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Multiple Generations in the Workplace: The Voice of the Older Generations

Stephanie M. Weaver
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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Stephanie Weaver

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Multiple Generations in the Workplace: The Voice of the Older Generations

by

Stephanie Weaver

MPhil, Walden University, 2021

MBA, Walden University, 2006

BS, College of St. Elizabeth, 2000

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

August 2022

Abstract

Millennial-based changes in a multigenerational workplace create workplace issues among the four generations, diminishing collaboration and harmony in the workplace, and consequently decreasing effectiveness and efficiency. There was a lack of knowledge and understanding about how these changes affect the older generations (traditionalists, baby boomers, and Generation X) in the workplace. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how millennial-focused changes in the workplace have affected the older generations. The conceptual framework was Mannheim's problem of generations and Reed and Thomas's management-by-generations. The research question concerned the lived experiences of older generation workers related to management decisions and workplace policies directly focused on the millennial generation. Fourteen members of the older generations who currently worked in a multigenerational workplace that had made millennial-focused changes were selected by purposive sampling. Data collected through individual interviews were analyzed and hand coded. Seven themes were identified: generational differences, appearance, professional etiquette, employee benefits, recruiting, increased reliance on technology, and workplace environment. The main finding was that all the participants agreed that the younger generations are critical to a thriving workplace; however, there is a need to consider all generations when making policies in the workplace. To create positive social change, organizational leaders need to understand the needs of all generational employees, update policies, and make management decisions that account for those needs.

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Dedication

I am grateful to God, who has blessed me with the perseverance and dedication to complete this doctoral journey. This study is dedicated to my family and friends who have encouraged me through this journey. To my grandchildren, I pray this inspires you to always make your dreams your reality, by being kind, working hard to overcome obstacles, and dedicating yourselves to achieve greatness.

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I have the privilege and honor to have so many people in my life who love, encourage, and support me, far too many to name, but I thank each of you for being there for me. A very special thank you to my rock, my husband, Eric, who helped to make this journey possible by always giving me unconditional love, patience, understanding, encouragement, and support. Big thank you to my daughter, Cayla, who is my motivation to want to achieve great things, gives me tremendous joy, keeps me inspired, and is my awesome cheerleader.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Multiple generations have coexisted in the workplace for many years. In 2017, Lewis and Wescott stated that it was the first time in history that there were four generations in the workplace at once: traditionalist, baby boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y or millennial. There is considerable scholarly research into the millennial generation, and their rapid movement into the workforce has generated changes in management and social structures within organizations (Gabriel et al., 2020). Organizations with millennial employees are conducting changes in culture, structure, and technology because leaders feel that these changes are necessary to meet the current needs of society to create a high-performance work environment (Darmasetiawan, 2021). However, there is also evidence of a social problem—millennial-based changes create workplace issues among the four generations, diminishing the collaboration and harmony in the workplace, and consequently decreasing effectiveness and efficiency. There is resistance to change manifested by disengagement of employees and opposition to the shift in values within the organization (Sruk, 2020).

My research focused on the older generations' experiences in a workplace that has made millennial-focused changes. As organizations move forward with organizational changes to accommodate millennials, it is important to understand how the changes affect all generations to ensure a cohesive, efficient, and productive multigenerational workplace, leading to positive social change.

In the remainder of this chapter, I explain the background of my study, provide the problem statement, and describe the purpose of my study to substantiate that there is

evidence that this problem is relevant to today's society. Then, I provide the research question, conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations. Lastly, I explain the expected significance of my study to practice, theory, and social change.

Background of the Study

No official years mark the beginning or end of a generation (Clark, 2017). According to Lewis and Wescott (2017), a *generation* is a group of people who are born within a 20-year span and have shared the same social and life events. The four generations in the current workplace, along with their birth years, are traditionalists (1925-1945), baby boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1979), and Generation Y or millennials (1980-2001; Aaron & Levenberg, 2018). In the remainder of this document, I will refer to members of the generations as traditionalists, baby boomers, Generation Xers, and millennials. A fifth generation has been defined—Generation Z; however, my study focused on the first four generations because Generation Z is relatively new to the workplace, and little has been researched about their work-related attributes (Gaidhani et al., 2019).

In today's workforce, traditionalists are the smallest population (Purdue Global University, 2021), with most of them close to retiring (Smith & Garriety, 2020). The population of baby boomers is much larger than the traditionalist population, but smaller than Generation Xers and millennials (Purdue Global University, 2021). Generation Xers are the second largest population. Millennials are currently the largest generation (Smith & Garriety, 2020) and encompass 35% of the U.S. workforce (Fry, 2018; Purdue Global

University, 2021). By 2025, millennials will make up 75% of the global workforce (Lewis & Wescott, 2017; Njemanze, 2016) and will become more essential as they replace more than 75 million older workers who are near retirement (Tews et al., 2015).

Ensuring that all generations are working together well is a big concern for organizations (Kapil & Roy, 2014). Organizations are trying to blend this unique workforce, yet conflicts arise due to the uniqueness of the characteristics and preferences of each generation (Lewis & Wescott, 2017). Furthermore, with each generation having different collective values and experiences, having multiple generations in the workplace presents both a challenge and an opportunity for organizations (Clark, 2017). The unique attributes of millennials can cause surprise and frustration in the workplace (DeVaney, 2015). However, scholarly research proposes changing the culture of the workplace to attract and retain millennials. This may be an issue for older generational workers (traditionalists, baby boomers, and Generation Xers), because organizations are making changes to attract and accommodate one generation, instead of evaluating what would work for all generations. Because people are remaining in the workforce longer, organizations need to look for ways to facilitate the coexistence of four generations (Biggs, 2018).

Conflicts can arise from the generational differences in a multigenerational workplace. However, with the growing number of millennials and how they differ from the previous generations, researchers have focused on millennials and what organizations can expect from them in the workplace (DeVaney, 2015). For example, Ozkan and Solmaz (2015) addressed the technological aspect of this phenomenon and how

organizations must adjust to technological improvements if they are to remain in the competitive marketplace. In comparison, Stewart et al. (2017) focused on performance appraisal rewards as a key element in making all generations happy. Organizations are responding to the changing demographic workplace by focusing on recruiting and retaining millennials (Stewart et al., 2017). However, according to Chi et al. (2013), further research is needed to focus on the effectiveness of organizational structure changes that move away from autocratic/bureaucratic approaches to management and toward improving working relationships among the generations. Chi et al. asserted that organizational leaders need to address each of the generations' values, thoughts, and ideas to get an overall understanding of how to have a harmonious workplace with all generations coexisting.

Taylor (1919) claimed that traditional knowledge may be the principal asset of a worker. Workers must share their knowledge from generation to generation, because as members of the older generations retire, they take with them decades of experience (Kapil & Roy, 2014). This is still relevant in today's workplace. Baby boomers have acquired a wealth of knowledge over the years, and as they approach retirement, organizations may be at risk of this knowledge loss (Singh et al., 2021). Older generations need to pass down their historical knowledge to other generations so that practices that may have led to previous catastrophic events are known and avoided. Therefore, it is critical to understand the viewpoint of older generation workers when organizational leaders are implementing changes, because failing to do this could result

in unplanned loss of expertise and wisdom and have a detrimental impact on those organizations and, in turn, on society.

I review recent research in greater detail in Chapter 2. The research indicates that even though workplace demographics are constantly changing, organizational leaders may tend to neglect the older generations and implement changes based on only one generation's needs and wants. Much of the current research about generations in the workplace focuses on why organizations need to make workplace changes to accommodate millennials. However, no research exists on the effect that these changes may have on older generation workers. My research was intended to enable organizational leaders to better understand the older generations' point of view to make decisions to maintain a more collaborative, cooperative, and effective workplace.

Problem Statement

Millennials are unlike the other generations in their views on the workplace and exhibit unique needs and values compared to their older colleagues (Stewart et al., 2017). If for no other reason than their numbers, they are the key to maintaining organizational legacy, retaining core knowledge, and trailblazing the path to future innovation (Kuhl, 2014). Organizational leaders have realized this and have begun implementing changes in culture, work structure, and technology because they feel that these are necessary to accommodate millennials in the current workplace (Darmasetiawan, 2021). These changes, however, present challenges for the multigenerational workplace. For example, the work environment may encounter productivity challenges if changes are not made to accommodate employees with different attitudes and expectations (Stewart et al., 2017).

This results in a social problem well documented in the scholarly literature—workplace issues among the four generations, diminished collaboration and harmony, resistance to change, disengagement, and opposition to new policies within the organization. However, there is a gap in research related to how organizational changes and workplace management policies focused on millennials affect older generation workers. Consequently, organizational leaders do not have sufficient understanding to implement policies that accommodate millennials, while at the same time considering the effect on other generations. Therefore, the research problem was a lack of knowledge and understanding about how millennial-focused changes in the workplace are affecting the older generations, and the implications for cooperation and harmony in the workplace. Addressing this research problem through my research may provide managers information to institute more successful policies, take care of all generations in the workforce, and create the conditions for greater cohesion and teamwork.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how millennial-focused changes in the workplace have affected the older generations. Because prior research has not taken this approach, it is essential to understand the different perspectives about the future direction that organizations ought to take. An interpretation of the older generations' reality will form a basis for understanding the phenomenon, developing an understanding of the older generations' opinions on workplace changes, and adding to the current body of research.

I explored the experiences that the older generations have lived pertaining to millennial-based workplace changes. My research relied on interviews with the participants. I intended to narrow the gap in understanding how older generation workers perceive millennial-focused changes in today's workplace, to add to the current body of knowledge regarding the multigenerational workforce, and to provide managers with a more complete view when moving forward with changes that solely satisfy the needs of millennial workers.

Research Question

To explore the views of older generation workers who have experienced millennial-based workplace changes, my research addressed this research question: What are the lived experiences of older generation workers related to management decisions and workplace policies directly focused on the millennial generation?

Conceptual Framework

The underlying concepts that laid the foundation for my study were the *problem of generations* and *management-by-generation*. The problem of generations concept, as explained by Mannheim (1970), illustrates the anarchy in the social and cultural sciences when everyone has their own point of view on a specific problem and when they do not consider the various aspects of the problem. When this occurs, not everyone contributes to a collective solution. The solution is based on one point of view instead of reflecting options provided from others as well. Mannheim asserted that it is important to have fresh perspectives to keep the cultural process growing. The continuous emergence of new people into society results in the loss of some accumulated cultural possessions, but

on the other hand, it causes people to reevaluate their current knowledge. This concept tied into my study because it speaks to organizations having to maintain a stable work environment by managing the multiple generations to cohesively work together. While organizations need fresh contacts, there is a culture that still exists within the current workplace. As each new generation enters the workplace, they are coming in with fresher perspectives than the older generations. However, it is important to not lose the cultural history that the older generations possess.

This second concept, management-by-generation, contextualizes management practices within a multigenerational workplace. Reed and Thomas (2021) created the concept to explain situations that occur when organizations tailor their organizational practices to fit specific generational characteristics. These practices range from leadership styles to reward systems and are designed to cater to different generational characteristics within a diverse workforce. Reed and Thomas stated that this practice has gained traction in managing multigenerational workforces.

Mannheim's (1970) problem of generations specifically grounds the current phenomenon of managing multiple generations in the workplace. Mannheim emphasized the importance of the cultural shift when new generations clash with earlier generations because of their modern ideas that the older generations may not be willing to listen to. However, he furthered this idea when he stated that by strengthening the social dynamic, the older generations will become increasingly receptive to the influence of the younger generation. In contrast, Reed and Thomas (2021) suggested that management-by-generation is a way to address the different generational characteristics within the

multigenerational workplace. The management-by-generation concept provided a historical point of view on this phenomenon, as well as a more current practice of how organizations are managing the multigenerational workplace. The multigenerational workplace is not a new concept, but four generations in the current workplace make this a phenomenon.

I relied on these two foundational concepts (problem of generations, management-by-generation) when developing the interview questions used for data collection and analysis, but with a more focused view of the multigenerational phenomenon in the workplace. Focusing on the older generations in the current workplace addressed an underresearched portion of the current body of literature. While this chapter introduces these concepts, I provide a more detailed analysis of scholarly literature related to them in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

Researchers use qualitative studies for understanding social or human problems by collecting data in their natural settings and uncovering emerging themes (Creswell, 2005). I chose the qualitative method because my study involved understanding a social phenomenon. I chose phenomenology for my study because it focuses on the common experience that participants have during the same phenomenon. Researchers use phenomenology to study people's subjective experience and their interpretations of the world (Trochim, 2001). Researchers use phenomenology to understand how others view a phenomenon.

My study was exploratory. I intended to explore the point of view of the nonmillennial worker in the current workplace to understand how millennial-focused changes affect the older generations. I reported on the experiences of the older generations by conducting interviews with participants representing Generation Xers, baby boomers, and traditionalists. The interview questions were based on the conceptual framework. The focus of data collection and analysis was to understand the lived experiences of the older generation worker in a multigenerational workplace that made millennial-focused changes.

Definitions

Baby boomers: Those born between 1946 and 1964. Those born between 1946 and 1955 are also known as *early boomers*, and those born between 1955 and 1964 are also known as *late boomers* (Clark, 2017).

Generation: A group of individuals born, usually within a 20-year period, who share the same knowledge and experiences that have affected their thoughts, beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors (Clark, 2017). The generations referred to in my study were traditionalists, baby boomers, Generation Xers, millennials, and Generation Z.

Generation X: Also referred to as *Generation Xers*, those born between 1965 and 1980 (Clark, 2017).

Generation Z: Those born after 2000 (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015).

Millennials: Also referred to as *Generation Y* and *Generation Yers*, those born between 1981 and 2000 (Clark, 2017).

Millennial-focused changes: Changes made to accommodate the specific attributes and values of the millennial generation.

Older generations: Generations prior to millennials (Generation Xers, baby boomers, and traditionalists).

Traditionalists: Also referred to as the *silent generation*, those born before 1946 and currently the oldest generation in the current workforce (Clark, 2017).

Assumptions

A key characteristic of any research project is that the researcher defines assumptions in the beginning (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Assumptions are factors in the study that are out of the control of the researcher. Researchers believe them to be true but cannot prove them to be true. I assumed the following for this research:

- Participants were willing to provide candid responses to the interview questions.
- Regarding snowball sampling, participants were able to recommend other individuals who met the criteria of my study.
- Participants were employed at their workplace prior to the organization implementing millennial-based changes.
- The outcome of my study would contribute to the understanding of how millennial-based changes in the workplace affected older generation workers.

Scope and Delimitations

While millennials and the generational divide in the workplace are broad topics with many different aspects for research, the focus of my research was the nonmillennial

generation worker's point of view, to gain an understanding of the perceptions of older generation workers in organizations that made millennial-based changes in the workplace. The scope of my research encompassed an exploration of the lived experiences of the older generation worker and was limited to participants from the older generations in the United States.

Delimitation of a study involves how a study is bounded intentionally by the researcher to avoid additional scope from creeping in (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Older generation workers from various organizations based in the United States formed the boundary of my study. I did not include workers from outside of the United States, as other cultural factors might have skewed the results.

Transferability is the degree to which one can transfer the results of a qualitative study to other settings with other respondents (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Data collected and findings from my study focused on well-defined generations in the U.S. workplace. The participants in my study worked in organizations representing different industries. However, due to the small number of participants in a qualitative study, there is limited transferability. Findings may generate further research on this topic.

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses in a study that are out of the researcher's control and can affect the final conclusions drawn from the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Issues of trustworthiness are potential limitations in qualitative studies (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Researchers conduct qualitative studies in a natural setting, which makes it difficult to replicate studies in other settings or environments. Each study conducted has

limitations based on the researcher's available resources. My study was no different; therefore, the following were limitations for my study.

In a phenomenological study, the researcher is limited to only one legitimate source of data, which is the experiences and views of the participants (Goulding, 2005). Researchers take participants' views as facts; therefore, they only select those who have lived the phenomenon under study to participate. Consequently, for a phenomenological study, purposive sampling is the technique used to determine participants, and interviewing is the main instrument of data collection.

My interviewing strategy was based on Moustakas's (1994) idea that phenomenology describes the participants' experiences and does not involve an attempt to analyze or explain the experience. The critical point of a phenomenological study is to describe the meaning of the experiences from a small number of participants because as the number of participants increases, the ability for the researcher to offer an in-depth description decreases (Creswell, 2005). Having a smaller sample limits the representation of each generation, but small samples are inherent in qualitative research (Bourne, 2015). A smaller number of participants also limits the transferability of my study.

Another limitation was that the interviews were not face-to-face due to travel constraints; therefore, I was not able to see the participants' nonverbal cues when responding. However, I had an online meeting through Microsoft Teams when face-to-face interviews were not possible. This did not provide a full view of the respondent but provided access to the participants' facial expressions.

Potential for bias existed because the potential participants might have been known to me and might have provided skewed responses based on our prior experiences. To address this, I made the importance of my study known upfront and chose participants based on their ability to answer objectively.

I used reasonable measures to address these limitations. I have detailed all aspects of data collection within this document so that the reader has full disclosure of how I conducted my study. I gave all participants an approximation of the required participation time and asked if they could commit to fully participating for the duration of the study.

Significance

Organizations have a major objective to search for fresh solutions to generation gaps (Desai & Lele, 2017). It is important for organizational leaders to recognize that millennials are becoming the largest employee population and to prepare this generation to move organizations forward (Lewis & Wescott, 2017). However, because the older, nonmillennial generations are still working, it is important to consider them when proposing any changes within the workplace. Leaders have little knowledge of how responses to organizational changes vary among the different generations (Bourne, 2015). It is important to foster a work environment in which all generations are valued and have a forum to provide input (Riggs, 2017). The goal of my study was to contribute to an understanding of this multigenerational phenomenon in gaining a better understanding from the older generation workers.

Significance to Practice

Organizational leaders have acknowledged that generation gaps can lead to dissention among workers, lack of communication, and conflicts (Desai & Lele, 2017). With the focus on millennials, it is important that organizations also consider their nonmillennial workers. My study may be significant to practice because it provided further information about the nonmillennial worker that organizations can use prior to implementing changes that focus mostly on millennials. If workers from different generations respond differently to organizational changes, leaders can take these differences into account when creating and implementing change initiatives to enhance employee adaptation to the changes (Bourne, 2015). This will assist organizations in not falling into pitfalls and creating an unproductive work environment.

Significance to Theory

Because workers are remaining in the workforce longer, many organizations have a unique workplace that consists of multigenerational workers that span a longer age range. Because of the recession and longer life spans, people are working longer than at any other time in America's history (DeVaney, 2015); therefore, employees are working into their late 60s and 70s (Clark, 2017). Furthermore, individuals in the older generations are in better physical condition than preceding generations, resulting in lifestyles that are a mixture of youthful activities and mature priorities (Biggs, 2018). While organizational changes often require reevaluating current organizational practices and beliefs and replacing them with new ones (Bourne, 2015), there may be resistance to changes, especially when the changes focus on one generational preference. Resistance to

change involves opposition to the shift toward new values and employees disengaging (Sruk, 2020). Consequently, organizations must consider all generational workers when implementing changes, which can be difficult based on generational preferences. A goal of my research was to contribute to the advancement of knowledge by expanding on existing generational theory to accommodate as many as four generations in the workforce and to address the issues that nonmillennial workers may be facing due to the changes that organizations have made to accommodate millennials.

