace. The inclusion policy and guidance this study reviewed established a roadmap for the participants to consider when implementing and tracking inclusiveness in the workplace. Implementing policy and the participants' lived experiences related to inclusive practices are complicated—as manifested in the emotional tone used and heard when discussing inclusion matters.

This study explored whether the participants respect the IM programs' intent and policies enough to accept workplace differences. The results indicate that effective inclusive practices in the workplace are open for discussion and require the organization's focus to ensure building and sustain an inclusive environment. As part of such an environment, public managers' philosophy

is essential to creating a focus on connecting with employees to discuss core tasks of general interest. Building awareness of inclusive management practices that create connections to build a community of engaged employees with a capacity to inform and implement policymaking is an ongoing project (Quick & Feldman, 2011). This study's results indicate participants focus on specific plans of openness and accessibility to create a dynamic that promotes diversity of opinions, belongingness, and uniqueness.

Traditional and inclusive practices readily emerged as the primary influences on participants' IM perceptions. The participants indicated a variety of practices that inform their thinking about inclusive practices in general and their actions to promote inclusion. Participants shared a perceived commitment to an environment promoting employees' value and their contributions to the workplace.

Summary of Study

This study used a narrative inquiry methodology to collect and analyze data from in-depth interviews and formal organizational inclusion policy and guidance documents. Verbatim transcripts of participant interviews yielded data that were compared to documents and categorized into themes. The data produced coherent narratives of public managers' experiences and perceptions. The analysis process included separating pieces of information gleaned from the data to create the "story of the research" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 253). The findings' discussion brings the pieces together to create a complete understanding (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016) of IM practices in public management settings.

Coding and data analysis yielded seven emergent themes. Analysis of interview data supported by the organizational inclusion documents revealed a range of experiences and stories. Some participants spoke about encouraging employees to be open to change." In contrast,

Participant Monty was more vocal, proposing "[managers should get] up from [their] desk and have the face-to-face conversations [with employees when needed]."

Given the nature of organizations and life in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and divisive world, the work of fully engaging the creativity and wisdom of available team members is critical to organizational success (Katz & Miller, 2018). The stories participants told and retold and the documents reviewed provided a breadth of knowledge on how the eight public managers think about and understand inclusive management practices.

The interviews and documents addressed practices associated with the emergent themes such as fostering teamwork, open communication, shared decision-making and empowering employees, demonstrating a sense of care, and providing safety for employees. These practices align with Randel et al.'s (2018) belief that inclusive managers can "facilitate perceptions of inclusion …" serve as role models," and create trust with employees (p. 192). The inclusive organization model argues that all employees' inclusive treatment at all organizational levels supports opportunities to advance to mid-and upper levels of the organization is critical for establishing a truly inclusive organization (Shore et al., 2018).

Although participants had positive attitudes related to public management, their stories are subjective with incomplete data (Foster, 2015). Nonetheless, the findings of this study have merit. They are consistent with scholarship (e.g., Katz & Miller, 2018; Randel et al., 2018; Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2018) focused on inclusion and inclusive leadership and practices. The meticulous analysis of the interview transcripts and review of inclusion documents confirmed the participants' acknowledged actions toward creating inclusive practices in the workplace.

Organizational Inclusion Policy and Guidance Documents

Document review is one way to examine the presence and implementation of work-related practices in organizational environments and triangulate the data described by study participants (Houghton, Houghton, & Presnal, 2016). The purpose of the document review was to analyze and determine whether and how the interpretation of government diversity and inclusion policy and guidance and other contextual factors might have informed the participants' thinking. The examination of seven diversity and inclusion documents yielded two emergent themes related to inclusive management practices.

The reviewed documents are directives from the federal government, updated when Congress passes new legislation or senior executive branch leaders revise the policy. Additionally, the inclusion policy and legislative mandates apply to state and other government levels in the United States. The approaches of state and local governments to implementing inclusion might be different from the federal government. For example, the federal government publicly displays statistics for workplace surveys where other governments might not.

Analysis of the inclusion policy and guidance documents lent credibility to the participants' narratives (Houghton et al., 2016). The analysis revealed specific references to promoting and enabling flexibility to help managers and employees feel part of critical organizational processes, including having input over the decision-making process and access to information and other resources. The following themes align with the participants' perceived narratives.

Foster inclusive environment. The insights gleaned from the inclusion program and practice directives direct managers and employees to implement inclusion concepts in the workplace. All of the directives encourage direct leadership involvement in and commitment to

diversity and inclusion practices. The overarching directives provide a context for positive diversity and inclusion efforts. The documents advise public managers and leaders on how to develop and manage inclusion training and educational programs. Fundamental inclusion policies that govern compliance with the legal requirements for government organizations guide inclusive management. These policies are time-consuming and action-oriented. The eight participants' careful concern with socially desirable responses is a possible limitation of this study and many respondent-based studies, even in a time of political polarization, social change, and economic challenges across the country and the world.

The participants indicated a well-informed perspective of understanding inclusive management practices in public management. The policy actions developed by government organizations suggest support and protection of public servants from workplace exclusion. It is unknown if public managers are encouraged to read and become familiar with the federal government's documents. This study suggests that the participants promote a culture that encourages teamwork, flexibility, and fairness to allow individuals to contribute to their full capability. For example, some participants (Monty, Olivia, Allison) reported assigning employees to high visibility core tasks to increase their skill sets. Other participants (Meghan, Sidney) encouraged shared decision-making and open lines of communication. Most importantly, the participants embraced culture awareness programs.

At the same time, there may be differences between the intended IM practices these managers pursue and those perceived and experienced by employees (Downey et al., 2015). The 2019 FEVS addressed concerns about distrust and conflict in the workplace and rewards and merits promotions related to employee performance. Interpreting the environment in which the respondents worked, the survey reflects a gap between practice and perception and the need for

Downey et al.'s (2015) suggestion that organizations that aggressively practice inclusion will most likely see increased trust, positive relational experiences, and enhanced employee engagement and welfare. In this study, participants illustrated their perceived commitment to employee inclusion and practices that minimize negative dynamics. For example, Allison described how communicating with employees and listening to new ideas and suggestions reduces workplace tension.

