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Strategies for Managing a Multigenerational Workforce

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
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2016

Abstract

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by

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MBA, Regis University, 2001

BBA, Mount Vernon Nazarene University, 1999

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The multigenerational workforce presents a critical challenge for business managers, and each generation has different expectations. A human resource management study of organizations with more than 500 employees reported 58% of the managers experiencing conflict between younger and older workers. The purpose of this single case study was to explore the multigenerational strategies used by 3 managers from a Franklin County, Ohio manufacturing facility with a population size of 6 participants. The conceptual framework for this study was built upon generational theory and cohort group theory. The data were collected through face-to-face semistructured interviews, company documents, and a reflexive journal. Member checking was completed to strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the interpretation of participants' responses. A modified van Kaam method enabled separation of themes following the coding of data. Four themes emerged from the data: (a) required multigenerational managerial skills, (b) generational cohort differences, (c) most effective multigenerational management strategies, and (d) least effective multigenerational management strategies. Findings from this study may contribute to social change through better understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of the primary generations in the workforce, and, in turn, improve community relationships.

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Dedication

  The study is evidence of when one pursues a dream you can certainly obtain it through commitment, decisive action, and support. Without God's intervention last year, changing the entire perspective on my life's focus and outlook, I am not certain the completion of the study would have occurred. In addition, I dedicate this project to my wife—Cindy Iden—who endured countless hours of my time away from her and continually supported me throughout the process. She continues to believe in me to obtain higher and greater things in life.

Acknowledgments

The completion of this doctoral study would not have been possible without the support of a number of people. My gratitude to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is paramount with giving me life, breath, strength, and the determination to finish the course. In addition to the aforementioned support of my wife, the Strive-for-Five support group substantially contributed to my success. Included in the group was Dr. Rocky Dwyer, who volunteered to mentor the group all along the way. Melvia Scott, Leigh Byers, Roxie Mooney, and Cad Shannon, and others in 9000 classes provided personal encouragement during periods where events appeared to be overwhelming.

I want to thank my doctoral study committee comprised of Dr. Tim Truitt (Chair), Dr. Carol-Anne Faint (Second Committee Member), and Dr. Anne Davis (URR) for coaching and advising me through the entire process. A special thank you is due to Dr. Freda Turner, Fred Walker, and Dr. Arnold Witchel for their personal words of inspiration during Walden University residencies.

Lastly, I know I had numerous family members—both natural and church—lifting me up in prayer for God's blessing, courage, and tenacity to carry this through. Without this undergirding support, I would have not finished the course.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

A changing employment landscape presents workplace challenges involving multigenerational diversity. Business managers are working to determine successful strategies for addressing the challenges to ensure efficient operations and organizational success (Rajput, Marwah, Balli, & Gupta, 2013). A better understanding of the characteristics and attributes of the three primary generational cohorts and the business effect were central themes of this study. Helyer and Lee (2012) indicated the multigenerational workforce presents challenges as well as opportunities for managers. According to Mencl and Lester (2014), older employees are choosing to work past 60 and 70 years of age. The results are Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Millennial cohorts working alongside each other for another decade or more. Teclaw, Osatuke, Fishman, Moore, and Dyrenforth (2014) indicated generational differences receive increased attention in literature. As generational diversity grows in the multigenerational workforce, opportunities and challenges (Mencl & Lester, 2014) and potential difficulties occur with managing the differences (Lester, Standifer, Schultz, & Windsor, 2012).

Background of the Problem

The present workplace consists of three primary generations including Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979), and Generation Y (born between 1980 and 1999)—also referred to as the Millennials (Schullery, 2013). Lester et al. (2012) indicated employees from different generations have varying expectations on what becomes valued in the workplace. Each generation

creates their own distinct management challenges. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors affect each generation's thinking and decision-making (Lester et al., 2012).

Many organizations search for the right means to manage a multigenerational workforce. Managers have redirected focus from the aging worker to issues related to the new dilemma of a changing mix of employees (Cekada, 2012). Possible friction can create open conflict and managers must search for ways to anticipate the potential problems by taking the initiative to minimize tensions. An important element of generational issues is traceable to differences in life expectations and differing value systems (Ferri-Reed, 2013a). Information derived from this study supported tendencies toward conflict resulting from generational differences in the workplace.

The new challenges of these generational differences present unique requirements for human resource professionals and business managers. Bennett, Pitt, and Price (2012) indicated that an understanding of how to manage the new multigenerational phenomenon is vital. The areas requiring attention included job dissatisfaction, resulting decreased productivity, low morale, perpetuated attendance issues, and terminations (Bennett et al., 2012). Multigenerational challenges are not a short-term problem solved with a simple transition of knowledge. Branscum and Sciaraffa (2013) linked the situation in part to the Millennial generation becoming colleagues and service providers to older adults. Hillman (2014) discovered a significant relationship exists between cohort groups and resulting conflict created by generational work-value differences. In order to resolve generational conflict, business managers must also address the effects on job performance and production efficiencies (Hillman, 2014).

Problem Statement

Increasing workplace diversity is a challenge for some managers (Rajput et al., 2013), and each generation has unique workplace cultural expectations (Cekada, 2012). Cogin (2012) indicated, from a human resource management study of organizations with 500 or more employees, that 58% of the managers reported conflict between younger and older workers. The general business problem is business managers are unable to manage existing challenges across generational boundaries, which results in a loss of workplace production. The specific business problem is business managers lack strategies to manage a multigenerational workforce to improve productivity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore the strategies workplace managers use to manage a multigenerational workforce to improve productivity. Data was collected from a target population of six managers from a manufacturing facility located in Franklin County, Ohio who were experiencing the multigenerational phenomenon. The sample size was three of the managers. The population was appropriate for this study because it incorporated data from managers working within the organization. Based on the study, the results might contribute to social change by identifying strategies to manage the multigenerational workplace challenges. Findings could foster better understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of the primary generations in the workforce, and, in turn, improve community relationships.

Nature of the Study

The research method for this study was qualitative. Moustakas (1994) explained a qualitative heuristic framework draws on the researcher's experience and the participants in the study to arrive at a full story portrayed through personal documentation. From individual depictions and images relayed from research participants, a complete picture develops (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas added the researcher then designs a creative synthesis using the qualitative style. The selection of the qualitative method, rather than quantitative inquiry, was from a concern for a higher quality of interpretation and meaning instead of seeking to explain variables. Yilmaz (2013) referred to quantitative methods as research looking into the social phenomenon or human problem from theoretical testing consisting of statistical measures. Qualitative researchers collect extensive data on many variables over an extended period in a relaxed and natural setting to gain insights not possible through other forms of investigation (Yilmaz, 2013). Bansal and Corley (2012) added quantitative studies may describe how much of each generation's values, behaviors, attitudes, and work ethics exist, but not describe them. A mixed methods style presents a complexity of problems through a blend of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Mertens, 2014; Sparkes, 2014). The study did not include either quantitative or mixed methods inquiry. I used a qualitative methodology and a case study design.

A single case study design was the most appropriate for this study. A qualitative case study design is an in-depth strategy enabling researchers to explore a specific and complex phenomenon within the real-world context (Yin, 2013). Baskarada (2014)

related that case study research involves an intensive study of a single unit for understanding a larger class of similar units. A single case study can be the basis for significant explanations. Yin (2014) added that case study design allows the researcher to ask how and why of the participants. Capturing data on generational workplace differences, potential conflict, and the resulting challenges for business leaders is part of the nature of the study. Other qualitative designs considered were phenomenology, ethnography, and narrative. The phenomenological design was inappropriate due to potential confusion when processing a large number of interviews and data analysis (Tomkins & Eatough, 2013). Ethnographic researchers focus on an individual's conceptual world (Grossoehme, 2014). Narrative inquiry emphasizes deduction from illustrations such as collected stories and group conversations (Potter, 2013). I did not propose generalizing data, describing concepts, providing illustrations, or examining specific theories in this study.

Research Question

The problem of growing workforce diversity and management challenges framed the research question. Business managers can better understand the primary generations in the workplace and implement management strategies to improve productivity. The central research question was: What strategies do business managers use to manage a multigenerational workforce to improve productivity?

Demographic Questions

I asked demographic and interview questions that assisted in answering my research question:

1. How long have you been with your current employer?

2. How many years have you been a manager?

3. What is the total number of employees in your company?

4. How many direct and indirect (reports) employees are you responsible for leading?

5. What is the average tenure of employees in your organization or department?

Interview Questions

1. What are the critical skills you use to manage a multigenerational workforce?

2. What are the major differences you have experienced with regard to attitudes and perceptions between the generations you manage?

3. How do the generational cohort differences present management barriers and challenges for you with improving productivity?

4. What leadership strategies have you employed that are the most effective with managing the multigenerational workforce?

5. What leadership strategies have been the least effective for you in managing the multigenerational workforce?

6. What else would you like to add regarding the strategies used in the multigenerational workplace?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework supporting this study originated with Buss's (1974) generational theory and Mannheim's (1952) hierarchical point-of-view regarding cohort group theory. Buss established generational theory from descriptive analysis research. To

understand Buss's generational theory, one must examine multiple approaches to understanding the evolution of people development and predictive behavioral measures for managers (Papenhausen, 2011). Mannheim indicated generational cohort influences occur through self-awareness affected by historical and social constructs. Lester et al. (2012) referred to generational cohort theory as a social structure in which individuals born during a similar period are under the influence of the same historic and social activities. The experiences provide distinction from one specific cohort to another.

The Buss (1974) and Mannheim (1952) perspectives conceptualized the intersection between fields laying the foundation for future research (Festing & Schafer, 2013). As a result, key constructs and suggestions regarding multigenerational employment relationships become the source of further investigation (Festing & Schafer, 2013). In this study, participants responded to questions of potential factors challenging managers in the multigenerational work setting. Business managers can better understand the primary generations in the workplace and implement management strategies to improve productivity. Lived experiences of the multigenerational workplace are changing leadership behaviors and requiring new management skills (Haeger & Lingham, 2013). The literature review included detailing each concept that formed the conceptual framework of the study.

Operational Definitions

Baby Boomers (Boomers). Baby Boomers are individuals born between 1946 and 1964 (Crowne, 2013; Maxwell & Broadbridge, 2014; Schullery, 2013).

Generational cohort. A generational cohort is an age group of persons who identify through birth years, location, and significant life events (Choi, Kwon, & Kim, 2013; Hendricks & Cope, 2012; Lester et al., 2012).

Generation X (Gen X, Gen Xers, latchkey kids). Generation X are individuals born between 1965 and 1979 (Becker, 2012; Brown, 2012; Schullery, 2013).

Millennials (Generation Y, Gen Y). Millennials are individuals born between 1980 and 1999 (Choi et al., 2013; Schullery, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

During a study's development, recognizing restrictions and boundaries result in designed limitations (Simon, 2011). My responsibility as a researcher was providing information regarding the purpose, control, and location used to justify the limitations of the study. In the following sections, I state the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Assumptions

In a study, assumptions are the underlying perspectives assumed likely true by the researcher, or otherwise the study may not continue (Merriam, 2014). The study involved managers of the three primary generations in the workforce including Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. The first assumption was that participants answered questions honestly and truthfully. The assurance of confidentiality and nondisclosure was clear for the participants so that they felt at ease answering questions accurately and objectively. Assisting with validation, the inference to all participants was to express generational management challenges in an open and honest forum using semistructured

interviews. A second assumption was the population of managers in this study was appropriate for exploring themes involving generational challenges for managers in a manufacturing facility.

Limitations

Limitations to a study are the potential weaknesses beyond the researcher's control (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). One limitation to the study was that the study's population was comprised of six managers working in a Franklin County, Ohio manufacturing facility and the sample size included a minimum of three of the managers. Yilmaz (2013) indicated the sampling process runs the risk of generalizing information due to the setting or situation. A potential limitation of the study was data would not include information regarding the race and gender of the participant. Another limitation was that the findings from this study only reflected the perceptions of managers interviewed and not of other managers from the organization's leadership team.

Delimitations

Delimitations are characteristics limiting the scope and defining the boundaries of the study (Simon, 2011). Delimitations narrow the scope of the study and include the study's location, population, and sample size. The Franklin County, Ohio manufacturing facility selected was from a company who formally approved my access to interview the managers. The population consisted of full-time managers with a minimum of 1 year of current employment as a manager. I captured the lived experiences of manager members and did not address traits such as personality, despite this potentially being a factor with responses and statements made regarding the workplace. Verschoor (2013) indicated an

older generation referred to as Traditionalists were born between the years of 1925-1945.

The majority of Traditionalists are retired (Bell & McMinn, 2011) resulting in the

exclusion of Traditionalists in the study. Generation Z is the newest cohort group

(Srinivasin, 2012) born since 2000 and are approaching adolescence. The study excluded

Generation Z as well.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Roodin and Mendelson (2013) indicated that literary information has grown

concerning multiple generations employed together in U.S. workplaces. Members of the

Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Millennial generations are capable of working with

each other, but the resident differences can result in open conflict (Ferri-Reed, 2013a).

Dissimilarities in values and concepts about the organizations, work ethics, goal

orientation, and professional life expectations manifest into problematic challenges

(Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014). Kultalahti and Viitala (2014) further suggested each

generational cohort possesses unique and distinguishable characteristics regarding

workplace behaviors. Potential tensions and conflicts can arise with a lack of

understanding and the resulting disparity of values affect organizational dynamics (Lester

et al., 2012). Through the study, I sought to close gaps in understanding of the

management skills necessary for managing a growing diverse workforce with worldview

and values-based differences.

Implications for Social Change

The multigenerational workforce presents unique opportunities and challenges for managers. In the past decade, formation of opinions and considerable empirical work occurred, but there is more to discover on this topic through additional research (Gursoy, Chi, & Karadag, 2013; Mencl & Lester, 2014). Gursoy et al. (2013) related that identification of generational issues could potentially lead to improved leadership strategies lowering workplace tensions and generational conflict. The findings from my study could foster better understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of the primary generations in the workforce and improve community relationships.

The findings may also contribute to social change as managers apply solutions to improve the workplace setting within organizations. Managers may be able to foster improved loyalty among employees and help build local cultures and society. Scholars could also use my study results to gain deeper perspectives in the knowledge of the research topic.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of my qualitative case study was to explore strategies for managers to better manage a multigenerational workforce to improve productivity. The purpose of the literature review is to provide published research and documentation on generational differences in the areas of values, work ethics, conflict, and leadership challenges. Information and data from the inquiry contributed to explaining multigenerational differences, identifying gaps in research, and the need for further study. Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials are the primary generations in the workforce (Hansen &

Leuty, 2012; Malik & Khera, 2014; Park & Gursoy, 2012; Yi, Ribbens, Fu, & Cheng, 2015). Reasons why the divide is much greater between generations and the additional stress this places on workforces is evident in organizations (Lawler, 2011). Over the next decade, ever-increasing differences expect to take place (Gursoy et al., 2013; Lawler, 2011; Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman, 2012). Workers have reasons for thinking and acting, and the actions shape their personal worldviews (Valk, Belding, Crumpton, Harter, & Reams, 2011). A growing awareness among managers is emerging and substantive generational differences exist between individuals in workplaces (Constanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt, & Gade, 2012). Different generations need to work alongside each other and in an efficient manner (Lester et al., 2012) and business leaders may need to take generational differences into consideration to manage workplaces successfully (Benson & Brown, 2011).

