


2015

# Strategies for Transitioning Workforces From Baby-Boomer to Millennial Majorities

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Kimberly Riley

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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2016

Abstract

Strategies for Transitioning Workforces From Baby-Boomer to Millennial Majorities

by

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MBA, Morehead State University, 2002

BA, Ohio University, 1995

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

January 2016

## Abstract

The transition of organizations' workforces from a baby-boomer to a millennial majority in the 21st century has created work-engagement strategy challenges for management. The purpose of this study was to explore the engagement strategies that business managers design and implement that effectively address the generational differences within the workforce. The case study design was appropriate for addressing this study's purpose of exploring the successful experiences of approximately 125 healthcare business managers within a business organization in Huntington, West Virginia. Transformational leadership theory constituted the conceptual framework for this study. Methodological triangulation was used to identify key themes from the participants' interviews, employee training manuals, and job descriptions of the healthcare organization. The key themes that emerged were reverse mentorship, employee work-life balance, and employee feedback expectations. Social change could result from implementing the recommendations of this study to enhance employees' individual qualities such as worth, dignity, and a strong work ethic, thereby catalyzing employees' support of their local communities.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this study to my daughters, Madison and Meredith. You both inspire me every day to be the best that I can be in this world. My prayer is that you each lead a life with God in the Center of your day. “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:6). I love you both! – Mom

## Acknowledgments

I want to thank my family for the amazing support I have received throughout this long process. I would not be where I am today without the family God has placed in my life. Thank you to my husband, Eric, for helping me every day and spending countless hours reassuring me that I would complete this study. Thank you to my parents, Ron and Betty—without your prayers and continual support, this study would have not been possible. Last but not least, my brother, Jason when I wanted to say no more, you would not hear of it.

Thank you, Dr. Steven Munkeby and Dr. Peter Anthony, for having faith in me as a student. You stretched me beyond my limits. Thank you! Thankful to my Lord and Savior, who gave me the knowledge and wisdom to complete this doctoral study. I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me (Phil 4:13).

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

By the end of 2020, 40 million millennials, members of the generation born between 1980 and 2000, will have dominated the workforce, presenting business-process and performance-improvement challenges for organizations (Ferri-Reed, 2012). Business managers are aware of the challenges involved in transitioning the workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority (Duquette, Manuel, Harvey, & Bosco, 2013). During this transition, business managers have been experiencing difficulty in implementing engagement strategies that fit the millennial generation due to the millennials' advancement with technology (Barford & Hester, 2011). As the millennial generation enters the workforce, business managers are adjusting engagement strategies to form a favorable work environment for the multigenerational workforce (Cox & Holloway, 2011). Members of the millennial generation understand the importance of adjusting to the latest technological innovations in order for a business organization to remain competitive in its industry (Holt, Marques, & Way, 2012). In the current information age, millennials want challenges from their organizations (Berens, 2103). Business managers need to understand the qualities of this connected and well-educated generation (Holt et al., 2012).

### **Background of the Problem**

The focus of this research was exploring the gap in engagement strategies that are effective in meeting the needs of a multigenerational workforce (Duquette et al., 2013). Millennials represent a significant portion of the workforce population (Gallicano, Curtin,

& Matthews, 2012). Business managers must understand the style of applied leadership for interacting with the millennial generation (Holt et al., 2012).

The millennial generation consists of the future leaders of business organizations (Smith & Clark, 2010). Millennials are technologically perceptive, having grown up with wireless devices and workplace mobility (Bannon, Ford, & Meltzer, 2011; Heath, Singh, Ganesh, & Taube, 2013). Business managers are investing time and research in engagement strategies as millennials enter the work environment (Ferri-Reed, 2012). The millennial generation is a diverse generation whose members possess technology application skills and abilities in the workplace (Gallicano et al., 2012).

Business managers are transitioning organizations' workforces from baby-boomer majorities to millennial majorities (Balda & Mora, 2011). During this transition, business managers have been managing a multigenerational workforce (Cekada, 2012). Business managers recognize the need for engagement-strategy process changes to close the skill gaps left as baby-boomers retire and millennials take over the workforce ("Closing the Skill Gap," 2012). Therefore, business managers are trying to apply engagement strategies that effectively satisfy the demands of a multigenerational workforce (Duquette et al., 2013).

### **Problem Statement**

In 2011, the millennial generation accounted for 12% of the U.S. labor force; U.S. corporate leaders have been implementing engagement strategies to meet the demands of this tech-savvy workforce (Helyer & Lee, 2012). In 2012, U.S. employers indicated a 45% increase in employee training and cross training to close the skill gaps left as baby-

boomers retire and millennials enter the workforce (Ferri-Reed, 2012). The general business problem is that business managers need to develop engagement strategies that are effective in responding to the generational differences within the workforce (Duquette et al., 2013). The specific business problem is that some business managers lack the engagement strategies required to achieve a smooth transition between a workforce with a majority of baby boomers and a workforce with a majority of millennials.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the engagement strategies that business managers design and implement to shift from a workforce with a majority of baby boomers to a workforce with a majority of millennials in the healthcare industry. The population of the study consisted of approximately 125 business managers within a health care unit in Huntington, West Virginia. The population was appropriate for this study due to managers' experience and diversified workforce of baby boomers and millennials.

This study's contribution to social change derives from its exploration of employee engagement for a diversified and multigenerational workforce in a context of technological advancement (Kaur & Verna, 2011). Business managers and employees of an organization could benefit from effective engagement strategies for a multigenerational workforce (Ferri-Reed, 2012). This study could promote positive social change by addressing employees' individual qualities such as worth, dignity, and a strong work ethic within the effort to foster an engaged workforce (Heath et al., 2013; Meriac, Woehr, & Banister, 2010).

### **Nature of the Study**

Research methodology and design underpin the work and methods used within a study to collect information and understand lived experiences (Bernard, 2013). The qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study. Qualitative methodology involves data collection onsite in a natural setting where the participants experience the phenomenon of interest (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study in light of the identified need to explore engagement strategies that business managers must incorporate in order to transition an organization's workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority.

A quantitative methodology would not have been appropriate because an examination of the relationship between one or more independent and dependent variables would not have addressed the specific business problem (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A mixed-methods methodology would not have been appropriate because of the incorporation of quantitative research in this method, which would have entailed empirical investigation of statistical data and testing of existing theories (Bowen, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In addition, using both quantitative and mixed methods would have required the development and testing of hypotheses, which would not have been relevant to this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Based on the selection of the qualitative methodology, five design options were available: (a) narrative, (b) ethnography, (c) grounded theory, (e) case study, and (f) phenomenology. The case study design was appropriate for this study based on its focus on one specific business organization in a geographic region. In case study research, the

problem is investigated not through one experience, but through a collection of experiences, which allows numerous factors to be discovered and identified in the phenomenon (Yin, 2012). The intent of this single case study was to focus on the needs business managers face concerning the specific business problem within the organization (Bowen, 2008).

The narrative design would not have been appropriate for the study because the focus of this study was on the theory of consciousness, whereas a collection of communicative stories constitutes the framework arising from the participants' self-narrative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Ethnography would not have been appropriate because a systematic study of the comprehensive representation of the group's culture was not required (Yin, 2009). A grounded-theory design would not have been appropriate due to the greater emphasis of my study on materializing theoretical ideas of social sciences and the analysis of the discovery than theory development (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A phenomenological design would not have been appropriate because the focus was not on lived experience of the participants (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Research Question**

The overarching research question for this study was the following: What engagement strategies must business managers establish to transition a workforce from a majority of baby boomers to a majority of millennials?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What must organizational leaders do to transition an older aged team to a younger team?

2. What standards could the organization's leaders establish for an engagement strategy to be effective in the organization?
3. How do you measure workforce transition success?
4. What engagement strategy content will motivate a multigenerational workforce?
5. What engagement strategies are you planning to implement or have you implemented in the transition to a multigenerational workforce?
6. What current employee engagement strategies demonstrate your company's mission and vision for a multigenerational workforce?
7. What do you know will work within an engagement strategy?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Transformational leadership theory constituted the conceptual framework for this study. Transformational leadership theory was applicable to this study because of the focus on complexity and interdependence of leaders' influence on their followers to change expectations or perceptions toward a common goal (Kelloway, Turner, Barling, & Loughlin, 2012). Transformational leadership theory indicates standards for interrelationships such as interdependence to ensure that combined behaviors result in participants exploring experiences regarding transformational characteristics (Constanze, Badger, Fraser, Severt, & Gade, 2012).

Burns developed transformational leadership theory in the 1980s (McCleskey, 2014). Transformational leadership theory can address the strategic indicators that business managers face when transitioning a workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a



millennial majority (Rowold, 2014). An effective organizational framework incorporates engagement strategies to promote better relationships among multigenerational workforce members (Feyrer, 2011).

Transformational leadership theory reveals effective constructs such as intellectual motivation and individual cooperation for reaching organizational leaders' competitive goals (McCleskey, 2014). Transformational leadership theory addresses the difficulty business managers face in developing and deploying applicable engagement strategies to transition a workforce (Rowold, 2014). Transformational leadership theory relates to the characteristics of the engagement strategy phenomena business managers face with a multigenerational workforce (Schuh et al., 2013).

There are gaps in the existing literature on business managers' efforts to transition an organization's workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority in the 21st century (Duquette et al., 2013). Organizational paradigms and leadership practices require collaboration and conflict management in leading a multigenerational workforce (Balda & Mora, 2011). The focus of transformational theory is identifying the engagement strategies that challenge business managers during workforce transition (Cekada, 2012).

### **Operational Terms**

The following definitions served as guides for this qualitative case study.

*Decision making:* Decision making refers to the process of choosing a rational choice from a variety of choices (Bardia, 2010).

*Engagement strategy:* An engagement strategy is an organizational objective that motivates employees through a sustaining and positive working environment to meet the mission and vision of the organization (Pan & Werblow, 2012).

*Multigenerational:* Multigenerational refers to the different values each generation brings to the workforce (Helyer & Lee, 2012).

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

#### **Assumptions**

The assumptions guiding this research study involved an understanding of a paradigm shift developing with engagement strategy changes as the millennial generation enters the workforce (Sawitri & Muis, 2014). An *assumption* stems from inductive reasoning that indicates true and logical outcomes of a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The assumptions made for this qualitative single case study were the following: (a) qualitative research was appropriate for this study (Bernard, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Stake, 2010); (b) there were no confidentiality or anonymity issues with the participants (Cox & Halloway, 2011; Gagnon & Smith, 2013; Hagemann & Stroope, 2013); (c) cultural and environmental factors are inherent and cannot be removed by proper design (Ferri-Reed, 2013; Hagemann & Stroope, 2013; Kaur & Verna, 2011); and (d) because sample size determines variability of the population, the study's sample reflects an appropriate cross-sectional sampling of all available data (Bowen, 2008; Duquette et al., 2013; Yin, 2009).

**Limitations**

The limitations defining the study included semistructured interviews with participants having the appropriate background and ability to retrieve events related to the study (Farago, Zide, & Shahani-Denning, 2013). *Limitations* consist of potential weaknesses that the researcher cannot control (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Limitations exist with participants' perspectives, their meanings, and their experiences presenting a holistic picture (Yin, 2009). In addition, a qualitative approach establishes the existence of themes from data along with the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher to apply the data themes (Plankey-Videla, 2012). The theme data collected from the participants do not have a defined lifespan (Bowen, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Plankey-Videla, 2012).

**Delimitations**

*Delimitations* are plausible boundaries set by the researcher to obtain the desired outcome (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The limited population of the Tri-State area of Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia within one organization in the healthcare industry narrowed the scope of this study. The criteria for judging the success and binding the input of the study included (a) compilation of engagement strategies to meet the needs of a multigenerational workforce, (b) engagement strategies that meet the expectations of the mission of a company, and (c) the positive impact a multigenerational workforce has on the business processes of a company (Duquette et al., 2013; Sawitri & Muis, 2014; Smith & Clark, 2010).

## **Significance of the Study**

### **Value to Business**

This qualitative single case study is of value to business leaders due to some business managers lacking effective engagement strategies to meet the needs of a multigenerational workforce. Employee engagement strategies are an important concern for organizational managers in modern business (Ferri-Reed, 2012). Business managers have to meet the expectations of a high-performance work environment with a diversified workforce (McGinnis, 2011). The millennials, the latest generation of employees to enter the workforce, represent changing employee engagement needs compared to other generations (Sawitri & Muis, 2014). Business managers recognize that employee engagement strategies demonstrate a commitment to a workforce that is willing to meet the mission of the organization (Duquette et al., 2013).

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The potential contribution of this study is to add value to business organizations so that they may attract and maintain a multigenerational workforce, which plays an integral role in the growth and vitality of a business (McGinnis, 2011). Business managers identify the rapid changes occurring with business conditions that the millennial generation advocates, such as responsive technology skills targeting increases in the process development of organizations (Xu, 2009). In addition, the exploration of effective business practices contributes to the assessment of the millennial generation as future leaders of business organizations (Smith & Clark, 2010).

## **Implications for Social Change**

The potential implications for positive social change of this study involve the development of individuals' work environment. Business managers know that business conditions shape the framework of the organization (Smith & Clark, 2010). The work environment can affect employees' ability to excel under any business conditions (Baert & Govaerts, 2012; Bianchi, 2013; Ferri-Reed, 2012). Social improvements arising from this qualitative single case study could promote employees' individual qualities such as worth, dignity, and a strong work ethic. The social benefits of these characteristics add value to employees and their surrounding communities (Baert & Govaerts, 2012).

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

This literature review involves 117 references, of which 110 were peer-reviewed, with 85% of the total sources published less than 5 years from my anticipated graduation date of December 2015. The research question for the study was the following: What engagement strategies must business managers establish to transition a workforce from a majority of baby boomers to a majority of millennials? Therefore, *engagement models*, *engagement strategies*, *multigenerational workforce*, *reverse mentoring*, *cross-generational skills*, *business training*, *performance processes*, *business process strategies*, *transformational leadership theory*, and *business performance* were the key research terms and sources I explored for this qualitative single case study.