Inclusion initiatives. The results of this study confirmed D & I policies and guidance was essential core mechanisms of the participants' workplace experience. The governance inclusion policy and guidance directives guide public servants when implementing practices to recruit, retain, and develop a workforce that produces high-quality work. The inclusion initiatives in the directives (mandatory or voluntary) focus on understanding employees' value, transparency, accountability, integrity, and the capacity to learn. The reviewed documents stress the expectation that all employees should strive to foster diversity and inclusion at all levels in the organization. These findings suggest inclusion initiatives provide participants an alternative to creating an inclusive work climate.

Diversity and inclusion policy documents are significant and support a fundamental principle in the concept of inclusion: professional growth opportunities should be available to all employees. The *Diversity Strategic Plan 2012–2017* (Department of Defense, 2012) outlines all employees should have an opportunity to compete for professional training and leadership schooling. Miller and Katz (2002) note concerns arise from entrenched prejudice based on the perception that some employees are promoted due to affirmative action programs, instead of their knowledge and abilities. In comparison, Mitchell et al. (2015) argue inclusive leaders

encourage team identity through shared teamwork, which may reduce perceived favoritism in the workplace.

From leadership and inclusive perspective, the participants noted they understand the importance of employee trust and engagement in the workplace. The themes suggest the existence and implementation of the inclusion policy and guidance directives contribute to establishing an inclusive environment in government organizations. They focus on enhancing diversity, inclusion, and achieving a successful mission and goals for an organization.

Interview Summaries

The experiences with and perceptions of the IM practices participants employed are essential elements in facilitating inclusion and identifying the factors serving as barriers to successful, high-quality inclusion (Muccio, Julie, White, & Burns, 2014). Inclusiveness was the concept used to explore inclusive leadership and practices that affect employees' engagement and performance in the workplace. In this research, the interviews yielded several emergent themes. The themes reveal public managers' energy and commitment that brought valuable insight into their values and philosophies. The participants' narratives pushed the boundaries of how public managers understand inclusive practices compared with past actions.

A most valuable asset in the workplace. The first emergent theme recognizes employees are the most significant assets to public managers. It is essential to note the extent to which participants expressed a passion for their job and compassion for their employees. The initial conversation with participants reflected on the question, "What is your perception of what it means to be a public manager?" The question allowed participants to express the actions and the role they play in inclusive management practices. The participants unanimously revealed that accomplishing the organization's mission and goals depend heavily on letting employees

know their value and the manager's concern for their well-being. Participants talked in practical terms as they described inclusive practices. They described inclusiveness as valuing employees' contributions to the workplace and communicating with employees. Participants spoke of the organization's vision and goals, which illustrates the big picture and the buy-in needed from employees to achieve successful organizational performance.

When managers recognize employees as the most valuable asset in the organization, employees perceive the manager as trustworthy and caring. Managers can make a difference in enhancing the foundation for inclusive management when giving employees credit for their performance. For example, Elizabeth stated, "I can only be so strong by myself." Allison elaborated:

> You have to recognize that your biggest asset, your most valuable asset is your people. [Then] as a leader, there are certain things that you have to do to ensure that you [take care of your employees] as well as making sure that [you take care of the mission].

Such comments suggest the significance of a manager being perceived as an authentic leader. They also imply an awareness of inclusive management practices may create a way ahead for successful outcomes. Cottrill et al.'s (2014) study on authentic leadership reveals promoting an inclusive environment boosts employees' work-related self-esteem and their willingness to perform the job beyond expectations. These findings are consistent with the 2019 FEVS (OPM, 2019), which found respondents reported they were willing to exert extra effort to get a job done in the workplace. The implications are significant. They suggest Participant Zoe's efforts at "creating trust, showing that you care and engaging employees" contribute to getting employees' buy-in and may create motivation for teamwork.

Participants acknowledged they establish trust through the practices of employee participation, feedback, bringing people together, team building, input, and open lines of communication. These practices indicate an understanding of how organizations can encourage

and facilitate the full participation of employees. The findings are consistent with research on individual-level experiences of workgroup inclusion focused on belongingness and uniqueness. For example, the term "belongingness (insider)" refers to "information sharing," and "uniqueness" highlights "respect for all cultural perspectives" (Shore et al., 2018, p. 178).

The participants' enthusiastic responses demonstrate that an organization's mission and goals are dependent upon how employees perceive their value in the workplace. This finding reflects Randel et al.'s (2018) suggestion that an inclusive climate in an organization contributes to (a) an employee's positive perception of an inclusive leader, and (b) influences a managers' ability to implement inclusive actions. These two elements acknowledge the value of leadership and inclusion validation for the organization. All participants in this study described their involvement with inclusive practices focused on getting all employees to do their best work, supporting the scarcity of government resources, and achieving their organization's mission and goals. Even though the participants used different practices, they all expressed an IM understanding of making employees feel connected or engaged in the organization.

The participants offered mixed thoughts on achieving workplace inclusion, but all agreed employees are their most valuable asset. The findings suggest (a) participants articulated their IM philosophy of supporting an inclusive culture; (b) participants are mission-oriented; (c) regardless of age or tenure, participants understood motivating employees, showing flexibility, and being aware of how the employees perceived them as a manager were essential factors contributing to their understanding of inclusive practices.

Open lines of communication and listening. Participants shared many similar inclusive behaviors, even though they were responsible for very different program tasks and had different demographic characteristics. All of the participants felt listening to the voice of employees is

essential in the workplace. Cottrill et al. (2014) reference the importance of authentic leaders building integrity with employees and promoting open communication. Clifton (2016) views managers as being in a leadership position to smooth the progress of government employees' understanding of how their engagement contributes to the government's missions. The results indicate participants have formal leadership responsibilities that promote practices of inclusiveness. A need remains for continued enhancement of inclusive practices within the workplace, as reflected in the concerns in the 2019 FESV report (OPM, 2019).