My searches for peer-reviewed journal articles, as well as books, dissertations, and other research documents started with using Walden University's library search tools. A total of 270 journals and other articles became available through the search tools and were downloaded into specific software enabling my further analysis and determination of fit for use in the study. The search engines used were Thoreau Discovery Service, Business Source Complete, SAGE Research Methods, ABI/Inform Complete, and EBSCOhost. Primary search terms for multigenerational differences involving ethics, values, and behaviors included *Baby Boomers*, *Generation X*, *Millennials*, and *Generation Y*. Secondary search terms included *workplace conflict*, *generational theory*, *organizational conflict*, *employee performance*, *job satisfaction*, and *organizational*

leadership. In addition to Walden University's library, I also used Google Scholar and Emerald. In the literature review, I offer theories and findings from past researchers' exploration of the topic covering the multigenerational workplace. Articles, books, and dissertations of multigenerational differences, ethics, values, and characteristics contributed to the body of knowledge for the study. Table 1 contains a list of peer-reviewed journals, dissertations, books, and non-peer reviewed journals referenced in the literature review. Of the total of 200 unique sources referenced in the literature review, 180 of the articles had publication dates between 2012 to 2016.

Table 1

Literature Review Source Content

Reference type	Total	<5 years	>5 years	% Total <5 years old
Peer-reviewed journals	174	159	15	91%
Dissertations	7	7	0	100%
Books	11	6	5	55%
Non-peer-reviewed journals	8	8	0	100%
Total	200	180	20	90%

The literature review has three main categories: (a) conceptual framework, (b) generational cohorts, and (c) workplace dynamics. The conceptual framework is a critical analysis and synthesis of the information discussed earlier in the study. In the generational cohort discussion section, an overview of the term and its meaning in the workplace takes place, followed by explanation of each cohort group. The final category,

workplace dynamics and specific areas comprising this category, concludes this section of the literature review.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the research centered on generational theory and cohort group theory. In reviewing the literature, Mannheim (1952) created the concept of cohort group theory focusing on shared life experiences and historical events occurring during a person's early childhood. Mannheim's theory has been an important resource for the social change discussion and the conceptual groundwork for studying generations (Festing & Schafer, 2012). Buss (1974) posited that Mannheim's theoretical ideas of generations produced empirical research into new levels of generational detail.

Foster (2013) suggested Mannheim's theory of generations centers on biological timing, the birth cycle, and subsequent death. Foster furthered the concept of a generation as a method of thinking, actions, and an overall mental attitude. The mental attitudes they possess lead people to understand and react to the surrounding world (Foster, 2013). Foster concluded that a generation, however, is not only a mental perspective, but is more of a structured approach toward a meaningful purpose. Effective grounding of generational alignment in Mannheim's work occurs based on shared experiences or events interpreted through an ordinary lens during a particular life stage (Bolton et al., 2013; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). From Mannheim's work, Festing and Schafer (2012), Hillman (2013), Murphy (2012), and Yi et al. (2015) determined that generations share the integration of ordinary events, experiences, and collective memory identified throughout one's lifetime. Dixon, Mercado, and Knowles (2013) described a generation

as beginning when a birth rate increased and concluded when the rate declined. Each generation formulates values from societal and historical events and everyday life experiences (Deal et al., 2013). Papenhausen (2011) reflected that the common and universal disagreements implicit within particular members exists with each generation.

Aboim and Vasconcelos (2013) offered an opposing perspective to Mannheim's (1952) seminal work. The authors argued a need to expand from the excessive political and intellectual emphasis as a precondition for the formation of generations. Challenges have become prevalent with Mannheim's culturist viewpoint through other researchers who offer a more objectivist position (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2013). Even with considering Mannheim's theory as pioneering work, Joshi, Dencker, and Franz (2011) challenged the notion distinct generational differences exist and the typical generational boundaries have transitioned to cultural subgroups. Krahn and Galambos (2014) expressed Mannheim's conceptualization creates some difficulties when reflecting on whether or not a new generation is even emerging. Krahn and Galambos presented a new perspective of interest to managers frequently informed by the media and social science. The perspective is there are new ways of leading younger people influenced by the effects of changing labor information and educational methods (Krahn & Galambos, 2014). In the interim, business managers must continue to manage the work environment as if members of each generation operate from a universal perspective (Hendricks & Cope, 2012).

Mannheim's (1952) writings still form the foundation of thinking about generations (Lub, Bijvank, Bal, Blomme, & Schalk, 2012). Despite arguments to the

contrary, Aboim and Vasconcelos (2013) conceded Mannheim's legacy and theoretical expertise are accurate and indispensable tools for discussing generations and the effect generations have on social change. Important concepts of Mannheim's principles in modern sociology shape (Leavitt, 2014) and have continued to dominate sociological views regarding generations (Joshi et al., 2011). Lyons and Kuron (2014) further stated Mannheim was more concerned with the dynamic interaction of generations as a mechanism for social change. The effects upon individual attitudes and behaviors were secondary (Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

Generational Cohorts

The term, *generation*, typically refers to a general group of individuals (Bell & McMinn, 2011; Eastman & Liu, 2012; Hansen & Leuty, 2012; Murphy, 2012). As initially developed by Mannheim (1952), generations transcend approximately every 40 to 45 years (Eversole, Venneberg, & Crowder, 2012). Henkin and Butts (2012) determined the nature of generations is to strengthen each other and the communities. A complement to Mannheim's concept theorizes to present a cohort of persons passing through time together (Beutell, 2013). *Generational cohorts* are distinct groups of individuals born during and progressing together over the same period (Choi et al., 2013; Debevec, Schewe, Madden, & Diamond, 2013; Zopiatis, Krambia-Kapardis, & Varnavas, 2012). Debevec et al. (2012) offered, rather than using birth time as the traditional measurement of a generation, that generational cohort theory focuses on significant events. Debevec et al. added that generational cohort theory involves intervals of every 17 to 23 years. The events create a shift in society with new thinking arising from the

changes that result from the shift (Debevec et al., 2012). Cohort effects are traceable to cataclysmic events experienced during certain times. The concept of different cohorts crosses national and cultural boundaries (Debevec et al., 2012). Generational cohorts share common characteristics learned during formidable years (Hansen & Leuty, 2012; Murphy, 2012); develop collective ideas (Cogin, 2012); and experience similar lifecycle, cultural, and historic phases (Hendricks & Cope, 2012; Lester et al., 2012; Park & Gursoy, 2012; Rajput et al., 2013; Young & Hinesly, 2012; Zopiatis et al., 2012). Murphy (2012 recognized that generational cohort theory as composed of distinct age-based identity, mental models, and shared attitudes or values. Ropes (2013) described cohort theory as considering different aspects of age and influence on employee's attitudes and behaviors in particular ways. Beutell (2013) added that this newer perspective serves to integrate the term cohort into modern thinking.

The workforce is more diverse than in the past and manifested in differences involving generational cohorts (Jones, 2014), and the largest diversity of generational workers spanning over 60 years (Schultz, Schwepker, Davidson, & Davidson, 2012). Cogin (2012) expressed sharp differences in expectations and motivation among generational cohorts exists. Some researchers consider cohorts as a United States-specific phenomenon and others consider it a global one (Zopiatis et al., 2012). Zopiatis et al. (2012) further indicated that generational cohorts occur more often when explained in a multinational context. The advent of media and technology helps to transcend national boundaries and creates a new global understanding. Managers and administrators need to

include implementing effective strategies to assist leaders in learning more about the

details of generational cohorts (Cummings et al., 2013).

Baby Boomers (Boomers). The Baby Boomer generation members were born

between 1946 and 1964 and brought significant changes to the American family

(Fingerman, Pillemer, Silverstein, & Suitor, 2014). As the American economy improved

following the Great Depression and World War II eras, the surge in births spearheaded

this generation (Hansen & Leuty, 2012; Malik & Khera, 2012). Boomers grew up in a

time of changing gender roles and most in two-parent households, even with an

increasing divorce rate trend (Beutell, 2013). With many Baby Boomers in their mid-60s

of age at the time of the study, mortality rates are expected to decrease with Boomers

(Fingerman et al., 2014). Information indicated Boomers will live an additional 19.9

years more than the grandparents did (Fingerman et al., 2014). Boomers comprise the

largest cohort group in American history (Hansen & Leuty, 2012; Schultz et al., 2012)

and number approximately 76 to 78 million people in the workforce (Crowne, 2013;

Eversole et al., 2012; Kilber, Barclay, & Ohmer, 2014). As of 2010, Baby Boomers made

up 32% of the civilian labor force (Eversole et al., 2012).

Members of the Boomer cohort group grew up in an era of improved optimism

and economic prosperity (Malik & Khera, 2012; Zeeshan & Iram, 2012) and during the

advent of television (Schullery, 2013). Schullery (2013) added that in 1950, only 12% of

American households owned televisions. By 1958, 83% of households had at least one

television set (Schullery, 2013). Boomers were then able to see, as well as hear, the civil

rights movement, new freedoms won by women's rights, Vietnam protesting, and the

assassinations of two Kennedy's and Martin Luther King Jr. (Schullery, 2013). Festing

and Schafer (2013) indicated Baby Boomers were committed to lifetime employment and

company loyalty. Zeeshan and Iram (2012) criticized Boomer members as paying the

price for success through sacrificing time with families. Debevec et al. (2013) posited

Baby Boomers view themselves as workaholics and that they were willing to give up

work-life balance for the sake of their careers. Dixon et al. (2013) described this

generation as living to work and committed to company loyalty even at the expense of

family life. According to Eversole et al. (2012), Boomer commitment to the employer

and working hard to provide nice things for the family, was putting family first.

As Boomers begin retiring from the workforce, growing concerns developed

concerning the loss of skilled and experienced workers (Crowne, 2013; Taylor,

Pilkington, Feist, Dal Grande, & Hugo, 2014). Taylor et al. (2014) further elaborated this

could have an adverse effect on industrial and economic growth. The pressure also placed

on companies and governments for pension and social security benefits payments could

deplete financial reserves. The changing elements will also place stress on escalating

demands for medical services (Taylor et al., 2014). Crowne (2013) agreed the consistent

increase of retirees over the next few decades would affect organizations financially.

Chaudhuri and Ghosh (2012) related it to a resulting knowledge and leadership gap with

10,000 new Boomer cohort members eligible for retirement each day. Fingerman et al.

(2012) indicated that at the same time, Baby Boomers are making decisions concerning

aging parents. Boomers may also be assisting children who are unemployed or unable to

find jobs following college.

Generation X (Gen X, Gen Xers, latchkey kids). Generation X is the cohort group born between the years of 1965 and 1979 and is less in total numbers than either the Baby Boomers or Millennials (Normala & Dileep, 2013). The population of the cohort group is between 44 to 50 million (Berk, 2013; Eastman & Liu, 2012; Kaifi, Nafei, Khanfar, & Kaifi, 2012). Generation X are the post-Boomer cohort born following a wartime interval (Krahn & Galambos, 2014) and the result of a declining birthrate beginning in 1964 (Deal et al., 2013; Kaifi et al., 2012). The fact of the suffix attachment name of the cohort as *X* is due to a group defined to be without a clear identity (Brown, 2012). Gentry, Deal, Griggs, Mondore, and Cox (2011) stated the *X* connotation came from books about the generation written in 1964. Generation X is approximately 18% of the total workforce (Berk, 2013) and reared in a new social environment (Cekada, 2012).

Acar (2014) noted many Generation X members grew up with both parents working or divorced and became independent at a young age. The background included lack of social structure, changing surroundings, and missing traditions shared by Baby Boomers. Cekada (2012) added Generation X individuals became *latchkey kids* due to arriving to an empty home more frequently than predecessors did. Adaptability became inherent due to the environment and conditions created (Irwin, 2014). Generation X experienced painful events while growing up such as the onslaught of the AIDS epidemic, the Challenger explosion, the Vietnam War, and a number of financial crises (Debevec et al., 2013; Gentry et al., 2011). Even with the obstacles, Leavitt (2014) proposed Generation X became resourceful through independence in a world appearing unsafe.

Generation X is the first generation to grow up with computers, cell phones, and other entry-level electronic devices (Eastman & Liu, 2012; Young, Sturts, Ross, & Kim, 2013). The cohort group lives in contrast to the Boomer parents focusing more on a healthy work-life balance (Debevec et al., 2013; Dixon et al., 2013; Hendricks & Cope, 2012). Young et al. (2013) determined members of Generation X are resourceful and independent thinkers placing high value on family and friends over career. Generation X manages personal time better, and as adult workers, have a strong desire for outcomes drawn from facts rather than emotions (Hendricks & Cope, 2012). Cogin (2012) wrote Generation X has a different view of surrounding life and in stark contrast to Boomers. Holt, Marques, and Way (2012) stated while Baby Boomers have a stigma of narcissism and healthy values, Generation X are cynical and highly self-accountable. Generation X have adapted to change and are more family-oriented than predecessors.

Ferri-Reed (2013a) indicated the distrustful approach toward authority, contempt toward work rules, and rigidness creates challenges for Boomer managers. Generation X desires acknowledgment more so than workers did in the past and respond to rewards programs and incentives (Ferri-Reed, 2013a). Dixon et al. (2013) found that while Generation X members focus on striving to balance work and family responsibilities, less company loyalty occurs than compared to predecessors. This cohort places high value on personal goals and professionalism (Dixon et al., 2013). If Generation X members cannot achieve vocation demands, the cohort group is open to changing careers or jobs to attain the quest for quality of life (Jobe, 2014). The expectation of faster promotions and pay raises, after what the group feels is justified performance, can lead to impatience and

frustration (Heng & Yazdanifard, 2013). Cekada (2012) added Generation X employees desire autonomy with work, but do appreciate honest and respectful feedback from managers. The more casual work environment serves to motivate and validate the individuals from this group.