My use of research portals resulted in the identification of 85% of the peer-reviewed articles I retrieved. Google Scholar and Google web searches were also part of the search process, along with human resource databases. An extensive search of the

online databases enabled the retrieval of peer-reviewed scholarly materials relevant to the concepts of the study. The databases I searched were Elton B. Stephens Company, Business Source Complete Premier, and ProQuest. The tactics I used to retrieve pertinent materials included search with keywords, subject terms, date of publication, and scholarly or peer-reviewed sources; Boolean search; and concurrent search of multiple databases. Productive search threads included the use of operations and/or combining a subject term and date of publication. The first search of the databases generated 53 articles, dissertations, books, and other materials relevant to the topic area and research process that had been published less than 5 years from the anticipated completion date.

The reviewed literature primarily addressed the theoretical concepts that business managers must establish for millennials to contribute effectively as employees in U.S. workforce. After a thorough review of the literature based on results of the key term search results from Walden's University library, the organization of the literature review consisted of headings for (a) transformational leadership theory, (b) engagement strategies, (c) engagement practices, (d) historical overview, (e) current literature findings, and (d) 21<sup>st</sup>-century performance process strategy. Researchers such as Baert and Govaerts (2012), Constanze et al. (2012), Duquette et al. (2013), Ferri-Reed (2012), Hagemann and Stroope (2013), and Sawitri and Muis (2014) secured the foundation and support for this study.

### **Transformational Leadership Theory**

Transformational leadership theory was applicable to the study's conceptual framework because of its focus on the complexity and interdependence of leaders'

influence on their followers to change expectations or perceptions toward a common goal (Kelloway et al., 2012). Transformational leadership theory applied to the characteristics of the relevant engagement-strategy phenomena that business managers face with a multigenerational workforce (Schuh et al., 2013). Transformational leadership theory identifies the values of interrelationships such as boundaries to ensure that shared behaviors result in participants exploring experiences regarding transformational characteristics (Constanze et al., 2012).

I used transformational leadership theory in this study to explore the engagement strategies that business managers apply with a multigenerational workforce (O'Riordan & Fairbrass, 2014; Schuh, 2013). Organizational paradigms and leadership practices for a multigenerational workforce require collaboration and complex leadership (Balda & Mora, 2011). Baert and Govaerts (2012) argued that business managers cannot rely on incidental engagement strategies; implementing effective engagement performance strategies is essential with a multigenerational workforce.

Transformational leadership theory established the conceptual framework of the study, demonstrating that followers go beyond daily operations to reach the next level of performance and success in meeting the organization's mission (O'Riordan & Fairbrass, 2014; Schuh et al., 2013). Transformational leadership theory helped in identifying the specific business problem, which was that business managers lack engagement strategies to transition a workforce from a majority of baby boomers to a majority of millennials. In addition, transformational leadership theory was useful in addressing the developmental changes that business managers need to implement in order for engagement strategies to

contribute to the needs of the different generations of employees explored in this study (Duquette et al., 2013).

**Transformational indicators.** The transformational leadership theory used in this study depicted the application process indicators that business managers need to implement in engagement strategies for a multigenerational workforce (Kelloway et al., 2012). An engagement strategy framework establishes a business organization's mission statement and values as demanded by stakeholders (Burchell & Cook, 2013). Yin (2009) reinforced the need for case study design to address real-life phenomena encompassing important contextual conditions. An engagement strategy framework should reflect an understanding of the compelling transformational indicators that a business organization faces with the millennial generation workforce (Feyrer, 2011). Constanze et al. (2012) concurred that business organizations have a range of transformational indicators with differences about the dynamics of the workplace among employees.

Transformational leadership theory contributes to the identification of factor indicators that business managers face in transitioning a workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority (Rowold, 2014). This case study research consisted of interviews with a range of business managers in the Tri-state area of Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia. The case study exploration established engagement strategy changes that can meet the needs of the millennial generation (Feyrer, 2011). Furthermore, the qualitative case study explored the concerns facing business managers with a multigenerational workforce and the challenges that exist (Helyer & Lee, 2012).



Transformational leadership theory sets strategies that push to the next level, creating a high-performance level and competitive opportunity for organizations (McCleskey, 2014). An effective organizational framework incorporates engagement strategies to promote better relationships within multigenerational workforces (Feyrer, 2011). Deal, Altman, and Rogelberg (2010) reinforced the importance of a new direction of qualitative research generational phenomena in the workplace to assist business organizations in understanding the experiences, similarities, and differences among generations in the workplace.

**Transformational framework.** The transformational theory used in this study was useful in exploring the engagement strategies that are challenging business managers due to a multigenerational workforce. Transformational leadership theory explores the underlying framework factors needed for an engagement strategy for a multigenerational workforce (Kelloway et al., 2012). Hershatter and Epstein (2010) argued that cross-generational engagement strategies are neither new nor likely to dissipate.

A transformational theory framework bridges the gap of experience and serves as a building block to generate new knowledge as a basis for future research (Yin, 2012). The exploration of this qualitative case study involved a multigenerational workforce, which facilitated the ability to tap into the employees' skills, abilities, and talents demonstrating the need for effective engagement strategies (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Mirvis, 2012). Therefore, transformational leadership theory related to the specific business problem that business managers lack engagement strategies for transitioning a multigenerational workforce (Schuh et al., 2013).

### **Rival Theories/Opponents of the Conceptual Framework**

*Situational leadership theory* is a theory of leadership that is a segment of a collection of theories known as *contingency theories of leadership* (Kim & Grunig, 2011). The members of a multigenerational workforce have the potential to employ a wide variety of tasks with their unique skills and knowledge to achieve success in the workplace (Cekada, 2012). Contingency theories of leadership hold that a leader's effectiveness relates to the leader's traits or behaviors in relation to differing situational factors (Illia, Lurati, & Casalaz, 2013). Ferri-Reed (2014) indicated that leaders can limit the potential that a multigenerational workforce can provide with their multiple skills and talents. Thompson (2011) reinforced that a multigenerational workforce exhibits valuable and diverse knowledge, as well as innovative ideas, determination, and adaptability not held to the level of directive behavior. McCleskey (2014) argued that the fundamental underpinning of situational leadership establishes that a "best" style of leadership does not exist.

Transformational and transactional leadership theories vary to some degree with the underlying theories of management and motivation (Rowold, 2014). Schuh et al. (2013) argued that transactional leadership styles are concerned with maintaining the normal daily flow of operations. Business managers know and understand the generational skill differences that lead to effective engagement performance, which ultimately leads to successful high-performance organizational outcomes (Cekada, 2012). Transactional leadership theory may be used to strategically guide an organization toward high-performance outcomes (Rowold, 2014).

Transactional leadership theory works through creating clear structures of requirements required of subordinates and the rewards they get for following orders (Hoon Song, Kolb, Hee Lee, & Kyoung Kim, 2012; Schuh et al., 2013). Rowold (2014) reinforced that transactional leadership theory based on the contingency of a reward or punishment is contingent upon job performance. However, Benson and Brown (2011) argued that business managers faced what style of technical leadership to retain with a multigenerational workforce with their orientations and attitudes toward the work environment.

Transactional leadership theory uses management defined by a clear structure (Schuh et al., 2013). Rowold (2014) reinforced that transactional leadership theory has a style known as telling clear defined structure. Furthermore, business managers know that business conditions shape the framework of the organization; studies suggest that a business environment can imprint employees and empower their ability to excel under any business conditions (Bianchi, 2013; Hoon Song et al., 2012).

### **Measurement**

The data measurement for this qualitative case study consisted of semistructured interviews. The interviews were guided conversations rather than structured queries (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The semistructured interviews used for the study explored the engagement strategies business organizations are using to manage a multigenerational workforce. Yin (2009) suggested using embedded units that could allow for a higher level of response such as business firms. The interview volunteers received an email upon IRB approval.

I used semistructured interviews to collect data from business managers in the Tri-State area of Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia (see Appendix A). Yin (2009) indicated that a type of case study interview is a semistructured interview in which a person is interviewed for a short period. The researcher, in combination with the interview questions (see Appendix A), is the instrument in this approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Farago et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Each participant had a 60-minute interview session, in which I used a portable device for audio recording after receiving the participant's consent to do so, in an effort to ensure that the data collected were valid and reliable.

### **Methodologies**

This qualitative research explored engagement strategy changes that meet the needs of a multigenerational workforce (Feyrer, 2011). An effective engagement strategy framework incorporates the elements needed to promote better relationships among a multigenerational workforce (Meriac et al., 2010). This qualitative case study was conducted to fill a gap in the literature on engagement strategies that contribute effectively to the millennial workforce (Duquette et al., 2013). A case study design employs discoveries of knowledge and theories along with individual application (Yin, 2009). Constanze et al. (2012) argued that generational differences do exist, creating a need for a better conceptualization of generational phenomena and relevant engagement strategies. In addition, Chaudhuri and Ghosh (2012) indicated the aging of the U.S. workforce along with the simultaneous arrival of the millennials could have significant repercussions for business organizations.

Business managers have been trying to manage a multigenerational workforce for at least a decade (Cekada, 2012). The different members of a multigenerational workforce do not display the same job-related skills and standards (Meriac et al., 2010). An effective engagement strategy framework incorporates business processes and strategies to promote better relationships among the members of multigenerational workforces (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012). An engagement strategy framework may be used to gain an understanding of the substantial issues that business organizations tackle as the millennials enter the workforce (Feyrer, 2011).

### **Engagement Strategies**

As the millennial generation enters the workforce, business managers are altering their engagement strategies to create an effective and engaging work environment (Cox & Holloway, 2011). Sawitri and Muis (2014) argued that a paradigm shift is developing with engagement strategies as the millennial generation enters the workforce. Therefore, the emergence of the millennial workforce has piloted a new era of engagement strategy changes for business organizations and managers (Bardia, 2010; Mirvis, 2012). Kaur and Verma (2011) contended that business managers are evaluating the adjustments needed in engagement strategies to retain this talented pool of millennials.

Business managers are experiencing difficulty in implementing changes to engagement strategies due to the millennial generation's advanced command of technology (Barford & Hester, 2011; Swanson, 2013). Barkin, Heerman, Warren, and Rennhoff (2010) concurred that business managers are attempting to make changes in engagement strategies due to the pronounced technical interest and skills of the millennial

workforce. Berens (2013) argued that business managers have implemented changes to engagement strategies to assure the millennials that business organizations will continue to progress in the technology arena (Sanchez-Hernandez & Grayson, 2012).

As business managers consider preparing the millennial workforce, technical skills are at the forefront of the changes to engagement strategies (Eliasa, Smith, & Barneya, 2012). Sawitri and Muis (2014) contended that business managers see the importance of technology in the workplace in conjunction with millennials' job satisfaction. Holt et al. (2012) argued that business managers need to understand the different characteristics that make up the connected and well-educated millennial generation before implementing any changes to engagement strategies.

The different characteristics of the millennial generation demonstrate the need for engagement strategies to be at the forefront of business managers' goals and objectives for the organization (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Lester, Standifer, Schultz, & Windsor, 2012). Berens (2013) argued that business managers face performance challenges with the millennial generation that are creating engagement-strategy challenges in the workplace. Furthermore, business managers are investing additional time and research in engagement-strategy changes to fit the needs of the millennial workforce (Ferri-Reed, 2012). Feyer (2011) contended that business managers are perplexed by the task of determining the direction in which to attempt engagement strategy changes to fit the millennial generation.

Business managers contend with engagement-strategy challenges in an effort to contribute to job satisfaction and retention of this tech-savvy generation (Feyrer, 2011).

Eliasa et al. (2012) concurred that business managers have demonstrated a continued effort to understand millennial employees' attitudes toward technology through job satisfaction and retention in the workplace as they evaluate engagement strategies.

Sawitri and Muis (2014) agreed that business managers see the importance of technology in the workplace in conjunction with millennials' job satisfaction. Bannon et al. (2011), however, contended that business managers are not implementing engagement strategies that encompass the technical innovation the millennial generation brings to the workforce.

The millennial generation understands the importance of transforming to the latest technology innovations in order for a business organization to remain competitive in its industry meeting the organization's mission and vision (Holt et al., 2012). Berens (2013) reinforced after hiring millennials, millennials have an intellectual curiosity combined with their genuine desire to accomplish the organization's mission through technology innovation. Ferri-Reed (2012) concurred the millennials are motivated by meeting the organization's vision and mission through technological advancements in the workplace. Furthermore, business managers are encountering millennial employees appear to self-direct their work efforts through technology innovation to meet the organization's mission without the constant reminder from management (Baert & Govaerts, 2012).

Business managers need to correlate the engagement strategies to align with the organization's mission and vision (Baert & Govaerts, 2012). Hershatter and Epstein (2010) argued a variation that members of the millennial generation already align their work efforts with the organization's mission creating a loyalty to the company (He, Zhu,

& Zheng, 2014). Furthermore, business managers are finding millennials are capable of meeting the organization's mission even exceeding the expectations of management by adhering to high-performance standards within the organization (Ferri-Reed, 2012).

Business managers are finding millennials come to the workplace with significantly different expectations and community values than other generations meeting the mission of the company (Miller, Hodge, Brandt, & Schneider, 2013). Bannon et al. (2011) agreed business managers indicate the millennials have a desire to perform community service based work fulfilling part of the company's vision. In addition, business managers identified the millennial generation as being engaged in community activities, which meets the overall mission of the organization (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Lester et al., 2012). Therefore, business managers are adapting engagement strategies, which establish a connection between the employees of a multigenerational workforce to meet the organization's overall mission (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Sanchez-Hernandez & Grayson, 2012).