Significance to Social Change

Understanding various aspects of the generational gap is important when discussing social change. Organizational leaders need to understand the differences in values to better address conflicts, as well as motivate employees from all generations (DeVaney, 2015). Managers who are not considering generational differences could inadvertently create miscommunication, misunderstandings, and mixed signals in the workplace (Sruk, 2020). Most people must work, and it is imperative that managers set an environment where people are open and willing to collaborate with one another. Managers must encourage a work environment that is not hostile and where people feel a sense of accomplishment and value. Millennials will help to set the future, but seasoned employees from older generations have experience in what is working today. Finding a balance is critical for managers creating an effective and successful workplace. As a result, this also promotes social change. When people learn to understand and collaborate with one another, it is inevitable that change will happen. People will not only learn this

behavior in the workplace, but will also carry it into their everyday lives, thus impacting social change.

Summary and Transition

Multigenerational teams can be an asset to organizations, as each member brings different strengths, views, and skills relative to their generation (Clark, 2017).

Organizations are currently dealing with four generations in the workplace, which is a unique phenomenon. Millennials will become the largest generation in the global workforce by 2030 (Kuhl, 2014). Current research focuses on information regarding millennials. However, there are three other generations currently in the workplace.

The intent of my study was to contribute to the body of literature by focusing on the nonmillennial generation perspective on the current workplace. As managers make changes in the workplace to accommodate millennials, it is important that they understand how these changes will affect the older generations. My research may enhance understanding about how millennial-focused changes in the workplace affect older generation workers. Therefore, in this exploratory, phenomenological, qualitative study, I used interviews with workers from the older generations to describe their views on their current workplace. The intent was to describe the lived experiences that older generation workers have had with organizational leaders making changes to accommodate millennials in the workplace.

As with any research, there must be significance to practice, theory, and social change. The significance of my study to practice is that it may provide organizations with information prior to them implementing changes that may frustrate workers. Because this

phenomenon will continue as people are working longer, my study is significant to theory in that organizations must figure out how to keep all generations engaged and satisfied. Information that contributes to this phenomenon should be valuable as new generations begin entering the workforce. Regarding the significance to social change, organizational leaders should want to have a diverse workforce. Not only is this important for creating an effective workplace with different opinions to become a leader in the marketplace, but it is also important in society so that everyone has an equal opportunity to be employed.

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of my study and why it is important. In Chapter 2, I will critically evaluate current literature with the objective to identify the lack of research, knowledge, and understanding related to the study topic, as well as substantiate the importance of this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Americans are remaining in the workforce much longer compared to any previous time in history (DeVaney, 2015). Thus, organizations face integrating multiple generations in the workplace cohesively: traditionalists, baby boomers, Generation Xers, millennials, and Generation Z (Smith & Garriety, 2020). My study focused on the first four generations because Generation Z is relatively new to the workplace and little is known about members' traits, characteristics, workstyles, and needs in an organizational setting (Gaidhani et al., 2019). More specifically, there was a lack of knowledge about how millennial-focused changes in the workplace have affected older generations. Organizations are responding to changing workplace demographics to recruit and retain millennials by updating workplace structure and implementing new organizational policies (DeVaney, 2015; Stewart et al., 2017); however, organizational leaders must understand the effect on all generational workers when making changes to accommodate the millennials (Stewart et al., 2017).

In my study, I intended to describe the lived experiences of the older generational worker regarding the millennial-focused changes in the current workplace. To establish the relevance of the problem that was the basis for my study, in this chapter I detail the literature search strategy, describe the conceptual framework, and provide an exhaustive and critical analysis of scholarly research.

Literature Search Strategy

To complete a well-rounded investigation on the research topic, my literature search included peer-reviewed journals selected from ProQuest, EBSCO, Google

Scholar, and Academic Search Premier. Additionally, I employed an iterative search process by reviewing the referenced articles within the articles to ensure that I conducted an exhaustive search. Other sources included published books to get a background in workplace culture and organization.

Because there is little to no information that directly addresses the voice of the older generation, it was important to find research on the changes that are currently taking place in the workplace as well as information on why this multigenerational workforce is a phenomenon. Although there is research on millennials and the multigenerational workforce, there is little to no information from the older generation worker perspective. Several key words were used to search the literature, which included *generational gap, generations in the workplace, millennials in the workplace, millennials and the generational divide, older generations in the workplace, workplace frustration, generational divide in the workplace, millennials and older generation workers, workplace strategies, and organizational strategies.*

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework provides the key ideas, concepts, theories, and models related to the phenomenon under study and the presumed relationship among them (Lee, 1999). The two ideas that provided the framework for my study were Mannheim's (1970) problem of generations and Reed and Thomas's (2021) management-by-generation. The problem of generations has existed in the workplace for many years, and management-by-generation is one of many strategies that organizations use to address managing a multigenerational workplace. These concepts formed the basis for my study by

establishing the historical nature of the phenomenon and by addressing a recent, popular strategy that organizations are using to adapt to the current, unprecedented phenomenon of four generations in the workplace. Therefore, they substantiated the need for further research in describing the lived experience of the older generation worker in a workplace that has made millennial-focused changes.

Mannheim

Mannheim (1970) stated that there is a continuous emergence of new generations and the transition from generation to generation is a continuous process. New participants emerge in the cultural process while former participants continually disappear from that process. There is no society where one generation lives forever and there are no younger generations to replace them. Additionally, members of a generation can only participate in a limited part of the historical process, and it is necessary to communicate the accumulated cultural heritage. Older generations must pass on historical information to the younger generations. This concept is important because of the continuous process of generations entering and leaving the workplace. Mannheim's problem of generations established that having multiple generations in the workplace has always been a relevant topic. Organizations have historically faced workers passing down knowledge to the next generation of workers and having multiple generations work collaboratively.

Reed and Thomas

According to Reed and Thomas (2021), management-by-generation has developed as a common technique within multigenerational workplaces to manage the different generations according to their generational characteristics. It is based on the idea

that each generational population has distinct attributes and values that are radically different from one another; therefore, leaders must consider each of the different generational characteristics to effectively govern in a contemporary organization. To be effective, they must have an appreciation for the different generations and their unique attributes.

Reed and Thomas (2021) stated that even though management-by-generation can be used to manage the different generations and individuals, it simultaneously causes underlying tensions and contradictions. When implementing management-by-generation, leaders establish a management training program and alter the incentive and rewards system. First, the management program instructs managers on generational characteristics based on a certain knowledge construct of generational differences and how to manage them accordingly. To create a more harmonious team, managers also provide employees with information on the different generational characteristics to give them a better understanding of the people they work with. However, not every employee considers themselves as belonging to their generational group and wants to be grouped into that generational membership. Second, incentives resonate with individuals to encourage self-regulation and productivity; however, rewarding individuals based on measurements of attitudes and behaviors of their generational membership can cause tension because it does not properly recognize the individual.

Literature Review

The presence of multiple generations in the workplace is not a new concept; however, having four generations in the current workplace is a unique phenomenon.

Generational diversity in the workplace has prompted a debate on how organizations can lead employees who have different generational experiences (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). As more generations enter the workforce, it will continue to be necessary for leaders to understand how to effectively lead the different generations. In addition, millennials are a vastly different generation from the previous generations in terms of their values and commitment to the workplace (Calk & Patrick, 2017; DeVaney, 2015; Kuhl, 2014; Riggs, 2017). Therefore, the perceptions of millennials from older generation workers create challenges in the workplace (Clark, 2017). With organizations' focus on recruiting and retaining millennials, organizational leaders expect older generations to adapt to changes in the workplace, which can cause issues if they do not agree with the changes. Regardless, members of all generations agree that traditional organizational structures are outdated and should be more flexible to respond to today's rapidly changing environment (Mauricio, 2017).

Because there is considerable research focusing on millennials in the workplace, I assessed scholarly literature to provide an understanding of why the millennial generation is critical to the phenomenon under study. Several themes were evident regarding the multigenerational workplace and were used to organize this literature review, which included defining a generation, the associated attributes of each generation with a closer look at millennials, leadership, and the work environment. Lastly, there was a need to look at ideas on how to bridge the generational gap to have a more cohesive workplace.

Defining a Generation

The foundation of my study was the phenomenon of having multiple generations in the workplace. However, there are differing definitions of what a generation is, as well as the characteristics that make up a generation. Therefore, to have a clear understanding of the basis for my study, I explored the different definitions of generation, what makes a generation, and the attributes of each of the different generations.

In scholarly research, the most widely accepted definition of generation is a group of people who share birth years and experiences as they move through time together (Darmasetiawan, 2021; Jemina & Kusumadmo, 2019). Researchers frequently tie generational effects to age (i.e., life cycle) and historical period effects (Lyons et al., 2015). Overall, generations involve age, period, and cohort: Age is the age of the individual during which life events and transitions take place; period is what happens in the individual's lifetime; and cohort is a group of individuals who have shared experiences and events in their formative years that may shape their attitudes and beliefs for the rest of their lives (DeVaney, 2015).

However, there are varying definitions in scholarly research. For example, individuals within the same generation share a common location in the social and historical process, which limits them to a specific range of experience and predisposes them to a certain characteristic mode of thoughts and experiences (Mannheim, 1970; Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015). Each generation shares a common political, social, economic, and historical environment that influences the way that the individuals in that group

develop and distinguish them from other generations (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Darmasetiawan, 2021).

Generational Differences

Hall (2016) asserted that organizations must understand how new generations compare and work with the previous generations. However, not all researchers agree on the degree to which there is a generational difference and whether it is impactful to the workplace. Some researchers claim that there is insufficient evidence of generationally based differences in work-based outcomes and that the effect size of intergenerational differences is small, with the differences lacking practical significance (e.g., Clark, 2015; Constanza & Finkelstein, 2015). Others believe that there is an abundance of evidence on intergenerational differences, and the problem is the lack of comparison between the growing bodies of evidence that exist (e.g., Lyons et al., 2015). Even though researchers have investigated individual difference variables and their relationship to work outcomes, the generational perspective adds nothing substantive to the current body of knowledge (Constanza & Finkelstein, 2015), and giving up on generational research would be a mistake (Lyons et al., 2015). Therefore, the topic is rich, complex, and worthy of scholarly research. Researchers need to continue to examine generational differences, but with a change in focus by asking different questions.

The main argument against generational differences being a legitimate workplace phenomenon is the tendency to apply stereotypes to all members of a generation—the alleged influences that shape a generation may not apply to every member of the generation (Constanza & Finkelstein, 2015). Each person in a generation does not share

the same homogeneous values, attitudes, or behaviors (Constanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Lyons et al., 2015). Demographics do not determine the future to which individuals are destined (Lyons et al., 2015). Therefore, the construct of a generation only applies to demographic variables such as birth year and cannot apply to other variables such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, because these have evolved over time. In addition, even though there are stereotypes with each generation, not everyone who is part of a generation holds the same traits as their generation; therefore, one must be careful not to categorize or generalize (Riggs, 2017).

The four generations in the current workplace, along with their birth years, are traditionalists (1925-1945), baby boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1979), and Generation Y or millennials (1980-2001; Aaron & Levenberg, 2018). Developing an in-depth understanding of the experiences, values, and beliefs of each generation provides a basis upon which organizational leaders can make decisions, as well as analyze their organizational culture and the trends and shifts that may materialize (Lyons et al., 2015). Attributes of four generations (traditionalists, baby boomers, Generation Xers, and millennials) in the workplace have been widely defined. Additionally, some information has been provided on Generation Z, but it is not as exhaustive, as this generation is still being studied. The following sections include overall high-level traits for the different generations, as defined by researchers.

Traditionalists

Members of the traditionalist generation are the smallest portion in the workforce at about 2% (Purdue Global University, 2021). Nearing the end of their careers, some

traditionalists still hold key leadership roles, and others are reengaging in second careers for both financial and desire needs (Smith & Garriety, 2020). Members of this generation have remained in the workplace because they have a financial need to work, or they enjoy working (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). They work hard and normally stay with a company until retirement (Lewis & Wescott, 2017). According to a study of employees in the medical field, traditionalists are more focused on their work than any extracurricular activities; they have a strong work ethic and are loyal to their jobs (Aaron & Levenberg, 2018). Traits of traditionalists include patriotism, dependability, conformity, respect for authority, rigidity, social and financial conservatism, and a solid work ethic (DeVaney, 2015).

Baby Boomers

Baby boomers are 25% of the current U.S. workforce (Purdue Global University, 2021). They are currently the strongest workplace generation due their seniority based on the number of years that they have been in the workplace, as well as their authoritative growth into senior positions (Jemina & Kusumadmo, 2019); they hold leadership roles in many organizations (Smith & Garriety, 2020). This generation tends to work more for their own development and recognition as opposed to working to improve the company (Lewis & Wescott, 2017). They are workaholics whose careers often define them and provide their identity (Aaron & Levenberg, 2018). Their loyalty and strong work ethic make this generation unique and are credited with shaping the overall current workforce (Jemina & Kusumadmo, 2019). Traits of baby boomers include workaholism, idealism,

competitiveness, loyalty, materialism, seeking personal fulfillment, and valuing titles and the corner office (DeVaney, 2015).

Generation Xers

Generation Xers are 33% of the current U.S. workforce (Purdue Global University, 2021) and are often called the middle child of generations (Smith & Garriety, 2020). They are in the middle of their careers, occupy midlevel positions, and have seasoned knowledge and experience, but they are often forgotten about or taken for granted (Riggs, 2017). Even though Generation X employees are between two dominant generations (baby boomers and millennials), they remain a rising power in organizations and society. This was the latch-key kid generation whose members grew up less supervised than the previous generation and were the first generation to prioritize their personal lives over professional demands (Jemina & Kusumadmo, 2019). They can work successfully across different work styles and norms (Smith & Garriety, 2020). Their core values include diversity, being optimistic, and being literate in technology (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). Traits of Generation Xers include self-reliance, adaptability, cynicism, distrust for authority, resourcefulness, entrepreneurial spirit, and being technologically savvy (DeVaney, 2015). They seek a work–life balance and are comfortable with leaving a job if they are not satisfied with the conditions (Lewis & Wescott, 2017).

Millennials

Millennials are currently the largest population (35%) in the current U.S. workforce (Purdue Global University, 2021). According to DeVaney (2015), millennials are more racially diverse than the previous generations: 47% are members of minority

groups, compared to 37% of Generation Xers, 26% of baby boomers, and 9% of traditionalists. Like the previous generations, one fourth of millennials have college degrees; however, the levels of the degrees and rates at which they are obtaining them are greater than those of the previous generations. Furthermore, millennials are the first generation born into the world of technology and are highly qualified in digital knowledge (Bencsik et al., 2016). They have inspired organizations to make changes and adapt to a digital world (Smith & Garriety, 2020). They know how to use technology to help solve their problems, obtain relevant information, and coordinate their activities (Kapil & Roy, 2014).

The workplace priorities of millennials include technology tools, growth opportunities, work-life balance, exposure to diverse groups, training, opportunities to lead, and a platform to present their work (Njemanze, 2016). Millennials also need continuous feedback (DeVaney, 2015) and seek a team-based workplace with close contact with their superiors and frequent feedback (Stewart et al., 2017). Traits of millennials include entitled, optimistic, civic minded, close parental involvement, values work-life balance, impatient, multitasking, and collaborative (DeVaney, 2015). On a more positive side, characteristics of millennials include confidence, achievement-focused, collaborative, family-focused, and technological (Hall, 2016). Though most literature highlights stereotypes about millennials (Kuhl, 2014; Stewart et al., 2017), according to Njemanze (2016) their preferences are no different from the previous generations during similar times in their careers.

Generation Zers

Generation Zers are 5% of the current U.S. workforce (Purdue Global University, 2021). Information on Generation Z is constantly emerging, but current literature mostly compares this generation to previous generations in terms of their values, expectations, and how they would disrupt the workforce (Chillakuri, 2020). What is known is that Generation Z members, like millennials, are also digital natives who were born into the world of technology (Bencsik et al., 2016), but Generation Z members have the highest motor skill synchronization of all the generations from their familiarity of internet technology (Güngör & Alp, 2019). Additionally, Generation Zers have a different mindset and character from the previous generations because their expectations are different; they are self-confident, happy, enjoy social service activities, their social environment is important, and they are more interested in activities than the prior generations (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015).

A Closer Look at Millennials

The world is changing, and millennials are driving the change (Sruk, 2020). Millennials have unique needs and values compared to the other generations that influence the workplace (Stewart et al., 2017); therefore, because of these differences, they pose unique challenges for organizations (Campione, 2015). Consequently, millennials are worthy of taking a closer look into their place in the workforce. The number of millennials in the workplace are increasing, as they are reaching their peak employment years and are bringing new insight to office life and work structure (Folarin, 2021). As the older generations begin to retire, emerging millennial demographics will

change the workplace by bringing more workplace technology, having smaller group collaboration, and more workplace flexibility, such as working remotely (Economy, 2019). Overall, this generation is redefining how an organization develops, engages with employees, and responds to today's technological advancements (Huyler et al., 2015). Consequently, current research focuses on the need for organizations to make changes to accommodate millennials, with no mention of how the changes will affect the older generations. It was important to delve into this research to understand why organizations feel the need to change the workplace structure and policies to align with millennials' needs. Common themes were evident in the scholarly literature on millennials including their workplace and communication preferences; attracting, engaging, and retaining millennials; and social awareness.

Workplace Preferences

What sets millennials apart from the older generations is their preference for meaningful work over well-paid work (Hall, 2016); they value the importance of their work more than the salary attached to it (Kuhl, 2014). However, millennials put less value on working hard and working overtime than the previous generations did when they were young (Campione, 2015). Millennials want the freedom to work the way they want to and are not willing to work long hours to prove organizational commitment or for their own career advancement. Consequently, they are not interested in climbing the corporate ladder, even though they can do so. Conversely, millennials tend to seek out new learning opportunities because they have the need to exceed goals and aspirations and are willing to put forth extra effort to help the organization succeed (Hall, 2016).

Three major traits of millennials that affect workplace interactions and relationships that differ from the older generations include duty, drive, and reward (Stewart et al., 2017). Millennials limit their efforts to meet the manager's request at a minimum (duty); have a greater expectation to be part of a cohesive team, where there is support and appreciation for their contributions (drive); and expect rewards at least monthly (rewards). Furthermore, they prefer collaborating in small groups and feel that outdated collaboration processes damage organizational innovation (Economy, 2019).

Even though millennials are more positive and collaborative than other generations, they are willing to change jobs for a more challenging and satisfying work environment (Calk & Patrick, 2017). Millennials want to be happy in their work and are likely to change jobs often (DeVaney, 2015). In contrast, some research shows that millennials have a higher rate of job satisfaction and their intention to leave is lower than previous generations (e.g., Campione, 2015). But, on the other hand, millennials will move quickly and are more certain to leave their jobs if they become dissatisfied than the previous generations. Therefore, organizations need to provide meaningful work, let millennials provide input, and make them feel like they matter (DeVaney, 2015). Nevertheless, millennials are hesitant to commit to organizations even when the work environment is attentive to their needs (Stewart et al., 2017).