Millennials (Generation Y, Gen Y). Millennials represent the youngest cohort group and the fastest growing segment of the workforce at an estimated 76 million total members (Murphy, 2012) born between 1980 and 1999 (Choi et al., 2013; Ismail & Lu, 2014; Schullery, 2013). Ismail and Lu (2014) indicated Millennials become the significant portion of the workforce and will constitute 50% of all American employees by 2020. In the next few years, another 40 million Millennials will enter the workforce (Ferri-Reed, 2012a). Demirdjian (2012) stated the younger cohort is rapidly taking over jobs and positions from the many Baby Boomers pushing 70 years of age. The Millennial generation views themselves as the most wanted by parents and planned generation of all time (Langan, 2012). Millennials are maturing quickly, with the oldest members approaching 35 years of age, and the younger members reaching adolescence. Mendelson (2013) reported Millennials are the most diverse generation in history—both ethnically and racially. Making up the cohort group are 59.8% White—a record low for a generation, 18.5% are Hispanic, 14.2% are Black, 4.3% are Asian, and 3.2% are mixed race or other (Mendelson, 2013).

Debevec et al. (2013) wrote the Millennial generation grew up in a time of the Internet and web browsing becoming a cultural norm. Millennials are very technologically competent and trust comprehension sets the cohort apart from other

groups. Langan (2012) added Millennials are the most connected digitally. Sophisticated technologies are standard in homes, and Millennials have a stronger relationship to use for personal benefit. Dannar (2013) indicated digital involvement is vital to lives and remaining connected with the global landscape. Rai (2012) placed the level of social media involvement at 63% overall, with 50% agreeing Facebook and Internet branding influences decisions on products. Langan continued the ability of Millennials to sort through all the information to find what is relevant and useful is a trademark of the cohort group. In contrast to previous generations, Millennials live longer with parents at home and postpone marital planning until later in life. For the aforementioned reasons, the cohort group appears to have a stronger tie to parents (Holt et al., 2012; Langan, 2012).

Ferri-Reed (2013b) indicated due to the recent economic recession, Millennials suffer from careers stalled before getting started. The U.S. Department of Labor places the unemployment rate for Millennials at 13.1%, nearly 80% above the national unemployment rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Another 300,000 are not included in the figure due to already given up looking for jobs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Despite depressing prospects in the job market, record student debt, and the resulting high-stress levels, attitudes remain remarkably positive (Ferri-Reed, 2013b). Compared to Boomers who have spent most of career time with one employer, Millennials are not the same and may prefer multiple job movements (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012). Coulter and Faulkner (2014) linked additional characterizations of being confident and achievement-oriented, but prefer managers focusing on work as a means to an end. Work should be meaningful and little wasted time spent on nonvalue added events such as meetings. Millennials want

consideration as equals in the workplace and contributions noticed. Engagement, skill development, and networking are all tenets stimulating work life (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014). Personal images drive Millennial cohort thinking and are vocal concerning personal progress as evidence of high enthusiasm for success (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). Perrone-McGovern, Wright, Howell, and Barnum (2014) conducted comprehensive interviews with Millennial employees between the ages of 18 and 32. The discovery was most men and women from this group desired to avoid extremes in spending too much time at either work or home.

Workplace Dynamics

Scholars of organizational dynamics have linked diversity to workplace concerns and potential issues (Lindsay, Schachter, Porter, & Sorge, 2014). Joshi et al. (2011) indicated generational dynamics are having significant impact with outcomes in succession planning, skill transfer, and knowledge sharing. The recent age-based trending is also contributing to vigorous dialog on what managers must do to properly handle the challenges. Constanza et al. (2012) added the dynamics among employees lead to challenges for managers and raises a variety of questions. Bennett et al. (2012) added managers must understand the variety of generational dynamics and the challenges ahead in the workplace. Communication and knowledge exchange must occur between both workers and managers. Sonnentag, Unger, and Nagel (2013) posited differences in dynamics created with the workday concerns, along with originating from relational problems, results in management stress.

The objective of managers is to achieve a high level of productivity through subordinates at minimal cost (Otto, Wahl, Lefort, & Frei, 2012). The current challenge is to motivate employees to work in a new dynamic and multitasking environment. The increased pressure places additional demands on hiring practices and training. The same degree of the dynamic nature of change on the global scene is affecting and shaping the workplace (Otto et al., 2012). Lindsay et al. (2014) reported conflict involving specific levels of new dynamics have a potential effect on the workplace. Complex and dynamic interactive processes occur through employee exchanges and the resulting interaction within the working environment (Govaerts & van der Vleuten, 2013). The dynamic of performance in work settings becomes stressed due to internal factors concerning the internal environment and can negatively effect top performing workers. Guinn (2013) noted dynamic variables are available to improve organizational success and enable managers to resolve the issues leading to potential productivity losses. Controlling the variables can become a complex process. Cole, Oliver, and Blaviesciunaite (2014) posited the extended freedoms and increasing choices now permitted in society have spilled over into the workplace. The response to the changes is dynamically changing the workplace landscape. Discussions over work and leisure are influencing workplace culture. Addressing issues can lead to potential problems with employee dissatisfaction and morale (Cole et al., 2014).

Through the remainder of the literature review, I present scholarly information of the various components included within workplace dynamics. This included: (a) age groups, (b) sterotypes and perceptions, (c) values, (d) work ethics, (e) conflict, and (f)

leadership. Specific information presented new understanding and possible strategies to assist managers with managing the multigenerational workplace.

Age groups. Standifer, Lester, Schultz, and Windsor (2013) indicated age groupings assists with minimizing uncertainty, helped to facilitate change, and highlighted the area of complexities for researchers. A preference exists among employees to work and interact with people similar in age. With the influx of age-diverse organizations, this will lead to workplace challenges (Standifer et al., 2013). Bodner, Bergman, and Cohen-Fridel (2012) posited in order to understand ageism in groups we need to consider the role of attitudes in this area through different stages of life. Bodner et al. (2012) continued ageism exists in diverse forms and contexts such as avoidance of older people and age denial. Cultural differences contribute to this worldwide phenomenon as well. Rajput et al. (2013) related, despite the differences in age groups, all could learn from each other. By appreciating each age group's work style and cohort traits, energizing of a multigenerational workforce can occur. A distinct challenge for managing employees with diversity in age groups and providing balance in the workplace is taking shape. Managers must learn the intentions and specific traits of all ages and incorporate input toward decision-making processes (Rajput et al., 2013).

A definite advantage of a diverse workforce with different skill sets now occurs and employers are beginning to acknowledge this work situation (Swan, 2012). The benefit of age diversity is a pool of competencies cannot quickly assimilate into the workplace other than through experience. New entrants can then add to the quality of the workforce through providing newer skills and techniques. This combination of

complementary talents can place a business in a positive position for the future (Swan, 2012). Managers who can build on the strengths and address potential problems will be the most successful (Bennett et al., 2012; Henkin & Butts, 2012). Hernaus and Mikulic (2014) added work has become more demanding, complex, and diverse than in the past. Capitalizing on the new work alignment will provide economic stability (Hernaus & Mikulic, 2014) and a mixture of age groups appears beneficial for implementing productivity improvements (Wok & Hashim, 2013). New ideas involving age groups and multigenerational learning for both the individual and organizations are becoming essential for business managers and human resource professionals (Ropes, 2013). Tapping into the strengths found within the age groups can result in a better position for businesses to serve customers (Bennett et al., 2012).

Stereotypes and perceptions. Some researchers argued the average age of the workforce would increase due to the personal economic needs of older workers ("Just talking," 2014). Due to economic demands, Boomers may continue to work longer than expected driving the average work age upward. Some managers believe this is a potential problem and derive thinking from the perception of Boomers set in ways and not open to change. The stereotype reference of *old dogs* applies to the Baby Boomer cohort group ("Just talking," 2014). Another study supported this perception and found individuals stereotype older workers as resistant to change (Noorani, 2014). Noorani (2014) also commented cumbersome situations arise with getting the older worker to change behaviors than for younger cohorts. Negative perceptions follow older workers due to the unwillingness to participate in new training and development activities ("Just talking,"

2014). Chaudhuri and Ghosh (2012) agreed the lack of openness to additional workplace development of Boomers becomes an area of stereotyping. Ropes (2013) added older workers compound the problem with believing since retirement is nearing, the value of further training and development is a waste of time. The fact Boomers are less physically agile than younger workers can turn into unfair perceptions of them (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012). Lester et al. (2012) related persistent stereotyping of Boomer cohorts comes from the younger employees mainly due to Boomers being older. Zopiatis et al. (2012) elaborated Generation X and Millennial perceptions toward the Boomer cohort were similar. Areas of difference included views on organizational loyalty, preferences involving the use of single or multi-tasking work, non-work related relationships, and teamwork.

Older workers are not the only ones demonstrating stereotyping, as Baby Boomers also exhibit stereotyping toward younger worker members (Lester et al., 2012). Lester et al. (2012) included Boomers see Generation X and Millennials as lazy and unwilling to pay dues. Boomers attach labels such as unprofessional and disrespectful, and apply this toward the Millennial cohort group. Ferri-Reed (2014a) indicated stereotyping of Millennials in the area of demonstrating bad work attitudes and behaving disrespectfully toward bosses prevails in the workplace. Older workers and some managers expressed Millennials require too much time to understand work directives, lack initiative, and is an indication of poor attention spans (Ferri-Reed, 2014a). Wok and Hashim (2013) discovered younger and older workers face communication constraints encouraged and promoted by the older cohort. Older employees may face negative age

stereotyping, but then return the resentment back in other ways. Hillman (2014) added managers knowingly make stereotypical statements about why members of multigenerational workforces behave differently further inflaming potential hostilities.

Noorani (2014) suggested employee perceptions could have long lasting and drastic outcomes for workers as well as organizations. Potentially affected areas include job satisfaction, engagement, workplace stress, and turnover. Moving to encourage and transform a multigenerational work environment is challenging managers to think in different terms (Noorani, 2014). Walker (2013) posited employee perceptions regarding trying to find the place in the organization have a negative effect on attitude toward work and personal productivity. Noorani indicated an increase in job stress, and the work environment can take a step backward. A loss of workplace morale, negative work attitudes, and intentions to exit the organization can be the result. Important work outcomes closely relate to perceptions taking place among generational cohorts. Reliable evidence draws from research where perceptions are invaluable to understanding employee attitudes. Organizational policies and procedures need to be altered to address the growing concerns about better supporting the multigenerational workforce (Noorani, 2014).

Management practitioners and human resource managers must understand the growing implications with elderly and younger workers (Teclaw et al., 2014). Mencl and Lester (2014) agreed proposed generational differences exist among the three cohort groups. The argument containing the examination comparing generational differences with perceived generational differences found far fewer actual differences. Another

argument from Teclaw et al. (2014) reported findings of age and generational differences might not influence employee perceptions about one another as previously considered by other researchers. Past empirical research supports the generational differences, but additional need exists for further studies in this area.

Motivation. Elias, Smith, and Barney (2012) defined motivation as the use of individual energy to initiate and complete work through physical and behavioral means. A number of theories on motivation proposed in literature exists and derives from both intrinsic and extrinsic workplace factors (Acar, 2014; Chadhuri & Ghosh, 2012; Elias et al., 2012; Mencl & Lester, 2014). Deal et al. (2013) related researchers have paid little attention to generational differences in motivation. The inattention to generational differences in work motivation is surprising given motivation a key driver for employee performance. Davis (2013) indicated employee motivation ranks high with regard to areas of direct concern from managers. The lack of employee motivation results in turnover and lost company profits. Mencl and Lester (2014) indicated managers must pay attention to motivational needs when responding to workplace characteristics and employee situations. Motivational differences exist between each generational cohort and organizations must adapt new practices to close the gaps (Leavitt, 2014; Park & Gursoy, 2012).

Elias et al. (2012) found both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation possessed strong attitudes toward areas such as technology. The older the worker, the more negative the scores were from the study. Gursoy et al. (2013) posited businesses and industry must deploy motivational strategies addressing other areas such as working conditions, job

structure, and redesigned benefit packages. Employees consider such critical essential elements as important to personal motivation. Choi et al. (2013) included the element of fun as essential for improving employee motivation and productivity while reducing stress.

Management initiatives now include concepts such as inspirational motivation techniques (Hoption, Barling, & Turner, 2013) and insights with career motivation (Walker, 2013). Initiatives include creating a compelling vision for the future, presenting to employees, and striving to stimulate employees to surpass company expectations. Inspirational motivation stimulates employees when leaders communicate increased expectations and push employees to excel beyond normal levels of performance (Holt et al., 2012). Inspirational motivation appeals to employee emotions (Hoption et al., 2013) and positively affects employee behaviors (Leavitt, 2014). Walker added career motivation initiatives have shown positive results to several work-related outcomes.

Values. Cowen (2012) described values as fundamental beliefs a person relies upon to be meaningful or valid. Life experiences and developed value systems result in the identification of what is right and wrong (Normala & Dileep, 2013). Values are at the heart of every decision people make and the essence of who each person is as humans (Dean, 2012). Dean further elaborated values provide a more concise platform for decision-making than beliefs. Monahan (2013) added human nature includes inner values influence how one becomes satisfied with employment. Each of the generational cohort groups brings different values regarding reaction to work and careers (Ismail & Lu, 2014). Influential events such as economic recessions and periods of war helped shape

values in a way differentiating one generational cohort from another (Cogin, 2012; Mencl & Lester, 2014). Researchers examining the multigenerational setting find people who grow up in varying time periods have different sets of values affecting attitudes and expectations (Cogin, 2012). Academic researchers concluded generational cohort work-value differences ties to birth-year cohort theory (Cogin, 2012). Managers must utilize new research on work-value differences and take a different position on supervising employees from multigenerational backgrounds (Hillman, 2014).

Jin and Rounds (2012) found values become pivotal to the selection and satisfaction of roles in life. When interjected into the workplace, values are significant, persuasive, and share close alignment with other personal values. For over 70 years, researchers presented evidence supporting the factor of values as a predictor of work-related outcomes (Jin & Rounds, 2012). Hansen and Leuty (2012) described differences in particular high-level values held by the cohort groups. Baby Boomers value striving to get ahead, place importance on material success, and desire individuality. Generation X values family time, flexible work arrangements, and quick promotional opportunities. Millennials put more value on personal freedoms, social activities, and workplace engagement (Hansen & Leuty, 2012). Sledge and Miles (2012) posited understanding the differences in values is vital to managing organizational attitudes.

With new knowledge of work values, emphasis is shifting toward considering the connection between cultural perceptions, workplace principles, and the linking with age (Sledge & Miles, 2012). Results of generational differences in work values become complicated with the intersection of generation and age (Hansen & Leuty, 2012). Hansen

and Leuty (2012) went on to indicate new evidence pointing to work values influenced by age. However, problems separating some effects of values between cohorts and actual age present new challenges. Jin and Rounds (2012) suggested reasons exist with expecting changing work values at different age periods.