### **Engagement Practices**

The millennial generation is transforming the anytime and anywhere work culture of many organizations (Ferri-Reed, 2014). Barford and Hester (2011) reinforced the millennials are result-oriented, multitasking individuals with technology as if it is an extension of their being. Millennials are well prepared to work in a collaborative anytime anywhere work environment (Ferri-Reed, 2012). Brown (2012) argued organizations have not intensified employee productivity due to the millennial's ready-to-work-anywhere attitude.



Steffee (2012) indicated that 84% survey in North America uses a smartphone for work-related activities impeding on the anytime anywhere flexibility work schedule. Millennials are technological perceptive growing up with wireless devices and workplace mobility creating an anytime work environment (Bannon et al., 2011; Lester et al., 2012). Beekman (2011) concurred that millennials have the capability to do work on an anywhere and anytime schedule empowering them to be more productive than other generations.

Business managers see the need to expand engagement strategies to meet demands of this tech-savvy workforce by creating an anytime and anywhere work environment (Barford & Hester, 2011; Mirvis, 2012). Millennial employees have become the most creative and productive workforce with their anytime way of thinking (Ferri-Reed, 2012). Millennials are willing to work wherever and whenever necessary to complete the task (Beekman, 2011). Bannon et al. (2011) disputed the millennials require a flexible working hours with a more elastic timeframe for going the stability of the work demands of an organization. Furthermore, business managers are finding engagement strategies have to expand to pull toward the organizational challenges of the anytime and anywhere generation (Holt et al., 2012).

Business managers must determine what type of rewards, recognition, and trainings factors will meet the needs of the millennials entering the workplace (Bannon et al., 2011). Bardia (2010) argued a variation managers will not find a magic formula of recognition and training to ensure the success and growth of the anytime and anywhere employees. However, Barford and Hester (2011) concurred business managers attempt to

determine a successful formula of employee reward and recognition factors as the workforce transitions from a baby-boomer to a millennial (Bannon et al., 2011; Mirvis, 2012).

### **Historical Overview**

In the upcoming years another 40 million millennials, the generation born between 1980 and 2000, will stream the workplace creating work engagement strategy challenges for management (Ferri-Reed, 2012). Business managers face a workplace experiment of what type of engagement strategies to provide for this tech- savvy generation (Berens, 2013; Swanson, 2013). In addition, Brown (2012) contended the millennial generation lacks applied knowledge unlike other generations in the workplace. Therefore, business managers are evaluating the engagement strategy changes needed to transition the workforce to a millennial majority (Baert & Govaerts, 2012).

Business managers need to begin building integrated engagement strategies with technology at the forefront to encourage the technically experienced millennials to achieve the knowledge needed to compete in a multigenerational workforce (Coward, Gilley, Avery, Barber, & Gilley, 2014; Johnston, 2013). Bannon et al. (2011) argued millennials competitiveness in the workforce begins with distinct characteristics such as technological perceptiveness. In addition, business managers find the millennial generation is open to change and willing embraces workplace trends evolving technology, which also complements the work-life balance (Ferri-Reed, 2013).

As millennials transition as the majority in the workforce, millennials assign different levels of characteristics and importance with a lifestyle balance relationship

unlike previous generations (Barford & Hester, 2011). Business managers are finding through this transition process millennials lead a scheduled and structured work-life environment making sure the organization is aware of their structured lifestyle balance (Berens, 2013). Cowart et al. (2014) reinforced business managers indicated millennials report a need to accomplish a balance between work and family time than other generations.

Business managers have seen work intensification efforts with the millennial generation due to their technical skills creating a faster-paced work effort than previous generations (Brown, 2012). Berens (2013) concurred the millennials are well connected and desire a challenge in their work environment. Ferri-Reed (2012) contended that the millennial generation demands everything at their fingertips, unlike previous generations, when it comes to work responsibilities due to their technical skills. Therefore, managing millennials may seem like an overwhelming task, but business managers should not despair because they are well educated and extremely tech-savvy, which can create a structured and productive work environment (Ferri-Reed, 2013; He et al., 2014).

Business managers are trying to understand the style of technical leadership to implement with this evolving millennial generation (Holt et al., 2012). For example, the millennial generation is open to change and willing to embrace business trends that deal specifically with technology (Ferri-Reed, 2012). Benson and Brown (2011) argued business managers face the task of what style of technical leadership to retain with a multigenerational workforce with their diversified orientations and attitudes toward the work environment.

Business managers need to assess their workforce to see if multigenerational cross-training creates a positive impact under normal working conditions (Cekada, 2012). An advantage of a multigenerational workforce is cross-generational training. For example, baby-boomers can teach a team-oriented viewpoint to the other generations (Beekman, 2011). Cox and Holloway (2011) argued business manager see a significant difference in the technical qualities millennials possess compared to other generations. The technical challenges of other generations create obstacles for cross training with a multigenerational workforce (Ferri-Reed, 2013). However, both generations have distinct experiences, work styles, and attitudes, which will create a strong multigenerational cross training program (Cekada, 2012).

Business organizations are beginning to realize the cost of training the millennial workforce the next 20 years (Barkin et al., 2010). Ferri-Reed (2012) reinforced business organizations appear to be unsure of the expense of employee training cost for this tech-savvy workforce. Furthermore, business organizations have intensified the employee training programs, which indicated a greater cost to train the millennial generation (Brown, 2012). Cox and Holloway (2011) argued a variation that business organizations may have an increased cost in training the millennials, but the productivity and output of the tech-savvy generation will outweigh the increase in training costs. Therefore, business organizations need to strive for efficiency while evaluating the benefits compared to the long-term cost of employee training programs (Brown, 2012).

Business organizations need to assess the engagement performance strategies to have accurate and sufficient funds for performance improvement programs (Johnston,

2013). Business organizations need to evaluate the performance improvement cost increase compared to the loss of investing in employees (Gagnon & Smith, 2013). Hagemann and Stroope (2013) argued a variation performance improvement strategies can be too costly for business organizations if the strategies implemented do not match the business organization's mission. Therefore, business managers are trying to find optimal performance improvement strategies to fit the skill gap in a multigenerational workforce (Gagnon & Smith, 2013). Furthermore, business organizations need to assess, which performance improvement strategies would close the skill gap left as baby-boomers retire ("Closing the skill gap," 2012).

Business organizations are learning the value of investing time and resources in developmental programs to meet the needs of a multigenerational workforce (Gagnon & Smith, 2013). Business organizations have invested resources in developmental programs paying positive returns in the overall technical abilities of employees with an increased multigenerational interaction (Kulesza & Smith, 2013). Gagnon and Smith (2013) argued a variation business managers need to analyze the investment cost in the development programs, but at the same time analyzing the increased productivity in its competitive industry.

Business organizations are changing to a flexible scheduled work environment as millennials transition into the workforce (Pfeffer, 2013). Millennials value work-life balance placing a decreased value on traditional working hours. They will likely transform the conventional nine-to-five workplace in corporate offices into a flexible time frame (Bannon et al., 2011). Business organizations are considering flextime

programs as a strategy to provide millennial employees with job retention and satisfaction due to work-life balance this generation demands (“Employee and organizational impacts of flextime work arrangements,” 2011). Brown (2012) concurred business organizations are analyzing flex hours to create a true work-life balance increasing more time for civic involvement, care giving, and community work.

Millennials are more attracted to organizations that engage in social, charitable, and philanthropic causes (Ferri-Reed, 2014). Benson and Brown (2011) reinforced the importance of work-life balance recipe motivates employees and improves performance on the job. Pfeffer (2013) concurred business organizations are seeing a different balance of workplace values with the millennial generation being concerned about their community. Therefore, business organizations are revisiting the working-life balance schedule in response to retaining a multigenerational workforce (“Employee and organizational impacts of flextime work arrangements,” 2011).

**Performance evaluation.** United States employers are ramping up engagement performance processes and employee benefits to close skills gaps left as baby-boomers retire and millennials takeover the workforce (“Closing the skill gap,” 2012). In addition, U.S. employers identify shifts in skills and proficiency with technology expected to be a considerable part of engagement performance processes (Deal et al., 2010). Baert and Govaerts (2012) argued engagement performance processes are taking on a technical direction due to the multigenerational differences in the U.S. workforce. Deal et al. (2010) concurred business organizations’ engagement performance processes should

stimulate advancement in technology, while maintaining the needs of a diversified multigenerational workforce.

Business managers face new challenges and evaluations as millennials are integrating in the workplace (Berens, 2013). Business managers see a certain standard learning patterns exist with millennial employees (Baert & Govaerts, 2012). For example, millennials lead a scheduled and structured life and prefer business managers tell them what to do and when to do it (Berens, 2013). McGinnis (2011) argued the millennial generation is set to make an impact in the workplace through their technical structure of learning, which will affect all generations in the workplace. Therefore, business managers have multiple positive challenges with the millennial generation entering the workforce (Bannon et al., 2011).

**Human capital.** The ability of business organizations to attract the millennial generation workforce is an indication of vital, but costly part of the human capital within an organization (McGinnis, 2011). In addition, human capital is a critical component and a cost challenge for the business organization's success and growth (Walker, Cole, Bernerth, Field, & Short, 2013). Business organizations are evaluating the cost versus the benefit accrued in the millennial generation (Reinstein, Sinason, & Fogarty, 2012). Kaur and Verma (2011) argued the millennials are not meeting the demands of the workforce gap of business organizations in the 21st century due to lack of applied skills, which make up importance of human capital in an organization.

Business managers know that business conditions shape the engagement framework of the organization; studies suggest the business environment can imprint

employees and empower their ability to excel under any business conditions (Bianchi, 2013). However, business managers are up against rapid changes with business conditions, which the millennial generation advocates such as responsive technology skills, which target to increase and accelerate the development of organizations (Xu, 2009). Holman, Totterdell, Axtell, Stride, Port, Svensson, and Zibarras (2012) argued business managers are constantly battling changing business conditions no matter what generation has entered the workforce because the business environment is competitive and constantly changing.

**Business performance.** With retiring baby-boomers and small size of Generation X, business organizations will find millennials to be in high demand in the job market (Bannon et al., 2011; Williams Van Rooij, 2012). Therefore, business managers need to understand how to take advantage of the millennial generations particular skills and talents bringing about a positive business performance (Bardia, 2010; Petkova, Wadhwa, Xin, & Jain, 2014). Bannon et al. (2011) stated MorningStar, Google, and Orbitz Worldwide were three of the highest ranked companies to employ large number of millennials. In addition, Morningstar indicated the Generation Y employees bring an unexplainable energy to their company's business performance (Bannon et al., 2011; Phillips, 2014).

Business organizations are reliant on information technology, which increase the need for employees to obtain advanced technical skills to generate financial and operational systems (Velasco, 2012). Wentzel (2011) reinforced information systems are necessary for a well-defined process in an organization with employees having the



technical skills to maintain the information systems. In addition, business managers indicated the proper use of information systems brings about positive business performance (Hadani, Coombes, & Das Jalajas, 2012).

### **Current Literature Findings**

The millennial generation is numbering between 50 and 80 million and is set to make an impact in the workplace (Bannon et al., 2011). Cekada (2012) concurred that the millennials represent a fast growing and sizable population group (Cekada, 2012). In addition, millennials represent the largest workforce population in history (Gallicano et al., 2012). This generation accounts for 10 to 15% of the U.S. labor force (Bannon et al., 2011).

Business managers are trying to manage and evaluate at least a decade of multigenerational workforce (Cekada, 2012). A multigenerational workforce consists of each generation gaining fulfillment from their job duties and skills they bring to the workforce (Beekman, 2011). In addition, business managers are evaluating their multigenerational workforce concerning such issues as expectations, motivators, collaboration, and training (Cekada, 2012; Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, & Morgan, 2014). Gallicano et al. (2012) reinforced business managers have shifted their focus from aging workers to management issues relating to a multigenerational workforce.

Millennials desire training and professional development opportunities than other generations (Hadani et al., 2012). The millennial is highly engaged in meeting the requirements of their job responsibilities and assignments (Gallicano et al., 2012). Business managers indicated the millennial generation has a concern that business

organizations will not engage in the technical training and professional development they want to receive (Feyrer, 2011). Beekman (2011) reinforced the desires the millennials have to enhance their skills through professional development and training on the job. Gallicano et al. (2012) argued a variation the millennial generation craves knowledge and training, but at the same time feels an entitlement to a constant reward system. In addition, Berens (2013) reinforced this generation wants to be praised often on a job well done unlike other generations once they have successfully completed a task.

Business managers identified the millennial generation are the future leaders of business organization (Smith & Clark, 2010). Therefore, business managers need to identify opportunities, which develop millennials such as tasks that stretch their work characteristics and attributes (Ferri-Reed, 2012). Ferri-Reed (2013) concurred business managers must provide additional mentoring, training, and development opportunities for the millennial generation. In addition, business managers indicate millennials will achieve success on the job while engaging in training and mentoring opportunities (Ferri-Reed, 2012).

Business organizations indicate the challenges of developing and retaining the millennial generation (Gallicano et al., 2012). Multi-million dollar business organizations are pushing strategic initiatives to address the challenges of developing this tech-savvy generation (Constanze et al., 2012). In addition, business organizations are implementing strategies to keep pace with challenges of the technical workforce (Cekeda, 2012). Therefore, business organizations are trying to determine when the generational shifts are

large enough to warrant changes in engagement practices for the millennial generation (Helyer & Lee, 2012).

**Multigenerational skills.** At least 74 million boomers could retire by the end of this decade many of whom have skills that are difficult to replace (Houck, 2011). Ferri-Reed (2013) reinforced the baby-boomer generation is one of the largest generations ever to enter the workforce. Baby-boomers are retiring at a rate of one every 8 seconds (Hagemann & Stroope, 2013). In addition, business managers identified the baby-boomer generation is a competitive and hardworking generation setting the 40-hour workweek (Cekada, 2012).