Communication Preferences

Given the rise of the millennials in the workforce, managers need to understand their communication preferences (Hall, 2016). They desire frequent, positive, and open communication in the workplace and will also readily share information with others

(Bencsik et al., 2016; Hall, 2016; Lewis & Wescott, 2017). Millennials want leaders to hear their ideas. Millennials express the importance of a professional relationship with their managers and being able to openly communicate with their managers about work-related problems and concerns (Hall, 2016). In addition, millennials feel leaders should communicate company information to employees on a need-to-know basis only, and they want to know why the organization or manager is having them do something (Hall, 2016). They also want to understand how their job fits in the big picture of the organization. Millennials do not feel comfortable in asking their coworkers for information if the manager did not provide enough information. In summary, organizations need to develop communication strategies that recognize all forms of inputs and engagement from millennials (Stewart et al., 2017).

Attracting Millennials

Millennials are essential to keeping the company legacy and core knowledge, as well as trailblazing the path to future innovation (Kuhl, 2014). However, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to recruiting and retaining millennials (Calk & Patrick, 2017). They prefer to work in smaller companies where they have a more direct role (DeVaney, 2015) and because they can assess if it is a fit during the initial recruitment phase (Campione, 2015). Therefore, onboarding is the first opportunity to make a good impression and provides the opportunity to make it clear that the organization is a place for them to grow and achieve their goals (Kuhl, 2014).

Onboarding processes present a significant opportunity to introduce millennials to the values and work attitudes more commonly held by older generational workers

(Anderson et al., 2017). By investing in onboarding programs, organizations can realize the benefits of millennials sharing their positive experiences with their peers via social networking, which can be the best branding tool for organizations (Kuhl, 2014).

Additionally, organizations should hire based on the capacity to learn, achievement drive, and the ability to collaborate effectively, as well as tailor graduate development programs through rotations to better accommodate individual and preferences (Njemanze, 2016).

Engaging Millennials

The millennial generation is different from the previous generations, and organizational leaders must consider their motivation and engagement more so than before (Folarin, 2021). Organizations must make the environment one in which millennials want to work, that is supportive, and promises growth. Training opportunities and professional development are the important values to millennials; therefore, a significant factor in engaging millennials is the development and delivery of scalable training models (Kuhl, 2014).

The most successful training models for millennials include components of mentorship, team-based project work, and experiential learning. Like Kuhl (2014), Njemanze (2016) found that key strategies for organizations to engage millennials included expanding formal opportunities for professional development and learning. But the strategies also included supporting, training, and empowering managers as development coaches, offering millennials meaningful work, embracing modern technology, and design thinking as additional key strategies for engaging millennials.

For a specific action plan, DeVaney (2015) provided four approaches organizations should use to engage millennials. The first approach is to provide millennials with access to senior management and let the millennials take an active role in developing their own leadership role. The second approach is specific to nonprofit organizations, in that they need to be transparent and provide information to millennials on how nonprofit organizations affect the community, and how they raise and, subsequently, spend the money. The third approach is to develop social engagement platforms that millennials can discuss both offline and online. The fourth approach is to create an environment where millennials can develop solutions and execute the strategies to fulfill these solutions.

Retaining Millennials

Retention of millennials is one of the major challenges that organizations face today (Campione, 2015; Sruk, 2020). Organizations offering higher pay to millennials may initially attract them, but that will not be enough to keep them (Campione, 2015). Millennials seem to reject the luxury offerings of large establishments because they see the bureaucratic and impersonal environment as unappealing. Consequently, despite investing in updated compensation packages and workplace policies to attract millennials, the low retention rates of millennials translate into low rates of return on these corporate efforts. And even though organizations have become creative in their offering to recruit millennials, they have often failed to retain them. Therefore, organizations should promote a collaborative, team-based work environment (belonging) along with challenging and meaningful work (ego-status) instead of predictable salary,

insurance, retirement, or other benefits (safety) to recruit and retain millennial employees (Calk & Patrick, 2017). This leads to four key areas to further explore when recruiting millennials: organizational culture, motivation, rewards, and training and development.

Organizational Culture. The culture of the organization and the ethical tone set by management are important to millennials when considering full-time employment (Hall, 2016). According to Lewis and Wescott (2017), millennials report feeling unneeded, lack of communication, and lack of teamwork as the most discouraging factors in the workplace. Consequently, organizations must modify the workplace culture to foster a work environment where millennials succeed and develop a greater sense of organizational commitment (Stewart et al., 2017). Additionally, to foster the ethical tone, organizational leaders must set expectations around behaviors and results at the beginning (Kuhl, 2014), as well as provide basic training about organizational values (Stewart et al., 2017).

Another important action is to create a culture of feedback on the first day so that millennials understand they will receive criticism, but only to make them better at their jobs (Aaron & Levenberg, 2018). Millennials need to have continuous feedback, a nurturing work environment, and frequent contact with leaders (Njemanze, 2016). Thus, managers should have frequent, face-to-face feedback meetings with millennials to discuss performance and where they see themselves in the future of the organization. Organizations must provide feedback to millennials to create a more positive work environment (Aaron & Levenberg, 2018; Njemanze, 2016).

Motivation. Millennials have motivational drivers different from their predecessors (Anderson et al., 2017; Calk & Patrick, 2017). Therefore, understanding the perceived motivational factors of millennials, organizations can increase workforce commitment, reduce turnover, and fill the leadership void (Calk & Patrick, 2017). However, it is difficult to generalize in terms of their motivational needs and there are conflicting views on what motivates millennials. Millennials are more likely motivated by extrinsic rewards; they expect good pay and quick promotions (Anderson et al., 2017). Conversely, other researchers suggest that they are motivated by intrinsic rewards such as the desire for belonging, seek actualization of meaningful work, and basic needs (Calk & Patrick, 2017). Overall, if organizations can find ways to appeal to millennials' motivating factors, they increase the possibility of the millennials' job satisfaction.

Rewards. Creating a solid reward system will help to build the organizational commitment among millennials (Stewart et al., 2017). Furthermore, millennials look to business leaders to clearly articulate strategy, vision, and performance-based recognition (Njemanze, 2016). Stewart et al. (2017) reported that 41% of millennials (and 30% of nonmillennials) prefer reward or recognition for their work frequently, at least monthly. Through the performance appraisal process, managers can link millennials' individual contributions to specific organizational objectives to show them how they contribute to the larger context of the organization (Njemanze, 2016). When organizational leaders value and reward employee contributions, millennials are more willing to commit to an organization. Organizational leaders must offer a compelling employee value proposition that supports millennials' desires to do meaningful work.

Training and Development. Millennials cite opportunities for professional growth and development as critical components of their employment and are likely to leave their employer within 5 years when they perceive a lack of leadership development (Njemanze, 2016). Consequently, organizational leaders are seeking the right steps to recruit and develop millennials in leadership roles (Folarin, 2021). Even though most millennials do not plan to stay with their current employees for the remainder of their lives, organizations need to still invest in young talent (Kuhl, 2014). Therefore, organizational leaders should expand formal opportunities for professional development and learning by offering diverse career opportunities, as well as highlight the benefits of moving to the various roles within the organization (Njemanze, 2016).

Investments in training and development, as well as a transformation in management style, are keys to creating an organization that makes the young talent a priority (Kuhl, 2014). Training millennials and keeping them informed of technical, social, political, and economic changes, builds them up to lead the organization into the future (Riggs, 2017). Therefore, investing in millennials is good business and maximizing their productivity will make the hiring investment worthwhile; thus, setting the organization on a path to longer retention (Kuhl, 2014).

Social Awareness

Millennials are socially responsible and rank social awareness high on organizational responsibility (Hall, 2016). When faced with the challenges of student loan debt, a slow job market, watching their parents go through layoffs and divorces, and events like the attacks on September 11, millennials responded in social protest and

became more socially aware than the previous generations (DeVaney, 2015). Millennials have a strong motivation to do good for society, solve intractable problems, and are interested in how organizations develop their employees and the organizations' contributions to society (Njemanze, 2016). To prepare for the future of the organization, the social environment is a factor important to millennials when forming the organization culture (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015).

Leadership

Val and Kemp (2012) defined leadership as the ability to move a group of people toward a common goal that would not have been met if the leader was not present. Therefore, leadership plays a critical part in an organization's success. In today's workplace, traditionalists and baby boomers fill management roles and as they begin to retire, the next generations will fill their roles and change the landscape of organizations (Boyle et al., 2018). Furthermore, with an emerging appeal for managers to understand the workplace according to generational membership, organizations seek to determine the appropriate leadership style and management techniques, such as Reed and Thomas' (2021) management-by-generation, to lead the multigenerational workplace. Hence the need to discuss the different types of leadership styles and the leadership style preferences for each generation.

Leadership Style Types

According to Boyle et al. (2018), leadership styles are a set of behaviors chosen that best fit the situation. Main styles of leadership include autocratic (authoritarian), democratic (participative), laissez-faire (abdicator), situational, transactional, and

transformational (Anderson et al., 2017; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014; Olayisade & Awolusi, 2021; Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014; Val & Kemp, 2012). The autocratic leadership style is top-down, based on the leader issuing orders to subordinates and having those orders obeyed (Olayisade & Awolusi, 2021); the leader determines the solution to solve an issue for the entire group, based on what they feel is appropriate for all (Val & Kemp, 2012). The democratic leadership style is when the leader allows the group to participate in the decision making, but the leader makes the final decision (Olayisade & Awolusi, 2021; Val & Kemp, 2012). The laissez-faire leadership style is when the leader steps back and allows the group to guide themselves, with minimal supervision by the leader; it is a hands-off approach (Olayisade & Awolusi, 2021; Val & Kemp, 2012). The situational leadership style is when the leader adapts their style of leading to suit the situation and the team (Olayisade & Awolusi, 2021; Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). The transactional leadership style is when leaders motivate employees by offering systems of rewards and punishments that are triggered based on the person's achievement level (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014; Olayisade & Awolusi, 2021). The transformational leadership style is when the leader gets to know the employees personally to understand their personal goals and then guides them into fulfilling those goals (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014); motivating employees through the achievement of goals (Anderson et al., 2017).

Leadership Style Preferences Based on Generation

In a multigenerational organization, leaders must adjust their leadership style to become more effective leaders to the different generations (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014;

Boyle et al., 2018); however, these adjustments must not be discriminatory or lead to favoritism (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). Stereotypes are key to understanding perceptions and identities within an organization (Bigg, 2018). For example, baby boomer managers express an extremely low opinion of millennials because they consider them not to have a strong work ethic and to be slackers, while millennial employees view their baby boomer managers as out of touch with innovative ideas and poor collaborators (Clark, 2017). And even though millennials want to learn from long-term employees, they do not want to foster a relationship with them (Hall, 2016). Furthermore, millennials who are in management positions may have difficulty earning the respect from the older generations because of the stereotypes that follow millennials (DeVaney, 2015). With having this conflict in the workplace, managers must understand each team member's preferences and find a common ground for expectations on work completion and participation, while also being flexible (Kuhl, 2014). Nevertheless, scholarly literature provides some common generational traits and ideas on how each generation wants to be led.

Traditionalists. Al-Asfour & Lettau (2014) stated that traditionalists need leaders to lead through command-and-control management. This generation prefers leaders who provide feedback on a need-to-know basis. And because they like to take charge, delegate, and have a stake in the decision-making process, their ideal leadership style is directive, logical, and consistently fair. The leadership style of the traditionalist parallels the leadership style for the baby boomer generation, except baby boomers tend to like to leaders who are caring and competent.

Baby Boomers. Workplace policies, such as equal opportunity and adjustments to retirement and healthcare benefit, evolved after baby boomers began entering the workforce (Stewart et al., 2017); therefore, baby boomers want equal treatment and require a consensual leadership style (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). They want a participative style of leadership where they participate in the decision-making process (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). Baby boomers want to turn hierarchy upside-down and participate in the organizational decision-making, but do not want to espouse the same for the younger generations when they are in leadership positions.

Generation Xers. Traditional leadership styles do not work for Generation Xers (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). Their preferences are for leaders to understand the importance of work/life balance, training, development, and communicating organizational changes.

Millennials. Millennials are more assertive than the previous generations at that same age (Hall, 2016) and seem to want to redefine the relationship between supervisor and employer (Anderson et al., 2017). However, leadership styles for millennials are like Generation Xers, except those leaders need to provide millennials with continuous and instant feedback (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). An opposing view states this a myth and millennials do not require constant affirmation (Njemanze, 2016). Nevertheless, because millennials are accustomed to receiving praise, they may become defensive when managers provide constructive feedback (Hall, 2016), but millennials do value managers who are fair, ethical, and transparent (Njemanze, 2016). A key to successfully leading millennials is an awareness of the acknowledgments managers make when working with

employees who have different backgrounds and who hold different values (Anderson et al., 2017).

Work Environment

The work environment is also a key factor that organizations must consider (Darmasetiawan, 2021). And even though it does not directly impact the processes in the organization, the work environment affects the psychological and physical conditions of the employees. However, there has been a shift in career structure, work, and workplace since the early 1990s (Shearmur, 2017).

Work Structure

There is a shift in the traditional long-term work structure (Mauricio, 2017). According to Shearmur (2017), prior to the 1990s, there was a reasonable expectation for college graduates to gain full-time employment and a career shaped by periodic moves between stable jobs. There are two key differences in the workplace that millennials face compared to workers who preceded them: (a) the type of contract and employment experience; and (b) the technology that allows employees to perform work in any location. Millennials want the best of both worlds by having the flexibility of a freelancer with full-time stability (Mauricio, 2017). Because of this, organizations began to form a *gig economy* where there is less focus on long-term jobs with organizations and more emphasis on short-term gigs with flexible arrangements, as independent contractors working to complete specific tasks or defined times having no long-term connection to the organization (Shearmur, 2017). Shearmur reported that approximately 85% of all new jobs created between 2005 and 2013 in the U.S. economy had alternative contractual

arrangements, as opposed to fixed hours, location, and some expectation of job security. As a result, this furthered the friction among generations regarding conflicting acceptable work hours, breakdown in communication, as well as the perceived reliance on technology (Tureen & Skarl, 2020). Older workers still operate under the more traditional employee contracts in terms of a certain degree of stability, hours worked, and job location (Shearmur, 2017). Consequently, traditional long-term work structure could be a win-win situations for organizations because they are satisfying their employees as well as reduce their costs and responsibility over employee management (Mauricio, 2017). Additionally, the traditional structures allow for a clear hierarchy and ease of control over employees' performance, but organizations should do this with effective leadership instead of rigid silos. However, Mauricio (2017) stated, organizations should reduce superficial levels of management that have managers with no real leadership skills to have better communication across the organization.

Technology

One key factor in influencing the shift in the traditional workplace is the revolution of communication technologies (Shearmur, 2017). Shearmur stated that the shift began in the 1970s and 1980s with a slow introduction of the internet and cellphones but ascended in the mid-1990s as technology became more dependable and increasingly mobile. However, evolving technology and work patterns help to exaggerate employee conflicts (Riggs, 2017), because there is a fundamental difference between millennials and older generations in their relationships with technology (Njemanze, 2016). This clash, such as the older generations' frustration with the younger generations' use of

technology, consists of differences between technology use and how workers leverage these tools to manage work and life (Haeger & Lingham, 2014). For example, while older generations prefer face-to-face communication over technology (Kuhl, 2014; Singh, 2014), millennials prefer to communicate electronically (Kuhl, 2014). Nevertheless, use of technology in both work and life is shifting with the advancement of technology (Haeger & Lingham, 2014) and has a major effect on the work location, especially for millennials who are more at ease with using technology, as opposed to the older generations (Shearmur, 2017).

The use of cellphones and other handheld devices has altered the spatial work patterns because they allow for access to web-based documents and conference calls from any location, as well real-time coordination of meetings and other activities. According to Shearmur (2017), in the 1990s these technologies, along with personal computers, enabled employees to work from home, and made alternatives to the workplace place feasible. And because millennials focus on their private lives instead of their careers, there is a shift towards more work/life balance (Campione, 2015; Hall, 2016). Haeger and Lingham (2014) stated that there is a noticeably clear shift towards baby boomers, Generation X, and millennials using technology to concurrently manage work and life domains, known as *work-life fusion*. Work-life fusion helps to demonstrate that work-life management takes place in the virtual world and fusion is possible when the use of technology is enhancing and catalyzing the shift. There are significant differences in the way generations use technology to manage work and life, with a clear trend towards work-life infusion as the cohort becomes younger. For example, baby boomers are

predisposed to manage work and life separately, Generation Xers need to be able to manage work and life concurrently at work, and millennials must be able to manage personal issues during work because they do not disconnect.

Millennials are redefining how organizations develop, engage, and respond to today's technological advances (Sruk, 2020). Millennials became dependent on technology at an earlier age than other generations, and people who utilize technology at an earlier age become more proficient than those who learn it later in life (Hall, 2016). They developed a symbiotic relationship with technology and use it far more than the previous generations (Huyler et al., 2015). They use their technical expertise and ability to use social media to find the answers to questions they may have (DeVaney, 2015), by rapidly obtaining and filtering through the abundance of information that technology made readily available to acquire the desired information (Huyler et al., 2015). Consequently, the constant exposure and use of technology have shaped the way millennials navigate day-to-day interactions and they transferred these developed skills in the workplace (Huyler et al., 2015). For example, millennials also want to move quickly and prefer having short, casual, frequent meetings that provide instant gratification, instead of waiting for an in-person meeting for the bureaucratic chain of command for a decision (Kuhl, 2014). As a result, in-person meetings will decline, and video conferencing will increase because millennials believe the latter form of communication has a significant and positive effect on organizations (Economy, 2019).

As millennials take over the workplace, more integrated technology will be in work processes (Hall, 2016). Millennials are likely to have different, broader perspectives

on ways organizations can use communication and information technologies to enhance performance and maximize productivity within the workplace. And with the focus on millennials to keep organizations relevant in the future, organizations must make the environment one that millennials want to work, that is supportive, and promises growth (Folarin, 2021). Organizations must remain at the forefront by facilitating the use and adoption of technology that makes work faster, easier, and more efficient (Njemanze, 2016).

Bridging the Generational Gap

As more millennials enter the workforce, the divide between them and older workers becomes more prominent, which creates unique challenges for organizational leaders (Anderson et al., 2017). Multigeneration organizational leaders deal with conflicts that arise from different generational values, ethics, and communication styles (Riggs, 2017). But organizations must continue to change and adapt to the multigenerational work values to recruit, motivate, and retain the workforce (Calk & Patrick, 2017). Additionally, embracing generational differences provides an opportunity, as well as a challenge (Stewart et al., 2017). However, organizations cannot ignore the older generations and must develop sustainable solutions that can adapt to the different generations (Biggs, 2018). For example, organizations need to invest in Generation Xers and nurture their growth in leadership for now and in the future (Riggs, 2017). Thus, they must develop new, innovative training and development methods that encourage employees to collaborate with one another, and leverage each other's skills (Hall, 2016).