The experiences of the participants appear to have profoundly influenced their optimistic views of inclusive practices. Their ideas may have a far-reaching impact on public management. Randel et al. (2018) believe when managers include the right to be heard and listen to their employees' views in decision-making, they demonstrate the value and appreciation for others' assistance. All of the participants consistently indicated their support of having open communication lines with employees; they agreed that listening to the voices of employees is paramount to executing policy and guidance. Participant Monty was adamant that open-communication should include old and new forms of communication, such as the use of technology and primarily face-to-face dialogues when necessary. The findings are associated with Katz and Miller's (2018) argument that public managers are the voice of leadership for actions that improve conversations and interactions, even if there is a possibility of retaliation. The participants emphasized their support for building inclusiveness from practices based on their experiences.

Participants' stories are consistent with Shore et al.'s (2018) suggestion that providing mechanisms for voice and communication sharing within workgroups contributes to IM practices. The implications of these findings show the participants' perceived actions align with

the goals of the President's Management Agenda for 2019 (Executive Office of the President, 2019) and Executive Order 13583 (The White House, 2011).

Flexibility and adaptability of leaders. Participants indicated they rely upon a combination of individual and collective decision-making in public management. Participant Allison emphasized when unpopular policies come from senior leaders, and it is the manager's responsibility to facilitate actions so employees may understand the goal of the directed policy. Several participants (Monty and Olivia) commented on how they connect to employees by assigning them to individual projects, advocate for their ideas to senior leaders, and empower employees when appropriate.

Participants highlighted understanding an employee's talent and skills is important in the decision-making process. When discussing what it means to be a public manager, Participant Monty expressed the importance of understanding the source when encountering a problem in the workplace. For example, flexible managers can broaden others' horizons in the workplace and create innovative ways to resolve general issues (Offenbacker, 2010, p. 124). Participants expressed their ability to be flexible with employees when managing wellness, daycare, and telecommuting concerns. Participants shared stories related to inclusive practices and described how they interact with employees to get to know their followers individually.

Throughout most of the interviews, participants revealed high expectations of employees regarding their work ethics and "doing the right things" in the workplace. Jin et al. (2017) theorize inclusive leadership influences employees' creativity and innovation in organizations by allowing discretion in the way employees do their jobs. Several participants (Meghan, McKenzie, Zoe) indicated their core tasks require high-quality flexible, adaptable leadership, teamwork, rigor, a clear connection to reality, and a focus on employee performance. The results

suggest inclusiveness creates a complex roadmap that should be carefully navigated to balance experience, politics, and technology.

Participants' practices of flexibility and adaptability align with IM concepts such as supporting employees through practices that give an employee the ability to influence organizational decisions and the perception of fair and equitable treatment from management (Shore et al., 2018). From an implementation perspective, there are no significant differences among the participants in understanding how to achieve effective outcomes in an organization. The literature review highlighted that inclusive management practices require an approach that promotes greater inclusion of employees in ways that consider their views and promote self-esteem. Managers in official leadership positions are critical to creating inclusion (Randel et al., 2018). Engaged employees tend to be more pioneering and more prone to stay with their employer (Pitts, 2009).

Several participants emphasized being flexible and adapting to changes in the workplace are vital practices in public management for the 21st century. Cottrill et al. (2014) highlight if effective leadership is necessary for achievement; such leadership should be defined and described. Organizations should determine the best ways to cultivate and develop influential leaders (McCotter et al., 2016). The findings suggest public managers face challenges learning to balance traditional and inclusive practices as they engage situational awareness in the workplace.

Although some participants (Allison, Elizabeth) did not refer to their organizations' inclusive management inclusion policy or guidance, the participants' narratives indicated they were aware of the structures in place and understood the action necessary to support an inclusive work climate. These findings are significant because they highlight the participants' ability to be

aware of the challenges of ensuring inclusion through detailed policies and practices. Additionally, the findings suggest the philosophies and values for inclusiveness generate consciousness and aspirations to broaden an inclusive work environment.

Downey et al. (2015) suggest employees' beliefs that they are part of essential workplace initiatives, connected to strong teams, and have access to "information and resources" will be associated with enhanced performance (p. 37). Participants in this study consistently indicated teamwork is instrumental in getting employees' ideas and feedback. Participant Zoe stated, "Employees are valuable because once they feel validated and heard, then you will see them begin to follow through with what we want to execute as a team." Several standard features emerged from the participants' narratives. Their personal and professional experiences played a critical role in how they processed the concepts of inclusive management practices. All participants appeared to be motivated to achieve the mission of the organization. Participants vocalized an understanding of the big picture in an organization.

The participants' ability to help transform the workplace into an inclusive climate makes achieving the "big picture" much more feasible. The execution of inclusive practices adds value to employees, the public, and the organization. Most of the participants in this study emphasized building trust, allowing employees to take ownership of projects, supporting change, and managing chaos as critical factors. As Dempsey and Brafman (2017) suggest, assign employees a task, then give them autonomy to "craft strategies to achieve the desired results" (p. 54).

Sabharwal (2014) observed after much public debate about diversity and affirmative action that diversity policies alone are insufficient to improve workplace inclusion. Also needed may be what participant McKenzie noted based on real-life experiences working for the family business. "Everyone who worked for the company was a part of the team and treated as an

extension of the family" (McKenzie). Mitchell et al. (2015) state that inclusive leaders focus on a specific plan of openness and accessibility to create a dynamic that promotes diversity of opinions in shared team goals.