Baby-boomers have the experience and a vast amount of knowledge of the business organization and its industry to pass down to the millennial workforce (Kaur & Verma, 2011; Williams Van Rooij, 2012). Business organization face challenges by the exit of skilled and knowledgeable baby-boomer from the ranks of the workforce (Houck, 2011). Johnston (2013) concurred the generations preparing to fill the shoes of the boomers lack experience with the job positions and even the organizations. In addition, Meriac et al. (2010) argued baby-boomers report a higher level of work ethics and values than do other generations.

The millennial generation is shaking up the workforce creating various employee performance challenges across the United States (Ferri-Reed, 2013). Generation Y is another name for the millennial generation with technology as part of their being (Cekada, 2012). The habits and performance behaviors of the millennial generation have business managers concerned across the United States (Robinson & Stubberud, 2012).

The millennial generation has learned to manage work and family at the same time, making them effective at multitasking in the workplace (Ferri-Reed, 2013). Unique to this generation are the individual's ability to work well in teams or groups (Cekada, 2012). Duquette et al. (2013) concurred the millennial generation is tech-savvy, intellectually curious and confident, but they display a sense of entitlement. In addition, the millennials are idealistic and expect change and innovation on the job (Duquette et al., 2013).

**Multigenerational workforce.** Multiple generations inhabit the U.S. workforce with diversified skill sets (Ferri-Reed, 2013). This multigenerational workforce has the potential to employ a wide variety of unique skills and knowledge to achieve success in the workplace (Cekada, 2012). Thompson (2011) concurred a multigenerational workforce possess valuable and diverse knowledge as well as innovative ideas, determination, and adaptability. In addition, with the presence of four generations of workers in the U.S. workforce, diversified views and decision-making behaviors exist which creates conflict (Smith & Clark, 2010). Therefore, business manager are focusing on the unique skills and knowledge each generation brings to the workplace (Deal et al., 2010; Williams Van Rooij, 2012).

As business managers know and understand the generational skills difference, it will create an effective engagement performance, which ultimately leads to successful organizational outcomes (Cekada, 2012). Baert and Govaerts (2012) argued business managers could not rely on incidental engagement performance processes instead effective engagement performance strategies are essential with a multigenerational

workforce. In addition, a multigenerational workforce compels business managers to be creative in implementing training strategies (Thompson, 2011). Therefore, a multigenerational workforce displays a variety of skills, mindsets, standards, enthusiasm, and performance strategies (Helyer & Lee, 2012).

Business managers want their multigenerational workforce to work together effectively to accomplish the organization's vision (Cox & Holloway, 2011). Meriac et al. (2010) argued a multigenerational workforce does not display the same work-related attitudes and values, which will bring about a diversified organizational vision. Therefore, business managers need to create an engagement strategy around the vision of the company, motivating employee engagement and performance in a multigenerational workforce (Hagemann & Stroope, 2013). In addition, business managers must recognize each generation's unique talents and skills, which will determine the best engagement strategies and processes to develop with a multigenerational workforce (Duquette et al., 2013).

Over the next decade, business managers will attempt to implement the benefits and differences in a multigenerational workforce through cross training (Beckman, 2011). Helyer and Lee (2012) agreed some business managers are implementing the benefits along with the differences a multigenerational workforce brings to the mission of the workplace. Therefore, a multigenerational workforce correlation exists with employees (Hagemann & Stroope, 2013). In addition, employees need to take the initiative to increase their knowledge and skills, which in return creates job satisfaction meeting the organization's mission (Pan & Werblow, 2012). A multigenerational workforce generates

valuable knowledge, determination and adaptability needed for the mission and vision of the organization (Thompson, 2011).

As the workforce ages and skilled workers will increasingly come at a premium, business managers have to implement effective engagement strategies for a multigenerational workforce (Johnston, 2013). The primary strategic question is whether millennials are going to be different from boomers when they reach their 30s, 40s, and 50s (Constanze et al., 2012). Johnston (2013) argued business managers would fail to respond to the threat of developing engagement strategies needed with a multigenerational workforce depleting the future growth of business organizations.

**Reverse mentoring.** Reverse mentoring is a two-way street for the boomers and millennials mentoring each other in the workplace (Kulesza & Smith, 2013). Constanze et al. (2012) reinforced the millennials and baby-boomers expand across decades with multiple skill differences creating effective reverse mentoring. In addition, some business organizations are already embracing the multigenerational workforce and the benefits of reverse mentoring (Helyer & Lee, 2012).

Reverse mentoring creates a vehicle for multigenerational workforce to interact and enhance each other's skill path (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Sokoloff, 2012). For example, reverse mentoring prepares millennials to follow in the successful steps of the baby-boomers exiting the workforce (Houck, 2011). Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric, made reverse mentoring a popular form of training across generations (Kulesza & Smith, 2013). In addition, Welch indicated each employee in the organization has a unique ability and skill to extend to other generations (Kulesza & Smith, 2013, p.

23). Therefore, the millennial generation must adapt to the structure of the business organization while the baby-boomers must learn to work with new generations creating an effective reverse mentoring program (Cox & Holloway, 2011; Reinstein et al., 2012).

Reverse mentoring demonstrates positive skills and benefits for a multigenerational workforce-training program (Kulesza & Smith, 2013). Helyer and Lee (2012) concurred a multigenerational workforce brings a variety of skills and values to a reverse mentoring training program. For example, millennials bring their computer skills, ability to multitask, and proficiency with technology in the workplace (Beekman, 2011).

Reverse mentoring is cost efficient performance improvement tool, which business managers can capitalize on building bridges between generations and the reverse mentoring process (Marcinkus-Murphy, 2012). Johnston (2013) argued a risk with reverse mentoring exist due to the lack of time before the older skilled workforce retire, which means their knowledge will disintegrate. Therefore, business managers need to create a working environment that stimulates reverse mentoring in the workplace (Baert & Govaerts, 2012).

Reverse mentoring in a multigenerational workforce reduces employee differences leading to effective communication among the workforce (Kulesza & Smith, 2013). While, boomers bring valuable knowledge, skills and experience obtained from the workplace (Benson & Brown, 2011). Kaur and Verma (2011) concurred business managers find the baby-boomer generation to be invaluable due to their loyalty, knowledge and commitment to producing quality work. Therefore, some business

managers are preparing for the loss of the talented baby-boomer generation with increased cross training (“Closing the skill gap,” 2012).

### **The 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Performance Process Strategy**

More than 72% of managers polled described the loss of talented older workers to be a problem for their organization (“Closing the skill gap,” 2012). Baby-boomers are the babies of the late 1940s through the 1960s (Slawek, 2013). In addition, members of the baby-boomer generation grew up during stable economic times and positive influences such as a secure family unit (Cekada, 2012). The baby-boomer generation is a competitive and hardworking workforce (Grant, Berg, & Cable, 2014). For example, this generation developed the 40-hour work week (“Closing the skill gap,” 2012)

The millennial generation forms the largest and diverse generation in history with technology at the realm of their skills and abilities in the workplace (Gallicano et al., 2012). Hershatter and Epstein (2010) indicated the first millennial college graduates entered the workforce in the summer of 2004 and will continue in a large number until around 2022. Bannon et al. (2011) concurred the millennials are on target to become the most educated generation in the U.S. history. Furthermore, the millennials have become important contributors to the business enterprises’ success (Beekman, 2011). Hershatter and Epstein (2010) argued to some, the millennials are the next *Greatest Generation* equipped with the skills and drive to lead a business organization out of financial and economic difficulties.

Business managers see a strong work ethic and quality skills integrated into the workplace with the millennial generation (Helyer & Lee, 2012). In addition, the



millennials have grown up in a changing demographic society giving this generation a global outlook, which is a great strength for business managers (Palmiotto, 2012).

Therefore, business managers are finding the millennial generation as a catalyst for change in the global environment (Bannon et al., 2011). Bardia (2010) reinforced the millennial generation sees business organizations as a global village losing their boundaries to compete in a global environment.

Millennials tend to be technologically perceptive, collaborative, and multitaskers in the workplace (Berens, 2013; Lin, Tsai, Joe, & Chiu, 2012). In addition, millennials want to see organizational results from their work performance (Beekman, 2011). Furthermore, millennials are ambitious and likely to seek multiple opportunities actively in the business organizations. This generation has high motivation and expectations regarding the development of their work performance in the organization (Gamble & Jelley, 2014). Hagemann and Stroope (2013) concurred business managers have to be aware of the competencies of the millennials that include collaboration, flexibility, and creativity. Therefore, business managers need to embrace and understand how to take advantage of the millennial generation's technological talents and skills (Bannon et al., 2011).

The 21st Century information age has business organizations functioning in a beta world, where engagement strategies are under revision to keep pace with the changing millennial workforce (Cekada, 2012; Lin et al., 2012). In addition, the more firmly the business organization stays with past engagement strategies, the tougher it will be to manage this tech-savvy millennial generation (Beekman, 2011). For example, the millennial generation identifies a variety of ways to engage technology, and new

technological changes are not a challenge for the millennial generation (Kulesza & Smith, 2013). The millennial generation connection to technology has changed the way job performance; hence bringing changes to employee training programs in business organizations (Hershatler & Epstein, 2010). Bardia (2010) argued business organization will only be successful with the engagement strategies that entail smart technology and communication with the diverse skill set of this technical generation.

Business managers are resourceful in devising engagement strategies to exploit the opportunities they face losing this knowledgeable, skilled baby-boomer generation (Bardia, 2010). The distinct difference between millennials and baby-boomers in the workplace is the association of technology on the job (Hershatler & Epstein, 2010). Kulesza and Smith (2013) argued the boomers could learn and apply technology on the job with the proper training. However, millennials grew up with technology as a part of their being and can learn software programs without training (Hershatler & Epstein, 2010).

Reverse mentoring is an essential part of the development of a multigenerational workforce (Berens, 2013). For example, reverse mentoring educates baby-boomers on technical areas while at the same time teaching millennials the foundation of leadership skills (Berens, 2013). Business managers identified both generations as having a unique knowledge and job skill essential to the reverse mentoring process (Berens, 2013).

**Business coordination.** Several U.S. companies have enacted job enrichment policies and implemented job enrichment programs to serve the millennial workforce (Pan & Werblow, 2012). The retirement of baby-boomers is creating a crisis in business

organizations trying to recruit and retain the millennial generation (Gamble, & Jelley, 2014; Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). In addition, the millennial generation entering the workforce has a different set of needs and expectations concerning job empowerment and enrichment programs due to their technical skills (Klettner, Clarke, & Boersma, 2014; Mirvis, 2012). Pan and Werblow (2012) concurred that the millennial generation demands a job enrichment programs that empowers the employees are empowered to accomplish the tasks on their jobs.

A multigenerational workforce brings positive challenges to the development of an emerging talent pool, which enhances the competitiveness of the business organizations (Hagemann & Stroope, 2013). Helyer and Lee (2012) argued a variation business organizations have diversified challenges with a multigenerational workforce. In addition, business organizations can capitalize on the benefits of a diverse, multigenerational workforce by actively managing the sensitive manner of diversified skills among workers (Popescu & Rusko, 2012). Hagemann and Stroope (2013) concurred the emergence of a multigenerational workforce brings about diverse skills allowing the business organization to capitalize on the generational differences workforce.

Business managers are concerned with the view millennials have on the future of leadership (Penney, 2011). According to the report, 70% of the millennial generation, which are the future leaders agree leadership is changing globally as different technical skills develop (“Future leaders on sustainability,” 2012). Therefore, future leadership patterns will differentiate from previous generations (Penney, 2011). In addition, as

millennials move into the workforce changes in their lifestyle can affect their leadership patterns and productivity on the job (Barkin et al., 2010).

**Developmental framework.** The millennial generation identified collaboration and adaptive qualities as essential skills needed to be an effective leader (“Future leaders on sustainability,” 2012). Therefore, as millennials enter the workforce in large numbers, business managers need to investigate the type of leadership styles this generation will best respond to on the job (Ng et al., 2010). Millennial generation is constantly adapting to new technologies, which they see as a necessary component of leadership (Penney, 2011). Thompson (2011) argued the millennials prefer a flexible work arrangement not focusing on the where and when, but completed job responsibilities.

The retirement of baby-boomers has created a challenge for business organizations striving to recruit and retain the millennial generation (Ng et al., 2010). In U.S. history, baby-boomers entered the workforce equipped with talents and skills unlike previous generations (Saks & Burke, 2012; Tomlinson, 2013). Therefore, as millennials advance into career roles of the baby-boomer generation, they need to understand the expectations of job performance and career advancement (Kulesza & Smith, 2013).

Baby-boomers can demonstrate the importance of business expertise along with the importance of teamwork to the millennials (Ng et al., 2010). Henceforth, millennials can introduce the baby-boomer to developing technology trends (Saks & Burke, 2012). A multigenerational workforce maximizes the effective use of technology and business expertise (McGinnis, 2011).

In recent years, business organizations have seen an increasing interest in the application of informal self-directed workplace training programs (Jennings, 2012). The benefit of a self-directed employee-training program focuses on lifelong learning, which is effective in the employee's workplace development (Hines & Carbone, 2013; Robinson & Stubberud, 2012). In addition, old approaches to workplace training programs built around the application of self-directed workplace training programs (Jennings, 2012).

The ability of business organizations to appeal to millennials plays an essential part in the productive outcome business organizations desire (McGinnis, 2011; Tomlinson, 2013). In addition, business organizations that do not provide the new generation of employees with social media privileges are risking complications of attracting and retaining the millennial generation (Steffee, 2012). Furthermore, future research in this area will help business managers develop training practices that understand the needs and values of the millennial generation (Berens, 2013; McGinnis, 2011).