To assist with bridging the gap in the current workplace, organizational development (OD) and lean are two of many methods and tools available for organizations.

Huyler et al. (2015) stated that one solution for organizations to embrace all generations and be positioned for future success, is to implement organizational development (OD). Synonymous with change management, in OD, all employees engage in the strategic planning of an organization. Although there are differences in the various OD frameworks, they all share the commonality of change, as well as the fundamental belief that all members of a group, system, or organization must share in or participate in the change process.

Another solution to create a cohesive, content, and efficient multigenerational workplace is for organizations to adopt *lean* principles (Lewis & Wescott, 2017). The objective of lean is to actively engage all members of the organization to drive business practices to the most efficient state, by focusing on value-added activities, and design processes to make problems more visible. According to Lewis and Westcott (2017), when implementing lean techniques, organizations will not only reap the benefits of waste reduction and quality improvement, but also address the generational conflicts within the workplace organization.

A further suggestion is for organizational leaders to establish reciprocal mentoring relationships where both younger and senior employees train each other in their respective areas of expertise (Njemanze, 2016). In addition, to have a more cohesive workplace in the future, teaching styles in the classroom need to change to better prepare students for the workplace (DeVaney, 2015). Educators must prepare the next generation

of the workforce by teaching them about generational differences and how to deal with potential conflicts that may arise based on their thoughts of how workplaces function (Hall, 2016).

In summary, while there is a decline in job satisfaction among all ages (Lewis & Wescott, 2017), workers from every generation are working together by leveraging their different skills and perspectives (Tureen & Skarl, 2020). However, organizations have begun to accommodate millennials' preferences, such as creating open office layouts for their preference of more teamwork (Economy, 2019). It is important for organizational leaders to foster a work environment that encourages employees of all generations to feel free to present their ideas, concerns, and complaints (Riggs, 2017) and to not make changes according to the preference of only one of the multiple generations in the workplace.

Summary and Conclusion

The critical review of scholarly literature provided evidence that millennials are vital to an organization's success. Researchers have exhaustively detailed why the millennial generation is different from the previous generations and why it is necessary for organizations to evaluate their current policies to accommodate this generation. The themes that emerged from the scholarly literature set the stage for the value of my study.

Researchers have defined generational groups as people who share the same age in a span of 20 years and share the same social and historical events. While each generation has its own distinct attributes and values, workers share the common element of working in a multigenerational workplace. However, research has suggested that

millennials are a diverse, socially aware, and technology-centric generation, who are vastly different from the previous generations. As a result, researchers have suggested that organizational leaders must reevaluate their current policies and organizational structure to ensure they are pleasing to millennials, because they will be the generation to lead organizations forward. Consequently, there was evidence that this reevaluation and subsequent changes has led to workplace dysfunctionality, especially among older generation workers. However, much of the recent research focuses solely on attracting, engaging, and retaining millennials, even though there are older generations remaining in the workplace.

Leaders within the organization guide the culture and the work. Managers must determine the optimal way to lead in a multigenerational workplace to encourage collaboration and productivity. Researchers have suggested that leaders must be aware of the generational differences and adapt their leadership styles to effectively engage and lead workers from each generation; and to be aware of and consider the most effective leadership styles for each generation.

In the research, it has been established that millennials have brought about changes to the work environment, which includes changes to the work structure and technology. Researchers have stated that organizations must update the workplace structure based on millennial preferences, such as traditional long-term employment and the ability to work from any location. This may be a win-win for both workers and organizations because it provides flexibility and reduces an organization's cost and responsibility over employee management. However, with older generations' preference

for long-term employment, organizational leaders must determine the effects on all generations before making changes. In addition, the extent of how each generational group uses technology has an impact on how organizational leaders may implement innovative ideas. While millennials are digital natives, the older generational workers may not have the same affinity to use as much technology as millennials. Nevertheless, research has pointed out that organizational leaders are using millennial preferences as the catalyst for changes in their technology uses.

Organizational leaders look for techniques and tools that can help them form a culture where workers of all generations effectively collaborate and work well with one another. Essentially, they want to bridge the generational gap within the workplace. Solutions, such as organizational development (OD) and lean, offer a variety of methods to encourage employees to collaborate. In addition, it is important for educators to begin preparing the next generations on generational differences prior to entering a multigenerational workplace.

Current literature exhaustively covers distinct aspects of the multigenerational workplace, as this is not a new phenomenon. However, this number of generations at the same time in the current workplace is a new phenomenon. Researchers generally agree that millennials are a generation like we have never seen before and are worthy of in-depth research and attention. The vast amount of scholarly literature with the focus on millennials in a multigenerational workplace demonstrates this. However, there is a lack of research regarding the multigenerational workforce that focuses on older generation workers' experiences, related to management decisions and workplace policies that

directly focus on the millennial generation. Therefore, my research explored the perspectives of older generation workers to report on how changes in the workplace have affected them. My study contributes to scholarly research by providing knowledge and an understanding of the older generations' point of view regarding millennial-focused changes in the workplace.

In Chapter 2, I provided a critical evaluation of the scholarly literature to understand the lack of research, knowledge, and understanding as they relate to the topic. I substantiated the need for research on the views of the older generation worker in the multigenerational workplace. In Chapter 3, I provide the rationale for and details of the proposed research strategy and methodology to conduct the research.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how millennial-focused changes in the workplace have affected the older generations. With multiple generations in the workplace, current research focuses on millennials and changes that organizations needed to make to attract, recruit, and retain millennials. However, what is missing in such research is how these changes have affected the older generations; there has been a lack of research from the perspective of the older generations that are also in the current workplace. Therefore, I studied the effect of these changes in the workplace from the voice of the older generations.

In this chapter, I describe the research method that I used to collect, analyze, and interpret data to draw conclusions. Major sections address the intended research design and rationale, my role as the researcher during data collection, the research methodology, and issues of trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

I implemented the methods delineated in this chapter to answer this research question: What are the lived experiences of older generation workers related to management decisions and workplace policies directly focused on the millennial generation?

The central phenomenon of my study was four generations in the workplace, which is a new concept because people are living longer and having to work longer. The perceptions that each generation has of the others can affect workplace culture. The perceptions that older generations have of millennials, as well as the perceptions that

millennials have of the older generations, can cause miscommunication, lack of communication, and a host of other negative effects in the workplace. The phenomenon has led organizational leaders to make changes focused on millennials. However, it was important to explore the effect of these millennial-focused changes on the older generation worker. To address the research question, I used a qualitative phenomenological approach to describe the lived experiences of the older generation worker in a multigenerational workplace that made millennial-based changes.

Qualitative research is the investigation of a phenomenon, in an in-depth, holistic fashion, via a collection of rich narrative materials, and researchers use it to understand real-world problems and provide in-depth insights (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). This research approach entails looking at people, situations, events, and the process of what connects them (Maxwell, 2013). The result is an analysis of situations by emphasizing descriptions rather than numbers. This research tradition best fit my study because the factors included people, situations, and the influence of them both. I designed my research to report the lived experiences of the older generation workers in a multigenerational workplace to contribute to the knowledge and understanding about the effects of millennial-focused changes in the workplace on them.

Three common qualitative approaches are grounded theory, ethnology, and phenomenology (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). These designs share the following key features:

- Researcher studies phenomena in the natural context of individuals or groups.

- Researcher tries to gain a deeper understanding of people's experiences, perceptions, behavior, and processes and the meanings they attach to them.
- Researcher uses emerging design during the research process to be flexible in adjusting to the context.
- Researcher conducts data collection and analysis in an iterative process that happens simultaneously as research progresses.

Grounded theory involves generating a theory based on data from participants who experienced the same situation but are not likely located in the same place (Creswell, 2005). Ethnology is more relevant to research that investigates a holistic view of a culture and focuses on understanding the meanings and behaviors associated with the members of a group (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Ethnology takes the same approach as grounded theory but involves individuals who have shared patterns, such as a cultural group, and the unit of analysis is larger (Creswell, 2005). Phenomenology focuses on capturing the lived experiences of a phenomenon from the people who participated in the phenomenon (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). The aim of phenomenology is to understand a phenomenon from the people who experienced it.

I followed the five steps that Moustakas (1994) provided for conducting phenomenological research. The first step was to determine the best methodology to examine the research problem. Phenomenology investigates a lived experience and how individuals make sense of the world to provide insightful accounts of their subjective experience (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). This approach aims to describe participants' perceptions as they experience a phenomenon. The second step was to identify a

phenomenon of interest to study. I designed my study to describe the lived experiences of older generation workers in a workplace that had made millennial-based changes; therefore, phenomenology was the best option for my study. The third step was to identify the broad theoretical norms of phenomenology to bracket out my own experiences. Fourth, I collected data from individuals who had experienced the phenomenon. Fifth, I conducted interviews using open-ended questions to ask questions relevant to the participants' experiences in the multigenerational workplace.

Using this approach, I interviewed older generation workers to describe how the millennial-focused workplace changes were affecting them. Based on the information collected and analyzed, I provided a composite description what changes the older generations were experiencing and how they were experiencing the millennial-focused changes in the workplace. Organizational leaders can reevaluate these changes to ensure that they are incorporating the voice of the older generation and not solely focusing on millennials.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is to collect and analyze data to provide a view of the subject under study (Khan, 2014). In phenomenology, the researcher gathers and interprets data (Hopkins et al., 2016). Additionally, because phenomenological studies start with a phenomenon of interest to the researcher, perhaps due to their own experiences, I incorporated my own experiences. I played an observer-participant role because I have personally observed millennial-based changes in a workplace that has the four generations. However, my prominent role was that of an observer, to limit any bias

while analyzing the data collected, as well as during any follow-up interviews. I am in a workplace with multiple generations and could help the participants understand the phenomenon and clarify questions about the phenomenon.

Because I shared a personal relationship with the initial participants, I ensured that their responses were objective. Participants selected for my study were colleagues with no authoritative relationships with me, so the participants could be open and honest. I asked participants to suggest only peers in their network to participate in the interviews. This allowed me to avoid introducing bias due to power relationships. In addition, I did not introduce other ethical issues because participation was voluntary. There were no incentives or conflicts of interest.

Methodology

My qualitative study relied on one-on-one interviews to understand how millennial-focused changes in the workplace have affected the older generations. This section includes the details of how I gathered and analyzed the data.

Participant Selection Logic

The population for my study included members of the older generations who were currently working in a multigenerational workplace. Selected participants worked in different organizations, had experienced millennial-based changes in the workplace, and were willing to share their experiences.

Sampling Strategy

According to Marshall (1996), the appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research questions. Creswell (2005) recommended that

researchers in phenomenological studies interview five to 25 individuals who experienced the phenomenon. My initial sample size was 10 participants, and I continued to recruit participants until I obtained no new information; thus, saturation was met.

I identified participants by using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling occurs when the researcher selects the most productive sample to answer the research questions, which consists of subjects who have specific experiences (critical case sample), outliers (deviant sample), and subjects with special expertise (key informant sample; Marshall, 1996). This sampling strategy requires access to key informants in the field who can assist with identifying information-rich cases (Suri, 2011).

People are not equally capable of observing, interpreting, and understanding their own and other people's behaviors; some informants provide more in-depth insight and understanding for the researcher (Marshall, 1996). Therefore, snowball sampling was employed to identify additional participants, if needed for varying opinions and experiences and to reach saturation.

I selected my participants based on age (generation) and experience working in a multigenerational workplace where they had experienced millennial-based changes. I ensured that my sample included at least three members of each generation (baby boomers, Generation Xers, and traditionalists).

Recruiting Participants

Upon receiving approval from the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB), I began soliciting participants for my study. I selected participants via personal networking and word of mouth. I sent an email to people in my personal network with a brief

explanation of the study, the criteria for participation, and the request to respond if they were willing to participate. Once I had selected 10 participants who met the criteria, I asked them to complete and return the informed consent form prior to their participation.

Saturation

Saturation occurs when there is no new information derived, no new themes, and no new coding during analysis of the interviews. The idea is to obtain rich and thick data, as opposed to focusing only on the sample size (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The number of participants required becomes more obvious when saturation is reached, when new categories, themes, or explanations stop emerging (Marshall, 1996). Not reaching data saturation impacts the quality of research and hinders content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). When I did not reach saturation after interviewing the original 10 participants, I continued to select additional participants through snowball sampling until I reached data saturation and no new information arose.

Instrumentation

One-on-one interviews were the main method for data collection. According to Creswell (2005), using a protocol enables the interviewer to take notes during the interview about the responses of the interviewee and helps the researcher to organize thoughts on items such as headings, information about starting and ending the interview, concluding ideas, and thanking the participant. Castillo-Montoya (2016) provided an interview protocol refinement (IPR) framework to strengthen the reliability of an interview protocol. This four-phase process includes alignment of the interview questions with the research question, organization of the interview protocol to create an inquiry-

based conversation, a review of the protocol by others, and a pilot of the interview protocol. In the interview protocol (see Appendix B), the interview questions were inquiry-based and aligned with the research question. In addition, by employing the interview protocol in my pilot study, I was able to determine whether changes were necessary to strengthen its reliability. Therefore, I modified and adapted my initial interview protocol based on what was learned through the pilot study.

I provided the interview protocol to my participants before their interview. The interview protocol provided participants with a plan for what they could expect from the interview session, as well as assisted with the actual interview to collect only relevant information to answer the research question.

It is important to consider what a participant is saying, as well as what they are *not* saying (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Interviewing allows the researcher to notice these nonverbal cues, to ask additional questions. During the interview, I asked open-ended questions from the interview protocol and planned to record the responses using the recorder on my cellular phone. I also documented social cues via handwritten notes. I aligned these questions to the participant's experience and feelings about the phenomenon to get a deeper understanding of their experiences. This helped to round out the data set because there was discrepant information that I needed to consider during data analysis.

After each interview, I transcribed the recording using Otter and planned to send the transcript via email to the participant to ensure that I had accurately captured the

interview session. I planned to ask the participant to review the transcript for accuracy and respond to the email with their approval or with any changes, if applicable.

Pilot Study

Pilot studies are tactical instruments used to gain an entry point into the phenomenon under study when the researcher can adapt to the situation on the ground, and to avoid unpleasant surprises when conducting the main study (Nunes et al., 2010). A pilot study guides the planning of a large-scale investigation and allows the researcher to assess its feasibility prior to embarking on the larger study (Thabane et al., 2010). My pilot study helped to evaluate the instrumentation with a smaller number of participants, who were not part of the main study, to determine if I should make changes prior to working with research participants. This approach was aimed to save time when conducting the main study by evaluating key points upfront and adjusting accordingly. Key points included assessing the overall time it would take to gather data, such as how long the interview and transcription of the interview session would take; assessing the overall process to understand the feasibility of the steps needed to take place for the main study; and addressing the management of the participants and the collected data.

During the pilot study, I asked participants to review the interview protocol and provide feedback. This helped me to determine if the instructions were clear and the questions properly structured. Based on the responses, I evaluated whether the questions led to information representative of all aspects of the phenomenon under study and whether the data were likely to answer the research questions.

For my pilot study, I recruited three of my peers, one from each of the older generations, who did not participate in the main study. These associates worked in different multigenerational organizations, were willing participants to assist in my studies, and represented a suitable sample of the population sought in the main study. Selected participants provided responses to the interview protocol, as well as feedback on improvements to the questions and my data collection procedures. I updated the interview protocol in response to the feedback from the pilot study.

I asked if the pilot study participants understood the purpose of the interview, and I asked that they provide feedback on how I stated the questions and indicate whether there were any ways to improve the experience. I also assessed the interview script. While asking the interview questions, I took notes and recorded the discussion. This assisted in ensuring that my recording instrument worked properly and that I was able to take notes to yield the data required. In addition, this determined whether I needed to add or remove interview questions so that the discussion was free flowing.

By conducting this pilot study, I gained initial insight into the feasibility of the main study. By evaluating the data collection process on a smaller sample of the population, during which I had direct access to the participants for constructive feedback, I was able to refine my processes and tools for my main study.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I initially planned to recruit 10 people whom I knew and who were willing to participate and met the research criteria. If I had not achieved saturation with this initial group, I planned to ask them to suggest people they knew whom I could contact. This

purposive, snowball sampling technique would ensure that I identified enough willing participants who met the research criteria so that I could achieve saturation and answer the research question.

I initially planned for the interviews take place either in person or via Microsoft Teams. If neither option was possible, the interview was to take place over the telephone. Each interview was one-on-one so there was no external influence on how a participant responds to the questions. This also enabled the participant to speak freely on their views and provide additional information that may be relevant to my study. Each interview informs the next, and researchers use subsequent interviews to explore issues raised in the previous interviews (Brod et al., 2009). I used any information obtained from the previous interviews for further exploration in the subsequent interviews.

I planned to record the audio of each interview using a smartphone. Upon completion of the interview, I transcribed the recorded session via Otter, edited the transcriptions for clear issues of expression and grammar, and emailed the completed transcript to the participant for review. I asked that each participant review the transcript for accuracy and respond to the email informing me of any changes or to acknowledge completeness within 7 days. Once I received acknowledgement from each participant who the transcriptions are a true representation of their interview, I began data analysis.

Data Analysis Plan

As a part of phenomenological research data analysis, it is important to protect against any limited effects of researcher presupposition while gaining an understanding of the phenomenon (Morgan, 2021). Because I have pre-existing experience with the

topic under study, I wanted to ensure the understanding of the phenomenon emerged based on the participant experience and not by any presupposition. Hence, I began data analysis with bracketing, which was the suspension of prior understanding. Bracketing was achieved by reading the transcripts many times to arrive at a naïve understanding of the data. Transcripts are read with an open mind, with no consideration of the research question, or any prior understanding of the research topic to reduce influences of presupposition. Because it was difficult to suspend prior experience, I also employed reflexivity to document my thoughts in a journal during bracketing to ensure that my thoughts are identified and managed preventing the influence of presupposition.

After bracketing, the next step was coding, which is the process of taking raw data and converting to useable data through the identification of themes, concepts or ideas that relate to one another (Austin & Sutton, 2014). First, the researcher identifies a meaning unit, which captures a single meaning by isolating and removing text from the context and varies from a few words to a paragraph (Morgan, 2021). Researchers then organize the data by condensing the meaning units into shorter items that reflect the original meaning (Morgan, 2021). The researcher identifies certain words and phrases used by different participants to focus the findings (Austin & Sutton, 2014).

After the condensed items are compared, the next step was theming (Morgan, 2021). Theming gives meaningful names to characterize what the participants are stating (Austin & Sutton, 2014). Themes are further reflected upon to identify whether they validate or confirm the original naïve understanding (Morgan, 2021). To prevent researcher presupposition on the original understanding, this analysis process started

again from the beginning and continued until no new meanings emerge and the naïve understanding was confirmed.

It is important for the researcher to be transparent, objective, and unbiased during data analysis, to maximize trustworthiness of the study. Using computer assisted data analysis when coding and theming, provides this transparency (Ryan, 2009). Manual coding is possible with a small data set, but because the management of qualitative data is complex, it is best accomplished using technological and software support (Austin & Sutton, 2014). For this research, I planned to load the raw data (textual transcripts) from the interviews into NVivo to analyze and organize the data. NVivo would have enabled me to visually compare the data and develop codes based on similar text. Based on these coded units, I could identify emerging common themes that addressed the research question.

