

INTEGRATION RESISTANCE IN THE ACQUISITION OF NASHVILLE  
PUBLISHING COMPANIES BY INTERNATIONAL FIRMS

by

Dan Galen Hodges Jr.

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Business Administration

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Liberty University, School of Business

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## Abstract

A qualitative case study was utilized for understanding integration resistance throughout the process of international acquisition and integration within the Nashville music publishing creative cluster. The general problem addressed was the integration resistance associated with the acquisition of small independent companies by international firms and the effects on employee satisfaction and productivity resulting in the reduction of firm performance and an increase in employee turnover. The purpose of this flexible design qualitative case study was to add to the body of knowledge on the failure of international acquisitions due to a decline in the productivity and job satisfaction of employees after a merger and acquisition. The first few research questions explored the experiences of employees throughout the acquisition and integration process and the factors associated with changes in job satisfaction and productivity. The final research questions explored if integration strategies were utilized and the effect that the Nashville market's culture had on the success of acquisition and integration. Sixteen one-on-one interviews were conducted which resulted in nine key themes. The discovered themes combined with the existing research helped to establish critical recommendations for successful acquisition and integration within the Nashville market. With the completion of this study, international firms wishing to enter the Nashville market through acquisition and integration should have a better understanding of the issues they will face. Lastly, the study's recommendations provide a framework and best practices for acquisition and integration within the Nashville music publishing creative cluster.

*Keywords:* international acquisition, integration resistance, Nashville creative cluster, integration strategy, digital streaming

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**Approvals**

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my kids Josie, Lillian, and Galen, who are involved in their own school experience and aspiring to achieve their dreams and callings in life. I hope this accomplishment inspires you to realize that you can do anything of which you set your mind. No obstacles are too big that hard work and faith in God cannot overcome. The path through life is not always easy, but I know that your hearts and the dedication to excellence that you received from your mother will always drive you. I love you.

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### **Section 1: Foundation of the Study**

Nashville, Tennessee is known as one of the world's music business centers and holds the distinction of being deemed a music city by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Baker, 2016). Due to the presence of record labels, the city has become what Park et al. (2019) described as a business cluster where businesses locate near one another to compete and work together within a market for mutual benefit. Music publishers, songwriters, musicians, managers, booking agents, and artists have located to the market; and each facet of the music industry works together for mutual benefit (Baker, 2016). Music publishers historically have thrived on royalties from radio performances and album sales. In recent years, however, digital streaming royalties have quickly replaced traditional revenue sources to become the largest source of music revenue worldwide (Datta et al., 2018). As digital streaming revenues have increased, large music publishers seeking increased market share are continually acquiring smaller publishers (Towse, 2017). The situation is being regularly experienced by Nashville publishing companies and their workers.

This case study examined the international acquisition of independent Nashville music publishing companies and the issues associated with successful integration. In most industries, acquisitions fail to live up to the expectations of the acquiring firm (Zakaria et al., 2017). For the study of the Nashville music publishing industry, some of the common issues and challenges found in the literature on mergers and acquisitions occurred. Due to the culture of the Nashville music business cluster, other issues unique to the local market were also discovered. The examination of integration resistance within internationally acquired Nashville publishing companies adds to the literature on acquisitions in the local market as well as the overall literature on international acquisitions within a business cluster.

For this study, sixteen workers were interviewed. Each participant had worked for an independent Nashville music publishing company before and after the company was acquired and integrated by an international firm. The accounts given by each participant uncovered common themes associated with the experience. The themes helped to give a solid background on the experience and the common and unique issues that contribute to integration resistance within the market. The results of the study provide a foundation and guide for international firms wishing to acquire and integrate firms within the Nashville music publishing creative cluster.

### **Background of the Problem**

As the landscape of the business world becomes more globalized, organizations are embarking upon strategies for growth and development that include mergers and acquisitions across international borders (Zakaria et al., 2017). The firms are seeking to find competitive advantages by strategically entering new markets (Ivancic et al., 2017). International acquisitions have encountered significant problems and in many cases have failed to live up to the expectations of the acquiring firm and have had an impact on overall company value (Zakaria et al., 2017). The integration process of combining firms after an acquisition has been shown to contribute to employees' fear of job loss, higher perception of unfair treatment from management, and an increased amount of employee uncertainty and stress (King et al., 2020). Employee resistance has been shown to be a significant problem through the acquisition and integration process that can lead to morale damage, lower contributions, and turnover issues with employees (Charoensukmongkol, 2016). The issues associated with international mergers and acquisitions have been a well-researched topic; however, there is a lack of literature on acquisition occurrences within the music publishing industry in Nashville, which is experiencing a rise in international firms entering the market through acquisition (Towse, 2017).

In today's world of increasing globalization, there has been a rise in the importance for organizations to strategically enter new markets to find a competitive advantage (Ivancic et al., 2017). Towse (2017) explained that new technologies have drastically transformed how the public consumes music. In recent years, music consumption through digital streaming has grown exponentially (Datta et al., 2018). In 2015, digital streaming became the single largest source of music industry revenues in the US and the primary method used by the public to listen to their favorite artist, song, and music (Datta et al., 2018). As a result, publishers have realized the need to adapt their business models to account for the shift in income sources (Towse, 2017). Large music publishers around the world, realizing the need to adapt their business models to account for the shift in income sources, have embarked upon acquisition strategies to increase market share (Towse, 2017). The strategy of acquiring smaller organizations is an attempt of the international firms to increase catalog size and royalty revenue streams to benefit from the rise in revenues of digital streaming (Towse, 2017).

In 2013, the music business in Nashville, Tennessee contributed over five billion dollars to the local economy (Baker, 2016). The business cluster of the Nashville music community, known as "music city", has a unique culture where the record labels and music publishers work together symbiotically to promote the genre of country music (Baker, 2016, para. 4). Park et al. (2019) described business clusters as geographical areas where businesses in the same industry cluster together to benefit from the local market and each other. Zhou et al. (2020) explained that clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions that share a particular field. In the same way that actors move to Hollywood to be close to the film industry for increased opportunities, songwriters and music publishers cluster in Nashville and work

together symbiotically to benefit from the proximity to the major record labels that have offices in the market (Baker, 2016).

The Nashville market has over 130 publishing companies and is the largest publishing center in the southeastern United States (Baker, 2016). Geringer et al. (2016) expressed that the culture of an acquired firm's local industry might not be amenable to the culture desired from the acquired firm. Gill (2018) suggested that workers may experience a unique understanding of being acquired by an international firm. The Nashville music publishing industry's culture and symbiotic nature may create an experience unlike other industries. There is a gap in the literature on how the recent rise in acquisitions within the Nashville music publishing market has affected employee job satisfaction and productivity. In particular, the issues associated with the creative business cluster due to mergers and acquisitions have not been examined.

### **Problem Statement**

The general problem to be addressed is the integration resistance associated with the acquisition of small independent companies by international firms and the effects on employee satisfaction and productivity resulting in the reduction of firm performance and an increase in employee turnover. Cross-border mergers and acquisitions are a prominent form of strategy for growth and development in today's globalized landscape of business (Zakaria et al., 2017). The majority of international acquisitions have failed to live up to expectations and have had an impact on overall company value (Zakaria et al., 2017). King et al. (2020) described that the integration process of combining firms after acquisition may contribute to employees' fear of job loss, higher perception of unfair treatment from management, and an increased amount of employee uncertainty and stress. Charoensukmongkol (2016) further supported these views by explaining that a significant problem that normally occurs through mergers and acquisitions is

integration resistance from employees which can lead to morale damage, lower contributions, and turnover problems. In recent years, there has been increase in the number of large music publishers around the world realizing the need to adapt their business models to account for the rise of digital streaming (Towse, 2017). Those publishers have embarked upon acquisition strategies to increase market share as streaming revenues continue to rise (Towse, 2017). The specific problem addressed was the effects on productivity and employee satisfaction that occur after the acquisition of independent Nashville music publishing companies by international firms resulting in the reduction of firm performance and an increase in employee turnover.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this flexible design qualitative case study was to add to the body of knowledge on the failure of international acquisitions due to a decline in the productivity and job satisfaction of employees after a merger and acquisition. The experiences of an acquired firm's employees have been shown to be a dominant factor in the success or failure of an acquisition (King et al., 2020). Using a case study design, the larger problem was explored through the evaluation of internationally acquired Nashville publishing companies post-integration. The study also hoped to determine any issues unique to the Nashville music publishing industry's culture that may hinder or aid successful international acquisitions. Kumar et al. (2018) explained that organizational culture evolves from an organization's value system that becomes the norms affecting the behavior of employees. The culture and traditions of an individual will influence his or her understanding of an experience (Gill, 2018). The culture of an acquired firm's local industry might not be amenable to the culture desired from the acquired firm (Geringer et al., 2016).



## Research Questions

To address the problem statement of a study, research questions need to be developed. The purpose of the questions is to narrow the problem to a point that a researcher can collect and analyze data (Creswell, 2016). For the current study on the international acquisition of Nashville music publishers, a general research question followed by sub-questions was developed to address the overall issues related to being acquired. Each subsequent question narrowed the problem further to specific issues of job satisfaction and productivity. The final research question and sub-questions focused on the specific problem of the Nashville music industry and if the culture of the industry is a factor in addition to the normal issues in most international acquisitions.

**RQ1:** What are the factors contributing to increases and declines in productivity and job satisfaction of employees whose firm has been acquired by an international organization?

**RQ1a.** What are the factors that contribute to the decline in productivity and job satisfaction of employees after their firm is acquired by an international organization?

**RQ1b.** What are the factors that contribute to the increase in productivity and job satisfaction of employees after their firm is acquired by an international organization?

**RQ2.** What are the perceived experiences of employees undergoing the process of the acquisition of their firm by an international organization?

**RQ2a.** How does the perception of being acquired by an international organization affect employee productivity?

**RQ2b.** How does the perception of being acquired by an international organization affect employee job satisfaction?

**RQ3.** What are the factors influencing the success of increasing employee productivity and job satisfaction during an organization's acquisition and integration by an international firm?

**RQ3a.** What organizational strategies are necessary for high productivity in an acquired firm?

**RQ3b.** What organizational strategies are necessary for employee job satisfaction in an acquired firm?

**RQ4.** What are the differences in the culture of the Nashville music publishing industry from other industries?

**RQ4a.** To what extent does the culture of the Nashville music publishing industry negatively affect productivity in the process of the acquisition and integration of independent companies by international firms?

**RQ4b.** To what extent does the culture of the Nashville music publishing industry negatively affect employee satisfaction in the process of the acquisition and integration of independent companies by international firms?

**Discussion of Research Questions.** The first research question attempted to discover reasons behind the decline of employee productivity and job satisfaction after an international firm purchases and attempts to integrate another firm. The sub-questions for research question one sought to discover the factors that contribute to the decline and the increase of productivity and job satisfaction separately. It is important to examine the factors for success and failure to be able to approach the problem from each perspective. Overall, the first set of questions were broad and were the foundation of the study. The second research question asked how the variables affect each other. This study examined how the international acquisition of an organization within a business cluster affects the employees of the purchased firm in regard to

productivity and job satisfaction. The main research question broadly explored the issues for the case study. The sub-questions separated the issues into two questions of how the purchase and subsequent integration affected employee productivity and job satisfaction. Similar to the second research question set, the third research question explored how international organizations can increase employee productivity and job satisfaction during acquisition and integration. The sub-questions separated the two issues and explored the strategies necessary for increasing productivity and employee satisfaction. The question set gave valuable data for any industry to help give grounding for the study to further focus on the specific Nashville music publishing industry.

After the first three more general research question sets, research question four sought to relate the topic to the specific problem of the Nashville music publishing industry. Examination of the business environment and culture of the industry gave a strong base for applying the knowledge gained from the general research questions and helped to develop specific questions for the participants of the study. The first three research question sets explored the general problem statement and the issues that occur with employee experiences when a firm is purchased by an international firm. The fourth research question focused on the specific problem statement, which explored the environment of the Nashville music publishing industry and how it affects employee productivity and job satisfaction when a firm is purchased and integrated into an international firm with its own culture and methods. Overall, the four question sets provided a starting point for structuring a literature review and laid the foundation of the study.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study was conducted with a flexible design and a qualitative method. Specifically, a case study design was utilized. The reason for a flexible design was that the examination of

Nashville music publishers within the local creative business cluster, who have had their firm purchased by an international organization, might lead to unexpected conclusions. Robson and McCartan (2016) explained that flexible designs can adapt as research evolves. Qualitative research approaches the research process from a perspective that the answer may be different than what was previously learned (Creswell, 2016).

**Discussion of method.** The problem of the decline in productivity and employee satisfaction is not an easily quantifiable topic. Qualitative research methods seek to interpret what happens naturally in the world to make sense of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, this current study composed of Nashville creative workers may not be the same as the majority of the literature on the topic of international acquisitions. Seawright and Gerring (2008) explained that case study research is used to understand broader issues than the case itself; therefore, the focus on the international acquisition of Nashville publishing companies gives insight into some issues unique to the local creative business cluster. Drăgan (2016) outlined that individuals are different, and they act differently. The research questions sought to find the factors contributing to the decline of productivity and employee satisfaction in general as well as the issues unique to the local industry.

**Discussion of Design.** Case study, as a design, was chosen because the analysis of organizations that have been acquired by an international organization might uncover common themes associated with the event (Creswell 2016). Yin (2018) explained that case studies are utilized when a researcher attempts to study a phenomenon within the bounds of a real-life, contemporary context, or setting. Case study research is what is to be studied, not necessarily a methodology. Case studies can focus on concrete entities, such as individuals, small groups, or organizations; or they can focus on less concrete entities, such as communities, partnerships, or

relationships. Robson and McCartan (2016) described a case study as using collective sources of evidence to empirically investigate a certain present-day issue or event within its real-life context. The themes derived from interviews of participants that worked for acquired Nashville firms show what contributes to the issues of productivity increases or declines and employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The themes also uncovered issues unique to international acquisitions within the market (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Grounded theory and phenomenology were ruled out as designs to utilize due to grounded theory's attempt to create new theory and phenomenology's focus on the story of a lived experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Narrative design was also not chosen as a design due to the design's focus on one or two individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study examined the international acquisition and integration of Nashville publishing companies. To adequately examine the issue, it was appropriate to have participants from multiple jobs within acquired firms. The research location was Nashville, Tennessee. In recent years, the Nashville music publishing industry has experienced the acquisition of many small publishing companies by international firms (Towse, 2017). The reason for the rise in company and catalog purchases is due to the rise in streaming revenue (Towse, 2017). Large international firms are attempting to increase their global market share to take advantage of the new income opportunities (Towse, 2017). As a result, many Nashville publishing workers have encountered the experience of working for a company that has been purchased and integrated into a larger firm. For instance, Canadian publishing conglomerate Ole' recently purchased Nashville small publisher Parallel Entertainment (Parker, 2019). Parallel's executive and creative staff were retained and integrated into the acquiring firm (Parker, 2019).

**Summary of the Nature of the Study.** The aim of the study was to interview workers, like those at Parallel, who have witnessed their company being acquired and integrated by an international firm. As a publisher in Nashville for thirty years, the researcher has strong relationships with an adequate number of workers who have had their firms purchased by larger international organizations. The researcher requested permission from each participant in advance with the goal of having a total of at least fifteen participants from three different acquired firms for the study. The interviews were conducted virtually and recorded with the participants' permission. The researcher asked each participant to describe the experience of their company being acquired and integrated into an international firm with the goal of uncovering issues related to job satisfaction and productivity. In addition to interviews, the research utilized other data techniques including observation and analysis of the productivity of the employees involved. The case study adds to the literature on international acquisitions within a business cluster as well as uncovers new issues specific to the Nashville music publishing market.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Once a problem statement, research questions, and a research methodology are determined, the foundation is laid to map the course of a research study. A qualitative case study with a constructivist paradigm is the approach for the current study. The following section outlines the initial research framework for the examination of the experiences of Nashville music publishing workers after their firm is acquired by an international firm. Included below in figure one is a diagram detailing the researcher's initial conceptual framework showing the relationship between the elements of the study and the outcomes expected from the literature.

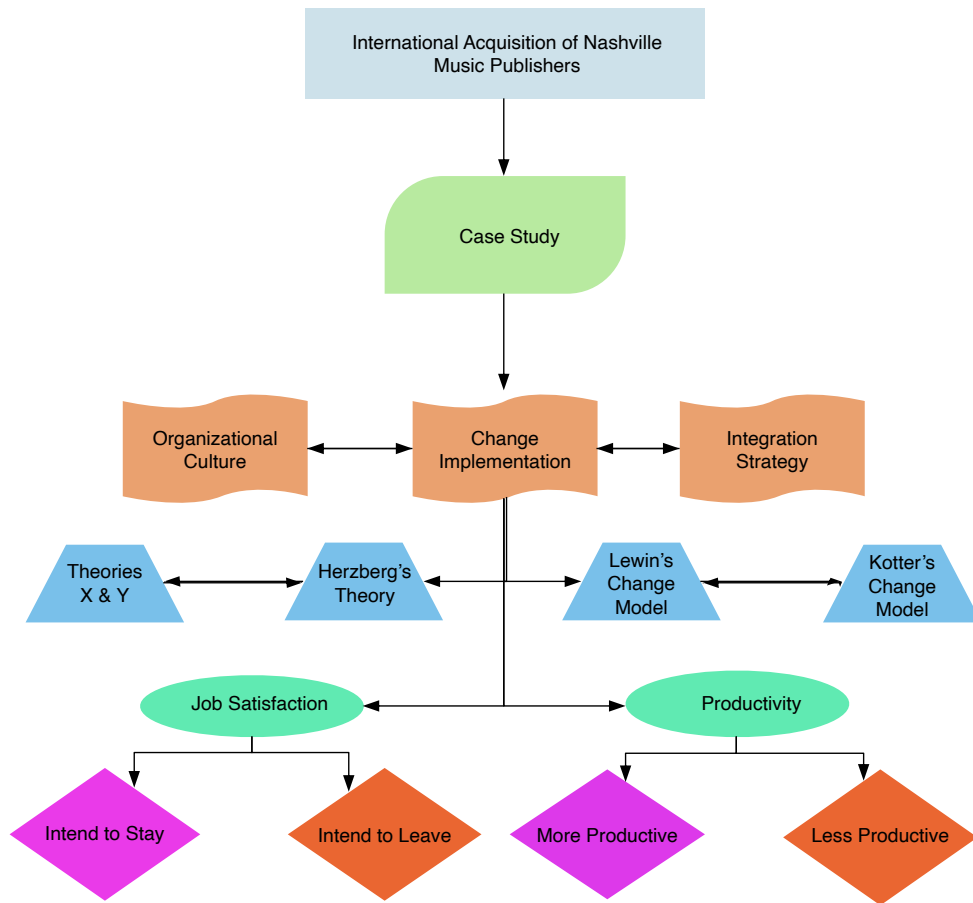


Figure 1. Research framework diagram -international acquisition of Nashville publishers.

Examining the outcomes of job satisfaction and productivity through interviewing participants who have experienced acquisition by an international firm unveiled some issues unique to the experience for Nashville music publishing workers. An updated conceptual framework and discussion are shown in section three’s presentation of the findings along with an updated diagram shown in figure seven.

**Concepts**

**Organizational Culture.** The first concept shown on the left side of the third row of figure one is organizational culture. Since the 1990s, mergers and acquisitions have grown exponentially in the United States (US) (Mello, 2019). Subsequently, three out of four mergers

and acquisitions in the US fail to achieve the targeted strategic and financial goal sought by the acquiring firm (Mello, 2019). Corporate culture influences the success and failure of mergers and acquisitions (Gamble et al., 2019). Corporate culture is the combination of ingrained behaviors, shared core values, beliefs, and attitudes that influence an organization's business approach (Gamble et al., 2019). Kumar et al. (2018) described organizational culture as what evolves from an organization's value system that becomes the norms affecting the behavior of employees. Groen (2018) outlined that employee participation and commitment are increased in a culture of perceived procedural fairness.

***Change Implementation.*** The next concept, which is located in the middle of the third row of figure one is change implementation. In today's world of rising globalism, cultural, social, and legal issues have shown a rise in importance as organizations strategically enter new markets to find competitive advantages (Ivancic et al., 2017). Global complexity is greatly influenced by culture as well as other barriers (Geringer et al., 2016). Well-documented barriers to change include habits, patterns that are stable, and power and influence, because in an acquisition, some employees may find power decreased, limited resources, and misunderstandings in the form of communication and information flow (Phillips & Gully, 2014). Some cultural aspects related to the process of change are tolerance for ambiguity, power distance, attitude toward planning, communication styles, and flexibility (Geringer et al., 2016). The US culture is individualistic, responsibility is allocated, and workers expect individual rewards (Geringer et al., 2016). The non-participation of employees is the root cause of the failure of many change initiatives (Krügel & Traub, 2018).

Organizations can overcome resistance to change through communication, performance appraisals, participation from employees, promoting fairness, negotiation, incentives, pilot



programs, and organizational development (Phillips & Gully, 2014). Employee job dissatisfaction can be a barrier to change initiatives due to cognitive dissonance (Phillips & Gully, 2014). Cognitive dissonance is the incompatibility between behavior and an attitude or between attitudes (Phillips & Gully, 2014). Management should strive to reduce cognitive dissonance and increase job satisfaction by influencing change perception, so employees understand that change is positive (Phillips & Gully, 2014). Job satisfaction can also be increased by work that is challenging, job variety, and giving employees more autonomy over their work (Phillips & Gully, 2014). Job satisfaction results in lower turnover (Tschopp et al., 2013). Job dissatisfaction results in disengaged workers who do not perform to their potential (Mello, 2019). Employee engagement is the connection between employees and their organization, job, manager, or coworkers (Mello, 2019). Fairlie (2011) discussed the importance of employee engagement and that workers who find their work meaningful can also enhance a firm's performance.

***Integration Strategy.*** The third concept shown on the right side of the third row of figure one is integration strategy. Once an international acquisition occurs, the acquiring organization must determine a management strategy for the integration of the acquired firm. An international strategy is needed when organizations attempt to compete in two or more countries simultaneously (Gamble et al., 2019). Kets de Vries (2015) explained that a major challenge for organizational leaders is to get everyone throughout the company to have the same strategy. Without a team culture, executives and employees will tend to do things their way instead of in the organization's best interests, which can cause conflicting actions and decisions (Kets de Vries, 2015). Gamble et al. (2019) also outlined that organizations have the three options of thinking local, thinking global, and thinking global but acting local. Koles and Kondath (2014)

recommended a participative strategy as a best practice for international acquisitions and dealing with diversity and globalization.

### **Theories**

*Theories X & Y.* Row four in figure one details four theories pertaining to employee motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity. Theories X and Y are represented on the far left of row four and describe work enjoyment (Phillips & Gully, 2014). Theory X is a belief that people dislike work (Phillips & Gully, 2014). Theory Y is a belief that people can enjoy work, responsibility, can make sound decisions, and are able to direct themselves (Phillips & Gully, 2014). Theories X and Y may not apply in countries with cultures associated with low uncertainty avoidance and collectivism (Hofstede, 1987).

*Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory.* Herzberg's two-factor theory is represented second from the left in row four of figure one. Herzberg's theory examines hygiene factors, including pay, status, and working conditions (Phillips & Gully, 2014). The theory also describes motivator factors, including factors intrinsic to the job that drive employees to pursue excellence (Phillips & Gully, 2014). US workers tend to be individualistic and desire to be praised or singled out. Other cultures prefer to not stand out, which Phillips and Gully (2014) described as "the nail that sticks out gets pounded" (p. 217). The feelings of achievement, recognition, and responsibility have a greater effect on motivation than higher pay and job security (Hur, 2018).

### **Constructs and Variables**

*Lewin's Change Model.* Figure one shows Lewin's change model second from the right in row five. Created by Kurt Lewin, the model describes the three stages for effective change. Organizations must unfreeze, or prepare people for change, then move, or begin practicing new behaviors, and lastly, refreeze, or accept new behaviors (Geringer et al., 2016). Employee

participation may aid in the change process (Burnes et al., 2018). Burnes et al. (2018) explained that overcoming conflict goes hand-in-hand with democratic participation. There are always forces striving for change as well as forces restraining or resisting change to maintain the status quo (Phillips & Gully, 2014). Attempts to understand the forces behind undesired behaviors and the forces are needed to bring about desired behaviors (Burnes & Cooke, 2013). Modern Organizations are experiencing more change than ever before, and managers' ability to manage change appears to be inadequate (Burnes & Cooke, 2013).

***John Kotter's Model of Change.*** John Kotter's model of change is represented on the far right of row four in figure one. The model outlines eight steps. The steps include increase urgency, develop a guiding team, develop a change vision and strategy, communicate a vision for buy-in, empower broad-based action to remove obstacles, generate short-term wins, foster persistence, and make the change persist through leadership's development and succession (Geringer et al., 2016). People making an effort to work towards the future are happier than those who hang on to the past (Burnes et al., 2018). High uncertainty avoidance countries are inclined to avoid change (Geringer et al, 2016). The US culture typically shows low uncertainty avoidance and respect for the past (Geringer et al., 2016). Cultures with a strong respect for the past are likely to resist change (Geringer et al., 2016).

**Relationships Between Concepts, Theories, Constructs, and Variables.** The overall study of organizations that have been acquired by an international firm and the effect on employee productivity and job satisfaction has several key variables that were examined. Figure one, above, described the study as a case study. The study was then split into the three key concepts of organizational practices, change implementation, and integration strategy. Each concept will be examined utilizing the theories in the next level of figure one, which are theories

X and Y, Herzberg's theory, Lewin's change model, and Kotter's change model. The line following the theories in figure one shows the two variables of employee productivity and job satisfaction, which are the focus of the literature. Employee productivity is broken down into more productive and less productive, and job satisfaction is broken down into intent to stay with the company or intent to leave the company. The areas of productivity and job satisfaction were updated based on the findings in section three and figure seven.

**Summary of the Research Framework.** Examination of Nashville music publishing companies that have been acquired and integrated by an international organization uncovered key issues relating to the situation unique to the local market. Organizational practices, barriers to change, and integration strategies are the key factors in mergers and acquisitions that were studied. The issues were examined as to how they relate to job satisfaction and productivity. There has been an abundance of research on the topics of motivation, job performance, and job satisfaction in the process of mergers and acquisitions. The study reviewed the literature on the topics and theories associated, such as theories X and Y, Herzberg's two-factor theory, Lewin's model of change, and John Kotter's model of change. The past literature helped to lay the groundwork for the study as the research shifted to interviews and observations of Nashville publishing firms within the local creative business cluster that have been acquired.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Business Cluster:** The integration of economic entities in a particular region based on mutually beneficial cooperation which helps to create competitive advantages for all entities involved is known as a business cluster (Romanova et al., 2019).

**Change Implementation:** Change implementation is a strategy and process of involving all stakeholders to overcome change resistance (Naeem, 2020).

**Digital Music Streaming:** Digital music streaming is a disruptive technology that allows consumers to listen to any song they choose by purchasing a subscription to a streaming service that can be accessed digitally through a device, such as a computer or a cell phone (Datta et al., 2018). In recent years, streaming has become the most popular way consumers listen to music (Danckwerts & Kenning, 2019).