With a multigenerational workforce, business managers have to prepare and deliver engagement strategy changes to fit a multi-learning environment in order for the multigenerational employees to understand and excel in the business organization (Cekada, 2012). In addition, business managers need to consider age diversity when implementing engagement strategies that incorporate technology as part of the training process (Eliasa et al., 2012). Robinson and Stubberud (2012) concurred the objective of

any engagement strategy is to increase work productivity and employee morale which empowers the workforce.

The focus of online, self-directed workplace learning is being driven by the realization of adult learning occurs through experience, and practice in the workplace (Jennings, 2012). Although, technology challenges exist with online training program, but employees can explore the advancement of technology with self-directed learning programs (Kok, 2013; Robinson & Stubberud, 2012). In addition, business managers acknowledge the millennial generation has the capabilities and tools for online work environment, which will engage and motivate employee empowerment (Mirvis, 2012).

Employee work-based learning strategies promote innovative job design characteristics as a learning tool (Holman et al., 2012). In addition, employees learn mainly through doing rather through knowing which is a mechanism demonstrating work-based learning strategies (Jennings, 2012). Holman et al. (2012) reinforced the general idea learning strategies as a tool for developing innovative job design through work-based learning.

Business managers are evaluating engagement strategies and the weaknesses of engagement processes to create a greater accountability among stakeholders for employee engagement performance outcomes (Burchell & Cook, 2013; Saks & Burke, 2012). Therefore, business managers face engagement strategy challenges in the coming decades mainly with an engagement model that will meet the demands of the stakeholders (Twenge, 2010; Wells et al., 2013). Business managers need to get an early start in understanding the workplace changes and the engagement strategies, which appeal to the

millennial generation (Bannon et al., 2011). In addition, business managers are revisiting the processes with specific types of engagement application to assure the stakeholders of the organization (Poudyal, Siry, & Bowker, 2012; Sawitri & Muis, 2014).

Business managers need to understand the generational shifts in the workforce when developing engagement strategies (Twenge, 2010; Wells et al., 2013). Business managers see potential in the millennial generation entering the workforce, but they are not using or developing their talent and values early enough (Van Velsor & Wright, 2013). Ng et al. (2010) argued the millennials have a high skill potential to give business organizations.

The millennial generation learns using computer software programs, which is a key indicator business organizations need to develop employee software training simulations (Bannon et al., 2011; Kok, 2013). Therefore, business managers are exposing the millennial generation to the business developmental methods, which enable the use of their skills in the early stages of their career (Van Velsor & Wright, 2013). Furthermore, business managers value how the millennial generation considers work-related attributes and work intensification, which is important to their choice of careers (Grant et al., 2014; Ng et al., 2010).

Employee engagement strategies can help expand the scope of available skills within the workforce improving on the existing expertise of a multigenerational workforce (Berens, 2013; Hagemann & Stroepe, 2013). Perceptions of employee engagement strategies expand to a multigenerational workforce to initiate the development of different forms of employee performance processes for a multigenerational workforce

(Smith & Ros, 2010). In addition, business managers identify that a multigenerational workforce turn to their peers for guidance and advice in areas they lack individual skills through effective engagement strategies (Palmiotto, 2012).

Business managers recognize knowledge is not a one-way street that multigenerational workforce shares individual expertise reversing the idea of mentoring (Marcinkus-Murphy, 2012). The development of engagement strategies will achieve the success business organizations need for successful business results and outcomes in a competitive industry (Sawitri & Muis, 2014). Helyer and Lee (2012) concurred successful business managers forward think and value a multi-faceted approach a multigenerational workforce bringing about with continuing skills and expertise. In addition, multigenerational workforce includes each other in the problem solving and understands the methods exchanged through reverse mentoring (Cox & Holloway, 2011). Business managers see positive generational differences from diversified work values and skills (Twenge, 2010).

### **Methodologies**

A methodology used in research underpins the work and methods used to collect information, data and understand experiences (Bernard, 2013). The qualitative methodology was appropriate for the study because of the participant's experience and framework approach (Hagemann & Stroope, 2013). The focus of the study formed qualitative methods of research, which explored the engagement strategies business managers must incorporate to transition an organization workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority. Boeije, Van Wesel, and Alisic (2011) realized the need



of systematically approaching research finding in a qualitative synthesis phenomena. The nature of this study explored the challenges that business managers have developing work engagement strategies that effectively contribute to the needs of the generational differences of employees (Duquette et al., 2013).

The qualitative methodology was appropriate for the study because of the participant's experience and framework approach (Hagemann & Stroope, 2013). The quantitative methodology was not used in this study because of the systematic collection and process of numeric data. The mixed methods methodology was not used in this study because of the combination of quantitative research incorporated in with this method, which is an empirical investigation of statistical data. Furthermore, business managers recognize employee engagement strategies determine the commitment and dedication of the workforce (Duquette et al., 2013). Boeije et al. (2011) indicated the need of systematically approaching research finding in a qualitative synthesis phenomena. The nature of this study explored the challenges that business managers have developing work engagement strategies that effectively contribute to the needs of the generational differences of employees (Duquette et al., 2013).

### **Transition and Summary**

The information in Section 1 included the foundation for this study and the exploration of business managers who lack the engagement strategies required to transition a workforce with a majority of baby-boomers to a workforce with a majority of millennials. I explored through this study the challenges and success that business managers have had developing work engagement strategies for effectively contributing to

the needs of the generational differences of employees (Duquette et al., 2013). The theories I explored in the literature review supported (a) the history overview of the problem, (b) conceptual framework, (c) engagement practices, (d) performance evaluation, (e) multigenerational skills, (f) reverse mentoring, (g) performance process strategy, and (h) developmental framework.

Section 2 contained details about the purpose for this study, my role as the researcher and selection of participants. Section 2 also contains discussion in the following areas: (a) research methodologies, (b) research design, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis procedures, and (e) the reliability and validity of the research. Section 2 concludes with a transition summary to Section 3.

Section 3 begins with the purpose of the study and the research question. In addition, Section 3 includes a brief summary of the findings from the study, along with a detailed presentation of the findings. Section 3 concludes with a discussion of how the conclusion and recommendations apply to the professional practice of business and a summary of my reflections from concluding this study with recommendations for further research.

## Section 2: The Project

Business managers are investing time and research in engagement strategies as millennials enter the workforce (Ferri-Reed, 2012). The focus of this study was filling the gap in the literature on engagement strategies for effectively addressing generational differences between employees (Duquette et al., 2013). Millennials represent the largest and fastest growing segment of the workforce population (Gallicano et al., 2012). The specific business problem is that some business managers lack engagement strategies required to make a successful transition from a workforce with a majority of baby boomers to a workforce with a majority of millennials. In Section 2, I identify my role as the researcher and describe the participants from the population and sampling chosen for this study. In addition, Section 2 includes the following topics: (a) research methodologies, (b) research design, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis procedures, and (e) the reliability and validity of the research.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the engagement strategies business managers design and implement to transition from a workforce with a majority of baby boomers to a workforce with a majority of millennials in the healthcare industry. The population of the study consisted of approximately 125 business managers within a health care unit in Huntington, West Virginia. The population was appropriate for this study due to managers' experience and diversified workforce of baby boomers and millennials.

The contribution to social change involving a multigenerational workforce derived from the findings and recommendations of this study focuses on technological advancement to fill gaps in a diversified workforce (Kaur & Verna, 2011). Business managers and employees of an organization could benefit from changes in the engagement strategies used for a multigenerational workforce (Ferri-Reed, 2012). Social change arising from this study could benefit employees by capitalizing on their individual qualities such as worth, dignity, and a strong work ethic, thereby fostering an engaged workforce (Heath et al., 2013; Meriac, Woehr, & Banister, 2010).

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as the researcher was to identify and implement a methodology and design to provide valid and reliable data for addressing the research question (Yin, 2014). My role in this qualitative case study was to observe and investigate the data collected from the participants within a real-life context (Yin, 2009). In addition, I processed the data from the participants to ensure that data were accurate and organized in one or more themes from evident patterns. In order for a researcher to evaluate and understand any case study phenomenon successfully, he or she must gain in-depth understanding of relevant contextual conditions (Yin, 2012).

I have worked as an employee in various industries in corporate America, as well as in higher education institutions in the Tri-State area of Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia for over two decades. This experience gives me a sense of connection to the multigenerational workforce, which does not display a uniform set of work-related skills

and values (Meriac et al., 2010). I have managed and worked with a multigenerational workforce, encountering employees with diversified skills sets and abilities.

My ethical role per the Belmont Report was to ensure that the participants of the study were unharmed. I extended the greatest care in regard to protecting all human subjects involved in the research and exploration of the study (Yin, 2009). The Belmont report is for the protection of human subjects of all research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

My intent as the researcher was to mitigate potential bias while assessing the participant data, identifying engagement strategies for meeting the needs of a multigenerational workforce (Feyrer, 2011). A researcher analyzes data through a personal lens, being aware of subjective influences on human judgment that can produce errors in reasoning during the interpretation of data collected from the participants (Yin, 2012). As the researcher, I used bracketing as a method to mitigate the effects of preconceptions related to my research (Stake, 2010). My intent was to interpret the details and specifics of the data to discover themed patterns the participants had experienced in managing a multigenerational workforce (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

My role in this qualitative single case study involved semistructured interviews of the participants (Yin, 2012). I organized and guided the interviews to obtain information, lived experiences, and challenges of the participants (Stake, 2010). I explained to the participants (a) the purpose of the interview, (b) the 60-minute timeframe of the interview, (c) the need to sign the consent form before participating, and (d) a sample interview question (Yin, 2009). I ensured that the interview remained on task during the allotted timeframe (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In addition, the researcher's role in this

study involved exploring employee training manuals and employee job descriptions from the participating organization to obtain information granted to the managers and employees (Yin, 2009). The features of the employees' training manual that I focused on in my review were the following: (a) the objective of manager and employee programs, (b) the opportunities afforded the workforce, and (c) training material connected to work experience (Bernard, 2013; Bowen, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Exploration of employee job descriptions focused on the following: (a) competencies and skills required, (b) job responsibilities, and (c) level of education required (Bardia, 2010; Boeije et al., 2011; Farago et al., 2013).

### **Participants**

The eligibility criteria for the participants of the qualitative case study limited the participants to business managers who possessed experience associated with managing a multigenerational workforce (Farago et al., 2013). Sawitri and Muis (2014) indicated that a paradigm shift is developing with engagement strategies as the millennial generation enters the workforce. The emergence of a multigenerational workforce has piloted the new era of engagement strategy changes for business organizations and managers (Bardia, 2010; Berens, 2013). The chosen participants met the specified eligibility criteria to participate in the study, which included (a) 2 years of management experience (Brown, 2012; Cox & Halloway, 2011; Gagnon & Smith, 2013), (b) 2 years of experience managing a multigenerational workforce (Ferri-Reed, 2013; Hagmann & Stroope, 2013; Kaur & Verna, 2011), and (c) 3 hours a year for professional development (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Ferri-Reed, 2014; Helyer & Lee, 2012).

A critical part of any study is gaining access to the participants, which involves two-way interaction between the researcher and the organization or facility (Farago et al., 2013). A formal letter of cooperation, found in Appendix D, identified (a) the nature of this study, (b) the responsibilities of the participating organization, and (c) the contacts within the organization (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Stake, 2010). The participating organization in the Tri-State area of Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia reflects a diversified combination of baby boomers and millennials (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). The strategy for gaining access to the participants consisted of contacting the approving manager of the participating organization via email with a follow-up phone call (Stake, 2010). I asked for a list of possible participants from the manager (or assistant) of the participating organization (Yin, 2009). These possible participants received an email from the researcher of this study to determine their willingness to participate (Yin, 2012). The message I sent to the participants is included in Appendix B.

Once the voluntary participants agreed to participate in the semistructured interviews, I established a working relationship with them to help them understand the purpose of this study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In addition, I set up the interview dates, times, and locations. Each participant received an informed consent email, shown in Appendix C, containing the following information: (a) consent information, (b) background and purpose of the study, (c) sample interview questions, (d) voluntary basis of participation, (e) risks and benefits of being part of the study, (f) no compensation

provided to participants, (g) confidentiality of all information, and (h) contact information for potential questions (Smith & Ros, 2010; Twenge, 2010; Xu, 2009).

The participants of this study were required to meet the eligibility criteria to ensure that each had the background needed to answer the interview questions (Yin, 2012). The interview questions aligned with the research question of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I focused the findings and results of the data collected from the participants on answering the overarching research question of this study (Boeije et al., 2011).

### **Research Method and Design**

A study's methodology underpins the work and methods for collecting information, data, and experiences (Bernard, 2013). The research design of a study depicts the appropriate data collection and data analysis techniques needed to explore the research problem (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Stake (2010) noted that the criteria for selecting a research method and design revolve around the research problem. I determined that a qualitative research method and single case study design were best suited to the study's problem statement.

### **Method**

I used the qualitative method for this study to identify, explore, and understand the engagement strategies business managers must incorporate to transition an organization's workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority. Boeije et al. (2011) indicated that qualitative researchers engage participants with open-ended questions to gain an in-depth understanding of their perspective and insight in a natural



setting. The qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study because of the participants' experience and framework approach (Hagemann & Stroope, 2013). In addition, qualitative researchers produce information for each particular case (Bowen, 2008). The qualitative method empowers participants to express their experiences (Bernard, 2013; Stake, 2010).