The inclusion literature implies the recognition of top employees in an organization should not be limited to employees from elite schools, specific socio-economic backgrounds, or particular countries of origin (Geiger & Jordan, 2014). These findings suggest working together and building teams are essential practices of inclusive leadership. Participants in this study did not speak about inequality in terms of the employees they supervised. Instead, they agreed empowerment of employees and encouragement to speak up safely provides an opportunity for employees to execute their ideas as a team. Thus, this study's contributions are significant in that participants shared their level of experience and perception related to real-time inclusiveness. Reflecting on how the participants discussed working together and team building, they seem to embrace the concepts of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Promoting and supporting inclusive management practices. Participants did not use the words *inclusive management practices* in their conversations, but their stories revealed inclusive beliefs and public management actions. Additionally, their reported behaviors appear to demonstrate flexibility, integrity, and support for changing policies that allow employees' professional growth. An essential interpretation of this study is that public managers often work to achieve their organizations' mission and goals, and they believe employees' support is the key to accomplishing those objectives. As noted earlier, inclusion implies a relationship between managers and employees. Shore et al. (2018) propose that managers' beliefs and different individual factors shape actions toward (a) making employees feel connected to the organization,

(b) establishing a level playing field, (c) fostering an integration strategy, and (d) facilitating inclusive decision-making.

Gurchiek (2018) argues that public management's underlying expectation is for public managers to support inclusive practices in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of diverse colleagues in the field. Additionally, public managers advocate for inclusion in the delivery of their day-to-day work, including how they approach customer service, programs, academic freedom, and diversity of thoughts (Grissom, 2018). The inclusion literature emphasizes managers should think of inclusive practices in terms of trust and belongingness, which create an experience of not being dismissed but the joy of celebrating the uniqueness among individuals (Vohra et al., 2015).

Many participants talked about how their organizations did not just talk about inclusion but held voluntary events that encouraged observance and awareness related to inclusion and diversity. Shore et al. (2018) suggest individuals from all backgrounds, not just those of a dominant group, who are valued, considered insiders, and treated with respect, create an inclusive environment. Participants in this study viewed promoting and supporting inclusive practices as different ways of thinking regardless of age or years of public service experience. Several participants who led organizations in social services, safety, and information technology emphasized they gather with diverse groups for lunch and after-work events. Overall, the actions identified by the participants are significant and arguably inherent in inclusive leadership.

This research drew on and described ongoing inclusive practices to bridge the gap between top government officials' strategic plans and executive orders and management actions. The findings here infuse the public management space with the potential to enhance trends related to theories of inclusion and inclusive practices. Based on previous inclusive management

research, this study's theoretical grounding and findings deepen current understanding of inclusiveness in public management and the concepts utilized to create an inclusive workplace. The participants depict realistic inclusive practices and leadership that promote employee belongingness and valued skills in the workplace. These findings suggest creating trust, fairness, and equality in the workplace aligns with scholarship related to authentic and inclusive leadership. Additionally, the findings suggest an ongoing evaluation of inclusive practices promotes greater operational effectiveness.

The findings reveal participants who were mindful of the changes they make in the workplace to embrace inclusive practices and underscores how 21st-century public managers may focus on driving the value of a variety of inclusive events when addressing public problems (Quick & Feldman, 2011). The inclusive practices participants embraced align with literature focused on building inclusive management capacity to implement decisions and facilitate employees' inclusion.

This study explores inclusive management practices through the lenses of the eight participants. Specifically, the study examines participants' inclusion philosophy, behavior, and reported values of diversity and equality. Participants believed they have a stake in making sure those with different voices are heard, valued, and contribute to the organization's performance. These practices constitute a reflection of public managers' responsibilities (Gurchiek, 2018). What is less specific is whether including a more diverse and inclusive workforce in public organizations will influence collective decision-making processes or the reversal of existing inclusion policies and guidance.

All participants described experiences to illustrate their leadership philosophy in a positive light but also indicated their job is sometimes challenging. Two participants (Allison

and Zoe) spoke about or indicated their management practices involve getting "buy-in" from all employees and treating them with respect. Randel et al. (2018) emphasize that as leaders engage in inclusive practices proactively and focus their attention on all members; their approach goes beyond diversity management by directing inclusion to every group member. The building of inclusive practices takes encouraging steps toward sharing information, creating employee trust, and mitigating chaos in the workplace.

During the interviews, McKenzie stated he "prefer[s] a management style where less focus should be placed on hierarchy when engaging with employees as well as less leadership formality and that, more emphasis should be on being a team as well as a flatter organizational approach to building employee relationships." Zoe stated she is a "progressive individual and works hard to hire a diverse population." These findings indicate participants have a more inclusive approach when engaging employees compared to a traditional hierarchical approach.

The participants' different management style perspectives are essential because they embrace age differences and lived experiences (including areas of diversity, culture, and transformational change). Most participants viewed various management practices as opportunities to observe multi-stakeholders' interactions, which contributed to practices such as working across organizational boundaries and building trust relationships. The findings suggest a few noticeable differences in the IM philosophy and the eight public managers' values based on their leadership levels, years of experience, and perceived inclusive climate in their government organizations. Participants' insights into their management practices, personal interest, background, and vision for their organizations contribute to understanding the differences associated with increasing inclusion.

Perceptions of workplace challenges. It is not easy to implement inclusive practices when situations are beyond an individual's control. Two key factors are associated with inclusive workplaces: inclusive workplaces are "embedded in historical inequalities" [and exhibit] "the promotion of efforts geared towards change" (Dobusch, 2014, p. 220). Proponents of inclusive management argue rigorous efforts should be made at all levels in public management to champion inclusive policy and practice focused on equality (Leo & Barton, 2006, p. 172).

Participants in this study discussed tensions they perceived when promoting the inclusive practice and embracing a positive and freethinking workplace. Participant Meghan cited an experience where the challenge of getting tenured and new employees to work together as a team was an ongoing process. In a diversity group study, Shore et al. (2018) suggest that perceived organizational inclusion is more likely for those with longer tenures than those with less experience. Often, length of tenure is perceived as unfavorable since there is a tendency to think older employees are out of touch with the organization's vision for the way ahead, and their skills are obsolete. Importantly, chronological age and tenure in a job are not the same things. The quality of leadership in the workplace can have a significant impact on implementing inclusive practices.