**Integration Strategy:** An integration strategy is an approach an organization will employ after acquiring another firm to manage resources with the aim of creating increased value (Wei & Clegg, 2020).

**Job Satisfaction:** Karolidis and Vouzas (2019) described job satisfaction as a congruence between a worker's prior motivational needs and values and the experience the worker has as an employee.

**Organizational Culture:** Chelsey (2020) simply explained organizational culture as the way things have always been done in an organization. Culture is a large part of organizational experiences and cannot be separated from the organization (Chelsey, 2020).

**Employee Productivity:** Feng et al. (2019) explained productivity as what occurs when the work of employees leads to improved firm performance.

### **Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations**

Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations help to create a framework for readers which adds knowledge and clarity to areas outside of the researcher's control. A researcher's boundaries and restrictions should be made clear to the reader. A commonly cited problem with qualitative studies is the issue of rigor; therefore, researchers must gather enough data to give as accurate a picture as possible of the phenomenon being examined (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Munthe-Kaas et al. 2019). Fjeld (2018) described assumptions as the elements or statements that,

even if there is no proof, are accepted as true. Keightley et al. (2012) described limitations as the weaknesses that might arise with a study. Delimiting helps researchers control the scope and boundaries of a study so the information can be manageable (Gentles et al., 2016).

**Assumptions.** The following assumptions were essential to the study of a Nashville publishing firm that had been acquired by an international organization. Due to the lack of proof of an assumption in a qualitative study, there is an element of risk that must be assessed with each assumption (Fjeld, 2018). The first assumption was that the participants would provide honest accounts of the experience of their company being acquired. Brashier and March (2020) explained that humans accept information retrieved from their memory as true. To mitigate the risk of false accounts of the experience, the researcher asked follow-up questions in order to have more specificity and accuracy in the participant's accounts of their experience. The second assumption was that the participants understood that their descriptions and accounts were confidential and that there would be no repercussions for their participation or lack thereof. Research that involves humans should always adhere to ethical principles, which include data confidentiality and consent (Swedan et al., 2020). To mitigate the risk of confidentiality, the researcher used participant numbers instead of names, and all responses and respondents were confidential. In addition, the participant's organization was not specifically named in order to eliminate possible association with the account of the experience.

**Limitations.** Any study must consider potential limitations or weaknesses of the research (Keightley et al, 2012). While there have been a reasonable number of Nashville publishers that have been acquired by international organizations, finding enough willing respondents was an expected challenge. It was assumed that workers still employed at the acquiring firm may be reluctant to discuss their experience for fear of repercussions. To mitigate the issue, the

researcher assured participants that the interviews would be conducted confidentially and that names will not be used. A second limitation, or challenge, was expected to be in finding participants who have been acquired by different international firms. Also, too many participants that had the same type of job within the examined firm might have skewed the data to that participant's perspective. To mitigate the issue, the researcher carefully chose participants from multiple areas of the acquired organization and was sure that not all participants had the same type of job within their firm to ensure the diversity of responses. A third limitation was possible researcher bias. The researcher has worked in the Nashville publishing industry for almost 30 years and may have his own bias towards the topic. The researcher separated, or bracketed out, his own bias and relied only on the accounts of the participants under study.

**Delimitations.** Gentles et al. (2016) suggested setting delimitations to determine the scope and boundaries of a study. Merriam-Webster (2019) defined delimiting as the setting or fixing of limits. The scope of this qualitative case study included workers from Nashville music publishing companies that have been acquired by an international firm. To make the information gleaned from the interviews of participants manageable, limits were set. First, the focus of the study was on the Nashville music market and publishing companies within the market that have been acquired by an international organization. Secondly, the workers within the firm during acquisition and integration with the international organization were selected. Workers who were hired by the international firm after the acquisition were not interviewed. The specific problem statement suggests the occurrence of international acquisition in the market is due to the recent rise of digital streaming; therefore, participants needed to have experienced the acquisition and integration during the time period where streaming has risen to prominence with consumers.

### **Significance of the Study**

Studying the acquisition and integration of Nashville music publishing companies that have been acquired by an international firm is of utmost importance in the current landscape of the Nashville music industry. Streaming revenues have risen 26% since the beginning of 2019 and represented 80% of all music revenues in 2019 (Alexander, 2019). The rising streaming revenues have increased the number of international organizations purchasing Nashville small publishers in an effort to increase market share and overall catalog revenues (Towse, 2017). Streaming has become the most popular way consumers listen to music in recent years (Danckwerts & Kenning, 2019). In October of 2018, the US Congress signed the Music Modernization Act (MMA) into law (Price, 2019). The current royalty rate per stream for music publishers and songwriters is .0017 cents per stream (Brabec & Brabec, 2018). The MMA will be increasing streaming royalty rates 40% by 2024 (Charap et al., 2019). The acquisition of small publishers should further increase as streaming revenues continue to rise as a result of the MMA. International music organizations seeking to bolster market share and acquire Nashville publishing companies will most likely encounter the common issues from the literature pertaining to the failure of most acquisitions (Zakaria et al., 2017). A dominant factor in the success or failure of many acquisitions has been due to employees' experiences resulting in poor productivity and job satisfaction (King et al., 2020). In addition, issues unique to the Nashville music market due to what Baker (2016) described as the symbiotic nature of the business cluster might arise.

The Nashville music market is a unique business cluster where publishers, musicians, songwriters, managers, booking agents, producers, recording engineers, and studios are all located to take advantage of the concentration of major record labels in the city (Baker, 2016).



Romanova et al. (2019) described business clusters as the integration of economic entities in a particular region based on mutually beneficial cooperation which helps to create competitive advantages for all entities involved. The different types of businesses and workers in the Nashville music industry thrive by working in a symbiotic manner with each other (Baker, 2016). One business is affected by the other, and cooperation is necessary (Baker, 2016). Record labels need songs from publishers for their artists, managers need artists to manage, booking agents need artists to book on tours, musicians need to play on albums, and songwriters and publishers need their songs recorded and released to the public. This symbiosis and concentration of businesses has created a culture of friendly competition as the different facets of the Nashville music industry work together and also compete with each other for success and profitability (Baker, 2016).

**Reduction of Gaps in the Literature.** Literature is readily available pertaining to organizational change in the context of mergers and acquisitions. The majority of international acquisitions have failed to live up to expectations and have had an impact on overall company value (Zakaria et al., 2017). The integration process of combining firms after acquisition may contribute to employees' fear of job loss, a higher perception of unfair treatment from management, and an increased amount of employee uncertainty and stress (King et al., 2020). The literature is not prevalent; however, on the effects on publishers due to the rise of acquisitions within the Nashville music business cluster. The factors associated with international acquisitions in the Nashville music publishing business cluster and the market's culture have not previously been examined (Baker, 2016). As digital streaming revenues continue to rise in the coming years, more international firms should attempt to increase market share by acquiring smaller Nashville firms (Alexander, 2019). The current study creates new

literature on the topic of the acquisition and integration of Nashville music publishers within the local business cluster as well as to the overall literature on international acquisitions into markets displaying the traits of a business cluster.

**Implications for Biblical Integration.** A person's worldview is the perspective that an individual approaches life and work. The term worldview can be traced back to the German word, *Weltanschauung*, which translated to English means a way of looking at the world (Kim et al., 2009). Worldviews consist of questions pertaining to how things are supposed to be, what is wrong the way things are now, what is the solution, and how it can be realized (Keller & Alsdorf, 2016). Many Christian writers and scholars suggest that Christianity is more than a religion and guidelines; but it is a worldview that can be applied to social issues, history, science, and politics (Bishop, 2013). Faith in Christ helps an individual approach life, business, and research with a spiritual worldview no matter what perspective comes naturally. Christians should use their moral compass in each situation and find ways to merge their faith into their work to be an example of Christ's love (Keller & Alsdorf, 2016). A Christian researcher should re-think assumptions and apply reasoning based on the Bible and its truths (Keller & Alsdorf, 2016). Serving others through one's work is what Keller and Alsdorf (2016) called the "ministry of competence" (p. 67). The current study displays the element of Christian service in that it explores the issues related to employee job satisfaction and productivity for employees in the face of international acquisition with the hope of uncovering and providing information to help aid the success of future acquisitions. Peter wrote to the early Church that Christians should "use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace". (*New International Version*, 1978/2011, 1 Peter 4:10).

**Benefit to Business Practice and Relationship to Cognate.** This study's research will contribute to the general understanding of international acquisition and integration within a business cluster. The research also creates new literature on the topic of the international acquisition of publishers within the Nashville music business cluster. The problem of decreased job satisfaction and productivity was explored through a study of local firms that were acquired and integrated into an international organization. Music streaming has quickly replaced downloaded sales of music in recent years and has changed the landscape of the world music industry (Aguiar, 2017). As streaming revenues continue to increase, so will the number of companies acquiring smaller companies to increase market share (Charap et al., 2019; Towse, 2017).

**Summary of the Significance of the Study.** Digital streaming revenues will only continue to rise in the coming years due to consumers switching from purchases to subscription music services and the passage of the MMA by the US congress (Aguiar, 2017; Price, 2019). With this rise in acquisitions, it was important to research the effects on employees and businesses within the culture of the local industry and whether the international influence will change the local business culture and cause employees to be unsatisfied or have poor job performance. The research also uncovered issues unique to the market that may have led to the failure of acquisitions of music publishers in the Nashville music business cluster. As a result of the study, the researcher uncovered strategies for helping international organizations acquire and merge with smaller Nashville publishers more effectively. If the study was not conducted, the rise of acquisitions within the Nashville market may ultimately change the culture of "music city," the market could lose its unique identity (Baker, 2016, para. 4). Talented workers with

small publishing companies could continue to find themselves having a difficult time transitioning as their company is acquired and merged with an international firm.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The study of the international acquisition of independent Nashville music publishing companies and the issues associated with successful integration began with an examination of the literature on the local industry. Next, the literature pertaining to the symbiotic culture that Baker (2016) described provided a strong foundation for beginning the study. The general topic of business clusters, their symbiotic nature, and the cultures within clusters that Romanova et al. (2019) outlined were also reviewed in depth. There is an abundant amount of literature on international mergers and acquisitions that was examined as to the effect the situation may have on employees and why three out of four mergers and acquisitions fail to achieve the targeted and strategic financial goals sought by the acquiring firm (Mello, 2019). The motivational theories directly attributed to job satisfaction and productivity were then examined as a foundation for studying integration resistance within internationally acquired Nashville publishing companies.

**Nashville Music Industry.** The Nashville music industry is one of several music business geographic centers that can be described as what Romanova et al. (2019) outlined as a business cluster where businesses display mutually beneficial cooperation. Baker (2016) examined two such music business clusters by studying the self-branding of the music scenes in Nashville, TN and Austin, TX. Each city is classified by UNESCO as a music city (Baker, 2016). The UNESCO classification means the cities have a strong background in making music, involvement in the community, education, international and local high-profile events, and music heritage (Baker, 2016). UNESCO's 2013 music industry report found that Austin's music

business generates more than \$1.6 million to the local economy, and Nashville's music industry contributes over \$5.5 billion annually to its local economy (Baker, 2016).

Yum (2019) explained that the creative industry has been one of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy since the 1990s. Creative clusters have become significant drivers for investments and concentrations of talented creative workers in the cities where they are located (Yum, 2019). The author described creative clusters as a group of industries with a geographic area that share ideas, develop products, and interact with each other (Yum, 2019). Creative industry clusters strengthen economic development in the geographic areas in which they are located (Yum, 2019). Yum's study specifically examined creative clusters within urban economies. The findings showed that government officials can utilize the development of creative clusters to bolster the economies of their regions (Yum, 2019). Yum's work pertains to the study due to Nashville being designated a creative cluster (Baker, 2016).

Baker's (2016) work was relevant to the study because the examination of the Nashville music market, its structure, and its importance to the local economy helped the researcher more fully understand the creative business cluster. Baker (2016) described Nashville as a unique business cluster where the concentration of major record labels has created a phenomenon where other facets of the music business, including publishers, producers, booking agents, songwriters, recording engineers, and studios have set up their business to work together and compete with each other symbiotically to take advantage of the proximity to major record labels. Nashville is home to over 200 music studios and 130 music publishers that are located in an area called music row, which includes a one-mile area along 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Avenues (Baker, 2016). The local Nashville music industry sustains more than 56,000 jobs (Baker, 2016).

Lingo (2020) further supported Baker's (2016) assertion of Nashville as a creative business cluster by examining the entrepreneurship of Nashville music producers. Lingo's work gave insight into the Nashville market's inner workings and culture that can help examine research question four on the differences in the market's culture from other markets. The Nashville music market provides an opportunity for music producers to be innovative, competitive, and creators of opportunities for songwriters and artists. Lingo (2020) explained entrepreneurship as the process of creating, developing, and taking advantage of opportunities to create value. The concentration of the many facets of the music industry in Nashville creates an opportunity for music producers to become entrepreneurs. Lingo (2020) outlined that the Nashville country music industry is a network of interdependencies and interconnections among songwriters, publishers, record labels, engineers, artists, and consumers. Producers are a key element within the system. Since the 1990s, there has been a shift from record labels using in-house producers for their artist's records to hiring outside, independent music producers. Producers secure music for their artists from the songwriting and publishing community because many artists do not compose their own songs (Lingo, 2020). Lingo's (2020) work pertains to the study of integration resistance within Nashville publishing companies that have been acquired by an international firm due to providing a foundation for publishing companies and their writers on their position and importance within the market and their relationship with record producers that help to create opportunities.

**Digital Music Streaming.** Datta et al. (2018) described digital streaming as a disruptive technology that allows consumers unlimited access to large libraries of music for a fixed payment instead of the traditional download to a device or compact disc sale. The growth of the digital streaming industry is relevant to the current study because the rise in streaming revenues

is a significant reason why larger corporations are acquiring smaller firms to increase market share (Towse, 2017). Datta et al. (2018) examined the effects that the adoption of music streaming by consumers has had on listening behavior. The study showed large increases in the quantity and diversity of music consumption (Datta et al., 2018). In 2015, digital streaming became the single largest source of global music revenues (Datta et al., 2018). Before digital streaming, there was less discovery of new music, and consumers would purchase music that they were already aware existed. The cost of exploring new music was high due to consumers having to purchase the music they wished to explore. The relatively inexpensive cost of subscribing to a subscription service of around \$10 per month allows consumers to listen to whatever music they desire and to explore vast catalogs of music and genres to which they would not ordinarily be exposed (Datta et al., 2018). The average digital streaming consumer discovers 27 new artists per month (Datta et al., 2018). The streaming service Spotify has emerged as the global leader in digital streaming with 100 million customers in 60 countries (Datta, et al., 2017). This growth in streaming has significantly affected overall music consumption with a rise of 49 percent worldwide (Datta et al., 2018). Willman (2020) discussed record label strategies in the face of the global pandemic of Coronavirus.

The pandemic has created a situation where artists are not able to tour and play concerts in support of their new album or song releases (Willman, 2020). Some music companies are apprehensive about releasing new music due to a perceived decrease in the public's buyer power due to the pandemic. Record labels are exercising caution with new album releases due to this lack of touring. Music listeners, however, have been shown to have increased their consumption of music during the pandemic. For instance, the artist known as The Weeknd released his single "*After Hours*" on the twentieth of March in 2020. The song surpassed 100 million streams on its

first day of release and surpassed one billion Spotify streams in its first week. Willman's (2020) study showed that smaller and mid-level artists may consider releasing their music in their normal time frames instead of waiting until the pandemic is over so they can tour. Universal Music Group in Nashville is forging ahead with their release schedules for their top artists, such as Sam Hunt, with the philosophy that in today's world of Covid 19, music is vital for healing and escape (Willman, 2020). The work is pertinent to the current study because outlining the rise and importance of streaming in today's music business gives the foundation of why international firms are purchasing smaller firms to increase revenue.

Digital streaming is not focused on music consumers alone. Streaming has become prevalent in many forms of media, including television and film with services, such as Netflix and YouTube. Spilker and Colbjørnsen (2020) compared the various streaming platforms and how each is evolving. The authors defined streaming as "the transmission and retrieval of digital content that is stored and processed on a remote server" (Spilker & Colbjørnsen, 2020, para. 2). The transmission takes place over the internet through digital networks. Information is not stored but viewed in real-time over a network. Recent advances in technology have made it possible for high-quality video and audio to be streamed without the lag and constant buffering of the past. This improved quality has helped digital streaming become the most prevalent way consumers receive their entertainment content in the world today (Spilker & Colbjørnsen, 2020). For information pertaining to the current study on the music industry, the authors reiterated previous literature which explained that Spotify was introduced in 2008 and, in recent years, has become the most used service for consumers to listen to music. In the company's home country of Sweden, streaming accounts for over 80% of music revenues (Spilker & Colbjørnsen, 2020). Spilker and Colbjørnsen (2020) found that the rise of streaming has curtailed the use of illegal



music distribution in all media forms due to the ease of accessing an endless variety of content. This downturn in the illegal distribution of music has only helped increase the market shares of the major streaming companies (Spilker & Colbjørnsen, 2020).

To add to the discussion on rising streaming revenues, Charap et al. (2019) outlined the recent music modernization act that was implemented by Congress and signed into law by President Donald Trump on October 11, 2019. The new legislation is an attempt by lawmakers to bring the US copyright laws into the digital age. Digital streaming's meteoric rise has created new revenue opportunities in all facets of the music industry to which the copyright laws needed to evolve to compensate. The MMA has three facets. First, the owners of sound recordings released before 1972 received copyright protection, which they did not have previously. Secondly, streaming services will be able to acquire blanket licenses to perform music from a newly created music licensing collective instead of having to track down the copyright owner for permission. Thirdly, the copyright royalty board will adjust streaming rates on a "willing buyer" and "willing seller" basis which should raise rates 40% over the next five years (Charap et al., 2019, para. 14). This third aspect of the law and the increase in streaming royalties is of interest to this study because the rise in streaming royalty income is one of the causes of what Towse (2017) described as large publishers acquiring smaller publishing companies to increase market share.

Huffman (2020) further explored the MMA and Congress's attempt to update the US copyright laws in the digital age. Copyright laws have historically not kept up with the technological changes in the music industry, including the recent rise of streaming and the digitalization of music consumption (Huffman, 2020). A major issue on which the new MMA law focused was the fact that streaming companies, such as Spotify, Apple Music, and Pandora,

have failed to obtain the proper licenses to perform musical works. The MMA creates a blanket licensing system along with the Music Licensing Collective (MLC) to license and collect streaming royalties for publishers and songwriters. Streaming companies will be able to obtain the MLC's blanket license, which will cover all music. It will be up to the MLC to obtain permission from the individual publishers and songwriters. Before the MMA, streaming companies were required to obtain permission from publishers and songwriters to stream music over their services. Instead of individually obtaining permission from each publisher and songwriter, the streaming companies were sending letters of intent to the copyright office saying that they could not find or reach the copyright owner, which allowed them to obtain a compulsory license. The vast number of letters of intent overwhelmed the copyright office, and as a result, many copyrights were streamed without permission and many copyright owners failed to receive royalties for the streaming of their works. Under the MMA, the MLC will consist of a board of songwriters, producers, publishers, and record label executives (Huffman, 2020). The MMA is widely supported within the music industry, with the exception of the streaming companies (Huffman, 2020). The MMA seeks to set a "willing buyer/willing seller" framework in the setting of streaming royalty rates, which should increase songwriter and publisher streaming royalties significantly in the coming years (Huffman, 2020, para. 23). Huffman's (2020) article further outlined the MMA, which is pertinent to the current study because it further explained the MMA and the law's contributions to US copyright law and protecting the intellectual property of songwriters and music publishers.

Aguiar (2017) added to the literature on streaming by studying the effects of the rise in free music streaming on the music industry and music consumption patterns. The study explored the types of digital streaming and the effects of each type on consumer behavior. In addition to

subscription-based streaming services, such as Spotify, examined by Datta et al. (2018), a number of free streaming services, such as the French company Deezer, have emerged in recent years (Aguiar, 2017). Free streaming services thrive from revenue from the advertising that consumers must watch while streaming (Aguiar, 2017). Consumers cannot listen to anything they want on-demand but must choose a style of music or an artist and then listen to the service in a similar manner to a radio station hoping that their choice is played. Free streaming services, in most instances, do offer subscription-based versions of their platforms as well where consumers can listen to whatever they desire on demand. For instance, Spotify has both a free and a subscription-based version. Free, ad-based streaming is known as non-interactive streaming, and the subscription-based, on-demand type of streaming is known as interactive streaming (Brabec & Brabec, 2018). Non-interactive streaming has been shown to increase the sale of music by 2% due to consumers desiring to hear the song again which spurs them to purchase the song in the form of a download or compact disc sale (Aguiar, 2017). Interactive streaming has been shown to have the opposite effect due to the consumer's ability to play the song again whenever they want because of their subscription to the streaming service (Aguiar, 2017). If the consumer can simply play the song again on demand within their streaming subscription, there is no incentive for that consumer to purchase the song via download or compact disc. In recent years, the rise of subscription streaming services has caused most music consumption to move from downloaded sales to digital streaming (Aguiar, 2017). This change of consumption patterns has forced music publishers around the world to dramatically shift their business models to account for the new source of royalty income (Aguiar, 2017).

Towse (2017) supported the literature on streaming by studying the change in business models in the music industry as a result of the shift in music consumption from sales to digital

streaming. The rise in digital streaming has created opportunities for large organizations to purchase smaller companies to increase market share as streaming revenues continue to rise (Towse, 2017). The music industry is constantly evolving due to technological advances in how music is consumed. The shift to streaming is not the first disruption that music publishers have encountered. In the past century, music publishers have had to adapt their business models to account for the rise of radio, television, and movies (Towse, 2017). Digital streaming is just another medium where music publishers have had to adjust their models to follow the revenue streams (Towse, 2017).

Traditionally, the music publishing business has been made up of major corporations as well as numerous smaller entities. Many of the smaller music publishing companies are family-owned (Towse, 2017). The music industry of the present is dominated by the three major conglomerates Warner Chappell, Universal, and Sony/ATV (Towse, 2017). Each major company owns catalogs of songs representing every genre of music from every part of the world. The switch to streaming by consumers has caused the smaller publishers as well as the large conglomerates to rethink their business models. The larger companies, with their extensive catalogs and royalty streams, have been able to position themselves better for the future while the smaller entities have found it difficult. One of the changes the majors are implementing is a focus on acquisition. Streaming revenues are expected to increase 40% by 2024; therefore, the larger companies are acquiring catalogs to increase marketshare to take advantage of the future projected revenue (Charap et al., 2019).

Danckwerts and Kenning (2019) added to the literature on streaming by examining the feelings of ownership with the consumers of music in the face of digital streaming and subscription services as opposed to downloaded sales or physical compact disc sales. Digital

streaming consumers were still shown to experience similar feelings of ownership in consumers who purchased their music (Danckwerts & Kenning, 2019). The study's aim was to determine if the similar feeling of ownership for purchasing and streaming music was a reason that consumers were switching from free, non-interactive streaming to subscription-based interactive streaming. The study relates to the topic of the integration resistance within Nashville publishing companies that have been acquired by an international firm because it is important to provide the background on how consumers have shifted from purchasing music to streaming music in recent years. The shift has caused music publishers worldwide to examine their business models and shift those models to take advantage of the change. The change that is associated with shifting business models is likely to create unique experiences for the workers within firms.

**Business Clusters.** Business clusters play an important role in many economic systems around the world (Romanova et al., 2019). Romanova et al. (2019) examined business clusters and the benefits they provide for the participating organizations. Businesses locating near their competitors and other stakeholders can create competitive advantages for all businesses within the cluster (Romanova et al., 2019). Since the 1990s, business clusters have contributed to the prosperity of economic systems in many areas around the world (Romanova et al., 2019). The authors described clusters as an integration of regional organizations, regional institutions, and business entities based on mutual cooperation that creates competitive advantages for all entities individually and for the entire industry (Romanova et al., 2019).

Business clustering has the potential for higher production and prosperity for all participants due to cooperation within the cluster and its internal competition. Clusters create increased opportunities for innovation and company development (Romanova et al., 2019). Business clustering has also been shown to benefit the region in which the cluster is located due

to the investment in the local economy, the creation of jobs, and infrastructure growth (Romanova et al., 2019). The authors further discuss that cluster formation can have a positive impact on innovation (Romanova et al., 2019). The article pertains to the current study because the Nashville music market fits the mold of Romanova et al.'s (2019) description of a business cluster. Baker (2016) described the Nashville market as a symbiotic business cluster where various facets of the music industry have located and work together to take advantage of the major record label presence in the market.

Lehtonen et al. (2020) added to the literature on business clustering by exploring the gaming industry ecosystem in Helsinki and Tokyo. Research on creative clusters has become more prominent in recent years. Specifically, research has found that clustering can revive urban areas and foster innovative capabilities (Lehtonen et al., 2020). Lehtonen et al. examined why clustering is still prominent in today's world of digital streaming when it is less important to be close to the customer. The work further explained the benefits to smaller firms being located near the larger hub firms for opportunities that can come from being in close proximity. Local culture and networks can be utilized. Person-to-person interaction between game developers and gaming companies can occur. This local interaction is similar to what occurs in the Nashville music publishing industry as described by Baker (2016).

The past literature on business clustering abundantly explored the benefits of all businesses involved in a cluster. Cottineau and Arcaute (2020) added to the literature on business clustering by examining the effects of industrial business clustering in regions, cities, and neighborhoods in the area around London. For the current study of integration resistance within a Nashville publishing company that has been acquired by an international firm, the literature on the entry of a foreign firm in a local business cluster should be examined. Cottineau and Arcaute

(2020) specifically studied the effects of the international acquisition of companies within a cluster. Cottineau and Arcaute (2020) expressed that when large organizations attempt to enter a market and take advantage of a cluster, the entry may jeopardize the benefits of the clustering for smaller organizations which may cause them to relocate and form a new cluster. The entry of large organizations within a cluster has been shown to push the smaller actors within the cluster to other geographic areas (Cottineau & Arcaute, 2020). As conducting business within the cluster becomes more profitable, so does the local economy where the cluster is located. The boost to the local economy can raise rental prices and taxes in the area. The boost may cause the cost of doing business to increase, which can force smaller businesses to relocate to less expensive geographic locations (Cottineau & Arcaute, 2020). The study also found that smaller firms may find it difficult to compete with large firms within the cluster that have vast resources (Cottineau & Arcaute, 2020).

Júnior et al. (2019) added to the body of literature on business cluster governance by examining governance within clusters. Specifically studied were the elements of structure, function, mechanisms, objectives, and agents within business clusters. Governance within clusters does not necessarily apply to the current study of the international acquisition of Nashville music publishing companies; however, Júnior et al. (2019) did provide a solid background on the previous literature pertaining to business clusters in general. The study of business clusters has been of increased importance to economists, geographers, and theoreticians in recent years (Júnior et al., 2019). Locating a small or medium-sized business within a business cluster can increase the chances for a successful business due to the sharing of common institutional and social bases (Júnior et al., 2019). The geographical location within the business

cluster enables local actors to generate economies of scope and scale and increase competitiveness by working collectively (Júnior et al., 2019).