A quantitative methodology was not appropriate for this study because of the central relationship between empirical observation, and mathematical modeling was not necessary to address the research question (Bernard, 2013). Quantitative research is appropriate when one is measuring a group of people based on their demographics and shared characteristics (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In addition, researchers using quantitative methodology identify relationships between one or more independent variables and dependent variables, which would not address the research question for this study (Bowen, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A mixed methods methodology was not appropriate because of the need to employ a combination of quantitative and qualitative research to develop and test existing theories and derivative hypotheses (Bowen, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

### **Research Design**

Based on the selection of the qualitative methodology, five design options were available: (a) narrative, (b) ethnography, (c) grounded theory, (d) case study, and (e) phenomenology (Bernard, 2013). The single case study design for this study involved a real-life phenomenon, which encompassed significant contextual conditions (Yin, 2009). The use of case study research is appropriate when a problem is investigated not through

one experience but through a collection of experiences, which allows for numerous factors to be discovered and identified in the phenomenon (Yin, 2012). The phenomenon I explored for this study consisted of business managers with experience in developing and using engagement strategies that effectively contribute to meeting the needs of a multigenerational workforce (Duquette et al., 2013). The single case study design was appropriate for the study because a phenomenon is investigated not in one event, but in a collection of events, which allows for numerous factors to be revealed and understood (Yin, 2012).

The narrative design was not appropriate for the study because of the emphasis on the theory of consciousness, such as a communicative framework arising from self-narrative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Narrative design research centers on a collection of stories from participants (Yin, 2009). Ethnography was not appropriate for the study because there was no need to conduct a systematic study of a particular culture or people (Yin, 2009). Ethnographers focus on the comprehensive representation of understanding of a particular culture (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Grounded-theory design was not appropriate for the study because there was no need to develop a theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Grounded theory is an inductive type of design involving theoretical ideas so that analytic theory can materialize (Yin, 2009). Phenomenological design was not appropriate for the study because there was no need to explore the specific experience and action of what was working well in a group of participants (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological design focuses on the positive experiences of participants concerning the subjective reality of an event (Yin, 2009).

Data saturation occurs when the researcher demonstrates that no new information results from collecting additional data (Bowen, 2008). Data collection for this study occurred until data saturation. Therefore, I continued to collect consistent data until the point of saturation (Bowen, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Data saturation occurred with 23 semistructured interviews along with the exploration of employee training manuals and job descriptions. Data collection continued in this study until no unexplained phenomena existed (Bernard, 2013).

### **Population and Sampling**

The participants for this study included business managers, supervisors, and department heads in a healthcare organization in the Tri-State area of Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia. The knowledge participants had was due to the availability of a multigenerational workforce in the area (Duquette et al., 2013). The population was practicable due to the area employing a considerable number of managers, supervisors, and department heads who may be lifetime residents in the community (Yin, 2009). The management population met the criteria for experience in developing and using engagement strategies that healthcare business managers incorporate to transition an organization's workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority (Baert & Govaerts, 2012).

The sampling method for the study was purposive (Bernard, 2013). With purposive sampling, the researcher implements decisions based on the individual participants who would be most likely to contribute appropriate data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Purposive sampling focuses on exploring the meaning that participants

hold about the problem or issue (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The purposive sampling method contributed to the participants' variety of experience, which was a vital to depicting the engagement strategies that business managers must incorporate to transition an organization's workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority (Hagemann & Stroope, 2013).

The appropriate sample size for a study cannot be predetermined, but data saturation occurred for this study with 23 semistructured interviews along with the exploration of employee training manuals and job descriptions (Bernard, 2013). A sample focuses on participants' perspectives, meanings, and experiences, representing a holistic picture (Yin, 2009). The Tri-State area hosts many healthcare facilities that employ a multigenerational workforce (Duquette et al., 2013). The case unit was one healthcare organization in the Tri-State area. The healthcare organization for my purposive sample has one hospital and one campus located in two states: one in Huntington, West Virginia, and the other in Ironton, Ohio. The population of the study consisted of approximately 125 business managers within a health care unit. I interviewed 17 business managers at the Huntington, West Virginia hospital and six at the Ironton, Ohio campus at that data saturation occurred. The other data I collected were from employee training manuals and employee job descriptions from the healthcare organization.

The healthcare managers from the Tri-State area of Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia whom I interviewed for this study shared rich knowledge and experiences with a multigenerational workforce. The semistructured interview questions were open ended in order to make it possible to gain understanding of the engagement-strategy phenomena of

interest in this study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The interviews took place in natural settings, enabling the researcher and participants to develop substantial dialogue (Yin, 2009). A formal letter of cooperation, found in Appendix D, identified the discussion area for the interviews, which consisted of an exclusive office space within the hospital facilities. Qualitative interviews involve a small number of semistructured and open-ended questions (Yin, 2012). The participants answered seven open-ended questions within a timeframe of 60 minutes.

### **Ethical Research**

I conducted this study under the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval number 07-30-15-0351490. For this study, I employed the process of informed consent (Plankey-Videla, 2012). The informed consent consisted of the following: (a) participants receiving an informed consent email listed in the table of contents and shown in Appendix C, (b) once the email was received participants replied to the email denying or consenting to participate, and (c) the participants that consented to participate, they could also withdraw from the study at any time by notifying me via phone or email (Plankey-Videla, 2012; Stake, 2010; Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008). In addition, participants did not receive any incentives such as compensation for participating in the interview of this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

I employed a coding system to replace the names of the organization and the participants with pseudonyms and numbers in order to protect the identity of both (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The coding system illustrated an adequate process of protection for the participants in this study (Plankey-Videla, 2012). The participants'

documents listed in the table of contents and appendices of this study: (a) Appendix A, interview questions, (b) Appendix B, invitation to participate, (c) Appendix C, consent form, and (d) Appendix D, organizational letter (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

I used a code for each interview participant in this study coded as selected participant 1 through selected participant 23 to protect the confidentiality of the individual and organization (Plankey-Videla, 2012; White & Drew, 2011). I used a code for the two healthcare facilities HC1 and HC2. I secured all data in a fireproof vault located in my home office, too, which only I will have, access. After 5 years, all interview document shredded, and electronic devices erased (Bernard, 2013; Yin, 2009). Furthermore, I will delete all information that could identify the participants or healthcare organization.

### **Data Collection**

Qualitative research does not use instruments as quantitative research does in the data collection process (Stake, 2010). Qualitative research uses interview questions, which can differ in type from semistructured to informal (Bernard, 2013; White & Drew, 2011; Yin, 2009). I, the researcher, using interview questions in Appendix A, was the principal data collection instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Farago et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The data collection process for the study consisted of semistructured interviews along with exploration of employee training manuals and job descriptions (Bernard, 2013; Farago et al., 2013; Yin, 2009). The interviews began with a conversational question to allow the interview to flow into a semistructured process with

a list of questions, which guided the interview process. The interview protocol is included in Appendix A (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The data collection process consisted of semistructured interview of business managers in the two healthcare facilities located in the Tri-State area of Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia (Bernard, 2013; Stake, 2010; White & Drew, 2011). The use of semistructured interviews explored the engagement strategies business managers are identifying to manage a multigenerational workforce (Duquette et al., 2013; Ferri-Reed, 2014; Meriac et al., 2010). Potential participants received an informed consent email shown in Appendix C. In addition, I contacted the participants by email to determine the time and location of the interview and subsequently stored the interview data along with the training manual and job description data in a fireproof vault in my home office (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Plankey-Videla, 2012).

I assured the reliability and validity of the data collection process by using a pilot study and member checking (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Farago et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Using a pilot study increased the likelihood of success with the identified instrument for a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Yin, 2009). In addition, necessary adjustments to the semistructured interview questions are determined in the pilot study (Stake, 2010).

Member checking enabled me to receive participants' feedback for validating and improving accuracy along with credibility (Bernard, 2013). Member checking provides researchers with the ability to correct errors or wrong interpretations of participants' feedback (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Stake, 2010). Therefore, member checking decreases

the opportunity for incorrect interpretation of data collected from participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

### **Data Collection Technique**

I used semistructured interviews to collect data from business managers in the 2 healthcare facilities located in the Tri-State area of Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia (see Appendix A). The semistructured interview data collection process consisted of (a) site visits at 2 healthcare facilities to meet with the approving managers of the participating organizations to sign the letter of cooperation located in Appendix D, (b) requesting a list of potential participants from the manager (or designee) of the participating organization, (c) contacted the potential participants by email with an invitation to participate (see Appendix B), (d) distributing and obtaining the potential participants' signed consent forms to participate in this study (see Appendix C), and (e) contacting the resulting participants to define the time and location of the interview (Farago et al., 2013; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2012).

Data collection techniques can vary from site interviews to surveys (Yin, 2009). Interviews were the best fit for this qualitative single case study. One advantage of semistructured interviews was the face-to-face data collection, from which I obtained a more accurate screening and response of and from the participant (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In addition, using semistructured interviews provided non-verbal cues such as body language that could indicate the participants are uncomfortable with the questions (Yin, 2012). Another advantage of semistructured interviews was the potential to record, which ensured the accurate capture of participant's responses (Bernard, 2013). However,



a disadvantage of interviewing is the time constraints giving the researcher only a limited amount of time with each of the participants (Stake, 2010).

Upon receiving IRB approval, I used a pilot study to identify and address the necessary adjustments to the interview protocol in Appendix A (Bernard, 2013; Farago et al., 2013; Stake, 2010). The intent of my pilot study was to determine if the seven semistructured interview questions were suitable and feasible for this study (Farago et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; White & Drew, 2011). In addition, the pilot study and the member checking identified any potential issues or problems that could have occurred during data collection (Bernard, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; White & Drew, 2011).

Member checking provided informed feedback substantiating the data collection technique of the study, which validates the credibility of the study (Bernard, 2013). I used member checking for the recorded transcript review during the semistructured interview process (Farago et al., 2013; White & Drew, 2011; Yin, 2012). In addition, member checking provides an opportunity for the researcher to understand and assess challenges that could occur through wrong interpretation of the seven semistructured interview questions. (Bernard, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Furthermore, the researcher used member checking to review the participant's answers to determine the accuracy and to correct errors of interpretations during the semistructured interviews (Farago et al., 2013; Stake, 2010; White & Drew, 2011).

### **Data Organization Techniques**

I used NVivo 10 for response tracking and organizing the data collection, which created labeling and cataloging of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Plankey-Videla, 2012). As the researcher collected and organized the responses from the interviews, all information remains confidential using the NVivo 10 software. In addition, using a coding system ensures the privacy of the participants coded as P1HC1 and P1HC2 identifying the participant and the healthcare facility (White & Drew, 2011; Bernard, 2013; Yin, 2009).

I organized the data organization process as (a) reviewing notes throughout the data collection, (b) ensuring the data correct and useful, and (c) entering the qualitative data in the NVivo 10 software (Farago et al., 2013; Plankey-Videla, 2012; Stake, 2010;). The data organization techniques minimize errors along with verifying the quality and integrity of the data collected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman 2011; White & Drew, 2011). In addition, after the data compilation, I reviewed for accuracy and the relationship of the research question to the collected responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Plankey-Videla, 2012; Stake, 2010).

I maintained the data collected from this study on a jump drive in a locked, fireproof vault. In addition, I am the only individual to have access to the data collected from this study. The data collected will remain in a secure location for a period of at least 5 years according to Walden University requirements. The data will remain in my home office locked in a fireproof vault with a combination only known to the researcher (Bernard, 2013; Farago et al., 2013; Stake, 2010).

## **Data Analysis**

Yin (2009) indicated the description and data analysis of a single case often suggests implications for the same phenomenon. In addition, Moustakas (1994) suggested utilizing a Modified Van Kaam method with the use of in-depth, semistructured interviews to explore the perception of the purposive sample. In general, the data analysis process consisted of : (a) correlating key themes within the literature review and new studies that develop during field observation (Farago et al., 2013; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2012), (b) categorizing the data collected from the participants' interviews, employee training manuals, and job descriptions of the healthcare organization into themes (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Plankey-Videla, 2012), and (c) summarizing and comparing the findings interpreted from the literature research with the data from the healthcare organization (Bernard, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

I used NVivo 10 software to manage the participants' responses to each interview question. NVivo 10 contains the data information, which I developed through coding and identifying themes (Bernard, 2013; Marshall & Friedman, 2012; Yin, 2009). The NVivo 10 platform enabled the researcher to collect and analyze the data in detail through coding and theme identification, which provides validity, reliability, and justification for the conclusions and recommendations stemming from analyzing the data. In addition, NVivo 10 has visualization tools, which allowed for mind mapping, so the researcher can visually organize the possible patterns and relationships (Bernard, 2013; Marshall & Friedman, 2012; Yin, 2009).

I focused on key themes, to compare with the literature review and the established conceptual framework for addressing the research question (Farago et al., 2013; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2014). The researcher compiled the themes based on the significant issues or characteristics of the phenomena being studied (Yin, 2009). The phenomenon for exploration through this study was the engagement strategies business managers identify and employ when transitioning an organization's workforce from baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority (Balda & Mora, 2011; Cekada, 2012; Feyrer, 2011).

### **Reliability and Validity**

#### **Reliability**

I used member checking of data interpretation by establishing a coding system to ensure the dependability of the transcript review of each participant and healthcare facility coded as P1HC1 and P1HC2 (Bernard, 2013). A critical determinant of dependability of the data from the interviews was my ability to apply member checking by correcting errors or wrong interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Farago et al., 2013; Stake, 2010). In addition, a predetermined interview site location along with a comfortable and noise-free atmosphere setting for the participants were essential in providing a dependable and reliable interview process during the pilot study and actual interview (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

I conducted a pilot study to see if any necessary adjustments needed with the 7 semistructured interview questions in Appendix A align with the research question ensuring the dependability and reliability of the data interpretation (Stake, 2010). The dependability and reliability of this study build the bridge for future researchers (Thomas

& Magilvy, 2011). In addition, the interview process of a pilot study verified the accuracy, dependability, and effectiveness of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Farago et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

### **Validity**

The data analysis process for this qualitative single case study design consisted of data triangulation (Bernard, 2013; Marshall & Rossman 2011; White & Drew, 2011). Yin (2009) identified data triangulation as collections from multiple sources of the same phenomenon. An array of sources used in the study as evidence, such as (a) 117 references of which 110 are peer-reviewed references, (b) semistructured interviews, (c) review of employee training manuals, (d) review of job descriptions, and (e) review of new studies, which came about during field observation (Bernard, 2013; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2009).