Sabharwal (2014) proposal to create an inclusive environment is related to a commitment from top leaders and an organization that fosters unbiased policies. Participants Allison, Elizabeth, and Olivia observed top management's lack of commitment to inclusion in their agencies. Elizabeth stated, on occasion, "when going to top senior leadership with an idea, senior leaders have said something to the effect that is a crazy idea—nobody is going to do that

or whatever." The participants' perceived challenges bring to light several troubling concerns if the organization's goal is to support different perspectives and points of view.

To shape inclusive management, leaders make efforts to direct inclusiveness toward overcoming barriers to employees' performance. Understanding employees are the most valuable asset in achieving diverse views (Mitchell et al., 2015). Participant Zoe described working in an environment with constant legal policy changes that made it challenging to keep employee morale high because several employees struggled with organizational change. McKenzie and Monty emphasized they experienced challenges with HR recruitment practices for internal and external candidates. Participants Elizabeth and Zoe expressed hopes for a better way of hiring "inclusive-minded managers."

Participant McKenzie recalled engaging with his internal HR staffer. The conversations led to the HR staffer asking McKenzie, "What can HR offices do to recruit public managers focused on inclusiveness"? It appears that even the internal HR staffer recognized the concern that HR offices have limited upfront training related to inclusion when hiring managers and leaders. The study suggests that the initial onboarding for government employment appears to have a narrow focus on inclusion. McKenzie and some participants believe HR offices have a fundamental problem incorporating inclusiveness in their hiring practices.

According to Downey et al. (2015), human resource offices seek to communicate better, promote employees' skill development, and establish helpful interactions in the employees' working environment to cultivate an atmosphere of trust in an organization. As the findings illustrate, the continued hiring and development of managers and leaders require an enhanced training program focusing on creating inclusive leaders and linking their success to the employee's performance (McCotter et al., 2016).

Perceived challenges and barriers can affect the future expansion of inclusive practices. Public managers need to communicate and change existing conversations and connections, limiting the possibilities of encouraging inclusiveness and creating spaces for employees to work together in new and groundbreaking ways (Katz & Miller, 2018). Awareness of inclusive practices suggests leaders are most effective when they empower their followers and enable a two-way influence between leaders and followers, allowing greater use of the followers' skill sets (Jin et al., 2017).

Deeply embedded in the participants' narratives is the enthusiasm for creating fairness and paying attention to employees' needs. The participants discussed specific inclusive behaviors that they enact based on their values and beliefs informed by lived experiences, policies, and guidance (Ekins, 2017, p. 129). As several participants' experiences illustrate, some were more exposed to inclusive behaviors than others due to personal or professional experiences and the type of they work performed. Inclusion theories place the importance of inclusive leaders and practices at the core of moving inclusion beyond diversity (Ekins, 2017; Katz & Miller, 2018; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2018).

While this study's extent is limited, it aligns with Shore et al.'s (2018) belief that top leaders in an organization must implement zero-tolerance policies and practices for any form of discrimination and continue efforts supporting inclusion. Participants in this study perceive public managers who hold fast to ethics and integrity create a workplace environment that supports employee engagement, shared decision-making, and enables all employees to do their best work. In contrast, Participants Monty and McKenzie reported when authoritarian leadership is the norm; it is challenging to link organizational performance to inclusive management styles of leadership. Consequently, managing the processes by which public managers construct

inclusiveness is of meticulously planned importance. The steady increase in inclusion practices in the workplace over the last 50 years encourages the further expansion of inclusion at all government levels.

The themes reflect how all the participants enact practices that allow employees to express their ideas in an unconstrained manner that contributes to the shared decision-making process, resourcefulness, and workplace performance. In particular, the themes suggest an inclusive workplace has a climate of trust, transparency, fairness, and equality. Inclusiveness serves to help everyone in an organization. Additionally, it serves to move toward a no prejudice workplace. Regardless of the type of organization, public managers may consider the use of inclusion best practices from other governments, businesses, and non-profits as tools to enhance support for inclusion in the workplace.

Global Perspective Using IM Practices

Another area where public managers may benefit from a better understanding of creating greater inclusion in the workplace is to consider more interaction with global advocacy groups, non-profit organizations, and corporations focused on IM best practices. Inclusion work has experienced changes in both the United States and worldwide (Katz & Miller, 2018). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2018) provides an excellent example of inclusive practices globally. In 2018, the OECD espoused "The Inclusive Growth Framework," (p. 19), a model designed to bring best practice policy ideas to challenges related to falling global earnings for working people over the past three decades. The OECD's (2018) goal is to shape policies that foster prosperity, equality, opportunity, and well-being for all. The purpose and actions of the OCED signify inclusive practices matter at the cross-national level. During a time of polarizing discourse, when significant changes have taken place in

organizations around the globe, due to a focus on inclusiveness, OECD is one organization that has established a better vision to serve people. Of particular note, OECD is an intergovernmental organization whose members are not obligated to follow any of its policies.

Practical Implications

This study has several practical implications. First, this was a qualitative study exploring eight public managers' lived experiences and their understanding of inclusive practices in public management. The inclusive practices themes discovered may serve as a model for workplace inclusion. In general, the inclusive themes and the participants' inclusive leadership seem likely to connect employees' perceptions of inclusion, fairness, and equality in the workplace. Several inclusiveness studies and public managers reported diversity alone is not enough to build an inclusive workplace (Jin et al., 2017; Moon, 2018; Sabharwal, 2014).