Ye et al. (2020) further described business clusters by explaining the importance of a business cluster's hub. The hub is an organization that is a major reason for the formation of the cluster. The hub firm is one that possesses power and prominence due to a central position in the structure of the business cluster. The smaller firms locate near the hub to benefit from its resources and capabilities. For example, the three major automakers in Detroit, Michigan dominate the local economy as hubs, and many businesses benefit from locating near the automakers (Ye, 2020). Boeing and Microsoft also serve as hubs in the Seattle, Washington area for many businesses. For the Nashville business cluster, the major labels, Warner Brothers, Universal, and Sony, that Baker (2016) described would be considered the hubs of the local music business market.

Gupta et al. (2020) further described business cluster hubs as organizations that other firms desire to locate their business near to find sustainable competitive advantages. The study focused on the electric automobile industry and the formation of hub firms within the industry (Gupta et al., 2018). As more firms position themselves in the same geographical location as the hub, business clusters form and grow, and the cluster forms an ecosystem that may benefit all involved (Gupta et al., 2020). Gupta et al. (2020) explained that local governments can influence the growth of hubs by enacting effective policies to engage with emerging industries. The study defined business clusters as business ecosystems. In the formation of the ecosystem, hub organizations will begin to benefit from the network, and new capabilities and collaboration may arise (Gupta et al., 2020). Hub firms are critical infrastructure builders supplying a critical need for other firms within the ecosystem. The growth of the business cluster or ecosystem



encourages innovation, which was evident in the electric vehicle study of Gupta et al. (2020). In the case of electric vehicles, businesses creating battery technology, electromagnetic systems, self-driving technologies, and manufacturing all benefitted from the hub core business (Gupta et al., 2020).

For the proposed study, it was important to examine how business clusters sustain their importance through economic and competitive change over time. International firms entering the local Nashville market may have a significant impact not only on their acquisition but on the entire music business cluster. Business clusters have life cycles that are formed and exist for a period of time until they either decline or evolve (Denney et al., 2020). There is very little literature on the agents that cause changes in clusters that cause them to either decline or evolve. Denney et al. (2020) studied cluster evolution with a focus on Toronto's information and communication technology (ICT) cluster. Toronto's ICT cluster was sustained for many years due to the power of emerging technologies and the ability to reinvent the local economy. Clusters form when businesses recognize an advantage to being located in a certain geographical area and multiple businesses decide to locate in the area to benefit from the advantage. The businesses within the cluster benefit themselves and others in the cluster through mutual cooperation and shared resources (Denney et al., 2020). Not all business clusters take root and continue to grow, but the ones that do experience deep pools of labor generated by the high concentration of organizations within the cluster (Denney et al., 2020). Denney et al. (2020) described the original model of a cluster life cycle as having a set of stages including emergence, growth, maturation, and decline or renewal. Movement through the life cycle may depend on how the cluster's organizations increase or decrease heterogeneity among one another.

As business clusters grow and become more successful, entrepreneurs within the cluster may seek outside funding and venture capital to continue to grow (Denney et al., 2020). This outside influence can have a lasting effect on a business cluster and re-shape the cluster's path through its natural life cycle. As business clusters grow and become more successful, companies outside the cluster will attempt to enter the cluster through acquisition to take advantage of the cluster's structure. As this acquisition occurs, clusters tend to move from more small and medium-sized entrepreneurial businesses to larger corporate entities, which can eliminate many of the benefits of mutual cooperation that successful business clusters enjoy (Denney et al., 2020). Denney et al. (2020) recognized the importance of entrepreneurs in Toronto's ICT cluster as contributing to the success of the business cluster. The study also showed a growing concentration of power of oligopolistic firms within the cluster that may threaten the future success of the business cluster and begin its decline. Denney et al. (2020) recommended local support of small entrepreneurships to help them scale up instead of supporting large firms to move into the market. Innovation has been shown to be greater in entrepreneurial settings; therefore, due to the technological focus of Toronto's ICT's, support for entrepreneurs may prolong the business cluster's success (Denney et al., 2020).

**International Merger and Acquisitions.** For the study of integration resistance within Nashville publishing companies that have been acquired by an international firm, it was important to examine the past literature on international acquisitions as well as the literature on acquisitions in general. Issues that affect the success or failure of acquisitions and integration include organizational culture, change implementation, and integration strategy (Gamble et al., 2019; Krügel & Traub, 2018). Organizational culture is the norms and expectations in how people act and how things are done within an organization (Upadhyay & Kumar, 2020).

The reasons vary for why firms conduct international mergers and acquisitions. Organizations might see improved sales, lower costs, new technology, cheaper capital, or increased market share for increased profits after an acquisition (Dandapani et al., 2020). The acquisitions of music publishers in the Nashville music market are primarily focused on increasing market share due to rising digital streaming royalties (Towse, 2017). Dandapani et al. (2020) explained that shareholders of large firms experience a 1% positive three-day abnormal return on a firm's first international acquisition and a positive stock price bump with each further acquisition. Acquisitions have a positive effect on investors and investments into the firm due to investors viewing the firm as intending to become a global player. The ultimate goal of an international acquisition is to increase the overall value of the firm (Dandapani et al., 2020).

Takhtehkar and Rademakers (2020) explained that 70 to 90 percent of acquisitions fail. The average annual acquisition market worldwide is four trillion dollars (Takhtehkar & Rademakers, 2020). A majority of worldwide acquisitions are conducted by multinational organizations seeking business development through the acquisition of companies that are either innovative or have unique capabilities. With acquisitions being prone to failure, it is important to examine where that failure manifests. Takhtehkar and Rademakers (2020) expressed that most failures occur during the integration phase post-acquisition. A number of factors may be involved in the failure, including incompatible cultures or structures or a lack of clarity on how the acquisition will create value. Another element that affects a successful acquisition and integration is if the target firm is a strategic fit with the acquiring firm. Analyzing strategic fit may be a good predictor of successful acquisition and integration (Takhtehkar & Rademakers, 2020). The work by Takhtehkar and Rademakers (2020) pertains to the current study by

examining research question one and the factors that influence the increase and decrease in job productivity and job satisfaction after international acquisition and integration.

Azam et al. (2020) explained that management teams play an integral role in international acquisitions. Management teams should gather information on a market, the market's culture, and competitors to make sound, rational decisions upon entering a market. Better informed decisions have been shown to be more effective decisions (Azam et al., 2020). Azam et al. (2020) suggested that top management teams should have team members who specialize in international business to aid with the difficulties associated with international acquisitions. Having managers who have international experience can aid in the strategic process (Azam et al., 2020).

Kahn et al. (2020) further explored emotional resilience after acquisition and integration. The study focused on international post-merger integration. The findings showed that successful post-merger integration depends on the emotional resilience of employees, which is contingent on the equity and efficacy of reward systems within the organization (Kahn et al., 2020). The authors also give solid background information on mergers and acquisitions in general and explained that they are one of the most vital forms of expansion and growth strategies within a market and across national boundaries. Mergers and acquisitions may bring new skills, capabilities, and efficiencies as well as enhance a firm's competitive advantage. Supporting Zakaria et al. (2017), Kahn et al. (2020) explained that many mergers and acquisitions fail to fulfill their intent or objectives, and failure rates are high, especially those across international borders.

Kahn et al. (2020) explained that post-merger integration can be aided through human resource management initiatives that specifically focus on financial and non-financial rewards.

The composition of such rewards affects employees' perception of fairness within an organization's culture. Past literature has focused on communication and relationship challenges as the primary force behind successful integration, but Kahn et al. (2020) claimed that communication alone cannot mitigate the issues associated with acquisition and integration. Rewards can help to influence employee resilience, but financial and non-financial rewards alone cannot be simply bought (Kahn et al., 2020). Procedural fairness in conjunction with rewards may aid in the success of post-merger integration. International acquisitions and integrations add another element to the traditional issues associated with the phenomenon. Cultural and organizational norms vary according to the society or country of the acquired firms. Employees often have feelings of isolation and loss of benefits during integration (Kahn, et al., 2020). Fairness norms are an important aspect of employee behavior and should not be discounted (Kahn, et al., 2020). Kahn et al. (2020) suggested the best way to influence employee resilience after acquisition and integration is to institute human resource management practices in the form of financial rewards, such as increased pay, bonuses, and benefits, and non-financial rewards, such as career development, employee recognition programs, and promotions based on performance. The study by Kahn et al. (2020) adds to the current topic because understanding past literature on employee experiences in mergers and acquisitions and ways firms have mitigated the issues involved provided insight into the employees' accounts of their lived experience.

Lewis and Bozos (2019) added to the literature on international acquisitions by studying the risk involved. Entry into the global marketplace comes with substantial uncertainty. Failure rates of international mergers and acquisitions have ranged between 45 and 67 percent (Lewis & Bozos, 2019). Lewis and Bozos (2019) sought methods that organizations could utilize to

mitigate the risk associated with expanding across borders through acquisition. The risks commonly associated with international acquisitions are country-level uncertainties, the liability of being foreign, and culture (Lewis & Bozos, 2019). The study sampled 1,874 international acquisitions from 2000 to 2014. The findings showed that risk was lessened when acquiring an organization in a country where the culture is distinctly different, and in countries where the culture was similar, the risk increased for the acquiring firm (Lewis & Bozos, 2019). The study pertains to research question four that examines cultural differences between acquiring firms and acquired firms and how those difference negatively affect productivity and job satisfaction because examination of the culture of the acquiring and acquired firms gave insight into the risk involved in the acquisition that might play into its success or failure.

Bansal and King (2020) supported the literature on acquisitions by examining the effects of change following an acquisition and the uncertainty for employees. Acquisitions are complex changes within an organization. The uncertainty involved can affect employee acceptance of change (Bansal & King, 2020). Most past literature prescribed for managers to communicate timely, accurate, and sufficient information to ease the concerns of their employees and give them a perception of fairness (Bansal & King, 2020). Bansal and King (2020) explained that how change is communicated is just as important as what is communicated. Employees are more likely to be integrated successfully if they receive accurate information, changes are explained well, and the communication of change allows for the exchange of ideas (Bansal & King, 2020). The study also offered the additional contribution that managers should consider human reactions to any change within an organization. Employees have been shown to react negatively to the change associated with acquisition and integration, which adds to the risk of acquisitions (Bansal & King, 2020).

**Organizational Culture.** Gamble et al. (2019) explained that organizational culture can influence the success or failure of a merger or acquisition. Research question set four explored the differences in Nashville's music industry from other industries and how different cultures can negatively affect productivity and job satisfaction. Upadhyay and Kumar (2020) further studied the role of organizational culture between the capability of big data analytics and the performance of a firm. The authors found that a culture that supports data-driven decision-making improved a firm's performance (Upadhyay & Kumar, 2020). For the current study of integration resistance within Nashville publishing companies that have been acquired by an international firm, the article provided a solid description of the topic of organizational culture. Organizational culture includes values, norms, assumptions, and shared behaviors within an organization's day-to-day operations. A good culture can benefit learned capabilities (Upadhyay & Kumar, 2020). For organizations to build good culture, it is important to focus on the staff climate, bonding systems, goal prioritization, and the leadership styles of managers (Upadhyay & Kumar, 2020).

Chelsey (2020) supported the literature on mergers and acquisitions by examining organizational mergers and acquisitions in the health care industry resulting from the passage of the Affordable Care Act. Health company mergers and acquisitions have increased significantly since the passing of the Affordable Care Act (Chelsey, 2020). The new legislation made it easier for health care companies to leverage costs across an entire organization by acquiring other firms (Chelsey, 2020). Regardless of why a merger occurs, success or failure can be predicted by looking at an acquiring company's organizational culture (Chelsey, 2020). The study specifically examined the current culture of the acquired firm and the preferred culture of the acquiring firm.

The results showed that if the culture of the acquiring firm is significantly different than the acquired firm, merging the two firms may provide significant difficulties (Chelsey, 2010).

Chelsey (2020) defined organizational culture as the way things have always been done in the past. An organizational culture occurs through the accumulation of the experiences of the workers involved over time (Chelsey, 2020). The author suggests that culture should be a primary consideration for any decision on a merger or acquisition, even before financial considerations (Chelsey, 2020). Organizations should consider what they are willing to change and how decisions should be made after a merger. The author gave the example of the failed merger of Mount Sinai and New York University which was due to the organization's failure to integrate culture, procedures, and processes (Chelsey, 2020). Mergers and acquisitions have also been shown to have major impacts on the lived experiences of individuals. The impact may even be more than other major life events, such as a death of a friend or family member or the purchase of a home (Chelsey, 2020). The author described the phenomenon known as merger syndrome that may occur when acquired employees experience culture shock, reduced performance, insecurity, resistance to change, anger, and fear as a result of the acquisition. Chelsey (2020) recommended that acquiring firms assess the cultural needs of their employees on a regular basis and to be willing to shift to meet those needs. This regular assessment may help employees overcome merger syndrome and help them feel as if the organization is listening to their needs and cares about their perceptions.

Kumar et al. (2018) examined the relationship between work engagement, job satisfaction, and turnover intention by examining organizational culture in the service industry. The work pertains to the second research question set on the perception of employees when their organization is acquired by an internal organization and how their productivity and job



satisfaction is affected. Kumar et al. (2018) surveyed 5,088 service industry employees who were experiencing organizational change. Organizational culture is the value system within an organization that affects norms and behavior (Kumar et al., 2018). The study explored the effects of management development on employees' job satisfaction and performance. The findings showed that employees who are trained and developed for more superior roles within the organization showed increased motivation, higher job satisfaction, and better job performance, which also lessened the employee's intent to leave the organization (Kumar et al., 2018). Additionally, favorable treatment by supervisors and the organization had a similar effect on job satisfaction, job performance, and intent to leave the organization (Kumar et al., 2018).

Employees who feel that their organization values them, has their interests in mind, and gives them opportunities to further develop their skills will be more satisfied, motivated, and loyal (Kumar et al., 2018). The authors discuss the importance of managers that cultivate and support their employees. If a manager can create a culture within the organization that promotes trust, turnover intention is lessened. The work relates to the study due to the focus on motivation during organizational change. The internal corporate culture that helps to mitigate the issues associated with change, such as of job dissatisfaction, intent to leave, and poor job performance, were important to examine to see if Nashville publishing workers experienced internal corporate cultures that aided or hindered their job satisfaction and job performance.

Groen (2018) supported Kumar et al.'s (2018) work on employee's perception during change by examining employees' participation in goal setting and performance reviews and the effect on an employee's perception of fairness. The author surveyed 135 employees from a Dutch temporary staffing agency. The study focused on if participation and goal commitment helped to increase employee perceived fairness. The findings showed that a culture of perceived

fairness can positively influence employee commitment and lessen an employee's intent to leave an organization (Groen, 2018). Fairness is using processes that are accurate, without bias, consistent, representative, correctable, and ethical (Groen, 2018). Goals that are attainable and are supported by the organization, in a construct of fairness, can help improve job performance (Groen, 2018). The study pertains to research question set three due to the focus on a culture that can help improve job performance and satisfaction. The literature helped to give a foundation to determine if acquiring firms in Nashville display a culture of perceived fairness to the employees of the acquired firm.

**Change Implementation.** Mello (2019) explained that change within an organization is almost always met with resistance. Employers and managers must prepare and account for such resistance. Krügel and Traub (2018) studied the circumstances that help lead to employee acceptance of change. Employees were chosen within an organization and provided a gift exchange game where they provided their effort levels pertaining to adapting to change depending on wage levels. The results of the study showed that some employees do not resist change at all. Other employees showed stronger acceptance to change with higher wage levels. The findings suggested that fair wages will result in the reciprocal behavior of employees (Krügel & Traub, 2018). Krügel and Traub (2018) further expressed that the failure of many change initiatives is due to the organization not having the active participation of employees. The work pertains to the current study because the determination if the employees had fair wages throughout their acquisition and integration gave quality insight into the issue of integration resistance and gave insight into the initial general research question set on the factors that contribute to a decline in productivity and job satisfaction in the course of acquisition and integration.

Geringer et al. (2016) discussed the difficulties in change as stemming from human behavior. Barriers to change have been shown to be power distance, communication styles, ambiguity, and flexibility (Geringer et al., 2016). Phillips and Gully (2014) explained that resistance to change is any behavior employees take to preserve the status quo or the way things have always been done. A major factor usually associated with any change initiative is an employee's uncertainty about how the change will affect them personally (Nilsen et al., 2019). Resistance to change can be overcome with strong communication, promotion of fairness, participation from employees, and employee incentives (Phillips & Gully, 2014).

Nilsen et al. (2019) supported the literature on change implementation by exploring change in the health care industry of Sweden. Interviews were conducted with 30 professionals in the country's health care industry to examine their responses to change implementation. Nilsen et al. (2019) mapped change responses into the categories of involvement in change, support for change, indifference to change, passive resistance to change, and active resistance to change. Of those studied, none reported change responses with the most extreme category of aggressive resistance. Most of the responses were classified as either indifference or passive resistance to change (Nilsen et al., 2019). The article applied to the current study in that it gave a strong cross-section of how employees react to change.

Organizational readiness, which is a factor shown to influence an individual's predisposition to organizational change, is important to assess when implementing change (Ruest et al., 2019). An individual's readiness to change may depend on the individual's perception of the necessity of change and an organization's capacity to implement the change. Other factors affecting organizational readiness to change are motivation, commitment, and self-efficacy (Ruest, et al., 2019). Ruest et al. (2019) examined French organizations' readiness for change

using Weiner's organizational theory of organizational readiness for implementing change. The organizational theory of organizational readiness for implementing change had previously been applied in the healthcare industry. The study found that Weiner's model applied to the French-speaking industry had similar findings to the health care industry. The readiness to change of workers was the most influential factor in the success of change implementation (Ruest et al., 2019). The study provides insight into the topic of the international acquisition of Nashville publishers due to the change associated with acquisition and integration. Assessing the acquired employees' readiness for change during their acquisition and integration gave insight into integration resistance, which was one of the factors contributing to declines in productivity and job satisfaction sought in research question set one

**Integration Strategy.** International acquisitions require a solid management strategy for integrating the acquired firm (Gamble et al., 2019). Kets de Vries (2015) studied the petroleum industry and the challenges the executive team of a global energy company encountered in implementing a company-wide strategy and culture after the acquisition of other companies. The executives of the company were each interviewed and asked to reflect on interpersonal relationships within the company, work practices, leadership styles, and the overall culture of the organization. The purpose was to be more effective in the integration and transformation process after acquisitions. One of the major challenges of any acquisition is to get all employees to adopt the same strategy (Kets de Vries, 2015). The results of the study showed that employees were reluctant to share their thoughts because there was a fear of retribution, or they felt that their voice did not matter. The culture of the company under study also showed to be very individualistic instead of a team effort. The two issues led to low company morale and performance (Kets de Vries, 2015). Without a coordinated team culture or mentality, employees

may tend to do things their way instead of ways that are in their organization's best interests (Kets de Vries, 2015). The author recommended a more participative strategy and a group coaching approach with employees (Kets de Vries, 2015).

Koles and Kondath (2014) supported the literature on acquisitions by exploring the strategy development processes of 52 companies in Central and Eastern Europe and compared them to companies in Western Europe with the intent of discovering best practices for acquisitions in Western Europe. The study explained that many industries in today's era of globalization are employing strategists to help manage the challenges that can arise with acquisition and integration. The differences in a top-down and participative approach were examined in-depth. A top-down approach allowed organizations to make quicker decisions, but participative approaches showed more effectiveness in influencing a congruency of strategy throughout an entire organization. In relation to research question set three, Koles and Kondath (2014) recommended a participative strategy as a best practice for international acquisitions in dealing with diversity and globalization. The study is important because the strategy of an acquiring company should affect the experience of an acquired firm's employees.

Hosani et al. (2020) added to the literature on post-acquisition integration by examining the phenomenon of employee alienation that can occur during integration. Contributors to employee alienation have been shown to be organizational injustice, poor employee commitment, organizational mistrust, no communication strategy, and no human resource initiative to facilitate change (Hosani et al., 2020). Organizations utilize acquisitions to improve strategic positions, performance, or enter new markets. Only 25 to 35 percent of acquisitions accomplish their desired goals (Hosani et al., 2020). In many cases, poor planning is to blame for the low success rate. Acquisitions may create uncertainty about the future for employees. Poor

communication during integration can create negative perceptions of organizational justice and trust as well as create high levels of feelings of alienation. In contrast, when employees feel that they have been treated fairly during integration, they tend to have a higher level of trust and are more committed to the organization. Hosani et al. (2020) also reiterated Groen's (2018) previous research that suggested perceived fairness as building positive attitudes and behaviors among acquired employees such as job satisfaction and higher job performance. During post-acquisition integration, organizations should utilize human resource management practices to effectively communicate to employees and to create a perception of fairness and organizational justice for the best chance of achieving the goals sought through the acquisition. The study by Hosani et al. (2020) relates to the current topic in that it explores research question two that examines the employees' perception of being acquired and how that perception relates to job satisfaction and job performance.

Wei and Clegg (2020) studied the levels of integration associated with acquisition performance. The focus of the work was on six case studies in the medical technology industry and the levels in which acquiring firms had integrated their acquisitions. The study sought to expand on the abundant literature that explained that in most instances acquisitions fail to achieve the expected performance of acquirers and to help answer research question set one's exploration of the factors that cause acquisition failure. Acquisition failure has been widely thought to be due to the management of post-acquisition integration (Wei & Clegg, 2020). The findings of the study showed that in every acquisition the phenomenon of value leakage occurs. Value leakage is when the acquisition fails to achieve the expected performance (Wei & Clegg, 2020). For the current study, the concept of value leakage and the fact that most acquisitions fail

were important in showing the need to evaluate the goals and performance expectations of the acquisition from the acquiring firm.

Acquisitions can help create value by giving access to key capabilities or knowledge bases enjoyed by a targeted firm (Colman, 2020). Adding to the literature on management strategies for effective integration post-acquisition, Colman (2020) expressed that a major challenge post-acquisition is the need to balance the transfer of capabilities with preserving the autonomy of the knowledge-based capabilities of an acquired firm. Acquired managers, many times, have a detrimental tendency and desire to shield their capabilities from acquiring firms (Colman, 2020). Resource sharing is necessary for successful integration; therefore, management activities must encourage resource sharing activities post-acquisition. The loss of autonomy of an acquired firm's management may encourage employee resistance and jeopardize the sharing of capabilities (Colman, 2020). Target managers play a critical role in the success of integration that acquiring managers may not understand or identify. Cooperation from both the acquiring and the target firm's management is pivotal to successful integration. Business continuity is also important to integration and can create additional firm value. A reduction of ambiguity can help with continuity by reducing negative views of the acquisition and helping target employees and managers feel as if the acquisition is a positive opportunity for them and their careers (Colman, 2020). Colman's (2020) work pertains to the current study in that it explored factors that can improve the success of integrating an acquired firm.

Every year, huge sums of capital are spent by corporations to acquire and integrate smaller companies (Pangarkar, 2020). Acquisitions are not always successful in achieving the goals of the acquiring firm (Wei & Clegg, 2020). Pangarkar (2020) studied acquisition integration to determine how much integration is necessary for optimal performance post-

acquisition. Pangarkar (2020) outlined the two success factors in acquisitions as the price paid for the acquired firm and the post-acquisition integration process. Acquisition integration success depends on internal factors, such as employee resistance to change and company culture. (Pangarkar, 2020). The findings showed that the acquiring firm must determine the appropriate level of integration and be careful to assess the acquired firm and its employees' resistance and ability to change (Pangarkar, 2020). Pangarkar (2020) outlined two levels of integration as a hands-off approach and a hands-on approach. A hands-off approach allows the acquired firm to operate similar to the way they did pre-acquisition. A hands-on approach is where the acquiring firm is involved heavily in the day-to-day operations and decision-making (Pangarkar, 2020). The study applies to the topic of the international acquisition of Nashville music publishers because acquiring firms might be well served to consider the level of integration sought in the acquisition. The Nashville music market's culture may require a more hands-off approach to integration for a better chance of success. The participant's explanation on if the acquiring firms used a hands-on or hands-off approach gave good insight into the concept of integration resistance.

Zhang et al. (2020) added to the literature on cross-border acquisitions and integration by examining the success of Chinese firms and their "light-touch" integration approach in acquiring and integration German technology firms (para. 2). When acquiring firms and target firms have drastically different cultures, light-touch integration may help aid in the success of integration as well as in the transfer of knowledge bases and capabilities. Strong human resource management practices that do not directly interfere with a target firm's operations or brand can help the target firm keep its autonomy by not disrupting the normal day-to-day business. Zhang et al. (2020) found that communication was the most important ingredient to successful post-acquisition



integration. A clear communication strategy can ease the uncertainty of acquired workers and eliminate the natural adversarial relationship that can occur during an acquisition between the acquiring and acquired firm's management teams. Effective communication throughout the acquisition and integration can help to promote the sharing of information between acquiring and acquired firms (Zhang et al., 2020). The work by Zhang et al. (2020) related to the current topic and research question three by exploring integration successes and the factors that contributed to the success.

Hsieh et al. (2019) added to the literature on integration strategy by stressing the importance of cultivation through human resource initiatives. The study was conducted with a leading semiconductor company in Taiwan. Managers shared their experience after recent acquisitions and integrations. The study showed the benefit of knowledge management processes to help cultivate employees and maximize the value of organizations. Knowledge-oriented cultures include sharing, learning, solving problems, and making innovations, which includes providing a direction for employees to work towards. Workers are a valuable resource for organizations. The study relates to the current topic due to the findings showing that employees craved attention and cultivation post-acquisition.

Brueller et al. (2018) examined social and human practices during mergers and acquisitions. Enhancing human resource strategies can aid in the success of post-merger integration. Focusing on personnel can help to translate an acquisition strategy to gain more effective integration. Giving integrated employees more opportunities and more empowerment to do their jobs has both been shown to directly correlate with improved integration success. Brueller et al. (2018) explained that during integration, employees worry about personal consequences, such as job security and possible relocation. These worries can lead to feelings of

hopelessness, demoralization, and betrayal by the acquiring firm. Human resources practices to combat those feelings with support and career development plans can aid in motivation. The study related to the current study due to the participant's accounts of a lack of strategies for integration into international firms.

Bose and Biswas (2018) studied cross-border mergers and acquisitions due to most not achieving desired results. The authors explained that management must communicate to acquired employees about the implications of integration with the international firm. Employees will have more job satisfaction if they know what to expect post-integration. In most cases, international firms try to shape the culture of the acquired firm into the culture of the home country. When this happens, integration resistance can occur where individuals will defend or advance their own interests over those of the firm. Having human resource practitioners within the firm to combat integration resistance and communicate to acquired employees is essential to achieving the desired objectives.