Krahn and Galambos (2014) probed deeper social science information and work values of young adults are different from people of previous generations. Gursoy et al. (2013) reported Baby Boomers expect younger workers to have the same commitment to long work hours. Since Boomers are results-driven and accept the hierarchical management structures, other cohorts should as well. Ferri-Reed (2013a) indicated members of the Baby Boomers do not look at things the same way or share the same values as either the Millennials or Generation X. Baby Boomers learned to sacrifice and follow orders, expected things to be predictable, and loyalty was unarguable. Generation X is more skeptical of authority and enjoys flexible work schedules. Ferri-Reed argued Generation X appears to not be as team-oriented as Boomers and prefer less supervision. Millennials values and perceptions are confounding older workers and leading to points of frustration. With Millennials valuing time off as much as actual work time, this is setting the stage for an unsettling atmosphere (Ferri-Reed, 2013a).

Work ethic. The concept of work ethic dates back to 1940 and is a learned and multifaceted concept demonstrated through behavior (Jobe, 2014). Smith (2011) communicated the ethics position theory states individuals possess certain judgments, actions, and reactions in different manners. Since ethics are personal and learned, the understanding of ethics demonstrates how people move toward responding to certain

situations (Smith, 2011). Ethics are guidelines and standards set by an organization rather than with an individual (Cowen, 2012). Jobe (2014) extended information to include differences in worth ethic is a cause of generational disagreement. Indications of better understanding of work ethics and associated dynamics could lead to strategies for improving generational issues.

Work ethic is a central area of generational difference (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014). The ethical behavior of younger workers differs from the Baby Boomer cohort (Verschoor, 2013). Bolton et al. (2013) related a growing decline in the importance of employment and a weaker work ethic when comparing Generation X and Millennials to earlier generations. Verschoor (2013) found younger workers are more likely than the older colleagues to commit ethical violations. Verschoor discovered inordinate behaviors take place regarding ethical situations. Disturbing findings included 37% accessing social network sites across company networks, 26% uploading images using company computers, and 13% copying business software to take home for personal use (Verschoor, 2013).

The Millennial cohort's unique experiences are likely to direct ethical ideologies affecting workplace actions and decisions (VanMeter, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts, 2012). VanMeter et al. (2012) found high idealism and relativism among the younger cohort group resulted in poor judgments regarding ethical standards and tendency to commit ethical violations. Because of this thinking, growing concerns exist this will change the entire nature of workplace culture (VanMeter et al., 2012). Cogin (2012) agreed evidence of a declining work ethic exists among young people. VanMeter et al.

presented data from a survey where 42% to 78% of Millennial workers engage in some

form of unethical practice. Additional results from the data provided concerns the cohort

does not understand proper ethical conduct to begin with. Bell and McMinn (2011)

related 28% of Millennials indicated business requires being a ruthless competitor and

sacrificing ethics is acceptable to get ahead. Other data showed 24% believing it tolerable

to lie about something significant when on the job and 17% expressed agreement

cheating a coworker to get ahead would be allowable (Bell & McMinn, 2011).

Generational differences link to increased workplace turnover, with work ethic reportedly

is an important element (Jobe, 2014).

The workplace has become a psychological battleground of Millennials thinking

they have the upper hand (Demirdjian, 2012) and in being more progressively proficient

and socially accomplished than prior generations (Holt et al., 2012). Ferri-Reed (2014b)

added the Millennials are transforming conventional thinking within the workplace. In

another article, Lippincott (2012) contended the brain of Millennials works differently

than of earlier generations due to the exposure to intense activities associated with

diverse digital media. Millennials hold differing viewpoints on life than the Baby

Boomers and Generation X (Holt et al., 2012). Ismail and Lu (2014) wrote, due to the

significant roles Millennials play in the future workforce, greater effort needs placed with

managers to understand the uniqueness of this particular group. Mendelson (2013) added

the differences viewed from an organization's management perspective could not rely on

perceived norms of ethical behavior.

Conflict. The age-diverse workplace is resulting in new challenges, increasing uncertainty and relational outcomes, and subsequent conflict (Standifer et al., 2013). Standifer et al. (2013) defined the source of workplace conflict wherever one party thinks negatively about something another party places importance. Conflict of this nature becomes detrimental to organizations, teamwork, and hinders productivity. Lindsay et al. (2014) wrote greater workforce diversity increases the levels of conflict between cohort groups. Standifer et al. added more workplace challenges are likely to rise out of the diverse environment. The issue of age alone is a concern from the perspective of younger workers and managers.

Work conflict can occur due to work-life balance problems, poor communication, technology-use differences, and other issues across the cohort groups (Hillman, 2014). Despite varying cohort groups capable of working together, the generational differences can create stressful situations leading to open conflict (Ferri-Reed, 2013a). Ferri-Reed (2013a) extended the discussion by stating conflict between Millennials and older generations has been widespread at times. Haeger and Lingham (2014) indicated technological advancements played a substantial role in how the handling of conflict will occur in the future by managers. Potential generational clashes could happen if leaders and managers ignore this important element. Sonnentag et al. (2013) exposed workplace conflict causes strained reactions with people in the workplace and includes task conflicts and relationship conflicts. Task conflicts are disagreements with two individuals over the work conducted and are as simple as differences in ideas or opinions. Relationship conflict originates from interpersonal differences and can be irreconcilable, creates

animosity and controversy, and detracts from workplace unity (Sonnentag et al., 2013). The actual work performed, openness on the shop floor, and interaction with managers can suffer when workplace challenges are not exposed and addressed in a timely manner (Standifer et al., 2013). Armache (2012) added unhealthy work atmospheres result in adverse employee effects and potential turnover.

In contrast, Shetach (2012) indicated general conflict is a normal and expected outcome of workplace disagreements and is neutral in terms of its nature. Differences of opinion between two parties are merely expressing points-of-view. Conflicts have come about between human beings across the various settings, and the workplace is no different (Shetach, 2012). Shetach suggested when two parties disagree; healthy resolution potentially can take place leading to a better overall outcome. Choi (2013) stated a robust characterization of conflict within organizations occurs through the usual expressions of active confrontation. A willingness to be open should not always appear to be negative. Shetach further added conflicts are normal and commonly arise among human beings who work with each other in any setting. The debate can continue constructively when parties pursue discussion in a non-destructive direction. If concentration on the real issue continues, then both sides are heading in the right direction (Shetach, 2012). Jones (2014) added the issue of conflict is of primary interest with how different generations deal with conflict within the groups. If organizations only focus on operational areas and ignore generational concerns expressed in conflict, numerous organizational problems could occur (Zopiatis et al., 2012).

Choi (2013) reported conflict and conflict management in the workplace strongly influence organizational effectiveness. A collaborative conflict management culture can realize a positive response from workers and increase job satisfaction. Sonnentag et al. (2013) agreed with this thinking indicating conflict management is an important element in a progressive workplace. A method of conflict management involving strategic deployment helps to mitigate both task and relational difficulties. Armache (2012) stressed conflict resolution skills now are essential for leaders. Recognizing early stages of conflict in order to resolve issues quickly are new competencies organizations must assure managers become equipped.

Leadership. An interesting perspective by Haeger and Lingham (2013) is that fewer leaders are in the workplace over the age of 40. Emerging patterns of leadership must redefine what managers will need for the future with addressing multigenerational conflict. Haeger and Lingham extended this thinking with presenting a proposal for an emerging pattern of leadership training managers to handle new workplace challenges. Leadership behaviors are crucial with how successful conflict resolution occurs. With findings pointing to managers 20 years younger on average than the direct reports, a different approach warrants investigation (Haeger & Lingham, 2013). Ferri-Reed (2012b) proposed strategies for new leaders to adopt managing a multigenerational workforce including:

1. Demonstration of flexibility. Different cohort members have varying personal and professional needs. An openness to flexible work schedules and time off can assist in reducing the levels of stress.

2. Cross or reverse mentoring of cohort groups. The matching of group strengths can ease tensions and promote increased knowledge and skill building.

3. Use of multiple communication channels. Managers must mix up the different formats of communication between standard meetings and innovative media-oriented approaches.

4. New methods of engagement. Managers need to become more creative with mixing-up tasks and events.

5. Team project involvement. Managers can seek to establish group collaboration and increase employee growth.

6. Improved feedback and frequent encouragement. Younger workers particularly desire hearing from the supervising managers. Changing this up to include even older workers will go a long way to diffuse lingering tensions (Ferri-Reed, 2012b).

Al-Asfour and Lettau (2014) stated leaders must adjust the style of management to improve the effectiveness with the blended workgroups. The cautionary perspective is it cannot lead to favoritism or discrimination of employees through changing practices. Leaders need to review the organizational policies and procedures and include factors affecting employee performance. Requesting employee input in this area is crucial to prevent potential conditions resulting in further conflict (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). Standifer et al. (2013) stated workforce challenges promote conflict. The multigenerational setting requires managers to educate themselves first and then address the needs of all ages within the respective workplaces. Shetach (2012) included

successful team management is about succinctly dealing with issues of conflict before escalating into negative situations. Perceptions and misrepresentations, along with the legitimate concerns, all focus on the effectiveness of team leadership.

The present workplace culture is transforming the way organizations manage (Ferri-Reed, 2014b). Ferri-Reed (2014b) went on to include both members of the Baby Boomer and Generation X cohort groups rely on the old command-and-control form of organizational culture. Millennials have a different set of expectations and is countercultural to the old style used with Boomers and even Generation X (Ferri-Reed, 2014b). New managers must learn to how to coach older adults to instruct and mentor Millennials (Branscum & Sciaraffa, 2013). Branscum and Sciaraffa (2013) cautioned placing less engaged older adults in this role could result in an increase in conflict and problems. The continued increase and integration of Millennials into the workplace will continue to grow in issues and problematic situations at times (Ferri-Reed, 2012). Eversole et al. (2012) described companies needing to expect resistance when moving into changing the environment. Some of the resistances is even involving managers who can impede a culture moving forward. Insensitive and rigid management styles can increase tensions and decrease productivity. The manager-subordinate relationship is one affecting the workplace either positively or negatively. Workplace flexibility is crucial for effective multigenerational talent management (Eversole et al., 2012).

Yi et al. (2015) provided important points where managers must quickly learn how to manage employees from different backgrounds and perspectives. Failure to do so could lead to adverse outcomes such as lack of commitment, workforce turnover, and

poor behaviors affecting organizational performance. Serious consequences could be a loss of company market share and even closed operations (Yi et al., 2015). Zopiatis et al. (2012) concluded future generations will continue to be different, and each new generation will bring unique perspectives. Generational differences do exist in the workplace and actions require leadership direction. The new ways of thinking about life, work, and the work environment will press managers to reflect and initiate ongoing change (Zopiatis et al., 2012).

The literature review included several sections beginning with a summary of the conceptual framework and the relationship to the study of generations. To provide relevant information on the multigenerational setting, a chronological history of generational cohort groups working in the workplace transpired and included Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. The generational cohort section focused on the three primary cohort groups and discussed the entrance of each generation into the workforce, influential events, and social effects influencing the generation's beliefs. In an effort to provide additional information on the characteristics of each cohort group, the literature review contained sections on workplace dynamics. The heading was further broken down into subsections of age groups, stereotypes and perceptions, motivation, values, work ethics, conflict, and leadership. The age groups section presented information on the general understandings of age group differences. Stereotypes and perceptions explained beliefs and thoughts on how each generation perceives each other and how this could affect the work environment. The subject of motivation involved providing scholarly information surrounding the importance of the subject matter both

from an internal and external perspective, and from stimulating concepts. The values section presented some unique characteristics significant to each generation. In the work ethics section, behavior explanations of each cohort group occurred. The conflict exposed some areas of cohort group collision in the workplace and present challenges for managers. The leadership section went into some potential changes managers can implement to help resolve multigenerational issues.

Transition

Section 1 of this study included an introduction to the business problem under study concerning exploring strategies managers could implement with managing a multigenerational workforce. Generational differences exist, challenging managers in the business world, and can be detrimental to employee well-being and organizational success. A discussion of the general problem existing between generations in the areas of values and work ethics took place. Information in the areas of conflict and leadership accompanied literature on the generations and cohort groups present and working alongside each other. I provided research findings comparing and contrasting the information and the phenomenon under study, and the need for further research.

In Section 2, I elaborate on the processes and procedures associated with the selected case study method used to conduct the study and data collection strategies. In Section 3, I present the study findings and include the analysis of the interview responses. I also provide recommendations discussing further areas of research.

Section 2: The Project

The purpose of the qualitative, single case study was to explore the strategies workplace managers use to manage a multigenerational workforce to improve productivity. Responses from the participants provided information on determining management strategies in managing a multigenerational workforce. In Section 1, the focus of the literature review was to establish a framework from scholarly resources. In Section 2, I provide the approach I used for conducting the study. The section begins with the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, and a description of the participants in the study. I also describe the research methods, research questions, population, data collection, and data analysis. Section 2 concludes with a description of the reliability and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the qualitative, single case study was to explore the strategies workplace managers use to manage a multigenerational workforce to improve productivity. Data was collected from a target population of six managers from a manufacturing facility located in Franklin County, Ohio who are experiencing the multigenerational phenomenon. The sample size was three of the managers. The population was appropriate for this study because it incorporated data from managers working within the organization. Based on the study, the results might contribute to social change by identifying strategies to manage the multigenerational workplace challenges. The findings of the study could foster better understanding, acceptance, and

appreciation of the primary generations in the workforce and improve community relationships.

Role of the Researcher

Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) reported qualitative researchers face a number of unique challenges when conducting inquiry. Marshall et al. (2013) extended the discussion with indicating qualitative researchers must perform a thorough exploration using design and analysis. Many constraints occur with ensuring quality and the researcher must overcome the constraints to ensure a proper foundation (Marshall et al., 2013). Eide and Showalter (2012) posited the researcher in qualitative studies must secure accurate information, report all data collected, and identify the lived experiences regarding the phenomenon. Using the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements, all participants in the study received assurance of the protection of their rights. A participant consent form was presented and signed prior to the interviews taking place.

Moustakas (1994) wrote first person reports of life experiences are the essence of qualitative research and freedom from assumptions promotes epoché. The condition of epoché is things not known without internal reflection and meaning (Moustakas, 1994). From this point, describing the internal and external relationship between the phenomenon and self occurs resulting from qualitative reduction (Moustakas, 1994). My personal involvement with managing multigenerational workforces led to an empathetic position and further desire to understand the experiences of managers.

Marshall et al. (2013) identified qualitative research employs interviews as the primary data source. The number of interviewees and the depth, breadth, and scope of the questions were central considerations. Significant optimal choices, associated with the particular design of the qualitative research, occurred during the process (Marshall et al., 2013). Dworkin (2012) offered proper guidance which included extrapolating data from in-depth interviews for qualitative consistency. The interview protocol included the following steps: (a) an opening statement, (b) semistructured interview questioning, (c) probing questions, (d) participants verifying themes noted during the interviews, (e) follow-up questions as needed for clarity, and (f) recording of reflective notes.