As part of data analysis, I searched for discrepant data, because I did not want to force data to fit any preconceived ideas. I wanted to understand various aspects of the phenomenon. Discrepant data analysis ensured there was adequate data for my study. It involves finding disconfirming instances of the phenomenon and comparing them to the confirming instances to understand the complexities of the phenomenon (Morrow, 2005). This is a deliberate search for disconfirming information that helps to combat the urge to only seek confirmation of the emerging or preliminary findings. It is a repeated comparison of the data, revising key assertions, until they accurately reflect the participants' experiences.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research as the credibility of the researcher, the applicability of the research methods, the rigor of the research design, and the believability of the findings (Rose & Johnson, 2020). It provides the overall impression of the quality of the research. The following sections detail the four criteria as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as well as the appropriate strategies I used to establish each criterion.

Credibility

Credibility is the confidence in the truth of the findings (Sutton & Austin, 2015). It establishes whether the research findings represent probable information drawn from the participants' original information and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To establish credibility of my research, I planned to send an email to each participant with the transcript of their interview session attached, requesting them to review the transcript for accuracy and to reply to the email with a confirmation that the transcript accurately reflects their experience in their own words or to respond with their changes.

In addition, I employed persistent observation, which is focusing on the identified characteristics and elements in the data that are most relevant to the problem under study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This is a strategy where the researcher iteratively reads, rereads, analyzes, categorizes, and revises the data until the final themes provide the intended depth of insight.

Transferability

Transferability shows that the findings are applicable in other contexts (Sutton & Austin, 2015). It is the degree to which researchers can transfer the results to other contexts or settings with other respondents (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers conduct transferability via a thick description strategy. Thick description is not only describing experiences and behaviors, but their context as well, so these experiences and behaviors become meaningful to anyone outside of the study. I provided a thick description of the participants, as well as documented my research process in an easy-to-follow manner, so the reader could determine the extent to which they feel my research is transferable to their own setting.

Dependability

Dependability is showing that the findings are consistent and repeatable (Sutton & Austin, 2015). It is the stability of the findings over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers establish dependability by the audit trail strategy, which involves providing a complete set of notes on data management, decisions made during the study emergence of findings, sampling, adopted research materials, and reflective thoughts. I documented all interactions, observations, and other aspects that pertained to my study. I included date, time, and the overall context in the documentation to have a full understanding of what took place. I kept this information together so I can present it for audit at any time.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the extent that the respondents shape the findings and not due to researcher bias, motivation, or interest (Sutton & Austin, 2015). It is the degree to which

other researchers can confirm the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As with dependability, the appropriate strategy to establish confirmability is developing an audit trail. This is being transparent with describing the research steps taken from the beginning of the study to the development and reporting the findings. In addition to keeping an audit trail, I patterned the reflexivity strategy by supplementing all analytical data with reflexive notes. These notes are like keeping a diary of examining one's own views, assumptions, preconceptions, and values, and how these affect the research decisions in all phases of the study. These reflexive notes consisted of information on the setting during the interviews, as well as the relationship with the interviewees.

I work in a multigenerational organization, so bias is unavoidable. Additionally, participants in my study potentially had a degree of familiarity with me and could potentially introduce bias. However, I did not discuss my views on this topic with anyone and did not provide any of my views during my study to ensure there was no bias introduced. I asked participants remain open and honest with their views, and we only discussed their experiences.

Finally, I achieved confirmability by validating the results of my study and acknowledged potential biases in my interpretations through member-checking and reflexivity. Member-checking involved sending a summary of interviews to each participant to ensure my transcript accurately captured the interview. Reflexivity was accomplished by remaining neutral and being self-aware of biases, and by frequent reviews of notes and transcripts throughout the data collection process.

Ethical Procedures

Because this qualitative study involved human interaction, it was important to conduct the research in a manner that places safety, security, and the needs of the participants first. Even though interviews are less dangerous than taking blood samples, it is important to recognize how researchers' representation of participants in research can be damaging (Austin & Sutton, 2014). I obtained approval from Institutional Review Board (IRB) and ensured participant consent, and then proceeded with data collection.

Informed Consent

At the beginning of the interview, I briefly described my study, then explained how the participants were giving their consent to use their responses for this research. I asked participants if they were participating in the interview voluntarily, without threat of harm or retribution. If they were willing to participate in the interview, I asked them to complete a consent form.

During data collection, I informed participants they were free to withdraw from the study or refuse to answer any questions that they were not comfortable. I reiterated to the participants that their participation was voluntary, and they were under no obligation to participate. Had the participant withdrawn or refused to answer questions, I would have asked for consent for use of the information that they did provide. Had they declined consent, I would not have used the information and properly disposed it. Had they provided consent, I would have asked for the extent of what information I could use and how I could use it. Had there been an unpredictable event and the participant was not able to provide consent, I would not have used the information and properly disposed it.

Protection of Participants

To reduce the potential for bias during the data analysis process, data collected did not have any identifying information regarding participants except, initially, their name. I associated participant names with transcripts and summaries of transcripts. After I received approval of the transcript summary from each participant, I substituted a code for each participant's name (e.g., P1, P2), and from that point forward referred only to the code.

Protection of Data

All interview data remains on my password-protected personal laptop until the conclusion of this research. I am the only one accessing the raw data and the data remains confidential. The data I planned to enter in NVivo had the participants' code instead of their name. Once I complete the final study, have final approval, and have met Walden University's retention requirements, I will delete the data from my personal laptop and NVivo, as there will be no future need.

Overall, there are no ethical concerns with this research. This phenomenon is well-known to many people and there is a desire to have a better understanding of the multigenerational workplace. I heard many express varying opinions on millennial-based changes in the workplace, but I drew conclusions based on the data collected and did not introduce my own bias into the study. I did not share my opinions or views with the participants to ensure I did not steer their thoughts into a certain way.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to detail all aspects of the research methods I used, and how I ensured my study was objective and dependable. I chose qualitative research because this study was investigating a phenomenon. While there are other qualitative methods, I chose phenomenology because it consisted of identifying a phenomenon of interest to the researcher, setting aside the researcher's experiences, and collecting data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Therefore, my researcher role for this study was primarily observer. I work in a multigenerational organization, but I did not introduce my own bias when gathering data from the participants. However, I was able to provide any clarification needed when necessary.

I selected participants who are part of the older generations and currently work in a multigenerational workplace, by purposive and snowball sampling. They were asked to participate in recorded one-on-one interviews to discuss their lived experiences in the multigenerational workplace. Subsequently, I analyzed this data by developing codes and themes using NVivo to assist with the visual analysis and report on my findings. I addressed issues of trustworthiness, providing a well-written account of my research steps to ensure my study is credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable.

Chapter 1 was an introduction to my study under investigation and Chapter 2 substantiated the need for my research by providing a literature review. Chapter 3 rounded out the foundation for my study by detailing the research method, the process for collecting and analyzing data, and how I addressed the issues of trustworthiness. In

Chapter 4, I share the actual data collection process that I used, the data analysis process, evidence of the study's trustworthiness, and the results of the data analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how millennial-focused changes in the workplace have affected the older generations. The central research question for my study was the following: What are the lived experiences of older generation workers related to management decisions and workplace policies directly focused on the millennial generation? I also developed 11 interview questions for the interview protocol (see Appendix B).

In this chapter, I report the affect that the pilot study had on the main study. After describing how the research setting may have influenced participants' responses or interpretation of the study results, I present the participants' demographics and characteristics that were relevant to my study. Then, I share my data collection process. Next, I report my data analysis process, including how I moved from the original transcripts to meaningful codes, to categories (anchor codes), to themes. I present evidence of trustworthiness by demonstrating credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Then, I share my study results, where I address the research question organized by emergent main themes. I present the data to support the findings, using specific quotes from the participants during data collection. I conclude with a summary of the key findings from my analysis. In Chapter 5, I present the interpretation of the results.

Pilot Study

Upon receiving approval from the Walden University IRB (02-10-22-0031783), I conducted a pilot study to evaluate my instrumentation, specifically to test the interview

protocol. I contacted three peers from my personal network to ask if they were willing to be pilot participants in my study. Because I already knew them, I knew that they fit the participation criteria and would provide honest, constructive feedback.

In addition to the questions in the interview protocol, I asked the pilot study participants the following questions:

- What are your thoughts on the recruitment process and the invitation email? Was there anything that you feel that I should change?
- Please give me your feedback on how I interviewed you. Did I make you feel comfortable enough to share your experiences openly? Was there anything that I should not do or do more of?
- Did you feel that the interview questions and my follow-up questions enabled you to share your unique experiences? Were you able to convey what you wanted to regarding this subject?
- Do you have additional feedback on the recruiting and interviewing processes? Do you have additional information that you feel will be helpful that I may not have covered already?

All the pilot participants had similar responses. They all felt that the invitation email and the consent form thoroughly explained my study and expectations of the participants. The participants felt that there was no need to make changes to the invitation email or to the forms that I attached (consent form and interview protocol). They all agreed that the interview questions were appropriate and understandable. Prior to asking the interview questions, I asked the participants if they were comfortable with being on

camera or if they preferred to not have the camera on, and they all agreed that they felt more comfortable with not turning on the cameras. In addition, they mentioned that because participants were members of the older generation, they might not be as familiar or comfortable with using video, and it might cause distractions. They did not have any suggestions on changes to the questions and felt that the way that I conducted my study made them feel very comfortable with sharing their experiences.

For the first pilot interview, Participant 1 (P1) encouraged me to reiterate, at the beginning of the interview session, how I was masking their private information—specifically, how participant names and organization would not be named in my study. P1 felt that would reassure the participants and they would be more willing to speak openly. P1 said, “even though you clearly address privacy in the consent form, people may not fully read the form and may have some hesitation when answering questions.” P1 had no additional feedback on the overall procedures and forms. P1 also stated that this was an exciting topic and was looking forward to the results of my study.

The second pilot participant (P2) stated that the questions were thought provoking. P2 said, “I felt that workplace has changed over the years, but never thought that others may feel the same way that I do.” P2 added, “I am glad you are doing this study so that our (older generation’s) feelings and experiences may be taken into account.” P2 liked the way that I conducted the interviews. P2 liked that I asked follow-up questions and the next question appropriately, so that there was no lull in the discussion. P2 said that I allowed the participant to continue their thoughts and stories without interruption or making the participant feel like they were rambling, while

keeping to the agreed-upon schedule. P2 had no additional feedback on the recruiting and interviewing processes.

The third participant (P3) provided very favorable responses on the recruiting and interviewing processes. P3 stated, “I was very excited when I saw your email. I liked that you put ‘Research Study Participation—Stephanie Weaver’ in the subject of the email, so I knew exactly what the email was about.” P3 shared that not using the camera during the interview session was more relaxing and gave the ability to focus on the information that they were providing, as opposed to worrying about how they looked on camera. P3 felt that scheduling the interview for 1 hour and not going over was appropriate, saying, “I was able to schedule when I could review the questions ahead time to gather my thoughts and give you my undivided attention during the interview session.” P3 had no additional feedback regarding the recruiting and interviewing processes, and concluded with saying, “Thank you for conducting this study. It is a very important and relevant study for us older folks to have some respect in the workplace.”

I concluded that the recruiting and interviewing processes were appropriate to garner the participants’ experiences for use in the main study. There was no need to make any changes to the processes, forms, or questions. However, I did note to reiterate how I was handling the participants’ privacy at the beginning of the interview session. The data collected from the pilot study were not used in the main study.

Research Setting

I conducted all one-on-one interviews via Microsoft Teams. I recorded the audio of all interview sessions via Microsoft Teams and Otter. I was originally planning to

conduct interviews using the video portion of Microsoft Teams so that I could also obtain nonverbal cues; however, based on the feedback that I received from the pilot participants, as well as not being able to record the audio without also recording the video, I did not turn on the cameras. I had not previously met the participants and was concerned with the participants being more concerned with how they looked instead of focusing on speaking freely. In addition, I felt that it was more important for the participants to be as comfortable as possible to focus solely on freely discussing their experiences, as opposed to being on camera for me to obtain nonverbal cues. The interviews took place in a home setting, in a private room. Interviews were scheduled according to the participants' availability to be in a private setting away from their work office. The interview protocol was sent to each participant via email once they responded to the invitation email with their consent to participate in my study.

At the beginning of each interview session, I asked the participant if they had a chance to review the questions. Most of the participants had reviewed them prior to the interview. Some even stated that they took notes so that they would remember to say information that was important for them to relay. There were four participants who had not reviewed the questions prior to the scheduled interview. Two of the four stated that they had glanced through the questions, so they had an idea of what was going to be asked. Another participant stated that they purposely did not want to review them because they did not want to think too deeply prior; they felt that they would be able to provide better responses without thinking too deeply into the questions beforehand. The other participant stated, "I simply did not have the time." For this participant, I asked if we

should reschedule the interview because I wanted to make sure that I had the participant's focus and that we were not going to be rushed. The participant stated there was no need to reschedule unless I really wanted the questions reviewed prior to the interview. I assured all the participants that there was no need to have read through the questions prior to the session. I was solely interested in hearing their experiences.

I had no prior relationship with, contact with, or knowledge of the participants in the main study. During my study, I did not reveal where I work and told them that I did not need to know where they worked, as it was not relevant to my study. I also did not reveal the other participants' names or organizations to any of the participants.

Demographics

There were 14 participants in the main study. There were seven women and seven men working in various positions within different organizations and locations in the United States. The selection criteria to participate in my study were that each participant needed to be a member of one of the older generations (traditionalist, baby boomer, and Generation X) who currently worked in a multigenerational workplace that had made millennial-based changes. To keep the participants' personal information confidential, each participant was labeled with a letter and number (e.g., P4, P5, etc.). The name of the organization where the participant was employed and any other specific demographics were not relevant to my study, because the focus of my study was the lived experiences of the participants.

Data Collection

To recruit participants for my study, I asked the pilot study participants to suggest potential participants for the main study. Each pilot participant provided several email addresses of potential participants. I emailed my study invitation (Appendix A) to the suggested potential participants, requesting a response email with “I consent” if they read the consent form, met the participation criteria, and were willing to participate in my study. In addition, participants forwarded the invitation email to other potential participants.

I emailed invitations to 23 potential participants and received 18 responses. There were 17 respondents who provided their consent to participate in the study, and one respondent declined to participate in the study for personal reasons. Upon receiving a positive response to participate, I responded to the email with the interview protocol attached and requested available times to schedule the interview session. Once I received the participant’s available times, I scheduled the interview session by sending a Microsoft Teams meeting invitation. There were three potential participants who had originally consented to participate but did not respond to the email request for available times to schedule the interview, so they were not included in my study.

There were 14 respondents used in the main study (P4 on). Saturation was reached as described in Chapter 3 with the 14th and final interview. Therefore, I concluded the interview phase after the final scheduled interview. There were four potential participants who contacted me after I concluded the interview phase. I thanked them for contacting me and informed them that the interview phase was closed because I

had collected enough information. I also informed them that I would contact them should anything change.

At the beginning of each interview session, I informed the participant that I was audio-recording the session via Microsoft Teams and Otter. I explained that Otter is transcription software that transcribes interviews in real-time, which would save time as well as provide a backup in case something went wrong with the Microsoft Teams recording. Each interview was scheduled for 60 minutes and lasted, on average, about 45 to 50 minutes. During the interview session, I followed the interview protocol. I also took handwritten notes to remind myself of points that I wanted to clarify with the participant without interrupting them, as well as documenting information that I believed might relate to key aspects when completing the remainder of the study.

Upon concluding each interview, I provided a summary of the key points during the interview and asked the participant if I had missed any relevant information that they wanted to add. I then thanked the participant for taking part in my study and asked them to contact me with any questions. I originally planned to send a copy of the transcript for the participant to review for accuracy after the interview. However, I decided to provide the summary at the end of the interview because I did not know if the participant would take the time to review the transcript and respond back accordingly in a timely manner. Data saturation occurred after interviewing 14 participants, as there was no new information being derived.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the interviews conducted in my study by using Microsoft Word and Excel. I transferred each interview transcript from Otter into a separate Microsoft Word document, with one document for each interview. I created two columns in each Microsoft Word document, where I copied the interview transcripts from Otter into the first column. After each interview, I began to familiarize myself with the data by reading through the transcript, ensuring that the interview was transcribed properly, correcting any transcription errors, and checking whether I reached saturation. Upon conducting the 12th interview, I noticed that there was no new information being shared. I conducted the final two scheduled interviews to be sure that I had reached saturation. After the final interview, I concluded that I had reached saturation.

I then began the process of bracketing, by reading through the transcripts several more times to arrive at a naïve understanding of the data. In addition, I employed reflexivity to document my thoughts in a journal during bracketing to ensure that my thoughts were identified and managed to prevent the influence of presupposition. I was then ready to begin the coding process.

The first step in the coding process was to review each interview transcript, line by line, searching for relevant information in the data, and to add this information into the second column of the Microsoft Word document. I was searching for participants' words and quotes to create codes that were specifically related to the research question. Upon completing this process for each interview transcript, I created an Excel spreadsheet that had one tab for each of the interview questions that was labeled according to question

number (Q1, Q2, etc.). Each tab had the research question in the first row, and I labeled the columns with the participant number (P4, P5, etc.). I used Excel because it provides the ability to easily view and sort the data. Then, I copied the data located in the second column of the Word document into the Excel spreadsheet, according to the interview question and corresponding participant. I wanted to preserve the original data by participant for later reference.

Once I transferred the data to the Excel spreadsheet for each participant, I created new tabs and labeled each tab according to the question number (Q1, Q2, etc.). Next, I copied the corresponding data from each participant into one column, according to the research question tab. This enabled me to view all the data from all participants in one column. Then, I sorted the data in alphabetical order and added another column to begin coding the data. For each participant response, I coded each response to a *node*. These nodes represented meaningful words or phrases that I would ultimately use to develop themes.

After I completed coding each participant response, I reviewed each response and its corresponding node again to ensure that it was the most appropriate node, and I was consistent in my node-naming convention. For example, in Interview Question 1 (Q1), I asked the participants to name the workplace changes, such as those related to policies, work structure, or workplace environment, that they had experienced since millennials had entered their workplace. P7 responded, “the organization is allowing for a more relaxed dress code.” In Q8, I asked participants what changes they would like to see implemented. In response to Q8, P6 also commented about the relaxed dress code. I

coded these similar responses to a node labeled *dress code*. This was to ensure that I could count the frequency of the use of the nodes and, subsequently, determine the emerging overarching themes, as well as any discrepant data.

I reviewed all the nodes to ensure that my nodes were consistently named and renamed any nodes that were not. I, then, resorted the list, alphabetically by the node name, counted the frequency of the same nodes, removed the duplicates, and added the frequency count in the next column. Therefore, in the spreadsheet, each row contained the participant response, coded node, and frequency number. I continued this process for each of the interview question, trying to use the same node names for similar responses.