**Fear of Job Loss and Productivity.** The findings of the current study uncovered an unexpected result of productivity increases due to the fear of job loss. The following studies examined the limited literature on the phenomenon. Van Vuuren et al. (2020) studied the relationship between job insecurity and performance by surveying 89,690 workers. The findings confirmed most of the literature that shows a decrease in productivity with the fear of job loss. The authors explained that job security is one of the most important factors in job quality. Job insecurity is an employee's concern about the future of their job. Perceptions of job insecurity can cause workers to have declining levels of performance and attitude. Job insecurity was shown to be a stressor because it threatens an employee's key resource, which is income. Van

Vuuren et al. (2020) described job security as an obligation of an employer. When employees feel insecure about their employment, it is a breach of that obligation (Van Vuuren et al., 2020).

A common element of acquisition and integration is that organizations will frequently downsize post-integration to be able to be more flexible and conserve resources. Impending downsizing can have a serious effect on job security and productivity (Probst et al., 2007).

Probst et al. (2007) examined job security perceptions in 144 employees of five organizations post-acquisition. Contrary to most research on job insecurity that found productivity decreased with job insecurity, the study found that productivity increased with a higher level of job insecurity. Creativity, however, was negatively affected by an increase in job insecurity.

Participants reported less freedom, access to resources, encouragement from management, and support post-integration and downsizing. Employees threatened with layoffs showed a rise in productivity and outputs.

In most cases, job insecurity impedes performance and productivity, but in some cases the opposite effect is true. Koen et al. (2020) examined a certain situation where job insecurity influenced higher productivity. The authors surveyed 103 employees of a company in the process of reorganization. The authors sought to assess perceived job insecurity, intrinsic motivation, and perceived distributive justice. While most studies show that job insecurity decreases productivity and performance, the authors and a few other studies have found a different result. Employees in the study showed increased performance and productivity due to what the authors called a job preservation strategy. The extrinsic motivation of possible job loss was a high motivator.

Employees may work harder to show their value to their employer. The authors found that although productivity increases did occur in certain situations the effects were not long-lasting.

The increased productivity and performance due to job insecurity had a negative long-term result and impeded creative performance.

Change is an important aspect of today's business world as most businesses and workers find their businesses in a constant state of flux (De Cuyper et al., 2020). One of the repercussions of change is that employees show an increase in a feeling of job insecurity. Job insecurity can deteriorate job attitudes, satisfaction, and commitment and can even affect an employee's health. De Cuyper et al. (2020) examined the previous literature on job insecurity and found that most studies showed a negative relationship between job insecurity and job performance and productivity. There was little evidence of job insecurity positively affecting performance and productivity, but the phenomenon is showing more attention in the literature. Job insecurity may increase performance in some instances. Employers may feel a level of comfort in this fact in times of change. The uncertainty of change may cause workers to work harder to be noticed or prove themselves to keep their employment. This can positively benefit the firm. De Cuyper et al. (2020) explained that workers, in a belief that people get what they deserve, feel that hard work will keep them from being dismissed. This belief that hard work pays off has not been supported by evidence, however.

**Theories.** The study of integration resistance within Nashville publishing companies that have been acquired by an international firm should include the theories and background information from the literature associated with motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity. Motivation is a critical topic in the world of business management and plays a significant role in job satisfaction and job performance (Ouakouak et al., 2020). The examination of motivation provided strong insight into research questions two and three on employee perception and the factors that affect productivity and job satisfaction through acquisition and integration. Mergers

and acquisitions have been shown to bring a high level of uncertainty and distrust, integration resistance, turnover, and lower motivation levels of acquired employees (Chelsey, 2020). Work engagement was also shown to be a major factor in motivating employees in the face of change (Kumar et al., 2018). Ouakouak et al. (2020) described motivation as the willingness of employees and other members of an organization to fully engage in their work. Nolen (2020) described motivation as the reason people do what they do. Ouakouak et al. (2020) explained that when the psychological needs of employees, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, are met, employees show improved performance, creativity, and persistence. Additionally, higher levels of motivation should result in greater effort and improved performance.

*Theories X and Y.* Ďuricová and Šugereková (2017) studied the self-concept of managers in the context of their leadership style within McGregor's theories X and Y. Theory X assumes that workers tend to avoid work while theory Y assumes that workers are more dynamic when they perceive work as natural (Ďuricová & Šugereková, 2017). Researchers still find McGregor's theories relevant after 50 years and consider them a foundation of employee motivational research (Ďuricová & Šugereková, 2017). The study presumed a positive relationship between the self-esteem of a manager and their managerial attitude. Additionally, it was assumed managers have a positive relationship between their managerial attitude and their self-efficacy. The research focused on 77 mid-level managers with the data collection method utilizing a questionnaire. Both assumptions were confirmed, and the authors recommended organizations to consider self-esteem when hiring managers. The authors also recommended finding organizational means to help managers improve their self-esteem through training and workshops to aid in the goal of successful leadership (Ďuricová & Šugereková, 2017). The study

relates to the topic due to the motivational factors that might arise due to the efficacy of the managers of the acquiring firm.

The study of motivation within organizations would not be complete without examining the literature provided by Geert Hofstede concerning motivation and theories X and Y. Hofstede's (1987) research has been predominantly devoted to culture and how people from different backgrounds act and feel when they are working together collectively. Hofstede (1987) examined the application of theories X and Y in various cultures. Hofstede (1987) found that workers in different cultures may be accustomed to different levels of collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and management styles. A management style that works in one culture may be disastrous in another culture. Hofstede's (1987) research should be taken into account within the current study of the acquisition of a Nashville publishing company by an international firm. The acquiring firm must consider the culture of the local Nashville music publishing market and determine if their management style will be successful post-acquisition. For instance, Hofstede (1987) explained that theories X and Y may not apply in countries that are associated with low uncertainty avoidance and collectivism (Hofstede, 1987). Workers in the United States tend to be associated with high uncertainty avoidance and individualism; therefore, theories X and Y might be an appropriate lens to examine motivation in the Nashville music publishing market. (Hofstede, 1987).

Senarathne (2020) compared theory X and theory Y-type employees and the human side of capital structure in an attempt to discover the optimal mix of employees who qualify as theory X or theory Y. The employees were distinguished as theory X or Y by examining their state of mind and attachment to the organization. The results showed that the optimal capital structure was unaffected when theory X and Y employees within the organization were at the optimal

level (Senarathne, 2020). Employing too many theory X employees, however, can raise costs due to poor work effort. Employing too many theory Y employees may cause the firm to take on too much financial risk as those employees pursue a higher level of needs satisfaction (Senarathne, 2020). It is up to firm managers to determine the optimal mix of theory X and Y employees for their desired outcome. Senarathne (2020) adds to the literature of motivation for the proposed topic of integration resistance but seeks to apply McGregor's theories in a real-world setting. The study also gives a solid explanation of theories X and Y.

Senarathne (2020) supported the literature on Douglas McGregor's theory X and theory Y by explaining that the theories examine human behavior while at work. Theory X describes employees as disliking work and avoiding responsibility (Senarathne, 2020). Theory Y describes employees as self-motivated to work, not expecting direct benefit in return for their work, and having a strong sense of collectivism (Senarathne, 2020). Hands-off management styles tend to work more successfully with theory Y employees while theory X employees need management to be more involved in their daily processes. McGregor's theories are based on the assumption that management provides the necessary employment conditions of equipment, labor relations, and compensation. The employment conditions also affect employees' job satisfaction.

***Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory.*** Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation pertains to research question two's exploration of the factors for increased productivity and job satisfaction in that it explains that employees are better motivated and productivity increases when employees have good working conditions, high pay, and job security (Hur, 2018). Hur (2018) tested Herzberg's theory of motivation in the public sector to see if the concept can be applied to public managers. Job satisfaction is documented as one of the major factors that can increase work motivation (Hur, 2018). Research question set two on employee perception also pertains to

Hur's (2018) findings that if employees are more satisfied at work, they tend to show higher performance and motivation (Hur, 2018). In contrast, if employees experience needs deficiencies, they may be less productive and not contribute their fullest to the organization. Hur's (2018) study examined public organizations to see if motivational factors were similar to for-profit types of organizations. A survey was conducted with 790 public managers. Hur (2018) found that Herzberg's theory can be applied in the public setting and that employees increase productivity and are motivated when they have good working conditions, high pay, and jobs that are secure. The work applies to the current study because the authors described Herzberg's theory in detail and applied it to examine the factors contributing to the job satisfaction and productivity of employees, which are significant issues in the lived experiences of the participants.

Feng et al. (2019) examined employee productivity in relation to real estate investment trust (REIT) performance in a sample of US equity REITs from 2003 to 2007. The focus of the study was to determine if a stable, motivated workforce will influence efficiency and performance. The author's aim was to show that a motivated workforce in the real estate investment industry will help improve overall employee productivity similar to the abundant past literature that showed that having motivated employees will lead to higher productivity and better overall firm performance (Feng et al. 2019). When employee job satisfaction level is high, productivity and overall firm performance should be high as well (Feng et al., 2019). The findings of the study showed that employees' job satisfaction and motivation are an integral part of high-performing REITs. The work is relevant to the study because job satisfaction, motivation, and their effects on overall organizational performance gave insight into integration resistance in the acquired firm.



The element of job satisfaction was explored in research question sets two and three. Job satisfaction is an interaction of what employees value, what they expect, and their personal characteristics (Yasin et al., 2019). Low job satisfaction has been shown to lead to undesirable workplace outcomes, such as turnover intention, burnout, or absenteeism (Yasin et al., 2019). Yasin et al. (2019) applied Herzberg's theory in the nursing profession in relation to job satisfaction. Factors that influence job satisfaction can be separated into extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Extrinsic factors include relationships at work, working conditions, and working hours. Intrinsic factors include things relating to job content, such as growth, recognition, nature of the work itself, and responsibility (Yasin, et al., 2019). Yasin et al. (2019) analyzed 38 past studies on the job satisfaction of nurses.

The previous literature on the general nature of job satisfaction showed that intrinsic factors had the strongest influence, but extrinsic factors were also reported as sources of job satisfaction (Yasin et al., 2019). The results from the study showed that autonomy, freedom, and working environment were the most reported factors of job satisfaction. Some community and intrinsic factors were also found associated with job satisfaction (Yasin et al., 2019). The examination of the literature on job satisfaction was necessary for the current study. The motivation and job satisfaction of the acquired workers uncovered valuable information on the experience, and the researcher had to be aware of the previous literature on the topics so it could be applied in the Nashville music publisher setting.

Karolidis and Vouzas (2019) supported the literature on job satisfaction by studying the Greek public sector in relation to organizational identification and job satisfaction. A questionnaire was utilized to survey 322 respondents. Clear organizational identification can help to improve employee job satisfaction (Karolidis & Vouzas, 2019). Job satisfaction increases the

helping behavior of employees in a community effort, which in turn has been shown to aid organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Karolidis & Vouzas, 2019). Community efforts within a firm and organizational citizenship behavior can cause employees to go beyond their normal job duties with no expectation of a reward due to pride in the organization. Citizenship behavior has been shown to be more pronounced in the public sector over the private sector (Karolidis & Vouzas, 2019). Public sector employees also showed a higher sense of job satisfaction due to the nature of the work of promoting the welfare of others by serving a public mission (Karolidis & Vouzas, 2019). The work applied to the study of integration resistance within Nashville publishing companies that have been acquired by an international firm because the researcher needed to examine the feelings of organizational citizenship within the acquired firms after acquisition and integration to uncover the true essence of the experience.

**Concepts.** Change is a powerful force in today's business environment as a result of rising globalism (Bose, 2020). Acquisition and integration are major catalysts to change. Organizations must find ways to minimize the negative effects as change occurs due to change always being a difficult process (Geringer et al., 2016). The implementation of change management processes initiatives and the research on change management theory have become prevalent topics of discussion in today's business world (Bose, 2020). Two of the most researched and utilized models to address change are Lewin's change model and John Kotter's model of change (Geringer et al. 2016).

**Lewin's Change Model.** Kurt Lewin is considered by many as the father of change management theory (Gill, 2018). His work provides a planned change approach to conflict resolution during organizational change. Lewin's work on change management applies to the fast-changing and globalizing business world today. Change management is a constant re-

evaluation and renewal of an organization's structure, direction, and capabilities with the goal of serving the constant changing needs of internal and external stakeholders (Gill, 2018). Lewin's change model suggests that organizations unfreeze the current level, move to the new level, and then refreeze to the new level (Gill, 2018). Gill (2018) examined the power struggles in India with the rise and fall of the National Green Tribunal (NGT). The failure of the NGT was partly due to change resistance and interference from government and judiciary forces that did not allow the NGT the ability to unfreeze the current way of doing things and sell the new direction to its employees and stakeholders (Gill, 2018). The work applied to the current study due to acquisitions being a powerful form of change. The study and implementation of Lewin's model may help acquired firms in the integration process by examining the level at which the acquiring firm encouraged the acquired employees to unfreeze, change, and then refreeze.

Burnes et al. (2018) supported the literature on organizational change and explained that organizational leadership goes hand-in-hand with change. The authors revisited the foundational research of Kurt Lewin's change model to explore change leadership in the modern era where leaders have increasingly engaged in unethical practices (Burnes et al., 2018). Burnes et al., (2018) suggested that one of the reasons for the decrease in ethical management is that the idea of transformational leadership is commonly misinterpreted allowing leaders the freedom to act at will and reward themselves. Additionally, the issue is exaggerated by a lack of transparency and control systems internally and externally to police the actions of managers. Burnes et al. (2018) suggested change leadership approaches by leaders that promote openness and the ability for employees and managers to hold each other accountable without repercussions. Employees that are allowed to participate in change initiatives have shown to exhibit increased readiness and acceptance of change (Burnes et al., 2018). The participation of employees also increased trust

and attachment to the organization. The work applies to the current study because examining change models and if acquired workers were allowed to participate in the change initiatives associated with integration helped to uncover issues that acquired employees experienced. Best practices were also uncovered that could limit the resistance to the change and uncertainty that accompanies international acquisition in the local Nashville market.

Bose (2020) explained that change is routine for most of today's organizations and does not disappear or dissipate. There are repercussions to change, however. Organizations are complex, which makes change even more difficult. The management of change is essential in most firms (Bose, 2020). Bose (2020) listed Lewin's change model and Kotter's eight-step models as strong methods of examining the present situation of an organization to implement change more effectively. Change is a major aspect of any merger or acquisition (Bose, 2020). Additionally, business leaders are under intense pressure to make their organizations more efficient and constantly assess processes and structure. Change management is the strategy behind systematic and planned change (Bose, 2020). A strong change management strategy can help employees adapt to change. Similar to Gill's (2018) study, Bose (2020) described Lewin's three-step model of successful change as the process of unfreezing the way things are currently done, moving to the changed behavior, and following the changed behavior with a refreeze. Some scholars have described Lewin's model as too simplistic and suggested other approaches, such as Kotter's eight-step model of change due to the complexity of today's organizations (Bose, 2020).

***John Kotter's Model of Change.*** Due to the complex nature of today's organizations and rising globalism, John Kotter, a key author in change theory, developed his eight-step model of change to follow for more successful change implementation and has become a primary source

for other literature on the topic (Bose, 2020). Kotter's eight steps include establishing a sense of urgency, forming a guiding plan or change coalition, creating a change vision, communicating that vision throughout the organization, empowering all within the organization to act on the new vision, setting up and planning short-term goals or wins, consolidating change improvements, and lastly, institutionalizing or solidifying the new approaches (Kotter, 1999). King et al. (2018) applied Kotter's model of change to attempt to understand the success and failure of community criminal sentences in the field of criminal justice. The community justice system has seen many changes in recent decades including evolving organizational structures (King et al., 2018). Notably, there has been an increase in managerialism which has been widely reported in a negative manner. The changes have led to cultural shifts within the justice system from autonomy to more participative, checks and balances types of organizations. While change models show that participative change is more effective in the job satisfaction of employees, constant change can become burdensome, and workers may become disillusioned with the organization (King et al., 2018). Examination of Kotter's model contributed to the current study because the literature on effectively managing change provided insight into the issues or factors that influence productivity and job satisfaction, which was explored in research question set three. The study of the normal issues associated with change helped the researcher discover issues unique to the Nashville publishing market.

Kotter argued that, in most cases, change efforts are not successful (King et al., 2018). The Kotter change model suggests an eight-step model to manage change and is one of the most renowned models used to study change implementation (King et al., 2018). The first step in Kotter's model is to establish a sense of urgency and that change is necessary. Next, managers should form a guiding coalition of powerful members of the organization, followed by the

coalition creating a vision for the change. Steps four and five are for management to communicate the newly created vision and to empower others within the organization to act on the vision. Step six requires managers to create short-term wins through goal setting with the aim to achieve the goals within a 12-month period. Step seven consolidates performance in the previous step's short-term goals and produces more change. The final eighth step institutionalizes the new approaches so that they become the norm throughout the organization (King et al., 2018).

McIntosh et al. (2018) supported the literature on change models by aiming to address management and change initiatives in the European Union within polypharmacy management. Similar to King et al. (2018), the authors described Kotter's model as including the eight steps in managing change as creating a sense of urgency, building a guiding coalition, establishing a vision, enlisting volunteers, removing barriers that may prevent action, helping to generate short-term wins or goals, continuing accelerations, and instituting change (McIntosh et al., 2018). The study conducted nine case studies in eight European Union countries, including Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and Sweden. The focus was on reviewing policy development and implementation within polypharmacy management. The common themes that arose from the study were that support for innovation and teamwork, workforce training, and communication of policy development and implementation all aided in the success of change initiatives (McIntosh et al., 2018).

**Summary of Literature Review.** There has been substantial research on international acquisition, integration, and business clusters. Additionally, the research on the issues of organizational culture, change implementation, and integration strategy is vast and well-rounded. Motivation has been shown to be a significant factor in successful integration post-acquisition

due to most employees being resistant to change (Mello, 2019). The theories on motivation, such as theories X and Y, Herzberg's two-factor theory, Lewin's change model, and John Kotter's model of change, have also been well researched. Most acquisitions fail to achieve the goals of the acquiring organization (Mello, 2019). The research suggests that the international acquisition of a Nashville music publishing company will most likely encounter the commonly found issues associated with integration resistance that occur in international acquisitions. The expected issues included decreases in productivity and the job satisfaction of employees due to integration resistance. Integration resistance may stem from an employee's perception of fairness, feelings of uncertainty, and lack of motivation (Groen, 2018; Kets de Vries, 2015). If the acquiring firm has a significantly different culture than the acquired firm, the integration may have a high chance of failure (Chelsey, 2020). A participative culture and hands-off management style have been shown to decrease the failure rate of acquisitions (McIntosh et al., 2018; Burnes et al., 2018; Pangarkar, 2020; Koles & Kondath, 2014).

The recent and predicted future rise in streaming revenues has presented a situation where international organizations are seeking competitive advantages by purchasing smaller independent publishers (Towse, 2017). There has been very little research on acquisition within the music industry, particularly within the Nashville creative cluster. Subsequently, motivation and the issues of job satisfaction and productivity have not previously been explored in the face of a Nashville publisher being acquired by an international firm. Acquisitions within the market will most likely experience the common issues associated with acquisition and integration. Examining international acquisitions within the Nashville creative business cluster displayed some issues unique to the market. The foundational literature helped to guide the researcher in the case study. A firm knowledge of the expected issues will aid the researcher in spotting any

unique aspects pertaining to cases of internationally acquired Nashville publishing companies.

The study also provided new information pertaining specifically to the Nashville industry and its symbiotic culture to add to the overall literature on the topic of international acquisitions.

### **Summary of Section 1 and Transition**

Section one outlined the foundation of the case study on integration resistance within internationally acquired Nashville publishing companies. In the section, the researcher discussed and explained the general issues associated with integration resistance as a result of the international acquisition of an organization within a business cluster. It also covered the background of the business problem, problem statement, and purpose statement. The purpose statement explained that a flexible qualitative methodology and a case study design were utilized for this study by examining Nashville-based music publishing companies that have been through an international acquisition. The research questions guided the study and were based on the problem statement and purpose statement.

Section one also included the researcher's initial conceptual framework. The framework listed the topics of organizational culture, change implementation, integration strategy, theories X and Y, Herzberg's two-factor theory, Lewin's change model, and John Kotter's model of change to be the topics explored. Section one also included subsections outlining the definition of key terms, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and the significance of the study. The literature review included an exhaustive review and evaluation of the academic and professional literature on the subjects concerning the Nashville music industry, digital music streaming, business clusters, international acquisitions and mergers, organizational culture, change implementation, integration strategy, and motivational theories. The following section concentrates on the technical aspects of this study and includes subsections on the role of the



researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, and data collection.

### **Section 2: The Project**

The Project, embodied in section two, includes elements of the application of the information provided in section one's Foundation of the Study. The section contains the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, and a description of the participants in the case study. Section two also includes a discussion on the research method and the research design used for the study. Information on the rationale for the use of the chosen research method and the chosen research design is also included. A description of the population from which the participants were chosen is provided along with a description of the population with a sampling method justification, the sample size and type, participant eligibility criteria, and the relevance of characteristics of the sample utilized. Following this information is a discussion on the instruments of the study, data collection and organization techniques, data analysis, qualitative reliability, and validity. Section two concludes with a section summary and a brief overview of Section three, which looks at the findings and discusses the applications to professional practice. After examination and analysis of the research findings, the researcher suggests action recommendations, further study recommendations, study reflections, and an overall study summary and conclusion.

#### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this flexible designed qualitative case study was to add to the body of knowledge on the failure of international acquisitions due to a decline in the productivity and job satisfaction of employees after an acquisition. The experiences of an acquired firm's employees have been shown to be a dominant factor in the success or failure of the acquisition (King et al.,

2020). Using a case study design, the larger problem was explored through the evaluation of internationally acquired Nashville publishing companies post-integration. The study also sought to determine any issues unique to the Nashville music publishing industry's culture that may hinder or aid successful international acquisitions. Kumar et al. (2018) explained that organizational culture evolves from an organization's value system that becomes the norms affecting the behavior of employees. The culture and traditions of an individual will influence his or her understanding of an experience (Gill, 2018). The culture of an acquired firm's local industry might not be amenable to the culture desired from the acquired firm (Geringer et al., 2016).

### **Role of the Researcher**

The casual observation of events or a particular case only provides generalizations of a phenomenon. To have a more detailed view of a phenomenon within a case study, it is necessary to have researchers recruit participants to be interviewed about their experience. Researchers will question the participants about the events surrounding the research, as well as their emotions associated with the phenomenon. Traditionally, interviews of the participants in a study are conducted face-to-face by the researcher to allow the participants the freedom to discuss their experiences, emotions, and thoughts on the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2018). Due to the recent Covid 19 pandemic, it was necessary to utilize technological resources for interviews instead of conducting them in-person to limit the risk of possible exposure to the virus. For this study, the Zoom platform was the primary method for the interview process. Researchers should utilize open-ended questions to allow for further discussion and to gain an understanding of the topic of the study (Creswell, 2016). Robson and McCartan (2016) described a case study as empirically investigating a certain present-day phenomenon within its real-life context using

collective sources of evidence. The researcher must make sure that there is adequate access to data through interviews, documents, or records (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers should take detailed notes of what the interviews provide, well-document things of interest, observations, and any issues that arise during interviews (Pagan, 2019). In order to find patterns or explanations to the issue under study, the researcher will organize the data either chronologically or across cases (Yin, 2018). The researcher should then examine the data gleaned and provide meaningful insights (Moon, 2015). Case studies are concluded when researchers detail and present their findings (Yin, 2018).

The role of the researcher is also defined in a case study by how a researcher collects, analyzes, and interprets data; how he or she positions themselves in relation to the research problem and the participants; the type of change the researcher is intending to recommend; and how he or she views and reflects on his or her own subjectivity and position (Horlings et al., 2020). A researcher's personality and personal experiences can influence the role a researcher adopts in the form of personal bias (Horlings et al., 2020). Recognition of reflexivity is of utmost importance for a researcher to bracket out and combat any personal bias. It involves the researcher understanding what is occurring within research and the knowledge that is being produced while also being aware of personal assumptions and background that might affect the researcher's view of the phenomenon in question (Pagan, 2019). If the researcher's personal perspective influences the interviewees' responses, the research could be tainted; therefore, the researcher must not let personal feelings affect how interviewees answer the interview questions (Yin, 2018). Additionally, the researcher must also be aware and reflect on the relationship he or she has with the interviewee participating in the study in order for the interview to be ruled by the interviewee and not the interviewer (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

For the current study, the researcher is a veteran of the Nashville music publishing industry. Personal experiences and bias were bracketed and removed from the study. Acknowledgment of possible bias was made known. Only the account from participants was considered in the findings of the case study. Additionally, the researcher's own bias did not influence the interview questions. Questions were broad and open-ended to allow participants to describe their own account of the experience of being acquired by an international firm.

### **Research Methodology**

Every researcher brings a personal philosophical orientation to his or her research. This personal orientation is known as a research paradigm and helps to separate qualitative research from quantitative research (Creswell, 2016). In addition, each researcher must choose an appropriate research methodology to explore the problem under study. The choice of a research methodology and design should be made with careful consideration (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The following sections outline the reasons for choosing a flexible research design and a case study methodology for the examination of the possible loss of productivity and employee satisfaction occurring after the acquisition of small independent companies by international firms resulting in the reduction of firm performance and an increase in employee turnover.

**Discussion of Flexible Design.** This study was conducted with a flexible design and a qualitative method. Qualitative research was chosen to allow the personal experiences, perceptions, and emotions of the participants to be explored to help refine the research topic (Klenke, 2015). Specifically, a flexible case study design was utilized. The reason for a flexible design was that the examination of Nashville music publishers within the local creative business cluster who have had their firm purchased by an international organization might lead to unexpected conclusions. Flexible designs found in qualitative research approach the research

process from a perspective that the answer may be different than what was previously learned (Creswell, 2016). Robson and McCartan (2016) explained that flexible designs can adapt as research evolves.

**Discussion of Case Study Method.** Case study, as a design, was chosen because the analysis of an organization that has been acquired by an international organization might uncover common themes associated with the event (Creswell 2016). Yin (2018) explained that case studies are utilized when a researcher attempts to study a phenomenon within the bounds of a real-life, contemporary context or setting. Case studies can focus on concrete entities, such as individuals, small groups, or organizations; or they can focus on less concrete entities, such as communities, partnerships, or relationships. For this study, multiple organizations and different levels of employees were the focus. Robson and McCartan (2016) described a case study as using collective sources of evidence to empirically investigate a certain present-day issue or event within its real-life context. The themes derived from the interviews of participants who worked for acquired Nashville firms showed what contributes to changes in productivity and employee job satisfaction, which uncovered issues unique to international acquisitions within the market. Grounded theory and phenomenology were ruled out as possible designs to utilize due to grounded theory's attempt to create new theory and phenomenology's focus on the story of a certain lived experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Narrative was also not chosen as a design due to the design's focus on one or two individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Discussion of Method(s) for Triangulation.** A good practice to offer validity to case study qualitative research is to utilize triangulation. Triangulation can bring about a convergence of findings, methods, or sources (Farquhar et al., 2020). Yin (2018) described triangulation as the practice of collecting data from multiple sources to corroborate the same conclusion or finding.