Therefore, keeping the concepts of inclusive practices at the forefront of scholarly conversations increases its relevance and visibility when making public policy decisions. Within public administration, inclusive management practices are another tool in the public managers' toolkit. The findings suggest inclusive leadership is important in building relationships that engage all employees. Additionally, the results suggest difficult conversations and healthy communication actions are required to change cultural mindsets toward greater workplace inclusion.

The second practical implications are the importance of understanding patterns of inclusive practices. Of particular note, inclusive practices that focus on relational work such as open-communication, listening to employees, engagement, and making connections with employees are critical to deciding for the best course of action in resolving complex problems. Additionally, participating in culture awareness events and other non-work-related activities

appear as pleasant activities and, in some cases, situated as inclusive activities that participants viewed as building an inclusive workplace climate. These implications align with Shore et al.'s (2018) concept that employees seek and value belongingness and uniqueness in the workplace.

Lastly, suppose government organizations consider sharing and receiving best practices diversity and inclusion policy and guidance directives as a catalyst and reminder of the importance of organizational or institutional involvement. In that case, organizations might benefit from an enhanced understanding of assisting U.S. public managers in recognizing and promoting inclusion. Moon (2018) suggests, "Inclusive management is a key strategy for effectively managing diversity" (p. 218). Increasing inclusive management practices is an ongoing challenge at the management level in government organizations.

The findings reveal the participants consider it their responsibility to set an inclusive tone when having conversations with employees. The results of this study imply that a majority of participants understand they are engaged in an ongoing effort to create and maintain inclusive practices at all levels, regardless of Leo and Barton's (2006) claim that in an environment where inclusiveness faces challenges, the dedication to inclusion is difficult to sustain. The results from this study might bring awareness to perceived biases and an increased understanding of inclusive practices.

Theoretical Implications

In this study, narrative inquiry blending eight participants' individual lived experiences and perceptions provided the basis for analyzing and interpreting the texts (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This study highlights the importance of the relationship between inclusive management frameworks and theories, on the one hand, and management activities, on the other. Additionally, other scholarship informing this study included inclusion, diversity, and inclusive

leadership, emphasizing bringing employees together, fostering a sense of connection in the workplace, and acknowledging employees as valuable assets.

This study reveals the relationship between public managers and inclusiveness and implications inclusion and inclusive management theories. Over the past twenty years, progress has been made in seeing a shift from diversity as a *disagreement* and government *levied* to seeing diversity as a possible opportunity to make an organization better through inclusion. However, legacy issues of Affirmative Action programs and equality views of the mid-20th century persist.

This study shows in the everyday experience of managers inclusive management is an elastic concept and takes on a variety of situated meanings. The concept broaden modes of inquiry allows researchers to address issues such as protection of marginalized groups, how organizations treat individual differences, addressing decimation issues, and employee expertise. The concept 'inclusion' is an intricate weave of supporting and differing values and practices that make up inclusive practices, which support employees in the workplace. Most importantly, inclusion relates to the connections underlying the execution of actions and policies which provide useful information about the particular inclusive practices which have progressed within a given workplace context (Elkin, 2017). Inclusion is not a "specific achievable or definable state" (p. 7).

Inclusiveness in public management intends to level the playing field for all employees in the workplace. Inclusiveness contributes to creating equitable organizations. In this study, the extent of inclusiveness reflects changes in organizational norms and practices. In the absence of legislative initiatives such as diversity and inclusion programs, the moral values and principles to create an inclusive work climate are essential.

Inclusive leadership is an inclusion model aligned with antecedents focused on understanding how individual differences may affect the actions of inclusive leaders (Randel et al., 2018). In this study, despite some differences, participants generally agree the following guidelines for public managers are essential:

1. considering employees as valuable assets
2. sharing information with employees
3. encouraging open lines of communication and listening to the voice of employees
4. empowering employees
5. building trust, equality, and fairness for all employees

The scholarship on inclusion does not adequately address how managers' characteristics might influence their behaviors and lead to diverse and inclusive work environments. The narrative inquiry identified inclusive leadership beliefs and IM practices as the most important factors supporting fairness and equality in the workplace. This research contributes to the growing literature on leadership inclusiveness observed in organizational processes and leadership values (Shore et al., 2011). The results of this study indicate the participants understand and enact behaviors supporting IM practices. The participants' in-depth narratives and government IM policy interpretations and guidance answered the research question and provided credibility to the results.

Future Research

The findings of this study identified essential insights into the phenomenon of inclusive practices in public management through eight public managers' lenses. Once a program's initiative moves from the planning process to the implementation phase, it may be easier to validate inclusive management constructs. Bringing change within an organizational setting is

challenging. Flexible, inclusive management practices (e.g., telecommuting opportunities, employee well-being programs) may be preferred ways to facilitate organizational and policy change in 21st-century public management. Several participants in the study mentioned the lack of enhanced inclusive developmental training. Relatedly, Vohra et al. (2015) suggest public organizations should engage with diversity and inclusion managers from business corporations to understand their best practices related to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Future researchers might explore ideas such as how public managers view existing IM training in their organizations and whether it affects or informs their inclusive management decision-making. Additionally, a narrative study related to employee well-being programs and the connection to human resource practices may offer additional insight into how government organizations can improve employee recruitment, hiring, and retention. Such a study could include a survey of specific inclusive practices. Even though many scholars debate the significance of relationships between employee well-being and public management, it would be interesting to learn, for example, if newer (and younger) government employees consider wellness programs a significant benefit. It is also important for the future to explore the systematic incorporation of inclusion into HR practices (e.g., initial and annual online IM training). Shore et al. (2018) suggest HR practices could be a starting point for creating inclusion by providing the tools to shift the focus from surface-level disparity to addressing organizational, social, and global issues.

In this study, the concepts of valuing, connecting, and communicating with employees in an inclusive culture that recognizes merit promotions and rewards link closely to the theoretical concept of inclusionary leaders (Randel et al., 2018). Moving the inclusive management journey ahead, Randel et al. (2018) propose exploring how leaders balance connecting with employees

and exhibit inclusive leadership behaviors might be an exciting research area for the future. This study may offer insight into managers' perceptions regarding employees' need for belongingness and uniqueness in the workplace.