Nijhawan et al. (2013) indicated informed consent for qualitative interviews is made clear in The Belmont Report. Informed consent is a requirement of some research processes involving human beings as subjects for study. Obtaining informed consent requires advising the subject about his or her rights, the purpose of the study, procedures undertaken, and the assurance of confidentiality (Nijhawan et al., 2013). Hammersley (2013) cautioned qualitative investigators regarding the potential of becoming prone to researcher bias that this could influence the information received during interviews. I had no personal or professional connection to the participants and organization included in this study. I avoided conflicts of interest and ensured my actions were ethical. I followed The Belmont Report that provides guidelines for ensuring protection of participant rights through the informed consent process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended implementing a journaling process to ensure the mitigation of personal bias. I developed a reflexive journal including reasons for undertaking the research. The reflexive journal

included bracketing from the beginning of this research process, when I first conceptualized the idea to explore the phenomenon, and continued throughout the research. All of the audio recordings of the interviews involved categorization, transcription, were saved onto a portable file flash drive, stored securely, and uploaded into NVivo10 software for data analysis.

Participants

The participants for this study were three managers from a Franklin County, Ohio manufacturing facility. A target population of six managers experienced the multigenerational phenomena. Purposeful sampling methods in qualitative research target a population meeting certain criteria to gain a sample of participants in the phenomenon (Suri, 2011). Suri (2011) extended the discussion of purposeful sampling by indicating elements of inclusion and exclusion criteria existed and were defined by methodological thoroughness. Inclusion involves a small number of studies and exclusion includes areas where undue influence can occur (Suri, 2011). Participants in my study consisted of managers of the facility who manage the workforce and selection took place irrespective of gender. Marshall et al. (2013) challenged researchers to continue introducing participants into the study until the dataset is complete or the achievement of data saturation. After receiving IRB approval, one-on-one semistructured interviews occurred with interviewees from the participating manufacturing facilities. I followed Walden University's IRB guidelines to protect the rights of the participants, and all participants were required to sign a consent form prior to the interview.

Initial recruitment took place to gain access to and establish relationships with the managers or leaders of the manufacturing facilities and potential participants. I worked with each manufacturing facility's managers and leaders to arrange access to the participants. The organization provided a list of participants who met the eligibility criteria. I contacted the potential participants after receiving the list. Each potential participant received an informed consent letter for the study including the explanation of the confidential nature of the study prior to the start of the interview. I personally provided the informed consent letter to each participant and ensured understanding, affirmed agreement, and obtained the participant signature. I made arrangements with each participant to select the private place of their choice to hold the interview. Dworkin (2012) indicated ensuring the information obtained from each participant is held in the strictest confidence is critical to study integrity. The data were collected in a manner permitting participant flexibility with responses and that enabled the participants to share their thoughts and experiences (Morse, Lowery, & Steury, 2014). All written data collected from the interviews will remain secured in a personal combination safe for 5 years and then shredded. All digital and electronic data security assurance occurred using a personal password protected computer flash drive. All electronic data on the portable flash drive will remain locked in a safe for 5 years. After 5 years, I will delete the electronic data.

Research Method and Design

The three types of research methods are: (a) qualitative, (b) quantitative, and (c) mixed methods (Earley, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). All three methods were appropriate

designs to consider for this study. The selection of the method and design for this study were a qualitative inquiry and a case study design based on the nature of the study. Selection of the method and design explored different aspects of people to determine their proper interaction with each other in the environment. Bailey (2014) indicated qualitative methodology seeks to explore and explain human behavior. A qualitative case study design permitted my understanding of the characteristics within a multigenerational workforce. Capturing data on generational workplace differences could assist business managers with implementing strategies to more effectively manage a multigenerational workforce.

Research Method

Hazzan and Nutov (2014) reported qualitative research assists with understanding people in an economic, cultural, and social context. Qualitative researchers use methods studying situations and processes involving people. With the ability of qualitative research to investigate environments such as feelings and attitudes, this type of inquiry holds a distinct advantage over quantitative methodology (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). Qualitative methods enabled me to explore the lived experiences of managers of multigenerational workers through conducting face-to-face interviews with them to understand the phenomenon associated with the workplace setting. Dworkin (2102) added that qualitative research methods focus on gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and concentrates on the how and why of a particular issue. Bailey (2014) that indicated the past 20 years have seen the success of qualitative research beyond reasonable doubt and that it has been applicable in multiple uses.

Quantitative researchers and methods use statistical data and large, random representations (Allwood, 2012). A quantitative approach would require a larger participant base and selection through hypotheses testing (Bansal & Corley, 2012). Bansal and Corley (2012) continued on to state that quantitative researchers attempt to tell stories through this type of inquiry, but cannot achieve the essence found through a qualitative approach. Even though quantitative research carefully plans the process in the beginning, it cannot obtain the same level of exploring ideas as qualitative inquiry can (Bansal & Corley, 2012). Moustakas (1994) posited the use of the quantitative method could not provide an understanding of descriptive articulation through personal experiences.

When considering the mixed methods research type, problems with the complexity involved using the diverse approach take place (Mertens, 2014). Sparkes (2014) added that mixed methods do not focus on understanding the cause of problems, but rather with examining the problems. Venkatesh, Brown, and Bala (2013) related that though advocates of mixed methods claim improvement from either qualitative or quantitative alone; arguments occurred among researchers on whether or not the method is even appropriate at all. The fact of combining the multiple methods causes paradigmatic issues (Vankatesh et al., 2013).

Research Design

The research design for this study was an exploratory single case study. Case study, grounded theory, narrative, ethnography, and phenomenological study were all appropriate design strategies for this study on multigenerational workplace challenges for

managers. With grounded theory design, novice researchers may tend to sway results through the selection of planned instead of random sampling (Hussein, Hirst, Salyers, & Osuji, 2014). While Engward (2013) communicated grounded theory is a valid alternative to interpretive qualitative data methodology, Higginbottom and Lauridsen (2014) related that grounded theory appeared to place data into preconceived categories weakening validity. Potter (2013) referred to narrative design as suitable for learning about the structural methods of analysis and to the study of social phenomena. Baskarada (2014) added narrative design does not provide sufficient raw data introduced to the research. Down (2012) proposed more understanding of ethnography must occur to move it into mainstream design and research legitimacy. A phenomenological design requires a great deal of time involved with potentially a lengthy interview process and can become very complex (Yin, 2014).

I decided that a case study design was the most appropriate for this study. Cronin (2014) indicated that case study research is a design with strong philosophical underpinnings providing a framework for exploratory research in real-life settings. Hoon (2013) discovered case study research enables the study of contemporary organizational phenomena with an in-depth, holistic view using a few or single cases. Case study strength comes from theoretical insight stemming from case-specific contextualized findings (Hoon, 2013). Cronin found that a case study is a widely used design and that it has changed over time. Case study design remains a rigorous and systematic method in many settings (Cronin, 2014). Baxter and Jack (2008) posited qualitative case study design provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena with their contexts. A

hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple data sources providing improved

credibility. Baxter and Jack added the sources could be documentation, archival records,

interviews, physical artifacts, direct observations, and participant observations. Yin

(2014) related another strong point for case study research is using a small population in

the same setting exploring, describing, and explaining a phenomenon in a real-life

situation. I also used multiple types of data including interviews and documentation of

manager multigenerational work strategies. Case study research has the ability to

incorporate a variety of data sources leading to in-depth qualitative findings (Hoon,

2013). A single case study design was the most appropriate for this study and can be the

basis for significant explanations (Baskarada, 2014). A qualitative case study design is an

in-depth strategy enabling researchers to explore a specific and complex phenomenon

within the real-world context (Yin, 2013).

Kenny (2012) indicated heuristic inquiry research design has attracted the interest

of investigators in a variety of fields of study. Heurism is a generic term encompassing a

way of thinking and exploring research. Moustakas's (1994) heuristic design derives

from the Greek word meaning to discover or to find (Kenny, 2012). Heuristic research

aims at discovery through self-inquiry and dialog. The heuristic researcher moves to

present a full story of the phenomenon and the researcher then creates synthesis from the

collected material (Moustakas, 1994).

Dworkin (2012) wrote data saturation is the most important factor when

considering qualitative sample size decisions. Saturation is the point when the data

collection process no longer offers any new or relevant data (Dworkin, 2012; Morse et

al., 2014). To indicate it in another way, Morse et al. (2104) stated saturation related to all aspects of the phenomenon satisfactorily occurring and the unlikeness of no additional or different insights. Saturation is a common theme in qualitative research and a number of influencing factors arise (Morse et al., 2014) and key to first-rate qualitative work (Marshall et al., 2013). The importance of saturation in qualitative research means giving full expression to the values desiring to communicate through the research (Gergen, Josselson, & Freeman, 2015). The interview process continued until the achievement of data saturation occurred. Exploring the experiences of multigenerational workers showed managers with new ways to blend the divergent workplace environment. I provided support demonstrating further meaningful research.

Population and Sampling

The population for the study consisted of six managers working in a Franklin County, Ohio facility and the sample included three of the managers. Yilmaz (2013) wrote purposeful sampling in qualitative research plays a key role in the selection of a small number of people or unique conditions. Studies using this context provide valuable information and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Jones (2014) related purposeful sampling is appropriate when a researcher has interest in a group of people with particular characteristics. If needed, additional data saturation of participants takes place through a chain method process known as snowballing (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). Snowball sampling is useful for qualitative research when participants are fewer in number and a potential hard to reach population (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). After recruiting participants using purposeful sampling, I would have contacted additional candidates

identified during the selection process through email, telephone, or text, if needed. The additional candidates would have come from the management of the organization identifying other managers who have experienced the phenomenon (Tirgari, 2012). Appointments took place at the convenience of the participant and I gathered as much information as possible through personal interviews with each. Each participant received verbal appreciation for his or her participation. Each participant will receive a copy of the findings via email or another preferred communication method.

Participants in the study worked as a full-time manager in a Franklin County, Ohio manufacturing facility and be experiencing the multigenerational phenomenon. Management of the organization helped to identify potential participants satisfying the candidate requirements and assisted with narrowing the population. The use of face-to-face interview methods permitted me to gather data about the lived experiences of managers experiencing the multigenerational work setting. Baxter and Jack (2008) indicated secondary data sources provide the researcher with another informational piece adding to strength of the findings. I collected secondary data through documentation aiding in identifying strategies of managing a multigenerational workforce. The secondary source materials included current human resource strategies and standard operating procedures local managers are using to manage the multigenerational workforce. The additional data assisted with understanding of the phenomenon. I interviewed participants until determined the data reached. Gergen et al. (2015) reflected through saturation, expression transpires providing validity to social and moral implications. Oberoi, Jiwa, McManus, and Hodder (2015) concluded data saturation is a

decision point where the researcher decides when no further need to continue data collection exists. This process continued until no new information emerges and verifies data saturation. Data saturation occurred following the completion of three participants and the incorporation of secondary documents.

Ethical Research

Damianakis and Woodford (2012) indicated qualitative researchers have a two-fold priority when conducting a study. The first is producing knowledge from the actual research and the second is upholding ethical principles and standards. McCormack et al. (2012) added similar to formal assessments through ethical boards, smaller scale research still must ensure ethical standards. Protection of vulnerable populations, respect for persons, autonomy, and justice are important ethical principles to adhere to (Wester, 2011).

The focus of this qualitative single case study was to conduct interviews and collect data from managers experiencing the multigenerational phenomenon. To protect participant identity, each received a specifically assigned form of SP1 through SP3. Saturation is a standard for qualitative inquiry (Morse et al., 2014; Rabinovich & Kacen, 2013). Rabinovich and Kacen (2013) added saturation occurs when additional analysis does not yield any additional information. Tools used during the interview process can uncover most of the core categories facilitating saturation. Researchers see saturation useful toward giving expression to social, moral, and political values (Gergen et al., 2015). The participant forms distinguished interviewee responses for the purposes of transcribing and data coding. A participant could have withdrawn before or during the

interview with no explanation required. The method of contact was email. Participant

information obtained followed the data storage process. Each participant received

information through the consent form of the data storage and disposal process. The

recruitment letter for study participants explained the study content and a copy is

available in Appendix A. A signed letter of cooperation (Appendix B) authorized site

approval of the study and interview process. The data storage and disposal process

entailed storing all data on a portable flash drive in a locked safe and shredding all paper

data after 5 years of the completion of the study. After 5 years, all computer and

electronic data files will undergo complete deletion from hard drives and digital devices

from the date of the completion of the study. No monetary or other incentives were given

to participants. Ethical research included the approval of the IRB before undertaking

approaching participants. The IRB approval number was 2015.10.21_16:41:56-05'0'.

Data Collection Instruments

Many qualitative design approaches include a specific protocol involving data

collection and data representations (Nolen & Talbert, 2011). As the researcher in the

qualitative study, I was the primary data collection instrument, and the semistructured

interview technique was the secondary instrument. The interview protocol served as a

consistent guide for all of the interviews in the study (see Appendix C). Damianakis and

Woodford (2012) stated in typical situations, qualitative interviews suggest face-to-face

interaction with participants recording the experiences. Connection with the targeted

community and candidate selections occurred with an established interview agenda.

Marshall et al. (2013) advocated collection procedures should not be routine and

experienced interviewers take advantage of unexpected opportunities during the interaction. An element of caution is during the interview, the interviewer does not influence the discussion toward a biased position. Damianakis and Woodford posited semistructured interviews enable positive, negative, and mixed answers from the approach.

The interview protocol (Appendix C) provided the steps to deploy before, during, and after the interview. I did not conduct a pilot test of the interview questions. Gibbons (2015) permitted participants to clarify questions during the interview process, and I replicated this same step. When using interviews for data collection, standardization of the interview process establishes consistency, and is applicable to the participant's cultural, educational, and linguistic levels (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). Rich (2012) indicated using the interview protocol ensures investigative areas are covered. The use of member checking gauged participant approval of how I represented findings and meanings from the interviews (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; Yilmaz, 2013). Member checking also assisted with determining data saturation (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012). Harper and Cole (2012) indicated member checking supports interpretations to confirm accuracy of data from the interviews. I conducted member checking to allow participants to verify accuracy of my interpretations of the experiences. The process I followed was restating or summarizing the participants' statements and opinions, and asked them to affirm or correct my interpretations.

