A MIXED METHODS STUDY DESCRIBING OLDER GENERATIONS’ PERCEPTIONS OF MILLENNIALS IN GEORGIA’S AGRI-WORKPLACE

by

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(Under the Direction of Lauren L. Griffeth)

ABSTRACT

This study initiates a conversation in the agriculture and related industries on promoting the value of effectively harnessing generational diversity to strengthen workplace relationships. A modified version of Dillman’s Tailored Design Method was used to develop an online questionnaire to determine older generations’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace by describing three objectives: perceptual knowledge of millennials, attitudes toward millennials’ behavior, and their behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials into the agri-workplace. The mixed-methods investigation into perceptions of the millennial generation focused on the survey responses from a target population that consisted of the volunteer board members from Georgia’s agriculture-related non-profit groups.

INDEX WORDS: Age Cohorts, Agri-Workplace, Communication Accommodation Theory, Generation, Microaggression, Millennial, Mixed Methods, Stereotype, Role Theory.
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the people that make agriculture the largest industry in Georgia. It is my hope that this thesis promotes a greater understanding of their relationships so that the industry can continue to be strong and successful.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to acknowledge my thesis committee. Dr. Abigail Borron, Dr. Lauren L. Griffeth, and Dr. Milton Newberry—thank you for your outstanding professional and personal support. You all coached me through this experience, and I appreciate each of you selflessly dedicating your time and your resources to my learning. I will forever be grateful.

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Finally, I would be remiss if I did not thank my family, friends and my husband for their unwavering encouragement. I love you all, and I share this achievement with each of you!
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Problem Statement

In the next decade, individuals born between 1980 and 2000 are projected to dominate the workforce (Fry, 2015). This age group, referred to as "generation Y" or "millennials" is currently entering the workforce in large numbers, and agriculture and related industries will be adapting to this new generation. This is the first time in the history of agriculture in the United States that there are so many and such different generations working together (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2013). Present day agriculture includes any company, organization or association that works in forestry, agriculture, natural resources, government, food distribution, rural economic development, Extension, banking, and the farm credit system. With ages that range over sixty years, nearly four generations currently work side by side in agri-businesses, creating an increasingly diverse workforce (Deyoe & Fox, 2012).

At this point in time, industries are at a crossroads. Diversity in the workplace can either be embraced as a competitive advantage or repudiated as an inconvenience. With the diversity of ages and perspectives now present, industries are confronting employee issues with conflicting values, mindsets, and demographics (Zemke et al., 2013). Not addressing the generational conflicts has implications for recruiting and retaining millennials as well as may result in decreased productivity, all of which lead to lowered profits (Sacks, 2006).

From a strengths perspective, some suggest embracing this diversity and argue that each of the generations brings something important to the workplace (Wagner, 2007). If it is possible
to have the value systems of different generations combine into a culture of a workplace, the results would be happier workers who are more productive (Wagner, 2007). Little is known about how multiple generations interact in the workplace, and the agricultural workplace presents a unique issue because of the demographic shift of the millennial generation from rural to urban areas. Ensuring strong workforce support practices is critical for some states with agriculture as their driving economic force.

Demographic Shifts

There is a trend in many states of exodus of millennials from rural areas where agriculture and related industries are prominent to more urban settings where agriculture and related industries are less prominent (Frey, 2012). The reasons cited for this exodus include the notion that millennials are searching for communities that allow them to have a certain quality of life, followed by a search for a job best complementing such quality of life. Robert Lang, professor of urban growth and population dynamics at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas adds that millennials will continue "a multigenerational pattern of young adults preferring more expensive urban areas over lower-cost rural ones because the lifestyles and opportunities in such places make the extra burden of cost worth it” (Dure, 2014). There is evidence that millennials value having a fulfilling life, which includes high quality of life now in addition to later in life (Deal & Levenson, 2016). Sacrificing quality of life of a good job is not a typical choice for a millennial, which differs from previous generations.

The Case of Georgia

In Georgia, this demographic shift is being discussed in terms of how it will affect Georgia's future in agriculture. Agriculture is Georgia’s largest business and employs one in seven Georgians (CAED, 2017). In 2015, Georgia’s food and fiber production contributed $74.9
billion to Georgia’s $917.6 billion economy and accounted for over 410,800 jobs in that year, making agriculture the economic engine that drives the state’s economy (CAED, 2017). Locally, agribusiness and directly related industries are the largest or second-largest economic engines in almost two-thirds of Georgia's counties (CAED, 2017). However, Georgia agriculture’s economic impact is not only felt on the state and local levels, but also, Georgia agriculture consistently secures the top rank in commodity production across the nation in not only one commodity or a few commodities, but thirteen (CAED, 2017).

In 2016, the Georgia Chamber of Commerce delivered a presentation titled Georgia 2030, which discussed future population, demographic, and industry trends throughout the state (Georgia Chamber of Commerce, 2016) at the Joint Agriculture Chairmen Agricultural Issues Summit, held in Georgia, where leaders met to discuss the issues facing the state's largest industry. The patterns showed expectation of loss of population from rural areas and gains in population in urban and suburban areas in the coming decades. Like Georgia, demographers project that the impact on small-towns in America will be great (Frey, 2012).

In addition to economic and demographic factors, it is important to consider the social and cultural implications of the changes to Georgia’s rural communities. Not only has agriculture shaped Georgia’s history and identity, but also agriculture and related industries are going to be important in growing local economies in future years (CAED, 2017). The counties in Georgia with the highest farm gate values (net value of product after leaving the farm) tend to be rural communities. As the culture of agriculture is changing along with the workforce, if millennials are not attracted to agriculture and related industries, then it is not clear how Georgia agriculture and the state’s economy will be sustainable within the next decade and beyond. Georgia cannot afford for agriculture companies to provide anything but an environment that is conducive to a
diverse workforce. With millennials migrating to more urban settings and baby boomers retiring in high numbers, it is projected that by 2030, the agriculture and forestry industries will look very different geographically, culturally, socially, and economically.

Agriculture Needs to Adapt

According to a national report from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), outlooks show there is no job shortage in the agriculture and forestry industries (Goecker, Smith, Fernandez, Ali, & Theller, 2015). It is projected that in the next 5 years, approximately 58,000 jobs involving food, agriculture, renewable natural resources and the environment will become available in the United States, and that agribusiness employers will lose employees. It is estimated that 75% of agribusiness employers will lose 1 to 5% of employees due to retirement, and another 10% of employers will see 6 to 10% exiting the workforce of agriculture and related industries. Furthermore, 60% of the open jobs are projected to be filled by new graduates with degrees in the agriculture industry, and the remaining will be filled with people from related industries such as biology and business administration (Goecker, Smith, Fernandez, Ali, & Theller, 2015). This poses a challenge to agriculture and related industries to do everything in their power to not only market jobs to millennials, but also to use best practices to recruit and retain them.

Purpose of the Study

The ultimate purpose of this study is to initiate a conversation in the agriculture and related industries that promotes the value of effectively harnessing generational diversity to strengthen workplace relationships. To investigate the issues of generational differences and interactions in the agri-workplace, three theoretical frameworks guided the development of this study. These were generational theory, communication theory, and role theory.
Generational theory explains the differences in value systems unique to individuals who experienced certain historical and cultural events in their formative years. Events such as war, political change, urban and rural geographical migration, immigration, and social phenomena become identifying experiences of a generation, which affect how they live and work and what they value (Strauss & Howe, 1991). These shared lived events bond people of a generation together and influence their identity and values in the years of their lives that are critical for their development, thereby separating them into generationally distinctive cohorts (Strauss & Howe, 1992). Researchers have used generational theory to explain generational differences in work attitudes in a variety of fields and settings (Sullivan et al., 2009) and in agri-business specifically (Smola & Sutton, 2002). These studies show differences in workplace attitudes, behaviors, and values, but little is known about how individuals already in the agriculture industry perceive generational differences in the agriculture-related workplace. Understanding perceptions will be a strong first step in building the knowledge base of issues on generational difference and will lead to the development of effective strategies for recruitment and retention. Georgia presents unique issues that may be similar or different for other states, but the concepts of generational differences can be applied in any multi-generational workplace.

The way individuals interact in everyday situations can provide insights into and also create and perpetuate the social and cultural dimensions of a workplace. To explain the communication challenges that generational differences can present in everyday interactions, it is useful to consider concepts from communication accommodation theory.

Role theory was used as a sociological and psychological framework and builds on the social psychological component of communication theory. Role theory and the social psychological discipline of communication accommodation theory both focus on the interactions
among people, the conversations that take place, the behaviors that result from those conversations, and the consequences of those behaviors. Role theory is more of a structural explanation, while CAT is more about the interactions themselves.

Approaching generational conflict can be an effective way to change the way individuals think (Diromualdo, 2006; Wesner & Miller, 2008). Generational conflicts, within the context of this paper, are discussed in terms of microaggressions that take place as a result of perceptions and communications embedded in generational differences.

In addition to informing business practices related to hiring, retention, employee relations, and productivity, this research has implications for millennials entering the workforce and leadership development programs in agriculture. With information on other generations' perceptions of them, they can adapt their behaviors to maximize their job prospects, quality of work life, and job retention. In recent years, agricultural leadership programs have been an important source for strategically planning state agri-business and adapting to the changing needs of the U.S. population. This study will support research and practice in agricultural leadership and training the next generation of leaders to make the adaptations necessary in the coming years.

Little research on generational differences has appeared in agriculture-related industries. This study aimed to bring attention to the importance of beginning a discussion about generational differences in the agri-workplace. This study describes older generations’ perceptions of millennials within Georgia’s agri-workplace. The hypothesis is that perceptions of other generations stem from stereotypes that often cause generational friction (Shaw, 2013). The current study used a framework developed by research on areas of disagreement in inter-generational workplaces. Shaw (2013) identified twelve areas in which different generations
differ in the workplace. These were communication, decision making, dress code, feedback, fun at work, knowledge transfer, loyalty, meetings, policies, respect, training, and work ethic. Shaw argued that these same areas that may be divisive could also cause individuals to bind together working effectively (2013). These areas were used to develop a questionnaire with non-millennial generations including perceptual knowledge of millennials, attitudes toward millennials’ behavior, and behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials into the agri-workplace. Shaw argued that when generational friction occurs, it “usually refers to one of the twelve sticking points- places where teams get stuck” (p. 5). These sticking points, which will be described in more depth later in the paper, were used to craft the questionnaire for this study so that what is perceived as an obstacle to be “stuck” can also be seen as an opportunity to “stick” together.

Research Objectives

While the overarching intent was to describe older generations’ perceptions of Millennials in the Agri-Workplace, the following constructs were used to formulate three research objectives:

1. To describe older generations’ perceptual knowledge of millennials.
2. To describe older generations’ attitudes toward millennials’ behavior.
3. To describe older generations’ behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials into the Agri-Workplace.

Assumptions

The following assumptions helped inform this study:

1. That each respondent answered based upon experiences with millennials in general and not based upon a particular member of the millennial generation.
2. That each respondent works in what is considered an Agri-Workplace.

3. That each respondent had direct work experience with members of the millennial generation.

Definitions of Key Terms

Age Cohorts: Individuals within age cohorts share unique, collective life experiences, values, attitudes, behaviors, and memories that are different from one another.

Agri-Workplace: Any company, organization or association that works in any of the following sectors: forestry, agriculture, natural resources, government, food distribution, rural economic development, Extension, banking or the farm credit system.

Communication Accommodation Theory: An all-encompassing approach to explaining modes of behavior in communication such as how people accommodate, or do not accommodate, their communication styles to compliment the person in which they are engaging in conversation.

Generation: Each generation has a set of characteristics circumscribed by specific birth years and significant life events.

Microaggression: Everyday unintentional or intentional verbal and non-verbal communication that can be interpreted by the targeted individuals as derogatory.

Millennial: An individual who was born in 1980 or thereafter, thus being considered a member of the millennial generation.

Mixed Methods: This study was a mixed-methods study because it used both qualitative and quantitative analysis to measure other generations’ perceptions of millennials.

Stereotype: Perceptions about a person or group of people that are taken in a negative context.

Role Theory: Used to explain the relationship between the individual and society, specifically among different generations.
Limitations

The questionnaire had the potential of collecting responses from as many as one hundred fifty-one members from eight non-profit organizations. However, thirty-seven individuals responded with thirty-six of those respondents completing the survey in its entirety. In addition, one of the non-profit organizations, which will remain undisclosed, declined to participate in the study.

The researchers, like Berk (2013), are cognizant of the research limitations involved with assigning characteristics to each generational category. When assigning people into categories based on age cohorts, it is important to remember that “each generation is infinitely more complex than any single profile can reveal” (p. 12). While we realize that there is not a solid, one-size-fits-all description of each age cohort, we agree that it is “legitimate to suggest a set of characteristics and cultural trends derived from sound scientific research can provide insight on values and expectations and guide the workplace practices” (Berk, 2013, p. 12).

To mitigate misunderstanding about the intentions of the questionnaire, it was reiterated to the respondents that the questionnaire was intended to capture their general perceptions of the whole millennial workforce and not their perceptions of a particular individual. Only in the short answer portion of the questionnaire were the respondents asked to describe experiences with a particular member of the millennial generation, and even then they were asked to exclude personal identifiers.

Originally, all communication included a consent form to be completed and returned. However, the researcher was advised at a research committee meeting in September to include a statement at the beginning of the survey to serve as a consent form reading “By continuing this survey, you understand that your responses will likely be used for analysis.” This was done with
the intent of making the survey more convenient for the respondent to complete, thereby increasing the return rate.

The next chapter discusses research on workplace conflict as well as the theoretical framework for the study, from generational theory to the social psychological perspectives of communication theory, role theory, and microaggressions. The result of the study will be a conceptual framework for future studies on conflict among different generations in the workplace.
CHAPTER 2
A MIXED METHODS STUDY DESCRIBING OLDER GENERATIONS’ PERCEPTIONS OF MILLENNIALS IN GEORGIA’S AGRI-WORKPLACE

This review will include a discussion of the current literature on conflict among generational differences in the workplace, specifically pertaining to workplace demographic shifts, generational stereotypes, and typical sources of conflict among generations at work. Overall, the literature review will relate the existing, more generic body of research about generational conflict in the workplace to the lesser known topic this study investigates: describing older generations’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace. Then, the conceptual framework will be presented with application of communication theory, role theory, and microaggressions.