The convergence that occurs through triangulation in research helps to establish facts and support validity. For the current study, data source triangulation, or using different types of participants was utilized (Carter et al., 2014). The data sources were the participants being interviewed. In the particular cases under study, having participants at multiple levels of the acquired organizations helped the researcher utilize triangulation to establish facts related to their organization's acquisition by an international firm. Each participant had a unique perspective on the experience of the acquisition and integration. Finding the commonality between each participant's views helped to establish facts. With the facts of the acquisition and integration solidified, the researcher then focused on the independent accounts to discover the factors contributing to the changes in productivity and job satisfaction for workers in the Nashville music publishing industry whose firms have been acquired by international organizations.

**Summary of Research Methodology.** Choosing the appropriate research methodology is crucial to effective research. For the current study, a case study methodology was utilized. Additionally the research was conducted with a flexible qualitative design. The choice of flexible qualitative design was chosen due to researching the experiences of workers in the Nashville market that have experienced their firm acquired and integrated into an international firm. Flexible designs are used when the results could be different from what is expected, which allows the research to adapt. Data triangulation was utilized by comparing the 16 participants accounts for common elements and themes from each description of the experience.

### **Participants**

For this study, the focus was on a sample population of individuals within small publishing companies that were acquired and integrated by a larger international firm. The participants ranged from general manager to creative staff within an acquired Nashville

publisher. The reason for participants needing to be from different levels of the acquired firm was to pull from each of their various experiences through the acquisition and integration process. The different accounts helped the researcher triangulate the facts associated with the process of acquisition and integration within the firm. The different perspectives gave insight into the various issues associated with the process that support previous research and that are unique to the Nashville market.

Participants were interviewed with open-ended questions that allowed them to extrapolate on the experience of their firm being acquired and integrated. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the researcher did not meet in-person with the participants but met with them virtually and discussed the purpose and nature of the study. Confidentiality was necessary to preserve the participants' rights and the study's data integrity. Participant information will not be made publicly available to anyone outside of the study. A completed consent form, shown in Appendix A, explaining the purpose of the study was required from all participants involved. The form disclosed any risks relating to the study and assured each participant's confidentiality. The recordings of the interviews, notes, and transcripts are also stored in a secure location. Upon three years after the research study's approval, the information will be permanently deleted. Li-Chen (2009) recommended holding data three to 10 years before disposal. The environment of the interviews was a secure online format. The interviews were recorded so the researcher could retrieve the information for transcribing and coding. Each participant and their responses were given an identifiable and unique code.

### **Population and Sampling**

Knechel (2019) explained that it is not possible to recruit an entire population of interest for a study. The researcher enrolls only a sample with the hope of representing the broader

characteristics of the population of those under study. Examining the entire population of workers in Nashville music publishing companies that have been acquired and integrated by an international firm is not feasible due to the number of recent acquisitions within the market. Additionally, a select few international firms have acquired more than one independent Nashville firm (Skates, 2010; Parker, 2019). Examining only one internationally acquisitioned firm would not provide enough saturation into the phenomenon. For this study, 16 participants were interviewed until data saturation was reached. The participants need to be workers for local Nashville firms that were acquired and integrated by a larger international firm.

**Discussion of Population.** Knechel (2019) described population as the entire collection of possible cases of interest to a study. For the current study, the participants ranged from general manager to creative staff within an acquired Nashville-based organization. The criteria for the sample population were that they must have worked for the firm before it was acquired. Participants must have also continued to work for the international firm after their firm was acquired and integrated. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that all participants must have experienced the same phenomenon under study. The eligible population for the study included all workers in the Nashville music cluster who have experienced their publishing firm being acquired and integrated by an international firm. In recent years, there has been a significant number of such instances (Towse, 2017). There have also been a number of smaller firms acquired by the same international organization. For instance, Canadian publishing conglomerate Ole' purchased independent publisher Blacktop Music and retained its management and creative staff (Skates, 2010). Ole' also recently purchased Nashville small publisher Parallel Entertainment (Parker, 2019). Parallel's managing partner was retained as Ole's senior director of creative, as well as his administrative and creative staff (Parker, 2019).



**Discussion of Sampling.** Sampling is an important aspect of qualitative research when it is not possible to interview an entire population who have encountered a phenomenon under study. Sampling refers to a subset of the entire population (Knechel, 2019). Sampling takes a segment of the eligible population with the idea that the findings for the sample can be used to understand the entire population (Robson & McCarten, 2016). Sampling may be random or systematic. Random, or probability, sampling gives each possible participant the same chance of being included in a study (Knechel, 2019). Participants are chosen at random. Systematic sampling looks at the eligible population list and determines specific participants who might best represent the issues under study (Robson & McCarten, 2016). Systematic sampling in the form of purposeful sampling was best for the current study. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to satisfy specific needs by choosing a specific group of participants for a project. For this study, workers were chosen from organizations that were acquired by an international firm.

**Discussion of Sampling Method.** For the current study, purposeful sampling was utilized. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to handpick the sample (Knechel, 2019). Creswell and Poth (2018) described purposeful sampling as strategically sampling a group of people who might give the researcher the best information pertaining to the research problem being examined. Knechel (2019) explained that a sample should closely approximate the characteristics of the entire population. The utilization of purposeful sampling requires the researcher to consider whom to select as participants, the size of the sample, and the sampling strategy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research requires at least two or three levels of sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The levels include site level, event or process level, and the participant level (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The current study sampled from the process level, with integration, and the participant level, with employees who have experienced acquisition and

integration. The sample population included participants who have experienced acquisition and integration but must have also worked for the firm before, throughout, and after the integration process.

***Discussion of Sample Frame.*** A sample frame describes the group of individuals who could possibly be chosen from the target population to be included in a study (Martinez-Mesa et al., 2016). The actual sample only represents a portion of the total population. For instance, examining international acquisitions, in general, may not provide information unique to the Nashville market. Additionally, examining random employees from firms in various industries that have been involved in acquisitions might encounter the issue of participants not sharing the same experience. Sample frames help to set boundaries for a study, so the selected sample should represent the study's objectives and have participants who have all experienced the acquisition and integration of their small independent company by an international firm (Martinez-Mesa et al., 2016). The sample frame for the current study set the boundaries of acquisition within the Nashville market. The sample frame also required only including participants from an acquired firm and those that have worked for their organization before and after the acquisition and integration of their firm by an international organization.

***Discussion of Desired Sample and Sample Size.*** The question of sample size is an important decision in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Smaller samples require a more in-depth interview and account from each participant. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend no more than four or five samples within a case study. For this case study, 16 workers were selected for interviews from organizations that have been acquired and integrated by international firms. Each participant needed to have worked for a firm that was acquired and integrated by an international firm. It is important that the participants were from different levels

within the organizations. Interviewing multiple levels of workers including executives, administrative, and creative workers helped to solidify the facts of the acquisition and integration while still allowing their own experience to be told. The inclusion of as many workers as possible that lived through the acquisition and integration revealed strong insight and saturation into the organization under study and the issues pertaining to the specific research questions.

**Summary of Population and Sampling.** The current study examined factors that arise affecting job performance and productivity in the international acquisition and integration of a Nashville publishing company. To adequately examine the phenomenon, it was appropriate to have participants from multiple jobs within an acquired firm. The research location was Nashville, Tennessee. In recent years, the Nashville music publishing industry has experienced the acquisition of many small publishing companies by international firms (Towse, 2017). As a result, a rising number of Nashville publishing workers have encountered the experience of working for a company that has been acquired and integrated into a larger international firm. To answer the research questions, careful consideration was taken in selecting participants, examining the population under study, and choosing the sampling method. The current study utilized purposeful sampling and specifically choose participants from the population of Nashville music publishers who have worked for a firm before and after it was acquired and integrated into an international firm.

### **Data Collection & Organization**

Creswell and Poth (2018) described data collection as a series of activities that have the aim of gathering solid information and that answer research questions. Cypress (2017) explained that qualitative data collection, management, and analysis can be extremely challenging for early career researchers and doctoral students. Collecting, recording, and storing data in a secure

manner must be paramount to prevent ethical issues. Researchers must anticipate and consider any ethical issues that may arise within a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A crucial issue in designing a qualitative study is in the method chosen for collecting data (Cypress, 2017). For this study, the data collection method was in the form of one-on-one interviews with a sample size of 16 participants, or until data saturation was reached. The participants all had worked for a firm that was acquired and integrated by an international firm. The interviews were conducted with open-ended questions so participants could provide historical information. The researcher encouraged an open exchange including follow-up questions. The researcher must gain support from the participants by explaining the purpose of the study and not being deceptive in any way (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, a research consent form, shown in Appendix A, was filled out by each participant explaining the confidentiality of their accounts to help gain their support (Creswell, 2016). Participants were fully informed that an interview was taking place and how the information they provide will be utilized in the research (Cypress, 2017). A researcher must also gain the support of an institutional review board before beginning the data collection process to make sure the research follows the board's guidelines for ethical research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Liberty University's institutional review board verified the research approach and approved this study.

**Data Collection Plan.** A good researcher utilizes rigorous data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data collection plan for this study includes first identifying the population and sample size of participants. The population chosen was workers in the Nashville music publishing industry who have experienced their firm being acquired and integrated by an international firm. The sample size was 16 participants or until data saturation was achieved. The most common forms of data collection are through interviews and observations (Cypress, 2017).

Cypress (2018) explained that an interviewer enters the participant's world and perspectives with the goal of letting them tell their stories. Cypress (2018) outlined that one-on-one interviews can occur over the internet or in person. For this study, the one-on-one interviews were conducted over the internet through the third-party software platform Zoom. The interviews were in-depth to provide data saturation about the experience. The interviews were also recorded and coded with unique codes for each participant and integral pieces of information gleaned from the interviews. NVivo, a data management software, aided in coding and organizing the data for analysis. In order to validate the participants' responses, clarify responses, and ensure accuracy, follow-up questions were necessary. Additionally, any further questions that arose after examining the data gleaned from the interview were included in follow-up interviews.

**Instruments.** Rimando et al. (2015) described the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection in qualitative research. The researcher is an active participant in the research process (Soh et al., 2020). Building trust with participants is of utmost importance as well as being able to use open-ended questions and to help guide the participant based on their responses. The researcher may also have to deal with unexpected circumstances or answers to interview questions (Soh et al., 2020). Xu and Storr (2012) expressed that the ability to observe as well as generate and interpret data is very important for a researcher. The researcher is the primary means of data collection by recruiting participants, developing the interview guide, analyzing the data, and finding the common themes associated with the event from all participants (Xu & Storr, 2012). For this study, the researcher acted as the primary instrument of data collection by selecting the appropriate participants from internationally acquired and integrated Nashville music publishing companies. The researcher conducted interviews, follow-

up questions, coded the data obtained in the interviews, and extrapolated key themes discovered from the research.

A secondary instrument used in case study research is the interview guide. An interview guide, shown in Appendix B, was constructed for the current study with the use of the literature review on the research topic (Safdar et al., 2019). The guide consists of questions pertaining to the primary themes covering the main content of the research. The guide also includes follow-up questions for probing and elaboration to improve explanation. The interview guide gives the interview discussion structure, but it should not be followed too strictly (Kallio et al., 2016). Instead, the interview guide should provide direction on what is to be discussed. Qualitative case study interviews are semi-structured; therefore, it is possible to collect extraneous information not pertinent to the study. The guide helps to keep the discussion focused on the topic under research (Kallio et al., 2016).

The interview questions in the interview guide, found in Appendix B, were constructed to address the research questions found in section one of this study. The interview questions in part A of the interview guide helped to set the stage for the interview. Participants were asked to give a brief history of who they are and their role in the organization before and during the acquisition and integration process. This provided background and showed the credibility of each participant. The follow-up question asked participants how their role changed after integration into the new firm. The questions in part B of the interview guide began to delve into the issues addressed in research question set one pertaining to the factors contributing to increases and declines in productivity and job satisfaction in the fact of an international acquisition. Participants are asked to provide their account of the experience. After providing their account,

participants were asked follow-up questions to determine if the experience affected employee productivity and job satisfaction.

Interview question set C asked the participants to explain what had happened since their previous company has been acquired and integrated. After the telling of the account, follow-up questions were asked to address what factors contributed to and hindered productivity and job satisfaction. Interview question set D inquired further into the integration process by asking participants if the acquiring organization utilized any strategies to help combat any issues with productivity or job satisfaction that might occur. The follow-up questions specifically asked what strategies were used and if they were successful. The final follow-up questions asked if the participants considered the acquisition and integration a success or a failure and to explain why.

The final questions in question sets E and F pertained to research question four and discussed the culture of the Nashville music market and the acquiring organization. The initial question set in section E asked participants to explain the culture of their original organization pre-acquisition. The follow-up questions asked if their original firm and the acquiring firm have different organizational cultures. The interview question set F specifically explored the Nashville music business cluster. The first question asked if there is anything unique to the Nashville creative cluster that an international organization may not understand. The first follow-up question delved deeper and specifically asked if the acquiring company took into account the uniqueness of the Nashville market throughout the integration process. The second follow-up question asked if the culture of the participant's original firm had a positive or negative effect on productivity and job satisfaction throughout the integration process due to being a part of the Nashville creative cluster?

**Data Organization Plan.** Before interviews were conducted, each participant was given a unique code. Elements of the interview, such as date, start time, end time, location, and the medium used for the interview were also recorded. Once interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed the interviews into a Microsoft Word document with each line numbered to begin the process of organizing the information gleaned. The organization of data was completed by assigning additional codes and organizing themes that represented the data collected in the interview process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell (2016) explained that coding is making sense of data that is transcribed from an interview. Alam (2020) described coding as an intermediate process that occurs after data collection and before data analysis can begin. Coding can be completed by hand or through a qualitative software. The use of a qualitative software to help code and analyze data can reduce the time spent on the processes (Alam, 2020). For this study, the software NVivo was used to code the data. Coding helps the researcher organize the lengthy data obtained from interviews and assists in finding common themes within the interviews (Alam, 2020).

**Summary of Data Collection and Organization.** Cypress (2017) outlined that data collection is utilized to help answer research questions in qualitative research. For this research study, data collection was in the form of personal interviews. Sixteen participants from Nashville publishing companies that have been acquired and integrated into an international organization were the sample size included in the study. Interviews were conducted over the internet using Zoom. Participants were given a unique identifying code. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were verified by each participant to maintain the accuracy of the transcription. The primary instrument of data collection for the study was the researcher. The interview guide, shown in Appendix B, served as the secondary instrument of data collection.



After transcription verification, the data was organized utilizing NVivo to assign codes to summarize basic information and to identify themes present in the data.

### **Data Analysis**

Creswell and Poth (2018) expressed that the analysis of data is a challenging task for qualitative researchers. Researchers have been shown to often begin case studies without any idea of how the evidence from a study is to be analyzed (Yin, 2018). The process of analyzing data includes coding and organizing themes, finding ways to represent the data, and forming an interpretation of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For the current study, story analysis was utilized. First, the researcher should produce open coding. After that, based on the codes, the researcher should proceed to examine categories and themes (Alam, 2020). Coding can be done by hand by marking up text with a highlighter (Creswell, 2016). Tools, such as the software NVivo, can also help aid in the process of analyzing data. Over the last decade, software tools have become more diverse and functional and as well as simpler for researchers to learn and utilize (Yin, 2018). NVivo is the researcher's choice in data analysis software for this study.

**Emergent Ideas.** Before coding begins, a researcher must determine the emergent ideas, or themes, that arise from the interviews. Identifying themes is the first step in interpreting data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A discussion of themes is how a researcher reports major findings (Yin, 2018). To identify themes, the researcher should read through the data collected and make notes on ideas that arise (Creswell, 2016). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that reading through the interview a few times can help the researcher break the interview into parts. Each part can then be examined for themes. Once themes have been identified, each theme must be defined within a codebook corresponding to the interview (Neal et al., 2014). Creswell and Poth (2018) also recommend writing memos to help in organizing the themes in each part. A complete

understanding of the information within the interviews will help the researcher begin the process of coding.

**Coding Themes.** After themes are discovered, the coding process begins. The coding process includes understanding what is being said in an interview and assigning codes to text passages (Creswell, 2016). Maher et al. (2018) explained that the coding of data provides an element of rigor that is essential in the research process. Codes are then grouped together as evidence to support broader categories called themes. As mentioned in the previous section, a codebook must be developed with detailed definitions of each key theme derived from the research (Neal et al., 2014). Essentially, coding is an attempt to make sense of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Coding gives labels to essential data and helps eliminate data that is not useful. Coding allows researchers to narrow down the abundant information in an interview to only the pertinent information for the study. Maher et al. (2018) outlined three approaches to coding. First, a researcher can utilize hand-written notes on paper, sticky notes, and display boards in conjunction with Microsoft Word. Secondly, researchers can utilize digital software, such as NVivo. Lastly, researchers may utilize both physical and digital means combining software with paper and sticky notes. The software NVivo is a valuable resource in helping to analyze the large amounts of text that come from interviews (Alam, 2020). The coded themes ultimately become the headings for the findings in a qualitative report. Several codes may be involved in building a theme. It is important that the codes do not overlap (Creswell, 2016). For the current study, the researcher utilized Microsoft Word, hand-written notes, and NVivo to code themes.

**Interpretations.** Interpretation is a creative process that makes sense of data by finding meaningful patterns and themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers need to find the larger meaning in the data above and beyond just the initial themes. Maher et al. (2018) prescribed deep

and insightful interactions for data interpretation in order to generate an understanding of a phenomenon. Researchers must immerse themselves in the data to find the true meaning. For this study, the software NVivo was utilized to aid in interpretation. NVivo allows for deep analysis and provides tools to help visualize and interpret data (Alam, 2020). The software can also be used in theory building and analyzing data to better understand the research being conducted. Maher et al. (2018) explained that digital analysis software, such as NVivo, provides excellent data management but does not take the place of a researcher's analysis.

**Summary of Data Analysis.** Many researchers find conducting qualitative research analysis a challenging task (Lester et al., 2020). A major aspect of that challenge is that there are numerous approaches that a qualitative researcher can utilize to analyze data. Researchers must generate a deep understanding of the data and the phenomenon under study. To generate that understanding, the use of coding can help uncover themes through the interview process. The coding process can be enhanced through the use of data analysis software, such as NVivo. For the current study, the researcher utilized traditional hand-written notes and Microsoft Word transcripts of interviews in conjunction with NVivo to establish rigor and identify the themes woven throughout the participants' accounts. Codes were developed for the themes that arose, and each code was defined in a codebook. The thorough knowledge of the data and themes helped the researcher develop an interpretation and understanding of the phenomenon of a Nashville music publisher being acquired and integrated by an international organization (Maher et al., 2018).

### **Reliability and Validity**

Qualitative research is often questioned for its rigor (Cypress, 2017). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research relies on personal stories or accounts to draw conclusions instead

of exact numbers or measurable events. Qualitative research accounts can vary from participant to participant, and the researcher must infer conclusions based on those accounts. Cypress (2017) defined rigor as the quality of being exact. In order to combat preconceived opinions on qualitative research, the researcher must take extra measures to ensure the rigor of their research. Two constructs that can display rigor in a qualitative research study are by showing that the research has reliability and validity (Yin, 2018).

**Reliability.** One test in judging the quality of a research design is in examining a study's reliability (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) explained that reliability is demonstrating that the results of the study can be repeated. The researcher must question if the same conclusion would be reached if another researcher followed the same procedures. Research findings should be a source of dependability for further research on the same topic or in examining another case (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) suggested undergoing research as if another researcher is looking over one's shoulder. Omanovic (2019) explained that researchers should seek truthful interpretation. Reliable research studies are those that have consistency with the visibility of the processes, analyses, and results of the research while being mindful of the limits of the results (Cypress, 2017).

For the current study, an interview guide was utilized to ensure consistency between the participants' accounts. Participants provided an account of their time with the firm before and after the acquisition as well as their role within the firm to show that each participant's account has credibility. Confirmability was achieved through follow-up discussions with the participants to verify the transcript from their initial interview and to have any other questions answered that arose from comparing their account to other participants. Another important aspect in the reliability of case study research is transferability. Lyle (2018) explained that the knowledge

transfer of one study should be applicable to other studies. The in-depth detailed study on the accounts of workers within locally based Nashville music publishing companies that have undergone and acquisition and integration by an international organization gives insight into the process with other publishers undergoing the same phenomenon. The transferability of the study to new occurrences of the acquisition and integration within the Nashville music market should be helpful in determining the issues that might occur.

**Validity.** Yin (2018) expressed that in addition to reliability, the validity of qualitative research is important to outline and shows whether the study's findings are generalizable beyond the current study. Validity can also be defined as being logical, relevant, justifiable, or well-grounded (Cypress, 2017). Creswell (2016) explained that validity in qualitative research means that good measures are gathered, there is a strong sampling, that the information has statistical use, and meaningful inferences are drawn. Validity and accuracy are at the heart of rigorous and good research (Creswell, 2016). In order for a qualitative account to be deemed accurate, triangulation needs to occur. Triangulation is evidence drawn from multiple sources to help establish a study's themes (Creswell, 2016). Triangulation can be from different interview participants' interviews or from different sources of information entirely. For this study, the different participants interviewed and their accounts provided the triangulation necessary for setting the foundation of key facts to provide validity.

**Bracketing.** Researcher bias is an element that could jeopardize the validity of a qualitative study. Reflexivity, which is engaging in a self-reflection or predisposition as part of a study, can be utilized to help validate the research and overcome researcher bias (Cypress, 2017). For the current study, staying true to the findings instead of attempting to make the findings fit within preconceived thoughts on the topic could have been a challenge. The researcher is an

almost 30-year veteran of the Nashville music publishing industry. This simple fact could be viewed as an ethical issue and has the potential for researcher bias. The researcher's previous experience and knowledge could have also conflicted with the new knowledge (Omanovic, 2019). In order to address any such bias, the researcher gave every attempt to set aside any preconceived experiences. The research focused only on the participants' experiences in what Creswell and Poth (2018) described as bracketing. Dörfler and Stierand (2020) described bracketing as a researcher's attempt to set aside their own pre-assumptions and understandings before making sense of experiences.

In addition to triangulation and bracketing in case study research, data saturation can help provide validity. For a study's conclusions to be generalized beyond its own findings, data collection must reach a point of saturation where very minimal new data can be found (Alam, 2020). Data saturation, however, can be hard to conceptualize (Saunders et al., 2018). Researchers must prove that data collection is complete and that they have reached data saturation. Saunders et al. (2018) outlined that data saturation must be consistent and focused on the research questions without being too broad. Failure to reach data saturation will have an impact on the quality of the research being conducted (Saunders et al., 2018). Saturation is the point where data collection is discontinued. For the current study, data saturation occurred after participant 13. No new information was gleaned from participants 14 through 16. The interviews were confirmed with each participant, and participants were given follow-up interviews to answer any additional questions or issues that arose from all participants' accounts of the experience. The invitation for participants to view and verify their transcript with the final themes outlined also aided in the validity and reliability of the findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). Other validation strategies utilized in this study of the international acquisition of Nashville

music publishers were in the careful taking of detailed notes, having strong recordings, and thoroughly transcribing the interviews.

**Summary of Reliability and Validity.** Research must always be conducted with the idea of quality in mind as well as an appropriate amount of rigor. Establishing reliability and validity is of utmost importance in showing quality and rigor. A reliable research study can be applied to other similar studies with similar results. A research study with a strong amount of validity is logical, transparent, relevant, justifiable, and well-grounded (Cypress, 2017). Validity in qualitative research means that good measures are gathered, there is a strong sampling, the information has statistical use, and the information is meaningful. Research that exemplifies both reliability and validity provides a sound foundation to make good judgments (Noble & Smith, 2015).

### **Summary of Section 2 and Transition**

Section two outlined the project portion of the study. The project contains some elements from section one and the foundation of the study. The purpose of the study was re-stated. Next, the role of the researcher was outlined, and a description of the participants was given. Section two also discussed the research method and design as well as the researcher's reason for choosing the design. The population from which the participants were chosen was described as well, including sample size, sampling method, and the eligibility criteria for participants. Section two then discussed the instruments of the study, which included the researcher as the primary instrument and the interview guide as the secondary instrument. A description of how data was collected, organized, and analyzed was provided along with a discussion on reliability and validity in qualitative research.

Section three will examine the findings and discuss applications to professional practice. An overview of the entire study will be provided. The data collected will be addressed, and the findings will be related to the larger body of literature on the research topic. The researcher will then suggest recommendations after examining the findings. The recommendations will be for areas of further study, action, or reflections of the study. Section three will then offer a summary and conclusion to the study.

### **Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change**

The third section of this qualitative research applies the results to professional practice and implications for change. Section three provides detailed information on the findings and addresses the research questions with conclusions. The section addressed the data and bounding of the data by the collected evidence. The results of the study are addressed as to how they relate to the larger body of literature on the specified topic. A discussion of a significant outlier is additionally included that provides evidence for strong recommendations and further study. Section three then provides those recommendations for action and further study. The researcher's reflections on the experience with the research process are also included in this section. Section three closes with a summary of the research and a discussion of the study's conclusions.

### **Overview of the Study**

The current qualitative case study sought to answer the research questions posed in section one and to understand integration resistance throughout the process of international acquisition and integration within the Nashville music publishing creative cluster. The general problem addressed was the integration resistance associated with the acquisition of small independent companies by international firms and the effects on employee satisfaction and productivity resulting in the reduction of firm performance and an increase in employee turnover.



The purpose of this flexible design qualitative case study was to add to the body of knowledge on the failure of international acquisitions due to a decline in the productivity and job satisfaction of employees after a merger and acquisition. Sixteen one-on-one interviews were conducted which resulted in the nine key themes outlined below. Participants all had worked for an independent Nashville publishing company before, during, and after acquisition and integration by an international firm. The discovered themes combined with the existing research helped to establish critical recommendations for successful acquisition and integration within the Nashville market.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

Creswell (2016) recommended that researchers begin the presentation of findings by identifying the purpose and method of a study. The intent of this qualitative research case study was to answer the research questions posed in the first section and add to the body of knowledge regarding integration resistance within the Nashville music publishing market in the face of increasing international acquisitions. To obtain perceptions of Nashville publishing workers who have been employed by small local firms that have been acquired and integrated into large international firms, interviews were performed using the Interview Guide established in Appendix B. The participants who were invited to participate in this research study were selected from purposeful sampling. Sixteen participants were chosen who were employed at various small Nashville publishing companies that had been acquired and integrated into a large international firm. To preserve confidentiality, the participants will not be named. Instead, they will be referred by a participant number. Of the sixteen participants, 14 were male and two were female. Four had management roles in both the acquired and acquiring firms, and 12 had the role of a creative songwriter in both firms. One participant had both a management role and a creative

songwriter role in both the acquired and acquiring firm. The participants answered 19 questions regarding their experience throughout the process of their company being acquired and integrated. Additional probing and follow-up questions were asked to obtain further information from the participants when necessary. To ensure validity, each participant was sent the interview transcript to verify that their account was accurately portrayed.