I ensured the creditability of the participants' transcripts by informing the interview participants of the recorded audio device and my note taking. In addition, data triangulation ensured the creditability of the interviews transcribed for this study (Bernard, 2013, Stake, 2010; Yin, 2009). To decrease possible errors and wrong interpretations, participants reviewed the transcribed verbatim interview responses from the audio recording to confirm accuracy of data interpretation and accuracy of transcription of responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Farago et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

I have enhanced other researchers' ability to develop conclusions on transferability by thoroughly defining all the case parameters, contexts, and assumptions

(Bannon et al., 2011; Helyer & Lee, 2012; Palmiotto, 2012). In addition, future researchers can expand on the context of the exploration of engagement strategies due to millennials being part of the U.S. workforce for a longer period (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Farago et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Therefore, the transferability of my findings and conclusions may not be applicable once time has elapsed after the completion of the study.

Confirmability occurs when the results can be confirmed by the researcher through procedures such as checking and rechecking the data during the collection process (Bernard, 2013; Marshall & Friedman, 2012; Yin, 2009). As the researcher of this study, I actively searched for and document any negative or different instances that could contradict my interpretation of the data collected. In addition, I examined the data collection and analysis procedure to avoid potential distortion of my results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Stake, 2010).

Data saturation occurs when the researcher collects no new information (Bowen, 2008). Data collection for this study occurred at the point of data saturation with 23 semistructured interviews along with exploration of employee training manuals and job descriptions. Therefore, I continued to collect consistent data until that point of saturation (Bowen, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). However, if saturation would not have occurred, but the intended number of participants interviewed, data collection continues until data saturation occurs (Bernard, 2013).

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 summarizes the details about the purpose of the study, my role as the researcher, and the selection process of the participants. The study characteristics discussed in Section 2 include (a) the research methodologies, (b) research design, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis procedures, and (e) the reliability and validity of the research.

Section 3 begins with a restatement of the purpose of the study and the research question. Section 3 continues with a brief summary of the findings provided for this study, along with a detailed presentation of the findings. Section 3 contains a discussion of how the findings, conclusions, and recommendations stemming from this study can apply to the professional practice of business, and contain a discussion of my reflections of completing the research process, and recommendations for further research.

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

Section 3 contains the findings of the research study. In addition, Section 3 includes (a) an overview of the study, (b) a presentation of the findings, (c) applications to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommendations for action, (f) recommendations for further research, (g) reflections, and (b) a summary and study conclusion.

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the engagement strategies that business managers design and implement to transition a workforce with a majority of baby boomers to a workforce with a majority of millennials in the healthcare industry. The focus of data collection was exploring the gap in engagement strategies that contribute effectively to meeting the needs of a multigenerational workforce. I used a pilot study to determine any necessary adjustments to the seven semistructured interview questions. After reviewing the results of the pilot study, I concluded that the interview questions were suitable and that no adjustments to the data collection were necessary.

The sampling method used during data collection was purposive. The purposive sampling displayed the variety of experiences from each participant throughout the semistructured interviews. During data collection, the participants gave examples of the differences and strengths of the baby boomer and millennial generations. In addition, the evidence collected indicated adjustments that the participants had to make as business managers with a multigenerational workforce. In addition, I explored other types of data from employee training manuals and employee job descriptions. The participating



organization is continually updating and changing the employee training manuals and job descriptions to parallel the management of a multigenerational workforce.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The overarching research question was the following: What engagement strategies must business managers establish to transition a workforce from a majority of baby boomers to a majority of millennials? I focused on identifying key themes and sought to compare the themes with the literature review and the established conceptual framework for addressing the research question. The following themes evolved from the participant interviews, employee manuals, and employee job descriptions: (a) cross training works for boomers and millennials, (b) restructuring work-life balance, and (c) generational differences in employee feedback expectations.

The evidence I collected in this study confirmed the exploration of the literature review indicated by each theme. The evidence also indicated that the organization could bring out the strengths of both generations through cross training. Further evidence implied that a strong organization incorporates cross training, which can catalyze boomers and millennials relying on each other to complete their jobs (PH13HC2, P14HC1, P18HC2, P23HC1). In addition, the evidence I collected on the restructuring of work-life balance was the complete opposite for boomers compared to millennials. For example, boomers preferred a standard 40-hour workweek, whereas millennials preferred a flexible workweek. The managers indicated that work-life balance is a *blurred line* with the millennials but is clear to boomers, and that to retain the millennial generation, they had to change this blurred work-life balance (P6HC1, P11HC1, P21HC2, P22HC2).

Lastly, the evidence I collected on the generational difference in employee feedback expectations was troubling to managers, due to the fact that millennials needed immediate feedback, whether positive or negative. If the millennials do not receive immediate feedback from managers, they are prone to seeking other employment opportunities. In the past, managers were used to evaluating the baby-boomer generation annually or semiannually to discuss feedback through the job evaluation process (P2HC1, P5HC1, P20HC1, P22HC2).

### **Evolved Themes From Findings**

The following themes evolved from the participant interviews, employee manuals, and employee job description: (a) cross training works for boomers and millennials, (b) restructuring work-life balance, and (c) generational differences in employee feedback expectations.

**Theme 1: Cross training works for boomers and millennials.** The first theme emphasized the participants' experience with cross training. Participants indicated that they had a variety of cross-training workshops (P13HC2 and P23HC1). The workshops emphasized the strengths of both generations. For example, the millennials have technology strengths, whereas the baby boomers have experience and knowledge from working on the job for years (P18HC2). Other participants affirmed seeing mentorship take place on the job between boomers and millennials. Boomers and millennials functioned as both mentors and mentees (P14HC1 and P17HC2).

Baby boomers have experience and knowledge of the business organization and its industry to pass down to the millennial workforce (Kaur & Verma, 2011; Williams

Van Rooij, 2012). Managers may pair millennial employees with baby boomers to create mentorships with the boomers as mentors and the millennials as mentees (P9HC1 and P12HC1). Another participant indicated that encouraging mentorships between the older and younger generations let employees see how the generations might approach the job differently, noting, “that is what we need” (P10HC2).

Cross training is an essential part of the development of a multigenerational workforce (Berens, 2013). A participant described building a strong team incorporating both generations and having them learn to rely on each other. Participant 17HC2 indicated that, as a manager,

I always separate the two groups so they can see and learn from each other. It motivates the millennial generation to want to be better and learn from the work experience of the baby-boomers, a true microism of the millennial generation.

Another participant concurred: “as a manager it is important when I see the older more experienced employees mentoring, the younger generation and vice-versa” (P2HC1).

**Theme 2: Restructuring work-life balance.** The second theme highlighted the participants’ experience with employee work-life balance. Participants indicated that a flexible workweek needs to be available to meet the needs of both generations (P1HC1 and P6HC1). For example, employees seemed to want longer hours and days off together so that they could plan more things and use less vacation time (P5HC1).

Participants described the work-life balance of the two generations. The boomer generation wants benefits and stability. They want to do the same thing repeatedly, along with the same work schedule (P11HC1 and P21HC2). The boomers do not like a lot of

changes. The millennial workforce wants the opportunity to balance work and home with flexible schedules (P6HC1 and P22HC2).

Participants indicated that the motivations for the two generations were completely different, making the workforce difficult to manage at times (P6HC1). For the baby-boomer generation, a paycheck is motivation enough, along with the self-satisfaction of doing the job well. The boomers stay engaged and own their jobs (P5HC1). In order to retain the millennial employee, there must be a transition to a flexible schedule (P1HC1). The millennials come back from 8 days off disengaged. For example, the millennial mindset is that “I am here for 3 (12 hour days) out of here do not own it” (P11HC1 and P12HC1).

Participants concurred that the two generations have different needs and desires (P21HC2 and 23HC2). The baby boomers and the millennials do not want the same type of work schedule (P11HC1). Boomers want a structured, 5-days-a-week schedule, whereas millennials want a flexible schedule; thus, each generation assigns a different meaning to *work-life balance* (P6HC1 and P12HC1). For example, a participant indicated that millennials want freedom and time off, which they call *flextime*. The baby-boomers indicate the exact opposite; they are interested in a structured lifestyle and finishing at a certain time every day (P23HC2).

**Theme 3: Generational differences in employee feedback expectations.** The third theme emphasized the participants’ experience with employee feedback expectations. Participants (P2HC1, P5HC1, P20HC1, P22HC2) mentioned recognizing

employees from both generations having different struggles with their job duties or skills. Another participant indicated a work-style difference between generations (P4HC1).

Participants indicated that millennials want immediate rewards and feedback, whereas baby boomers do not need immediate recognition or feedback (P16HC1, P20HC1, P22HC2). The participants indicated that the baby boomers knew that performance recognition takes place during job evaluation. The millennials, in contrast, did not want to wait for a yearly evaluation of a “job well done” (P16HC1, P20HC1, P22HC2).

A participant suggested finding an engagement strategy that would meet the needs of a multigenerational workforce for employee feedback expectations (P2HC1). In addition, participants mentioned coming together and giving situations or examples concerning employees’ expectations about job performance (P2HC1, P5HC1, P20HC1, P22HC2). One participant noted, “the organization needs to engage and embrace the diversity of the ages” (P2HC1).

### **Findings Related to the Larger Body of Literature**

Findings from the literature confirmed the themes that emerged from the evidence I collected from (a) semistructured interviews, (b) employee training manuals, and (c) employee job descriptions. The evolved themes included (a) cross training works for boomers and millennials, (b) restructuring work–life balance, and (c) generational differences in employee feedback expectations. The focus of the body of literature for this study aligned with the themes.

**Theme 1: Cross training works for boomers and millennials.** The findings confirmed that cross training creates a vehicle for a multigenerational workforce to interact and enhance each other's skill paths (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Sokoloff, 2012). For example, cross training prepares millennials to follow in the successful steps of the baby boomers exiting the workforce (Houck, 2011). In addition, mentoring educates baby boomers on technical areas while at the same time teaching millennials the foundation of leadership skills (Berens, 2013). Business managers identified both generations as having unique knowledge and job skills essential to the *reverse-mentoring process* (Berens, 2013).

**Theme 2: Restructuring work–life balance.** The findings confirmed that the members of the millennial generation have learned to manage work and family at the same time, making them effective at multitasking in the workplace (Ferri-Reed, 2013). In addition, business managers identified the baby-boomer generation as a competitive and hardworking generation setting the 40-hour workweek (Cekada, 2012). The millennial generation is transforming the *anytime-and-anywhere* work schedule of many organizations (Ferri-Reed, 2014). Barford and Hester (2011) concurred that business managers attempt to determine a successful formula for managing work–life balance as the workforce transitions from a baby-boomer to a millennial majority (Bannon et al., 2011; Mirvis, 2012).

**Theme 3: Generational differences in employee feedback expectations.** The findings confirmed that business managers knew and understood generational differences concerning employee feedback creating effective engagement performance, which

ultimately leads to successful organizational outcomes (Cekada, 2012). A multigenerational workforce displays a variety of skills, mindsets, standards, enthusiasms, and performance strategies (Helyer & Lee, 2012). Baert and Govaerts (2012) indicated that identifiable engagement performance strategies are essential with a multigenerational workforce. The different expectations of the millennial generation demonstrate the need for engagement strategies to be at the forefront of business managers' goals and objectives for the organization (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Lester et al., 2012).

### **Comparing Findings With the Conceptual Framework**

Transformational leadership theory exhibits standards for interrelationships such as interdependence to ensure that combined behaviors result in participants exploring experiences regarding transformational characteristics (Constanze et al., 2012). In addition, transformational leadership theory addressed the strategic indicators that business managers face in transitioning a workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority (Rowold, 2014). The themes from this study align with my conceptual framework.

**Theme 1: Cross training works for boomers and millennials.** The theme on cross training correlates with the conceptual framework, indicating the success business managers have in cross training the two generations. The business healthcare managers I interviewed indicated that in transitioning effectively from a majority of baby boomers to a majority of millennials, it is essential for experiences and culture to be shared between generations for a successful organizational mission (P18HC2 and P23HC1).

Transformational leadership theory posits that followers will go beyond daily operations to reach the next level of performance and achieve the organization's mission (O'Riordan & Fairbrass, 2014; Schuh et al., 2013).

**Theme 2: Restructuring work–life balance.** The findings also tie the conceptual framework to the restructuring of work–life balance in the workplace. Transformational leadership theory suggests that business managers must address obstacles when transitioning a workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority (Rowold, 2014). The evidence I collected from this study indicated that managers incorporate certain factors such as a flexible workweek for a successful transition. For example, a flexible work schedule is a major factor in maintaining and retaining the workforce as millennials become the majority (P1HC1, P6HC1, P12HC1).

**Theme 3: Generational differences in employee feedback expectations.** My findings also tie the conceptual framework to generational differences in employee feedback. Transformational leadership theory indicates that business managers need to implement engagement strategies for a multigenerational workforce (Kelloway et al., 2012). For example, managers need to have effective processes in place concerning timely employee feedback as the workforce transitions from a majority of baby boomers to a majority of millennials (P2HC1, P5HC1, P20HC1, P22HC2).

### **Relating Findings to Existing Literature on Effective Business Practice**

My findings align with the existing literature on effective business practices. The business-manager participants indicated that rapid changes were occurring in business conditions, such as the introduction of advanced technology, which is a strength of the



millennials that enables them to enhance organizations' business process performance (Blattner & Walter, 2015; Xu, 2009). In addition, the exploration of effective business practices contributes to the assessment of the millennial generation as future leaders of business organizations (Maheshwari & Shreeharsha, 2015; Smith & Clark, 2010).