The next step in coding involved categorizing the coded nodes into specific themes. After a continuous review of the coded nodes, I began to see overarching themes emerge. I created labels for the emerging themes: *generational differences*, *appearance*, *professional etiquette*, *employee benefits*, *recruiting*, *increased reliance on technology*, and *work environment*. I assigned each node to a relevant label, beginning with the most frequently used nodes. For example, in Q1, P13 commented, “everyone is talking and collaborating with one another.” I coded this sentence to *collaboration* as a node. Whereas, in Q6, P16 stated, “[older generation workers] get frustrated with [members of] the younger generations.” I coded this sentence to *generational divide* as the node. I labeled both nodes as *generational differences*. I transformed the most dominant nodes into themes and attached the less dominant nodes to those themes. I also documented the discrepant cases that were nonconforming to the rest of the data to ensure transparency of the data.

Table 1 displays the themes and the dominant nodes, in alphabetical order, used to form the themes from all interview questions, which resulted in key findings covered in a later section. Tables 2 through 9 display the nodes identified for each interview question and the frequency of their use.

Table 1

Themes

Theme (Label)	Node
Generational differences	Collaboration Feeling valued Generational divide Generation-based
Appearance	Dress code Hair Piercings Tattoos
Professional etiquette	Punctuality Respect Work schedule
Employee benefits	401(k)/pension Pay structure Salary
Recruiting	Advertisements Application methods Attract innovators Career opportunities Equal opportunities for all employees Hiring methods Training programs
Technology	Communication Customer service Work/life balance
Work environment	Cubicle/desk changes Lack of privacy Meeting spaces Open space

Table 2

Q1: What Workplace Changes, Such as Policies, Work Structure, or Workplace Environment, Have You Experienced Since Millennials Have Entered Your Organization (Early 2000s)?

Nodes	Frequency of use
Dress code	120
Technology	81
Generation-based	45
Application methods	39
Advertisements	36
Hiring methods	35
Training programs	33
Work schedule	31
Collaboration	29
Open space	27
Work/life balance	25
Career opportunities	18
Punctuality	16
Customer service	15
Communication with applicants	14
Cubicle/desk changes	12
Management	12
Management-based	12
Pay structure	12
Paid time off	11
401(k)/pension	10
Lack of privacy	9
Environmental consciousness	8
Qualifications	8
Hair	5
Diversity	4
Incentives/perks	4
Performance management	4
Tattoos	4
Meeting spaces	3
Offering salary	1
Piercings	1

Table 3

*Q2 and Q3: Why Changes Were Implemented and How These Changes Were Determined
by Organizational Leaders*

Nodes	Frequency of use
Attract innovators	30
Competition	21
Diversity	19
Customer satisfaction	13
Employee satisfaction	11
Technology	10
Work/life balance	8
Financial	5
Consulting company recommendations	5

Table 4

Q4: Please Elaborate on How Millennial-Based Changes Affected You

Nodes	Frequency of use
Frustrated	38
Less respected	16
Management style changes	13
Coming out of comfort zone	16
More tech-savvy	12
Salary	8
Customer frustration	6
Increased work/life	3
No impact	2
More opportunities	2
Less personal	1
Enjoying perks	1

Table 5

Q5: Is There Any Additional Information That You Would Like to Provide Regarding the Millennial-Based Changes?

Nodes	Frequency of use
Generational relevance	25
Competition	11
Respect	4

Table 6

Q6: How Have the Changes Affected the Workplace Culture?

Nodes	Frequency of use
Generational divide	122
Collaboration	23
Respect	22
Appearance	20
Focus on work/life	16
Traditional knowledge	14
Increased reliance on technology	14
Changed management styles	12
Work hours	9
Greater learning curve	5
Employee retention	5
Employees with different skill set levels	5
Employees with different education levels	4
No change	1

Table 7

Q7: Please Explain How Valued You Feel and if Your Opinion Is Taken Into Consideration When Changes Are Being Discussed

Nodes	Number of participants
Valued	11
Opinion is considered	10
Opinion is not considered	4
Devalued	1
Ignored	1
Not valued	1

Table 8

Q8: Please Elaborate on the Changes You Would Like to See Implemented

Nodes	Frequency of use
Equal opportunities for all employees	22
Punctuality	19
More training	13
Flexibility-work/life	9
Collaboration	8
Mentoring	5
Better compensation	4
Customer focused	3

Table 9

Q9: Have You Expressed These Changes to Leadership? If So, What Was the Response?

Nodes	Frequency of use
Surveys	9
Feedback loops	8

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To ensure credibility, I followed Castillo-Mantoyo's (2016) Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) framework during the collection process and employed persistent observation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) during the data analysis process, as described in Chapter 3. For the data collection process, I aligned the interview questions with the research question, organized the questions appropriately to create an inquiry-based conversation, and conducted a pilot study where the pilot participants reviewed the interview protocol and participated in a pilot interview to provide feedback on the instrumentation and process. While conducting data analysis, I iteratively read, reread,

analyzed, categorized, and revised the data until the final themes emerged to provide the intended depth of insight.

Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the reader has determined the study is transferable to other context or settings with different participants applicable to their study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability is determined by reviewing the thick description of the raw data and experiences within a specific context, so research data becomes meaningful to anyone outside the study. The research data provided a thick description of the phenomenon of the lived experiences of the older generation workers pertaining to millennial-based workplace changes.

To aid in transferability, I documented my research process in an easy-to-follow manner so the reader could determine the extent to which my research is transferable to their own study. For data collection, I followed a consistent and specific set of characteristics to select participants, as shared in the demographics section of this chapter. I followed the detailed interview protocol listed in Appendix B. For data analysis, I applied a consistent approach to analyzing and coding the raw data, including direct quotes, for each of the interview questions. I also described how I moved from the raw data to themes.

Dependability

The audit trail strategy is used to assist the researcher to establish dependability and involves providing a complete set of notes on data management, decisions, emergence of findings, and reflective thoughts. (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). During the

data collection and analysis, I followed the process as I described in Chapter 3. I rigorously took notes on my observations, participant interactions, and overall context, as described in Chapter 3.

Confirmability

Confirmability represents whether the research is free from bias (McGinley et al., 2021). Because my professional experience could introduce bias and influence the line of questioning, I strictly followed the interview protocol to ensure the participants' responses reflected their lived experiences with the phenomenon. As I described in Chapter 3, I kept an audit trail and reflexive notes. To further reduce bias, I only selected participants for the main study who were unknown to me. At the beginning of each interview session, I informed the participants that the purpose of the interview was to report on their lived experiences, and I would only ask the questions from the interview protocol, with additional follow-up questions if clarification is needed. I also informed the participants that I would not provide my views or experiences so that I did not unwillingly influence their responses. During the entire research process, I constantly reminded myself that the goal of the research was to reflect the experiences of the participants. In addition, I reminded the participants that I was solely gathering their pre-COVID experiences because COVID has changed many ways in which organizations operate and this could skew my study results.

Study Results

Based on the participants' responses to the interview questions, I identified the following themes: generational differences, appearance, professional etiquette, employee

benefits, recruiting, increased reliance on technology, and work environment. These themes provided insights to address the research question of the lived experiences of older generation workers related to management decisions and workplace policies directly focused on the millennial generation. I used various participants' comments as support for each theme. In addition, I identified two discrepant cases where the participants did not experience any effect of the policy changes, personally or in the organizational culture, respectively. I substantiate the reasoning why these cases were discrepant by using participants' responses to the interview questions.

Emergent Theme 1: Generational Differences

In this theme, I identified the participants' opinions on their younger generation coworkers and their feelings about how they are valued in their organizations as the dominant attributes. All participants agreed that organizations must hire younger workers to keep the organization relevant in the marketplace. And, even though most of the participants felt valued, they see that organizations cater to the younger generations' needs. For example, P14 commented that organizations must make changes, "otherwise, they will fall behind and business will suffer." Participants also understood that they would have to embrace these changes. P6 stated, "I feel like I have to change and adapt to be a part of the organization." They understood that organizations must hire younger workers to provide innovative ideas and to compensate for older generations retiring. P5 stated, "organizations need to bring in younger to shift things and keep up with overall market." P12 commented, "younger people think differently."

Many of the participants mentioned millennial stereotypes, such as being self-entitled, tech-savvy, job-hoppers, more educated, and questioning everything. However, because of the stereotypes about millennials, older generation workers have mixed feelings. P8 felt that the generations had good relationships with one another. However, P16 observed that the older generations are very frustrated with millennials. There are pluses and minus to working with all generations. P12 stated the importance of having the different generations in the workplace by saying, “older generations have to adjust to millennials, but also need to teach them different ways of doing things.” P14 commented, “these companies need a foundation.” However, millennials bring innovation and newness. Most participants had positive experiences with the younger generation. P9 stated that millennial energy and enthusiasm make them great team leaders for driving projects, creating flyers, and opening team chats. Others stated that they enjoy working with the younger generation because they are not stuck in their ways and bring new ideas.

I observed many responses that discussed whether the participants experienced a generational divide. There was a mix of responses in how the participants viewed the status of the generational divide. P4 stated, “the generational divide has gotten bigger.” This was opposed to P11 who stated, “the generational divide is the same” and P7 who commented that “the gap is getting closed.” I noted that the participants felt an imbalance in the way they were treated. For example, P5 noted that the millennials get the Apple laptops, while the older generation workers get standard, less popular laptops.

While analyzing the research data, I observed that participants felt organizations catered to millennial needs more than treating everyone equally. P5 stated that

organizations need to be fair across the board and need to take care of everyone. P16 responded, “if there are people willing to develop, grow with the company, and learn, they should be given the opportunity no matter their age.” P7 stated, “opportunities are greater for millennials.” Nevertheless, 11 out of the 14 participants felt valued in the workplace. They felt that their experience and work ethics were appreciated by organizational leaders. P6 said, “I feel valued because of my quality of work and work ethics.” P7 stated that their “experience is highly valued” and P8 said that “their knowledge is appreciated.” But P12 stated, “we are working harder, they are working smarter.”

It is important to also call out the discrepant responses. P7 commented, “[I feel] devalued because you are questioned more.” P4 responded that “I feel pushed to the side.” P5 stated, “I do not feel valued.”

Emergent Theme 2: Appearance

In this theme, I identified dress code as the dominant change that most affected the older generation. All the participants discussed how the dress code in the workplace has gone from formal to very relaxed. P16 stated, “you had to look a certain way, but that is different now.” P12 commented, “young kids are not dressing in suits and ties.” “Previously, everyone was in a suit,” P6 agreed. “It is a big change to not wear a suit. I still wear a suit to work because that is what was previously required,” said P17.

This even applied when interviewing for a new job. P16 reported that previously, applicants would wear a suit to an interview, but now it is more business casual. Wearing

a suit to an interview was standard practice. Others stated that they now only wear suits when they go to the organization's headquarters.

While most organizations' dress code is business casual, there is a discrepancy in the definition of business casual. P16 noted that older and younger people view business casual differently. According to P11, they constantly had to tell the younger employees that what they were wearing was not acceptable work attire and showing them pictures was subject to interpretation. Furthermore, P11 stated that because of different interpretations of the employee handbook on what is appropriate to wear in the workplace, one millennial suggested they have a fashion show to provide employees a visual illustration on what is acceptable to wear. They had the show, and it was a big hit in their organization because they were able to directly point out what was appropriate and not appropriate attire in the workplace. P11 further stated that having the fashion show really increased employee relations because everyone had fun and were able to settle some of their differences.

Participants felt that this change in the workplace was a direct impact from having younger people in the workplace. P13 commented, "kids are coming in [the workplace] wearing whatever and it is acceptable. Older generations like business casual and it is driving them crazy." Most participants did not want to return to wearing more formal work attire, such as suits and ties; however, they all agreed that the changes in the dress code and lack of enforcement of the more formal dress code has impacted the overall morale of the older employees.

Other properties of appearance were facial hair, hairstyles, tattoos, and piercings. As noted in the data, organizations have relaxed their policies on these features. P12 commented that there were policy changes for hairstyles. These changes included being able to have long hair, natural hair styles, and hair that has been dyed different colors, such as pink. P16 noted that facial hair was not previously allowed, but even long beards are now acceptable. This was the same for tattoos and piercings. P4 and P16 commented that “tattoos had to be covered up” and “earrings were not allowed” in the workplace. The participants emphasized the importance of having an appropriate dress code and felt that by wearing business casual clothing, as opposed to more relaxed clothing, such as jeans or leggings, employees take their jobs more seriously.

Emergent Theme 3: Professional Etiquette

Professional etiquette was another prominent property when discussing the workplace culture. P6 summed all the key points by stating, “some of the problems are the slip of the tongue, not being professional, attire, and coming into the office at any time.” However, the most discussed topics were respect and punctuality. “Kids today are more sassy,” said P12. Older generations were raised to respect your boss. According to P7, an employee would not call their boss by their first name; “you used custom courtesies like, Mr. and Ms.” P6 reported that millennials will argue with their bosses. Whereas members of the older generation would not argue, “even if they are wrong, let them be wrong.” You had to respect the decision of the boss. Additionally, I noted that some of the language used in the workplace has become more acceptable, where this was

previously unheard of. Now, people are freer in what they say, but older generations were previously taught to watch what and how you say things in the workplace.

“There is no punctuality,” P5 stated. P6 further stated that millennials could be 2 hours late and forget to call their boss but did not worry about being fired. “When living at home [with parents], it is not a problem with losing your job.” Older generation workers only called out if there was an emergency or they were sick. Nevertheless, to accommodate the lack of punctuality, P10 commented that organizations adjusted work schedules to accommodate younger people who do not want to get up early.

Organizations are now having work schedules that begin later in the day when it used to be a strict schedule of 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Everyone would start work and leave at the same time. There was a shift in the work schedule by stating that younger people were taking a Saturday schedule so they could have a day off during the week. P6 agreed, “organizations are opening on weekends to accommodate millennials.” The theme suggests that organizations have changed the work schedules to make it more convenient for the younger generation’s lack of punctuality.

Emergent Theme 4: Employee Benefits

In theme 4, I identified pay structure, paid time off, and retirement funds (401(k)/pensions) as relevant organizational policy changes that affected the older generation worker. Many noted that their pay structure changed and felt that millennials are being hired at much higher salaries. P10 noted that their organization implemented a pay structure change. P4, P9, P10, and P12 discussed the changes in salary increases and bonuses. They noted that the salary increases were smaller, and bonuses were taxed, so

there was not much of a salary increase each year. There was also concern about the amount of money older generation workers are making, as opposed to millennials. P5 stated, “millennials are making more money than older generations. They are throwing money at the millennials.” This is causing conflicts. “Older generations know millennials make more money,” said P10. As noted by the participants, millennials are entering into organizations with more education and can demand more money. P17 reported that organizations “hire people with college degrees versus experienced because they will bring something new to the table.” And because of their increased education, organizations hire millennials at higher levels.

One participant noted the changes to their paid time away from work. “We used to have all of the major holidays off,” said P10. Organizations have “taken sick days away.” P10 stated that you could previously accumulate sick days and be out of the office for extended periods of time:

Now you must have a doctor’s note if you are out 5 days straight and must go out on temporary disability if you are out more than 10 days; then your pay is cut to 66% of your salary. Previously, you could be out for a few months and receive your full pay. Instead of having sick days, employees are given a set amount of paid time off (PTO) days. Everything is a PTO bank.

Because the older generations are closer to retirement than the younger generations, retirement funds are vital to them. This is especially true for employees who have been working in the same organization for many years. “A lot of the long tenure employees have a pension,” P15 stated. P13 also noted that older generation workers

could work for an organization and would have a pension when they retired if they were there for a specific number of years. However, P10 observed that there are no pensions for new hires. Participants also noted that there are changes to their 401(k), “401(k) used to be matched [by the company] dollar for dollar, then went to a 50% match [by the company]”, said P4. Now there is no company-matching in their organization.

Emergent Theme 5: Recruiting

In theme 5, the most dominant change in recruiting policies that the participants felt were directly focused on the millennial generation was that the entire recruiting and hiring process is now online. “Hiring practices have changed since attracting and retaining millennials,” said P7. All participants stated that their organizations now recruit via online platforms. P16 commented that there is no more getting hired by word of mouth, because “all recruiting is online.” Starting from the advertisement of the job posting through the interviewing process, everything is done online and there are no more opportunities to help applicants get hired. Organizations are now recruiting through Indeed, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. P9 stated that their organization posts job openings on every platform that is available to post on. It was also noted that hiring managers can distinguish between who is applying for jobs based on the platform in which they submit their application. “Most of the younger people apply for jobs via Facebook or Instagram, where many of the older people will use LinkedIn or Indeed,” P9 stated. Some participants felt that this gave the older generation worker an unfair advantage because they may not be aware that these options are available or not know how to use them. Most older people will not go to Facebook to apply for a job.

Additionally, the older generation worker may have an outdated resume and not know they need to add an email address. “Resumes should have an email address and a Twitter handle,” according to P6. Additionally, there is no human interaction unless a candidate makes it to the final interview stage. According to P16, “now you do not even meet the person you are interviewing until the final stage.” Communication with the applicants has also changed. It is now done via text messaging, email, or direct messages from online platforms. P9 stated that applicants are contacted via email or text. “I need to put my credentials on the email and texts when communicating to get the older applicant to respond back.” Otherwise, the older generation worker may think the message was spam.

Another finding related to recruiting policy changes was the qualifications necessary for job positions. “Older people were high school graduates and worked their way up,” P17 stated. The people being hired now for jobs that previously only required a high school diploma are college graduates. Organizations have raised their qualification standards and it has affected the older generation worker. Based on the research data, older generations would start a job after graduating high school, gain experience, then could move to another job because of that experience. Once they graduated from high school, they did not have the option to go to college because they could not stay with their parents and not work. According to P4, “parents are financially taking care of the younger generation because they are not leaving home.” P6 agreed that millennials “do not care because they stay at home, living with their parents.” And because they are staying home longer, they can go to school longer. P7 stated that the older generations had to balance providing for their families and going to school, so they were doing their

homework during their lunch breaks. Whereas “millennials are staying home until their 30s.” In addition, this makes it difficult for the older generation worker who was hired in an organization with a high school diploma, worked in the job for many years, and then was laid off. Now the older generation worker does not have the education level that is needed for their same position at any organization, even though they have more experience than a millennial. P17 said, “the experienced people did not have college degrees.” Where are P16 noted, “younger people come onto the job with education and do not have the experience.” This was also an issue when applying for positions within the company.

Emergent Theme 6: Increased Reliance on Technology

According to the research data, technology was the most frequently referenced change. P7 reported that technology is the key to some of the generational divide. P6 felt that there was less reliance on computers prior to millennials entering the workplace and now almost all aspects of their job are technology-based. This has led to increased frustration with the participants. P9 responded:

I am frustrated with having to do things completely different, such as conducting presentations to more people over a Zoom call. I had to learn how to use Zoom and PowerPoint, as well as learn how to use both while entertaining questions during the call. Knowing there was a big crowd listening to you even if the camera is off.

“Meetings were in person, in a conference room, with hard copies of the presentation,”

P15 added.

Furthermore, because of the increased use of technology, participants felt that they lost a sense of camaraderie. P11 felt like the workplace is less personal. Each desk used to have a visitor's chair for coworkers who wanted to stop by and chat. Now, we "have a mobile file cabinet with a cushion instead."