**Themes Discovered.** Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that researchers must analyze qualitative data to find similarities and differences among cases. Once the data in this study was analyzed, multiple themes were uncovered that contributed to the body of knowledge regarding acquisitions within the Nashville music business cluster. The themes supported the research questions that were outlined in Section one. The apparent themes that surfaced are listed below:

- Nashville's family-style business culture: The culture of the Nashville music publishing market is service-oriented towards the cultivation of songwriters at the small mom-and-pop companies.
- International firm's business culture: The culture of international firms is less service-oriented and focused primarily on the bottom line.
- Anxiety and stress: The experience of being acquired creates anxiety and stress that may affect job satisfaction and productivity.
- Consideration of emotions: International firm leaders that considered the emotions of employees throughout the process were more successful.
- Consideration of the local business environment: International firm leaders that took the local business culture into account were more successful.

- Management integration: International firms that brought the small organization's management into the new firm helped to enhance an acquired songwriter's job satisfaction and productivity.
- Preference for small company environment: Songwriters were more satisfied at smaller companies, but productivity varied on the participant and the participant's self-motivation.
- Decrease in job satisfaction: Workers were less satisfied working for the international firm as opposed to their original independent firm.
- Increase in productivity: Workers were individually more productive working for the international firm as opposed to their original independent firm.

The original intent was to have 15 interviews; however, participant 12 proved to be an outlier due to having a unique experience. A sixteenth participant was added to account for the outlier and ensure data saturation. Data saturation was reached, however, after 13 interviews. The remaining three interviews did not uncover any new or unique themes to the experience that were much different than the initial 13 accounts of the experience. All interview transcripts were analyzed with the aid of NVivo for coding and organizing the themes discovered. The convergence of the themes discovered in the research display data triangulation, which authenticates the results of the study.

### **Interpretation of the Themes**

*Nashville's family-style business culture.* One of the first themes that was uncovered through the interview process was the family-style of business that has traditionally been a prominent component of Nashville's music publishing industry. The interviews solidified Baker's (2016) description of Nashville as a creative cluster. The industry is made up of many

small independent firms. A term describing the local Nashville music publishing culture that was mentioned by numerous participants in their interviews was the word camaraderie. Oxford Learner's dictionary defined camaraderie as "a mutual trust and friendship among people who spend a lot of time together" (n.d.). Merriam-Webster defined camaraderie as "the feeling of closeness and friendship that exists between companions" (n.d.). Merriam-Webster (n.d.) also outlined synonyms for camaraderie as brotherhood, community, companionship, and fellowship. Participant two described the independents in the Nashville music publishing market as "everybody pulls for each other even though they are still competitors" (personal communication, March 23, 2021). It is a normal event for music publishing workers to hang out at restaurants and bars during and after work with workers from other companies. Participant 13 described the culture as publishers having "mutual respect for one another" (personal communication, April 21, 2021). "It's like in the army where soldiers respect soldiers because they are all up against the same thing" (Participant 13, personal communication, April 21, 2021).

The camaraderie in the Nashville culture is not only outwardly displayed between companies. The word camaraderie was used to describe the culture within the individual companies as well. About his experience as a songwriter for a small company, Participant 11 said, "I just felt like everybody cared about what everybody did and cared about everybody who was there and each other's success" (personal communication, April 15, 2021). Participant 13 explained that coworkers at small publishers empathize with each other because "they know what everyone is going through" (personal communication, April 21, 2021). "When your coworker gets their song on that last spot on an album, workers within the small publishers are not upset. They cheer that on and are happy for each other" (Participant 9, personal

communication, April 13, 2021). “It’s a real Nashville thing because it’s the South” (Participant 9, personal communication, April 13, 2021).

In addition to camaraderie, participants explained that the culture of Nashville’s music publishing market is “a real handshake business” (Participant one, personal communication, March 21, 2021). Participant three described the culture and environment of his independent firm as “very small and very close” (personal communication, March 21, 2021). Participant four described Nashville as an “intimate and close community” (personal communication, March 24, 2021). He explained that managers get very close to their teams and it is “like family” (Participant 4, personal communication, March 24, 2021). Participant six said that Nashville has a “leave your keys in your car in the driveway mentality” (personal communication, March 30, 2021). Multiple participants mentioned that the Nashville publishing community is based on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> avenues, and the companies have traditionally been located in small houses that have been converted to businesses. Participant nine called the small Nashville publishers located in houses “boutique little family mom-and-pops” (personal communication, April 13, 2021). The close-knit culture of Nashville also means that information travels quickly. Participant 10 explained that “if you do not treat someone the right way, they will be at lunch with 10 other publishers that day and they will all hear about it” (personal communication, April 15, 2021). Participant four reminisced that his boss at the international firm frustratingly said the following to him when some secret company news became common knowledge, “Nashville is the only place where I can think something in LA and hear it in Nashville” (personal communication March 24, 2021). Participant 11 summed up the description of the market by explaining that Nashville is “relationship-based” (personal communication, April 15, 2021).

Within the individual companies, local publishers were described as “collaborative as far as the company’s day-to-day” (Participant 10, personal communication, April 15, 2021). Managers at the small local companies are very hands-on and involve their staffs in developing the company and the staff’s individual careers. Staff has easy access to managers. Participant 10 reminisced that when he was with the small company, he would go into his boss’s office each morning and strategize on co-writes, and he stressed that his boss was a “great cheerleader” (personal communication, April 15, 2021). The small publishers in Nashville treat their songwriters and employees with respect and were described as businesses that are “run by people who want to be decent people while they do business” (Participant 13, personal communication, April 21, 2021). One participant said that his experience working for a small publisher was a feeling of being “surrounded by people that cared and being surrounded by people that were willing to invest in me” (Participant 15, personal communication, April 28, 2021). Participant 15 also described his experience as “everyone within the company was pulling in the same direction” (personal communication, April 28, 2021).

Participant 12 contributed a valuable perspective for the study as the current head of one of the major international publishing companies in Nashville. He said, “music publishing operates exactly the same everywhere on the planet Earth, except Nashville” (Participant 12, personal communication, April 19, 2021). The Nashville publishing market was built on “finding creative people who a manager believes in and then developing and championing that creative person until they either find success or fail” (Participant 12, personal communication, April 19, 2021). He explained that everywhere else on the globe, the development side of the creative person is not present. He explained that “international music publishing is more transactional” (Participant 12, personal communication, April 21, 2021). The companies that approach

Nashville in a manner of accepting how the market works instead of trying to impose their own culture and practices are the ones that succeed. Participant 12 also described the service element and long-term viewpoint of the small publishers in Nashville. “Smaller publishers, because they do not have the financial ability to sign writers who are already developed, have to rely on finding and developing new talent over time” (Participant 12, personal communication, April 21, 2021). The service element and the attention that songwriters receive at the small companies are what helps to create such a tight-knit family culture within firms. The theme confirmed Baker’s (2016) designation of Nashville as a creative business cluster and Romanova et al.’s (2019) description of creative business clusters as workers and firms working together within a market for mutual benefit even though they are competitors. The theme also showed that acquiring firms that follow participant 12’s example of instilling a small family-type culture of camaraderie and cultivation will have more satisfied workers.

***International firm’s business culture.*** The second theme that was exposed through the examination of the interviews was the culture of the international firms that each participant experienced. The culture of international firms was shown to be less service-oriented and focused primarily on the bottom line. When describing the acquiring international firm from his experience, participant two did not think that the international company fully understood how business is conducted in Nashville as opposed to their home country (personal communication, March 23, 2021). He described the culture as “me, myself, and I”, which directly opposes his description of independent local firms as having “camaraderie” (Participant two, personal communication, March 23, 2021). Participant two explained that the reason that he left the company after integration was because of their lack of understanding and consideration of the local market. The international head of the company “rubbed people the wrong way” within the

local industry and he was worried that the chief executive officer and the company's practices would hurt his career in the long run because of the association (Participant two, personal communication, March 23, 2021). Some participants explained that the international firm's culture and day-to-day felt more rigid. Participant five said, "sometimes you do deals because of a belief in a person's potential, not just based on numbers or activity" (participant five, personal communication, March 29, 2021). Participant five also experienced what she thought to be unethical practices when the international firm's legal team attempted to change aspects of her contract on signing day without discussing it with her attorney. The attorney decided not to do business with the international firm in the future. Participant six expressed that he did not believe that most of the international firms entering the Nashville market through acquisitions care about the local market's culture and practices (personal communication, March 30, 2021). He expressed that he believed the international firms care more about the financial side than the people involved.

Participant nine described the experience of working for the international firm after integration as "very impersonal" (personal communication, April 13, 2021). He elaborated that it was "more like a formula and not the usual culture of Nashville where workers eat together, drink coffee together, talk about life, and care about each other's families" (Participant 9, personal communication, April 13, 2021). The international firm was "more sterile and you did not see your boss or co-workers" (Participant 10, personal communication, April 15, 2021). Participant 16 reiterated this point by saying that the administrative and management staff were separated from the creative staff in a different part of the building. There was no interaction between the two areas of the company unless you booked a meeting. There was no "hanging out



together at the coffee pot” like they did at the small independent firm (Participant 16, personal communication, April 29, 2021).

Participant ten felt that the international firm acquired his catalog so they could say that they “owned his hit songs” not to work with him directly (personal communication, April 15, 2021). He said, “they wanted the plaque on the wall and would pay anything to get it and stand on the awards stage” (Participant 10, personal communication, April 15, 2021). He did not feel that the international firm cared about earning awards themselves and developing their songwriters. They wanted to buy the awards. Participant 15 expressed a similar opinion of the international firm in that “they had many awards on the wall for the hit songs that they had acquired, but that they had nothing to do with making any of the songs hits” (personal communication, April 28, 2021). Participant ten reiterated the impersonal nature of international firms by saying, “there was no personal aspect”, “they were ruthless business people”, and “they were not interested in working with people but in owning Nashville” (Participant 10, personal communication, April 15, 2021).

Another aspect gleaned from the interviews about the international acquiring firms was their importance on paperwork. Participant ten remembered what he called “endless reports and having to explain every picky thing” as opposed to the loose nature of the smaller firm where he had worked previously (personal communication, April 15, 2021). Multiple participants explained that the international firms displayed more structure and they had a more formal chain of command as opposed to the open door policy most Nashville workers are used to at the small companies. Participant 11 explained that he had to “go through the chain of command” to get an answer to a question, where before, he would just go to his boss’s office, sit down, and ask the question (personal communication, April 15, 2021). Participant 13 felt that the paperwork and

procedures watered down the culture that had developed at his smaller firm, and he called it a “corporate filter that everything had to go through” (personal communication, April 21, 2021).

The perspective of most participants showed that the acquiring firm sought increased market share and increased profits. This coincided with what (Dandapani et al., 2020) found as the reason for most international acquisitions. The expected rising royalty revenue from digital streaming makes small publishing companies a viable target for acquisition. The acquisition of small firms, as royalties continue to increase, should help to increase the market share and profits of international firms (Towse, 2017). The participants described increased paperwork, streamlined business practices, and a focus on the bottom line instead of the worker’s job satisfaction. The theme confirmed that the motive of acquiring firms was mostly for increasing market share and profit, and very little attention was paid to the workers involved in the acquisition process (Dandapani et al., 2020).

*Anxiety and stress.* Nilson et al. (2019) explained that a major factor in any acquisition is uncertainty and how the worker feels about how the change will affect them personally. A theme prominent in the past literature on international acquisition and integration was the anxiety and stress for employees that is associated with the experience. The theme was present with most of the participants of this study as expected. The most common source of anxiety and stress was the change from the intimacy of being with a small group of people that felt like family to one in a large number of workers. The help and support provided in the smaller environments were not present in the larger organizations. Most participants preferred the smaller environment. Participant three explained that the change had an adverse effect on him because he had been with a large publisher before and did not want to return to one (personal communication, March 23, 2021). Participant 10 described the experience of working for the international firm as “being

on an island” and knowing that they were paying you, but you were not going to receive any help in your career (personal communication, April 15, 2021). Participant 11 expressed that his anxiety stemmed from feeling like the management at the international firm did not have confidence in him, and he did not have confidence that they had any keys to his personal success. Participant fourteen described being “anxiety-ridden” and concerned about what would happen after the integration (personal communication, April 22, 2021). Participant one explained that her anxiety stemmed from the management being unprofessional and not welcoming her, in any way, to the new firm. Participant three explained that he prefers to have a routine, and the change to the larger company, where there were so many other workers, made it difficult to develop a comfortable routine. Songwriting spaces had to be booked in advance and many times they were not available on the days he needed a room. Participant 15 explained that his day-to-day point person did not survive the integration process; therefore, the person that he felt believed in him the most was no longer at the company. His anxiety stemmed from not having a point person that he felt truly believed in him as a songwriter and that wanted to devote the time and effort to guide him towards success.

Another source of anxiety for the participants was the change from working in small houses to sterile office buildings. Most preferred the boutique small house type of office. Participant three expressed that he did not like the international company’s office, so he did not want to go there. Participant 11 reiterated that the workspaces at the international firm were “very sterile and not conducive to creativity” (personal communication, April 15, 2021). Participant one felt that the international firm paid no attention to the atmosphere that the building and office conveyed to creative people. Most participants preferred to work in the small houses along Nashville’s music row as opposed to office buildings. After the integration,

participant 14 decided to spend his own money to rent an office in the building his previous company had been housed just to keep the environment he preferred.

Some participants did not experience the common phenomenon of anxiety due to organizational change. Those participants looked at their new organization as an opportunity. Instead of anxiety, they were excited about the change. Participant six described his elation at suddenly being a part of a major international firm due to the opportunities and clout he thought they could bring his career. The opportunities that were presented were not only in the Nashville market, but he found that he had access to artists and opportunities around the world that he had never experienced at a small publisher. Participant nine experienced a similar experience and said, “they put me on retreats and camps and gave me opportunities that I did not have before” (personal communication, April 13, 2021). Participants six and nine, however, found that the opportunities did not pan out for them in the end, and anxiety and a decrease in job satisfaction did arise that confirmed what Nilsen et al. (2019) explained as occurring due to uncertainty and how the worker feels about how the change will affect them personally

*Consideration of emotions.* Philips and Gully (2014) explained that employee emotional considerations, such as fairness, participation, and strong communication can help employees in the integration process. Kumar et al. (2018) shared that employees who feel that their organization values them, has their interests in mind, and gives them opportunities to further develop their skills will be more satisfied, motivated, and loyal. In this study, whether the acquiring firm considered the emotions of the creative employees or songwriters of the acquired firm had a strong effect on job satisfaction. In most participants, job satisfaction decreased significantly when they went from working with a small group of people to just being one of many songwriters at an international firm. Participant four explained that the experience of

transitioning from a small independent firm to a large international firm was “very emotional” (personal communication, March 24, 2021). Participant seven described a level of anxiety throughout the company due to the fear of the unknown. All but one participant expressed fear of the unknown and anxiety to varying degrees throughout the process.

When asked if the acquiring firm applied any integration strategies to help during the transition process, most participants said no. If there were strategies, they were minimal. Participant two described the integration experience as “all business” (personal communication, March 23, 2021). Participant eight said no one even reached out to him for his address. Participant ten explained that he felt the acquiring firm was buying the catalog and were more concerned with the assets acquired than the people involved. Participant 11 described an initial attempt to help employees blend in, which helped at first, but there was no follow-through. The only significant attempt at an integration strategy was shown with the experiences of participants seven and 12. Each was involved with the same companies. Participant 12 managed the independent firm that was acquired and then became the local CEO of the international acquiring firm. Participant seven explained that participant 12 did everything in his power to make the transition as seamless as possible and gave his staff the same level of service they had experienced at the smaller firm.

Some firms initially attempted to consider the acquired employees’ fears, anxiety, and emotions by trying to make them feel welcome and helping them acclimate to the new organizations. Participant six described the experience initially as the company having open arms and a feeling of “you’re a part of us now” (personal communication, March 30, 2021). After the initial welcomes, the feeling was no longer present. International firm leaders found more success when the emotions of songwriters moving from a small environment to a larger work

environment were considered. After the acquisition, participant 12 was brought in as leader of the international firm's local office. He realized the emotional aspect of his employees acclimating to the new larger firm. He tried to make the transition as smooth as possible by attempting to give his staff the same level of service they received from their independent firm. His attempts have been successful, and most of the songwriters remain with the company two years after integration. Participant seven has directly benefitted from participant 12's efforts and his anxiety and fear of the unknown were eliminated.

The theme of consideration of emotions correlated with Philips and Gully's (2014) findings. Fairness, participation, and strong communication help employees in the integration process. Most participants in this study did not experience strong communication or have the opportunity to participate in the integration process, which was a detriment to their job satisfaction. Additionally, participants did not feel valued or that the opportunities that the acquiring firm provided had their best interests in mind, which Kumar et al. (2018) explained helps employees stay satisfied and loyal throughout the integration process. The international firms in this study predominantly did not consider the emotions of employees throughout the integration process.

***Consideration of the local business environment.*** In direct correlation with Azam et al. (2020), leaders who considered how the market conducts business and tried to adapt their internal company environment to suit the market found more success. Leaders who tried to instill their international firm's culture into their acquired firm found less success and a decrease in job satisfaction of their staff and songwriters. As discussed above, camaraderie and a family environment are a major aspect of the culture of Nashville's music publishing market. Camaraderie is shown within the inner workings of the firms and also in how they interact with

other firms in the market. Participant one recalled his international firm's total absence of concern for Nashville's culture saying, "they expected us to adapt to their culture" (personal communication, March 21, 2021). Participant two expressed similar thoughts in describing the international firm as "all about competitiveness, keeping secrets, and keeping things in-house" (personal communication, March 23, 2021). He did not believe the company comprehended the cultural differences of the Nashville market compared to how the music publishing business is conducted in their country. Participant two went on to say that the international firm "did not understand the local politics as well and how small the town is" (personal communication, March 23, 2021). The international head thought throwing money at the market would mean success, but in a lot of ways it "rubbed people the wrong way" (Participant two, personal communication, March 23, 2021).

Participant ten described the international firm in his case as "ruthless business people that would pressure people into deals" (personal communication, April 15, 2021). He explained that the firm tried to find people in desperation to sell, and then they would pay very little for the company. He did not think the firm was interested in working in Nashville and being a part of the culture. He felt that they were only interested in the bottom line and did not have an interest in the market's tradition of speculating and developing talent. Participant thirteen reiterated the point that the international firm was not interested in the local market's culture and said, "they are strictly looking at the numbers" (personal communication, April 21, 2021). This view coincided with the literature on music acquisitions as primarily focused on increasing market share (Towse, 2017).

**Management integration.** Colman (2020) explained that target managers play a critical role in the success of an international acquisition. In this study, international firms that allowed

the management team of the small acquired firm to assume management roles in the new firm found more success and higher job satisfaction of their songwriters. Additionally, songwriters whose management did not transition with them to the international firm had less success and job satisfaction post-integration. Of the songwriter participants, four experienced their day-to-day point person making the transition to the new company with them. In each case, having the familiarity of someone in who they already had a comfortable working relationship helped quell some of the anxiety and issues of job satisfaction that occurred. Participant seven experienced no anxiety or loss of job satisfaction due to his boss being brought into the international firm as the chief executive officer and due to his boss's attempt at keeping the small company feel and the family culture associated with the past independent firm. In describing his boss, participant seven said, "he is trying to keep that personal feel, that personal culture" (personal communication, April 2, 2021). This approach supports Colman's (2020) view that preserving the autonomy of managers post-acquisition is beneficial. The other three participants who initially were happy with their manager joining them at the new firm saw their point person either leave the company shortly after integration or take on a different role in the new organization, which caused increases in anxiety and losses of job satisfaction. Participant three explained that his point person from the small independent firm became the head of the creative team at the international firm. Initially, this was positive, but in the long run, instead of his point person being able to devote 100% of his efforts towards cultivating songwriters, he was now having to devote most of his time to administrative tasks and managing people, and he was not happy in his job. The fact that his point person joined him at the new firm helped quell his initial anxiety, but the effect was short-lived when he realized he would not receive the same attention and service.



One of the most prevalent complaints from the songwriter participants in the study was that their day-to-day point person did not survive the acquisition and merger. When the songwriter did not have an ally in the new organization, it decreased job satisfaction significantly and created anxiety. What Hosani et al. (2020) described as employee alienation was present. Participant ten described the feeling as “being on an island” (personal communication, March 23, 2021). Participant 15 described losing what he called his “pot banger” when his day-to-day point person did not make the transition to the new firm (personal communication, April 28, 2021). His previous point person at the independent firm was the person that believed in him, hired him, and helped develop his songwriting skills. He felt that he did not have a champion at the larger firm. There was no person at the international firm that seemed willing to invest the time and energy in helping him continue to develop his career. In most participants’ cases in this study, consideration was not given to bringing management teams along with the acquisition as Colman (2020) suggested, or combatting what Hosani et al. (2020) described as employee alienation.

***Preference for small company environment.*** All but two participants preferred the culture and hands-on approach of a small company to the culture of the international firm, which primarily left them alone to do their job. Even the outlier of the study, participant 12, preferred the smaller organization. Even though he was now CEO of the local branch of an international firm, he was tasked to give his company the small company feel and culture that his previous firm had embodied. Participant sixteen summed up the theme by saying, “I have always liked being with smaller companies, because they have more of a family feel” (personal communication, April 28, 2021). The two songwriting participants who did not prefer the small company gave their reasoning as they were seasoned writers who needed less development and that they looked at the large international firm as an increase in opportunities. This theme

confirmed Gamble et al. (2019) and Chelsey's (2020) explanation that organizational culture can influence the success or failure of a merger or acquisition. The traditional culture of the Nashville market was a significant factor in worker's view of the success of the acquisition and integration.

***Decrease in job satisfaction.*** In all but two cases, job satisfaction decreased in workers whose independent publishing company was acquired by an international firm. The family atmosphere of smaller firms was greatly missed in the larger company environment. Participant three explained that he preferred the small house over the corporate office building, which created a decrease in his job satisfaction. Participant three's sentiment was shared by most participants. Songwriter participants also experienced a loss of job satisfaction when their day-to-day point person did not come with them to the new firm. This coincided with Hur's (2018) findings that needs deficiencies can be a detriment to job satisfaction. Participants showed the need for hands-on management and development. The attention to developing and cultivating a songwriter's career at the smaller firms was greatly missed by the songwriters of the acquired firm. Songwriters did not feel like a priority to the international firm's management team. Worker's job satisfaction declined due to the more rigid structure of command and not being able to socialize and daily interact with their management staff. Yasin et al. (2019) explained that low job satisfaction has been shown to increase turnover intention, which was present in this study. Most participants left their company post-integration within a year of acquisition.

***Increase in productivity.*** Hur (2018) explained that job satisfaction is a major contributor to an increase in productivity. Hur's (2018) findings were not the case in this study. Contrary to the abundant literature on acquisitions, productivity did not decrease with the workers of Nashville independent publishing companies acquired by international firms. Surprisingly,

productivity increased in most participants. One reason for the productivity increase was the number of opportunities provided by the international firms. Songwriters were less satisfied in their jobs, but they increased their productivity to attempt to take advantage of the increased opportunities. Participant six explained that the international firm gave him opportunities to write with recording artists and songwriters from all over the world who he would not have had before. Participant nine recalled becoming more productive due to having opportunities to be involved in songwriting camps and have his songs pitched to the movie industry.

A second reason that productivity increased was due to fear. Further research of the literature on job insecurity and productivity discovered some correlation to this result, but the instances were rare. Probst et al. (2007) explained that in some cases productivity and performance can increase in employees when there is job uncertainty. Employees will work harder due to the extrinsic motivator of job loss (Koen et al., 2020). Songwriters are hired on a contract basis. The loss of a point person through the acquisition had the effect of increasing productivity in an attempt to get more attention from management. The songwriters were doing everything they could to be noticed and to be successful in the new firm. Participant fifteen explained that the loss of his point person caused him to write more songs in the year after the acquisition than he had ever written in one year at the smaller company. He was doing everything he could do to be noticed so he would not lose his job. The feeling of being alone gave songwriters the idea that their career was up to them, alone. If they were going to be successful, they would have to do it on their own.

***Outlier.*** A significant outlier was discovered through the interview process. Participant twelve had experienced managing a small publishing company that was acquired by a major international publishing company. His small company had been tremendously successful in the

local Nashville market having multiple hit songs and winning independent publisher of the year. Due to that success, the chairman of the international firm that acquired his company asked him to head the international firm's local Nashville office as CEO and to bring his small company culture into the local branch of the company. Participant twelve's salary increase and freedom to run the international firm in the same way he ran his independent firm created the opposite effect of most participants as far as job satisfaction. He experienced a significant increase in job satisfaction due to the extrinsic motivation. Integration resistance was not present in him or his employees. In his words pertaining to the experience, participant twelve said, "it was bittersweet because something was ending, but the employees got jobs with the biggest publisher in the world and they received dramatic pay increases" (Participant 12, personal communication, April 19, 2021). Participant 12 was an example of what Hur (2018) described as employees who are more satisfied at work are more satisfied. Participant 12 was able to establish a vision for integration, as King et al. (2018) described, which was to bring the small company feel to the international firm.

**Representation and Visualization of Data.** One of the arguments against the validity of qualitative research is the challenge researchers have in visualizing their data (Pokorny et al., 2018). It is important to find ways to turn the data gleaned from qualitative processes, such as interviews, into some sort of visual representation. Yin (2018) recommended the use of graphics, such as flow charts and graphs to help visualize data. Pokorny et al. (2018) explained that computer-aided tools can help researchers find common themes in the data and help to create visual representations of the data and themes. For this study, the computer software NVivo was utilized to code, organize, find themes, and create visual representations of the data and themes. Microsoft PowerPoint was also utilized to help display pie-charts representing job satisfaction

and productivity and a flow-chart representing factors that influenced integration resistance in the study.

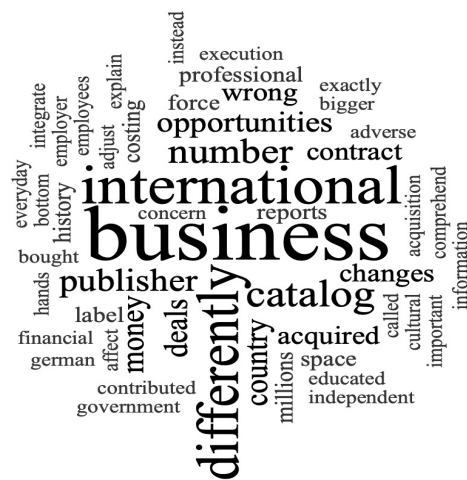
The first visualization example, shown below in figure two, is a word cloud that demonstrates the frequency of keywords that the participants used to describe the culture and environment of the small independent publishing companies that make up the creative business cluster in Nashville, Tennessee. The larger words are those that were mentioned more frequently. Examination of figure two exposes the common descriptions of the Nashville small publishing culture as family, people, community, camaraderie, relationships, respect, supportive, friendly, and creative. These words verify the mutually beneficial relationship shown in creative clusters as described by Romanova et al. (2019).



*Figure 2. Word cloud of Nashville publisher characteristics*

Figure three, below, displays a similar word cloud for the participants' description of the culture of the international acquiring firms. The most frequent words used to describe the international companies were business, number, money, deals, changes, opportunities, financial, space, millions, and adverse. The word, such as business, money, numbers, and finances, show a

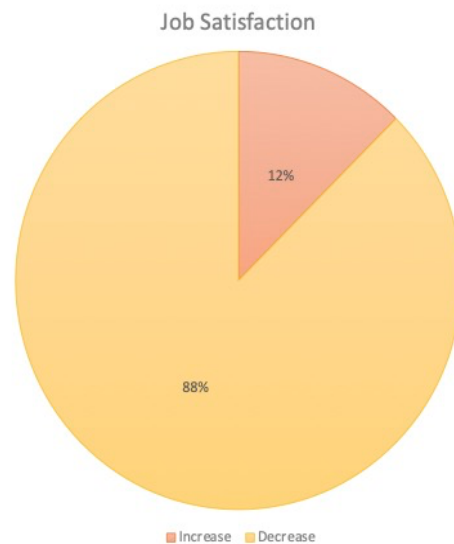
very different view from that of the description of the small independent firms. The word adverse was used repeatedly by participants when they were asked if the international company's culture affected them positively or adversely. Opportunities was another word that was prominent in the word cloud in figure three. The participants within the study were positively influenced by the new opportunities that the international firms provided. The opportunities increased productivity and minimally affected job satisfaction in a positive way.



*Figure 3. Word cloud of international publisher characteristics*

In addition to NVivo, Microsoft PowerPoint was utilized to create pie-charts to display the job satisfaction and productivity of participants. The pie chart below in figure four represents the participant's description on whether their job satisfaction increased or decreased throughout the experience of acquisition and integration in an international firm. The pie chart shows that approximately 88%, or 14 of the participants, experienced a decrease in job satisfaction, which Kets de Vries (2015) described as a normal result of acquisition and integration. Approximately twelve percent, or 2, of the participants, experienced an increase in job satisfaction. The two

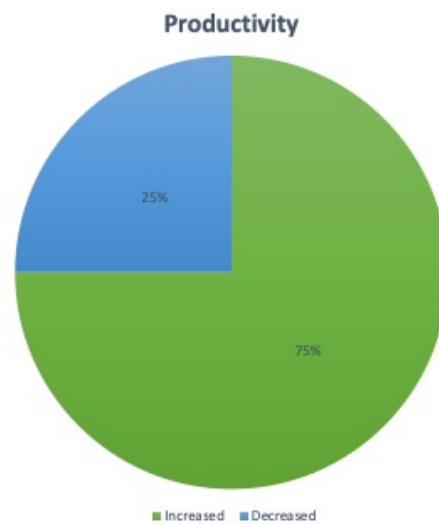
participants who showed increases in job satisfaction were participant 12 and participant seven. In their case, participant 12 transitioned to the job of CEO of the Nashville branch of the international firm and was tasked with bringing his small company culture to the international firm. Participant seven worked for participant 12 in both companies and did not see a decrease in job satisfaction due to participant twelve's efforts to retain the small company's culture.



*Figure 4. Pie chart displaying increase or decrease in job satisfaction*

The pie chart below in figure five represents the participant's description on whether their productivity increased or decreased throughout the experience of acquisition and integration in an international firm. The results showed that roughly 75%, or 12 of the participants, showed an increase in productivity post-integration, which was the opposite of most research on integrations; however, the results coincided with Probst et al. (2007) and Koen et al. (2020) who explained that in some cases the extrinsic motivator of job uncertainty can increase the productivity and performance of employees. Approximately twenty-five percent, or 4 of the

participants, showed a decrease in productivity post-integration. This result was unexpected due to the past scholarly research that showed a trend for decreases in productivity as a result of change and acquisitions. The increase in productivity was due to the factors of more opportunities within the international firm and a fear of job loss that spurred the workers to believe that their success depended on their efforts alone.



*Figure 5. Pie chart displaying Increase or decrease in productivity*

The final visual representation of the data displays a flow-chart demonstrating the factors influencing integration resistance in the acquisition of a small independent Nashville publisher by an international firm. The flowchart is represented in figure 6, below. The participants' accounts of their experience revealed the following themes. Participants experienced a job satisfaction decrease due to the preference of a small company with a family environment. The corporate structure was not preferred by any of the 16 participants. Colman (2020) explained that when target managers play a key role in integration, there are fewer job satisfaction issues. When the participants' management point of contact did not survive the integration, participants



experienced a significant decrease in job satisfaction. The job satisfaction of those participants whose manager did make the transition had less of a decrease in job satisfaction, but the feeling was short-lived due to the manager having new duties or eventually exiting the firm, which left the employee without a champion in the new organization. The participants' accounts detailed little strategy on behalf of the acquiring firms to help employees transition to the more corporate environment from the small family-style environment that was exemplified in their previous firms.



*Figure 6. Flow chart displaying factors influencing integration resistance*

**Relationship of the Findings.** The participants' responses showed that the themes are interrelated to one another. The ideas and concepts overlapped throughout each participant's response. The interview questions were constructed with the goal of answering the research questions presented in Section 1. Each theme discussed is correlated to at least one of section

one's research questions. The themes derived from analyzation of the interview transcripts related to the conceptual framework discussed in section one. Additionally, the themes correlate with the predominant literature on integration resistance in the case of international acquisition and the integration of an independent firm. One exception or outlier was found. Lastly, the findings correlated with the problem under research and should add to the literature on the topic.

**Research questions.** Creswell (2016) explained that research questions help to narrow the purpose statement. The more specific questions help the researcher find answers through the collection and analysis of data. Question set A from the Interview Guide, shown in Appendix B, asked participants to briefly describe their career and their role in the company that was acquired by an international organization. The question served as an introductory question to establish the participants as a reliable source and to be sure that each participant worked within the Nashville market, worked for an independent firm that was acquired by an international firm, and worked for the international firm after the acquisition. Question set A followed up the initial question by asking participants to discuss their role in the organization before, during, and after the acquisition. Of the 16 participants interviewed, four were in management roles and the remaining 12 were in creative songwriter roles. The role of participant 13 was unique to the rest of the participants because he had the dual role of management and creative songwriter in both the acquired and acquiring firms. Question set A did not directly relate to the research questions in section one; however, it provided the foundation for the remaining interview questions by proving that each participant worked for a small Nashville firm that was acquired by an international organization and that each worked for the firm post-integration.

Question set B from the interview guide, shown in Appendix B, asked participants to describe the personal experience of their small independent firm being acquired and integrated

into an international firm. The sub-questions in question set B asked if the acquisition process affected employee job satisfaction and productivity. Participants were then asked to explain their answers. The questions were designed to give participants an opportunity to go in-depth about the experience. The descriptions helped to uncover themes that were apparent among participants.

The first theme that became apparent was the preference of workers within the local Nashville industry to work in smaller company environments. All participants preferred the smaller family company feel that traditional Nashville publishing companies exemplify. They also preferred operating out of a house as opposed to an office building. The larger business structures of the international firms caused anxiety that ultimately decreased job satisfaction. The anxiety felt by participants had an opposite effect on their productivity, however. Productivity increased when workers were integrated into the new firm. This increase in productivity was due to two factors. The first factor was the new opportunities provided by the international firm, which coincided with Kumar et al.'s (2018) findings that opportunities with employee interests in mind can increase productivity. Songwriters were more vigilant to take advantage of the new opportunities and were more productive. The second factor increasing productivity was the fear of losing employment, which mirrored Koen et al.'s (2020) findings that in some cases, employees will work harder due to the extrinsic motivator of job loss. The participants felt that they had to work harder and "prove themselves" to keep their job and that they were merely a number for the international firm and not a priority (Participant 7, personal communication, April 2, 2021).

Question set B addressed the research questions in sets one and two from section one. Research question set one sought to investigate the general factors that affect job satisfaction and

productivity when an independent firm is acquired and integrated by an international firm. Some factors uncovered were similar to the predominant research on the topic including fear and anxiety (King et al., 2020). Research question set two explored the in-depth experience of participants as they underwent the acquisition and integration of their company. The sub-questions addressed how that experience affected job satisfaction and productivity with the hope of uncovering any themes unique to the Nashville market. Unique to the Nashville market were the factors of losing the small company family environment once they went to the international firm and losing their day-to-day point-person or champion from the previous firm.

Question set C of the interview guide, shown in Appendix B, explored the changes from the small independent company to the international firm. Participants were asked to explain if and how their day-to-day experience changed throughout the acquisition and integration. The question set and sub-questions sought to uncover any factors that contributed to or decreased job satisfaction and productivity. Phillips and Gully (2014) explained that effective change management is integral in any acquisition. Question set C related to research question sets one and three which pertained to factors that contribute to an increase or decline in job satisfaction and productivity. The question set had similar findings as question set B. The predominant factors that decreased job satisfaction were the loss of the small company feel, loss of a day-to-day point person, and the loss of attention. The loss of a trusted point-person made participants feel alone, which Colman (2020) had described as the loss of job satisfaction due to not integrating the acquired firm's management and letting them have a hand in the integration process. Instead of the support they felt at the previous organization, they now felt that their career success was up to them alone. Similar to question set B, productivity was shown to increase due to more opportunities and the fear of losing employment.

Question set D from the interview guide, shown in Appendix B, asked participants to describe any strategies that the international firm utilized during the acquisition and integration process as an attempt to curtail any loss of job satisfaction or productivity declines. Solid integration strategies are necessary for integrating an acquired firm (Gamble et al., 2019). With the exception of participants seven and 12, participants predominantly answered that the acquiring firm did not utilize any strategies other than an initial welcoming meeting. Participants felt that they were on their own to get acclimated to the new environment and ways the company conducted business. Participant 12 proved to be an outlier in that when his small company was acquired, he was asked to head up the local branch of the international firm. His job satisfaction increased. He was asked to bring his small company environment and feel to the big corporate giant, which proved a winning strategy. In this case, the participant went out of his way to make his creative songwriters feel as if there was no difference in the two firms, except that they had more opportunities at the international firm. He also strove to bring his small company's service mindset to the rest of the local branch where those employees had never experienced that type of environment. Participant seven benefited from participant 12's approach and did not experience a decrease in job satisfaction. Question set D related to research question set three which pertained to strategies that an international firm can utilize to increase productivity and job satisfaction. The theme that became apparent from the question set is that organizations that utilize a strategy to keep the small company feel at the large corporate company may find more success, which solidified the findings of Gamble et al. (2019). Additionally, a strategy to make creative people feel welcome, supported, and like a member of the team showed to help them transition to the new environment.

The final question in interview question set D was if the participant felt the acquisition and integration of their firm was a success or failure. Most acquisitions fail to achieve desired goals (Takhtehkar & Rademakers, 2020). The answers varied on whether the participant described if the acquisition was a success for the firm or for them personally. In most cases, participants believed that the international firm achieved its goal of acquiring a successful independent company and assimilated the companies' income streams. In contrast, most participants felt the acquisition was a failure for their individual careers. Even though the international firm gave them the appearance of more opportunities, there was little guidance. The workers missed the hands-on approach and development enjoyed at the small independent firms. Workers felt devalued and alone, which made them long for the small company where they had previously worked. The experience decreased job satisfaction significantly where most participants have either left or are in process of leaving the international firm.

Interview question set E focused on the culture of the Nashville market and the typical culture of an international corporate firm entering the local Nashville market. The success or failure of acquisitions can in most cases be predicted by looking at an acquiring and acquired companies' organizational culture (Chelsey, 2020). The question set related to research question four and its subquestions which explored how the culture of the Nashville music publishing industry can affect the acquisition of a small local company by an international firm. The predominant theme that was apparent in all interviews was the family atmosphere of the Nashville publishing industry. The word that multiple participants used was camaraderie. This camaraderie was present not only within a company but between companies similar to what Baker (2016) described as a characteristic of creative business clusters. The small companies in the Nashville market cultivate and develop their creative talent. The international firms that have

acquired small companies and entered the market have found it difficult to adapt to the local culture. Most internationals have chosen to run the Nashville arm of their company the same as they do in every other market around the world. The international firms have chosen, in most cases, to focus on numbers instead of cultivation. If a songwriter's career is going well, the company is happy; if not, that songwriter is fired. Conversely, in the typical small company Nashville environment, the small company's staff would do everything possible to develop and cultivate that songwriter so he or she does not fail. As Chelsey (2020) described, small firms and the market's culture were a significant force in the success or failure of acquisitions within the Nashville market.

Interview question set F of the interview guide, shown in Appendix B, continued the discussion on culture from question set E. The question is also related to research question 4 and its sub-questions. The main question was general about the participant's opinion on if there is anything unique about the culture of the Nashville market that an international firm might not understand. Some participants believed that international firms do not understand the relationship aspect of the Nashville market, but most participants believed that firms understood the Nashville culture but that they were not concerned about it. Participant 12, who was the outlier in that he is now managing the local branch of the international firm that acquired his small independent company, explained that an international publisher can run their business the same way everywhere else in the world, except Nashville. "Everywhere else, music publishing is transactional, but in Nashville, business is relationship-based" (Participant 12, personal communication, April 19, 2021). With the exception of participant 12 and his songwriter participant seven, all other participants claimed that the culture of the independent firm was not respected and taken into account throughout the acquisition and integration process. This

question set further outlined the importance of culture in the success of acquisitions within the market in agreement with Chelsey (2020).

*Conceptual framework.* Section one outlined the research framework for the examination of the experiences of Nashville music publishing workers after their firm is acquired by an international firm. Section one's diagram, shown in figure one, detailed the possible relationships between the elements of the study and the outcomes. Examining the outcomes of job satisfaction and productivity through interviewing participants who have experienced acquisition by an international firm unveiled the issues unique to the experience for Nashville music publishing workers which result in integration resistance. The three categories of organizational culture, change implementation, and integration strategy were the focus of the interview process. The interview process uncovered issues pertaining to each category that were common to a majority of participants. The interviews also uncovered issues with motivation that were unexpected which caused an increase in productivity instead of the anticipated decrease.

Figure seven, below, displays an updated conceptual framework diagram containing the findings from the study. The diagram shows similar information from diagram one in that organizational culture, change implementation, and integration strategy were the focus of the study. The motivational theories of Herzberg's theory and theories X and Y were examined in each participant's experience. Also examined were Lewin's and Kotter's change models to understand the participant's resistance to change through the participant's descriptions of the change. Figure seven differs from figure one when it comes to job satisfaction and productivity. The diagram was updated to show the findings that job satisfaction decreased due to the three factors of preference for a small company environment, the loss of a point person or attention,



and minimal integration strategy. Productivity was also updated to reflect the findings that it increased due to the factors of increased opportunities and the fear of job loss.

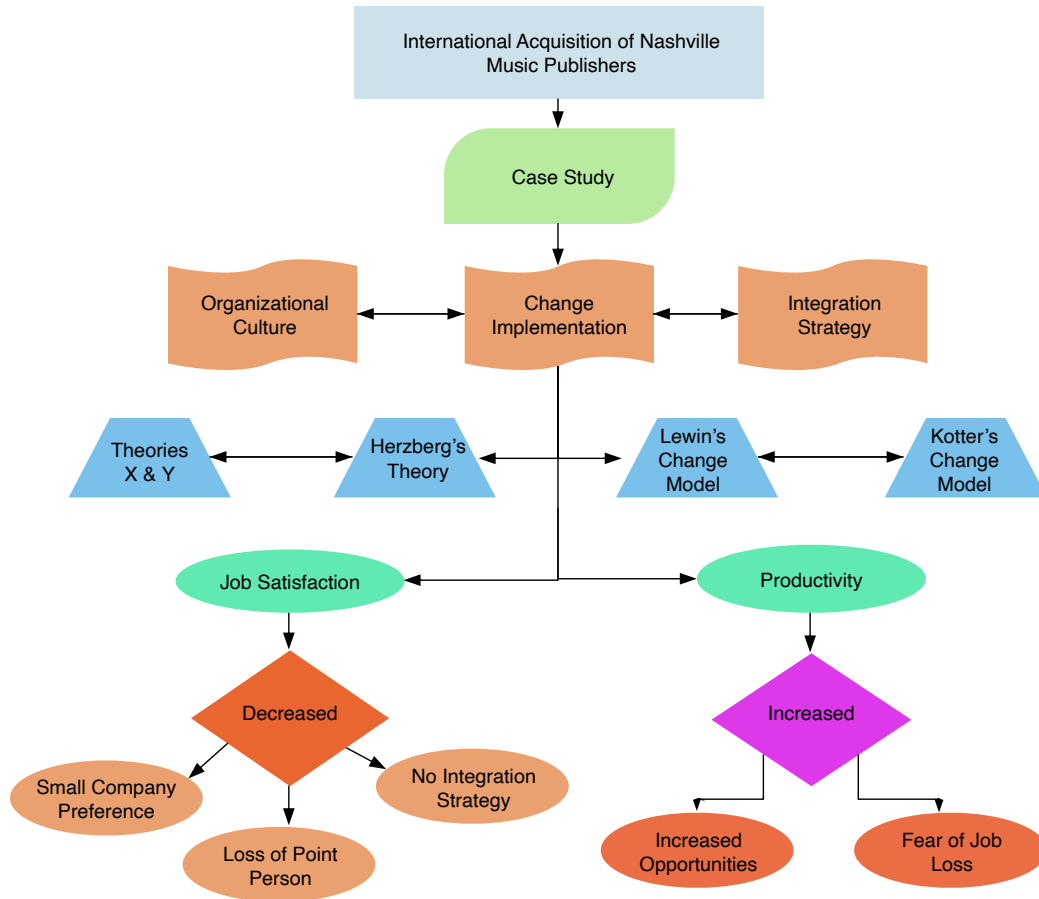


Figure 7. Updated conceptual framework diagram

*Organizational culture.* Gamble et al. (2019) expressed that corporate culture greatly influences the success and failure of mergers and acquisitions. Organizational culture was of particular interest in this study. The interview questions explored the differences in the culture of a small Nashville independent publisher as opposed to an international firm within the local market. The culture at the small independent publishers was described as a family environment with a high degree of camaraderie within the firm and between firms in the local market. Another term used was “boutique” in referring to the small publishing houses (Participant 4,

personal communication, March 24, 2021). The international firms were characterized as not caring about the individual, focusing only on the bottom line, and having sterile environments. International firms displayed a very corporate environment as opposed to the loose family atmosphere of the independents. Participant one called the international firm a “corporate machine” (personal communication, March 23, 2021). All participants preferred the small family environment of the independent firms to the international corporate entities. The overriding theme that was woven through the interviews was that the change to the international firm created a decrease in job satisfaction in all participants except participant 12, who was the CEO of the international’s local branch, and his writer, participant seven, who followed him from the small firm where they both worked previously. Participant 12 had been able to bring the small company feel and culture to the international firm which included a high degree of service towards the creative staff. The results of this study confirmed the findings of Gamble et al. (2019) in that culture is a major influencer in the success or failure of acquisitions and integrations within the Nashville market.

*Change implementation.* Phillips and Gully (2014) outlined barriers to change, which include habits or patterns that are stable, power and influence, decreases in autonomy, and communication and information flow issues. The interview process uncovered themes similar to the previous research on change implementation. The loss of stable work patterns, including loss of a day-to-day person and not having creative office spaces created a decrease in job satisfaction. Participant 15 explained that the biggest drawback and cause of his decrease in job satisfaction was the loss of his day-to-day point person. For the management participants, the loss of power and influence, the autonomy to manage the business the way they had done in the past, and poor information flow caused an additional decrease in job satisfaction. Participant two

described the experience of losing autonomy and having to run every decision through the corporate machine as “the closest that I ever came to a heart attack” (personal communication, March 23, 2021). Participant five discussed the challenges of communicating with the head office in another country and how it seemed that they lost paperwork and had them duplicate work due to what she perceived as incompetence. The results of this study showed similar findings to Phillips and Gully (2014) in that Nashville workers showed a loss of autonomy and the loss of stable work patterns which were significant barriers to change.

*Integration strategy.* Gamble et al. (2019) expressed the importance of strategy when an international organization attempts to compete in two or more countries simultaneously. It is puzzling that a common theme woven throughout the interviews in this study showed no strategy utilized by the international organizations to integrate the employees of the acquired firm. Participant ten described the feeling as “being on an island” (personal communication, March 23, 2021). In a few of the participant’s cases, the international firm welcomed the new employees with an initial meeting, but there was never any follow-up. Most participants felt that they had no support and were alone in whether or not they succeeded. Participant 12 was able to successfully use the integration strategy of attempting to recreate the small company environment and element of service he provided in his previous firm. Participant seven was one of the creative songwriters at participant 12’s previous firm and has not experienced a decrease in job satisfaction or productivity. The absence of an integration strategy in most participants’ accounts and the effect on worker’s job satisfaction confirmed what Gamble et al. (2019) stressed about a need for a solid integration strategy.

*Motivation.* The interview process uncovered themes consistent with the research on motivation. Participants shared characteristics of both theory X and Y employees as described by

Senarathne (2020). Theory X employees need management involvement. The alienation and lack of help during integration negatively affected motivation. Theory Y employees have a strong sense of collectivism, which participants enjoyed in the small company environments they preferred. Phillips and Gully (2014) described workers as wanting to be singled out and to be given attention. Additionally, the workspace environment was a major issue in job satisfaction, which was congruent with the research (Yasin et al., 2019). These themes directly corroborated areas of Herzberg's theory including the hygiene factors of status and working conditions. Issues outlined in John Kotter's model of change were also evident throughout the interviews, such as workers that hang on to the past are less satisfied (Burnes et al., 2018). Geringer et al. (2016) explained that cultures with a strong respect to the past are likely to resist change. This issue was prevalent throughout all participants interviewed. The respect for the family-style culture and resistance to the corporate environment were evident in each participant's experience.

*Anticipated themes.* The review of academic literature provided a solid background of issues experienced through international acquisition and integration. The research gave the researcher an idea of themes that might arise. One of the themes anticipated from this research study was anxiety and stress that affect job satisfaction and productivity (Phillips & Gully, 2014). The anxiety and stress of the acquisition and integration experience negatively affected job satisfaction as expected; however, the experience positively affected productivity. This resulting theme was unexpected. The increase in productivity was due to the factors of fear of losing employment and the increase in opportunities at the international firm.

In addition to the literature, the researcher had almost 30 years of experience working in the Nashville market. An expected theme not found in the literature, but expected due to the researcher's personal experience, was employee preference for a small company and a family

environment or culture. This theme was evident in all 16 accounts from participants in this study. The notion that international firms do not understand the local Nashville market and culture was an additional expected theme. This expected theme was not proven as some participants did believe their acquiring firm understood the market's culture. The true theme that was uncovered was not if they understood the market, but if the international firm cared about the local culture and took it into account throughout the acquisition and integration process. The participants overwhelmingly explained that the firms did not take the local market's culture into account.

The final expected theme was that the international firms did not achieve the desired goals of the acquisition. Takhtehkar and Rademakers (2020) explained that most acquisitions fail to achieve the desired goals of the acquiring firm. This theme was difficult to determine. Participants chose to focus on if they achieved their personal goals throughout the experience. Most participants did not achieve their personal goals and experienced a decrease in job satisfaction. As far as the international firm, participants either did not know if the firm found the acquisition successful, or they felt that the firms might have achieved the initial goals of acquiring assets and revenue streams but not in continuing to increase the value of the assets or develop the employees involved.

**Literature.** The findings from the interview process relate to the majority of the literature in a number of ways. First, participants confirmed Baker's (2016) assessment of Nashville as a creative business cluster. Additionally, all participants explained the camaraderie and participative nature of the market. This camaraderie is similar to what Romanova et al. (2019) described as a characteristic of a business cluster due to the mutually beneficial cooperation of business entities. The interview process also confirmed much of the literature on international acquisition and integration. Change within an organization is almost always met with resistance

(Mello, 2019). The uncertainty and resistance to change caused all but two participants to have anxiety and stress related to the experience. Takhtehkar and Rademakers (2020) expressed that most failures occur during the integration phase post-acquisition. In this study, only three participants have remained with the international company more than a year after the acquisition due to decreased job satisfaction. Azam et al. (2020) explained that management teams play an integral role in international acquisitions. In the instances where participants had their manager or point person join them at the international firm, the participants experienced less of a decrease in job satisfaction. This theme coincided with Colman's (2020) research that showed that target managers play a critical role in the success of integration that acquiring managers may not understand or identify. Ultimately, however, the decrease in job satisfaction due to the corporate environment and culture outweighed having a familiar person as manager.

Chelsey (2020) explained that, regardless of why an acquisition occurs, success or failure can be predicted by looking at an acquiring company's organizational culture. Culture played a prominent role in each participant's account. International firms expecting acquired Nashville workers to adapt to their company's corporate style were unsuccessful in quelling their employees' loss of job satisfaction. Gamble et al. (2019) explained that a solid integration strategy is a key to the success of an acquisition. The participants in this study overwhelmingly did not perceive a strategy on behalf of the international firm.

Motivation is a critical topic in the world of business management and plays a significant role in job satisfaction and productivity (Ouakouak et al., 2020). The theme was of particular interest in this study. Congruent with the literature on acquisition and integration, employees experienced a feeling of anxiety, fear, and mistrust of the acquiring firm. These feelings adversely affected job satisfaction in all participants who lost their small company environment.

An interesting theme that was uncovered through this process that did not coincide with most of the literature was that productivity increased in most participants instead of the expected decrease in productivity. The productivity increases were due to two factors. The first factor was the opportunities that the international firm provided for working in other markets around the world. The second factor was the fear of losing the job. Employees felt that they had to work harder to be noticed and to keep their jobs due to the feeling of being alone in their path to success. Probst et al. (2007) and Koen et al. (2020) previously explored this phenomenon and found that in some cases productivity and performance can increase in employees when there is job uncertainty due to the extrinsic motivator of job loss.

**Problem.** The general problem addressed in this study is the integration resistance associated with the acquisition of small independent companies by international firms and the effects on employee satisfaction and productivity resulting in the reduction of firm performance and an increase in employee turnover. Cross-border mergers and acquisitions are a prominent form of strategy for growth and development in today's globalized landscape of business, but most fail to live up to expectations (Zakaria et al., 2017). King et al. (2020) and Charoensukmongkol (2016) explained that the integration process may contribute to employees' fear of job loss, higher perception of unfair treatment from management, and an increased amount of employee uncertainty and stress, which lead to integration resistance from employees. The research questions and interview questions sought to uncover the factors that affect the job satisfaction and productivity of workers in the Nashville market who have experienced their small independent firm acquired and integrated into an international firm. Decreased job satisfaction was shown to be a major aspect in the experience for employees. The current study showed integration resistance as King et al. (2020) and Charoensukmongkol (2016) described,

such as uncertainty, stress, and fear of job loss. The preference for working at a small independent firm and the culture associated with the experience also caused integration resistance from all participants who were required to adapt to the international firm's culture.

Productivity was not as prominent of a factor in integration resistance due to most participants experiencing increased productivity. Productivity increases were due to positive and negative reasons. The positive reason was the increase in opportunities that employees experienced. The negative reason, which could be considered a factor in integration resistance, was the fear of losing the job. Participants worked harder but were not satisfied.