Conclusion

The participants in this study offered practical insight into how public managers think about and understand inclusive practices they deem necessary to achieve organizational priorities, missions, goals, and vision. Offenbacker (2010) suggests, "inclusiveness and positive outcomes" (p. 119) will not be achieved unless someone takes responsibility for beginning the conversation across organizations. The participants' detailed stories indicate the dynamics within work environments depend on interpersonal relationships with and among employees.

The participants in this study exhibit a deep commitment to an inclusive work environment, while some employees' exclusion is still apparent today. The participants' breadth and depth of inclusive practices reflect little differences across the various government agencies. The data in this study suggest most participants' workplaces have consistent D & I policies, similar organizational cultures, values, and goals. However, participants' emphasized HR practitioners' inclusive training for new and current public managers is limited. The research suggests although HR practitioners assume leaders know what to expect when directed to be inclusive in their practices (Gurchiek, 2018), public managers may need ongoing and enhanced inclusive leadership training.

The seven emergent themes indicate all participants enact behaviors supporting the creation of an inclusive environment. The results of this study suggest participants' positive experiences contribute to supporting inclusive management practices and fostering an unbiased view of their capacity to be inclusive leaders. Participants agree more inclusive practices may

lead to broader conversations encouraged by new perspectives. Greater agility and faster service in government work are essential to the mission and goals of an organization. The value of employees is a high priority in the workplace, particularly when balancing inclusive practices and equality to ensure the language used in the workplace shows the value of different demographic characteristics (Moon, 2018). The findings suggest organizations can no longer choose to disregard and not recognize the distinctiveness of different groups in the workplace because doing so is essential to enhancing work performance (Vohra et al., 2015).

This research consisted of a small number of participants. Participants had various career pathways and demographics. They varied in age, levels of government, racial background, and extent of public management experience. Most notably, the younger participants were more likely to reflect on less conventional structures and practices such as supporting a flatter organization rather than hierarchy, greater use of social media (e.g., chat communications), team building, shared decision making, flexibility with employees, wellness, employee autonomy, and empowering employees. In this study, the length of time a participant served as a manager did not appear to influence their likelihood of implementing inclusive practices. Participants with the most years of experience and older relied more on formal policies and structural changes to foster inclusive practices. In contrast, younger participants with less experience fostered a more inclusive management approach to public management.

Some participants described how they bring employees together for brainstorming sessions and team huddles, thereby awakening employees' capabilities. Shore et al.'s (2011) framework refer to the importance of inclusion and inclusive practices that focus on employees' need for belongingness and valuing of their uniqueness. Participants voiced their interest in

morale, values, and ethics in the workplace as highly necessary. Perhaps inclusive practice requires the roles and everyday tasks of public managers to remain flexible and adaptable.

The participants' expressed philosophy indicates the managers' support for making a good impression, having no hidden agendas, and being sincere in demonstrating care for their employees. In this study, what emerged is a much more situated and a multifaceted account of a wide range of different practices interacting with each other to produce a workplace environment that promotes inclusive thinking and practices (Ekins, 2017, p. 131). The evolution of inclusive management practices in public management serves as a benchmark for moving forward in the future.

Many scholars and practitioners see diversity and inclusion in an organization as a legacy of the affirmative action era, primarily focused on achieving acceptable demographic representation levels, adopting workforce regulations, and avoiding public relations problems (Katz & Miller, 2018). The idea of creating an utterly unbiased organization may not be realistic. Consequently, some scholars and practitioners struggle to view inclusive management and practices as credible public management tools. Recognizing this anxiety is important in public management. The seven themes in this study have implications for hard-to-have conversations about how inclusive management practices may help manage diversity.

The fast demographic shifts in many federal, state, and local government agencies have created significant spaces for public administration scholars to explore inclusive management's organizational significances. Most importantly, the participants in this study-underscore that leadership based on social inclusion's moral values is fundamental to workplace inclusiveness. Their leadership actions suggest employee representation in the workplace is an essential factor that may reduce the perception of an employee feeling invisible.

This research brings forward several understandings of the functions of inclusive management. Findings highlight the concerted efforts of the participants to reduce barriers to inclusion in the workplace. Additionally, findings illustrate enhancing the possibility of enabling the strategic, operational, and technical direction of an organization by either constructing or reexamining the norms and practices contributes to an inclusive workplace climate.

The unbiased work environment may not be as obvious externally. The words participants used when describing how they understand inclusive practices included recognizing the influence of a leader's inclusiveness is vital for the work of organizational change, fairness, and equality. The results suggest organizations that focus on diversity and inclusion and are willing to receive and share best practices may experience the positive benefits of inclusion and are unconditionally dedicated to integrating diversity and inclusion (Vohra et al., 2015).

This study adds to the inclusion literature and furthers an understanding of how "shifts in terminology may have far-reaching implications for social equity as they can alter how policy is formulated and implemented by signaling what should be valued in the process" (Pitts, 2011, p. i78). The eight participants' narratives illustrate how lived experiences in different positions understand inclusive practices in the social order, new management techniques, and actions applicable to organizational changes toward a more inclusive workplace.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Email/Flyer

Call for Research Study Participants

My name is Jessica Spencer-Gallucci. I am a retired Air Force Civilian and a Ph.D. student with Virginia Tech's Public Administration and Policy program located in Alexandria, VA. Having spent over 30 years working in public service, I decided to do my dissertation research study topic on the "***The Exploration of the Influence of Inclusive Management Practices: through the Lenses of Public Managers***." The focus of the qualitative research study is to gain insight into current public managers' lived experiences and perceptions to determine if inclusive management practices have influenced public management processes. My recruitment selection of participants stems from my contact with an enormous professional network of public managers worldwide.