Customer Service

The research data showed that technology has also changed the way participants communicated with customers. P9 stated, "communication has uplifted with all the different technology." Participants noted that customer service has changed using technology to communicate with customers. "It is totally different how organizations reach out to customers," stated P6. Customers used to go into an office building, speak with a receptionist, and receive personal attention. P10 stated that customers do not get that personal touch they once had because "everything is done online or over the phone." P6 also voiced concern with using technology to store customer information instead of storing on paper in a file cabinet. "We have lost a customer's information, and there was no way to retrieve it. And, what if an electronic piece of information gets into the wrong file?"

Participants were concerned about customer service, especially those in sales because it ultimately impacts their financial status. People have become another name and voice over the phone. P10 stated that customers do not feel valued anymore. They feel like they are just a number. Also, technology is also being used to gather personal information about customers with the increased use of social media. "People have been fired for viewing a client's information on LinkedIn," said P6.

Employee Communication

Participants also noted that technology has changed the way they communicate with others in the organization. P14 reported that coming into the office was previously based on the need to communicate with others in the office. However, P9 noted, “a lot of group chats are being used for staff purposes and communication.” Texting would have previously been frowned up at work, but now it is done all the time to communicate with coworkers. Overall, participants noted that organizations are using technology to communicate with employees, whereas previously there was more face-to-face communication. Now organizations are using different platforms to communicate with employees that might not have been used in the past. Most meetings are held virtually and no longer in a conference room.

Work/Life Balance

The introduction of laptops shifted the work/life balance. Most of the participants stated that they went from desktops to laptops in the workplace. P9 stated, “carrying the laptop around makes it easier.” But that enabled employees to work outside of the office and potentially working longer hours. P4 commented, “I take my laptop home and continue to work from there.” However, according to P5, mostly younger people take their laptops home and continue to work. This is attributed to the thought that millennials do not have a family to take care when they get home. However, P14 noted that employees having laptops gives employees the ability to work from home and not be “punished due to family responsibilities.”

Participants enjoyed this shift in the organizational culture. P6 stated, that organizations set the tone of the culture and the “tone is [to give employees] more flexibility.” With new generations, the demands for flexibility and the ability to work from home has increased. Many participants agreed that flexibility has become essential as they are taking care of children, as well as elderly parents. Having the increased flexibility to handle personal matters without fear of retribution or not getting their work done, has enabled participants to have a better work/life balance. In addition, it reduced their time to commute to work and they felt more productive. Lastly, it gave participants more time to consider other aspects of life besides work and family. P15 noted that millennials bring more social awareness and focus on the environment. “Older people never considered green energy. The green energy helped to educate employees on things they could do that were environmentally friendly. The millennials were willing to work on it and start some green initiatives.”

Emergent Theme 7: Workplace Environment

In theme 7, the dominant change that participants experienced since millennials entered the workplace was the layout of the office space. Most of the participants responded that they went from having a cubicle to now only having a desk in an open space. P5 attributed this change to millennials, “moving from cubicles to open space to support millennials.” Similarly, P14 stated that the changes were implemented to help facilitate openness which the younger generation is probably more accustomed to. Because of moving to open space, participants felt there was less privacy and reduced opportunity for personalizing their space. P17 commented, “nothing is done in private

anymore.” If you need a private space, you go to a conference room. However, P16 noted that the conference rooms were removed. Regarding personalization, P14 noted that employees no longer had an assigned desk, so family pictures that once adorned desks no longer exist. P4 stated, “[I] do not want a locker, breakout space, or have to take items home every day.”

According to the participants, these changes have also impacted those in management roles. P17 noted that managers did not get the best seats and got the same space as their subordinates. Participants felt that this contributed to the decreased respect level for management. “Respect level is different,” P7 added. Managers are part of the team and not just someone who is managing the team. “There is little barrier between management levels.” Managers were not previously expected to work alongside of their subordinates, but that has changed. Managers now need to explain more to younger people than giving them a directive, according to P17.

In addition to open space, organizations have also put in lounge areas with various games. “We have a ping pong table, foosball, and Wii machines. I am enjoying the free snacks that are stocked in the lounge area,” said P14. It took participants time to get used to, but they are now taking advantage of taking a break. In addition, some organizations have put in podiums for people to work while standing. P5 noted their organization is now “using podiums where you can put your laptop on and stand up.” This also contributes to healthier lifestyle habits where employees are not sitting all day. “We are able to stretch our legs,” P14 commented.

Participants attributed these changes to organizations' attempt at attracting millennials. P11 and P13 agreed that organizations changed the way of attracting candidates to make it more appealing. P13 stated that younger people are "demanding changes in the workplace accommodations, like meeting places, places to relax, having coffee or tea." There are more collaborative style meeting places, with whiteboards to communicate more openly with one another. The removal of assigned seating was another noteworthy comment. P14 noted that you can reserve the desk you want and can sit next to a friend, as opposed to sitting where your manager wanted you to sit.

In summary, besides the lack of privacy and personalization of the individual work area, I observed that the participants did not mind the changes to the work environment. While all were used to having their own workspace, they could decorate with family pictures and personal items, many understood why organizations decided to make these changes. In P15's organization, "there were a lot of retirements and they needed to replace them with young talent." Organizations also needed to establish or maintain their relevancy in their industry, so they had to make changes to attract new hires. As P5 stated, organizations are making changes according to what has worked for Google and Microsoft. This was a common observation among the participants.

Discrepant Case 1: No Personal Effect

I designated the millennial-based policy changes not having a personal impact on one participant as a discrepant case. P10 observed that their workplace had made some policy changes, such as the work schedule and work attire, but the changes did not have any real impact on them. One learns to adapt and "this is how it is." Organizations try to

keep up with the changes and have become just “like everyone else in the industry but forgot what made us the head of our industry.” While these changes were taking place, P10 did not feel like the changes were causing a personal effect, due to the tenured time with the company. P10 still felt valued and properly compensated. This experience with the organizational changes affected the older generation worker was nonconforming to the rest of the data, which resulted in classifying this as a discrepant case.

Discrepant Case 2: No Organizational Cultural Effect

Only one participant reported that there was no change in the culture; therefore, I designated this as a discrepant case. P8 stated,

The culture is the same. Millennials are not coming in trying to make changes; they want to get along with the other generations. They are smart and have come into the organization and done well. The organization treats everyone equally.

This experience with not observing any changes in the organizational culture was also nonconforming to the rest of the data, which resulted in classifying this as a discrepant case.

Summary

The participants’ responses to the interview questions helped me to develop the seven emergent themes to address the research question: What are the lived experiences of older generation workers related to management decisions and workplace policies directly focused on the millennial generation. The emergent themes of generational differences, appearance, professional etiquette, employee benefits, recruiting, increased reliance on technology, and workplace environment provide a comprehensive

understanding of what millennial-based organizational changes have affected the older generation workers in a multigenerational workplace, and represent the seven key findings of this research.

The discrepant cases of the changes having no personal effect and the changes having no effect on the organizational culture were outliers and noteworthy. There was one participant for each discrepant case that did state that there were changes within the workplace that were millennial-based, but each participant did not feel that there were any direct impacts on them personally or to the overall organizational culture, respectively. Both experiences were nonconforming to the rest of the research data.

In Chapter 5, I explain how these themes relate to previous research. The data resulted in the exploration of the lived experiences of older generation workers who work in a multigenerational organization that has implemented policy changes, based on the millennial generation. I interpret the results, describe the limitations of the study, provide recommendation for future studies, discuss implications for social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of the older generation worker in a multigenerational workplace that had made millennial-focused changes. To obtain research data, I interviewed 14 participants who were members of the older generations (traditionalist, baby boomer, and Generation X) who worked in different, multigenerational organizations throughout the United States. The study was needed to narrow the gap in understanding how organizational changes based on one generation affect other generations in a multigenerational workplace, and, as an outcome, provide managers with a more complete view when making decisions and changing organizational policies.

There were seven key findings that emerged:

1. **Generational differences:** Participants agreed that it is important to have the younger generations in the workplace, and they noted that there was cooperation among the generations; however, they felt that management catered to millennials and were feeling ignored.
2. **Appearance:** Participants felt that appearance in the workplace is a reflection on an employees' commitment to work and that organizations need to enforce more professional work attire, such as business casual, as well as teaching younger generation employees what is appropriate to wear.
3. **Professional etiquette:** Participants agreed that there is a lack of professional etiquette, namely respect levels and punctuality, in today's workplace.

4. Employee benefits: Participants were concerned that changes in employee benefits, such as pay structure, paid time off, and retirement plans, had negatively impacted their ability to retire at an earlier age because they could not afford to stop working.
5. Recruiting: Participants wanted comparable considerations when organizations were looking to fill both internal and external job positions that were afforded to the younger generation by considering their experience as important as their education level.
6. Increased reliance on technology: Participants expressed concern with the impact that organizations' increased reliance on technology has on communication and recruiting but agreed that this had helped to increase their work/life balance.
7. Workplace environment: Participants agreed that the office layout had changed from having cubicles with desks to open, shared space in the work environment because organizations wanted to move in an innovative direction and stay relevant in the industry, but they did not like the lack of privacy and not having their own space to personalize.

Interpretation of Findings

Generational Differences

It is inevitable that newer generations will enter the workplace and older generations will retire; that is the cycle of life. Accommodating the needs of all employees is a critical yet difficult task for organizational leaders. Participants shared this

sentiment and sympathized with organizational leaders on this dilemma. However, that did not negate their feelings of being ignored by these organizational leaders, whom they felt were focused on the younger generations' needs. Each employee brings value to the workplace, whether it is traditional knowledge or innovative ideas. Participants wanted organizational leaders to consider the wants and needs of all employees, regardless of their age.

Participants noted that younger people have a different mindset from the older generation, and that has changed the culture. However, researchers do not agree on the degree to which generational differences impact the workplace culture. Some researchers have found that there is insufficient evidence of generationally based differences (e.g., Clark, 2015; Constanza & Finkelstein, 2015); whereas others have found that there is an abundance of evidence (e.g., Lyons et al., 2015). Participants identified generational differences based on the traits they observed in younger generations. Many of the millennial traits reported by DeVaney (2015) were also noted in my participants' responses. Some of these traits included being collaborative, civic minded, entitled, and optimistic. Similarly, participants noted confidence, achievement focused, family focused, and technological, as noted by Hall (2016).

Despite the generational differences, there were mostly positive responses to having millennials in the workplace. All the participants felt that the younger generation workers were needed for organizations to be able to sustain as well as elevate themselves in the marketplace. They also agreed that workplace culture would have to change to attract and retain younger generation workers. However, there were mixed feelings on the

degree of the generational divide. Some participants felt that the generational divide was closing, others felt that it was getting bigger, and a few felt that it was the same. As Riggs (2017) noted, conflicts arise from different generational values, ethics, and communication styles in multigenerational workplaces.

Appearance

Participants wanted a defined business casual dress code that is enforced by management. I have found that organizations have relaxed the dress code over the years. This trend began with being able to wear jeans on Fridays and went to being able to wear jeans on any day. This change in policy has contributed to a more relaxed workplace; however, employees can become too relaxed and not take their work seriously. In addition, each generation has a different perspective of what is appropriate to wear in the workplace, so the definition of business casual is based on the employee's interpretation.

Participants contended that how a person dresses is representative of themselves, as well as the organization they work for, which is supported by the findings of Botrel Vilela (2021) that a dress code can be meaningful in relation to organizations' communication with customers and employees' identity. However, because the younger generations are driving the changes that organizations are making and they do not want, or understand, what the older generations consider to be business casual, participants noted that the dress code policies are not enforced or have changed to more relaxed attire. This confirms Talwar and Mahajan's (2019) finding that organizations are implementing a casual dress code because the younger generations want a less formal dress code in the workplace. My research data confirmed that the dress code has become more casual in

today's workplace. Furthermore, the participants noticed that there was a difference in the definition of what is appropriate work attire among the generations. Participants stated that wearing a suit to work was no longer necessary, even though some participants continued to wear suits because they felt that this attire was more professional when meeting with customers. However, all the participants agreed that business casual was the most appropriate and what the members of the younger generation were wearing could not be considered business casual. For example, one participant noted that the younger generation felt that leggings were appropriate, which the older generation disagreed with. Becton et al. (2014) confirmed this finding by stating that members of each generation in the workplace gave themselves an over 90% compliance rating with their organizations' dress code. Therefore, compliance to the dress code is subjective.

While Becton et al.'s (2014) findings stated how employees see themselves, my findings illustrate how employees see their colleagues' appearance. Based on the research data, I found that organizations have updated their policies to relax the dress code or relaxed the enforcement of the existing policies, and this is causing tension in the workplace because of differing opinions on what is appropriate attire in a professional setting. Dress code policies are an example of where differing or unclear expectations can cause confusion in the workplace (Dixon, 2021). The older generation workers do not want to return to the formal attire of wearing suits but want organizations to provide a clear definition of business casual and enforce the dress code policies. Participants felt that implementing a clearly defined dress code would raise the professionalism within the organization and influence the younger generations to take their jobs more seriously.

Professional Etiquette

Participants passionately expressed that they felt the absence of professionalism in today's workplace, with punctuality and respect levels being the main sources of contention. These findings are supported by current literature (e.g., Dixon, 2021) and add information to the current body of knowledge. In previous years, most employees started and ended their workday around the same standard hours, such as 9–5. In today's workplace, the times that employees work vary. Participants found that they must accommodate the lack of urgency to begin on time. My personal rule is to begin a meeting no later than 3 minutes after the start time to accommodate those who arrived on time as well as those who will arrive late. Participants want to management to lead by example as well as reinforce professional etiquette, namely punctuality and respect for all employees.

Punctuality

Because the growth and success of an organization are dependent on its employees, it is critical that employees are punctual and work the number of hours defined by the organization (Shah et al., 2020). Punctuality shows the workers' seriousness for the job that they do (Adisa et al., 2021). Participants supported both findings by discussing how they felt about organizations changing their work schedule policies to accommodate younger generation workers who had difficulty with arriving to work within the standard 9–5 work hours. Shah et al. (2020) defined absenteeism as a habitual pattern of absence from a duty or obligation, and it is assumed as a major indicator of poor performance. Absenteeism happens when an employee is habitually late

or engages in activities that are not work related. Participants felt that changing this policy contributed to the lack of professionalism within the workplace because it was not putting the needs of the organization first and allowed the younger employees to do what they wanted to do. They noted that, in previous years, if employees were continually late for work, they would be fired instead of having their hours changed. Older employees are ensuring that they are showing to work a little earlier than their work shift so that they can begin working on time, whereas the younger employees are not as concerned. This is causing conflict within the workplace because organizational leaders have made allowances for tardiness.

Furthering the findings by Shah et al. (2020), organizations have also encouraged employees to engage in activities that are not work related by installing lounge areas within the workplace. Participants confirmed that their workplaces now had lounge areas where they could get coffee, play games, or watch TV. This area was meant for employees to take a break, socialize, and have fun. However, participants supported the findings of Ranganathan (2018) that all members of the multigenerational workforce might not have the same perception towards workplace fun. Older generation workers expect to go to work and do their jobs for the allotted time, and when they leave work, they can have fun during their personal time. Ranganathan found that the younger employees stated that fun activities at work help them to be more creative, allow them to withdraw from stress, keep them focused, improve the level of understanding with coworkers, and increase productivity. Participants were originally skeptical of participating in the lounge area activities because of their traditional thoughts about the

workday. They noted that the lounge areas in the workplace took some time to get used to because they felt awkward relaxing out in the open at work. However, in support of Ranganathan's findings, they realized that it is fine to take a break, as it gave them time to unwind and continue to be more productive.

Respect Levels

Participants supported the findings of Smeak (2020), acknowledging that they were raised to respect authority and they respected the hierarchical structure in the workplace. Participants wanted the younger generation to have the same respect level for authority. They recognized that because of the different generational values and ethics, the younger generation did not have the same respect level for management. However, participants also had a difficult time with adhering to this with their millennial managers, which is supported by Taylor's (2018) findings that millennials believe that they are not respected because they are young. This is the challenge that organizations face with having multiple generations in the workplace. Nevertheless, participants want organizations to stop catering to the younger generations and to consider their needs. This finding confirmed the idea that organizations must change, adapt, and embrace the generational differences in the multigenerational workplace (Calk & Patrick, 2017; Stewart et al., 2017).

Employee Benefits

As a result of changes to pay structure, paid time off, and retirement plan policies, participants expressed concern about their ability to retire. Participants wanted to be able to retire comfortably and continue to work if they desired, not because they had no

choice. However, changes in employee benefits, such as having a 401(k) instead of a guaranteed pension, have older generation workers worried that they will have to push out their retirement plans. Each of these changes has a profound impact on the multigenerational workplace because the younger generation workers are not as concerned about sick leave and retirement plans as the older generation workers, and this has become a source of contention.

Pay Structure

Participants want to be offered the same salaries that the younger generations are being offered. They have noted that the younger generations are hired with significantly higher salaries and less experience than they have, for doing the same job. Having a fair salary structure and job security are key factors for organizations to focus on to maintain a competitive multigenerational workplace; leaders must be free from perceptual bias and treat all generations fairly (Satpathy et al., 2019). Additionally, they are not receiving higher increases in salary and bonus when compared to previous years. This is supported by Cote's (2019) finding that employee salary and compensation have decreased from 44% to 35% due to a decrease in bonus payout, while yearly salary increases have remained the same as in previous years. This significant difference in salary has discouraged the older generation workers. They view the younger generations as having less responsibilities at work and personally, yet they see them as making more money than the older generations whose members have greater responsibilities at work and personally.

Paid Time Off (PTO)

Participants felt that the paid time off policy changes had a profound effect on their job security. Paid sick leave is critical to the health of older workers (Ghilarducci & Farmand, 2020). Older workers are more susceptible to becoming sick, and not having paid sick leave poses a risk to the organization, as well as to public health overall. Workers cannot afford to take time off if they become sick, and they are in fear of losing their job if they do. With older workers already in fear of losing their jobs to younger generation workers because they lack the same skill set, they are also afraid to become sick. Therefore, they will continue to go to work even though they are sick, and according to Ghilarducci and Farmand (2020), this is a public health concern.

Retirement Plan

Participants were concerned about how long they would have to continue to work until they had enough money to retire comfortably. Baby boomers are on the verge of retirement and are more concerned about pensions and security benefits than any other generation (Rajput et al., 2019). The participants corroborated this sentiment. A major concern was that pensions no longer existed, and they must rely on 401(k) savings plans. Therefore, they no longer have the certainty of how much money they will have in the future. This uncertainty contributed to the angst that the participants were feeling about their future in their organizations.