Responses from semistructured interviews provided information on the workplace strategies managers utilize with managing the three primary generational cohort groups. I

sent personal invitations using email contact to solicit volunteers following approval from

the employer. A Sony Model ICD-PX333® digital recorder and Sony Sound Organizer

1.6® software assisted with recording the interviews. TranscribeMe® software created

textual transcriptions from the interviews. The textual data moved then into QSR-

NVivo10® to help structure the data. NVivo10® software enabled proper coding of

themes for analysis. Moustakas (1994) related rigorous and systematic procedures

accompany qualitative data inquiry. Proper data analysis begins with listening to

significant and relevant statements illuminating the phenomena under research

(Moustakas, 1994). A summary of the study will be available to each participant.

I also requested and used secondary data sources from managers of standard

operating procedures and human resource techniques used in the multigenerational

workplace. Gibbons (2015) and Yin (2014) determined case study research permits the

researcher to collect data from additional sources including documentation and archival

records. The secondary information promoted increased validity and improved data

saturation in the research process.

Data Collection Technique

To conduct a successful interview, researchers must choose the correct technique

and carefully plan for all aspects involved in the process (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Yu,

Abdullah, and Saat (2014) suggested data collection techniques could become a challenge

when large amounts of data lead to assorted information. Yu et al. argued researchers

only using an interview format run the risk of inadequate results. Simultaneous additional

fieldwork, however, appears to be cumbersome and too constraining. Marshall et al.

(2013) posited other researchers preferring different inquiry sometimes misunderstand

qualitative research techniques. Qualitative research, nonetheless, draws upon the value

of psychological techniques seeking to explore and explain human behavior (Bailey,

2014). A qualitative technique involves in-depth interviews offering proficiency and

knowledge to answer the why's and how's of behavior. This technique has remained

stable through several decades (Bailey, 2014). To validate the study, I implemented a

method of epoché using semistructured interviews. Moustakas (1994) indicated epoché is

a technique used by researchers to mitigate bias one may have regarding the phenomena.

Having an awareness of potential biases, the researcher can set them aside to view the

phenomena studied from a fresh perspective. When a researcher implements epoché,

academic rigor increases throughout the research project (Yu, 2014). Ponterotto (2014)

related to mitigate biases and presumptions, participants must not be colleagues or

persons known in another manner. The planned interview time was approximately 60

minutes in length and all interviews ended within this timeframe. The long length of time

required for this data collection technique could have been a potential constraint to the

data collection process. A manager could have felt he or she did not have sufficient time

to participate in the study. They had the option not to participate. I made every effort to

work with participants to best fit their schedules.

For data collection, I used a technique involving a reflexive electronic journal

focusing on reasons for undertaking the research. Researchers can mitigate personal bias,

beliefs, and meanings using a reflexive journal when conducting qualitative research

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985), however, a complete detachment of a researcher's personal

perceptions is unattainable (Yu, 2014). The use of reflexive journals increased the

researcher's ability to remain neutral toward the phenomenon under study (Ponterotto,

2014). A reflexive journal is another form of bracketing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and I

used a research reflexive journal from the beginning of the research process.

The validity of qualitative research is in first person reports of life experiences

(Moustakas, 1994). Careful selection of participants for the study occurred and I

confirmed all participants experienced the phenomenon. Personal interviews took place

in a quiet setting of the participant's choice. Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, and McKinney

(2012) argued a disadvantage of this data collection technique is the time and expense to

complete the data collection process. Doody and Noonan (2012) added the interview time

could seem intrusive to participants and some may respond with attempting to sound

more impressionable rather than being honest about answering a question.

Nijhawan et al. (2013) indicated an IRB must approve an informed consent form

before approaching participants to ensure all compliance areas are covered. All

participants included in the interviews received an introductory letter or email explaining

the study design, intent, and participant criteria (see Appendix A). All participants

volunteering to take part responded back via email. All answers to questions and

concerns occurred before the interviewee provides a signature. All participants received a

copy of the signed consent form prior to the form placed in the locked safe in a file with

the commitment of no access or retrieval for 5 years. After this period expires, shredding

of all paper information will occur and electronic files deleted.

I immediately conducted member checking with the participants on properly representing their responses to interview questions and documented manager multigenerational work strategies. Yilmaz (2013) indicated member checking is important to determine if descriptions and themes accurately reflect the participant views. Member checking is similar to a debriefing used in other investigative areas (Darawsheh, 2014). Member checking is a positive step with increasing legitimization in the interview process (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). I asked participants for corrections, if any, and took notes regarding how each participant changed their responses.

Gibbons (2015) and Yin (2014) determined case study research permits the researcher to collect data from additional sources including documentation and archival records. Collecting documentation and archival records is advantageous because participants can provide access to company management strategies not possibly available through public records (Bryde, Broquetas, & Volm, 2013). Bryde et al. (2013) proposed disadvantages of using this data collection method increases subjectivity with information and may be out of date, incomplete, or inaccurate. Although this additional data source could have disadvantages, the advantages of requesting supporting documentation enabled access to data I otherwise could not obtain. I asked each participant if they had supporting documents on multigenerational workplace strategies. The documentation included standard operating procedures and human resource practices used in the multigenerational workplace. With this additional data, I improved the research with real-life experiences managers use with the workforce. Yin added the use of multiple sources offers a means of triangulating the data gathered in the interviews and secondary data.

Data Organization Technique

Josselson (2014) indicated emerging improvements to critical reflection, analysis of data, and certain processes are superior to others. A systematic guarantee of value and rigor from information received through the qualitative inquiry regarding the collected data must occur (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013). Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) indicated the role of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software is enhancing trustworthiness through the organizing process. Data analysis software can manage and document the process more effectively.

I collected the data and transferred it into NVivo10® software permitting organization of the raw data. The software enabled coding the data into themes for further analysis. Separation into themes from decoding occurred assisting with identification and categorizing using a modified van Kaam method. The assembling of collected data into an electronic file is exclusive to my possession and all material appropriately labeled. To protect participant identity, each received a specifically assigned number of SP1 through SP3. Alignment occurred for each participant and all information treated as a separate dataset. I assured personal control with all data files and storage in a locked safe for 5 years. After this period passes, the shredding of paper files and deletion electronic files immediately will occur.

Data Analysis

St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) related challenges connecting qualitative data analysis with interpreting the information could take place. Interviewing and observing people resulted in the collection of data in the form of words. St. Pierre and Jackson

reported interviewing is the customary method of data collection in qualitative research. Participants input became uncontaminated and authentic voices. Data analysis involves the inductive exploration of recurring themes, patterns, or concepts and then transferring into clear and concise interpretation (Nassaji, 2015). The intent of the interview process was to collect the perceived lived experiences of managers in the multigenerational work setting. The results of this qualitative case study may provide more insight into the behaviors of the multigenerational workforce and the strategies managers could implement to increase productivity.

A researcher uses a qualitative method to gain understanding of the participant's perceptions as the primary source of knowledge (Applebaum, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) designed a foundation with qualitative understanding with it being the natural process through which awareness, understanding, and knowledge are critical. Moustakas used a seven-step modified van Kaam analysis method allowing researchers to analyze textual data. The steps included: (1) listing textual data in groupings, (2) reducing and eliminating invariant themes of the phenomenon, (3) clustering core themes, (4) checking for patterns running contrary to the interview transcript, (5) developing a structured description of experiences by each person, (6) creating a structured description based from the textual data, and (7) implementing an individual textural-structural description of the data from the combined interviews (Moustakas, 1994). I utilized the steps throughout the data analysis process. A Sony Model ICD-PX333® digital recorder and Sony Sound Organizer 1.6® software assisted with recording the interviews. Transcriptions created from the interviews went through an

upload into TranscribeMe® software. The textual data from TranscribeMe® uploaded into QSR-NVivo10® further assisting with structuring the data. The textual data from the interviews exported again into QSR-NVivo10® software for the development of themes and presentation of the results in Section 3 of the study. In addition to the interview data, I uploaded data from the archival documentation into QSR-NVivo10® to include in the analysis.

Denzin (1970) communicated the idea of triangulation has four possible types: (1) data triangulation including gathering data through several sampling strategies, (2) investigator triangulation involving more than one researcher to gather and interpret data, (3) theoretical triangulation referring to the use of more than one theoretical position in interpreting the data, and (4) methodological triangulation involves more than one method for gathering data. I used data triangulation through the use of semistructured interviews and supporting documentation on strategies used in the multigenerational workplace. Themes discovered through the utilization of the NVivo10® software and analysis of the supporting documentation occurs in Section 3.

Reliability and Validity

Important considerations are issues regarding reliability and validity associated with qualitative research (Mangioni & McKerchar, 2013). Sousa (2014) indicated concepts such as reliability and validity involving qualitative research is clearer through a well-crafted framework. Mangioni and McKerchar (2013) related validation guidelines of qualitative research involve both extrinsic and intrinsic areas. Mangioni and McKerchar added the key to strengthening both the reliability and validity of data analysis lies in the

techniques incorporated beginning with data coding. Through the implementation of appropriate steps to maintain standards set by the IRB, the mitigation of bias occurred with reliability and validity (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Dworkin (2012) wrote data saturation is the most important factor when considering qualitative sample size decisions. Saturation is the point of when the data collection process no longer offers any new or relevant data (Dworkin, 2012; Morse et al., 2014). Interviewing continued through three participants and an assessment took place validating data saturation. Additional interviewing was not needed.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which the results are repeatable and confirm or reject findings from the data (Grossoehme, 2014; Mangioni & McKerchar, 2013). Grossoehme (2014) posited one means of demonstrating reliability is ensuring documentation of research decisions along the way similar to being included in a research diary. Another researcher should be able to understand what was done and why. Lincoln and Guba (1985) related the study exhibits dependability if the process of selecting, justifying, and applying research strategies and methods project clear explanations. This acts much like an audit trail in other applications. Nolen and Talbert (2011) posited reliability and dependability are interchangeable. Studies exhibiting confirmability are wherever the collected data from the research approves the findings as logical and clear (Yilmaz, 2013).

I asked participants to verify synthesized interpretation of the emerged themes from their interviews and company documentation. Providing the participants an

opportunity to review the interpretations of their viewpoints and company documents

permitted them to be personally comfortable with accuracy of the interpretation and

perceptions regarding strategies needed for managing a multigenerational workforce.

Dependability is comparable to the concept of reliability in qualitative research and refers

the stability of the data (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). I used the same

open-ended questions and provided each participant the ability to present documents on

strategies used in managing the multigenerational workforce. The use of open-ended

questions and secondary data from each participant in a case study technique increases

dependability (Baxter & Jack, 2008). I used this technique to help assure the availability

of data and collection reached to reach the point of saturation.

Validity

Grossoehme (2014) indicated validity refers to whether the study's product

correctly portrays the intended emphasis. Govaerts and van der Vleuten (2013) reported

validation is the development of a sound argument to support the findings. In case study

research, validity measures the degree in which the interpretations and outcomes are

adequate and appropriate when compared to the evidence. Rennie (2012) argued a threat

to validity could be from the researcher's subjectivity must be under control. Credibility

means the participants involved in the study find the study's results true and credible

(Venkatesh et al., 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). The incorporation of member checking assured

validity through asking respondents to review the material for accuracy (Moustakas,

1994; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012; Yilmaz, 2013) and increases legitimacy (Onwuegbuzie

et al., 2012).

Houghton et al. (2013) posited credibility refers to the value and believability of the findings. The researcher must ensure the practices of qualitative methodology strive to be pure and simple, and free from objections. I established credibility and trustworthiness of my study by implementing appropriate steps to maintain the highest levels of academic standards. I adhered to the Walden University IRB research guidelines. Combining appropriate methods and instruments applicable to case study research strengthens trustworthiness (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Copeland and Agosto (2012) suggested the combined use of multiple data sources promotes triangulation and helps establish internal credibility and consistency. The increased consistency lends support to improved claims of reliability and validity. Triangulation purposes are to confirm data and ensure data are complete (Houghton et al., 2013). Increased strength to the study occurs with the additional evidence. Venkatesh et al. (2013) indicated a deeper understanding of the phenomenon takes place through data triangulation.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described confirmability as a degree of impartiality in the study findings shaped by the participants and the researcher's interest. I assured confirmability through member checking and rechecking the data during the data collection process. I asked participants to review my summarized interpretations of their responses to verify I captured the intended meaning of their responses.

Transferability takes place if the findings are transferable to another qualitative study (Yilmaz, 2013). The actions and events need to be transferable. Lincoln and Guba (1985) added transferability is the trustworthy measure used to develop contextual statements could transfer to other populations. Transferability ultimately remains up to

the reader to decide (Yilmaz, 2013). I attempted to assure the transferability of my study methods by carefully documenting and describing the entire research process.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of Section 2 was to provide an overview of the role of the researcher in the project, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, data analysis, and reliability and validity. Ethical compliance is crucial and the required steps taken during the research process ensured confidentiality and the protection of participants. The participant consent form and organization permission letter (Appendices A and B) promoted the essential elements during the process. The study's qualitative case study method focused on interviewing participants who have experienced the phenomenon. Shared feelings and interpretations of lived experiences from the workplace became the basis of formulating study results. Reliability and validity controls occurred throughout the study using the techniques described. In Section 3, data from participants' interviews become findings for the study. In Section 3, I provide a detailed description of the analysis of the interview responses from the participants and the emerging themes to answer the overarching research question. Business managers can benefit from the findings of my analysis of the data collected.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

Section 3 provides the findings of the research study. In addition, the section includes: (a) an overview of the study, (b) presentation of the findings, (c) application to the professional practice, (d) implication for social change, (e) recommendation for actions, (f) recommendations for further study, (g) reflections, and (h) summary and study conclusion. In Section 3, I present the findings of the study by main themes.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of the qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies workplace managers use to manage a multigenerational workforce to improve productivity. I conducted semistructured face-to-face interviews with three managers working in a Franklin County, Ohio manufacturing facility to obtain data and to answer the following research question: What strategies do business managers use to manage a multigenerational workforce to improve productivity? I qualified participants based on their experience of managing a multigenerational workforce. Interviews took place in a private environment where participants could feel comfortable with providing detailed responses to answer each semistructured interview question. No interviews lasted longer than 60 minutes. Participants responded to five demographic questions and six semistructured interview questions indicating the strategies used by some managers to manage the multigenerational workforce. I also reviewed secondary documents and my reflexive journal to triangulate and confirm interview data.

I analyzed the data and identified 10 core emergent subthemes. The emergent subthemes reflected participants' views, experiences, and perceptions regarding the multigenerational workplace and strategies noted in company documents to answer the central research question. Based on the research question, and analysis of interview responses and company documents, I identified four main themes: (a) required multigenerational management skills, (b) generational cohort differences, (c) most effective multigenerational management strategies, and (d) least effective multigenerational management strategies. The conceptual summaries of required managerial skills are: (a) consistent, fair, and respectful treatment; (b) leadership communication; and (c) providing ample work direction. The generational cohort differences include: (a) preferences, (b) priorities, and (b) variation in work ethic. The most effective multigenerational management strategies are: (a) creative engagement practices and (b) mentoring and training. The least effective multigenerational management strategies are: (a) forced compliance and (b) procedural assumptions.