Therefore, business managers need to understand how to take advantage of the millennials' particular skills and talents for designing and implementing positive business process practices (Bardia, 2010; Petkova et al., 2014).

**Theme 1: Cross training works for boomers and millennials.** Cross training creates a vehicle for effective business practices with a multigenerational workforce so that employees of different generations can interact and enhance each other's skill paths (Blattner & Walter, 2015; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Sokoloff, 2012). For example, cross training prepares millennials to follow in the successful steps of the baby boomers exiting the workforce (Houck, 2011). In addition, the evidence collected indicates the need to increase cross training, which will dissolve the disconnect between the generations and encourage the development of effective business practices for the organization as the transition occurs from a majority of baby boomers to a majority of millennials (P1HC1, P18HC2, P23HC1).

**Theme 2: Restructuring work–life balance.** The findings of this study indicated that the restructuring of work–life balance requires effective business practices throughout organizations. Participants indicated the need to restructure work–life balance to fit the different needs of each generation, indicating the need for effective business practice for the participating organization (P11HC1 and P21HC2). In addition,

Hagemann and Stroope (2013) indicated that business managers have to be aware of the competencies of the millennials, which include collaboration, flexibility, and creativity. Therefore, business managers need to understand how to design and develop business processes that reflect the millennial generation's skills and demands for work-life flexibility (Bannon et al., 2011; Blattner & Walter, 2015).

**Theme 3: Generational differences in employee feedback expectations.** The findings of this study indicated timely employee feedback is necessary to maintain effective business practices as the workforce transitions to a majority of millennials (P16HC1, P20HC1, P22HC2). Business organizations are trying to determine when the generational shifts are large enough to warrant a change in engagement practices for the millennial generation, which maintain effective business practices for the organization (Maheshwari & Shreeharsha, 2015; Helyer & Lee, 2012).

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The findings of this study with respect to professional business practice demonstrate that business organizations are attempting to attract and maintain a multigenerational workforce, which can play an integral role in the growth and vitality of business practices (Maheshwari & Shreeharsha, 2015; McGinnis, 2011). In addition, the findings from the study add to the body of knowledge from the evolved theme areas: (a) cross training works for boomers and millennials, (b) restructuring work-life balance, and (c) generational difference in employee feedback expectations. The significance of this study presents findings, which can contribute to the improvement of business practices of the multigenerational workforce (Cortez & Costa, 2015; Smith & Clark, 2010).

**Theme 1: Cross training Works for Boomers and Millennials.** The findings from this study added to the body of knowledge indicating that cross training benefits both generations such as educating baby-boomers on the technical areas while at the same time teaching millennials the foundation of leadership skills (Berens, 2013; Cortez & Costa, 2015). The results of the study indicated the experiences both generation display are an asset to the business practices of the organization (P1HC1, P17HC1, P18HC2, P23HC1). In addition, the study added to the body of knowledge identifying business managers find that both generations have a unique knowledge and job skill essential to the reverse mentoring process (Berens, 2013; Maheshwari & Shreeharsha, 2015).

**Theme 2: Restructuring work-life balance.** The findings from this study added to the body of knowledge identifying the importance and difference of work-life balance to maintain the organization's business practices. The findings indicate managers have to meet the desires of the work-life balance for the boomers and millennials to sustain effective business practices. Unlike the millennials who desire flexible schedules, the baby-boomers do not want the 24 hour 7 days a week work-life balance together (P11HC1, P21HC2, 23HC2). A multigenerational workforce brings positive challenges to managers for determining the work-life balance of an emerging talent pool, using enhances business practices (Cortez & Costa, 2015; Hagemann & Stroope, 2013)

**Theme 3: Generational differences in employee feedback expectations.** The finding indicated business managers must determine what type of rewards, recognition, and training factors will meet the needs of a multigenerational workforce (P16HC1,

P20HC1, P22HC2). The results from this study indicated that an annual employee job evaluation would not suffice as the workforce changes from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority (P2HC1, P5HC1, P20HC1, P22HC2). Therefore, as millennials enter the workforce, business managers need to investigate the type of recognition and reward system to which millennial will best respond (Bannon et al., 2011; Maheshwari & Shreeharsha, 2015).

### **Implications for Social Change**

The findings from my study indicate the work environment can affect employees' ability to excel under any business conditions affecting the behaviors of the employees (Baert & Govaerts, 2012; Bianchi, 2013; Ferri-Reed, 2012). The implication of social improvements from this qualitative single case study promotes individual qualities such as worth, dignity, and a strong work ethic. Several participants confirmed the importance of employee success depends on a strong work ethic (P2HC1, P12HC1, P19HC1). In addition, the social benefits of these characteristics add value to the employees and surrounding communities, which in return benefits organizations (Baert & Govaerts, 2012; Blattner & Walter, 2015). The results from this study could enhance the core values of employees and their families and catalyze them to perform their civic duties throughout their local communities.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The study results pertain to business managers transitioning a workforce from a majority of baby-boomers to a majority of millennials. Baert and Govaerts (2012) confirmed that engagement performance processes are taking on a different direction due

to the multigenerational differences in the U.S. workforce. In addition, Kaur and Verma (2011) argued the millennials are not meeting the demands of the workforce gap of business organizations in the 21st century due to lack of applied skills, which make up the importance of human capital in an organization.

The results of this study imply business managers need professional development workshops on how to manage a multigenerational workforce. Through my findings, the participants confirmed the millennials, unlike their predecessors, are lacking the skill set and on-the-job knowledge (P1HC1, P2HC1, P6HC1). My recommendation from the results of this study would be to develop webinars or training courses for business managers across the United States.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Future researchers can expand on the context of the exploration of engagement strategies due to millennials being part of the U.S. workforce for a longer period (Cortez & Costa, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Farago et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The limitations defining the study included semistructured interviews with participants having the appropriate background and ability to describe their experiences for addressing the research question for this study (Farago, Zide, & Shahani-Denning, 2013). The participants in this study were healthcare managers who possessed experiences associated with managing a multigenerational workforce. The participants for my study had to meet the eligibility criteria to participate in the study, which include (a) 2 years of management experience, (b) 2 years of experience managing a multigenerational workforce, and (c) 3 hours a year for professional development.

## Reflections

The purpose of this research was to explore business managers' transition of an organization workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority in the 21st century. I faced preconceived ideas during the process "*how is this study going to come together*" because as the researcher, I was only seeing small segments at time, as I was compiling the data. The DBA process takes perseverance, but to see it come together is rewarding. I was also pleased to note that the results of my findings for this study aligned with the peer-reviewed articles.

## Summary and Study Conclusions

By the end of 2020, another 40 million millennials, the generation born between 1980 and 2000, will have joined the workplace creating work engagement strategy challenges for management (Cortez & Costa, 2015; Ferri-Reed, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the engagement strategies business managers design and implement to transition a workforce with a majority of baby-boomers to a workforce with a majority of millennials. Business managers face a workplace *experiment* of what type of engagement strategies to provide for this tech-savvy generation (Berens, 2013; Maheshwari & Shreeharsha, 2015; Swanson, 2013).

Transformational leadership theory addresses the difficulty business managers' face in developing and deploying applicable engagement strategies to transition a workforce (Rowold, 2014). Transformational leadership theory reveals effective constructs such as intellectual motivation and individual cooperation for reaching the organization leaders' goals (McCleskey, 2014). My findings indicate business managers

must determine what type of rewards, recognition, and training factors will meet the needs of multigenerational workforce (Bannon et al., 2011).

Furthermore, my findings indicate business managers are evaluating engagement strategies and the weaknesses of engagement processes to create greater accountability among stakeholders for employee engagement performance outcomes (Blattner & Walter, 2015; Burchell & Cook, 2013; Saks & Burke, 2012). The retirement of baby-boomers has created a challenge for business organizations striving to recruit and retain the millennial generation (Maheshwari & Shreeharsha, 2015; Ng et al., 2010). Therefore, business managers will continue to need to develop and improve engagement strategies in the coming decades to meet the demands of the stakeholders (Twenge, 2010; Wells et al., 2013).

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Introductions: \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

- 
1. What must organizational leaders do to transition an older aged team to a younger team?
  2. What standards could the organization establish for an engagement strategy to be effective?
  3. How do you measure workforce transition success?
  4. What engagement strategy content will motivate a multigenerational workforce?
  5. What engagement strategies are you planning or have implemented with the transition of a multigenerational workforce?
  6. What current employee engagement strategies demonstrate your company's mission and vision for a multigenerational workforce?
  7. What do you know will work within an engagement strategy?

Other topics discussed: \_\_\_\_\_

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Post interview comments: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

Dear (XXXX XXXX):

My name is Kimberly Riley and I am a graduate student working on my doctoral study at Walden University. This doctoral study is about engagement strategies that could contribute to the success of business managers transitioning a multigenerational workforce. Research collected in this study will be used to explore business managers transitioning an organization workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority with the objective of identifying the engagement strategies that contribute to the success of the transition.

The only requirements of your participation will be to meet with me approximately 60 minutes at your facility to answer some interview questions about your experiences managing a multigenerational workforce.

Your identity and the identity of your company will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed in the study. As a participant in the study, you will receive a copy of the research, when completed. This may provide information that you can incorporate into your business to enhance your business practices or boost the profitability of your business.

In order for you to decide if you would like to participate in the study, I would like to speak with you by phone to further explain the study or to answer any questions that you may have. The call will only take 5 to 10 minutes of your time.

I will call you at your office number on (INSERT DATE AND TIME). If you prefer to call me at a different time or to a different number, please notify me by replying to this email.

Regards

Kimberly Riley

[kimberly.riley3@waldenu.edu](mailto:kimberly.riley3@waldenu.edu)

Tel: XXX-XXX-XXXX

### Appendix C: Informed Consent for Participants Over 18 Years of Age

You are invited to participate in a research study of engagement strategies that could contribute to the success of business managers transitioning a multigenerational workforce. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to gain an understanding of this study before deciding whether to take part. If you do agree to participate, this form will be used to request your written permission to use the data collected during your interview in the study. Research collected in this study will be used to explore business managers transitioning an organization workforce from a baby-boomer majority to a millennial majority with the objective of identifying the engagement strategies that contribute to the success of the transition.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Kimberly G. Riley, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

#### **Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to explore the engagement strategies business managers must establish to transition a workforce with a majority of baby-boomers to a workforce with a majority of millennials.

I am inviting managers who possess experience associated with managing a multigenerational workforce. The chosen participants met the specified eligibility criteria to participate in the study, which include (a) 2 years of management experience (b) 2 years of experience managing a multigenerational workforce and (c) 3 hours a year for professional development.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a one-on-one interview with questions about the engagement strategies or techniques that you use or have used to transition a multigenerational workforce. The interview will last about 60 minutes.
- The interview will not involve questions about confidential information about your organization and will not include question about sensitive information.
- The interview will be audio recorded. A summary of the transcribed interview will be provided to you for your review of accuracy.

**Sample questions**

1. What impact do you believe members of each generation age have on completing a job according to your organizations' policies?
2. What steps are you taking to evaluate the transition of a multigenerational workforce?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Your participation in the study is voluntary. The researcher will respect your decision if you choose to be in the study or not to be in the study. If your decision is to join the study at this time, you can still change your mind at a later date. You may stop your participation in this study at any time. You may pass on any interview questions that you feel are too personal.

### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study**

Participating in this study involves minimal risks of discomforts encountered in daily activity, such as tiredness, fatigue while sitting for 60 minutes. Participating in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. Your personal information and company information will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone outside of the study. As a participant in the study, you will receive a copy of the research when completed. This may provide information that you can incorporate into your organization. The research may positively affect society by providing a positive social change for the development of individuals work environment. The social improvements from study can promote individual qualities such as worth, dignity and a strong work ethic.

### **Payment**

The participants in this study will not be compensated for their participation in the study.

### **Privacy**

All information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. In addition, the researcher will not include your name, your organization's name, or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by the researcher in a locked, fireproof vault. No other individual besides the researcher will have access to the file or the research data. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the University.

### **Contact and Questions**

Do you have any questions at this time? If you were to have questions at a later day, you may contact the researcher via phone (XXX-XXX-XXXX) or email (kimberly.riley3@waldenu.edu). If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. XXXX XXXX at 1-XXX-XXX-XXXX, extension XXXX. Dr. XXXX is the Walden University representative who can discuss your participation with you. Walden University's approval number for this study is 2015.07.30 17:28:15-05'00' Please print or save this consent for your records.

### **Statement of Consent**

I have read the above information and I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement as a participant. By replying to this email with the words "I Consent," you are agreeing to the terms described above.

## Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation



Office of Research Integrity

July 7, 2015

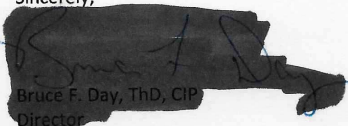
Walden University  
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

To Whom it may concern,

This letter is in support of the study for Kimberly Riley entitled "*Business Managers' Transition of an Organization Workforce from Baby-Boomer Majority to a Millennial Majority in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*" that is to be submitted to the Walden University IRB. We are in agreement with [REDACTED] Medical Center being listed as an off-site facility for this study. We have conducted a facilitated review of the study and find it appropriate for our human subject population and our facility is adequately equipped to perform the necessary procedures. Our understanding is that interviews will be conducted with [REDACTED] Medical Center managers and administrators to help complete her doctoral dissertation at Walden University.

The Federalwide Assurance (FWA) for [REDACTED] Marshall University is 00002704 and we are AAHRPP accredited. If I can provide any further information or assistance please do not hesitate to contact me [REDACTED] 303 or [day50@marshall.edu](mailto:day50@marshall.edu)

Sincerely,

  
Bruce F. Day, ThD, CIP  
Director

**WE ARE... MARSHALL.**  
One John Marshall Drive • Huntington, West Virginia 25795 • Tel 304/696-4100  
A State University of West Virginia • An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer