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## **Strategies Managers Use to Increase Collaboration and Productivity Among Multigenerational Workers**

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Clarissa M. Goins

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Walden University  
2021

Abstract

Strategies Managers Use to Increase Collaboration and Productivity Among  
Multigenerational Workers

by

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BS, SUNY College at New Paltz, 1994

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

Walden University

July 2021

## Abstract

Age differences within the workforce continue to challenge employers because they must create environments that enhance collaboration among multigenerational workers.

Grounded in emotional intelligence theory, the purpose of this single case study was to explore strategies business leaders in the financial services industry use to manage a multigenerational workforce. The participants comprised six business leaders from one financial institution headquartered in Dutchess County, New York, who successfully created strategies to promote collaboration. Data collection involved the use of semistructured face-to-face interviews and phone interviews. Data analysis included a coding process to identify themes and member checking to ensure the findings' validity.

Three key themes emerged from the study: (1) communication with staff is the foundation for effective management strategies, (2) the need to acknowledge stereotypes and generalizations, and (3) develop collaborative strategies. A key recommendation is for small financial services leaders to use multiple communication methods to engage generational staff and keep them informed. The implications for positive social change include the potential for business leaders to minimize negative stereotyping in the general workforce, resulting in generational cohesion, enhancing organizational commitment and creating positive relationships.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this study to God; my loving husband, Howard; and my two children, MaKayla Alani and Kolongi James. This study is also dedicated to my three siblings, my late brother John H. Hull, Sr., and my two sisters, Jacquette D. Bottoms and Gwendolyn I. Undly. To my parents who have passed on, J. L. and Mary E. Hull, I know that you both are watching over me.

## Acknowledgments

I want to give thanks to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for providing me with the ability and the strength to get through this journey. This has been a long process; however, through prayer and an abundant amount of support, I have made it to this day. When I doubted my ability to complete this journey, along with the numerous obstacles that I faced, I went back to God's word, Philippians 4:13 (New King James Version)—“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

I acknowledge my first chair, Dr. Jerry Franklin, III, for all your encouragement and belief in my study. Dr. Franklin, I am forever grateful. To my chair, Dr. Michael Lavelle, thank you for picking up the baton and bringing me to and through the final lap. We were not together for long, but your words of encouragement and guidance enabled me to complete this journey. To Dr. Schrita Osborne-Blackmon, thank you for your advice and encouragement. You are more than a classmate but a friend too. To my closest sister-friend, Pamela Watts, I thank you for supporting me and being a part of my life for over 25 years. Thank you to my church family, close friends, and colleagues who helped me and provided encouragement along the way. Through God's grace, I finally completed what I started!

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

An organization's success is dependent upon its leaders and the staff that supports them. With up to five generations (Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z) in the workforce, organizational leaders must recognize and comprehend the differences among this group of diversified workers (Bencsik et al., 2016). Phillips (2016) noted that each generation has identifiers that are recognizable and unique to its members. From communication styles to work ethics, comprehending and understanding each generation's uniqueness is critical if organizational leaders are to be successful.

### **Background of the Problem**

A workforce shift has resulted in up to five generational cohorts working alongside each other (Bencsik et al., 2016). With multiple generations working together, from Baby Boomers extending their retirement age to the Generation Z cohorts entering the workforce, it is imperative that organizational leaders address the workplace differences among generations (Graystone, 2019). North and Fiske (2015) posited that age-based perceptions develop when leaders fail to address such differences, resulting in workplace conflict. Sweeping demographic change in the workforce increases opportunities for generational tensions and negative attitudes among the various cohorts (Graystone, 2019). Individuals who are part of the same generation identify with one another; therefore, perceptions of one cohort group compared to another may be a result of ageism (North & Fiske, 2015). When there is conflict in the intergenerational workforce, it is not limited to a particular organization (Boysen et al., 2016). Sakdiyakorn

and Wattanacharoensil (2018) noted that intergenerational conflict may occur when there is a misunderstanding of norms and behaviors between groups.

### **Problem Statement**

Age differences within the workforce continue to challenge employers because they must create environments that enhance and actively promote collaboration among multigenerational workers (Juevesa et al., 2020). Companies' failures to manage generational groups effectively contribute to annual productivity losses of \$483 billion to \$605 billion (Brightenburg et al., 2020). The general business problem is that some business leaders are losing their competitive advantage by not building intergenerational cohesion throughout their organization. The specific business problem is that some business leaders lack strategies to manage a multigenerational workforce to increase collaboration and productivity.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that some business leaders use to manage a multigenerational workforce to increase collaboration and productivity. The targeted population consisted of six business leaders from a financial institution headquartered in Dutchess County, New York, who had successfully managed a multigenerational workforce. The Dutchess County, New York business leaders might identify strategies for building intergenerational cohesion. The study has implications for positive social change, in that the findings may inform efforts to create an inclusive work environment, enhanced quality of work life, and customer satisfaction.

### **Nature of the Study**

The qualitative method was best suited to exploring strategies that business leaders use to manage the unique characteristics of a multigenerational workforce in upstate New York. Qualitative researchers aim to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon from a social or human perspective (Harrison et al., 2017; Isaacs, 2014; Park & Park, 2016). Whereas an overarching theme of the qualitative research method is understanding the opinions and views of others (Barnham, 2015), quantitative research designs involve formulating a hypothesis and conducting statistical analysis. The quantitative method would not have been suited to this study because I did not seek to use a theory or test a hypothesis.

Mixed-methods research provides a unique approach to inquiry because it integrates qualitative and quantitative research (Wilkinson & Staley, 2019). Because mixed-methods research combines quantitative and qualitative research elements, this method would not have been appropriate for the study. As such, qualitative research was most appropriate for this study.

A researcher selects a particular research design based on the objective of the study. Research designs that I considered for a qualitative study on managing a multigenerational workforce included (a) grounded theory, (b) narrative, (c) ethnography, and (d) case study. Researchers use grounded theory design to derive a general theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants. Researchers often use grounded theory in qualitative management research (Sato, 2019). Researchers may use a narrative approach to produce knowledge by providing life meanings through



storytelling (Haydon et al., 2018). A narrative approach would not have been appropriate to this study because I sought to explore strategies used by business leaders to manage a multigenerational workforce, not to explore life meanings. The discovery of knowledge within a culture is the foundation for ethnography (Charette et al., 2019). A drawback of ethnographic design is that researchers do not always understand a group's patterns or cultures (Sorice, 2019). Because this study's direction involved exploring strategies for managing a multigenerational workforce, grounded theory, narrative, and ethnography would not have addressed the research objective; therefore, case study was the approach used for this research.

Case study design comprises a series of methods for collecting data, understanding events, and exploring programs (Roberts et al., 2019). When the research goal is to get answers to explanatory research questions, this supports the rationale for conducting a case study (Alpi & Evans, 2019; Yin, 2018). Case study was the best approach for this doctoral study because I sought to analyze data from multiple sources to understand and identify strategies to manage a multigenerational workforce.

### **Research Question**

The overarching research question for this study was the following: What strategies do some business leaders use to manage a multigenerational workforce to increase collaboration and productivity?

### **Interview Questions**

1. How do you monitor and assess effective levels of collaboration amongst your organization's multigenerational workforce?

2. What strategies have you used to increase collaboration and productivity within your multigenerational company?
3. What communication strategies work best when you have multiple generations in the workplace?
4. What communication strategies help increase collaboration and productivity within your multigenerational company?
5. What strategies did not help increase collaboration and productivity within your multigenerational company?
6. What else can you tell me that would help me understand the strategies you use to manage a multigenerational workforce to increase collaboration and productivity?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The theory of emotional intelligence (EI) commenced with the founders Salovey and Mayer (1990). Mayer et al. (2004) defined EI as a blending of intelligence and emotion and how they work together. In the late 1990s, EI was popularized by Goleman (1995) as a result of his examination of how personal competencies such as (a) self-awareness, (b) self-management, and (c) social awareness increase success in managing relationships. Goleman developed EI to use in research related to intergenerational cohesion (Kaufmann & Wagner, 2017). A strong leader is one who can manage the unique characteristics of each generation.

A leader who exhibits traits of EI can inspire, show empathy, and efficiently manage an organization (Baesu, 2018). Resonance and harmony within an organization

demonstrate strong leadership, and this distinction links to increased productivity. Nguyen et al. (2019) postulated that a leader skilled in EI understands its effect on employee job performance. Increased team performance is related to EI theory and serves as a foundation for motivating and inspiring workers (Goleman, 1995).

### **Operational Definitions**

*Baby Boomers:* Individuals born between 1943 and 1960. Members of this group are considered hardworking and self-motivated (Moore et al., 2016).

*Cohorts:* Groupings of individuals born during specific time frames (Alkire et al., 2020, Clark, 2017; Venter, 2017; Young et al., 2013).

*Generation X:* A Generation X individual is one born between 1961 and 1979. Members of this group seek work balance and are characterized by flexibility and self-reliance (Moore et al., 2016).

*Generation Y:* Members of Generation Y, commonly known as *millennials*, were born between 1980 and 2000. Members of this group characterize themselves by their confidence and high achievement goals (Moore et al., 2016; Venter, 2017).

*Generation Z:* Generation Z is composed of individuals born after the year 2000. A common characteristic of this group is mastery of digital technology (Miller & Mills, 2019).

*Intergenerational cohesion:* Intergenerational cohesion is collaboration among diverse generations (Anderson & Morgan, 2017).

*Multigenerational workforce:* An organization with a span of diverse generations (Miranda & Allen, 2017).

*Veteran Generation:* A Veteran Generation member is an individual born between 1925 and 1945. Members of this group demonstrate loyalty and self-sacrifice (Hisel, 2019; Moore et al., 2016).

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

In this section, I focus on the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study. A study's underlying assumptions and limitations substantiate the researcher's belief (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Additionally, I discuss factors that may have contributed to the restrictions of this study.

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are claims or beliefs assumed true but not verified (Niven & Boorman, 2016). I based the validity of the findings within this study on the belief that intergenerational cohesion does influence organizational productivity. Additionally, I assumed that business leaders would be willing to share strategies on managing a multigenerational workforce. Because the participant responses would remain confidential, I assumed that the information that participants provided was not misleading.

#### **Limitations**

Limitations are constraints or weaknesses beyond the researcher's control (Shin et al., 2016). One limitation of this study was that the data collected during interviews might contain interviewer or researcher bias. Additionally, participants might have had time constraints regarding the interview process.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations address the domain of the research and how a study is framed (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I limited the study population to the chosen business leaders in the study area's financial services organization. This single case study focused on management strategies to increase collaboration and productivity among multigenerational workers. The scope of this study included individuals who had strategies for managing a multigenerational workforce. I selected the financial organization with which I am employed within upstate New York to participate in this study. Individuals who did not have experience managing or working alongside other generational cohorts were not eligible for this research. The study did not include entry-level staff or individuals who were employed part time. The participant interviews that I conducted were used to identify perceptions and work-related concepts of building intergenerational cohesion.

**Significance of the Study**

In this subsection, I convey the study's contributions to business practice and implications for positive social change. Managing creative environments enhances collaboration among multigenerational workers (Clark, 2017). The section below addresses how this study may help in developing a cohesive work environment, enhancing work-life quality, and increasing profitability.

**Contribution to Business Practice**

The projection is that between 2016 and 2026, the U.S. labor force will reach 169.7 million; however, the workforce's overall population numbers is declining,

becoming older, and becoming more diversified (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Because of skill shortages and a slow-growing economy, older workers have opportunities to remain in the workforce longer than in the past (Rose & Gordon, 2015). Diverse experiences and perspectives across generations create challenges for business leaders seeking to promote multigenerational collaboration (Rose & Gordon, 2015). Age-related attitudes influence each generation; therefore, creating opportunities to increase multigenerational collaboration may diminish stereotypes and improve organization profitability (Clark, 2017). The knowledge gained from this study may help to educate management on enhancing communication and collaboration between generations.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The results from this study may be used to assist management in exploring successful strategies to improve intergenerational cohesion in the workplace. The positive social change implications involve leaders who improve communication and mitigate stereotypes between generations. Positive work environments that promote employee collaboration may mitigate generational stereotypes, which, in turn, can lead to new employment opportunities and benefit the surrounding community (Clark, 2017). Organizations promote positive social change when creating an inclusive work environment that increases employee performance, reduces turnover, and increases profitability (Satria & Setiawati, 2018). Leaders of business organizations who reduce employee turnover can promote a productive atmosphere and help create a sustainable business model that will enable employees to contribute to their local community's economy.

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

Today's workforce is a blend of multiple generations. Presently, up to five generations exist in the workforce: Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. Business leaders who understand the motivation of each generation may successfully impact management strategies and productivity in the workforce (Clark, 2017). I explored literature on issues related to generational work-value differences impacting team productivity in the workplace. The review of literature for this study includes information collected from peer-reviewed and seminal research regarding managing a multigenerational workforce. Phillips (2016) noted that a challenge for management is keeping each generation committed; this commitment may contribute to each generational cohort's value systems. The purpose of this study was to provide documented research on the strategies that business leaders use to manage a multigenerational workforce to increase collaboration and productivity.

Preparation for the literature review commenced with analyzing peer-reviewed studies that address leadership, team innovativeness, and characteristics of multigenerational workers. The primary resources used for locating research articles and other studies included Google Scholar and the following Walden University Library article databases: ABI/INFORM Global, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Emerald Insight, and ProQuest. The primary search terms for the multigenerational cohorts included *Traditionalists (Veterans)*, *Baby Boomers*, *Generation X*, *Millennials (Generation Y)*, and *iGen (Generation Z)*. The organization of the sources created synthesis throughout the literature review. To maintain organization, I recorded

the results netted from searching key terms. Preliminary search terms included *cohorts*, *demographics*, *intergenerational cohesion*, *multigenerational*, *organizational culture*, and *workplace flexibility*. There are a total of 206 references in this study, of which 195 (93%) are peer-reviewed journal articles, nine (4%) are books, one (.05%) is a government website, and one (.05%) is a non-peered-reviewed website.

The literature review begins with an overview of the challenges of implementing strategies to build team collaboration and productivity, followed by a detailed analysis of the conceptual framework for this study. In this study, the literature review identifies various facets of EI and how the personal competencies may increase success in managing relationships. After a description of EI, the next section of the literature review addresses the characteristics of each of the five generational cohorts and their influence in the workplace. The remainder of the literature review addresses Burns's (1978) transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership theory. The review of research on transformational leadership theory includes a description of leadership challenges in promoting collaboration and the organization's success (Spano-Szekely et al., 2016). After a description of the various leadership styles, the next section addresses team dynamics and successful leadership.

### **Challenges of Building Team Collaboration**

Clark (2017) discovered in a study that the effects of creating a unified workforce are a challenge for management. Flinchbaugh et al. (2018) found that adapting a workplace to a multigenerational workforce also presents a challenge. Different generations working together does not guarantee a cohesive work environment (Watts,



2017). From a generational perspective, research subjects who have worked alongside other diverse cohorts understand the importance of connectedness and how it may develop in the workplace. Douglas et al. (2015) cited that fear of multigenerational conflict is a driving force behind team dysfunction. Conversely, when conflict emerges among the generations, it may result in isolation and noncommitted workers. Leaders capable of reducing conflict address performance and shape employee team productivity (Douglas et al., 2015). To reduce workplace conflict, leaders must understand the characteristics and the challenges of a generationally diversified work environment. Clark found that generational differences and workplace behavior may present challenges to organizational leaders.

Creating a positive diversified work environment, contributes to team collaboration and performance (Kaufmann & Wagner, 2017). My findings on team cohesion will provide additional depth to the literature review on promoting collaboration among multigenerational workers. Owens and Hekman (2016) noted three characteristics of a cohesive team—(a) collective humility, (b) shared purpose, and (c) communication—that contribute to successful team outcomes. A specific team goal or a common task among members of the group will positively enhance a team's cohesion (Bencsik et al., 2016; Neil et al., 2016). The aim of this research was to gain insight into the work attitudes of each generational cohort. Research on effective team management supported the study's objective by increasing understanding of the significance of work-value differences within the generations and their relationship to EI.

## **Emotional Intelligence Theory**

The primary theory for the study was Emotional Intelligence (EI) theory. The foundation of EI theory commenced with its founders, Salovey and Mayer (1990). The study of EI has since surpassed what these founders established. Some researchers have argued that EI constructs stem from Thorndike's pioneering work (1920) and his conceptualization of social intelligence. Several different types of intelligence exist; however, to properly research and analyze EI, one must understand the distinction between intelligence and emotion (Mayer et al., 2004). Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotions as an organized response to an event or memory used to solve a problem. Intelligence is perceived broadly as involving acting purposefully to judge and think rationally (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). In a study conducted by Cross and Travaglione (2003), the researchers determined that emotions influence intelligence and play an integral role in workplace success. Although the definitions for these two terms are broad, they provide a greater understanding of how the two terms correlate to one another.

EI is a unified social intelligence construct defined by Thorndike and Stein (1937), and it is known to be difficult to measure. In a study on the effect of social intelligence, Salovey and Mayer (1990) attempted to view social intelligence in a broad sense as an ability to understand oneself and others. Goleman (1995) popularized EI and expanded on the early work of Salovey and Mayer (1990) in formalizing this concept. Within a couple of years of Goleman's expansion of EI, the Bar-On (1997) model and other models developed using a mixture of EI approaches. Various approaches inundate

the EI field; however, a study by Kerr et al. (2006) suggested that leadership is an emotional process.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) found that EI differentiates between social and general intelligence, noting that EI involves detecting and appraising feelings and regulating emotions in self and others. Accordingly, to demonstrate a full commitment to the benefits of employing EI theory in the workplace, there must be strong support from the organization's top management (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Team effectiveness increases when executive management displays a commitment to EI theory in the workplace (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Goleman et al. (2013) found that the workplace suffers when individuals are unable to cooperate. EI contributes to a shared sense of organizational change and organizational commitment (Dabke, 2016; Vakola et al., 2004). Being flexible and open to change is critical in the workplace to create cohesion.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Leadership**

With EI's evolution, researchers posited that EI is related to the individual level of managerial skills (Rezvani et al., 2016). The concept of EI pertains to leadership effectiveness and how business leaders understand the emotions of others. EI theory addresses the indirect influence that EI has on a business leader's ability to perceive emotions (Nafukho et al., 2016). EI has several possible definitions; however, the consensus is that emotions may impact a leader's management style (Chatterjee & Kulakli, 2015). Mathew and Gupta (2015) posited that business leaders who understand their team's emotions positively influence the team's performance. As such, team performance is critical to the organization—so much that Cole et al. (2018) suggested

that there is an opportunity for organizations to increase team effectiveness through the support of collaborative processes.

EI has been used as a measurement by leaders for work-related outcomes (Serrat, 2017). An organization is successful when it has adaptive leaders, shows initiative, and shares its vision regarding the bottom line (Chatterjee & Kulakli, 2015). Ugoani et al. (2015) conducted a study on EI and leadership and found a positive correlation between EI and leadership style. Furthermore, Beigi and Shirmohammadi (2010) posited that organizations benefit when they have leaders who understand and relate EI with workplace success. Because of the various generations in the workforce, leaders must retain valued employees and maintain a cohesive work environment.

An individual who embarks on a role in management does so to be successful and not fail. There are various facets of EI that can predict a leader's success in an organization (Dabke, 2016). Demonstrating positive norms and leader effectiveness is essential and can either make or break an organization (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Leaders who understand their staff's emotional makeup can provide guidance, support, and proper feedback (Spano-Szekely et al., 2016). Forming genuine, compassionate, and loyal relationships links managers to their staff and EI (Beydler, 2017).

Emotional competence is essential for developing successful relationships at work (Mayer et al., 1999). How leaders relate to their colleagues may determine how leaders facilitate relational learning in the organization (Bellack & Dickow, 2019; Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Researchers have posited that EI and group cohesion have a positive correlational relationship (Curseu et al., 2015). Wilderom et al. (2015) found that a

business leader's EI is the foundation for enhancing work-related performance and active group cohesiveness. Almatrooshi et al. (2016) found that EI is a relevant construct for managing and understanding emotions. Leaders who are successful in influencing others continually build rapport with their staff to maintain their EI skills (Beydler, 2017).

There is no single agreed-upon definition of EI; however, EI is critical for managing multigenerational workers (Nafukho et al., 2016). Workplace success and group cohesion are proven outcomes of the EI concept. EI is a predictor of how cohesive a team may be (Curseu et al., 2015). Leaders with innovative work behaviors who have proven effectiveness in EI competencies contribute to success in their management roles (Maqbool et al., 2017). Leaders who possess strong EI competencies can manage and improve work-related outcomes.

Effective leaders are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and the skills required to succeed (Bellack & Dickow, 2019). When a business is unsuccessful, regardless of the cause, this lack of success results in an examination of the leader's vision, relationship with colleagues and subordinates, and execution of the organization's vision (Bellack & Dickow, 2019). For example, since the financial meltdown over 10 years ago, the banking environment's change has placed an additional burden on leaders to perform. Leaders who are capable of nurturing relationships will have their staff's support and the ability to carry out their vision. Bellack and Dickow (2019) suggested that supportive staff members who understand the organization's vision know the expectations of them.

The various generations in the workforce will challenge leaders with the task of

retaining valued employees while at the same time maintaining a cohesive work environment. To obtain success, a leader must develop EI competencies, including identifying how EI is defined (Bellack & Dickow, 2019). Leaders' abilities to understand needs and manage generational groups are grounded within their strengths as leaders. A group collectively may have needs; therefore, a relationship between emotional competence and generational groups may exist (Goleman et al., 2013). Management's ability to employ four EI competencies while finding common ground contributes to the spirit of leadership effectiveness. Goleman et al. (2013) proposed the fourfold competencies of EI as (a) self-awareness, (b) self-management, (c) social awareness, and (d) relationship management.

### ***Self-Awareness***

Self-awareness is the ability of a leader to identify individual limitations and strengths. EI begins when individuals have a good sense of their strengths and weaknesses (Bellack & Dickow, 2019). Leaders who possess strong self-awareness recognize personal areas in their life in need of improvement (Beydler, 2017; Dabke, 2016). A misconception of a leader with no self-awareness is the belief that personal weakness will go unnoticed by others (Beydler, 2017). Goleman et al. (2013) found that leaders who acknowledge and comprehend their emotions understand how weak job performance is cultivated and understand leadership effectiveness. Leaders who understand the importance of self-awareness can identify their weaknesses and are conscious of taking responsibility for their errors (Beydler, 2017). A leader with keen self-awareness is aware of red flags, recognizes preferences, has a strong sense of

personal intuition, and knows when to seek assistance.

### ***Self-Management***

Goleman et al. (2013) suggested that a leader who demonstrates self-management traits exemplifies self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and optimism. The drive to channel emotions and remain in control in stressful or trying situations is another quality of a strong leader (Zhang et al., 2018). Leaders with EI self-management competencies can mitigate disagreements between workers in the organization through practices that include setting measurable goals, resulting in a more productive work environment (Lerner et al., 2015). Being transparent, having high personal standards, exhibiting confidence, and not being satisfied with the status quo are additional behaviors of a highly motivated leader with self-management skills (Goleman et al., 2013). Leaders who do not possess self-management skills are considered negative, impulsive, and not in control of their feelings, and they do not demonstrate the ability to work well with others (Beydler, 2017).

### ***Social Awareness***

Zhang et al. (2018) found three common qualities in a leader who demonstrates social awareness. A socially aware leader's qualities include empathy, organizational awareness, and cultural understanding (Goleman et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2018). When leaders adapt to others, they monitor others' needs and get along with diverse groups of individuals; they also foster a high level of keen social awareness. Leaders who read and understand the unspoken values relevant to others find ways to maintain structure and guidance in the organization (Goleman et al., 2013).

### ***Relationship Management***

A leader who can create harmony, shares the organization's mission, and embodies a characteristic that inspires others to follow demonstrates EI relationship management skills (Goleman et al., 2013). A leader capable of managing relationships understands the staff's emotional makeup and can influence and develop others as well as challenge the status quo. Leaders who remain attuned to their workers' needs and who form genuine and compassionate relationships handle conflict and understand that different perspectives can positively impact the workplace (Beydler, 2017; Mohamad & Jais, 2016).

### **Generational Cohort Characteristics**

When working with a multigenerational team, a leader's challenge is capitalizing on each generation's strength and knowing which leadership approach is beneficial to each cohort. Generational differences influence work ethics and team productivity (van Der Walt et al., 2016). A group defined by birth year, cultural values, and shared beliefs represents a generational cohort (Clark, 2017; Moore et al., 2016). Organizations that capitalize on the various cohorts can celebrate the differences and characteristics that define each generational cohort (Moore et al., 2016).

The impact that a generation has on an employer is not new to research. Employers have identified strategies to manage each generation's workplace behavior and continue to challenge themselves to do so (Fishman, 2016). Because the workforce of today is generationally diverse, leadership styles must meet diverse needs. Leaders should not favor one generation over another; instead, each generation's uniqueness



should be celebrated (Douglas et al., 2015). Leaders should recruit and manage each of the generational cohorts differently to increase employee productivity (Becton et al., 2014). When working with a multigenerational team, a leader's challenge is to capitalize on each generation's strength.

Because of various changes in multigenerational descriptions over the years, it resulted in controversy over the names. For instance, the various cohorts' birth year and their title names have slightly changed over the years (Miranda & Allen, 2017). What remains consistent is that each generational cohort values and what is meaningful to them. Characteristics of a group of people sharing similar experiences, life events, and birth years range is considered a generation (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Lewis & Wescott, 2017). A birth year defines a generation; however, cohorts also share experiences or events (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). Besides the difference in ages, the shared experiences or similar life events such as disasters or wars differentiate one generation from another (Becton et al., 2014). Generations also differ based on their values. Unique life events lay the foundation for a given generation and shape their values and traits (Moore et al., 2016). Organizations that encompass multiple generations must develop strategies for dealing with each generation's unique characteristics (Lyons et al., 2015). Presently, there are numerous generational cohorts represented in the workforce (Phillips, 2016).

The precise age ranges for each generational cohort vary; there is dissent regarding each cohort's birth year ranges (Cucina et al., 2017; Rudolph & Zacher, 2017). The differences within each generational cohort stem from values and perceptions

instilled within each group's members; however, Clark (2017) indicated no consensus on each generation's precise beginning and end. According to Boysen et al. (2016), the five generations identified are Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennial, and Generation Z. Bennett et al. (2017) posited various life experiences generation contribute to how satisfied they are in their work environment. Members of the same cohort generally display similar cognitive values and speak the same language (King et al., 2017). The challenge of managing a multigenerational workforce includes various experiences, differences in values, expectations, and knowledge. Blending each generation's unique perspectives is challenging at best, mostly because work introduction was different for each cohort.

### ***Veteran Generation***

This group of workers was born between 1925 and 1945. These workers, also commonly referred to as Traditionalists, Matures, and Silent Generation were born before the end of World War II (Wiedmer, 2015). Traditionalists have lived through economic hardship and World War II. Phillips (2016) further suggested that Traditionalists are loyal and accustomed to being rewarded for their hard work. This group of loyal workers is working well into their senior years. Traditionalists are small in numbers; however, individuals in this group are still working and expect a flexible work environment. This generation's workers have respect for authority and may even be working because of enjoyment (Phillips, 2016).

The Great Depression was a critical life-changing event for this group (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). This risk-averse group is considered

conservative, respects authority, and demonstrates loyalty (Boysen et al., 2016). A small number of traditionalists remain in the workforce and are less than enthusiastic about the technological innovation. Al-Asfour and Lettau (2014) noted that this group is uncomfortable with change and prefers face-to-face communication.

Because this group is older than 70 years of age, technology for some members is less important than living to work in a flexible, stable, and accommodating environment. Some members of this group may not have the stamina of their younger counterparts; however, they remain in the workforce more out of necessity even if their health is declining (Moore et al., 2016). Raised during the Depression-era, traditionalists understand the meaning of sacrifice and limited resources. Members of this generation consider financial stability and integrity to be valuable traits.

### ***Baby Boomer Generation***

Born between 1943 and 1960, these workers are often referred to as *boomers* because they were born when there was a boom in birthrates. Members of this cohort are amongst the largest groups (Clark, 2017). This generation understands the sacrifices that are necessary to complete a task. Approximately 79 million Baby Boomers were born post Second World War; however, many expect to remain in the workforce for quite some time because they are highly motivated and want to prolong their youth (Fishman, 2016).

Hoole and Bonnema (2015) posited that Baby Boomers have established a strong financial position and do not experience struggles similar to their children. Boomers grew up in a time of “live to work” attitude and job stability (Clark, 2017; King et al., 2017).

Baby boomers are team-oriented and believe that it is a moral obligation to work until completing the task, even if it requires overtime (Phillips, 2016). Members of this generation believe in lifelong learning; therefore, *Boomers* who did not immediately enter the workforce typically went to college and became first-time college graduates within their families (Clark, 2017).

Also, important life events shaped this generation, such as the assassinations of prominent individuals, the civil rights movement, and political scandals of the 1970s (Becton et al., 2014). Furthermore, this group is reluctant to go against peers, resistant to change, and respect authority because they are considered team players (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). Some major responsibilities for this group include: career juggling, raising their own families, and caring for aging parents (Fishman, 2016).

A common misconception of the Baby Boomer generation is that they are technology adverse; instead, a more accurate definition of this generational cohort is that they struggle with rapidly changing technology (Shatto & Erwin, 2016; Weeks et al., 2017). Although members of this age group are beginning to retire from the workforce, their knowledge and contribution are still valuable. Researchers found that Baby Boomers should learn to embrace the Millennial generation's contributions and be willing to share their experiences (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). The best way to relate to this cohort is to seek their expertise or guidance and avoid mentioning age.

### ***Generation X***

Born between 1961 and 1979, the birthrate for this generation was significantly less than that of the baby boomers (Moore et al., 2016). Generation X has now surpassed

the Baby Boomers in the workforce (Douglas et al., 2015). Although members of this group are self-reliant and independent, because of their unique perspective, Stewart et al. (2017) posited that this generation regularly seeks a balance between their jobs and personal life. Members of this group are risk-takers and outcome-focused because they have dealt with economic uncertainty, high unemployment, and downsizing (Becton et al., 2014). Some members of this group hold critical roles in their organization, such as senior managers responsible for making strategic decisions for their companies (Cheah et al., 2016). This group does not view life through black and white lenses; instead, their perspective is to view each situation uniquely.

Commitment to an organization by a Generation X member likely depends on the amount of compensation (Cheah et al., 2016). Because this group has fallen victim to downsizing, they have a less than optimistic outlook towards their employer and are perceived as cynical (King et al., 2017). This generation has a unique perspective on their career versus the boomers. Members of this cohort remain marketable and are not afraid to work independently or seek career opportunities elsewhere.

### ***Millennials or Generation Y***

The Millennial generation is unique. Born between 1980 – 2000, members of this cohort are part of the largest generation today (Clark, 2017). The learning characteristic of this group is different from the other generational cohorts. Hoyle (2017) suggested that this generation is unique compared to other generations. Although members of this generation are technology savvy, this generation does not feel comfortable with face-to-face interactions; because they are more comfortable with virtual contact. Bodenhausen

and Curtis (2016) posited that millennials are skilled in technology and multitasking; however, they are risk-averse to face-to-face communications.

Understanding the training needs of the millennial is essential for managing this group. This generation has experienced the 2001 terrorist attack, the continued war on terrorism, and mass shootings on high school and college campuses. Stewart et al. (2017) determined that this group's experiences shaped the foundation of this generation. This generation was the first to have personal computers regularly used as a teaching method throughout school (Shatto & Erwin, 2016). Because this generation has never known or experienced a world without email or the Internet, they are technology savvy.

Often considered to be acting as they are entitled, employees of this generation also have different motivational drivers than their predecessors. Additional traits of this generation include: the ability to multi-task, success-driven, expects on immediate return, and team-oriented. This group's surprising characteristic is that millennials have an active learning style; however, they constantly desire structure because they are overachievers (Smith & Nichols, 2015). What is unique about millennials is that they are youth who live for the moment, are impatient, and do not always consider the future (Bencsik et al., 2016; Hoyle, 2017).

This generation uses social sites to maintain relationships and keep abreast of what is going on in the world. Fishman (2016) found that this generation makes their own rules because money and success are a top priority for some. Bodenhausen and Curtis (2016) posited that management must advocate sustaining these younger workers' interests. Millennials are commonly known as digital natives due to their familiarity with

technology (Bodenhausen & Curtis, 2016). This generation is willing to be more involved in the workplace and cares about relationships more so than the previous two generations (Smith & Nichols, 2015). The last few years have seen an influx of more millennials in the workforce.

### ***Generation Z***

This generation is new to the workforce, and they have value systems that are different from all other cohorts. The uniqueness of this group is their diversity (Shatto & Erwin, 2016). Members of this generation learn new digital technologies rapidly. Shatto and Erwin (2016) noted that this generation relies on YouTube videos, Netflix, and web-based video games. This group, born after the year 2000, does not solely use technology for entertainment. They also foster a type of learning that the other generations have not experienced.

Chillakuri and Mahanandia (2018) suggested that this generation is the first group to have wide-scale access to digital communication technology in the form of smartphones, Wi-Fi and interactive computer games in their own homes. Because Generation Z has grown up in a digital era, iGen is another known name for them (Bencsik et al., 2016). Members of Generation Z often have a device connected to them. This generation's unique communication and entrepreneurial drive method is their success strategy (Bencsik et al., 2016). Although these are the newest members of the labor force, this generational cohort is willing to learn and determined to be successful (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018).

## **Managing a Multigenerational Workforce**

When a diverse group of individuals is placed together in the workforce, there will be some inherent differences. Each generational cohort has a unique set of characteristics that distinguishes them from other generations. When workforce leaders understand each of the cohorts' uniqueness, this mitigates the likelihood of incivility (Moore et al., 2016). There are presently five generations represented in the workforce. The five generational cohorts include Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z (Christensen et al., 2018). The numerous diverse generations in the workforce present challenges for organizational leaders.

Each of the generational cohorts has a preferred style of leadership (Holian, 2015). For instance, work/life balance is critical for Generation X; however, work flexibility is imperative for the millennial generation (Moore et al., 2016). The ability for each generation to have a cohesive working relationship alongside each other is a challenge. From the Veterans to Generation Z, leaders must understand each generational cohort's various work styles and expectations. Graystone (2019) posited that an advantage of having a multigenerational workforce is that employees are well-rounded and capable of learning from one another. Learning from one another requires a level of knowledge sharing. Sharing knowledge is not an instinct; knowledge sharing blossoms when trust is evident (Bencsik et al., 2016). Leaders can benefit from understanding each generation's unique beliefs, values, and traits in their organization (Moore et al., 2016).

Each generational cohort has different factors requiring consideration to balance work and life properly. Prioritizing what is important to each generation may define how



the cohorts will work together (Moore et al., 2016). As each generation moves through different life phases, their priorities will shift in the workplace. The sacrifice, strengths, and unique qualities of each generation manifests, in the workplace, because of differing goals and life experiences (Moore et al., 2016). The differing life experiences and work values may result from the generations growing up in different times (King et al., 2017).

Organizations that are successful in hiring and managing their relationship with the various generational cohorts can capitalize on the experience of the older workers (Fasbender & Wang, 2017). Organizations are successful when they are proactive and identify management concerns and issues (George, 2015). An organization will not be successful if it fails to encourage communication amongst the different generations.

To set the foundation for team cohesion and efficiency, organizations must capitalize on mentoring opportunities between senior and younger workers. Graystone (2019) found that a multigenerational workforce's success depends on how well management communicates with the staff and how well the staff members' talent and experience are valued. Whether it is social media or the Internet, leaders are beginning to implement ways to engage a mass mix of generations (Graystone, 2019).

Employees become committed when they understand the goals of the organization. A team leader understands that the organization's workers will be successful when the organization advises what they consider is valuable and critical (Khoreva et al., 2017). A leader is successful when developing their workforce to appreciate and draw upon the leader and the organization's values. An effective leader understands that communication is the catalyst for engaging all generations.

## **Impact of Team Cohesion**

Cohesion is a common bond that draws individuals together (Kaufmann & Wagner, 2017; Mello & Delise, 2015; Salas et al., 2015). Having a team culture within the organization is a benefit to the workers and the employer. Driskell et al. (2018) suggested that teams are critical to an organization because working in a group setting allows individuals to achieve more than working independently. Working with a group creates cohesiveness and the development of new ideas. A benefit of working with a team is the interaction that members have with one another (Bayraktar, 2017; Thompson et al., 2015). Positive aspects of a functioning, cohesive team include team size and time associated with the team (Thompson et al., 2015). Teams may optimize their overall performance by demonstrating cohesive qualities (Salas et al., 2015). At the formation of a team, the group moves through different development phases (Salas et al., 2015). Beyond the social aspect of working with a team, Bayraktar (2017) posited that teaming behaviors benefit the organization. Picazo et al. (2015) suggested that team performance is surpassing individual performance. A benefit of working with a team is the pool of knowledge (Salas et al., 2015). A curvilinear relationship may contribute to teams with a strong, cohesive relationship (Park et al., 2017). Cohesion is not instantaneous; it develops over some time. Bayraktar (2017) posited that cohesion is a multidimensional construct. For cohesion to exist, Picazo et al. (2015) discovered that employees must have personal satisfaction with the team.

Leaders who communicate their vision influence their work teams toward achieving a high level of performance. Unclear vision leads to poor team cohesion and a

leader's inability to manage conventional differences amongst the generations effectively. Teams that display cohesion have leaders capable of managing problems that arise when the older generation and the younger generation try to marry their differences (Bencsik et al., 2016). Although cohesion may exist in multiple forms, it is an employee's satisfaction with the team that is imperative for the organization's betterment (Picazo et al., 2015). Organizational strength occurs when employees learn more about one another and participate in team exercises (Salas et al., 2015). Cohesion and collaboration occur when employees get to know their coworkers through team-building activities.

It is a challenge to measure cohesion because multiple forms of cohesion may result from group diversity or a specific task. For example, group cohesion can be assignment-based, sentiment-based, reward-based, or dependency-based (Bayraktar, 2017). How cohesive a group is, depends on both the task and the organization's vision. Bayraktar (2017) explains the multiple forms of cohesion as follows: (a) Cohesion that is an assignment-based suggests group attraction occurs because of the members shared goals, a sense of loyalty, and an obligation to reach the goal; (b) Sentiment-based cohesion relates to the individual relationship that the workers have with one another; (c) Functioning under reward-based cohesion, suggests that a successful group will result in each member becoming successful; and (d) Bayraktar (2017) found that dependency-based cohesion is relying on other group workers to get tasks completed.

Since this is the first time that five generations have come together in the workforce, it presents organizational leaders' challenges. Five generations working together requires blending of ideas, learning to work collaboratively, and effective

communication. The implication of combining ideas suggests various opinions and goals (Bang & Midelfart, 2017). Teams that demonstrate high efficacy reduce complacency and sticking to old strategies (Park et al., 2017). Organizations are under constant pressure to stay ahead of the curve and remain competitive. Diversity in the workplace impacts the team environment (Mello & Delise, 2015). Team cohesion is of great importance to leaders of an organization (Rodriguez-Sanchez et al., 2017). Observable differences, such as member attitudes, can result in cognitive differences and affect the team's outcome (Mello & Delise, 2015).

Several elements contribute to cohesion in the workplace. Ojo et al. (2016) found that a sense of pride, unified outlook, shared team goals, and job satisfaction contribute to cohesion. Mello and Delise (2015) noted that individuals have a sense of pride and are more productive when they relate with a group. Building cohesion amongst workers throughout an organization is critical to maintaining a competitive advantage. The aging workforce and the inability to retain qualified workers present unique leadership challenges in today's organizations. Mello and Delise (2015) posited that cohesion is an indicator of how well a team is united. Cherniss and Goleman (2001) posited that a lack of cohesion and collaboration could decrease team effectiveness. Leaders must understand their influence over the team climate (Stutzer, 2019). Cohesion unites individuals; however, competition is a way to separate individuals.

Competition among cohorts is considered a negative behavior. Occasionally, leaders may use the tactic of exclusion to minimize the negative behavior. The initial reaction that a leader may have towards an individual, who demonstrates negative

behavior and strife, is to identify a corrective action to mitigate the behavior (Jaikumar & Mendonca, 2017). Taking this approach is an option; however, an alternative may be to identify triggers to the negative behavior that help repair the harmful reactions and increase cohesion. When organizations learn to capitalize on their team members' differences, it results in positive outcomes (Mello & Delise, 2015).

The viability of a team matters to both the organization and the leader. Teams that are viable increase the overall performance of the organization. Teams that increase their performance positively impact the bottom line and add value to the organization (Bang & Midelfart, 2017). One way to raise morale is having a worker believe that they are part of a team (Wei et al., 2016). Leaders who make the job means to a worker have a positive impact on job performance.

A worker's emotions directly impact team cohesion (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Additionally, team cohesion is a constructive tool to increase harmony and overcome differences (Jit et al., 2016). Team cohesion is not a new concept; actually, it is a relevant and critical component contributing to an organization's success (Salas et al., 2015). Cohesive team members often promote a positive attitude. A team member's positive attitude results in high confidence in team performance and team norms (Park et al., 2017).

Salas et al. (2015) noted that although cohesion is critical to the organization's success, various approaches are necessary to measure cohesion. Interactions and establishing relationships amongst the multiple generations in the workforce is challenging. Group cohesion and a team's performance are indirectly linked (Picazo et

al., 2015). Strategies must be developed and understood to accomplish the task of building relationships across generationally inclusive work environments. Picazo et al. (2015) posited that team members might perceive a lack of cohesiveness due to a low social interaction level.

The effectiveness of team cohesion influences the organizational outcome of the team. For an organization to remain competitive and have positive results, it requires highly effective teams and a specific leadership approach. Solaja and Ogunola (2016) posited that the most effective leaders exhibit traits of multiple leadership forms. The three forms of leadership for a multigenerational workforce are transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Although different each of the three forms of leadership styles uniquely impacts the achievement of organizational goals.

### **Transformational Leadership Theory**

Burns (1978) developed the transformational leadership theory to motivate and develop followers into leaders. The premise behind Burns's definition of transformational leadership was to elevate, engage, and "morally uplift" followers to be change agents (Burns, 1978). A strong leader encompasses many great qualities, such as guidance, motivation, and dealing with a worker's emotions (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Mathew & Gupta, 2015). In the book entitled *Leadership*, Burns (1978) described a transformational leader as admired and engaged with followers. Lanaj et al. (2016) posited that transformational leaders motivate followers when their behavior aligns with leadership values. Although Burns created transformational leadership, Bass (1985) challenged Burns's theory and expanded it. Leaders who exude transformational qualities

empower their followers, and in doing so, they increase their commitment (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Spano-Szekely et al., 2016). Bass (1985) considered transformational and transactional leadership as two distinct concepts; however, Bass also believed that a great leader demonstrated both elements.

The definition of a great leader continues to evolve. Ideally, a transformational leader shares the organization's vision and is willing to coach and mentor others. Evidence from previous studies indicates that a transformational leader uses innovative ways to support their workers and focus on their needs (Andersen et al., 2018; Mathew & Gupta, 2015). The convergence of generations in the workforce requires leaders to remain abreast of the organization's main issues while ensuring cohesiveness between the group members (Goleman et al., 2013). Singh and Sharma (2015) suggested that leadership style influences employee productivity. Leaders who exhibit transformational leadership theory qualities understand how to empower their multigenerational staff (Schaubroeck et al., 2016). To gain a competitive advantage, leaders must understand their influence on the team climate (Paulsen et al., 2013).

The labor force is becoming more culturally diverse. Because of the workforce's demographic shift, management must be sensitive to potential conflict among multiple generations. Leaders who become attuned to the workers they oversee minimize conflict and complement the organization's culture (Goleman et al., 2013). Mathew and Gupta (2015) suggested that intelligence alone is not enough to make a great leader. A strong leader encompasses many great qualities.

Organizational diversity requires hands-on leadership because it may affect performance and productivity (Singh & Sharma, 2015). Prior research reveals that a multigenerational team's success or failure depends on the transformational leader's effectiveness (Paulsen et al., 2013). Mathew and Gupta (2015) found that transformational leaders are aware of their followers' feelings and look out for one another. When leaders receive organizational support, they will experience a more significant commitment from their followers (Spano-Szekely et al., 2016). A transformational leader is an individual who understands their peers and may be able to inspire change (Schaubroeck et al., 2016). The traits that a transformational leader exhibits may influence increased involvement from their peers. Schaubroeck et al. (2016) suggested that an individual who exhibits a transformational leader's qualities inspires others and encourages teamwork.

Although transformational leadership may encourage employee involvement, the driving force regarding how involved an employee is in the organization results from the leader's relationship. Research has not proven that employee involvement in the organization is beneficial; however, employee involvement may boost peers (Bodenhausen & Curtis, 2016). A leader who exhibits transformational leader's traits keeps communication lines open with their followers and enables them to understand its goals. Expressing the organization's goal to team members diminishes the need for a leader to micromanage (Goleman et al., 2013).

Transformational leaders must keep the participants involved in the outcome. A transformational leader can make participants trust their vision and help the leader



achieve the organization's goals. Bodenhausen and Curtis (2016) suggested that a transformational leader that can mentor and establish high-performance expectations will enable their participants to develop new skills and become successful. Transformational leadership is the appropriate model for empowering and challenging employees of all generations.

Overall, the transformational leadership style stimulates the intellect and potential because others' needs and feelings are primary concerns (Mathew & Gupta, 2015). A highlight of utilizing a transformational leadership approach is building trust between the leader and the follower (Bodenhausen & Curtis, 2016). Leadership in the organization influences the motivation of the followers (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001).

Transformational leaders are known to be more sensitive to their followers needs (Bodenhausen & Curtis, 2016). Contrary to the transformational leadership style that promotes employee involvement is the transactional leadership approach.

### **Transactional Leadership Theory**

Burns (1978) first introduced the concept of transactional leadership as one of the major leadership styles. Transformational leadership focuses on peer needs; conversely, the transactional leadership approach focuses on rewarding or disciplining an employee based upon their action or inaction (Bodenhausen & Curtis, 2016). Transactional leadership involves specific behaviors, and good behavior justifies a reward. For instance, Martin (2015) posited that an individual who is a transactional leader has a more passive leadership approach. Leaders who use a transactional leadership approach may demonstrate a reactive approach instead of a proactive approach for solving problems

(Bodenhausen & Curtis, 2016). Leaders who demonstrate transactional leadership qualities are occasionally considered non-caring, ineffective, and less assertive (Martin, 2015).

A transactional leader of a multigenerational workforce will demonstrate various leadership styles based on the workforce's needs and assessment (Doucet et al., 2015). Compared to transactional leadership, transformational leadership is a more effective form of leadership, resulting in improved outcomes. Transactional leaders look at the organization's norms to clarify and assign tasks so that objectives can be met (Martin, 2015). Contrary to a transformational leader, a transactional leader does not inspire others to do better; however, transactional leadership qualities are in all areas of workforce management. The concept of transactional leadership should be mutually beneficial, with leaders influencing followers while enabling followers to seek gratification from various transactions.

Critics of transactional leadership suggested that this concept utilizes a cookie-cutter leadership method without developing any substantial relationship with the follower (Bellé & Cantarelli, 2018). Transactional leadership is not considered an active form of leadership. Bodenhausen and Curtis (2016) regard the transactional leadership style as a traditional form of leadership. Furthermore, utilizing one style of leadership does not accomplish all of the objectives of each organization.

McCleskey (2014) considered the transactional leadership style as a concept where the leaders are unwilling to adapt, and the followers are fulfilling their self-interest. The concept of transactional leadership enables followers to seek gratification

from various transactions. McCleskey (2014) suggested that transactional leadership's design benefits both the leader and the follower.

### **Laissez-Faire Leadership Theory**

Lewin et al. (1939) considered a social scientist pioneer credited for outlining three leadership models: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. There are pros and cons for each of the three types of leadership models. A laissez-faire leadership style rests somewhere between autocratic and democratic models. Some may describe a laissez-faire leader as one who negates leadership by mainly focusing on delegating responsibility. Compared to an autocratic leader who is domineering and a democratic leader who pioneers support, a laissez-faire leader does not attempt to be "hands-on" or take responsibility (Lewin et al., 1939). Over the years, research on leadership continued to evolve. Bernard Bass's developed a leadership model that contradicted some of the previous traditional theories. In contrast to Lewin's leadership model, Bass (1985) expanded on Burns' (1978) earlier work by defining laissez-faire leadership as the third component of transformational and transactional leadership.

One quality of a laissez-faire leader is a non-involved approach to leadership (Wong & Giessner, 2018; Yang, 2015). A leader who uses this approach does not accept ownership or responsibility for operational results (Yang, 2015). The quality of this leadership style is one where the leader lacks confidence (Martin, 2015). Furthermore, a laissez-faire leader displays indifference towards their followers (Cheung et al., 2018; Yang, 2015). A leader who demonstrates attributes of a laissez-faire leadership style is

generally considered ineffective, demotivated, and not as strong as a transformational or transactional leader (Yang, 2015).

Laissez-faire leadership is not the preferred leadership style of someone involved or has a take-charge approach to leading. Martin (2015) posited that a leader who demonstrates laissez-faire leadership traits is an individual who may not be able to handle leading others. A laissez-faire leader is also one who finds strength in delegating critical responsibilities to followers instead of personally making decisions (Zareen et al., 2015). Of all three leadership styles discussed, the laissez-faire leadership approach is the most controversial and is a profound contrast to its transactional and transformational leadership approach counterparts. The Laissez-faire leadership approach is not always negative; coincidentally, a positive aspect of laissez-faire leadership is the trust that develops between the leader and their subordinates (Yang, 2015). Differences in perspectives and opinions may cause dissent and mitigate the pursuit of fulfilling the team goals (Mello & Delise, 2015). Overall, a laissez-faire leader may not be the ideal leadership style for increasing cohesion among generational cohorts.

### **Contributors to Multigenerational Team Dysfunction**

Cohesion is essential for effective team performance. Individuals are less motivated to participate in the team's success when there is no team bonding evidence (Salas et al., 2015). Although team dysfunction may not be easily identifiable, some behaviors can increase team dysfunction. Because team cohesion does not emerge immediately, some factors are detrimental to the team performance and may conflict amongst the team members. Douglas et al. (2015) identified five factors that contribute to

the perception of team dysfunction: the absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results.

### ***Absence of Trust***

A contributor to team dysfunction is the absence of trust. Douglas et al. (2015) found that the inability to admit mistakes and fears contributes to trust issues. Showing signs of negative behaviors in the workplace such as (a) slacking off, (b) behaviors outside of the work norms, and (c) explosive attitude towards others reflects the absence of trust (Jaikumar & Mendonca, 2017). Trust is also not afraid to ask for assistance when needed (Douglas et al., 2015). Identifying triggers to negative behavior diminishes the fear of conflict and establishes trust.

### ***Fear of Conflict***

Team dysfunction can occur when a cohort is apprehensive about expressing their feelings. Complete conflict avoidance is not required for teams to function. Strategies that leaders use for conflict management must balance concerns for others and concerns for self (Jit et al., 2016). To remain viable, highly functioning teams do not avoid conflict. Team members who can be honest and express their opinions to one another without the fear of rejection or retaliation demonstrate signs of being a conducive team member and not afraid of conflict (Bang & Midelfart, 2017). Douglas et al. (2015) suggested that conflict avoidance may cause trust issues. Overall, recognizing conflict as a healthy function of team dynamics adds value to the team.

### ***Lack of Commitment***

Team members that lack commitment are not supportive of decisions made. These

same team members who lack commitment may sabotage cohesiveness amongst other team members (Douglas et al., 2015). Committed teams can accomplish the goals set for them by their leaders. The commitment of a worker indicates no fear of failure.

Furthermore, a committed worker raises morale and indicates that they are part of a team (Mello & Delise, 2015; Wei et al., 2016). Commitment is not only the responsibility of the worker; it is also the responsibility of the leader. Leaders who are indifferent and do not take their responsibility seriously cannot support their team. Lack of leadership support contributes to the overall team not being committed (Hoyle, 2017). For instance, a sense of commitment demonstrates belongingness, accountability, and it strengthens team cohesion.

### ***Avoidance of Accountability***

The goal of a cohesive team is to work together for the desired result. Bayraktar (2017) suggested that workers displaying unity, solidarity, and accountability indicate a strong team. For a multigenerational team, unity amongst the team members is critical. An individual who fails to be accountable for their actions jeopardizes the success of the team. When individuals learn to hold themselves accountable to their team members, it results in positive outcomes, such as obtaining the desired goals (Mello & Delise, 2015). A team's strength is apparent when a group member no longer perceives themselves as a single entity but instead understands what it means to be accountable for their actions to other team members.

### ***Inattention to Results***

Members of a cohort who put their own needs above the team's needs cause

dysfunction, known as inattention to results. When a team member focuses on their accomplishments instead of promoting the team, this is a sign of negative behavior. When a cohort places the team's needs above their own, this demonstrates positive behavior (Douglas et al., 2015).

### **Successful Leaders of a Multigenerational Team**

Leading a multigenerational workforce provides a set of challenges for each organization. Since the financial crash of 2008, experts view and highly scrutinize the economic environment. Because of some unethical business practices, many Baby Boomers (and some Veteran) generational employees must remain in the workforce beyond their expected retirement age of 65. As a result, the workforce is more diversified (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). Each generational cohort has unique personalities and goals within the workforce (Miranda & Allen, 2017).

A leader of multiple generational cohorts must understand the work/life balance. Moore et al. (2016) suggested that a positive work/life balance is different for each generational group. The amount of work/life balance required by each generational cohort is determined by how well balanced the amount of family time or leisure time compares to the time spent at work (Moore et al., 2016). To lead a multigenerational workforce, Miranda and Allen (2017) posited that EI skills are needed. Possessing this skill further demonstrates that the leader understands how emotions can boost its effectiveness (Miranda & Allen, 2017).

Diversity in the workplace presents a challenge for the organizational leader. Graystone (2019) found that a multigenerational workforce's success depends on how

well management communicates with the staff and how well staff members' talents and experiences are valued. Effective leadership understands that communication is the catalyst for engaging all generations. For instance, each generation must understand the various forms of communication. Whether in social media, or the Internet, leaders must implement ways to engage a mass mix of generations (Graystone, 2019). Sibarani et al. (2015) suggested that the combination of the multiple generations in the workforce reinforces the notion that there are different communication and learning styles. A supportive leader is capable of motivating and empowering their workforce (Moore et al., 2016). Leaders who recognize and support the team's initiative contribute to its development and success (Hoyle, 2017).

Along with motivational benefits, connecting the various generations can create a cohesive environment, whereby members are willing to offer encouragement and leverage differences amongst group members (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). A manager tasked with leading a multigenerational team is challenged to understand each of the generational cohorts (Sibarani et al., 2015). Prior research indicates that multigenerational workers receiving adequate support from organization leaders will have positive work outcomes (Sibarani et al., 2015). Leading a multigenerational team successfully requires recognizing that each of the cohorts has a specific style of leadership. An aspect of leading a multigenerational workforce is understanding diversity within the workforce (Moore et al., 2016; Sibarani et al., 2015). Previous research indicated that a multigenerational leader should understand the learning style differences among various cohorts (Sibarani et al., 2015).



When a leader understands the importance of celebrating each generational cohort's differences, this leads to workforce success. The teams that successfully reach the goals set forth within the organization result from management understanding the generational traits and the differences amongst the cohorts (Moore et al., 2016). Building upon each of the cohorts enables a multigenerational leader to realize positive outcomes (Goleman et al., 2013). Because the organization's composition is changing, leaders must develop innovative ways to connect the various generations.

The challenge for promoting cohesion amongst multigenerational workers is for the organizational leaders to use creative measures to create a bond among the workers (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). Aside from the knowledge gained when multiple perspectives are shared, it establishes relationships among the cohorts. Blattner and Walter (2015) noted that team dynamics improve when identifying work-value differences in a generationally diverse workplace.

An effective leader impacts the followers and the organizational outcome (Zareen et al., 2015). No one leadership style works for every organization. How effective a leadership style is, depends on the complexity of the situation (Puni et al., 2016). When selecting effective leaders, there are no guarantees. It is dependent upon the dynamics of the situation and the desired outcomes.

### **Transition**

Section 1 of this case study includes introducing the study's foundation, problem and purpose statements, research question, conceptual framework, operational terms, the significance of the study, and review of professional and academic literature. This study's

focus included topics on the various options leaders can use to manage a multigenerational workforce. The literature review had topics such as EI theory and leadership, EI competencies, characteristics of the five generational cohorts; the impact of team cohesion; and addressing the various forms of leadership styles and contributors to team dysfunction. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the knowledge and experience that some business leaders used to manage a multigenerational workforce to increase productivity.

In Section 2, I focused on the project by discussing the researcher's role, demographics of the participants, the research methodology and design, and population sampling. This section also included the data collection instruments, techniques, ethical research, and data analysis and observations. Finally, I discussed the reliability and validity of the study. Section 3 discusses the research findings and the significance of the study.

## Section 2: The Project

Today's workforce comprises up to five generational cohorts. One of the challenges of leading generational cohorts is embracing the differences that exist among them. Hoole and Bonnema (2015) posited that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective in managing these cohorts. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies to manage and increase collaboration and productivity among multigenerational workers. This section includes the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participant selection, the research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instrument/techniques, data analysis, and the reliability and validity of the study.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that some business leaders use to manage a multigenerational workforce to increase collaboration and productivity. The targeted population consisted of six business leaders from a financial institution headquartered in Dutchess County, New York who had successfully managed a multigenerational workforce. The Dutchess County, New York business leaders identified strategies for building intergenerational cohesion. This study has positive social change implications, in that the findings may be applied to efforts to create an inclusive work environment, enhanced work-life quality, and customer satisfaction.

### **Role of the Researcher**

When conducting qualitative research, a researcher serves as the main instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Silverman, 2015). Additionally, a researcher must have

a strong rationale and the ability to be objective and must demonstrate integrity when collecting data (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). Equally important to being objective is the researcher's familiarity with the study, which makes it possible to select the most appropriate data collection method. It is important to provide information on the researcher's background to potential readers, in that this background may affect the views and interpretations presented within the study (Sorsa et al., 2015).

From an ethical viewpoint, a researcher's approach to a study is vital because it may affect the researcher's lens. In a case study design, the research comprises a series of data collection methods, which the researcher uses to understand an event and the participants involved (Aczel, 2015; Vohra, 2014). Data collection instruments to explore strategies to manage intergenerational cohesion and productivity consist of open-ended interviews, review of relevant documents, and direct observations (Yin, 2018). Participants were business leaders from a financial organization in the Mid-Hudson Valley in upstate New York. I work for the organization participating in this study; therefore, I ensured that the individuals were relevant to the study.

While collecting the data, I reduced my assumptions regarding intergenerational cohesion and organizational productivity through bracketing. Researchers use bracketing to separate their assumptions from the research participants' viewpoint (Sorsa et al., 2015). Coburn and Penuel (2016) posited that a review of strategies and findings from previous case studies on the subject matter reduces the risk of researcher bias. A researcher employs ethical consideration by safeguarding and accurately characterizing the participants' status (Thomas, 2017). I was the only person with direct access to the

participants' personal information; therefore, I ensured that their rights would be protected.

I adhered to the Belmont Report protocol regarding guidelines to follow for research that includes human subjects (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Before the study commenced, Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) needed to approve all aspects of the project. The three ethical principles of the Belmont Report are (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice. The Belmont Report's major principle is ensuring that participant information is protected (Friesen et al., 2017). Despite the difficulties that may arise from conducting a research study, the researcher's goal is to make sure that trustworthiness and accuracy are apparent (Morse, 2015).

Walden University promotes ethical responsibility by offering key services through the research center. These services enable researchers to produce high-quality work that systematically complies with documented guidelines and standards (Walden University, 2020). Empathy and ethical judgment are key qualities that a researcher should demonstrate when conducting interviews (Prior, 2017). Noble and Smith (2015) maintained that research's reliability and validity are challenges for a researcher. The use of an interview protocol directs a researcher to adhere to a procedural guide to mitigate bias. I introduced myself to the participants, and they were fully aware of my note taking and recording of the interview.

## Participants

Throughout the interview process, the researcher is responsible for exercising caution while having a consistent line of unbiased and meaningful questions (Yin, 2018). The financial institution selected for this case study was in the Mid-Hudson Valley in upstate New York. This financial institution, founded by a group of local citizens in 1891, was family-owned, employed individuals from the community, and had sustained longevity and growth. I based this organization's selection on my professional affiliation with it; therefore, I had immediate access to the participants (Saunders & Townsend, 2016). Because my employer was the organization selected for this study, I spoke directly with the president of the organization to request study participation and provide background information regarding the study (see Appendix A).

To enhance the interview process, I created a list of purposeful, nonthreatening interview questions (see Appendix B). When a researcher understands each participant's unique perspective, this assists in relationship building (Karagiozis, 2018). Potential participants needed to meet specific eligibility requirements to take part in the study. The minimum criteria for this study included (a) having at least 1 year of experience managing a multigenerational workforce, (b) being active in senior management or leadership, and (c) having developed strategies that promote collaboration. An interview protocol was adhered to for data collection in the semistructured interviews. The interview protocol served as a guide to maintain the consistency of the interview process (see Appendix C). Additionally, I requested that participants who met the eligibility requirements sign and return a consent form, which outlined the study's purpose and

confidentiality. During my initial discussion with the participants, I discussed the research protocol and interview logistics (Saunders & Townsend, 2016). Apart from providing insight to the participants regarding the interview process, the purpose of the exchange was to explore each business leader's perception regarding increasing collaboration and productivity among multigenerational workers.

In a case study, an essential component of the interview process is guided conversation (Yin, 2018). I conducted face-to-face interviews with six business leaders to explore leadership strategies resulting in intergenerational cohesion. I collected data through purposeful and nonthreatening interview questions. Each participant's title remained anonymous through an alias; however, the objective was to have savvy business leaders with unique perspectives (Stevanin et al., 2019). Neglecting to follow policies and procedures would have been detrimental to this study's success and might have increased the likelihood of having the research study rejected (Connelly, 2016).

### **Research Method and Design**

A host of research methods are available to researchers. The three research methods under consideration for this study were quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Selecting the proper method hinges upon the research question (Yin, 2018). The following section addresses the research method chosen and how it contributed to this study.

#### **Research Method**

Researchers can use the qualitative method to explore building intergenerational cohesion through an organization by analyzing the perceptions and practices of business

leaders who have had successful integration. Researchers use the qualitative method to evaluate, refine, and develop information received from participants (Saunders & Townsend, 2016). Harrison et al. (2017) found that qualitative research is seeking to explore and understand a phenomenon from the participant's perspective. Through qualitative inquiry, a researcher can understand strategies that some business leaders use to implement a cohesive intergenerational organization.

Researchers use quantitative methodology, unlike the qualitative approach, to focus on statistical analysis and variables (Chamberlain et al., 2015). For a researcher who uses a quantitative method, the goal is not to understand a phenomenon; instead, the primary use for quantitative research is to use numerical data (Al Marzooqi, 2015). In addition, quantitative researchers use a reductionistic approach, as the intent is reducing complexity into a discrete set of ideas for testing a theory through data collection and measurement (Al Marzooqi, 2015). Because the quantitative method focuses on the relationship and statistical analysis of two or more variables, this methodology was inappropriate for this study.

Mixed-method researchers integrate the processes of quantitative and qualitative research methods, garnering the benefits of deductive and inductive viewpoints (Lucero et al., 2018; Soderberg, 2015; Venkatesh et al., 2016). A challenge that a novice researcher may encounter when conducting a qualitative study is properly framing the question to highlight its relevance (Yap & Webber, 2015). Mixed-method researchers use one approach's strength to highlight the other's weakness (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). In this study, I aimed not to test a theory or hypothesis but to explore each



business leader's strategies to manage a multigenerational workforce to increase collaboration and productivity. My intent was not to analyze statistical data or use closed-ended questions for data collection; therefore, a mixed-method approach that integrated qualitative and quantitative components would not have aligned with this study's purpose.

Understanding other perspectives is an integral part of qualitative research (Al Marzooqi, 2015; Landrum & Garza, 2015; Yap & Webber, 2015). Researchers use a qualitative approach to create well-crafted research questions, which require careful thought regarding the study's direction. Using a qualitative approach is more appropriate for understanding the human experience and the participants' perception of the phenomenon (Rahman, 2017).

### **Research Design**

A case study is the most appropriate design to use when a researcher is seeking answers to exploratory questions. A researcher must be mindful of the research purpose and questions when assessing the design for a study (Ridder, 2017). The process of selecting a research design depends upon understanding whether the design can align with the study's direction (Ridder, 2017). A case study is the most appropriate design to use when a researcher is seeking answers to exploratory questions (Al Marzooqi, 2015). Exploring in-depth programs, events, activities, and data collection procedures are all case study objectives (Yin, 2018).

A case study incorporates an in-depth understanding of a specific case or issue and participant perspectives (Morgan et al., 2017). The purpose of this study was to seek

answers on managing the unique characteristics of a multigenerational workforce.

Considering the research goal, I used a case study design for this investigation.

I considered the following possibilities for the research design for this study: case study, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and narrative research.

Investigating differences among the approaches, I understood that phenomenology is the best approach for researching lived experiences and grounded theory is premised on developing a theory. Given the study's direction, phenomenology and grounded theory would not have addressed the research objective; therefore, I did not select either one. In ethnographic research, the guiding principle is cultural mindfulness and collective interaction (Kvarnstrom et al., 2018). Narrative research premises insight and gives specific meaning to lived experiences (Adler et al., 2017). Given the research's objective, I selected neither narrative nor ethnographic design for this study.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population for this qualitative case study consisted of multigenerational workers within a mid-sized financial firm in the Mid-Hudson Valley in upstate New York. The selection of participants for qualitative exploration involves consideration of individual characteristics and their capability to relate to the research (Li & Titsworth, 2015). Sampling in a qualitative study involves the researcher's ability to draw upon and identify key individuals' knowledgeable about the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

I used a purposeful sampling approach for this study. A purposeful criterion sampling method was the preferred sampling method to guide the interviews by the participants' authoritative knowledge (Cairney & St. Denny, 2015; Marshall & Rossman,

2016; Palinkas et al., 2015). The initial sample selected for this single case study was four business leaders who had at least 1 year of proven success in building intergenerational cohesion. My choice of sample size was guided by whether the quality data sufficiently obtained answers to the problem under investigation (Gentles et al., 2015). A solid research study comprises a series of data collection methods through which the researcher understands an event and the study participants (Vohra, 2014).

To ensure data saturation, I interviewed two additional participants until no new themes emerged. The open-ended interview questions with the participants were purposeful, distinct, and included verifying the participant transcripts. To support an accurate and honest account of the data, I used member checking to identify the participants' analysis and review of the information. Data saturation occurs when additional data collection does not provide any further insight or themes regarding the research problem (Kalla, 2016). All interviews were unbiased and conducted in a neutral, nonthreatening, and natural setting conducive to the participants' comfort.

### **Ethical Research**

Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time, without being subjected to penalty or negativity. Although there were no known risks for this study, the participant consent form outlined any unforeseeable risks the participants may encounter (Bromwich & Rid, 2015). The consent form included a statement indicating that the participants understood that they would not receive compensation for participating in this study. To comply with the

Belmont Report's ethical guidelines, the participants had confidentiality, and the organization remained anonymous (Miracle, 2016).

To ensure that the research complied with ethical standards, I obtained Walden University IRB approval #09-16-20-0234960 before I contacted participants and collected any data (Walden University, 2020). Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time, without being subjected to penalty or negativity. I contacted the participants via email explaining the study's risks and benefits and requested that the selected participants reply to the email with "I consent." I used the consent form to outline to the participants the nature, demands, benefits, and risks of the study. The participant's acknowledgment of the consent form was vital because it attested to no coercion or undue influence, and it assured thoroughness when safeguarding participant information (Bromwich & Rid, 2015).

To ensure each participant's confidentiality, I used an alphanumeric code such as P1, P2, and so on for each one. I was the only individual with knowledge of each participant's name and responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I used a flash drive to maintain all participant data. The flash drive is stored in a fire-resistant personal safe deposit box, accessed only by me, to protect the participants' confidentiality (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). After 5 years, I will destroy all of the data on the flash drive.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Conducting a qualitative case study requires ensuring that the data collected are purposeful and distinct. Ridder (2017) suggested that a researcher select a method that

aligns with the purpose of the study and be mindful of the research question's relevance. I was the primary data collection instrument (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2018). The primary method of data collection in my study was the use of open-ended semistructured interview questions (see Appendix B). For this research, I used interview questions to explore methods that promote collaboration among multigenerational workers.

The goal of using open-ended interview questions was to assist with developing a detailed description of leveraging intergenerational cohesion. The participants' knowledge and experience concerning the challenges of working alongside other generational workers were considered in developing the open-ended interview questions (see Appendix B). Each interview's careful planning helps to develop emergent concepts and key themes (Birt et al., 2016). The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and occurred at a date and time agreed upon by the participant while ensuring privacy and comfort.

I used data collection instruments to enhance the data validity. The credibility of the data collection instrument rests in the quality of the research outcomes' reporting (Birt et al., 2016). I used member checking to capture the participant responses and ensure the data's reliability and credibility.

### **Data Collection Technique**

A qualitative researcher may decide amongst several techniques to collect data. Data collection strategies include observations, surveys, and interviews (Adams et al., 2017; Heting & Qing, 2017). For this research, the data collection techniques I used were face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews. The open-ended interview questions

used (see Appendix B) aligned with the central research question and provided a detailed description on leveraging intergenerational cohesion (Silverman, 2015). Before commencing interviews on-site, I received approval from the bank President to conduct the research (see Appendix A). At the interview commencement, I identified the study's importance and the value the participants provide to the research (see Appendix A). The questions were unbiased to ensure a successful interview and offered a unique perspective while keeping the interviewee focused (Adams et al., 2017).

In my invitation email to the participants, I asked them to review the consent form and respond "I consent" if they agreed. I contacted eight participants, seven responded, and six consented to participate. One advantage of a qualitative research interview is that well-informed participants provide valuable insights and a fresh commentary regarding the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Yin, 2018). Possible interruptions and time constraints are considered disadvantages of face-to-face interviews (Adams et al., 2017). Zoom and online interviews were options for participants who needed time flexibility (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). The nature of the research and the participant availability influenced the interview's length. Two face-to-face interviews took place at the participating organization site. The remaining four interviews were by phone. Each interview was scheduled for 30 minutes and remained within the allotted time. I asked each participant the same question and in the same order to demonstrate consistency.

Along with taking written notes, I informed each participant that I would use my iPad to record the interview. At the commencement of the interview, I reiterated to each participant that I would not offer any incentive for voluntarily participating in the study.

The organization of the data occurred through a word document using alphanumeric codes for each of the participants. It is vital to verify the data's accuracy to strengthen the study; therefore, after the data collection process, as part of the member checking process, each participant received the completed transcript via email to validate and review. After each interview session, I transcribed the data using NVivo 12 software and Microsoft Excel. I then created a summary of the transcribed interview data to email the participants for their verification and accuracy.

To ensure credibility and enhance reliability and credibility, I used member checking and data triangulation. Through member-checking, a researcher mitigates the possibility of misrepresentation and misinterpretation (Varpio et al., 2017). Member checking was an additional source used to validate the study. I requested that each participant review the summary of the transcribed responses to the interview questions. Member checking enhances the researchers' interpretation of the data (Varpio et al., 2017). If the transcribed information required updating, this occurred through email. My goal was to present accurate summaries to the participants and provide adjustments where necessary.

For a case study, data triangulation is by (a) data source, (b) investigator, (c) theory, or (d) methodological. Triangulation increases the study's richness and enables the researcher to reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The type of triangulation I used to analyze data for this case study was methodological. Using methodological triangulation, I analyzed data about strategies managers used to increase collaboration and productivity among multigenerational workers.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Protecting the participants' privacy and safeguarding access to the stored data is part of the researcher's organization process (Ethicist, 2015). There are various systems for organizing and tracking data, including the use of data analysis software. For this research, an electronic word document was the preferred method for the data organization. To maintain the research data integrity, I used a password-protected file on my computer to house the information (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I maintained the interview questions and notes from the participant responses in a research log as a backup.

To organize the captured data, I created general code categories. I used distinctive codes for each participant. A uniform coding system is critical to capture emergent themes and patterns (Bell-Laroche et al., 2014; Fletcher, 2017; Theron, 2015). To protect the participants' privacy and the organization, I assigned codes that ranged from P1 through P4 and so on. The uniqueness of the code indicated the order of the participant interview. To protect the organization's privacy, instead of using the official name, I used a pseudonym. The participants' data is stored and maintained on a flash drive. The flash drive and research log will be secured in a fire-resistant safe deposit box for 5 years after completing the study then it will be destroyed.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Yin (2018), a researcher must consider a range of issues during the data analysis process. A qualitative case study hinges upon selecting a data analysis process appropriate for the research design. Because each participant will have a unique



perspective on the study, fully understanding the case study's objective is important. Distinguishing among a specific case or issue is part of a qualitative case study's effective process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Data analysis is a process of sifting through data to report the researcher's outcome (Graue, 2015). The six qualitative research data analysis steps include (a) reading the data, (b) breaking the data into meaningful and manageable amounts for analysis, (c) commence detailed analysis with a coding process, (d) capture how the concepts and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative, (e) use the coding process to define the meaning and application of the setting or participants, as well as categories or themes for analysis, and (f) interpret and write-up findings of the data (Graue, 2015; Johnson, 2015).

The first step for the data analysis was a transcription of the interviews followed by a member checking process (Birt et al., 2016). To analyze and code the data, I used NVivo 12 and Microsoft Excel software. The software ensured that the data collected was dismantled, segmented, and regrouped into different categories (Kaefer et al., 2015; Vaughn & Turner, 2016). A researcher analyzes emergent themes and patterns related to the central research question's answer through inquiry. Additionally, using Microsoft Word's comment function, field notes and ideas were captured and highlighted, describing the phenomenon (Woods et al., 2016). To keep track of ideas as they occurred, I manually inputted information into Microsoft Word during the research to analyze the data. Coding, analyzing, and identifying themes, enables the researcher to derive the findings and conclusions (Graue, 2015; Yin, 2018).

Triangulation is the source for providing richness within the study and combining data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and documents (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Mayer, 2015). A benefit of triangulation is that it enhances the research results and provides a more in-depth perspective of the study's phenomenon through different sources (Mayer, 2015; Yin, 2018). To analyze the data collected, I used methodological triangulation. I conducted semistructured interviews and observed how the business leader's behavior compared with or contrasted to the interviews. Methodological is the most commonly used triangulation method for converging different data sources and testing the consistency of the findings (Mayer, 2015; Yin, 2018).

I collected and analyzed the data from the six business leaders who participated in this study. Data analysis involves commencing a coding process to identify themes for answers to the research questions of the study (Yin, 2018). To remain objective and explore new concepts for this case study, I recorded interview data and included a narrative to enhance the triangulation of different data sources (Lawlor et al., 2016; Mayer, 2015). Responses to the open-ended questions asked during the face-to-face interviews included a narrative (Mayer, 2015; Yin, 2018). The questions used during the individual interviews explored strategies used by management to build intergenerational cohesion, allowing for in-depth analysis (Palinkas et al., 2015).

I considered the conceptual framework EI when I examined the data. How a business leader communicates with his/her staff could play a critical role in collaborative efforts amongst multigenerational workers. The conceptual framework is a pivotal part of the research design; therefore, key themes or commonalities of the conceptual framework

identified in the literature review were used to code and connect data to developments in recent studies (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Using EI as the framework, I understood the possibility of a linkage between a business leader's communication and EI competency. Considering EI enabled me to interpret the themes that emerged from the data.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Leung (2015) noted that reliability ensures a rich and thorough framework for the qualitative method exists. A relevant aspect of conducting qualitative research is to select various sources to examine the data collected. The following section will address how reliability and validity contribute to the rigor of a qualitative study. As outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), aspects of trustworthiness relevant to qualitative research include dependability, credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation.

#### **Dependability**

Reliability is a key component of qualitative research (Cypress, 2017). Reliability refers to having data that is replicable and repeatable (Mohajan, 2017). Dependability is a measure that provides stability and consistency (Kornbluh, 2015). For a study to be considered reliable, there must be an element of dependability and consistency built-in. To enhance dependability in a qualitative study, a researcher develops a procedure for maintaining process logs and an interview or observation protocol. In qualitative research, reliability and dependability are parallel to one another (Cypress, 2017). I established dependability by maintaining an audit trail for storing collected data, enabling it to be repeated.

**Credibility**

When a researcher is capable of supporting authenticity in their research, this implies credibility. A researcher establishes credibility by selecting various approaches to examine the data collected. I established credibility by ensuring that no biases exist. I confirmed and enhanced the credibility of the study by using member checking. I performed member checking by transcribing each participant interview to ensure that I accurately validated and understood the responses and corrected as needed. The use of member checking does not only offer understanding and richness to the study, but it provides additional insight and believability (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018; Thomas, 2017).

**Transferability**

Transferability refers to the research's quality to build a case for further research and transfer the findings to other people, settings, or situations (Mayer, 2015). Transferability is dependent upon the reader (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Data triangulation is a concept that involves a combination of information and observational data (Hagood & Skinner, 2015; Mayer, 2015). Integrating triangulation methods such as (a) open-ended interviews, (b) reviewing archival data, and (c) observing the participants enables the reader to confirm transferability. In this study, I ensured transferability by thoroughly describing the research and selecting knowledgeable participants who met the study's specific criteria and experience.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability is a quality to ensure no biases exist and the data is accurately interpreted (Connelly, 2016). Providing development and validation is one measure of

confirmability (FitzPatrick, 2019). Confirmability is a measure of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To attain confirmability, I used member checking to ensure the findings were consistent and validated the study results. To establish confirmability, I presented the interview questions in the same format in identical order to each participant. When participants authenticate and clarify their responses, this maintains an interview protocol (Connelly, 2016).

### **Data Saturation**

Data saturation happens when a researcher confirms that no new information connects to the data or no new themes developed (Saunders et al., 2018). Data saturation occurred when the researcher posited that data redundancy exists and no further information is obtained (Kalla, 2016). To ensure data saturation, I asked open-ended interview questions to the participants. Although I determined that four business leaders were suitable for my study, I interviewed two more participants until the data collection provided no further insight. After confirming data saturation, there was no additional sampling required.

### **Transition and Summary**

This qualitative study aimed to identify strategies that some business leaders use to manage a multigenerational workforce. In Section 2, I provided a detailed description of the objective of the project. I identified the researcher's role, participants of the study, and the sampling technique used. I presented the data collection method and the open-ended interview questions. I addressed the reliability and validity of the research and how I ensured data saturation. Furthermore in Section 2, I also explained why a qualitative

case study was the most appropriate method for my proposed study. In Section 3 of my study, I present the findings, identified the themes, listed implications for social change, and recommendations for further action and research.

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

#### **Introduction**

This qualitative case study's objective was to explore strategies that some business leaders use to manage a multigenerational workforce to increase collaboration and productivity. I conducted six semistructured interviews with business leaders from a financial organization in upstate New York to collect data on the strategies that they used to manage the multigenerational workforce. Participants were selected based upon their experience and success in managing a multigenerational workforce. Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, I prepared for the interviews by giving the participants an option to participate in a face-to-face interview, a phone interview, or a video platform application such as Zoom. As an alternative to a face-to-face interview for data collection, four participants opted to participate via a data collection phone interview. The participants answered six open-ended questions as part of a semistructured interview (see Appendix B). I performed member checking with each participant after transcribing the interviews to ensure that I accurately validated and understood their responses and corrected as needed. Birt et al. (2016) explained that credibility improves through the use of member checking.

I imported the data into NVivo 12 software and Microsoft Excel for the coding process. After using each software to analyze the interview data, three main themes emerged: (a) communication methods with a multigenerational workforce, (b) recognition of particular stereotypes and generalizations, and (c) development of collaborative strategies. Theme 1 included three subthemes: face-to-face communication,

email/electronic-based communication, and generational preference. After each emergent theme, I provided the alignment with the literature and the conceptual framework.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The conceptual framework supporting this study was EI. Salovey and Mayer (1990) introduced the term *emotional intelligence*; however, Goleman (1995) redefined what it means to employ feelings and emotions when leading others. The study's findings support the idea that there is a direct correlation between how a business leader communicates and their EI competency. During data collection, I addressed the following research question: What strategies do some business leaders use to manage a multigenerational workforce to increase collaboration and productivity? For my semistructured interviews, I used the interview protocol (see Appendix C) to acquire answers to six open-ended interview questions and completed each interview within the 30-minute time allotment.

#### **Theme 1: Communication With Staff**

The first theme that emerged was communication with staff. Emotionally intelligent individuals understand the importance of communication as it relates to leadership abilities. Using a one-size-fits-all approach to communication is not realistic or practical when managing a diversified workforce. Momeny and Gourgues (2019) found that EI, coupled with consistent communication, is the foundation for team dynamics. The participants asserted that they obtained their management strategies through face-to-face communication, email/electronic communication, and generational preference. A majority of the participants indicated that face-to-face communication aids in developing



management strategies. The participant group was 33.5% male and 66.5% female.

Participants were equally split between two generational groups, Baby Boomers and Gen X. Findings from previous research confirm the findings identified in Theme 1. Momeny and Gourgues (2019) demonstrated that emotionally intelligent leaders understand that they must tailor their communication methods to recipients.

As shown in Table 1, three subthemes emerged from data analysis regarding communication strategies used to manage a multigenerational workforce: (a) face-to-face communication, (b) email/electronic communication, and (c) generational preference.

**Table 1**

*Communication Strategies Used to Manage a Multigenerational Workforce*

Subtheme	<i>N</i>	% of frequency occurrence
Face-to-face communication	38	82.6
Email/electronic communication	5	10.9
Generational preference	3	6.5

***Face to Face***

The findings indicated that 83% of the business leaders preferred face-to-face interaction for communication with their staff based on participant responses. Face-to-face interaction allows a leader to gauge whether something is understood or needs additional explanation. P1 highlighted the importance of face-to-face communication to establish a collaborative relationship with peers and subordinates. Rezvani et al. (2016) argued that EI is a critical ingredient that leaders need to communicate with their

subordinates more effectively. P6 affirmed, “face-to-face communication is valuable; because, as a leader, when communicating over the phone or other electronic media, it becomes difficult to determine if the rhetoric or tone is completely understood or needs to be changed.”

### ***Email/Electronic Communication***

Data obtained from the participants indicated that face-to-face interaction may not always be ideal. The COVID-19 worldwide pandemic and mandatory quarantines had affected the way that business leaders communicated. P2 shared, “because restrictions on in-person gathering are constantly changing, leaders are using technology such as Zoom, text messages or emails to communicate with one another.” Momeny and Gourgues (2019) posited that leaders’ communication methods with their team members influence relationship development. P3 added, “a leader must be flexible and willing to use email and other forms of electronic communication because some generational team members are not receptive to face-to-face interaction.” A transformational leader understands that sticking to a familiar communication strategy is not effective when managing a multigenerational workforce (Park et al., 2017). P3 further explained that when executive management communicates the staff’s organizational goals, regardless of the method, it improves collaboration and adherence to the company vision.

### ***Generational Preference***

Obtaining organizational success requires a leader to understand how to relate and communicate with team members from different generations (Sudhakar et al., 2019). P2 stated, “there should be multiple forms of communicating with staff, including a social

media presence that is conducive to meet the needs of each generation where they are.” For example, P4 indicated that face-to-face communication followed up with a written document is beneficial in a work environment that includes older generational workers. A leader who is attuned and exhibits a transformational leadership style will keep communication lines open with their followers and get everyone involved to understand the organization’s goals (Bodenhausen & Curtis, 2016). P5 affirmed that “generationally, there may be a preference for communication; however, it is essential that we communicate information in multiple ways including occasionally having team meetings to get all people involved in the same location.”

#### ***Alignment With the Literature***

Theme 1 (communication with staff) was consistent with Graystone’s (2019) findings, in that communication is the foundation for successfully managing a multigenerational workforce. Several of the business leaders’ observations aligned with the article from Sibarani et al. (2015), identifying the importance of having multiple communication styles for various generations in the workplace. Leaders who fail to communicate information to their staff contribute to cohorts’ lack of motivation and commitment to the organization’s mission.

#### ***Alignment With the Conceptual Framework***

Theme 1 (communication with staff) is a strategy that aligns with EI theory. According to Goleman et al. (2013), a business leader’s critical competency can influence and inspire others to follow. In this study, the business leaders shared their desires to improve communication by creating an inclusive environment to build trust while

listening to every voice. The business leaders' statements aligned with Raeissi et al.'s (2019) suggestion that skilled leaders generate and sustain trust when their EI skills align with their communication skills.

## **Theme 2: Acknowledge Stereotypes and Generalizations**

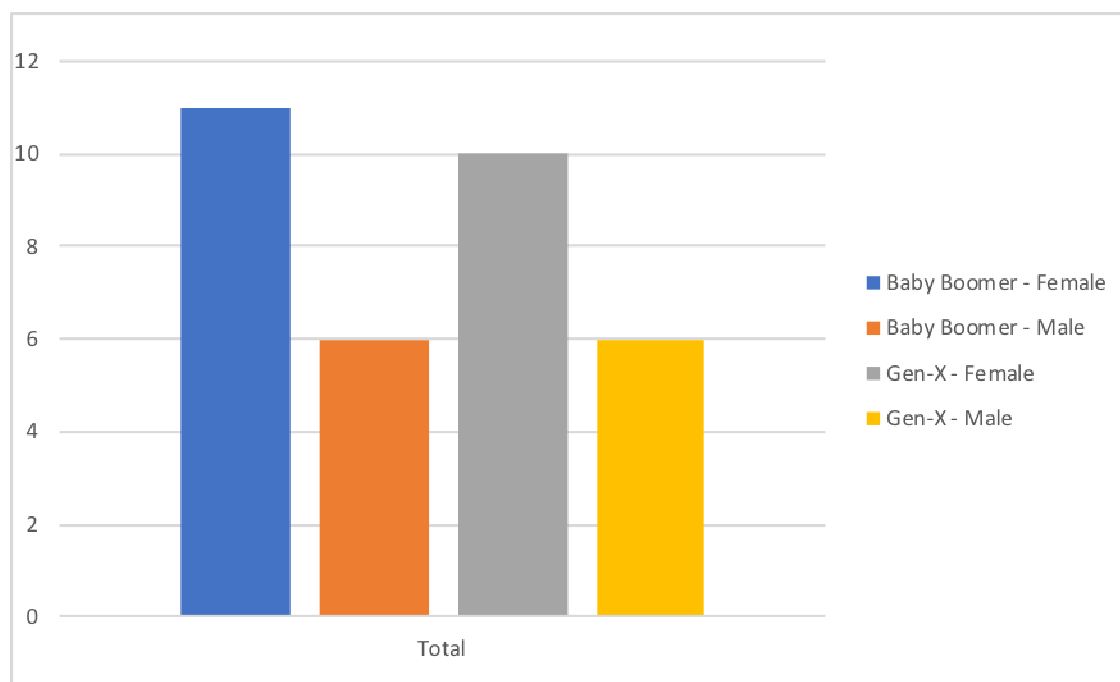
Although each generation has recognizable identifiers, there is no consensus regarding the exact years associated with the generations (Shrivastava, 2020). Some participants acknowledged that they occasionally had generational biases or preconceived notions toward other generational workers. Clark (2017) found that operating with a stereotypical mindset creates an opportunity for incivility, division, and generational conflict. P2 stated, "retaining a multigenerational staff requires learning from each other." One participant candidly discussed their perceptions of workers from generations other than their own. P3 indicated, "I must be transparent and acknowledge biases and certain stereotypes I have held regarding other generational groups." A leader must recognize that a stereotype can be considered a broad assumption as well as an acknowledgment that communication is lacking and that an opportunity thus exists to increase collaboration. Clark (2017) articulated that age-related attitudes influence each generation; however, collaboration aids in diminishing stereotypes. P4 contended that "having younger generations in the organization helps the older generations learn the technical aspects of the job." P4 further stated, "being impatient or stereotyping members of other generations including the unwillingness to assist one another is not profitable to the individual or the organization." Generalizations are the most prevalent when specific projects need completing. Managing a diverse workforce is complicated, and

occasionally, leaders are guilty of making broad statements regarding the various cohorts (Savino, 2017). P5 found that some projects may require an older worker’s knowledge to execute due to a learning curve. P6 added, “certain generational cohorts process information differently; therefore, I adapt to their learning style and provide information through the use of bullet points instead of extensive paragraphs.”

As shown in Figure 1, the female respondents generally had more instances of stereotypes and generalizations towards other generational workers.

**Figure 1**

*Response Frequency of Multigenerational Stereotypes and Generalizations*



*Note.* This figure identifies the frequency of responses by gender and generational group pertaining to the second theme that emerged during the data analysis.

### *Alignment With the Literature*

Theme 2 (acknowledge stereotypes and generalizations) aligns with Van Rossem's (2019) findings in that leaders of the same generational group may have stereotypical thinking regarding other generational members. Leaders must remove such barriers and learn to be engaging and supportive to assist members of other generational groups. In this study, the business leaders disclosed that understanding that generalizations may emerge due to learning style differences is vital to building and balancing relationships among various cohorts.

### *Alignment With the Conceptual Framework*

Managing a multigenerational workforce is challenging. Theme 2 correlates to EI because of the challenges that leaders face when managing relationships and understanding their followers' emotional makeup. Dabke (2016) affirmed that adopting the EI framework assists with leaders facilitating and accurately building emotions. Intellectual growth helps minimize the likelihood of generalizations about other cohorts.

### **Theme 3: Develop Collaborative Efforts**

All participants asserted that showing respect is the foundation for developing collaborative strategies in the workplace. P1 observed, "this organization is successful because of the respect that transcends between management and staff." P2 shared, "we demonstrate commonality and respect by keeping each worker up to date and in the loop. This, in turn, results in a team that is appreciated regardless of their age." In addition to respect for the individual, collaborative strategies such as offering encouragement are essential for building a multigenerational workforce. P3 affirmed, "leaders must be

encouraging and respectful to the various team members to work together; this fosters collaboration and assists with building trust.” Leaders who are willing to invest time and to research the interests of their team members can begin to develop collaboration (Momeny & Gourgues, 2019). P5 explained that team meetings are beneficial to get all members assembled in one place. Assembling together provides leaders with an opportunity to know more about members of their team. P6 observed, “when you find out what interests your employee, this is the foundation for building a rapport, and it makes them feel good and allows them to feel connected to the team.”

See Table 2 for strategies to improve collaboration.

**Table 2**

*Frequency of Strategies Used to Improve Collaborative Efforts*

Subtheme	<i>N</i>	% of frequency occurrence
Respect	11	52.4
Encouragement	2	9.5
Staff interests/team meetings	8	38.1

***Alignment With the Literature***

Theme 3 (develop collaborative efforts) aligns with Momeny and Gourgues’s (2019) findings in that creating the opportunity to learn about what interests team members is valuable. The business leaders identified that when a worker is respected and believes that they contribute to the organization’s mission, this results in a positive outcome (Wei et al., 2016). Members of each generational cohort want to be respected,

be encouraged, and have leaders interested in what is important to them; this allows the cohort to feel connected to the team.

### ***Alignment With the Conceptual Framework***

The findings noted in Theme 3 identified the importance of a leader engaging with their workforce. Engaging with followers and creating collaborative opportunities may result in a more committed workforce. As determined by Cross and Travaglione (2003), emotions are fundamental for workplace success and are considered an effective strategy used for creating opportunities for a cohesive work environment. The participants pointed out that their feelings and rapport with their generational cohorts were the driving force behind their team's success.

### **Application to Professional Practice**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that some business leaders use to manage a multigenerational workforce to increase collaboration and productivity. Strong leadership is vital for understanding that communication is the catalyst for engaging all generations (Puni et al., 2016). As asserted by P6, leaders should realize that setting clear goals and communicating that to staff increases collaboration and productivity among the generational workers. Furthermore, leaders who understand the diversification among the cohorts will successfully reach the goals set forth within the organization (Moore et al., 2016).

The participants in this single case study were business leaders who had at least 1 year of proven success in building intergenerational cohesion at a financial firm in the Mid-Hudson Valley in upstate New York. The participants provided feedback on



strategies to increase collaboration and productivity among a multigenerational workforce. The strategy identified could have applications to professional practice. The interview responses provided insight into the processes and challenges that affect intergenerational cohesion and cohort perceptions in the workplace. Business leaders who effectively and consistently remain attuned to those they oversee will experience a more outstanding commitment from their workers and may see an increase in profits (Spano-Szekely et al., 2016).

The participating business leaders agreed that augmenting communication among their generational team would result in this financial institution being set apart from other banks in the area. The findings apply to business practice as these themes could transfer to other industries as strategies leaders use to increase collaboration and productivity. Emerging as one of the subthemes for this study was the need for business leaders to have varied communication styles with their generational cohorts. Shrivastava (2020) suggested that providing opportunities to communicate and getting to know the cohorts on an intimate basis lessens the chance for poor communication and increases the possibility of success.

As recommended by P1, leaders need to demonstrate flexibility when communicating with their staff and consult with front-line members impacted by the changes under consideration for the organization. There is a need for leaders to foster high-quality relationships with their teams. With four or more generations working together in several organizations, it is beneficial to increase communication across multigenerational groups for workplace success (Shrivastava, 2020). As P3 expressed,

daily communication with staff is critical, and it provides an opportunity to pass relevant information on immediately to the team. Nguyen et al. (2019) found that the foundation to a better team environment is leaders who have excellent communication skills. When leaders keep team members abreast of organizational changes, this contributes to the staff remaining engaged and motivated.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The study findings contribute to positive social change by providing business leaders in the financial environment with a framework to increase collaboration and productivity strategies among multigenerational workers. Cote (2019) found that organizations that use effective methods to attract and retain dedicated multigenerational employees may increase productivity and profits. Additionally, multigenerational workers who feel respected and valued are less likely to job-hop or have negative attitudes towards the organization or staff (Shrivastava, 2020). Multigenerational workers who think that their voice matters and are provided with information to remain apprised of organizational goals contribute to its success. Organizations should acknowledge the benefit of using multiple communication strategies to provide information to their multigenerational workforce. Keeping members of the staff informed regarding the goals of the organization aids in increasing collaboration and productivity. Sibarani et al. (2015) suggested that organizations with a cross-generational workforce should remember that each cohort has different communication and learning styles.

In addition to understanding the organization's benefits, business leaders who communicate information to all staff members address potential generational

stereotyping. Weeks et al. (2017) asserted that stereotypes exist in the workplace between generational cohorts. Unfounded generational stereotyping may contribute to diminished motivation and turnover. When leaders create opportunities to increase collaboration, this may positively impact retention and motivation (Lewis & Wescott, 2017). When employees experience a collaborative work environment's positive effects, this lessens generational conflict and enhances working relationships in the community.

Business leaders who respect and value each generational cohort create effective communication strategies to assist leaders in other business industries. The implications for positive social change include the potential for business leaders to (a) manage the emotions of others by observing the link between a generational cohorts feelings and their level of productivity, (b) know their emotions and exhibit empathy to improve cohort relationships and (c) establish communication with cohorts to achieve organizational goals.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Business leaders, managers, officers, and other individuals in leadership positions could use the information, research findings, and recommendations from this study to improve collaboration among multigenerational workers. Leaders of financial organizations and other medium-sized firms can use the knowledge gained from this information in this study to (a) foster a positive relationship between business leaders and workers, (b) provide clarity about the organization's goals and mission, and (c) allow workers who are personally motivated to learn new skills. Implementing these strategies

enables business leaders and managers to create an inclusive work environment and potentially increase a multigenerational workforce's productivity.

Sharing the research findings and recommendations with other leaders through professional forums and conferences is beneficial. I plan to contact former colleagues from local financial firms to discuss presenting the study's findings at a meeting or training session. When the opportunity arises, I will explore other avenues to present the results of this research study. The publication of my doctoral study on the ProQuest/UMI dissertation database will add to the body of literature.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, one limitation of this study was that some business leaders were reluctant to schedule in-person interviews. Because of this, future researchers should become proficient with Zoom or other video media as an option to conduct interviews. I recommend researching an organization where the researcher does not have a professional affiliation. Excluding an organization connected to the researcher eliminates the awkwardness experienced amongst colleagues. Additionally, I recommend the researcher include members of each generational cohort. Conducting more in-depth inquiry on the participant's background may result in having more generational cohorts. Additional participants may generate more information about strategies to increase collaboration among multigenerational workers. Finally, I recommend representation from participants with a minimum of 5 years in management. Individuals with this amount of management experience will provide additional information on how to increase collaboration within a multigenerational workforce.

### **Reflection**

The Walden University Doctor of Business Administration Program has challenged me in every aspect. I am grateful for the support I have received and continue to receive in this journey. My husband, children, and siblings never let me quit, and for that, I am grateful. As a legacy student, my mission is to encourage and advise other students regarding my triumphs and failures in this program.

I have inquired more in-depth research skills and improved my writing skills. This knowledge ignited my desire to explore opportunities in academia – preferably becoming a college professor. I have worked hard over the years to obtain this prestigious degree. In June 2020, I became part of a group of individuals led by Dr. Michael Lavelle, known as *Grinders*, who motivated me to complete the last phase of my doctoral program. Becoming part of the *Grinders* was a game-changer because now I was with a group of individuals who have endured the challenges of life like me while trying to complete this program. I look forward to the blessings and opportunities that this terminal degree will bring.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that some business leaders use to manage a multigenerational workforce to increase collaboration and productivity. Business leaders who manage multigenerational workers could benefit by enhancing their communication efforts, minimizing generational stereotyping, and implementing innovative training plans. As the various generational cohorts begin to feel appreciated and respected, this will provide an opportunity to increase productivity. If

business leaders adopt the strategies discussed in this study, this may enable business leaders to retain and attract dedicated multigenerational employees. With these innovative strategies, working relationships amongst generational cohorts may improve internally and within the community.

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## Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

Community Research Partner  
Contact Information

Dear [Name],

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled **Strategies Managers Use to Increase Collaboration and Productivity Among Multigenerational Workers** within our organization. As part of this study, I authorize you to interview participants and record their interviews. I will provide potential participants' email addresses for your contact purposes. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: a safe and quiet room to conduct interviews and provide supervision. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

The student will be responsible for complying with our site's research policies and requirements, including our "Living Our Common Bond" statement, meaning that we behave in law-abiding and ethical ways in all our business relationships, dealings, and activities. Company records include employee, payroll records, vouchers, bills, time reports, billings records, measurement, performance, production records, and other essential data. To protect our records we always, disclose records only as authorized by company policy or in response to legal process.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Authorization Official Name

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

### Interview Questions:

1. How do you monitor and assess effective levels of collaboration amongst your organization's multigenerational workforce?
2. What strategies have you used to increase collaboration and productivity within your multigenerational company?
3. What communication strategies work best when you have multiple generations in the workplace?
4. What communication strategies help increase collaboration and productivity within your multigenerational company?
5. What strategies did not help increase collaboration and productivity within your multigenerational company?
6. What else can you tell me that would help me understand the strategies that you use to manage a multigenerational workforce to increase collaboration and productivity?

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Location \_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewee \_\_\_\_\_

**Orientation**

Opening introduction and exchange of pleasantries

**General Reminders to Participants**

The interview protocol will consist of the following six steps:

1. an opening statement;
2. semistructured interview questioning;
3. probing questions;
4. participants verifying themes noted during the interview;
5. corrections to themes if noted by the participants; and
6. a recording of reflexive notes.

**Closing**

The interviewer will review documents with the interviewee and allow time for reflection, feedback, and confirmation of accuracy of interpretation of key terms.

The interviewer will thank the interviewee for his or her time and request permission to have a follow up visit if necessary.