**Summary of the Findings.** This qualitative case study's purpose was to answer the research questions outlined in section one. It is important to note that this is one researcher's encounter with a complex case (Creswell, 2016). The researcher was able to achieve this by conducting 16 interviews over Zoom. Participants were required to be at least 18 years old, have worked for an independent Nashville music publisher that was acquired by an international firm, and have worked for the international firm post-integration. Each participant answered a series of questions regarding their experience throughout acquisition and integration, the culture of the acquired and acquiring firms, and the factors that influenced job satisfaction and productivity throughout the experience. Each participant was asked essentially the same questions, but in some instances, follow-up questions were utilized. After the interview process was complete, the interviews were transcribed and coded to find common themes associated with the experience. The transcriptions were validated by each participant. The findings were supported through the saturation of data that occurred from the 16 personal communications, in conjunction with the previous literature which helped provide a triangulation of data.



The themes derived from the interview data helped to answer and understand the research questions. The themes were Nashville's family-style business culture, an international firm's business culture, anxiety and stress, consideration of emotions, consideration of the local business environment, management integration, preference for small company environment, decrease in job satisfaction, and increase in productivity. The most popular theme, which was unique to this study, was the preference for small family-style business that is a tradition in Nashville. All participants shared this theme. The camaraderie that is present within and between the smaller firms in the local market is a great source of job satisfaction for workers. The loss of that culture and feeling of community that occurs in large international firms is a major detriment to job satisfaction. The issues of anxiety and stress that are common to most acquisition and integrations were present as well. International firms that took the emotions of the acquired employees into account were more successful. Overall, the job satisfaction of participants was decreased by the factors due to integration resistance resulting from losing the small family environment, losing a management point person, or the preference to work in small boutique houses instead of sterile office buildings. A surprising finding was the increase in productivity that occurred among participants. The new opportunities provided at the international firms and the fear of losing a job were the factors that contributed to the productivity increase.

### **Application to Professional Practice**

This qualitative case study contributes to the professional practice of international acquisitions of independent firms within the Nashville music publishing creative business cluster. The completed research concentrates on individuals who have experienced their small Nashville music publishing firm's acquisition by an international organization. Past research pertaining to integration resistance occurring in acquisitions within the Nashville music

publishing market is minimal. This completed case study provides results on factors influencing the job satisfaction and productivity of workers who have experienced their firm's acquisition by an international firm. International firms that utilize the findings from this study will be able to identify the key areas of focus for decreasing integration resistance by enhancing the job satisfaction and productivity of acquired workers within the Nashville market.

**Improving General Business Practice.** The data obtained from this case study showed that most international firms acquire and integrate small independent music publishing firms within the Nashville creative business cluster with no significant strategy to prevent losses of job satisfaction or productivity. Workers have viewed the acquisitions of their companies as purely financial and that they were seeking to benefit from the prestige and income streams of the acquired firms. Awards on the wall and revenue streams were shown to be the most important desire for the leaders of international firms. The further development of the employees and the acquired businesses, which were the reasons the small firms were an attractive asset to acquire in the first place, has not been present in most cases. International firms have lacked strategies to help employees deal with issues that arise with acquisition and integration, such as anxiety, fear of the unknown, loss of creative workspaces, and the loss of personal interaction with management. This feeling of being alone and on an island has caused most of the participants to ultimately leave the international firm and seek other job opportunities.

Change is a significant aspect of any acquisition. Phillips and Gully (2014) explained that barriers to change can be habits or stable patterns, loss of autonomy, and issues with communication and information flow. All but two participants in this study experienced issues with habits or stable patterns. Small publishers within the Nashville market have traditionally been based in small boutique houses along 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> avenues. The small, unique work

environment helped to create the intimate environment the small companies enjoy similar to what Romanova et al. (2019) described occurs in business clusters. The word used by multiple participants was camaraderie. This camaraderie is felt within the firms as well as between firms in the market. Stable patterns, such as daily interactions with management and other staff, help to provide a family-style environment of nurturing and support for creative workers. This camaraderie was not present in the international firms. In all but one case, workers felt that they lost the family feel when their firm was acquired by an international firm. A major contributor to the loss of the family feel was in the number of workers the international firm employed. Acquired workers went from having five or six coworkers to having forty or fifty at the international firm. Additionally, the increased workload for management made it difficult to have daily interactions, and creative personnel were kept separate from management. In some cases, workers lost their manager entirely and felt no support from the organization.

The manager participants experienced a significant loss of autonomy. In the smaller firms, most were able to make key decisions. Once integrated into the international firms, all decisions had to go through what was described as a corporate filter or corporate machine. This loss of autonomy caused a significant loss of job satisfaction. Three of the four managers have left the companies where they worked post-integration due to the issue. One of the three managers left the firm after the initial interview for this study. Managers suffered from an increased workload and were not able to give the same amount of service to their employees that they gave at their previous firm.

All participants expressed issues with communication and information flow within the international firm. At the smaller firms, information flow was personal and direct. If an employee had a question, they went directly to the person who could provide an answer. In the

international firms, there was a chain of command in which information had to travel. If there was a question, it might have to go through three people before reaching the person who could make the decision.

The revelations provided from the interviews provided valuable information that could be utilized to improve the general business practice of acquiring independent firms within the Nashville market. First, international firms should consider the traditional family-style culture and service that employees were accustomed to. Secondly, international firms should consider the work environment due to the importance workers placed on the small house office instead of a corporate office building. Firms may also consider Koles and Kondath's (2014) recommendation of a participative strategy for acquired managers as a best practice for international acquisitions. Participative strategies tend to help ease employees' anxiety and fear of the unknown due to the aspect of them feeling as if they have a part in where the company is headed (Kets de Vries, 2015).

Creswell (2016) explained that qualitative research approaches the research process from a perspective that the answer may be different than what was previously learned. A surprising result of the study was that workers experienced an increase in productivity when integrated into the international firm. This contradicted Hur's (2018) findings that job satisfaction was directly correlated with productivity. Productivity increases among participants were due to the fear of losing employment and increased job opportunities. The fear of losing employment decreased job satisfaction, but it made workers more productive while they tried to make up for the lack of support from management. There is little past research on this phenomenon, but Probst et al. (2007) and (Koen et al., 2020) acknowledged that in some cases productivity can increase through job uncertainty. The perceived increase in opportunities was also a major factor that

initially increased job satisfaction; however, in most cases, this increase was short-lived due to the opportunities not coming to fruition. International firms entering the market through acquisition might consider ways to counteract employees' fear of job loss by finding ways to support them after integration. Additionally, finding ways to make the perceived opportunities a reality may help employees retain the job satisfaction increase that is initially experienced.

It is important to examine the outlier of the study and the successful acquisition and integration experienced by participants 12 and seven. Participant 12 was an outlier because when his firm was purchased, he was made CEO of the international firm's local branch and asked to bring his small company culture to the international firm. He experienced no personal decrease in job satisfaction due to his high salary and autonomy to manage the company. His company culture exemplified a strong sense of service to employees, which included regular interactions with management, encouraging notes, and regular informal gatherings to boost camaraderie. Participant seven was a recipient of that service and has not seen a decline in his job satisfaction or productivity. International firms wishing to enter the Nashville market should examine the example set by participant 12.

**Potential Application Strategies.** In recent years, streaming revenues have become the primary method used by the public to listen to music (Datta et al., 2018). Additionally, new legislation is requiring streaming services to increase royalty rates to music publishers and creators (Charap et al., 2019). This foreseen rise in music publishing royalties has created an opportunity for large international firms to increase their market share through acquisition (Towse, 2017). As royalty rates continue to rise, the creative business cluster in Nashville should see continued acquisition and integration of its small independent music publishing firms. Entering a new market comes with significant challenges when country and cultural boundaries

are crossed. Most acquisitions fail to achieve desired results (Takhtehkar & Rademakers, 2020). Takhtehkar and Rademakers (2020) explained that most acquisition failures occur during the integration phase post-acquisition. Factors involved in acquisition failure include incompatible cultures or structures or a lack of clarity on how the acquisition will create value. Chelsey (2020) recommended that acquiring firms assess the cultural needs of their employees on a regular basis and be willing to shift to meet those needs. This regular assessment may help employees overcome merger syndrome.

The culture in the Nashville market was shown in this study to be the overriding issue contributing to integration resistance within the market. Workers felt that the traditional culture was ignored and that they lost the family-style, cooperative, and supportive service environment when their companies were integrated into the international firms. Strategies to combat cultural inconsistencies should include possibly locating the local branch of the international firm in a traditional boutique house setting as opposed to a sterile office building. An office building may provide more room for the increased number of employees, but it detracts from the job satisfaction of employees when they do not feel their workspace is creative. Workers overwhelmingly stated that the office building environment of the international company was sterile and not creative. Participant 14 even spent his own money to rent a room in the previous building where his small publisher was housed. To accommodate the larger number of employees, international firms may consider splitting groups of employees along with a direct manager into multiple small house accommodations so employees can experience a working environment in which they are more familiar. If small houses are not a possibility, consideration should be given to creating an office environment with a small company feel.

International firms entering the Nashville market should also consider bringing the management team of the small firm into the international organization. The loss of a day-to-day point person was a significant source of decreased job satisfaction among participants. Nashville workers are used to a certain level of daily interaction and service from their managers. This daily interaction and service create a bond that helps to encourage the family-style environment enjoyed at the independent Nashville firms. If acquiring firms can find ways to maintain the service mentality towards their workers, they should see an increase in job satisfaction. Participant 12 was a strong example of retaining a service mentality. At his independent firm, he was very close with his employees. He had daily interaction with each member of the team, which included informal meetings and encouraging notes, calls, and texts on a frequent basis. He tried to keep that same level of service with his employees when his company was integrated into the international firm. His efforts have been successful, and participant seven praised his boss's efforts and claimed that he has not experienced a decrease in job satisfaction.

Another strategy international firms should employ during integration is finding ways to welcome acquired employees and to help make them feel part of the team. Human resource initiatives focused on cultivating and serving employees can give organizations a strategic advantage (Mello, 2019). Allowing employees to participate in the transition can also make them feel as if they are a determinant of the company's success. The consistent feeling of being left alone that participants in this study experienced could be quelled by regular personal interaction. Workers were shown to crave the attention and cultivation that they experienced at the small independent firms. If firm managers gave workers the feeling that they cared about them or their personal success, then workers may feel more comfortable entering the new larger-scale environment of the corporate firm.

The fear of job loss caused an unhealthy sense of increased productivity with participants. Attention to the cultivation of employees' personal careers should help to decrease issues with the fear of job loss without decreasing employee productivity. If firms can be sure that the perceived opportunities are real and then follow through to help workers make them a reality, then the increase in job satisfaction due to increased opportunities may be long-lasting instead of a passing thought. International firms should pay attention to the success of participant 12 and his dedication to the service of his employees as an example of a best practice. Acquisitions and integrations modeled after participant 12's approach should have a better chance of success.

**Summary of Application to Professional Practice.** This completed case study provides results on factors influencing integration resistance in workers who have experienced their firm's acquisition by an international firm. The findings from this study identified key areas of focus for decreasing integration resistance by enhancing the job satisfaction and productivity of acquired workers within the Nashville market. A key area and loss of job satisfaction for workers was the feeling of being alone in their personal success or failure. Firms should employ strategies for integrating employees that include cultivation and service. Human resource initiatives to manage the usual issues described in the past literature of fear of the unknown and anxiety due to change should also be employed. Acquired managers allowed to participate in the integration process will be more satisfied. Workers who retain their day-to-day manager throughout the process will also be more satisfied. In contrast with the literature, workers had an increase in productivity for positive reasons, such as new opportunities, and negative reasons, such as fear of job loss. International firms should focus on creative opportunities to increase the effect that opportunities have on productivity. Human resource initiatives toward cultivation and service should help to combat the negative motivator of the fear of job loss. International firms should also closely



consider the office environment. Workers overwhelmingly preferred the small boutique feel of an office in a house, which is a staple on Nashville's music row. Lastly, international firms should consider bringing the small company's management team and culture in with the acquisition. The familiar day-to-day person and family-style management can help combat integration resistance and keep workers productive and satisfied.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

This study specifically examined the experiences of workers within small Nashville music publishing firms that have been acquired and integrated by international firms. The results detailed common themes and issues that workers encounter that contribute to integration resistance when experiencing the phenomenon. Zakaria et al. (2017) explained that most international acquisitions fail to achieve the desired outcome of the acquiring firm. While this study outlined key issues with integration resistance within the Nashville publishing market and that the acquisition was a failure for 14 out of 16 participants in their personal careers, it did not determine whether the acquisitions were a success or failure for the acquiring firms. To determine acquiring firms' success or failure, a recommended further study is of the international firms and their management to determine if acquisitions within the Nashville market are achieving the desired goals. Most participants in this study believed that the international firms desired to acquire awards and income streams and that they had no interest in continuing to develop the organizations or employees that they acquired.

Another area recommended for further study is the changes in Nashville's music publishing culture due to increased international acquisitions. Participant six explained that the influx of acquisitions by larger firms within the local market has made it difficult for the large firms to operate in the small houses on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> avenues. Music publishers are increasingly

moving to office buildings in other parts of Nashville. Additionally, many of the small houses on Music Row are being replaced with large condos or office buildings due to many publishers moving from the area. This may ultimately prove devastating for the benefits that Romanova et al. (2019) described occur from business clustering in a creative hub. Further research should examine the implications that these changes are creating for the family-style culture of the market in which all participants expressed as ideal. Cottineau and Arcaute (2020) explained that when large organizations attempt to enter a market and take advantage of a cluster, the entry may jeopardize the benefits of the clustering for smaller organizations. Researchers should try to determine if the camaraderie between companies will still exist when workers do not run into each other every day at lunch or in the small bars that line Nashville's Music Row. Additionally, determination of which stage that Nashville is experiencing in its creative business cluster's lifecycle should be included (Denney et al., 2020).

### **Reflections**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to contribute to the existing academic literature on integration resistance within the Nashville music publishing business cluster. The area of literature was previously underdeveloped. The research was accomplished by exploring the experiences of workers who have had their small independent publishing company acquired and integrated into an international firm. The goal of this study was to provide insight for international firms into the issues unique to the Nashville publishing market that they will most likely encounter in the process of acquisition and integration. Additionally, the researcher sought to provide strategies for best practices for successful integration of firms and employees with less integration resistance.

**Personal and Professional Growth.** Before embarking on this case study, there was an expectation that it would be a challenge to find enough study participants willing to discuss their experiences. The Nashville music publishing market is a close community. Very little that occurs in the market is not known by most workers. Even with confidentiality agreements in place, it was feared that the participants' employers would still see the results and discover the identity of participants who discussed their experience. The discovery could possibly lead to the participants losing their employment. This expectation proved false. The fact that the interviews were confidential and that participants would be listed as a participant number, instead of their name, eased fears. Additionally, the phenomenon of international acquisition is a rising trend within the market. It was expected that there might not be enough workers who have experienced the phenomenon for the interview process to reach saturation. This expectation proved false as well. The participants contacted were more than willing to be included in the study and even recommended other possible participants. In the end, 16 participants were interviewed, and saturation was reached after 13 interviews.

As an almost 30-year veteran in the Nashville publishing industry, the researcher expected certain results. It was expected that Nashville workers would resist losing their small company family environment when integrated into a large international firm. The researcher bracketed out assumptions and made sure that the research questions did not reflect research bias, which allowed participants to give their own account of the experience. The research confirmed the expectation. All 16 participants preferred the small company feel, and 14 experienced job satisfaction loss when the small family culture was lost. It was also expected that participants would experience job satisfaction and productivity decreases through losing the hands-on, collaborative, and nurturing environment that the small publishers provide. The

findings provided a surprising result. Workers did experience job satisfaction decreases with the loss of their day-to-day manager or nurturing environment as expected; however, productivity increased in most participants. This productivity increase was the opposite of most of the literature on the topic of motivation while encountering acquisition and integration. The increase in productivity was due to increased opportunities and the fear of job loss.

The research provided valuable insight into the local Nashville market. Areas of further study were identified. Issues unique to the market were uncovered. Best practices were identified for firms wishing to acquire and integrate smaller firms within the Nashville market. As an almost thirty-year veteran of the market, the researcher gleaned valuable knowledge for continued work within the market.

**Biblical Perspective.** One of the primary themes unveiled by this study was the cultivation and service element of the small independent publishers in the Nashville market, and how that element is lost when workers transitioned to an international firm. The close-knit family environment of the small independent firms creates camaraderie within the firms. This camaraderie gives workers the feeling that management cares about them, their families, and their careers. Small company managers form close relationships with their workers to help them develop and to give them advice and opportunities to succeed. This service element was found to be absent in 14 of 16 participant accounts of the large international firm that acquired their small company. Workers felt alone in whether they developed or succeeded. To increase job satisfaction in acquired workers, international firms should utilize human resource initiatives focused on cultivating and serving employees. Participant 12 was focused on bringing his small company culture of service and cultivation to the international firm. The principles of cultivation and service align well within a Christian worldview approach to business.

**Cultivation.** Keller and Alsdorf (2016) explained that God has mandated humans to work and to cultivate the earth through their labor. God instructed humans to “fill the earth and subdue it” and explained, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food” (*New International Version*, 1978/2011, Genesis 1:28-29). The intent was that humankind was put on earth to take care of His creation and to cultivate it through work. God’s example of the work that He endured when He created all things is an example of the need for work. Adam and Eve were not just placed in the Garden of Eden; they were put there to tend to it. In addition to cultivating the earth, Keller and Alsdorf (2016) outlined that humans are responsible for cultivating each other as well. In the business world, human resource development is a form of cultivating employees. The cultivation of employees through human resources was described by Hsieh et al. (2019) as building a knowledge-based culture that encourages sharing, learning, solving problems, and innovation. Brueller et al. (2018) explained that human resource initiatives linked with integration strategy can give firms a greater chance of successful integration. The same can be applied to a Christian worldview. Keller and Alsdorf (2016) explained that even before the Fall of Man, God’s intent was that the world needed cultivating. Christians must understand that no matter what profession they find themselves in, the job must be approached and viewed as following God’s directive of cultivation and mandate for work.

**Service.** “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (*New International Version*, 1978/2011, Mark 10:45). Keller and Alsdorf (2016) discussed the advice that the founder of Starbucks, Howard Schultz gave to Mike Ullman, the CEO of JCPenney when his company was struggling with employee motivation. Schultz suggested that JCPenney should adapt the company’s culture to one of service. He explained that employees need to

become aware that work matters. Keller and Alsdorf (2016) detailed that Christians should view their work as an opportunity to serve God and their neighbor. God's purpose is for humankind to serve. Christians should look inward and discover where they can be an example of God's love for humanity and the greatest service to others. Service is an excellent way for Christians to be a partner in God's mission of redemption for helping humans to flourish (Jonsen, 2017).

The results of this study showed that acquired workers who feel that their organization does not value them and makes no effort toward cultivation and service will experience decreased job satisfaction. Participant 12, the one outlier in the study, realized the need for the service and cultivation of his employees. His corporate manager also allowed him to implement his small company culture of service within the international firm. This strategy proved successful and was praised by participant seven, who directly works for participant 12.

Participant 12 was focused on bringing his small company's culture of service and cultivation to the international firm. Participant 12 also expressed that his Christian worldview is what drives him to be a servant leader. He believes that his faith and his desire to cultivate and serve as God intended is what has driven the success of his career and the businesses he has managed.

**Summary of Reflections.** Prior to conducting this study, it was expected that workers preferred the independent company culture and the work environment of the traditional small houses on Nashville's music row to an office building environment. It was also expected that acquired workers would experience losses of job satisfaction and productivity upon integrating into an international firm. The responses of participants provided quality information for the researcher to give substantial support for the identified themes that enhanced the existing body of research on the acquisition and integration of small independent firms in Nashville by large international organizations. The findings confirmed that workers preferred independent

publishing firms located in a small house environment due to the family atmosphere, cultivation culture, and service element exemplified. Additionally, job satisfaction was decreased in most participants; however, productivity increased in all participants throughout the acquisition and integration process. The increase in productivity in workers was a surprise and was contradictory to the abundant literature on the topic of productivity in international acquisitions. International firm managers who approach the acquisition and integration process with a Christian worldview mentality of service and cultivation will be more successful.

### **Summary of Section 3**

Section three outlined the presentation of findings and the application to professional practice portion of the study. The section began with the presentation of the findings, which included a detailed discussion of the themes discovered throughout the interview process. The themes were interpreted, and the data was visualized to find the relationship of the data to the original problem statement, research questions, conceptual framework, and previous literature. The conceptual framework was then adapted to reflect the findings. The application to professional practice portion of section three outlined ways to improve general business practices and apply strategies to utilize the findings from the study. Additionally, further areas of study were identified, and the researcher's reflections on the study were discussed in detail.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

The general problem examined in this qualitative case study was integration resistance within the Nashville music publishing business cluster when employees of small independent publishing companies experience the acquisition and integration of their company by an international organization. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to add to the body of knowledge on the phenomenon of integration resistance that occurs during the international

acquisition and integration process. The study included interviews with sixteen workers who were employed at small independent Nashville publishing companies that were acquired by international firms. The interview responses were examined, and multiple themes were evident that contribute to the body of knowledge regarding acquisitions within the local Nashville market. The themes support the research questions that were posed in section one. The apparent themes included Nashville's family-style business culture, international firm business culture, anxiety and stress of the acquisition and integration experience, lack of consideration of emotions, lack of consideration of the local business environment, minimal management integration, preference for small company environment, decrease in job satisfaction, and increase in productivity.

Based on the study's findings and the apparent themes, the following actions are recommended for implementation. International firms should consider the traditional family-style culture and service that employees are accustomed to, as well as the work environment. Participants placed great importance on working in a small house environment instead of a corporate office building. International firms should consider the office space and strive for recreating the small house environment instead of locating their offices in sterile corporate buildings. A participative strategy for acquired managers is also recommended to help ease employee anxiety and fear of the unknown due to the aspect of them feeling as if they have a part in where the company is headed (Kets de Vries, 2015). International firms entering the Nashville market through acquisition should focus on ways to counteract employees' fear of job loss through human resource initiatives that serve and support workers after integration. Additionally, finding ways to make the perceived opportunities a reality may help employees retain the job satisfaction increase that is initially experienced but rarely continues due to the opportunities not



being realized. The conclusions of this study and the recommendations for action contribute to the body of knowledge of international acquisition within the Nashville music publishing business cluster. Integration strategies based on the service and cultivation of acquired employees will help to contribute to more successful future acquisitions within the market.

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## **Appendix A: Research Participant Consent Form**

**Title of the Project:** Integration Resistance in the Acquisition of Nashville Publishing Companies by International Firms

**Principal Investigator:** Dan Galen Hodges Jr., Doctor of Business Administration Student, Liberty University

### **Invitation To Be Part Of A Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, must have worked for an independent Nashville music publisher that was acquired by an international firm, and must have remained with the firm post-acquisition and integration. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

### **What Is The Study About And Why Is It Being Done?**

The purpose of the study is to examine integration resistance within small Nashville music publishing companies that have been acquired and integrated into international firms. Research has shown declines in job performance and job satisfaction through international acquisitions and integrations. The study will seek to understand if there are any unique factors contributing to the phenomenon listed above due to the Nashville market being a creative business cluster.

### **What Will Happen If You Take Part In This Study?**

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a 45-minute recorded interview through Zoom
2. Participate in a 10 to 15-minute follow-up interview.

### **Benefits From This Study**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include fundamental knowledge for international organizations in acquiring and integrating local Nashville music publishing companies with the hope of discovering best practices to maximize integration with less of a decline in productivity and job satisfaction.

### **What Risks Might You Experience From Being In This Study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

### **How Will Personal Information Be Protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, such as dates, company names, or coworker's names, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be confidential. Interviews will be conducted privately over the internet via the Zoom platform where others will not be able to overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- The information gleaned from the interview will be confidential. Participants will be assigned a unique code known only to the researcher. Identities will not be disclosed, and individual responses will not be identifiable in any publications.

### **Is Participation Voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

### **How to Withdraw from the Study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

### **Whom To Contact If You Have Questions Or Concerns About The Study**

The researcher conducting this study is Dan Galen Hodges Jr. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at ..... or ... You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Ranjan George, at ....

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, ..... or email at ...

### **Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

The researcher has my permission to video and audio record me as part of my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Subject Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature & Date

### **Appendix B: Interview Guide**

This guide outlines the interview questions that were constructed to address the research questions identified from Section One of this research study. The purpose of the questions is to prompt the study participants to give their accounts of the experience of being acquired and integrated by an international organization. The interview guide's objective is to obtain answers from the participants that are their own thoughts and unique accounts, are in-depth, and are vivid descriptions of the experience under study (Kallio et al., 2016). Participant responses to the questions should be personal and reflect the participant's experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The Interview Guide consists of six parts.

The interview questions in Part A of this Interview Guide give a backstory of the participants and their roles in their organization before and after acquisition and integration. The interview questions in Part B address research question RQ2 from section one and provide their description of the experience of their company being acquired and integrated into an international firm as well as the effect on employee productivity and job satisfaction. Part C specifically addresses the factors that have increased or decreased productivity throughout acquisition and integration. Part D asks what strategies were utilized by the acquiring firm to limit problems with productivity and job satisfaction during integration. Part E explores the culture of the acquiring and acquired firms and the issues associated with cultural differences. Part F specifically delves into the culture of the Nashville music business cluster and the effect it may have on an international organization acquiring and integrating a firm from the market.

**Part A**

1. Briefly describe your career and your role in your company that was acquired by an international organization?
2. What was your role before, during and after the acquisition and integration the acquisition of your previous company?
3. Did your role with the company change after integration occurred post-acquisition?

**Part B**

1. Briefly describe the experience of your organization being acquired and integrated by an international organization?
2. Do you believe that the acquisition and integration process affected employee productivity? If so, how and in what ways? If not, how and in what ways?
3. Do you believe that the acquisition and integration process affected employee job satisfaction? If so, how and in what ways? If not, how and in what ways?

**Part C**

1. Please describe the changes that have happened within the organization since your previous company's acquisition and integration?
2. What are the factors that you think have increased productivity and job satisfaction?
3. What are the factors that you think have decreased productivity and job satisfaction?

**Part D**

1. Did the acquiring organization utilize any strategies to help in the success of the acquisition and integration of your previous company?
2. What strategies were utilized to gain higher productivity? Were they successful?
3. What strategies were utilized to enhance job satisfaction? Were they successful?



4. In your opinion, was the acquisition and integration of your company a success or failure? Why?

**Part E**

1. Briefly describe the culture of your previous organization and its role in the Nashville music business creative cluster?
2. Was there a different culture exemplified by the acquiring firm than your original organization? If yes, please explain.
3. During integration, do you feel that the culture and practices of the acquiring firm have a positive or adverse effect on job performance and job satisfaction? Please explain.

**Part F**

1. Do you feel that there is anything unique about the local Nashville market that international acquiring companies may not understand? Please explain.
2. Do you feel that the acquiring firm understood the culture of the Nashville music market and took that into account throughout the integration process? Please explain.
3. Did the culture of your original firm have a positive or negative effect on productivity and job satisfaction throughout the integration process due to being a part of the Nashville creative cluster? Please explain.