Presentation of the Findings

A single case study design was the most appropriate for this study. A qualitative case study design is an in-depth strategy enabling researchers to explore a specific and complex phenomenon within the real-world context (Yin, 2013). Three managers from a Franklin County, Ohio manufacturing facility were selected as participants based on their experience with implementing multigenerational management strategies. In addition to the responses to face-to-face, semistructured interviews, company standard operating procedures and human resource strategies integration occurred to triangulate and confirm

interview data. The company standard operating procedures were an internal process improvement form used in the multigenerational workplace environment. The human resource strategies were from an employee handbook describing policies and guidelines implemented for all multigenerational workers. The three participants were managers of the community research partner represented in the study as SP1, SP2, and SP3.

I used Moustakas's (1994) seven-step modified van Kaam analysis method to analyze the textual data. As reported in Section 2, I deployed a Sony Model ICD-PX333® digital recorder and Sony Sound Organizer 1.6® software for recording the interviews. Transcriptions created from the interviews were uploaded into TranscribeMe® software and this information was further assembled into themes through QSR-NVivo10® while maintaining research participant confidentiality. I used member checking to confirm accuracy and to ensure I captured the meaning of each participant's responses. Following the collection and analysis of data, I reviewed company documents for local multigenerational workplace strategies and my reflexive journal to triangulate the data.

The conceptual framework for this research was supported by Buss's (1974) generational theory and Mannheim's (1952) hierarchical point-of-view regarding cohort group theory. I reviewed the two frameworks to gain a better understanding of the strategies multigenerational managers need to improve productivity. The company documents and participant responses supported the Buss and Mannheim theories. Festing and Schafer (2013) posited that the Buss and Mannheim theories assist with laying the foundation for future research.

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

The first five interview questions revealed the participants' demographics. Demographic questions included the number of years each manager has been with the current organization and the number of years in the role of manager. Demographic responses also showed the total number of employees in the company and the number of direct and/or indirect employees reporting to each manager. The final demographic question connected the average tenure of employees both within the organization and in the department, or group, that each participant manages. Participant SP1 had 21 years of company tenure and 5 years as a managerial leader. Participant SP2 had 14 years of company service time and 10 years of management experience. Participant SP3 had 11 years of organizational tenure and has served all but 6 months of employment in a management capacity. All participants were involved in the operational focus of the business managing the multigenerational workforce.

Emergent Theme 1: Required Multigenerational Management Skills

The results interpreted from the conceptual summaries of required multigenerational management skills (see Table 2) focused on participants' responses to management skills the organizational managers use. Managers mentioned management skills 31 times during interview and responses to questions as indicated in Table 2. Based on the coded responses of the managers and integration of company documents, I identified the strategies in use supporting the Buss (1974) and Mannheim (1952) theories. The emerged subthemes were: (a) consistency, fair, and respectful treatment; (b) leadership communication; and (c) providing ample work direction confirmed in previous

research by Chaudhuri and Ghosh (2012), Davis (2013), Irwin (2014), Shetach (2012), and Sledge and Miles (2012).

Table 2

Frequency of Required Multigenerational Management Skills

Subtheme	*N*	% of frequency of occurrence
Consistent, fair, and respectful treatment	8	38.10
Leadership communication	7	33.33
Providing ample work direction and teamwork	6	28.57

Note: N = frequency

Consistent, fair, and respectful treatment. Swan (2012) noted a finding that the importance of consistent treatment was essential regardless of the age of employees. Consistent treatment implementation was further evident through the employee handbook introduction stating the importance and value of each employee. Workers value respect and equality more than higher pay (Hansen & Leuty, 2012). Participant responses and company documents suggested the company executes consistent, fair, and respectful treatment of their multigenerational workforce. The employee handbook and standard operating procedures contained sections that included statements of how all employees have the same access to incentives and promotional opportunities. Participants specifically addressed the subtheme during interviews:

- SP1 noted, "We treat all employees equally and do not take into account any differences of managing related to age."

- "I manage with consistency, irrespective of age, promoting an atmosphere of fairness." (SP3)

- SP2 posited, "There are times when discipline is needed and consistent application of documentation is put into use when the action is required."

- "I look at things as an actual working employee and individual respect is a normal expectation." (SP1)

- Specific to the Baby Boomer cohort group, SP3 stated, "Baby Boomer workers not only want fair treatment, but also expect management to exhibit the same toward all employees."

Leadership communication. The employee handbook is a document providing guidance to local organizational leadership. Along with the core elements necessary for describing standard employment practices and compensation, the employee handbook lists employee expectations. The employee handbook also assists local managers with tools enabling consistent and ethical application of company standards, along with communication best practices. Lindsay et al. (2014) supported leadership communication to clarify directives and avoid potential areas of conflict and Twenge (2012) stated workers accept and welcome the structure of company standards presented through communication methods. Cummings et al. (2013) agreed stating that designing creative communication initiatives improve workplace morale and help managers grow in personal confidence, and ability to cope with new demands. Complementing the company documents, further mentions on leadership communication occurred with the participant interviews:

- "Focusing on strong communication, particularly across departments are essential core management skills. Team leader involvement, ensuring the lines of communication remaining open and effective, are also crucial. Employees thrive on and appreciate the most recent information contributing to improved workforce morale." (SP2)

- SP3 added, "Provide the right level of individual leadership and permit individual space on determining the correct personal response actions to take."

- "Communicate reasons for the need for efficiency gains and permit a potential opening for employee incentives" was a statement made by SP1.

Providing ample work direction and teamwork. VanMeter et al. (2012) indicated an organization must strive to stray away from a self-centered approach to work direction and teamwork. Hernaus and Vokic (2014) related workplace diversity potentially changes the nature of job design, directing work, and characteristics. Improved camaraderie can help with promoting teamwork and reducing periods of turnover (Hernaus & Vokic, 2014). Teamwork concepts are as a means to bridge potential gaps across generational environments (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). All participants expressed insights applicable to this subtheme:

- SP3 communicated, "All age groups desire just enough job task direction. Each employee needs to learn the specific job technique through actual performing."

- SP2 added, "Process implementation occurs involving older workers transferring job knowledge and skills through shadowing to employees who

are younger or newer in the company. Older workers feel more integrated and

appreciated while assimilating newer workers."

- SP1 concluded, "Continue to teach them as long as they show they are

    responding. For younger workers, take a step back and let them try it even if

    they make mistakes."

Emergent Theme 2: Generational Cohort Differences

As presented in Section 1, the workforce is more diverse than in the past and

manifested in differences involving generational cohorts (Jones, 2014). Cogin (2012)

expressed existing sharp differences in expectations and motivation among generational

cohorts. Participant responses resulted with three subthemes of: (a) preferences, (b)

priorities, and (c) variation in work ethic. There were 35 mentions from participant

interviews containing the theme of generational cohort differences. Table 3 displays the

subthemes and frequencies.

Table 3

Frequency of Generational Cohort Differences

Subtheme	*N*	% of frequency of occurrence
Preferences	13	37.14
Priorities	10	28.57
Variation in work ethic	12	34.29

Note: N = frequency

Preferences. Gursoy et al. (2013) related a social phenomenon involving Baby

Boomers with respect to varying generational needs. The cohort group is set in their ways

(Fingerman et al., 2012) and Holt et al. (2012) indicated there is narcissism within the Baby Boomer cohort group when it comes to preferences. All participants discussed this subtheme element across different age groups:

- "There are social aspects of the multigenerational environment. The older generation desire more sit-down positions and do not mind the monotony associated with repetitive tasks. Baby Boomers do not require more from the company or management than what they are presently receiving. They are satisfied with the present state of affairs regarding available work and even the current status-quo. Older people tend to not desire as much social activity during work time and are resistant to further change." (SP3)
- SP1 responded with "Generation X and Boomer workers want you to stay out of their way most of the time."

On the contrary, Millennials desire the social connectedness and eagerness to learn new things (Murphy, 2012). While all groups seek a social element as suggested by King, Kravitz, McCausland, and Paustian-Underdahl (2012), Millennials crave increased social interaction (Kilber et al., 2014). Eastman and Liu (2012) suggested demographic variables are a factor in how people act in the workplace. Each participant communicated their opinions with mentions:

- "Difference in preferences is more so from demographic backgrounds, rather than related to cohort ages. Local demographic changes have involved the transformation from a more rural setting to one of an urban sprawl. This

phenomenon has more impact with preferences and associated behaviors than directly from age. People are a product of where and how raised." (SP3)

- SP2's comment was, "New employee's desire for increased interaction to escape potential boredom."

- SP1 concluded, "Younger workers want more direct interaction."

Priorities. Festing and Schafer (2013) agreed with the perspective of changing strategic priorities of younger workers. Demirdjian (2012) posited Millennial priorities are simple—they do not consider anyone else but themselves. Holt, Marques, and Way (2012) indicated Millennials look for new ways of engagement and management style. Barron, Leask, and Fyall (2014) posited all generations are searching for similar things with personal priorities. Participants engaged this subtheme with specific comments:

- SP3 stated, "Outside influences seem to be more problematic with younger employees and the resulting search for flexible work schedules."

- "Younger workers feel entitled and not as willing to accept procedures, and want to rule the company. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but younger workers just need managed more closely." (SP1)

- SP2 related, "There are differences in learning levels among ages. What works for older workers does not necessarily work the same for ones who are younger. Searching for a common ground approach helps to reduce the differences in cohort groups."

Variation in work ethic. Information presented through scholarly literature suggested differences in work ethic among the three main cohort groups. Cogin (2012)

related a declining work ethic among young people. Choi et al. (2013) substantiated a work ethic shift in workplace cultures. New perspectives about life and work are reshaping the image of a desirable workplace. Murray (2013) related fostering an environment that takes into consideration the work ethic of each generation could have advantages. All participants commented about work ethic differences:

- SP1 suggested, "Younger workers do not have the same commitment to accept required work compared to Baby Boomers. Millennials were not held accountable for actions and behaviors as youth when living at home with parents or guardians."

- Regarding the younger generations, SP3 stated, "Generation X desires flexibility and a different style of management. Millennials are vocal on what they can do, and managers enable them to prove it."

- SP3 simply stated, "Work ethic differences are evident".

- SP1 added, "With their better work ethic, older worker group priorities result with fewer issues for managers."

- SP2 noted, "Periods of conflict due to the ethical differences and occur from time to time."

- "All attitudes are a challenge to managers and a deterrent to improving productivity. Some employees would always be only concerned with a paycheck and little else." (SP3)

- "Older workers desire to contribute more and become troubled over the younger employee's work ethic. Due to in part their longer tenure with the

company and evident loyalty, older workers are concerned with the lower

level of commitment. Older workers desire seeking to help the situation

through personal involvement with training and other means." (SP2)

Emergent Theme 3: Most Effective Multigenerational Management Strategies

Ferri-Reed (2012b) provided research on how to blend different generations into a

high-performance team. The challenges are numerous, but obtainable, when addressing

key areas within an organization. Mitchell, Parker, Giles, Joyce, and Chiang (2012)

posited effective dynamics provide increased opportunity for organizational success. The

identified subthemes through semistructured interviews were: (a) creative engagement

practices and (b) mentoring and training as represented with frequencies displayed. Table

4 displays the subthemes discussed during the participant interviews with 23 mentions in

the theme of most effective multigenerational strategies used in the company.

Table 4

Frequency of Most Effective Multigenerational Management Strategies

Subtheme	*N*	% of frequency of occurrence
Creative engagement practices	12	52.17
Mentoring and training	11	47.83

Note: N = frequency

Creative engagement practices. Kassing, Piemonte, Goman, and Mitchell

(2012) related creative engagement actions, such as flexible work schedules, reduce the

amount of employee dissent and intention to leave. Reducing the amount of dissatisfying

workplace conditions through new practices can help with organizational engagement

(Kassing et al., 2012). Deal et al. (2013) found failure to motivate employees will lead to

lower levels of engagement. Blending work life with home life can increase workplace

engagement (Ferri-Reed, 2014b). Participants provided comments within the subtheme:

- "Collaboration and idea sharing occurs through methods such as process

  improvement forms. Employees can provide a written description of

  suggested changes for improving quality, or making a job or task easier. This

  assists with employee engagement and encouragement, as well as set the stage

  for rewards and recognition." (SP2)

- SP3 commented, "The company has had an openness to alter work schedules

  to provide employees with more flexibility. The company has tried a few

  innovative changes in an attempt to help people work around their busy lives."

- SP1's perspective was, "Explaining on how to move on to the next work

  situations provides opportunity for not only increased efficiencies, but also

  personal incentives including monetary."

Mentoring and training. Ferri-Reed (2012b) endorsed mentoring between

generations as a means with effectively managing a multigenerational workforce.

Mentoring, training, and coaching reinforcement are crucial for building teamwork and

internal talent (Festing & Schafer, 2013). Organizations must look at mentoring and

training programs through the lens of generational differences (Houck, 2011). The

employee handbook provided secondary information explaining a concise orientation

process and internal procedures involving performance appraisals. Participants also

provided substantive information on the subtheme:

- SP1's statements on the subject were, "Imparting personal experiences with workers is a successful way for new people to step into their role. Show them how to do the job and then allow them to perform the work, while giving the employees room for normal learning mistakes."

- SP3 went on to state, "Give employees just enough information to do their jobs—no more and no less. Giving them too much leeway or power too early can backfire and lead to an unsuccessful strategy."

- SP1 simply stated, "Focusing on solid training is key".

- "I keep open lines of permitting employees to feel comfortable with expressing new ideas. This helps with engagement." (SP2)

Emergent Theme 4: Least Effective Multigenerational Management Strategies

Managing for effective production results requires succinct processes and management fortitude (Shetach, 2012). In the diverse workforce, different generations must work side by side (Lester et al., 2012). This emergent theme of least effective multigenerational management strategies includes subthemes of: (a) forced compliance and (b) procedural assumptions. Table 5 displays the data frequencies from all participants. There were 19 mentions of the two subthemes from analysis of participant interviews.