I am respectfully writing to ask if you or someone you can recommend will participate in this strictly "voluntary" research study. I need ten current government/public leaders' professionals to participant in the study. There is no compensation for participants. If you choose to participate, you may alternatively choose not to participate at any time. The time commitment will involve approximately two interviews if needed, 60-90 minutes in length. The interviews will be audio recorded for transcription by the researcher. All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality of participants and discussions. Written consent is required for participation. For anonymity, there will be no reference to your name in the research. Names or organizations are not relevant or required for data collection.
I know this is a heavy request given the demands on your time. Your consideration of this request is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at [redacted] or email me at [redacted] Please let me know no later than 2 February 2019. Many thanks in advance!
Respectfully,

Jessica L. Spencer-Gallucci
Virginia Tech University, Ph.D. Student

Attachment:
Consent Form

Appendix B: Informed Consent for Participants

Appendix A

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for Participants
in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: An Exploration of the Influence of Inclusive Management Practices: Through the Lens of Public Managers

Investigator(s): Jessica L. Spencer-Gallucci [redacted]
Name E-mail/Phone number

Matthew Dull [redacted] Committee Chair
Name E-mail/Phone number

I. Purpose of this Research Project
I am conducting a research study entitled An Exploration of the Influence of Inclusive Management Practices: through the Lens of Public Managers. The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore and understand the lived experiences and perceptions of how public organizations are influenced by inclusive management practices. As part of my research, a sample of 10 professional public managers in a leadership role (i.e., subject matter experts) will be interviewed to get their perspective on the influence of inclusion/inclusive management in public management. Public managers must have two or more direct reports. I have limited the population size to current public managers leading organizations in various public entities (i.e., federal agencies, Department of Defense, state and county governments) will be asked to participate in the study. The research data collected may be used to write my dissertation.

II. Procedures
Your participation will involve oral one-on-one semi-structured audio interviews (not to exceed two interviews) that focus on obtaining your individualized experiences and perception on how inclusion/inclusive management influenced your public management governance processes in your organization. The interview will take approximately 1-1.5 hours depending on participant responses. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience, and at a location convenient for you. For this study, the number of years as a public leader is relevant. In addition, I will capture demographic data (i.e., racial/ethnic background). Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, you can do so. The results of the research study may be published, but your identity will remain confidential, and your name will not be disclosed to any outside party.

III. Risks
In this research, there are no known risks associated with this study or any interviews. Please be assured that all participants and their respective organizations will remain anonymous.

IV. Benefits
While there may be no direct benefit to you, a possible benefit of your participation is that you will have the opportunity to contribute to the body of knowledge by providing aggregated data on whether Inclusion/Inclusive Management Practices have any impact on public management governance processes. No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality
For anonymity and confidentiality, there will be no reference to your name or organization in the research study. All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality of participants and discussions. The interviews will be audio recorded for transcription by the investigator. A pseudonym--fictitious name will be created for the study. Data will be used and stored in a confidential manner such as data coded; identifiable information stored separately and securely from coded data. All data will be aggregated and compiled to develop themes for further analysis and research. At no time will the investigators release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent. Data will be stored in a secure and locked area. The data will be held for three years, and then destroyed.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation
Participation in the study is voluntary, and there is no compensation for participants.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw
It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions that you choose or respond to what is being asked of you without penalty. Please note there may be circumstances under which the investigator may determine that a subject should not continue as a subject. Should you withdraw or otherwise discontinue participation, you will be compensated for the portion of the project completed in accordance with the Compensation section of this document.

VIII. Questions or Concerns
Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact one of the research investigators whose contact information is included at the beginning of this document. Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board at irb@vt.edu or (540) 231-3732.

IX. Subject's Consent
Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview for this research study. I have read the Consent Form and the conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. If you agree to participate in this study, a copy of this document will be given to you.
I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ Date_____
Subject signature

_____
Subject printed name

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Research Question	Basic Criteria	Interview Questions	Sample of Probing questions depending on the response from the participants
How do public managers/leaders think about and understand inclusive management practices?	• Years as a public manager/leader • Racial/Ethnic Background • Minimum age of 18 years old	What is your perception of what it means to be a public manager? How do you feel about citizen-participation in policy decision-making? How would you describe your management style? What is your viewpoint of implementing employees' suggestions? What are some of your perceived challenges facing a public leader who embraces a positive and freethinking work environment? Any other experiences or perceptions you would like to mention.	How do you ensure shared decision-making in your organization? What do you believe are essential factors for engaging employees in the workplace?

Appendix D: IRB Approval

VIRGINIA TECH.

Appendix F

Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732 Fax 540/231-0959
email irb@vt.edu
website http://www.irb.vt.edu

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 3, 2019

TO: Matthew Martin Dull, Jessica Lee Spencer-Gallucci

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires January 29, 2021)

PROTOCOL TITLE: An Exploration of the Influence of Inclusive Management Practices: Through the Lens of Public Managers

IRB NUMBER: **18-424**

Effective January 2, 2019, the Virginia Tech Institution Review Board (IRB) approved the Amendment request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

https://secure.research.vt.edu/external/irb/responsibilities.htm

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As:	**Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5,6,7**
Protocol Approval Date:	**July 24, 2018**
Protocol Expiration Date:	**July 23, 2019**
Continuing Review Due Date*:	**July 9, 2019**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

Date*	OSP Number	Sponsor	Grant Comparison Conducted?

* Date this proposal number was compared, assessed as not requiring comparison, or comparison information was revised.

If this IRB protocol is to cover any other grant proposals, please contact the IRB office (irb@vt.edu) immediately.

Appendix E: Documents List

The names of the organizations were removed to retain the confidentiality of the participants.

Policy or Guidance Document	Year
Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for Executive Order 13583	2012
Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan	2012
Inclusion: Belonging	2013
Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity	2015
Promoting Diversity and Inclusion	2017
Diversity and Inclusion Policy	2018
Diversity and Inclusion Competencies	2019