Recruiting

Participants wanted comparable considerations when organizations are looking to fill both internal and external job positions that are afforded to the younger generation by

considering their experience as important as their education level. Organizations have implemented online recruiting strategies that include job advertisements, application intake, and applicant communication via social media platforms. Moving the recruiting process online gives the older generation applicant an unfair disadvantage because they are not as tech savvy as the younger generations. Participants noted that while millennials may be more comfortable with an online application process, members of the older generation are not as comfortable with technology and may struggle with applying for jobs and the interviewing process being solely online. DeVaney's (2015) finding of millennials using their technical ability to search social media for the answers they need aligns with my research findings in that the participants would not have used social media platforms such as Facebook to look for a job. Participants were aware of sites that are specific to job searches, such as LinkedIn or Indeed, but searching for a job on Facebook or Instagram was also new information to me. In addition, organizations have a social media presence where people can find additional information about the organization. Participants commented that they experienced their pictures being taken at organization-wide events and being posted online. They felt that this helped the organization attract new employees by seeing what the organization offers, which is consistent with the perspective of Kuhl (2014), who stated that social networking can be the best branding tool for organizations. Organizations benefit from employees sharing their positive experiences online. However, not all members of the older generations are comfortable with their pictures being posted on an organizational website.

Participants noted that younger generations are more educated than the older generations, which aligned with DeVaney (2015) who stated that the level of degree and rate in which millennials are obtaining their college degrees are greater than the previous generations. However, this did not align to Smeak's (2020) findings of Generation Z witnessing an increase in education costs and skyrocketing student loan debt, so they are turning to work experience over education. Most of the participants noted that they only obtained a high school diploma, but similar jobs to theirs now require a bachelor's degree. Raising the education level for job positions has hindered the older generations from moving to new positions or being hired in organizations. Furthermore, because of the college degree requirement, the starting pay for these positions has significantly increased. Consequently, you now have current employees doing the same job that have a vastly different level of experience with an unbalanced pay rate. The older generation workers with more experience are receiving less pay for the same position than the younger generation workers with less experience and greater pay.

Because millennials are willing to change jobs more frequently (Calk & Patrick, 2017; DeVaney, 2015), the older generations are left behind with less mobility options. As a result, participants seek the same training opportunities that they witnessed being given to the millennials, which also leads to more promotion opportunities. They recognized that the younger generations could move around within the organization trying to gain more experience and network with others. This provides the younger generation with the right tools to move into leadership roles, which aligns to Folarin's (2021) finding that organizational leaders are seeking the right steps to develop

millennials in leadership roles. However, participants want to be recognized for their experience and want to learn new information for their professional growth, which is supported by Riggs' (2017) in that organizational leaders need to nurture the growth in leadership for the older generations. In addition, Hall (2016) found that organizational leaders must develop training and development methods that foster employee collaboration, which the participants agreed that it would be beneficial for everyone to have the different generational employees learn from one another. This is furthered supported by Njemanze's (2016) suggestion of establishing reciprocal mentoring relationships where both younger and older generation workers can learn from one another.

Increased Reliance on Technology

Participants voiced concern about how the increased reliance on technology has replaced some of the personalization with customers and employee communication but liked that it has given them the ability to move towards a greater work/life balance. For example, instead of communicating with customers or coworkers via telephone, people now send a text or email message. This removes the personal touch that some customers and employees like to have. This is especially true for members of the older generations who are used to being able to place a telephone call or meeting in-person for information and clarity. However, participants noted that increased reliance on technology in the workplace gave them the ability to conduct the same work remotely and provided a greater work/life balance. Employees can access their work from any location, while

potentially taking care of their personal responsibilities, which has become increasingly important to everyone.

Shearmur (2017) recognized that the key factor that influenced the shift in the traditional workplace was the revolution of communication technologies. My research data corroborated this finding because participants discussed that much of the communication with customers, coworkers, and organizational leaders is done via technology, such as email, Microsoft Teams, and text messaging. They noted that most of their team communication is done in a group chat instead of face-to-face communication. Economy (2019) projected that there will be a decline in in-person meetings and video conferencing will increase and my participants confirmed this change has happened when they stated that they experience some anxiety with having virtual meetings instead of their preference for in-person meetings. This is supported by the findings of Kuhl (2014) and Singh (2014) that older generations prefer face-to-face communication over technology and Kuhl's finding that millennials prefer to communicate electronically. These changes have caused angst with the older generation workers and agreed that this has drastically changed the workplace culture.

Participants remarked that the increased use of technology had changed how and where they work, which enabled them to move towards a greater work/life balance. This finding is supported by Haeger and Lingham (2014) who stated that increased use of technology in both work and life, has shifted with the advancement of technology. They credited this change with the younger generations being in the workplace, which is supported by Economy's (2019) finding that millennials will change the workplace by

bringing more technology and flexibility, such as working remotely. Participants liked that organizational leaders changed their desktops to laptops because it gave them more flexibility to work from different locations, they still felt that the rate in which the increased use of technology was frustrating because they were not as tech-savvy as the younger generations; further confirming Riggs's (2017) report that evolving technology exaggerates employee conflicts. It also confirms Njemanze's (2016) finding of there is a fundamental difference between millennials and older generation in relation to technology.

Workplace Environment

Participants had mixed feelings about the changes in their workplace location. They were not happy about not having their own cubicle or assigned desk, where they could have their personal items, such as family pictures or their own office supplies. However, they understood that this was done to promote more collaboration, working together with team members, and to emulate what are considered innovative and trendy organizations, such as Google. Changing the workplace to an open space environment is on trend with accommodating millennials and is supported by Economy's (2019) finding that organizational leaders created more open office layout to accommodate millennials' preference of more teamwork. Koteswari and Pushpam (2018) found that millennials want to work for Google because they encourage innovation, provide freedom at work, and offer the best salary. This aligns to my participants concluding that the organizational leaders are trying to compete with other organizations, such as Google, to attract millennials and are making these change to do so.

Participants missed being able to personalize their workspace but liked that their organizational leaders became more flexible with working from remote locations and not having to come into the office. Participants noted that being able to work remotely gave them more work/life balance and reduced the pressure of having to commute to and from work. This aligned to Haeger and Lingham's (2014) finding of baby boomers, Generation X, and millennials using technology to concurrently manage work and life, as well as Nakrošienė et al.'s (2019) finding that it helps maintain employee work-family balance. However, having this flexibility also has its downside as reported by Nakrošienė et al. because employees tend to work more days and longer hours, which negatively impacts an individual's work-life balance. The participants agreed that they are working longer hours because of the flexibility of working from any location.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are the weaknesses of the study that are out of the researchers control and could affect the conclusion drawn from the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). However, the researcher must determine how to minimize the impact of the limitations of the study. In a phenomenological study, the views and experiences of the participants are the only source of data (Goulding, 2005). Therefore, participants' views are taken as facts and the research must only select those who have experienced the phenomenon under study to participate. The following is a description of the limitations for my study.

In my study, the interview was the only source of data. I conducted audio only interviews with 14 members of the older generation who currently work in different multigenerational workplaces that have made millennial-based changes. This was to

collect data that describes the participants' experiences and not to attempt to analyze or explain the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Even though small samples are inherent in qualitative research, having a smaller number of participants limits the transferability of the study (Bourne, 2015). Creswell (2005) stated that as the number of participants increases, the researcher's ability to offer an in-depth description decreases. To mitigate this limitation, I chose a smaller number of participants so that I can offer an in-depth description, which is the critical point of a phenomenological study.

In addition, to ensure the participants felt comfortable with sharing information, I conducted the interviews via Microsoft Teams, but chose to not turn the cameras on. None of the participants were known to me and I wanted the participants to feel comfortable in sharing information without worrying about how they looked or being nervous because the cameras were on. While I was unable to see participants' facial expression and pick up nonverbal cues, I was able to have the participants delve further into their experiences without any visual distractions.

Because I work in a multigenerational workplace that has made millennial-based changes, I selected participants who were not known to me or worked in my organization to reduce the risk of bias. To further mitigate the risk, at the beginning of each interview, I shared my background and my reasoning for choosing this research topic. I informed the participants that I would only ask questions provided in the interview protocol, along with potential follow-up questions for clarification on their responses.

Recommendations

In my study, I chose the qualitative phenomenological research design, which uses a small number of participants. However, quantitative research involves a larger sample size and obtains more generalizable results. Perhaps future research can employ quantitative research designs to garner a broader range of data.

Another recommendation is to select participants within different regions of the U.S. and other countries. One participant discussed how the policy changes varied by region within the organization within the U.S. For example, the start time for work was different in the Midwest, as opposed to the east coast because of varying access to public transportation, as well as traffic patterns. All the participants in my study worked on the east coast. In addition, the enforcement of policies varied depending on working in the regional offices or the organizations' headquarters. Therefore, this would be another variable to explore. Future research could explore the lived experiences of the older generations in other countries outside of the U.S. This could lead to further exploration on how culture influences organizational changes and culture.

Policies based on demographics was another key topic of discussion that is worthy of further exploration. My study had an even mix of woman and men, however, some of the woman expressed that the woman's dress code was antiquated. For example, one participant discussed that her organization had policies on the length of the skirt, as well as the length of the heel on women's shoes. Also, the policies on hairstyles were not diverse. For example, leaders in one organization had amended their policy to allow women to wear their natural hair. This policy was specific to women of color.

Conducting further research incorporating employee demographics will provide another layer of inquiry into the employees' lived experiences.

Lastly, I grouped all the members of the older generations into one group. Future research could collect data based on specific generation membership, including Generation Z. Similarly, the participants in my study were from a variety of organizations within different industries. Future research could focus on specific industries and compare the results between the different industries.

Implications

Participants were very passionate about their experiences in the multigenerational workplace. All participants understood that organizational leaders must hire members of the younger generations to bring in innovative idea and the policies must change with the times. However, because of the focus on the younger generations, the older generations are learning to adapt to the changes, instead of feeling being incorporated during decision making. Employees are working into their late 60s and 70s (Clark, 2017). Therefore, the older generation workers bring experience and the traditional knowledge that the younger generation workers do not possess. As a result, understanding how the millennial-focused management decisions and policy changes have affected the older generation worker in a multigenerational workplace has potential impact for positive social change at the individual, family, organizational, and societal levels.

Positive Social Change Implication

Participants expressed that they felt valued within their organization based on their tenured experience. However, they also expressed that they want opportunities for

personal growth. Because they do not have the ability to continue their education and not work, they find it difficult to find the time and resources to learn new skills and/or earn a degree. This hinders them from moving to higher positions or obtaining an increase in salary. Not only does this affect the individual, but it also effects their family. In addition, not having a perceived fair balance among employees leads to conflict in the workplace and resentment within society. Not considering generational differences could lead to misunderstanding, miscommunication, and mixed signals in the workplace (Sruk, 2020). The findings of my study encourage social change by providing organizational leaders with the expression of the older generations' lived experiences with the millennial-based changes made in the multigenerational workplace. Organizational leaders must consider implementing opportunities for all generations within in the workplace. By taking a broader look at the needs of each generation, organizational leaders will understand how to create a wider variety of programs and implement policies that all employees, thus potentially impacting social change.

Recommendations for Practice

The lived experiences of the older generation worker in a multigenerational workplace that has made millennial-based changes resulted in emergent themes that provide an understanding of how the changes have affected members of the older generation. The theme of appearance relates to the change in what some perceive as professionalism within the workplace and explain an aspect of the generational divide that is not widely discussed in current literature. The theme of employee benefits highlights policy changes that have a greater impact on older generation workers and

provides organizations with direct information on the results of making changes that solely focus on one generation in a multigenerational workplace. The theme of recruiting provides organizations with a different view of their hiring practices and enables organizations to revisit their job qualification requirements to include experiences as equally as education. The themes of generational differences and increased reliance on technology extended the existing body of knowledge by explaining the older generations' perception of the generational differences and the use of technology. Organizational leaders can utilize this additional information to drive the workplace culture that is suitable for all generations. The final theme of workplace environment provides organizational leaders with potential cost savings ideas on their brick-and-mortar workplace, as well as ways to incorporate a more relaxed atmosphere where all generations are collaborative and working together as a team. The recommendations are addressed as part of the findings for each of the themes.

The research data presented how the dominant property of dress code had a significant impact on the theme of appearance. It is recommended that organizational leaders revisit their policies related to appearance that maintains a professional atmosphere suitable for all generations. Clothing styles have changed over the years and why many of the participants felt that wearing suits were too formal in today's workplace, all the participants felt that business casual was the appropriate work attire. In addition, it is recommended that organizational leaders consistently enforce these policies across locations, as well as help to guide the younger employees on the definition of business casual. Organizational leaders must recognize that how an employee dresses is

how they are perceived to feel about their work. Participants indicated that some of the younger generation employees looked like they were not planning to come to work based on how they were dressed and therefore, were not taking their job seriously. In addition, the other properties of facial hair, tattoos, and piercings have become acceptable in the workplace, but not an excess or extreme use. It is further recommended that organizational leaders provide interactive training that explains the purpose of professional work attire and examples of acceptable and nonacceptable attire.

The research data presented properties of pay, paid time off, and retirement funds evolved into the theme of employee benefits; therefore, it is recommended that organizational leaders reevaluate how these policy changes greatly impact the older generations' ability to manage getting older. Participants were concerned about not being able to tend to their physical needs and increased doctor appointments to manage their health. As people get older, they have more health concerns than younger people. Because older generation workers provide a traditional history and critical information based on their experience, organizational leaders must consider their personal needs without penalizing them for ageing. It is recommended that organizational leaders implement employee benefit policies that will help older employees feel safe to properly take care of their health without fear of being negatively impacted.

Research data illustrated how the properties of online recruiting strategies and changes to the qualifications needed to fulfill positions influenced the theme of recruiting. It is recommended that organizational leaders continue to expand their social profile so that all generations can continue to access organizational information online. It

is also recommended that organizational hiring managers review an applicant's experience as equally as they do education. Since there is a significant difference in education levels among the generations, hiring managers cannot choose education with no experience over no education with experience. It is further recommended that organizational leaders relax the education requirements on job qualifications, as well as have in-person interviews before determining an application do not have the educational requirements. Because members of the older generation are still in the job market, they must have an equal opportunity to qualify for jobs within their current organization or new ones.

The research data showed how the properties of generational differences and technology developed the theme of workplace culture. It is recommended that organizational leaders embrace the generational differences and develop policies that are equal to all generations. While this is a very difficult feat, organizational leaders cannot only accommodate the youngest generation in the workplace to take them into the future; they must also accommodate the generations that helped to build their foundation and sustain their business. Participants agreed that the younger generation have innovative ideas, but they also agreed that the traditional history that they possess was just as critical. Furthermore, it is recommended that organizational leaders continue to increase their reliance on technology but provide training opportunities and dedicated time to focus on the training for all generations. Research data demonstrated that members of the older generations were willing to learn new technology, but at a pace they are comfortable with; therefore, it is recommended that organizational leaders offer self-

paced, easy-to-understand, online training material on technology that is being used within the workplace. Employees from each generation can choose which training is relevant to what they want to contribute to their professional and personal growth.

Research data presented the layout of office spaces as the dominant property of the theme workplace environment. It is recommended that organizational leaders have a combination of personal desk space in addition to open desk space. While participants did not have any choice but to embrace this change, many expressed that they miss being able to have their own desk. It is important for employees from all generations to feel comfortable in the work environment and not everyone wants to sit in an open area with a lack of privacy. Having the option of having a personal space versus sitting in an open space provides employees with the choosing according to their preference. This is a small change that can make a big difference in the workplace environment. It is further recommended that organizational leaders have a lounge area and encourage employees to take breaks during the workday. Participants commented that it took some time for them to take advantage of the lounge area because they did not feel comfortable with utilizing the space during work hours. They felt that managers would view them as not performing their job duties during the workday. It is recommended that organizational leaders also utilize the lounge space, so that employees gain an understanding that it is encouraged to take breaks. This will potentially enhance collaboration and develop personal relationships among employees.

Conclusions

Older generation workers provide a critical component in today's workforce. While organizational leaders are being directed to focus on millennials, it is important to not lose sight of members of the older generations. Because people are remaining in the workforce longer than previous times, the older generations' workers bring a rich history to organizations that is necessary to sustain in the marketplace. The study of the effects of millennial-focused management decisions and policy changes in a multigenerational workplace as shown through the lived experiences of the older generations' workers illustrated several factors that contribute to the body of knowledge related to the multigenerational workplace.

The attributes of appearance and employee benefits contribute to the body of knowledge and adds to literature by introducing new aspects for organizational leaders to consider in their multigenerational workplaces. Although available literature supports workplace policies and management decisions on recruiting practices, the workplace culture, and the workplace environment, my study adds to the body of knowledge because it examines the effect of the changes on the older generations within the multigenerational workplace. It also contributes to the literature because through the findings, it emphasized the need for organizations to incorporate the needs and views of the older generations' employees to become leaders in advancing their multigenerational organizations.

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Appendix A: Invitation Email

INVITATION EMAIL

Greetings,

My name is Stephanie Weaver, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. You are invited to take part in a research study about understanding the lived experiences of the older generation in a multigenerational workplace that has made millennial-based changes. The purpose of this study is to explore how millennial-focused changes in the workplace have affected the older generations. I am inviting members of the older generations (traditionalist, baby boomer, and Generation X) who currently work in a multigenerational workplace that has made millennial-based changes to be in the study. Your participation will consist of taking part in a confidential, recorded interview (approximately 1 hour) and reviewing a typed transcription of the interview for accuracy.

If you meet each of the following criteria and might like to take part in this study, please read the attached consent form and reply to this email with the words “I consent” if you choose to participate.

- Birth year falls in one of the following generations: traditionalists (1925-1945), baby boomers (1946-1964), or Generation X (1965-1979).
- Currently work in a multigenerational workplace that has made millennial-based changes.
- Willing to participate in the study.

Additional details regarding the study are included in the consent form. Upon receiving your email with the words “I consent”, I will contact you to schedule the

interview session. Prior to our scheduled interview, I will email the interview protocol that will be used during the recorded session for your review.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you in advance.

Stephanie Weaver

(Consent Form attached)

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Good morning/afternoon/evening,

I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. It is truly appreciated. As a reminder, this research study is to narrow the gap in the lack of knowledge and understanding about how millennial-focused changes in the workplace have affected the older generation. It is designed to give a voice to the older generations for organizations to integrate ideas and perspectives of the older generation workers. Your participation in this study will help organizations understand the effect of millennial-based changes on the older generations so that they can reevaluate these changes, as well take the results of the study into consideration for any further changes to the workplace.

Before we get started, do you have any overall questions or questions regarding the study? I will ask you a few questions to prompt the further discussion. I will take notes as well as record this interview so that I can ensure that I do not miss any information.

Let us get started with the questions.

1. What workplace changes, such as policies, work structure, or workplace environment, have you experienced since millennials have entered your organization (early 2000s)?
2. Why do you believe that management has made these changes?
3. How do you believe organizational leaders determined what changes to make?

4. Please elaborate on how millennial-based changes affected you.
5. Is there any additional information that you would like to provide regarding the millennial-based changes?

We will now discuss the workplace culture.

8. How have the changes affected the workplace culture?
9. Please explain how valued you feel and if your opinion is taken into consideration when changes are being discussed.

The next set of questions are regarding changes that you would like to see implemented in the workplace.

10. Please elaborate on the changes you would like to see implemented.
11. Have you expressed these changes to leadership? If so, what was the response?

If applicable, we will now discuss the additional information that you stated was important to add to this research study.

Once again, thank you very much for taking the time to meet with me for this interview. Please feel free to contact me if there are any questions.