Table 5

Frequency of Least Effective Multigenerational Management Strategies

Subtheme	*N*	% of frequency of occurrence
Forced compliance	11	57.90
Procedural assumptions	8	42.10

Note: N = frequency

Forced compliance. Gursoy et al. (2013) stated employees could take the position of challenging conventional norms and disagreement with rules. While the number of people challenging conventional norms could be small, working on behaviors take additional time to manage. Work rules such as codes of conduct are written to protect various work groups and correct undesired behaviors (Fredericksen & McCorkle, 2013). The employee handbook dedicates an entire section on rules and regulations applicable to all employees. Practices in the employee handbook are readily available to managers. Participants expressed personal opinions in this area as well during the interviews:

- "Pressuring or forcing employees into work rule compliance has not worked. The failures have not just been with Millennials, but from all generational cohort groups. Millennials need to understand the benefits of rules and change, and managers must accentuate the positive aspects where possible. Explaining the consequences of non-compliance in a reasonable and sensible approach is important." (SP1)

- "Younger workers do not necessarily accept things like older workers do."
  (SP2)

- SP3 concluded, "Millennials struggle with showing up for work and want the
  ability to arrive late to work when personal issues happen."

Procedural assumptions. Potential dangers exist when implementing new

processes or changing existing procedures. Sonnentag et al. (2013) cautioned

organizations about the need for procedural clarification. Ferri-Reed (2013) added older

workers can react negatively when changing procedures. Policy and procedures in an

organization are important means of ensuring accountability (Fredericksen & McCorkle,

2013). Kilber et al. (2014) indicated being able to bounce ideas off different groups can

help with acceptance across the workforce. A lack of definitional clarity in key concepts

and constructs can be detrimental to an operation (Hillman, 2013). Participants reflected

on the area through the interviews. Additionally, information contained within the

organization's employee handbook is instrumental in establishing correctness and

therefore helps to eliminate workplace assumptions. Participant responses added to the

discussion of procedural assumptions:

- From a personal learning experience, SP2 noted, "A new product line
  implementation did not go well due to some inherent mistakes with procedural
  assumptions. Although managers corrected the situation, obviously confusion
  and wasting of time occurred."

- SP1 communicated, "Managers could not assume certain responses to change. A manager has to follow-through and pursues to make the experience end positively."

- "Managers must strive to ensure all understand and apply problem-solving to areas needing addressed. One cannot assume procedures are clear." (SP3)

Summary

The research findings included association with the purpose, significance of the study, the review of the literature, and conceptual frameworks. Papenhausen (2011) described Buss's generational theory as multiple approaches to understanding the evolution of people development and behavioral measures for managers. The study of generational theory provides possible adaptations to changing workplace environments and techniques (Papenhausen, 2011). Mannheim (1952) indicated generational cohort influences occur through situations affected by historical or organizational environment conditions. Mannheim's culturalistic view of generations has been an indispensable tool for laying the groundwork for studying generations (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2013). Depending on the circumstances, appreciating how generations differ provides a foundation of understanding multigenerational situations (Buss, 1974). Joshi et al. (2011) identified Mannheim's exposition of generations as an agent of social change. The Buss and Mannheim perspectives conceptualized the intersection of generational theories and laid the foundation for future research (Festing & Schafer, 2013). Buss's (1974) generational theory and Mannheim's hierarchical point-of-view regarding cohort group theory had support from the study's findings. Mannheim focused on shared life

experiences as a basis for studying generations. Buss believed there would be new levels of generational detail occurring in the future. Multigenerational management strategies received developmental guidance from the two theories. Face-to-face interview responses and company documents reinforced the Buss and Mannheim theories. Different life experiences of the cohort groups and various responses to handling them highlighted the findings. Managers should take into account how the changes impact them professionally and on the productivity responsibility.

Managers may be able use participants' information to help manage the multigenerational workforce to improve productivity. Manager concerns with providing efficient and effective supervision in the multigenerational workplace are challenging (Hillman, 2014; Rajput et al., 2013). The participants' responses and company documents assisted me in understanding the research phenomenon. I explored strategies managers need to improve managing a multigenerational workforce. Coulter and Faulkner (2014) pointed out managers must seek to comprehend the value and benefits of a diverse workforce and how this can maximize employee potential and increase productivity.

Applications to Professional Practice

The purpose of the qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies workplace managers use to manage a multigenerational workforce to improve productivity. Based on the research question and analysis of interview responses, as well as company documents, I identified four main themes in Section 3. The main themes included: (a) required multigenerational managerial skills, (b) generational cohort

differences, (c) most effective multigenerational management strategies, and (d) least effective multigenerational management strategies.

The research is meaningful to managers of multigenerational workforces in numerous ways. Workplace dynamics are changing with the age-based trends (Joshi et al., 2014; Otto et al., 2012). The findings from the analysis of responses to open-ended interview questions and information from secondary documents confirmed the existence of a multigenerational environment at the facility. In the second main theme, SP2 and SP3 related the differences and management adjustments required to ensure maintaining a balance between the needs of each generation. SP3's specific viewpoint of the effects of demographics introduced an element involving the shifting local urban cultural setting. Eastman and Liu (2012), Henkin and Butts (2012), and Teclaw et al. (2014) suggested demographic trends are setting the stage for required changes in revolutionary thinking by managers.

Worker priorities and work ethic differences require new management strategies. Kultalahti and Viitala (2014) suggested each generation possesses unique and distinguishable characteristics. Ferri-Reed (2013a) related, however, all three generations are capable of working with each other. Business managers can implement creative engagement practices expressed by SP2 and SP3 in the third main theme, supported by literary information, as they seek new means to promote teamwork and perhaps reduce turnover. SP1's statements with mentoring and training may help with job assimilation, as well as introduce important team-building skills. The introduction of reverse

mentoring principles (Berk, 2013; Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012; Ferri-Reed, 2012b;

Murphy, 2012) could provide additional tools to the local managerial leadership.

Implications for Social Change

I found the following management strategies for managing and sustaining a

multigenerational workforce. All cohort groups desire some level of sense of belonging

and seeking consistent, fair, and respectful treatment from their managers and peers.

Capitalizing on this subtheme might promote a stabilizing element irrespective of age or

demographic differences. Beutell (2013) related generational differences involving values

and beliefs were priorities to all cohort groups. Coulter and Falkner (2014) agreed with

the perspective and included positive labor-management relationships and employee

retention can take place as an outcome.

Additional management strategies useful toward positive social change include

using leadership principles. Participants related the importance of leadership

communication as a means of feeling valued and a part of the business. Information

dissemination and the timing of the delivery are focus elements to maintaining

management credibility. Participants also mentioned the value of personal visibility and

involvement among the workers. Haeger and Lingham (2013) provided research on the

importance of existing and new leaders. An emerging pattern of challenges requires

resourceful thinking skills and organizations must be in a position to help. Researchers

could utilize the findings from the study to develop a greater understanding of strategies

business managers need to manage the multigenerational workforce.

Recommendations for Action

Researchers have completed a plethora of studies on the topic of the multigenerational workplace (Zeeshan & Iram, 2012). The continued challenges present in workforces stimulate managers to seek new ideas of integration and successful implementation. With 10,000 new Baby Boomers retiring each day (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012), 40 million Millennials entering the workforce in the next few years (Ferri-Reed, 2012a), resulting in Millennial workers at 50% of the total workforce by 2020 (Ismail & Lu, 2014), effective strategies must be a part of development.

Business managers should view multigenerational workplaces as a challenging problem and implement proactive measures. The findings of this study are relevant to not only managers, but human resource practitioners, and senior and corporate officials as well. The application of effective management strategies may assist all groups in successfully improving manufacturing productivity and long-term company financial viability.

I will share my study findings with other business managers and professionals through scholarly journals and business publications. I will also share the findings through seminars and training courses. I have an invitation currently in April 2016 at Ohio Christian University in Circleville, Ohio to share my information followed by a question and answer session. As an adjunct instructor with Ohio Christian University and Indiana Wesleyan University, I expect to receive additional requests for more information from my research and study in the business school sections of the universities.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings from this study warrant additional exploration of multigenerational strategies for managers. The workforce landscape is changing and business managers must address the challenges to ensure efficient operations and organizational success (Rajput et al., 2013). Therefore, researchers should conduct further studies to explore problems not covered in this study to address limitations and delimitations. The inclusion of specific data from people of different ethnicity, race, and gender could provide other results. Exploring information from interviewing actual generational cohorts might generate new material. The findings of this study may warrant information from human resource managers and senior leaders. People in this group could share observations and perspectives not considered in the study. Since this study focused on one Franklin County, Ohio manufacturing site, I recommend expanding research to include other geographic areas or additional facilities in the same county. I further recommend exploration of multigenerational management strategies with companies providing a bigger sample size or larger organization.

I suggest conducting a study to compare multigenerational management strategies of private versus nonprofit companies. Procedures and other business process applications vary among the two types of organizations. I also suggest expanding research to determine differences with union versus nonunion manufacturing facilities. The addition of a collective bargaining agreement in unionized workplaces could change the structures of processes and procedures. The findings from this study warrant further exploration to examine essential strategies needed for all businesses to investigate the

determining factors important with managing a multigenerational workforce. Some organizations may not have the same levels of generational diversity and need to alter how they manage their specific environment. In addition, consideration of the impact of strategies on a company's stability and profitability could occur. Companies could monitor and track profits based on internal workforce changes. I further suggest a study to investigate businesses, which are on the leading edge with multigenerational manager training, and comparing their strategies of success with this and other studies. Businesses with innovative approaches could benchmark and provide insights as to success levels of implemented changes and the results.

Reflections

The Walden University Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) Program has been a challenging and rewarding experience. At the beginning of the journey, I was very enthusiastic to begin the process with the full intent of the degree leading to involvement in the future with academia. I met a number of phenomenal doctors, instructors, and colleagues with at least a few who will remain with me well beyond graduation. As time progressed with studies, there were periods where I felt overwhelmed and faced a number of hurdles. With continued encouragement from a core group of colleagues and the personal faith to persevere, I pressed through the struggles and overcame adversity that also included the loss of full-time employment in 2014.

The phenomenon of the multigenerational workforce is of personal and professional interest. I am a long-term management veteran of the paperboard packaging industry with a strong interest in how businesses are going to continue to operate

successfully with increasing diversity. I began focusing my interest on this subject early following enrollment in the DBA program and incorporating literature.

As I continued with core DBA studies, the title of my research became clearer and evolved to *Strategies for Managing a Multigenerational Workforce.* I originally selected a quantitative approach, but then gravitated to a qualitative inquiry and phenomenological design. Shortly after beginning the process, I was strongly encouraged to change to a case study design. Over the course of 4 days, I was able to make the required changes. From there, I have worked diligently to meet set timelines in order to graduate.

The three study participants provided key insights into multigenerational management strategies that answered my research question. The findings of this study influenced me personally to look differently at the multigenerational workplace. I am reemployed and now manage a more diverse workforce than before. I believe the research and findings from the study has provided new skills and approaches, and will enable me with an advantage over other managers of similar facilities.

Summary and Study Conclusions

Workplaces have employees from multiple generations and the varying ideas, values, and experiences affect the workplace (Cekada, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to answer the central research question: What strategies do business managers use to manage a multigenerational workforce to improve productivity? Managers strive to address the changing environment, attitudes, and behaviors in an effort to keep up with company demands (Srinivasin, 2012). Three

managers from a Franklin County, Ohio manufacturing facility participated in semistructured interviews and a review of company documents augmented the data.

After collecting and analyzing the data, four main themes emerged from the data: (a) required multigenerational managerial skills, (b) generational cohort differences, (c) most effective multigenerational management strategies, and (d) least effective multigenerational management strategies. The findings indicated managers need creative approaches to address the increasing challenges. The findings also should stir senior company officials and human resource professionals to better understand the growing complexities and provide assistance and training to managers.

There are several conclusions in this research project. Participants in the study answered semistructured interviews with open-ended questions. In addition, a review of company documents included a process improvement form and employee handbook. I triangulated the data collected through the interviews and company data with current literature to support the findings.

The initial findings of this study are essential strategies all companies need to manage the multigenerational workplace. However, not all strategies are effective and business managers must decide on which ones to implement (Roodin & Mendelson, 2013). In addition, management practices, leadership characteristics, and organizational culture also influence a manager's ability to be successful in the multigenerational environment (Starks, 2013). Understanding the critical factors and barriers is also important when determining the need for developing multigenerational management strategies (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014). Business managers who desire to be successful

with managing the multigenerational workplace will need to consistently review current

conditions and make adjustments as needed to engage, encourage, and motivate (Cole et

al., 2014).

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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter for Study Participants

[Date]

Re: A Doctoral Study of Potential Interest

Dear [Name]:

My name is Ronald Iden and I am currently a graduate student at Walden University pursuing a doctoral degree in Business Administration with a Leadership specialization. I am conducting research on the current multigenerational workforces. My study is entitled: "Strategies for Managing a Multigenerational Workforce". I am interested in conducting the study to explore how differences among the generational cohorts require managers to consider new approaches to effectively manage.

I am seeking to interview managers who fit the following criteria:

- Working in a Franklin County, Ohio manufacturing facility.
- Employed in a full-time, manager position for a minimum of 1 year, and working 40 hours or more per week.
- Working directly with a multigenerational workforce.

The participants study criteria has been determined to provide the researcher with unique perspectives to this research. Participants who choose to become a participant in the study will be asked to do so in a face-to-face interview. The results and findings will be shared with participants, other scholars, and the organization senior leadership. All responses will be categorized and no names will be attached in any form to the results. Confidentiality is assured through protocol established by the Walden University Internal Review Board (IRB).

Individuals who met the above criteria and are interested in participating in the study, are asked to contact me a XXX-XXX-XXXX or across email at XXX@WaldenU.edu. Participation in this study is obviously voluntary.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ronald L. Iden

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation

Community Research Partner Name
Contact Information

Date:

Dear Researcher Name,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled "Strategies for Managing a Multigenerational Workforce" within the <u>Insert Name of Community Partner</u>. As part of this study, I authorize you to <u>Insert specific recruitment, data collection, member checking, and results dissemination</u> activities. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: Insert a description of all personnel, rooms, resources, and supervision that the partner will provide. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

Include the following statement only if the Partner Site has its own IRB or other ethics/research approval process: The student will be responsible for complying with our site's research policies and requirements, including <u>Describe requirements</u>.

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

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

Sincerely,
Authorization Official
Contact Information

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview: Exploring the lived experiences of managers of a multigenerational workforce working in a Franklin County, Ohio manufacturing facility.

1. The interview session will begin with greetings, a brief personal introduction, and review of the research topic.

2. Appreciation to the participant will occur for volunteering and taking the time to permit the interview.

3. A brief review of the signed consent form will occur to ensure complete understanding and if any final questions are needful.

4. The participant will be informed a digital recorder in being turned on and I will note the date, time, and location.

5. The coding identification of the interview will be indicated verbally and written on the actual consent form.

6. The interview will begin.

7. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes for responses to the 11 questions.

8. I will use the questions in sequence.

9. I will pause after each question is asked to ensure the participant understands the question. If he or she does not want to answer any particular question, they may do so for any reason or no reason at all.

10. At the end of the interview, I will thank the interviewee again for taking the time to participate in the study.