Generational Differences in the Workplace

Generational conflict is becoming a large topic of discussion among human resource professionals and business owners (Deyoe & Fox, 2012). This is attributed to the different character traits among the generations and their respective value systems and behavioral patterns. More than one-in-three American workers are millennials, officially surpassing generation X to become the largest share of the American workforce, according to the Pew Research Center (Fry, 2015). According to PricewaterhouseCoopers, millennials are expected to comprise seventy-five percent of the workforce by the year 2025 (as cited in L&D Meets OMG: Learning & Development for millennials, 2015, p. 6).
While one might argue that multiple generations have always existed in the workplace, workplace interactions until this point have historically been thought of as between just two generations: one entering and one exiting the workplace (Sayers, 2007). This can result in a horizontal hierarchy that keeps the two cohorts from each other, isolating the newcomers from the knowledge of previous generations, or it can result in a more adaptable setting in which interactions and discourse can take place that have never taken place before. While there are opportunities in this new structure for exchanging ideas, an unfortunate outcome of multigenerational conflict is a work environment that does not foster creativity and synergies (Zemke et al., 2013). Differences in values, communication, thinking, and behaviors cause conflict that is in opposition to best practices in the workplace. Some suggest that the result of repeated conflicts can be “devastating” because they fester, cause tension, and lead to further unnecessary organizational conflict (Zemke et al., 2013).

The four generations working together in today’s workplace reflect drastically different collective personalities and life experiences, which need support to co-exist harmoniously in the workplace environment (Shaw, 2013). A major challenge is that each of these four generations has different attitudes and perspectives on work, work ethic, and how they prefer to manage and be managed (Zemke et al., 2013). This study used the categories of generations used in previous works on generational differences to separate each generation based upon birth years and life events. The generations included in this study were the traditionalists, the baby boomers, generation Xers, and millennials. Below is a description of some of their defining characteristics.

The traditionalists were born prior to 1943. Defining events in their formative years were the Great Depression, World War II, the New Deal, the Korean War, the golden age of radio, the rise of popular cinema, and the rise of labor unions (Zemke et al., 2013). As a result of these
experiences, this generation's values focus on patriotism, family as a focus, and the importance of work ethic. The baby boomers, born 1943 to 1960, were a generation in which many social and political changes occurred. In an age when children were in the spotlight, this generation grew up with television and so were connected to ideas and people that were not part of the previous generation's formative years. Although they lived through the Cold War with constant fear of nuclear disaster, this generation experienced prosperity (in contrast to the Great Depression), which would shape their attitudes and beliefs. With women's liberation, the space race, the Vietnam War, and the civil rights movement, this group lived through major social changes (Zemke et al., 2013). The generation Xers were born from 1960 to 1980. This generation experienced changes in family values and structure, with an increase in single parent homes; they experienced tragedies that were distant from home such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Challenger disaster, the Gulf Wars and social and cultural phenomena that would change how they interact with others such as MTV, the internet, and AIDS. Millennials were born from 1980 to 2000. This generation was shaped by the advent and expansion of social media, mobile computing, and email. Reality television, multiculturalism, and 24-hour access have influenced the way they live and work. Events that may have shaped their generation are the September 11 attacks, Occupy Wall Street protests, and tsunamis abroad. Understanding these differences provides insights into what issues might be present in a multi-generational workplace.

Hiring, retaining, and motivating young employees has been identified as one of the biggest challenges facing employers today (Twenge, 2010). It is becoming increasingly difficult to attract and keep talented workers, particularly younger, highly skilled individuals (Sayers, 2007). The failure to confront generational differences in the workplace could result in
misunderstandings and miscommunications as well as send mixed signals about what businesses value in the workplace (Fyock, 1990). Hundreds of articles and more than 20 books have been published on challenges to managing this generation gap (e.g., Berk, 2013; Deal, 2007; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Magnuson & Alexander, 2008; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Understanding these generational differences may in fact be an advantage rather than a disadvantage if managers appreciate the differences in a way that increases employee productivity (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

Research shows that most of these negative conversations unfolding in today’s workplace are targeted toward millennials. A national survey found that traditionalists, baby boomers and generation Xers all named millennials the toughest generation to work with (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010).

While the main focus of this study was describing older generations’ perceptions of the millennial generation, it is important to consider where each generation is different and similar in regards to work related characteristics and expectations. Tolbize (2008) summarized research on work and learning differences between the four generations. Figure 2-1 shows a comparison and contrast of each. As is evident from this table, there are many similarities and differences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditions</th>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work ethic</strong></td>
<td>Hard working</td>
<td>Workaholic</td>
<td>Only work as hard as needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Attitudes towards authority/rules** | • They value conformity, authority and rules, and a top-down management approach  
• 13% included authority among their top 10 values | • Some may still be uncomfortable interacting with authority figures  
• 5% included authority among their top 10 values | • They are comfortable with authorities and are not impressed with titles or intimidated by them  
• They find it natural to interact with their superiors  
• 6% included authority in their top 10 values | • They believe that respect must be earned  
• 6% included authority in their top 10 values |
| **Expectations regarding respect** | • Deference  
• Special treatment  
• More weight given to their opinions | • Deference  
• Special Treatment  
• More weight given to their opinions | • They want to be held in esteem  
• They want to be listened to  
• They do not expect deference | • They want to be held in esteem  
• They want to be listened to  
• They do not expect deference |
| **Preferred way to learn soft skills** | • On the job  
• Discussion groups  
• Peer interaction and feedback  
• Classroom instruction-live  
• One-on-One job coaching | • On the job  
• Discussion groups  
• One-on-One coaching  
• Classroom instruction-live  
• Peer interaction and feedback | • On the job  
• One on One coaching  
• Peer interaction and feedback  
• Assessment and feedback | • On the job  
• Peer interaction and feedback  
• Discussion groups  
• One on coaching  
• Assessment and feedback |
| **Preferred way to learn hard skills** | • Classroom instruction-live  
• On the job  
• Workbooks and manuals  
• Books and reading  
• One-on-one coaching/computer based training | • Classroom instruction-live  
• On the job  
• Workbooks and manuals  
• Books and reading  
• One-on-one coaching | • On the job  
• Classroom instruction-live  
• Workbooks and manuals  
• Books and reading  
• One-on-one coaching | • On the job  
• Classroom instruction-live  
• Workbooks and manuals  
• Books and reading  
• One-on-one coaching |
| **Feedback and supervision** | Attitudes closer to boomers’ | May be insulted by continuous feedback | Immediate and continuous | Immediate and continuous |

Figure 2-1. Table from Tolbize (2008).
### Figure 2-1 (cont). Table from Tolbize (2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generational Stereotypes and Perceptions</th>
</tr>
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</table>

At the root of workplace intergenerational miscommunication are the stereotypes and perceptions of each generation. Even though hundreds of peer reviewed articles, books, and pop culture articles have been published about millennials and their stereotypes respectively, it is important to remember that millennials have entered the workplace relatively recently when compared to the other generations, so much of information considered to be factual about
millennials is emergent until more is learned about their personalities and behaviors; nonetheless, being aware of the stereotypes is helpful when addressing workplace conflict.

In general, millennials are perceived as being lazy and entitled (Deal & Levenson, 2016), creating a nearly insurmountable barrier for millennials when they are attempting to incorporate themselves into the workplace. Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (2013) compiled twenty years of research on what other generations say about millennials to provide a qualitative example of typical responses. Their research showed that traditionalists said “they need to tighten up” and “they don’t respect tradition,” suggesting a negative work ethic. A stereotype millennials have of traditionalists is, "they can't work the remote," suggesting their frustration with traditionalists not being technology savvy. Baby boomers said, "they’re tethered to their cell phones” and “they’re inexperienced.” They thought of millennials as being able to set up their facebook page. Generation Xers called millennials "neoboomers" who are "unrealistic," and "another generation of spoiled brats." In actuality, millennials are very different from baby boomers and these perceptions. They are hardworking, with an old fashioned work ethic; they value family and education; they volunteer; trust authority; and follow rules. They watch far less television than boomers, and are showing reduced rates of binge drinking, violence, tobacco and marijuana use, and teen pregnancy compared to previous generations.

Each generation must overcome stereotypes to a certain extent; however, it is arguable that millennials have a long battle ahead of them to prove the negative stereotypes wrong in order to secure a positive reputation in the workplace. As one of the primary goals of this study is to explore generational perceptions of their workplace behavior, this study can raise the level of self-awareness of millennials about their presence in the workplace. This will help individuals
become more effective communicators in their role, thereby creating more harmonious relationships.

Now that stereotypes have been demonstrated, another layer to understanding these complex generational dynamics is realizing where disagreements and conflicts take place, something Shaw (2013) refers to as sticking points.

**Sources of Workplace Conflict**

Serving as the inspiration for this study, Shaw (2013) compiled an excellent resource that delineates twelve areas where each of the four generations conflict in daily workplace interaction. These twelve areas include: communication, decision making, dress code, feedback, fun at work, knowledge transfer, loyalty, meetings, policies, respect, training, and work ethic. Shaw (2013) stated, “All organizations have to understand sticking points to ensure that their teams stick together instead of being stuck in generation conflicts” (p. 12). Like Shaw (2013) believing that “they [sticking points] can instead be huge opportunities to make our organizations more effective” (p. 12), the same belief serves as the mission for this study: to help agri-workplace professionals better understand that the challenges revealed from the survey findings are actually incredible opportunities to collaborate and make industry relationships stronger.

**Role Theory—Generational Cohorts Establish Roles Among a Group**

Each generation presents different perceived roles, both self-perceived and perceived by others. This brings about utilizing role theory as a way to explain why generation differences are so difficult to overcome in the workplace when they are differing. Zemke *et al.* (2000) describes different generations as generational cohorts. These cohorts are groups of people who share birth years, history, and a collective personality. This collective personality develops as a result of their defining experiences. Each generation is ultimately defined in social and cultural terms by
the commonality of “its times and tastes” (Zemke et al., 2013, p. 16). In fact, each bond is so strong that “generational commonalities cut across racial, ethnic, and economic differences” (Zemke et al., 2013, p. 16). To move forward, it is important to know the different generations and the characteristics of each cohort. The different generations are the traditional generation, the baby boomer generation, generation X and generation Y (millennials).

The traditional generation (traditionalists) is the oldest generation in the workplace, although most are now retired. Born before 1943, Traditionalists were influenced by the great depression and World War II. They are typically stable, detail-oriented, thorough, loyal, and hard-working; however, they may be inept with ambiguity and change, reluctant to buck the system, uncomfortable with conflict, and reticent when they disagree (Zemke et al., 2013). They have been described as liking formality and authority. They need structure and a top down chain of command. Being shown respect is important to them. They typically make decisions based on what worked in the past. Members of this generation have also been characterized as highly dedicated and loyal workers. Organizational loyalty is important to this generation, and they feel seniority is important to advance in one's career (Carlson, 2005).

The baby boomers are a generation of people born during the post WWII ‘Baby Boom’, roughly during the years 1943 to 1960. They grew up in an era of “prosperity and optimism and bolstered by the sense that they are a special generation capable of changing the world, have equated work with self-worth, contribution and personal fulfillment” (Yang & Guy, 2006, p. 270). Baby boomers are a great deal like the traditional generation, especially in the sense that they both hold authority in high regard. Tolbize (2008) relays that these individuals are those who believe that “hard work and sacrifice are the price to pay for success,” thus beginning what is frequently recognized as the workaholic generation (p. 3). “In terms of leadership style, baby
boomers accept the chain of command” (Yu et al., 2005, p.3), which is quite different from the views of their employees, the younger generations.

Generation X proceeds the baby boomers. The time frame for those considered generation X typically covers the people born between the mid 1960’s and the early 1980’s. This generation is defined by global political events such as The Vietnam War to the end of the Cold War, both of which helped to shape the culture and upbringing of generation X. According to Tolbize (2008), generation Xers were raised “in a period of financial, familial and societal insecurity” (p. 3). “In fact, job satisfaction is more important than promotion for the Xer” (Yu et al., 2005, p.4). Having grown up in an unpredictable economy where their parents, the baby boomers, were often laid off of work, they are not as loyal to their employers as their parents and grandparents were during their careers. This is the generation also known as the “latchkey” generation as they were often responsible for themselves after school because both parents worked. This could largely be responsible for why they are known as the independent generation, so it’s no surprise they value continuous learning and skill development (Boya & Kroth, 2001). Those born in the latter part of the generation cohort were likely introduced to the first video games, beginning that sense of instant feedback (O’Bannon, 2001).

Millennials encompass people born between 1980 and 2000. In general, generation Y shares many of the characteristics of generation Xers, as they both tend to value teamwork and collective action. The millennials were shaped by unprecedented technological advances (Niemiec, 2000). With millennials typically being more technologically advanced than their supervisors, their supervisors cannot understand how they are able to be productive without having to work the same amount of hours during the week. An Australian study on generational differences in the workplace showed that issues on which generations differed were varied and
ranged from the use of technology to flexible working hours and individual freedoms in the workplace (Sayers, 2007). The millennials tend to be more acceptable of change and innovation and seek flexibility in their work life and personal life (Martin, 2005); therefore, they seek a more balanced work life and personal life. Their seeking a balanced work life can be perceived by generation Xers and baby boomers as being irresponsible or lazy.

Research comparing generations X and baby boomers shows that they differ in their lifestyle values and work ethics (Yu & Miller, 2005). Tolbize supports the idea that there are different mindsets between the generations concerning work hours and the values associated with working an eight-hour day versus a fifteen hour day. As Tolbize reiterates “that employers [older generations] complain that younger workers are uncommitted to their jobs and work only the required hours and little more” (p.5). Tolbize continues discussing millennials’ commitment to the workplace when she states, “The perceived decline in work ethic is perhaps one of the major contributors of generational conflicts in the workplace” (p. 5). This conflict in the workplace can possibly be attributed to confusion around the roles people play, or the roles that they are perceived to play. There is a culture of roles within the workplace, roles that are defined by gender, seniority in the company, title and especially for the purposes of this paper, roles that are defined by that person’s generation.
Role Theory- Using Generational Cohorts to Predict a Group’s Behavior

Conceptual Framework

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In Examining Workplace Conflict Among Different Generations

Figure 2-2. Conceptual framework of this study.

Figure 2-2 shows the conceptual framework of this study. How people behave in these roles can be guided by social norms that can be engrained in someone. Callero (1994) reiterates that “roles have profound influence on people’s behavior in social settings, on how they organize and process information, and on their political, economic, and moral priorities” (p. 1). As long as people operate within these perceived roles, then there will be little opportunity for conflict to result from a confusion of role occupation. According to Biddle (1986), roles can be explained by “presuming that persons are members of social positions, and hold expectations for their behaviors and those of other persons” (Biddle, 1986, p. 96). These norms can be set by cultural roles, social differentiation, situation-specific roles, bio-sociological roles and gender roles. Bio-sociological roles are particularly interesting because it is a role that is determined by one’s natural occupation in a particular environment, whether it be at home, at work or as a member of
a team. This is different from gender roles, because bio-sociological roles are not about being a male or a female; however, bio-sociological roles are about someone’s role in a natural order within a type of cohort, like in generations.

The different roles in the workplace that each employee may carry with them due to the different times in which they were born could certainly cause confusion among the workplace regarding what role each person is supposed to occupy. One subject for contention is the amount of time at work. The perception of how hard one should work to get a job done or accomplish a task often differs among the generations. With baby boomers being more traditional than younger generations, they are of course more process oriented than those who would work for them. That desire for instant feedback that began with generation X and continues with Generation Y certainly has created a group of people that is typically more results-focused with little emphasis on when or where the job is accomplished or in what manner.

Dittmann (2005) reviews the work and thoughts of psychologist Constance Patterson, PhD, in “Generational Differences at Work” from the American Psychological Association. According to Dittmann (2005), Patterson also believes that every generation is influenced by the time period in which they were born. That time period’s economic, political and social events mold that person. According to Patterson, these generational experiences determine how that person perceives the world and may also affect the way they work. Patterson says that "A lack of understanding across generations can have detrimental effects on communication and working relationships and undermine effective services" (Dittmann, 2005, p. 54).

When these generations do not understand one another and the roles that they believe they should occupy due to their roles, role conflict results. Dittmann (2005) discusses how generational differences among the group can negatively affect certain behaviors of the group
members when they are trying to occupy certain roles in the group (like manager or employee), thereby affecting the dynamics in a team setting. According to Patterson, “Such generational differences sometimes may cause clashes in the workplace, especially among workers on teams” (Dittmann, 2005, p.54). An example would be an office meeting where a staff member who is baby boomer wants to continue to execute preparation for an annual event in the same way it has always been done. His or her motivation for not wanting to deviate from the plan could be for a number of reasons, but it can almost certainly be attributed to the fact that his or her experiences in that generation cohort directly affect how he or she perceives the world and accepts new information. As is typical of those who are considered baby boomers according to the stereotypes that are associated with that cohort, baby boomers prefer to practice caution and to continue to utilize proven methods. The millennial in the meeting may understand the significance of past experiences but naturally seek possibilities and opportunities for improvement.

When a younger employee asks questions to gather information and then suggests enhancements to make preparations more efficient, the older employees may see the younger employee as challenging authority or being defiant rather than being inquisitive and wanting to contribute to the workplace. Dittmann (2005) supports this idea of miscommunication among different generations by stating that “boomers may believe gen Xers are too impatient and willing to throw out the tried-and-true strategies” (p.54). Any negative remarks or actions that result from a simple misunderstanding of intentions can be perceived as microaggressions, a concept that will soon be explained in this chapter.

While the Traditional generation and baby boomers were discussed earlier as being loyal toward their employers, they do not always receive the same respect from younger generations
who are their employees. This can be for a number of reasons, but it is likely a generational difference in how authority is perceived. Tolbize (2008) notes the disparity in perceptions from one generation to the other when she states, “While younger workers complain that there is a lack of respect towards them in the workplace, older workers share similar complaints, especially regarding the attitudes of younger and newer employees toward management” (Tolbize, p. 7).

There are even statistics to support that older generations and younger generations view authority differently. Thirteen percent of the traditional generation included authority among their top ten values, compared to six percent of millennials (Deal, 2007, p. 7), lending credit to the generational stereotypes. “Loyalty towards employers has been found to decrease, depending on how ‘new’ the generation was: the younger the generation, the least loyal the generation appeared to be” (Tolbize, 2008, p. 6). An interesting component of the respect for authority dynamic is that the millennials tend to ask a great deal of questions, as they desire feedback. However, their questioning of processes in the workplace can be seen by the older generations as questioning authority. This can result in great distress in the workplace, whether it is passive aggressive or openly confrontational. Deal (2007) advises that employers need to refrain from assuming that employees who ask questions are doing so with ill-intent.

Ill-intent is a puzzling thought when considering daily discourse and other general interaction within a workplace. Why would someone intentionally hurt another co-worker? Why is it necessary to advise employers not to assume that younger generations mean ill-intent when asking questions? The subject matter surrounding the ill-intent that takes place is likely rooted in miscommunication among the group or simply rooted in a misunderstanding perhaps due to the stereotypes associated with the group in question, qualifying the misunderstanding as a microaggression.
Craig’s (1999) "Communication Theory as a Field" discusses communication theory as a dialogical-dialectical field where similarities and differences are deliberated through careful metadiscourse that considers existing communication disciplines when trying to find commonalities and differences among them. Craig assumes that “theoretical metadiscourse [communication theory] derives from and theorizes practical metadiscourse” (Craig, 1999, p. 131). This is a way of uniting the different fields through normal conversation to find underlying ties. One would think that there would be one existing definition of communication theory, as Craig makes such a compelling case that it does exist. However, Craig (1999) states “there is no canon of general theory to which they [communication disciplines] all refer” (p. 119). Craig (1999) even elaborates on the fact that “communication is not yet a coherent field of study” (p. 120). One would have to agree that it does seem an oddity that something we use every day to survive (communication) could prove so difficult to explain, but we learn this is not necessarily the case because the subject matter of communication theory itself is difficult. Rather, how it exists at the time of the article as a very segmented and compartmentalized matter makes it difficult to synthesize. With that being said, communication theory discussed as unified does not necessarily mean that it can be best portrayed with a single theory, but with the dialogical-dialectical disciplinary matrix (p. 120) to be outlined in Figure 3. Craig (1999) goes on to detail that the work of language theory by Taylor (1992) revealed that all communication theory in general, not solely language theory, is a kind of metadiscourse.

When considering communication as metadiscourse, Craig (1999) states, “Practical metadiscourse is intrinsic to communicative practice” (p.129). An example is given of a dialogue between a male and a female when she tells him that he cannot possibly understand what she is
talking about; in other words, she believes that true understanding can only come from his
experiencing the same situation, possibly her attempt in communicating to him that is frustrated
by the fact that he could even possibly comprehend what she is going through. This is known as
practical discourse, and it is critical in everyday conversation.

The metamodel in which the theoretical framework is founded upon is a concept where
other disciplines of communication theory are able to interact in the context of everyday
situations, metadiscourse, in order to develop some sense of order and relationship. There are
seven traditional disciplines that are discussed in the metamodel. These disciplines are rhetorical,
semiotic, phenomenological, cybernetic, socio-psychological, sociocultural and critical (Craig,
1999) is described in Figure 2-3 below:
One way to think of social psychological metadiscourse and how to do so effectively is to think about the way one’s dialogue is processed by those around them. One may not be accepted or perceived and interpreted by others in the same manner in which they believe they are being perceived. For example, an older employee in the workplace may be trying to offer a younger, new employee advice while that younger employee may take the older employee as not trusting in his or her abilities. These behaviors, and the underlying factors that may trigger these behaviors, can be further studied by exploring the relationships between different generations.

What can be studied is whether or not the people within those differing generations possess
underlying traits that present as difficult for those from different generations to communicate effectively, particularly in the workplace. Such social encounters that seem difficult to explain inspired the theories that are connected to form the conceptual framework.

The social psychological influences of communication theory that are referenced in Figure 2-3 can explain this common, everyday communication among two or more people, bridging communication theory with innate, psychological influences to explain the resulting human behavior during a conversation. For the purposes of building the theoretical framework, the socio-psychological discipline, or social psychology, of the metamodel will be emphasized.

**Communication Theory- Modes of Communication**

Communication in general does not have to necessarily take place in a specific form or point in time or among a certain number of people. “Communication may occur face-to-face or through technological media and may flow from one to one, one to many, or many to many” (Craig, 1999, p. 143). So, conflict could occur from written communication, like in an e-mail, or from face-to-face communication, like in a meeting. Conflict can occur one-on-one, or it can be an entire staff frustrated with a coworker or a supervisor. What is so fascinating is that socio-psychological communication is present and directly intertwined with everyday communication, or metadiscourse, in which everyone must engage because it results from those psychosocial triggers that are based upon underlying traits and beliefs. In other words, no one at any time can completely separate themselves from what seems innate, for it is common sense for each person to behave a certain way during a particular situation. Craig (1999) states that social psychology “appeals to our commonsense beliefs and our everyday practical concerns about the causes and effects of communication” (p. 143). So, this discipline is experienced by anyone who ever interacts with another person during the day, especially with another person or group of people
who do not naturally believe the same things, hold the same values or practice the same methods. When groups of people who are innately different are forced together in an environment such as a workplace, conflict among the individuals is likely to result.

**Communication Theory- Social Psychological Influences on Conversation**

The social psychological aspects of the communication theory matrix allow CAT, role theory, and microaggressions to be weaved together in a way that explains the psychological roots of generational conflict. Crucial to the development of the argument of social psychology’s role in not only communication theory but in communication across strata of generations, which is to be delved into shortly, is Craig’s (1999) reference to socio-psychological trait theories of communication. Craig (1999) states that socio-psychological trait theories appeal to the “commonplace notion that people’s communication styles reflect their personalities” (p. 129). What will be explored later is whether or not it is plausible if these personality traits which communication styles reflect can be traced back to the time period they were born, such as what generation they are classified under.

Craig paraphrases from Berger & Chaffee (1988) to reiterate that theories pertaining to social psychology should be thought of as a communication science. In order to establish a better understanding of the scope of what is social psychology, a brief overview of defining characteristics will be reviewed. For instance, the behavior of those involved in socio-psychological communication is studied to explain the effects of those people’s physiological mechanisms, like existing traits, produces “cognitive, emotional and behavioral effects” (Craig, 1999, p. 143). Craig further defines socio-psychological communication as being typically characterized as the outcome of some form of “expression, interaction and influence” (p. 133). Keywords when discussing the socio-psychological tradition include “behavior, variable effect,
personality, emotion, perception, cognition, attitude, and interaction” (p.133). Here, communication is about how people interact with one another in a variety of mediums. How these interactions take place have how the conversation and the message is perceived by the other person depends upon inner traits. The quality of these interactions and the nature of the messages transferred almost always directly reflect those individuals’ inner personalities, beliefs and feelings. These inner traits, whether shaped by genetics or past experiences are triggered by those psychosocial mechanisms that were discussed earlier as vital when understanding the realm of true metadiscourse in everyday conversation.

Communication, then, according to a socio-psychological approach, is about people’s influence on those around them, and how those people and those interactions that result affect one another, both positively and negatively. The way in which people communicate according to social psychology is also largely determined by underlying tendencies, like attitudes, opinions, paradigms and underlying issues that are formed from past experiences. These underlying tendencies determine when and how people react and interact to the world; thus, those with different underlying traits can result in behaviors and dialogue that can be seen as offensive by another person who would not naturally act a certain way.

Even though innate, underlying tendencies are often the source from which communication problems emerge, they can be lessened or avoided altogether, but only if each person works consciously to suppress behaviors that may be seen as confrontational by others. This may require one to deviate from behavior that feels normal, from what seems natural, and from what is psychologically ingrained in them, whether it is from past experiences or paradigms that could exist as they do within that person because of when they were born and the socio-cultural influences during that time. If one has difficulty controlling a personality trait when that
outcomes are differing and desire an outcome is a situation that does not align with someone else’s envisioned outcome, then conflict could quite possibly arise.

**Communication Theory- Linking Social Psychological Differences and Workplace Conflict**

It is hard not to immediately think of workplace environments where people must work with others in order to achieve a common goal. “Communication problems in the socio-psychological tradition are thus thought of as situations that call for the effective manipulation of the causes of behavior in order to produce objectively defined and measured outcomes” (Craig, 1999, p. 143). Therefore, conflicts between people can possibly be directly traced back to conflicting predispositions, especially if one person’s ideal outcome is not what the other person has envisioned. Communication theory from a socio-psychological perspective, then, can be utilized to study the relationships among the different coworkers in the workplace and the communication challenges that those differences can present in everyday interactions.

Workplace conflict can stem from a variety of issues, but they are almost certain to occur when the end goals vary among the coworkers or when the method in which the end goal is achieved differs from each person. These differences can stem from personality differences, prior experiences and other underlying traits that can alter the way in which one communicates and behaves in the world. Craig (1999) solidifies this notion when he states that “we readily believe that our ways of communicating and our reactions to the communications of others vary according to our individual personalities” (p. 143). The manner in which people exhibit their personality tendencies due to their genetic predispositions, can really determine how others react to them. Craig (1999) explains this as human nature, stating that “our judgements can be influenced by the immediate social context and are often biased in predictable ways by our strong beliefs, attitudes and emotional states (p. 143).
How people interact with the world is a fine balance of psychological mechanisms that people must try to control. “Social psychological implies a strong moral imperative that we as individual communicators should make responsible choices based on scientific evidence concerning the likely consequences of our messages” (Craig, 1999, p. 144). What is interesting about this notion from Craig is his specific and purposeful language as he stated that people need to use a “strong moral imperative” in order to be consciously on guard about the psychosocial mechanism that could cause all communicators and their messages to be perceived negatively or threatening by others. One never knows when a comment or a question could be seen as challenging or threatening by someone else, possibly throwing off the work day. If this were to happen continuously over an extended period of time, it could even damage work relationships and threaten the stability of the work environment.

The dynamics of these interactions among people are further explained in a social psychological context by utilizing Social Attribution Theory (SAT) and Communication Attribution Theory (CAT). SAT will be discussed first since CAT evolved from SAT.

Social Accommodation Theory- Communication to Affirm One’s Role

Keeping in mind the fundamental necessity to utilize the social psychological concepts as a paradigm for understanding the dynamics in conversation, SAT was founded to “explain some of the motivations underlying certain shifts in people’s speech styles during social encounters and some of the social consequences arising from them” (Beebe & Giles, 1984, p. 7). When relating this statement to the larger context of the psychosocial mechanisms in communication described by Craig (1999), altering one’s speech style stems from a deeper motivation, such as the case when person raising one’s voice to establish dominance over the other person, an alteration in speech style that could result in conflict. These motivations to alter communication methods can
vary depending upon the situation, and most certainly will vary as an individual assumes a particular role within a social setting.

According to Giles and colleagues (2008), SAT sought to understand and interpret the root of language behaviors, thereby focusing “upon the social cognitive pro cesses mediating individuals' perceptions of the environment and their speech styles as a foil to the omnipresent and determining role ascribed to norms in molding sociolinguistic behaviors” (Giles et al., p. 6, 2008). The Giles et al. explanation of SAT’s focus with reference to an individual adjusting his or her speech style according to a perceived ascribed role when molding sociolinguistic behaviors is key in relating communication as a vehicle for transcending norms in a social setting. Here in the contextual framework is where communication theory, particularly accommodation theory, is pieced together with role theory. A more in depth review of role theory in relation to workplace conflict will be described later in this chapter.

Whereas SAT mainly focuses on cognitive processes in a social interaction, CAT broadens this theory to include other aspects of communication that are not only verbal but interpersonal as well, making CAT an all-encompassing approach to explaining modes of behavior in communication.

**Communication Accommodation Theory- Motivating Communication in the Workplace**

Building upon SAT’s cognitive foothold in social interaction, CAT evolved in the 1970s as a means to “explain and predict such communicative adjustments, and model how others in an interaction perceive, evaluate, and respond to them” (Dragojevic et al., 2015, p. 1). Giles believed that the theory could be used to explain exactly what the namesake implies, how people accommodate, or do not accommodate, their communication styles to compliment the person in which they are engaging in conversation, also called an interlocutor. Referring to the earlier
discussion about modes of communication within the context of communication theory, CAT studies communication that takes place in a variety of settings, whether “face-to-face or electronically” and more recently “in mediated contexts such as e-mail, voice mail, texting, synchronous chat, and in video chat-rooms” (Dragojevic, Gasiorek, & Giles, 2015, p. 2). Herein lies the distinct difference between SAT and CAT; CAT digs below the surface to focus not only on verbal communication, but written communication and body language as well.

At its core, CAT studies how people adjust their communication styles to the interlocutor. Utilizing different modes of behavior in communication, or adjusting communication styles, can be intentional or unintentional (Dragojevic et al., 2015, p. 1). For instance, raising one’s voice in a conversation because you know the other interlocutor is hard of hearing is an intentional adjustment in conversation style. However, there are times in conversations where one will unintentionally adjust his or her conversation style to match the interlocutor’s, such as whispering because the other person starts to lower his or her voice. These intentional and unintentional adjustments in conversational style relate CAT to the psychological mechanisms of communication theory, making it “consistent with its socio psychological origins and interests in motivational and evaluative trends” (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991, p. 4).

Dragojevic et al. (2015) refer to these psychological mechanisms as “accommodation strategies” (p. 5), and they present themselves in conversation in one of three ways: convergence, divergence or maintenance. Convergence refers to “adjusting communicative behaviors to be similar to another’s,” (Dragojevic et al., 2015, p. 3) usually in an effort to gain favor with the other person. They say imitation is the greatest form of flattery, and CAT argues that “speakers can increase interpersonal liking and secure potential social rewards by becoming more similar to one another in terms of their communicative behaviors” (Dragojevic et al., 2015, p. 9).
Usually, an individual gains favor through varying language, accent, utterance length, and pitch to match the interlocutor’s. Divergence is the opposite of convergence and refers to communicative behaviors that are adjusted to “accentuate verbal and nonverbal differences with others, to appear more dissimilar” (Dragojevic et al., 2015, p. 4) in an effort to “prove differences between themselves and others” (Coupland et al., 1988, p. 7). Unlike convergence, divergence “will trigger generally negative evaluations and response” from the interlocutor (Coupland et al., 1988, p. 7). Maintenance is neither convergence nor divergence; however, it is a “way of communicating without adjusting for others” (Dragojevic et al., 2015, p. 4). While this may sound that though the person is nonchalant when engaging in conversation, maintenance in itself can signal “significant (often psychologically dissociative) interpersonal meanings” (Coupland et al., 1988, p. 7).

What is important to glean is that while engaged in everyday conversation, people psychologically accommodate their conversations styles to compliment (convergence), contrast (divergence), or sustain (maintenance) the style of the interlocutor in an effort to either emphasize or minimize the social differences between them. These communication styles, specifically divergence, which is microaggressive in nature, can be used as a lens to explore miscommunication among different generations. Coupland et al. (1988) agree that accommodation theory is a “profitable framework for elucidating the sociolinguistic mechanics of, and the social psychological processes underlying, intergenerational encounters,” (p.1), which is what will be discussed next.

Communication Accommodation Theory- Inter- and Intra-Generational Communication

When people of different generations are intermingled in the same environment, people tend to change or accommodate their communication styles to compliment (convergence),
contrast (divergence), or sustain (maintenance) the style of the interlocutor; however, this is amplified in intergenerational communication, resulting in overaccommodation, which has been “studied extensively in the context of intergenerational communication” (Dragojevic et al., 2015, p. 8). Furthermore, stereotypes of these generations can add to the confusion in communicating across generations, and “these perceptions are often exaggerated and reflect negative age stereotypes” (Dragojevic et al., 2015, p. 8). When these perceptions are taken in a negative context, then divergence is likely to be displayed during conversation in order to show differences, resulting in miscommunication among different generations. Coupland et al. (1988) agree that accommodation theory “provides a general framework for understanding intergenerational miscommunication, on the assumption (still to be empirically verified) that "young" and "old" may constitute different subcultures with distinct self- and other-identities, aspirations, beliefs, and life circumstances, and, consequently, distinct strategies for producing and interpreting talk” (p. 6).

Setting the stage for incorporating role theory in this theoretical framework, Coupland et al. (1988) propose that accommodation theory be used “to consider the role of stereotypical perceptions of interlocutors and their speech characteristics and how such stereotypes can mediate the strategies speakers adopt and their effects on listeners” (p. 9). When “frequent, inappropriate, misconceived talk” takes place among different ages, “consequences might be irritation and dissatisfaction - ultimately for both parties involved” (Coupland et al., 1988, p. 9). When conversation is miscommunicated, negative behaviors can result, confusing relationships and roles in a workplace.
Role Theory- A Way to Predict an Individual's Behavior within Society

After discussing how individuals alter their communication style across perceived roles, it is time to explore how a role can be a predicting factor in an individual's behavior among a group of people. According to International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (2008), role theory “is generally concerned with explaining the relationship between the individual and society” (p. 1). The sociological and psychological frameworks from which role theory is founded coincides nicely with the social psychological component of Craig’s (1999) work about communication theory. Role theory and the social psychological discipline of communication theory both focus on the interactions among people, the conversations that take place, the behaviors that result from those conversations and the consequences of those behaviors. With generational differences in the workplace being well documented as a source of confrontation in the workplace, role theory’s role, so to speak, in communication theory can be studied by those in the workplace to better understand differences in the workplace. After understanding differences and reasons for those differences, behaviors and ways to control behaviors can then be incorporated into workplace counseling as ways to control inherit traits to keep an environment harmonious.

Role theory is based upon the belief that people behave in a predictable way, perhaps because of a set of traits or opinions based upon past experiences. These expectations of how people will behave or react to a certain situation can be held both by the individual and by other people. From the structural perspective, roles are the culturally defined norms—“rights, duties, expectations, and standards for behavior—associated with a given social position” (Linton, 1945). With roots in sociology and social psychology, role theory is not necessarily one rigid
theory. Rather, the definition of role theory may be determined upon the definition of the role in which that person occupies, in this case, the generation in which that person was born.

Role theory seems to be differentiated into two different schools of thought: structural and interactionist. For the structural school of thought, Talcott Parsons (1950’s-1960’s), the structural role concept is used to explain one’s desires are less important than the needs of the group as a whole. This applies to family structures, educational institutions and workplaces. Within this school of thought, people’s roles and the expectations of those roles are shared and understood by the whole group. Ralph Turner introduced the interactionist perspective and the notion of role making where people must mold their perceived roles to match certain situations, especially in an environment where there is a chain of command. This molding can be with behaviors, everything from verbal language to body language, and allows someone to fit into a role within a system. In the late 1980’s both of these theories were merged to form a more traditional theoretical approach. Still, the overall paradigm is that social roles can profoundly “limit and structure patterns of social behavior” (Callero, 1994, p.1). This thought sets the stage for more discussion about the roles that people are forced to fill and how psychosocial mechanisms can direct the behaviors in these roles.

Microaggressions- Connecting CAT and Conflict Among Generations in Conversations

According to Sue (2010) microaggressions are the “everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.” Sue (2010) goes on to say that “the most detrimental forms of microaggressions are usually delivered by well-intentioned individuals who are unaware that
they have engaged in harmful conduct toward a socially devalued group,” possibly lending a reason as to why unintentional conflicts take place.

While discussion on microaggression tends to focus on differences due to religion, disability, gender, race, and sexual orientation, this paper intends to explore the microaggressions within generational cohorts. Since “microaggressions can be based upon any group that is marginalized in this society (Sue, 2010),” an argument can be made that any generation, particularly the millennial generation, is marginalized because of perceived differences. The key is to realize that demographic diversity in a workplace fosters an environment where microaggressions are more likely to take place.

Microaggressions- Generational Differences Foster Environment for Workplace Conflict

At this point in the literature review, social psychological characteristics of communication theory and role theory combine to help explain workplace conflict, or microaggressions, that take place as a result of inherent, innate differences among generational cohorts. Keeping diversity in mind with relation to generational differences, the workplace in general is on the brink of experiencing four generations working together in the same place at the same time. Berk (2013) discusses this event in an academic setting, “This is the first time in history that this many generations have attempted to work together” (p.10). Shaw (2013) not only supports Berk, but emphasizes that “these generations might as well be from different countries, so different are their cultural styles and preferences” (p. 4). The diversity that results from a multi-generational workplace allows the term diversity, and its contributing demographic factors, to take on a new meaning, a meaning that includes age. Berk (2013) supports this thought with “Age can be labeled as another demographic source of differences among us, tossed into the workplace profile with gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation” (p. 10). Dries et al
(2008) argues that when multiple generations work together, “there are bound to be some differences in communication, work style, and job/career ambition” (as cited in Berk, 2013, p. 11). These differences obviously can lead to “clashes in values, beliefs, and attitudes rooted in those differences” (Berk, 2013, p. 11).

One might argue that differences have always existed among individuals in the workplace. While this is true, this type of difference is separate from typical personality and professional conflicts. In fact, according to the Society for Human Resource Management (2010), “Negative encounters of the multigenerational kind are attributable to systematic differences in perspectives between members of different generations and the problems that can result” (as cited in Berk, 2013, p. 11). Therefore, these types of age and multigenerational differences merely “add to the interpersonal conflicts already occurring in the workplace with incivility, bullying, and microaggressions” (Berk, 2013, p. 11).

With diversity in the workplace increasing exponentially, one would assume that the instances of microaggressions will increase exponentially as well. As can be gleaned from the review of recent literature the theoretical framework portion of this chapter, the relationship between workplace diversity and microaggressions is certainly a prevalent research topic and worthy of careful consideration.

Before moving forward, Figure 3 reviews the theoretical framework and demonstrates how the conceptual framework will be connected to address the nature of workplace conflict. This is an interconnected, two-way process that not only helps explain the relationship among the factors that create workplace conflict, but that shows how workplace conflict can likewise affect the relationships among those factors, making the relationship cyclical in nature.

This chapter discussed the theoretical framework for the study, funnelling from a broad
explanation of the social psychological perspectives of communication theory that serve as foundation for purposefully connecting aspects of CAT, role theory and microaggressions to craft a conceptual framework that studies conflict among different generations in the workplace. The conceptual framework included the latest information about the following: generational demographic shifts, generational stereotypes, and typical sources of conflict among generations in the workplace. The next chapter details the reasoning behind utilizing a mixed methods approach to this study with a questionnaire measurement tool that investigated other generations’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

A modified version of Dillman’s Tailored Design Method was used to develop an online questionnaire to determine older generations’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace (Dillman, 2007; Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2008). The mixed methods investigation into perceptions of the millennial generation focused on the survey responses from a target population that consisted of the volunteer board members from Georgia’s agriculture-related non-profit groups. For this particular study, the researchers implemented the University of Georgia’s Qualtrics (2015) survey tool to craft a questionnaire of multiple choice and short answer questions that measured their perceptual knowledge of millennials, attitudes toward millennials’ behavior, and their behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials into the agri-workplace.

It was important to approach this topic using both quantitative data and qualitative data so that the results can be appreciated by a variety of audiences. Since this study intended to start a conversation about generational diversity in the agriculture and related industries, the results needed to be relatable to older employees and younger employees alike. While both audiences could certainly appreciate each of the data sets respectively, the researchers chose to enrich their understanding of the results by tailoring the research methods to meet their needs. For instance, quantitative data was provided with the intent that older employees, especially those in a for-profit business setting, could glean a meaningful snapshot of the greater issue and what that means for their bottom line. However, qualitative data was provided so that younger employees
and future employees could access the older generations’ personal anecdotes about their experiences with millennials in a nontargeting setting.

This chapter presents a rationale for the research design of this mixed methods study along with discussion about participant and site selection. The quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis are also described.

**Rationale for Research Design**

The Qualtrics survey tool allowed the researcher to develop a self-administered questionnaire so that each respondent would avoid any social pressures to answer a specific way. Furthermore, questionnaires are considered to be “objective” (p. 155) sources of data because “the presence of an investigator does not alter what is being studied” (Merriam, 2009, p. 155). Dillman *et al.* (2008) also believe that respondents are more likely to answer honestly to self-administered questionnaires as opposed to “interview questionnaires” (p. 38).

Before engaging in discussion about the format of the questions in the survey, it is necessary to discuss the importance of scales selection in a questionnaire. The selection of appropriate scales of measurement as response options on the questionnaire can determine whether or not the data analysis is successful. In other words, scales of measurement aid the researcher in calculating the respondent’s response to the variable at hand (Radhakrishna, 2007). This relationship between scales and variables must be understood in order to perform data analysis correctly. For instance, independent variables are measured on a nominal scale, and dependent variables should be measured on a ratio scale. This will determine the mode of data analysis to be used, thereby establishing the questionnaire’s reliability and validity, both of which will be discussed later in this chapter.
The questionnaire consisted of sixty-nine questions that ranged from sixty-three multiple choice, three short answer, and three fill-in-the-blank questions, making this a mixed methods study. According to Merriam (2009), a study like this one that consists of both quantitative and qualitative data collection pair nicely, as she states that “statistical data from surveys on any number of topics all can be treated as documents in support of a qualitative investigation” (p. 149).

Questionnaire Design

Four of the sixty-three multiple choice questions collected the following demographic data respectively: gender using nominal-level bivariate response options, ethnicity using nominal scale-level multivariate response options (the only close-ended question with unordered response options), opinion regarding the agri-workplace environment using ordinal scale-level multivariate response options and formal leadership role status in a non-profit using nominal scale-level bivariate response options. The remaining three demographic data questions that inquired about each respondent's employer, volunteer boards served and birth year are detailed later in this chapter as fill-in-the-blank questions. As Dillman et al. (2008) recommend, all seven of the questions that gathered demographic data were collected at the end of the survey so that the responder could end the survey confidently.

Of the sixty-three multiple choice questions, sixty of those questions offered ordinal scale-level multivariate response options; this total of sixty includes the one demographic question described above that measures opinion regarding the agri-workplace environment. With the ultimate goal of assessing older generations’ perceptions of the millennial generation, the majority of the questionnaire consisted of ordinal scale response options. Incorporating ordinal scale response options was deemed an appropriate measurement tool for this study, as Dillman et
al. (2008) suggest that “close-ended questions with ordered response categories” (p. 43) are ideal to incorporate into a questionnaire when the researcher is seeking an “evaluative” (p. 43) response from the respondent, such as perceptions.

The possibilities within utilizing ordinal-scale concepts are almost “endless” (Dillman et al., 2008, p. 44), but the researcher carefully utilized three different ordinal scale response sets. While these response sets will be described in more depth in chapter 4, it is important to understand that each of the three sets of ordinal-scale response sets measured a different construct, each of which were stated at the beginning of this chapter. For instance, perceived knowledge was measured with answer choices varying from strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree to strongly disagree; attitude was measured with answer choices varying from never, sometimes, most of the time to always; and behavior was measured with answer choices varying from strongly agree, maybe, definitely to quite likely. Dillman (2000) recommends each construct to utilize a separate set of responses such as described above to keep a consistent flow throughout the questionnaire. Each of these answer choices are what Dillman (2000) states are frequently referred to as “vague identifiers” (p. 44). While using these answer choices can likely result in measurement error, there is little alternative if the researcher seeks to “compare preferences across areas” (Dillman, 2007, p. 44), such is the case with this study in which each respondent’s perceptual knowledge, attitudes and behaviors is compared among respondents from other generations. For instance, the findings may reveal that generation Xers possess a more negative attitude toward millennials’ work ethic than baby boomers possess. Digging deeper into the multiple choice response options, it can be gleaned from the prior response set description that there are four answer choices for each close-ended question, making each response set a “traditional measure” (p. 44) of each question. While sixty-three of the
questions are open-ended, six of the questions are open-ended, the three short answer questions and the three fill-in-the-blank questions.

The three short answer questions were incorporated into the survey so that the researcher could collect qualitative data. It was important to understand how people interpret their experiences (Merriam, 2009 p. 5), in this instance, how they interpret their experiences with millennials. Systematically placed at the end of the multiple choice questions and before the demographic portion of the questionnaire, the three questions asked the respondent to describe a positive experience with a millennial, to describe a negative experience with a millennial and to provide any additional comments or respectively. While this portion of the survey involves interpretive research and it is assumed that in this case “reality is socially constructed,” (Merriam, 2009, p. 9) the responses are collected and coded through content analysis. The process is detailed later in this chapter.

This portion of the questionnaire was placed at the end and collected demographic data about each respondent. Three questions asked the respondent to list his or her employer, volunteer boards served and birth year respectively. This data was used to segment the respondents into groups including industry employed and generation, allowing the researcher to cross-compare responses among the different groups.

Researcher Subjectivity

While a small portion of the survey, the short answer portion, is left to my interpretation as the researcher, I do want to take the opportunity to share information about myself so as to convey my desire to present the most accurate and objective analysis possible.

Having been born in 1990 and classified as a member of the millennial generation, it is understandable that I have my own personal views about millennials and the nature of their
contributions to the workplace; however, it can be gleaned from the literature review that extensive research has been conducted about millennials in the workplace, so the analysis of the questionnaire is compared to and founded upon proven methods.

At the time of data collection, I was employed at what would have been deemed an agri-related workplace. In fact, my employer was an agri-workplace that happened to be a non-profit with a board of directors that was included in the target sample. However, research procedures that are detailed later in this chapter will demonstrate that not only were the responses anonymous, but certain measures were followed to avoid under or over representing any of the boards. Furthermore, at each board meeting, in person or otherwise, where I invited the members to participate in the study, I represented the University of Georgia as a graduate student, not as a professional in the industry.

As a millennial and a former professional in the agriculture industry, this research topic is obviously one that I feel strongly about, and I have taken every measure necessary in ensure objectivity with a valid and reliable research design.

Validity and Reliability in the Research Design

The questionnaire was carefully designed to strive for optimal validity and reliability. Radhakrishna (2007) reiterates that developing the questionnaire with validity and reliability in mind is important to reduce measurement errors. Validity is the amount of built-in error in measurement while reliability indicates the accuracy or precision of the measuring instrument (Norland-Tillburg, 1990). In other words, validity is established when the constructs in the questionnaire measure what they intend to measure. Reliability refers to the consistency of the results. It is important to remember that while a valid test is always reliable, a reliable test is not necessarily valid. However, the goal is to have both exist within a study.
Questionnaire development was certainly the longest segment of the process, but that is necessary in building a strong foundation for the study. Dillman (2007) supports this by saying that “sometimes it is necessary to spend a lot of time drafting, writing, and testing alternative wordings of questions, and even then we can only obtain an approximate answer” (p. 37). The researcher, along with specific members of the thesis research committee, began drafting the questionnaire in March of 2016. Shaw’s (2013) “sticking points” were used to craft the questionnaire for this study so that any negative perceptions revealed as obstacles for generations to be “stuck” in the workplace can also be seen as opportunities for generations to “stick” together in the workplace. Dr. Lauren Griffeth, with her extensive knowledge and keen interest in generational differences, aided in selecting the content to incorporate and the constructs measured in the questionnaire. Dr. Milton Newberry, with his expertise in evaluation and research methods, suggested formatting edits to questionnaire in an effort to more adequately better follow the Dillman Tailored Design Method and ensure the survey measures what it intends to measure. Greco et al., (1987) support this thought by stating, “In order to have confidence in the results of a study, one must be assured that the questionnaire consistently measures what it purports to measure when properly administered” (p.699). Each question was intentionally written to measure the three constructs of either perceptual knowledge of millennials, attitude toward millennials’ behavior or behavioral intent to incorporate millennials into the workplace respectively. The questionnaire was also written in a manner to demonstrate how aspects of CAT, role theory and microaggressions can serve as a conceptual framework to describe conflict among different generations in the workplace can be traced to miscommunication across the different generations. While the majority of the questionnaire
collected multiple choice responses, there was a small portion that required a short answer response, creating a mixed methods approach to the study.

The discussion about validity and reliability shifts slightly with a qualitative study. Internal validity “deals with the question of how research findings match reality” (Merriam, 2009, p. 213). Maxwell (2005) supports the ambiguous nature of validity when he states “it is never something that can be proven” (p. 105). Merriam (2009) goes even further into the possibility of achieving reliability in a study when she states that doing so in a qualitative study “is not only fanciful but impossible” (p. 222) simply due to the emergent nature of the research. Looking beyond this specific study in an even larger scope is the issue of external credibility, or the “extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (Merriam, 2009, p. 223). Since this study is dealing with a specific group of people, older generations’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace, “replication of a qualitative study will not yield the same results” (Merriam, 2009, p. 222). However, Merriam (2009) clarifies that a study’s inability to be replicated and yield the same results in a different context does not diminish the significance of the study. What can be gleaned, however, is if the general findings of this study, are consistent with research performed in other industries, thereby qualifying the study as “dependable” (Merriam, 2009, p. 222). The following segments of the chapter discuss the measurement techniques used to analyze both the qualitative and quantitative portions of this study.

**Participant Selection**

The target population of this study was older generations in Georgia’s agri-workplace. Board members who were born before 1980, meaning that they belong to either the traditional generation, baby boomer generation or generation X, were the focus of this target population.
The questionnaire was issued to a representative sample of this target population, volunteer board members for Georgia’s agricultural non-profit organizations and the president or executive director of each those organizations. The survey had the potential of collecting responses from as many as one hundred fifty-one members from these eight organizations:

1. Advancing Georgia's Leaders in Agriculture and Forestry, 14 members
2. Georgia 4-H Foundation, 37 members
3. Georgia FFA Foundation, 10 members
4. Georgia Farm Bureau Foundation, 10 members
5. Georgia Agribusiness Council, 35 members
6. Georgia Agritourism Association, 10 members
7. Georgia Forestry Association, 15-20 members
8. UGA CAES Alumni Board of Directors, 10-15 members

These volunteer board members were most likely born before 1980, meaning that they belong to either the traditional generation, baby boomer generation or generation X. Zemke’s (2013) definitions of the generations will be used to define each generation’s key characteristics associated with the birth years respectively. In the event that survey respondents did not feel they worked for an agriculturally related company, the researchers’ definition of agri-workplace was well-defined at the top of the Qualtrics questionnaire to provide more clear instruction for the respondents, just as Dillman (2000) recommends. The board members from the sample group of the target population, the questionnaire responders, were encouraged to share the findings with their organization or company.
Research Procedures

All communication documents and the questionnaire were approved by the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB) May 12, 2016. IRB approval documentation is included in Appendix A.

In an effort to determine older generations’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace, a mixed methods approach that utilized the University of Georgia’s free Qualtrics survey tool measured three constructs: perceptual knowledge of millennials in the workplace, attitude toward millennials in the workplace, and behavioral intent to incorporate millennials in the workplace. The questionnaire is included in Appendix B.

Beginning in mid-May of 2016, the executive director or president of each of the agriculture related non-profit organizations was contacted either via email, phone or face-to-face for permission for his or her respective board to participate in the study. All organizations, with the exception of one, granted permission for the board members to receive an invitation to participate in the study. Throughout the process, it was stressed that participation was completely voluntary and anonymous. Once permission was granted for the board members to receive an invitation to participate in the study, a date was set for an email invitation to be sent to board, for a phone conference invitation with the board, or for a face-to-face invitation with the board. An example of the verbal script used in these emails and face-to-face scenarios is included in Appendix C. The consent form referenced in the verbal script is included in Appendix D. With an e-mail scenario, the consent form was attached to the email with instructions to return the form to the researcher. With the face-to-face scenario, consent forms were signed on-site and returned directly to the researcher. With the phone conference scenario, a follow-up email was sent with the consent form attached. Once the consent forms were received, an email was sent
with the survey link. A follow-up email was sent four weeks later to increase response rate (Dillman et al., 2008) and was repeated until September of 2016 to achieve an optimal return rate. Since Dillman et al. (2008) believes that the “optimal timing sequence for web surveys has not been determined yet” (p. 279), the researcher continued communication and accepted responses until December of 2016. The emails were as personalized as possible, as Dillman (2000) suggests. An example of this email communication with the survey link is included in Appendix E. All email communication, especially the emails with the survey link, was brief, as “the key to getting respondents to read all of the important information in the e-mail invitation and follow-ups is to keep these contacts short and engaging” (Dillman et al., 2008, p. 282).

Originally, all communication included a consent form to be completed and returned. However, the researcher was advised at a research committee meeting in September to include a statement at the beginning of the survey to serve as a consent form reading “By continuing this survey, you understand that your responses will likely be used for analysis.” This was done with the intent of making the survey more convenient for the respondent to complete, thereby increasing the return rate. Without one of the boards participating, there was a potential sample size of hundred forty-one board members. While thirty-seven board members attempted the survey, thirty-board members completed the survey in its entirety, thus achieving the magic number of thirty responses that Dillman et al. (2008) believe is necessary to minimize sampling error and to show a bell-shaped distribution with the Central Limit Theorem.

Quantitative analysis was used to investigate the demographic portion of the survey and the other portions of the survey that measured each of the three research objectives: older generations’ perceptual knowledge of millennials, older generations’ attitudes toward millennials’ behavior, and older generations’ behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials
in the agri-workplace; therefore, utilizing a questionnaire as the primary data collection tool compliments the goal of collecting each respondent’s knowledge, attitudes, opinions, behaviors and facts about the subject at hand (Radhakrishna, 2007). In examining the demographic information about gender and race, the valid percent represented the percent when missing data were removed from the data sets. Valid percents were present in these demographic data sets because not every respondent completed the survey in its entirety. The cumulative percent was the sum of all the valid percentage values within that specific data set.

In examining each of the three research objectives, descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were used. The frequency in which a response ultimately revealed older generations’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace. The answer choices within each of the three constructs followed the Likert Scale so that the more positive the answer choice, the least weight it carried in the scoring; the more negative the answer choice, the more weight it carried in the scoring. For example, if the majority of the respondents chose positive responses like strongly agree or somewhat agree, then the mean will be closer to one; if the majority of the respondents chose more negative responses like strongly disagree or somewhat disagree, then the mean will be closer to four. Each question was measured on a scale from strongly agree (one) to strongly disagree (four). If the mean was less than 2.0, the mean was considered to be closer to one. If the mean was greater than or equal to 2.0, it was considered to be closer to four.

As far as qualitative analysis, a narrative analysis of three open ended response questions was conducted deductively through domain analysis with coding, labeling and categorizing in order to explore similarities and differences within the group being studied. Content analysis was conducted with attention given to the “frequency and variety” a certain phrase or word was used (Merriam, 2009, p. 205). Domain analysis is a form of content analysis, and it was used to
summarize the raw data from the three short answer questions into broad categories. Merriam (2009) explains this process as “open coding” (p. 178) where broad categories are funneled to more specific phrases or words to determine emergent themes. This short answer portion of the survey also gave respondents an opportunity to provide valuable anecdotes about positive, negative and additional experiences in the workplace. Content analysis of the short answer responses gave an even more holistic, richer understanding of quantitative data that was collected with the multiple choice questions from the survey.

As will be explained in more detail in the next chapter, the codes resulting from re-occurring key words and phrases in the raw data gathered from the short answer responses informed the Wordle, which is a graphic organizer based upon the number of times a certain word appeared in the short answer responses. The more frequently a word appeared throughout the coding process, the more prominent the word appeared in the graphic.

This chapter presented a rationale for the research design, participant and site selection, data collection, and data analysis. A modified version of Dillman’s Tailored Design Method was used to develop an online questionnaire to determine older generations’ perceptions of millennials in Georgia’s agri-workplace. Shaw’s (2013) “sticking points” were used to craft the questionnaire for this study so that what is perceived as an obstacle to be “stuck” can also be seen as an opportunity to “stick” together. The researchers implemented the University of Georgia’s Qualtrics survey tool that measured older generations’ perceptual knowledge of millennials, attitudes toward millennials’ behavior, and their behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials into the agri-workplace; the next chapter describes the findings.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

This mixed methods study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis to determine older generations’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace. This chapter used frequencies and descriptive statistics to describe the demographic data collected from the respondents. In examining the demographic information about gender and race, the valid percent was the percent when missing data were removed from the data sets. The cumulative percent was the sum of all the valid percentage values within that specific category. Means and standard deviations were used to describe each of the three research objectives: older generations’ perceptual knowledge of millennials, older generations’ attitude toward millennials’ behavior, and older generations’ behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials in the agri-workplace.

Survey responses within each research objective, or construct, were examined in terms of Shaw’s (2013) generational “sticking points” in the workplace. The three short answer questions used content analysis to determine emergent themes relating to perceptions of millennials. The information gleaned from the survey will help agri-workplace professionals better understand the challenges and opportunities when creating stronger industry relationships.

To reiterate, the target population of this study was older generations in Georgia’s agri-workplace. The questionnaire was issued to a representative sample of this target population, volunteer board members for Georgia’s agricultural non-profit organizations and the president or executive director of each those organizations. Since the survey’s respondents serve as a representative sample of Georgia’s agriculture non-profit board members, their perceptions of
millennials in the agri-workplace are also a representative sample of perceptions held by older generations in Georgia’s agri-workplace. Furthermore, board members who were born before 1980, meaning that they belong to either the traditional generation, baby boomer generation or generation X, were the focus of this representative sample. Since the majority of the board members who completed the survey are among the oldest members of their workplace, it is likely that they are responsible for hiring and promoting employees in their respective companies, their perceptual knowledge of millennials, their attitudes toward millennials’ behavior, and their behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials into the agri-workplace contribute valuable information that millennials can utilize to increase their self-awareness as they enter the agri-workplace.

Overall, the respondents’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace tended to align with perceptions of millennials in other industries. For instance, respondents tended to perceive millennials as tech-savvy, entitled, self-centered, demanding, impatient and unappreciative. However, unlike what the larger body of research discusses, the researchers were surprised to learn the majority of the respondents disagreed that multiple generations in the agri-workplace can lead to conflict, and that they did not witness conflict arise among the different generations often. With all of the negativity surrounding millennials, it is difficult to imagine that workplace conflict would not result. This anomaly in the survey results reveals perhaps one of the largest “sticking points” of all; perhaps the agriculture and related industries are unable to or uncomfortable with appropriately addressing generational conflict. Respondents disagreed that millennials possess strong conflict resolution abilities, and they disagreed that millennials communicated easily with older generations. Could this be due to the fact that millennials are not provided with the proper platform to create an understanding? Respondents disagreed that older
generations welcome millennials’ contributions to the workplace, and they even disagreed that millennials feel welcome into the agri-workplace culture. Because they aren’t made to feel welcome, are millennials uncomfortable with initiating discussions about generational differences in the agri-workplace? Even more importantly, if millennials aren’t comfortable with initiating these discussions because they are uncomfortable in the agri-workplace setting, will the agriculture and related industries be able to recruit and retain the millennial workforce? Is this where the agriculture and related industries are currently “stuck?” The fact that respondents disagreed that the agri-workplace is prepared to incorporate millennials into the workplace demonstrates the need for strategies to engage millennials in the agri-workplace. These thoughts will be addressed in more depth in later in the paper.

Sample Demographics

A total of thirty-seven individuals began the survey, and thirty-six individuals completed the survey, with one leaving some answers blank. Referencing Table 4-1, one of the respondents did not complete the demographic question about age. Regarding gender of the sample, of the thirty-seven respondents (n = 37), males served as 75.7% of the respondents. White individuals represented 89.2% of the sample. The mean age of the respondents was fifty-one years old ($M = 51.28, SD. = 11.52$). A majority of the sample reported either strongly agreeing or somewhat agreeing that the agri-workplace was a traditional work environment. A small percentage of respondents (21.6%) stated holding a formal leadership position, such as the executive director, of a non-profit organization.
Table 4-1. Older Generations’ Perceptions of Millennials in the Agri-Workplace Respondent

Demographic Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<td>89.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonwhite</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agri-Workplace as a Traditional Work Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Leadership Role in Non-Profit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: One respondent did not complete the age, gender, and formal leadership role in non-profit items. Age item information (M = 51.58, S.D. = 11.52)
Research Objective 1: To Describe Older Generations’ Perceptual Knowledge Of Millennials

Forty-five questions measured other generations’ perceptual knowledge of millennials in the Agri-Workplace. This construct utilized eleven of the twelve generational “sticking points” in the workplace (communication, decision making, dress code, feedback, fun at work, knowledge transfer, loyalty, policy, respect, training, and work ethic) to frame the description of older generations’ perceptual knowledge of millennials. The instructions for this section included, “Please select your level of agreement to the following statements.” The answer choices were scaled so that the more positive the answer choice, the least weight it carried in the scoring; the more negative the answer choice, the more weight it carried in the scoring. So, if the majority of the respondents chose positive responses like strongly agree or somewhat agree, then the mean was closer to one; if the majority of the respondents chose more negative responses like strongly disagree or somewhat disagree, then the mean was to four. Each question was measured on a scale from strongly agree (one) to strongly disagree (four). If the mean was less than 2.0, the mean was considered to be closer to one. If the mean was greater than or equal to 2.0, it was considered to be closer to 4.

Forty-five questions measured other generations’ perceptual knowledge of millennials in the Agri-Workplace. This construct utilized eleven of the twelve generational “sticking points” in the workplace (communication, decision making, dress code, feedback, fun at work, knowledge transfer, loyalty, policy, respect, training, and work ethic) to frame the description of older generations’ perceptual knowledge of millennials. The “sticking points” were rated on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Respondents reported to somewhat agree about the perceptual knowledge of millennials ($M = 2.24$, $SD = .54$). Table 4-2 displays
the descriptive statistics of all of the sticking points for this construct. Table 4-3 displays the
descriptive statistics of all of the questionnaire items for this construct.

Table 4-2. Older Generations’ Perceptual Knowledge of Millennials' Sticking Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sticking point</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress-code</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun at Work</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Transfer</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Scale: 1 = strongly agree; 2 = somewhat agree; 3 = somewhat disagree; 4 = strongly disagree.
Table 4-3. Older Generations’ Perceptual Knowledge of Millennials Item Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sticking point</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>When millennials ask questions, I think they are insecure about their abilities to complete the task at hand.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older generations tend to misunderstand millennials.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Millennials tend to misunderstand older generations.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Millennials communicate easily with older generations.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Millennials possess strong conflict resolution abilities.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel comfortable working with millennials.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is easy to communicate with millennials.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>Millennials are efficient.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress code</td>
<td>Millennials dress professionally.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Millennials receive criticism well</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is important for millennials to know that their work is contributing to the organization as a whole</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is important to provide millennials positive feedback when they have completed a project successfully.

**Fun at Work**

Millennials require more accommodations in the Agri-Workplace than the older generations.

**Knowledge**

Older generations make millennials feel welcome into the Agri-Workplace culture.

**Transfer**

Millennials are comfortable with implementing change in the Agri-Workplace. Respondents somewhat agreed with the statement, “Millennials are skilled at implementing change.

**Loyalty**

Millennials enhance my organization/company’s reputation in a positive way. Millennials are loyal to their organization/company.

The organization/company I work for is fortunate to have millennials working there.

Millennials threaten the integrity of my /organization.

**Policy**

Millennials prefer to work in non-traditional environments, like a coffee shop. Millennials desire a work-life balance more than the older generations.
The agri-workplace is prepared to incorporate millennials into the workplace. 37 2.73 0.65

As long as your work is completed, it does not matter how many hours you work a day. 37 2.32 0.82

Respect

Millennials appreciate the status quo. 37 2.97 0.76

Millennials respect the foundation built by other generations. 37 2.76 0.83

I feel excited to work with millennials. 37 1.86 0.75

I feel good knowing that millennials will dominate the workplace in the next decade. 37 2.70 0.88

Older generations welcome millennials’ contributions to the workplace. 37 2.62 0.59

Multiple generations in the workplace can lead to conflict. 37 2.22 0.82

Millennials are impatient. 37 1.95 0.71

Millennials are entitled 37 2.08 0.89

I feel comfortable working with millennials. 36 1.75 0.77

Millennials are strong leaders. 36 2.58 .73

Training

Millennials are lacking in basic skills. 37 2.27 0.77

I expect millennials to be more technologically savvy than older generations. 37 1.24 0.50

Millennials have potential to be strong leaders. 36 1.64 0.59
| Work Ethic | Millennials expect career advancement and promotion in the workplace too early in their careers. | 37 | 1.57 | 0.77 |
| Millennial work ethic | I would rank millennials’ work ethic as excellent. | 37 | 2.54 | 0.69 |
| Millennial readiness | Millennials are willing, ready and able to succeed. | 37 | 2.27 | 0.77 |
| Millennial advancement | Millennials expect to advance too soon in their careers without “paying their dues.” | 37 | 1.51 | 0.56 |
| Millennial presence | My workplace would be more productive if millennials were not there. | 36 | 3.25 | 0.81 |

Note: Scale: 1 = strongly agree; 2 = somewhat agree; 3 = somewhat disagree; 4 = strongly disagree.

Before proceeding to the second research objective, it is beneficial to review the results from the first research objective. Respondents agreed with the following statements:

- Older generations tend to misunderstand millennials.
- Millennials tend to misunderstand older generations.
- They feel comfortable with millennials.
- It is important for millennials to know that their work contributes to the organization as a whole.
- It is important to provide millennials positive feedback when they have completed a project successfully.
- Millennials require more accommodations in the agri-workplace than older generations.
● millennials are comfortable with implementing change in the agri-workplace.

● The organization/company they work for is fortunate to have millennials working there.

● millennials desire a work-life balance more than the older generations.

● They feel excited to work with millennials.

● millennials are impatient.

● millennials are entitled.

● They felt comfortable working with millennials.

● They expect millennials to be more technologically savvy that older generations.

● millennials have the potential to be strong leaders.

● millennials expect career advancement and promotion too early in their careers.

● millennials expect to advance too soon in their careers without “paying their dues.”

Respondents disagreed with the following statements:

● millennials were insecure about their abilities to complete the task at hand.

● millennials communicated easily with older generations.

● millennials possess strong conflict resolution abilities.

● It is easy to communicate with millennials.

● millennials are efficient.

● millennials dress professionally.

● millennials receive criticism well.

● Older generations make millennials feel welcome into the agri-workplace culture.

● millennials are skilled at implementing change.

● millennials enhance their organizations/company’s reputation in a positive way.

● millennials are loyal to their organization/company.
• millennials threaten the integrity of their company/organization.
• millennials prefer to work in non-traditional environments, like a coffee shop.
• The agri-workplace is prepared to incorporate millennials into the workplace.
• As long as your work is completed, it does not matter how many hours you work a day.
• millennials appreciate the status quo.
• millennials respect the foundation built by other generations.
• They feel good knowing that millennials will dominate the workplace in the next decade.
• Older generations welcome millennials’ contributions to the workplace.

Research Objective 2: To Describe Older Generations’ Attitudes Toward Millennials’ Behavior

Twelve questions measured other generations’ attitudes toward millennials in the agri-workplace. This construct utilized seven of the twelve generational “sticking points” in the workplace (communication, decision making, feedback, meetings, policy, respect, and work ethic) to frame the description of older generations’ attitude toward millennials. The instructions for this section included, “Please select how often you have witnessed the behaviors described below.” The answer choices were scaled so that the more negative the answer choice, the least weight it carried in the scoring; the more positive the answer choice, the more weight it carried in the scoring. So, if the majority of the respondents chose positive responses like always or most of the time, then the mean was closer to 4; if the majority of the respondents chose more negative responses like never or sometimes, then the mean was closer to one. Each question was measured on a scale from never (one) to always (four). If the mean was less than 2.0, the mean was considered to be closer to one. If the mean was greater than or equal to 2.0, it was considered to be closer to four.
Twelve questions measured other generations’ attitudes toward millennials’ behavior in the Agri-Workplace. This construct utilized seven of the twelve generational “sticking points” in the workplace (communication, decision making, feedback, meetings, policy, respect, and work ethic) to frame the description of older generations’ attitude toward millennials. The “sticking points” were rated on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (always). Respondents reported that they sometimes witnessed the specific behaviors ($M = 2.44$, $SD = .34$). Table 4-4 displays the descriptive statistics of all of the sticking points for this construct. Table 4-5 displays the descriptive statistics of all of the questionnaire items for this construct.

### Table 4-4. Older Generations’ Attitudes toward Millennials’ Behavior Sticking Point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sticking point</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$S.D.$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Scale: 1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = most of the time; 4 = always.*
Table 4-5. Older Generations’ Attitudes toward Millennials’ Behavior Item Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sticking point</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>How often does conflict arise among the different generations in your office?</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>Millennials use their cell phones at inappropriate times.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Millennials are respectful to older generations.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>Millennials care about the quality of their work.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Millennials prefer to collaborate on projects.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Millennials require feedback during a project.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Millennials ask for additional instruction.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Millennials work within the normal business hours, like from 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is acceptable for older generations to work from a non-traditional location, such as a coffee shop.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
<td>Millennials complete projects in a timely manner.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How often are millennials late for work?</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How often are millennials leave work early?</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Scale: 1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = most of the time; 4 = always.
Before proceeding to the third research objective, it is beneficial to review the results from the second research objective. Respondents witnessed the following behaviors often:

- millennials caring about their work.
- millennials preferring to collaborate on projects.
- millennials requiring feedback on projects.
- millennials asking for additional instruction.
- millennials using cell phones at inappropriate times.
- millennials working within the normal business hours.
- Older generations working from a non-traditional location.
- millennials being respectful to older generations.
- millennials completing projects in a timely manner.
- millennials being late for work.
- millennials leaving work early.

Respondents did not witness the following behavior often:

- Conflict arise among the different generations.

Research Objective 3: To Describe Older Generations’ Behavioral Intent Toward Incorporating Millennials into The Agri-Workplace

Two questions measured other generations’ behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials in the agri-workplace. This construct utilized one of the twelve generational “sticking points” in the workplace (training) to frame the description of older generations’ behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials. The instructions for this section included, “Please answer the following to the best of your ability.” Each question was measured on a scale from strongly agree (one) to definitely (four). If the mean was less than 2.0, the mean was considered
to be closer to one. If the mean was greater than or equal to 2.0, it was considered to be closer to four.

Two questions measured other generations’ behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials in the agri-workplace. This construct utilized one of the twelve generational “sticking points” in the workplace (training) to frame the description of older generations’ behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials. This “sticking point,” training, was rated on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (definitely). Respondents reported that they maybe would incorporate millennials into the workplace \((M = 2.11, SD = .11)\). Table 4-6 displays the descriptive statistics of the sticking point. Respondents believed that, “My workplace would benefit from strategies to help understand generational differences” in the Agri-Workplace \((M = 2.19, SD = 1.01)\). Respondents believed that, “My workplace would utilize strategies to help understand generational differences” in the Agri-Workplace \((M = 2.03, SD = .85)\).

Table 4-6. Older Generations’ Behavioral Intent Toward Incorporating millennials into the Agri-Workplace Item Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sticking point</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>My workplace would benefit from strategies to help understand generational differences.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My workplace would utilize strategies to help understand generational differences</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Scale: 1 = strongly agree; 2 = maybe; 3 = quite likely; 4 = definitely.*
Before proceeding to the qualitative analysis portion of the chapter, it is beneficial to review the results from the third research objective. Respondents believed the following:

- That their workplace would benefit from strategies to help understand generational differences
- That their workplace would utilize strategies to help understand generational differences

**Qualitative Analysis**

Content analysis was used to systematically evaluate the three short answer questions. Raw data from short answer responses was coded into broad categories before being funneled down into more specific phrases and words that determined overarching themes. These emergent, overarching themes describe how other generations perceive millennials.

To determine these overarching themes, the specific phrases and words resulting from the open coding analysis were entered into an online graphic organizing tool called Wordle. Wordle generated a graphic organizer based upon the number of times a certain word appeared in the short answer responses. The more frequently a word appeared throughout the coding process, the more prominent the word appeared in the graphic. The less frequently the word appeared throughout the coding process, less prominent the word appeared in the graphic. While raw, original data from each respondent was coded for key words and phrases to inform the Wordle, the researcher may have slightly modified various key words and phrases so that the concept would be represented appropriately in the Wordle. For example, if the words “entitlement” and “entitled” were present several times throughout the responses, then the researcher chose to code those responses as “entitled” to represent both key words; therefore, the concept was visually represented in the Wordle as one concept instead of two different concepts. Also, so that “tech
savvy” would not appear as two separate concepts on the Wordle, the researcher hyphenated the words so that they would appear as one concept in the Wordle.

For this qualitative portion of the survey, each respondent was asked to describe a positive experience with a millennial, to describe a negative experience with a millennial, and to provide any additional comments.

Positive Experience with A Millennial

Overall, the word “tech savvy” appeared most frequently in the responses, thus being most prominent word in the Wordle. *Q86: Do you have a positive experience with a millennial that you would like to share in the box below? Please do not use personal identifiers.* There were eleven responses to this question. Specific words and concepts generated the Wordle in Figure 4-1. It can then be interpreted that older generations associate technologically savvy millennials with a positive experience.

Figure 4-1. Positive Experience with A Millennial
Negative Experience with A Millennial

Overall, the words “demanding,” “entitled,” “late,” “missed-deadlines,” and “self-focused,” appeared most frequently in the responses, thus being the most prominent words in the Wordle. Q86: Do you have a negative experience with a millennial that you would like to share in the box below? Please do not use personal identifiers. There were fifteen responses to this question. Specific words and concepts generated the Wordle in Figure 4-2. It can be interpreted that older generations associate these words describing millennials with a negative experience.

Figure 4-2. Negative Experience with A Millennial

Additional Comments

There were no specific words or concepts that featured more prominently than the others.

Q67: Do you have any additional comments? There were five responses to this question.

Specific words and concepts generated the Wordle in Figure 4-3, “succession training” was a
unique concept that did not appear in any of the survey questions or in the other two short answer responses. “Succession training” was referenced in the following response, “There is a tremendous need for succession training (including information as to generational knowledge, challenges and opportunities) in industries currently.” This need for “succession training” is certainly impactful for those engaged in human resources for the agri-workplace. However, the word “agri-industry” was referred to when one respondent stated, “The agri-industry has done a poor job setting the standards and the reason that is, I feel, is due to the [fact that] millennials will just go to a different higher paying industry with less working hours and more freedoms.” It can be interpreted that there is an appetite for developing methods to effectively engage and retain millennials in the agri-workplace.

Figure 4-3. Additional Comments
Summary

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis were utilized to determine older generations’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace. Frequencies and descriptive statistics described the demographic data collected from the respondents. Descriptive statistics described each of the three research objectives: older generations’ perceptual knowledge of millennials, older generations’ attitude toward millennials, and older generations’ behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials in the agri-workplace. Survey responses within each research objective, or construct, was examined in terms of Shaw’s (2013) generational “sticking points” in the workplace. Finally, content analysis examined the short answer questions to determine emergent themes relating to older generations’ perceptions of millennials.

The information gleaned from the survey identified the challenges and opportunities when creating stronger industry relationships within the agri-workplace. The anomaly in the survey results reveals perhaps one of the largest “sticking points” of all; perhaps the agriculture and related industries are unable to or uncomfortable with appropriately addressing generational conflict. Could this be due to the fact that millennials are not provided with the proper platform to create an understanding? Because they aren’t made to feel welcome, are millennials uncomfortable with initiating discussions about generational differences in the agri-workplace? Even more importantly, if millennials aren’t comfortable with initiating these discussions because they are uncomfortable in the agri-workplace setting, will the agriculture and related industries be able to recruit and retain the millennial workforce? Is this where the agriculture and related industries are currently “stuck?” The final chapter discusses where the industry is “stuck,” connects these findings with the theoretical framework for the study, and recommends future research and practice opportunities.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Millennials can often have a negative connotation in the workplace, including being described as entitled and needy. The overall purpose for this study was to initiate a conversation in the agriculture and related industries that promotes the value of effectively harnessing generational diversity to strengthen workplace relationships. This study aimed to encourage workplaces, specifically Georgia’s agri-workplace, to appreciate the differences among each generation as a means of conducting smart business practices. Because this research is situated within a college of agriculture at a land-grant university in the southeastern United States, a key outlet for research implications is with a prominent leadership development program.

Partnering with College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) faculty member Dr. Lauren L. Griffeth, this study described older generations’ perceptions of millennials within Georgia’s agri-workplace, perceptions likely stemming from stereotypes that often cause “generational friction” (Shaw, 2013, p. 4). Shaw (2013) believes that “The same generational conflicts that get teams stuck can cause teams to stick together” (p. 5). He goes on to say that when generational friction occurs, it “usually refers to one of the twelve sticking points- places where teams get stuck” (p. 5) These sticking points were used to craft the questionnaire for this study so that what is perceived as an obstacle to be “stuck” can also be seen as an opportunity to “stick” together.

While the overarching intent was to describe older generations’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace, the following constructs were used to formulate three research
objectives:

1. To describe older generations’ perceptual knowledge of millennials.
2. To describe older generations’ attitudes toward millennials’ behavior.
3. To describe older generations’ behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials into the agri-workplace.

Review of Methods

A modified version of Dillman’s Tailored Design Method was used to develop an online questionnaire to determine older generations’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace. Shaw’s (2013) “sticking points” were used to craft the questionnaire for this study so that what is perceived as an obstacle to be “stuck” can also be seen as an opportunity to “stick” together. For this particular study, the researcher implemented the University of Georgia’s Qualtrics survey tool to craft a questionnaire that measured the respondents’ perceptual knowledge of millennials in the workplace, attitude toward millennials in the workplace, and behavioral intent to incorporate millennials in the workplace; therefore, utilizing a questionnaire as the primary data collection tool complements the goal of collecting each respondent’s knowledge, attitudes, opinions, behaviors and facts about the subject at hand (Radhakrishna, 2007). The investigation into perceptions of the millennial generation focused on the survey responses from a target population that consisted of the volunteer board members from Georgia’s agriculture-related non-profit groups.

Summary of Findings

Chapter 4 reviewed the quantitative and qualitative analyses utilized to determine older generations’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace. This summary of findings gives an
overview of the research results first within each of the three research objective and then within each of the three short answer questions.

Quantitative Data

Research objective one was to describe older generations’ perceptual knowledge of millennials. Participants most frequently agreed that older generations tend to misunderstand millennials, millennials tend to misunderstand older generations, they expect millennials to be more technologically savvy than older generations, and millennials expect to advance too soon in their careers. Respondents frequently disagreed that millennials communicated easily with older generations, millennials possess strong conflict resolution abilities, it is easy to communicate with millennials, older generations make millennials feel welcome into the agri-workplace culture, the agri-workplace is prepared to incorporate millennials into the workplace, and older generations welcome millennials’ contributions to the workplace.

Research objective two was to describe older generations’ attitudes toward millennials’ behavior. Participants often witnessed millennials requiring feedback on projects, millennials asking for additional instruction, millennials using cell phones at inappropriate times, millennials being late for work and millennials leaving work early. Respondents did not often witness conflict arise among the different generations.

Research objective three was to describe older generations’ behavioral intent toward incorporating millennials into the agri-workplace. Respondents believed that their workplace would benefit from strategies to help understand generational differences and that their workplace would utilize strategies to help understand generational differences; however, they more frequently believed that their workplace would benefit from strategies than they believed their workplace would actually utilize those strategies.
Qualitative Data

Overall, the word “tech savvy” appeared most frequently in the eleven responses to the following question: Q86: Do you have a positive experience with a millennial that you would like to share in the box below? Please do not use personal identifiers. It can then be gleaned that older generations associate technologically savvy millennials with a positive experience. In a particular response, one respondent stated, “Generally, I have found that having a structured development plan that the millennial takes ownership of, coupled with frequent, one on one communication is very beneficial to them and our company. Providing and encouraging networking opportunities with other millennials is also helpful.” As a researcher and a millennial in the workplace, this response is encouraging in that it shows a willingness on behalf of the agriculture industry to engage and retain millennials. There is incredible irony in the fact that while most of the respondents had positive feelings for tech savvy millennials, at the same time, most of the respondents witnessed millennials often using their cell phones at inappropriate times. So, while being tech savvy can be an asset to millennials in the workplace, they need to be cognizant of appropriate settings to use technology.

Overall, the words “demanding,” “entitled,” “late,” “missed-deadlines,” and “self-focused,” appeared most frequently in the fifteen responses to the following question: Q68: Do you have a negative experience with a millennial that you would like to share in the box below? Please do not use personal identifiers. It can be gleaned that older generations associate these words describing millennials with a negative experience. With these negative stereotypes being reflected in other industries as well, millennials are generally perceived as being lazy and entitled (Deal and Levenson, 2016), creating a nearly insurmountable barrier for millennials when they are attempting to incorporate themselves into the workplace. Millennials need to be aware of
these perceptions so that they can actively and intentionally present themselves in a manner that
dispels these negative perceptions.

There were no specific words or concepts that featured more prominently than the others in
the five responses to the following question: *Q67: Do you have any additional comments?*

“Succession training” was a unique concept that did not appear in any of the survey questions or in
the other two short answer responses. “Succession training” was referenced in the following
response, “There is a tremendous need for succession training (including information as to
generational knowledge, challenges and opportunities) in industries currently.” This need for
“succession training” is certainly impactful for those engaged in human resources for the agri-
workplace. However, the word “agri-industry” was referred to when one respondent stated, “The
agri-industry has done a poor job setting the standards and the reason that is, I feel, is due to the
[fact that] millennials will just go to a different higher paying industry with less working hours
and more freedoms.” It can be gleaned that there is an appetite for developing methods to
effectively engage and retain millennials in the agri-workplace, something that will be suggested
under recommendations for further practice section of this chapter. Another interesting thought
included, “I believe millennials have the potential to bring a lot of skills and energy to any
organization. The diversity of thought is valuable.” Key concepts from this statement such as
“millennials have a lot of potential” and that “diversity of thought is valuable.” This shows that
people in the agri-workplace want to see millennials succeed and that they believe millennials
could bring something valuable to the table; however, millennials need to realize that work must
be done on their part to prove themselves valuable members of the workplace.
Key Findings and Implications

Overall, the respondents’ perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace tended to align with perceptions of millennials in other industries. For instance, respondents tended to perceive millennials as tech-savvy, entitled, self-centered, demanding, impatient and unappreciative. However, unlike what the larger body of research discusses, we were surprised to learn the majority of the respondents disagreed that multiple generations in the agri-workplace can lead to conflict, and that they did not witness conflict arise among the different generations often. With all of the negativity surrounding millennials and with all that we know about the bio-sociological aspects of communication theory, it is difficult to imagine that workplace conflict would not result. This disparity in the survey results reveals perhaps one of the largest “sticking points” of all; perhaps the agriculture and related industries are unable to or are uncomfortable with appropriately addressing generational conflict. After all, respondents disagreed that millennials possess strong conflict resolution abilities, and they disagreed that millennials communicated easily with older generations. Respondents disagreed that older generations welcome millennials’ contributions to the workplace, and they even disagreed that millennials feel welcome into the agri-workplace culture

These findings reveal that negative perceptions of millennials arguably stem from miscommunication across generations, a miscommunication that results in a crippling misunderstanding of intentions and roles in the workplace. Patterson’s beliefs support the notion that misunderstanding is at the cornerstone of miscommunication when he states, "A lack of understanding across generations can have detrimental effects on communication and working relationships and undermine effective services" (Dittmann, 2005, p. 54). Such a misunderstanding is so demanding that an entire industry does not believe that conflict occurs in
the workplace because of generational differences, yet older generations collectively think so poorly of a generation that will dominate the workforce within the next decade; in fact, the majority of the survey respondents disagreed that they felt good knowing millennials would dominate the workforce within the next decade. Thus, we believe that effectively assimilating millennials into the workplace begins with meaningful communication across generations. Referencing Figure 5-1 below, we suggest incorporating generational theory as an umbrella theory to guide the conceptual framework for further study; however, bio-sociological aspects of communication are at the root of cultivating an understanding among the different generations across the agri-workplace. Hopefully after a mutual understanding occurs, then the agri-industry will feel comfortable amicably discussing generational diversity.

Figure 5-1. Conceptual Framework

In Examining Workplace Conflict Among Different Generations

Communication theory from a socio-psychological perspective was utilized to study the relationships among the different coworkers in the workplace and the communication challenges that those differences can present in everyday interactions. How people interact with the world is a fine balance of psychological mechanisms that people must try to control. “Social psychological implies a strong moral imperative that we as individual communicators should
make responsible choices based on scientific evidence concerning the likely consequences of our messages” (Craig, 1999, p. 144). Bio-sociological roles are particularly interesting because it is a role that is determined by one’s natural occupation in a particular environment, whether it be at home, at work or as a member of a team. This is different from gender roles, because bio-sociological roles are not about being a male or a female; however, bio-sociological roles are about someone’s role in a natural order within a type of cohort, like in generations.

Each generation presents different perceived roles, both self-perceived and perceived by others. This brings about utilizing role theory as a way to explain why generation differences are so difficult to overcome in the workplace when they are differing. Zemke et al. (2013) describe different generations as generational cohorts. These cohorts are groups of people who share birth years, history, and a collective personality. This collective personality develops as a result of their defining experiences. Each generation is ultimately defined in social and cultural terms by the commonality of “its times and tastes” (Zemke et al., 2013, p. 16). In fact, each bond is so strong that “generational commonalities cut across racial, ethnic, and economic differences” (Zemke et al., 2013, p.).

The different roles in the workplace that each employee may carry with them due to the different times in which they were born could certainly cause confusion among the workplace regarding what role each person is supposed to occupy. When people of different generations are intermingled in the same environment, people tend to change or accommodate their communication styles to compliment (convergence), contrast (divergence), or sustain (maintenance) the style of the interlocutor; however, this is amplified in intergenerational communication, resulting in overaccomodation, which has been “studied extensively in the context of intergenerational communication” (Dragojevic et al., 2015, p. 8). Furthermore,
stereotypes of these generations can add to the confusion in communicating across generations, and “these perceptions are often exaggerated and reflect negative age stereotypes” (Dragojevic et al., 2015, p. 8). When these perceptions are taken in a negative context, then divergence is likely to be displayed during conversation in order to show differences, resulting in miscommunication among different generations. These communication styles, specifically divergence, which is microaggressive in nature, can be used as a lens to explore miscommunication among different generations. When “frequent, inappropriate, misconceived talk” takes place among different age cohorts, “consequences might be irritation and dissatisfaction - ultimately for both parties involved” (Coupland et al., 1988, p. 9). When intentions are miscommunicated, negative behaviors can result, confusing relationships and roles in a workplace.

Recommendations for Research

With baby boomers retiring and with millennials migrating to more urban settings, it is projected that by 2030, the agriculture and forestry industries will be tasked with filling a ten percent loss in total employers (Georgia Chamber of Commerce, 2016). This employment gap will only continue to widen as Agcareers.com Human Resources Services Manager Melinda Mullenix states, “Seventy-five percent of agribusiness employers will see one to five percent of their work-force retire in the next one to two years, and ten percent will see six to ten per-cent exit the workforce during that same time period” (Hoffman, p. 14). Millennials are projected to dominate the workforce within the decade; coupled with the knowledge that jobs in the agricultural industry will outnumber graduates in the next five years and that the workforce intended to fill these jobs in leaving the rural areas of the state where these jobs are primarily available, the agriculture and related industries should be proactive in recruiting millennials.
This poses a challenge to the agriculture and related industries to do everything in their power to not only market the jobs to millennials, but to use best practices to retain them as well. Sayers (2007) further supports the idea that “workforce planning and generational change have become critical issues for organizations forced to compete for increasingly scarce human resources” (p. 474). The fact that respondents disagreed that the agri-workplace is prepared to incorporate millennials into the workplace demonstrates the need for strategies to engage millennials in the agri-workplace. Perhaps millennials feel that they are not provided with the proper platform to create an understanding. Because it is perceived that millennials aren’t made to feel welcome, maybe millennials are uncomfortable with initiating discussions about generational differences in the agri-workplace. Even more importantly, if millennials aren’t comfortable with initiating these discussions because they are uncomfortable in the agri-workplace setting, the agriculture and related industries must be introspective about best practices to recruit and retain the millennial workforce. Could these notions signify where the agriculture and related industries are currently “stuck?”

To proactively address the challenges referenced above, the following recommendations are possible topics for future study:

1. A mixed methods study, using the Shaw’s (2013) “sticking points” referenced within the research objectives in this questionnaire, to determine millennials’ perceptions of older generations in Georgia’s agri-workplace

2. An evaluation of exit interviews that a third-party would perform when millennials leave a current position for a position either with a different agriculture-related company or for a position outside of the agriculture industry.
3. A mixed methods study that recommends specific strategies for employers to utilize when effectively incorporating millennials into the agri-workplace.

4. A longitudinal study that evaluates the effectiveness of the strategies referenced in the first recommendation.

The above recommendations would contribute to a greater body of knowledge to formulate a more holistic approach for employers and millennials alike when addressing generational diversity in Georgia’s agri-workplace.

**Recommendations for Practice**

Georgia’s economy and the rural communities that are the lifeblood of the agriculture and related industries cannot afford for the agriculture companies to provide anything but an environment that is conducive to millennial engagement. If millennials are not attracted to these agriculture and related industries, then what does that mean for the sustainability of Georgia agriculture and the state’s economy within the next decade and beyond? However, there are communication barriers that must be overcome so that Georgia’s agri-workplace effectively recruits and retains millennials. As referenced in Deyoe and Fox (2012), “DiRomualdo (2006) and Wesner & Miller (2008) suggest that approaching generational conflict is simply changing a way of thinking that has occurred before” (p. 13), and this study will begin a conversation that has never formally taken place in Georgia’s agri-workplace.

It is the researchers’ belief that an industry is only as strong as the quality of its relationships, even if strengthening those relationships means revolutionizing the way in which those relationships are approached. To overcome these communication barriers and to strengthen industry relationships, the researchers recommend that the following practices must occur in Georgia’s agriculture and related industries.
The findings from this study should be shared with millennials enrolled in agriculture related majors at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, GA and at the University of Georgia in Athens, GA so that they can increase their self-awareness about how their behavior is affecting Georgia’s agri-workplace. The findings from this study should be shared with other key stakeholders, like employers, to discuss best practices to engage millennials in Georgia’s agri-workplace. The findings from this study should be shared with the following agricultural leadership development programs directed by Dr. Lauren L. Griffeth at the University of Georgia to enhance instruction: Advancing Georgia’s Leaders in Agriculture and Forestry, ExTEND Advanced Leadership Training Program, Extension Academy for Professional Excellence. The findings from this study should be shared with agriculture research institutions throughout the Southeast in an effort begin a regional conversation about millennial engagement in the agri-workplace.

The above recommendations for employers, millennials and agriculture related educational institutions would create a forum for meaningful conversations that discuss practical strategies to enhance communication and to positively harness generational diversity in Georgia’s agri-workplace. Now is the time for productive discussion to take place so that Georgia’s agri-workplace can proactively transform perceived obstacles where they “stuck” into obstacles to “stick” together, thereby forging stronger industry relationships for Georgia’s strongest industry.
REFERENCES


doi:10.1017/cbo9780511663673.001


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB Approval

May 12, 2016

Dear LAUREN GRIFFETH:

On 5/12/2016, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

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<th>Type of Review:</th>
<th>Initial Study</th>
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<tr>
<td>Title of Study:</td>
<td>Perceptions of Millennials in the Agri-Workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigator:</td>
<td>LAUREN GRIFFETH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB ID:</td>
<td>STUDY00003269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
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<td>Grant ID:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The IRB approved the protocol from 5/12/2016.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

Dr. Gerald E. Crites, MD, MEd
University of Georgia
Institutional Review Board Chairperson
APPENDIX B

Qualtrics Questionnaire

Perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace

Q90 Thank you so much for clicking on the link to complete this survey. Your anonymous responses are valuable and will contribute to a greater understanding of generational differences in today's work environment, specifically in the agri-workplace. By continuing this survey, you understand that your responses will likely be used for analysis. Quick Definitions: For the purposes of this survey.... agri-workplace is considered any company, organization or association that works in the any of the following sectors: forestry, agriculture, natural resources, government, food distribution, rural economic development, Extension, banking or the farm credit system. Anytime the word "workplace" is presented in a question, this is synonymous with "agri-workplace"; so, they can be used interchangeably. millennials refers to an individual who was born in 1980 or thereafter, thus being considered a member of the millennial generation.
Q65 Part 1: Please select your level of agreement to the following statements.

Q18 millennials dress professionally.
- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q6 millennials are efficient.
- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q80 millennials expect career advancement and promotion in the workplace too early in their careers.
- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Q7 millennials are lacking in basic skills.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q81 I would rank millennials' work ethic as excellent.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q79 millennials prefer to work in non-traditional work environments, like a coffee shop.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Q5 millennials are ready, willing and able to succeed.

☐ Strongly agree (1)
☐ Somewhat agree (2)
☐ Somewhat disagree (3)
☐ Strongly disagree (4)

Q3 millennials desire a work-life balance more than the older generations.

☐ Strongly agree (1)
☐ Somewhat agree (2)
☐ Somewhat disagree (3)
☐ Strongly disagree (4)

Q4 millennials expect to advance too soon in their careers without "paying their dues."

☐ Strongly agree (1)
☐ Somewhat agree (2)
☐ Somewhat disagree (3)
☐ Strongly disagree (4)
Q8 millennials require more accommodations in the agri-workplace than the older generations.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q9 millennials enhance my organization/company's reputation in a positive way.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q2 The agri-workplace is prepared to incorporate millennials into the workplace.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Q10 millennials appreciate the status quo.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q11 millennials respect the foundation built by older generations.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q12 Older generations make millennials feel welcome into the agri-workplace culture.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Q13 As long as your work is completed, it does not matter how many hours you work a day.

○ Strongly agree (1)
○ Somewhat agree (2)
○ Somewhat disagree (3)
○ Strongly disagree (4)

Q16 Millennials bring positive attributes to the agri-workplace.

○ Strongly agree (1)
○ Somewhat agree (2)
○ Somewhat disagree (3)
○ Strongly disagree (4)

Q17 Millennials receive criticism well.

○ Strongly agree (1)
○ Somewhat agree (2)
○ Somewhat disagree (3)
○ Strongly disagree (4)
Q19 It is important for millennials to know that their work is contributing to the organization as a whole.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q20 When millennials ask questions, I think they are insecure about their abilities to complete the task at hand.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q21 Millennials are loyal to their organization/company

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Q23 I expect millennials to be more technologically savvy than older generations.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q24 The organization/company I work for is fortunate to have millennials working there.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q78 I feel excited to work with millennials.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Q25 The organization/company I work for is fortunate to have millennials working there.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q26 Millennials are comfortable with implementing change in the agri-workplace.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q27 I feel good knowing that millennials will dominate the workplace in the next decade.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Q28 millennials are known for job hopping until they find a job that suits them.
- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q57 millennials are skilled at implementing change.
- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q58 Older generations welcome millennials' contributions to the workplace.
- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Q59 millennials expect change to occur in the workplace too soon.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q60 Older generations tend to misunderstand millennials.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q61 millennials tend to misunderstand older generations.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Q62 Multiple generations in the workplace can lead to conflict.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q56 Millennials communicate easily with older generations.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q29 Millennials are impatient.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Q30 millennials are entitled.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q54 millennials possess strong conflict resolution abilities.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q82 It is important to provide millennials positive feedback when they have completed a project successfully.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Q75 I feel comfortable working with millennials.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q53 It is easy to communicate with millennials.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q31 Millennials are strong leaders.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Q32 millennials have potential to be strong leaders.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q33 My workplace would be more productive if millennials were not there.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q34 millennials threaten the integrity of my company/organization.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Part 2: Please select how often you have witnessed the behaviors described below.

Q38 millennials use their cell phones at inappropriate times.

- Never (1)
- Sometimes (2)
- Most of the time (3)
- Always (4)

Q39 millennials work within the normal business hours, like from 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

- Never (1)
- Sometimes (2)
- Most of the time (3)
- Always (4)

Q40 millennials care about the quality of their work.

- Never (1)
- Sometimes (2)
- Most of the time (3)
- Always (4)
Q41 millennials are respectful to older generations.
- Never (1)
- Sometimes (2)
- Most of the time (3)
- Always (4)

Q43 millennials complete projects in a timely manner.
- Never (1)
- Sometimes (2)
- Most of the time (3)
- Always (4)

Q47 millennials require feedback during a project __________.
- Never (1)
- Sometimes (2)
- Most of the time (3)
- Always (4)
Q52 millennials prefer to collaborate on projects.
   ○ Never (1)
   ○ Sometimes (2)
   ○ Most of the time (3)
   ○ Always (4)

Q48 millennials ask for additional instruction.
   ○ Never (1)
   ○ Sometimes (2)
   ○ Most of the time (3)
   ○ Always (4)

Q88 It is acceptable for older generations to work from a non-traditional location, such as a coffee shop.
   ○ Never (1)
   ○ Sometimes (2)
   ○ Most of the time (3)
   ○ Always (4)
Q49 How often are millennials late for work?

- Never (1)
- Sometimes (2)
- Most of the time (3)
- Always (4)

Q50 How often do millennials leave work early?

- Never (1)
- Sometimes (2)
- Most of the time (3)
- Always (4)

Q51 How often does conflict arise among the different generations in your office?

- Never (1)
- Sometimes (2)
- Most of the time (3)
- Always (4)
Q63 Part 3: Please answer the following to the best of your ability.

Q66 My workplace would benefit from strategies to help understand generational differences.
- Strongly Agree (1)
- Maybe (2)
- Quite Likely (3)
- Definitely (4)

Q89 My workplace would utilize strategies to help understand generational differences.
- Strongly Agree (1)
- Maybe (2)
- Quite Likely (3)
- Definitely (4)

Q86 Do you have a positive experience with a millennial that you would like to share in the box below? Please do not use personal identifiers.

Q68 Do you have a negative experience with a millennial that you would like to share in the box below? Please do not use personal identifiers.

Q67 Do you have any additional comments?
Q69 Part 4: Please tell us about yourself.

Q70 Please select your gender.
- Male (1)
- Female (2)

If Male Is Selected, Then Skip To Please select your race.

Q71 Please select your race.
- African-American (1)
- Asian (2)
- Caucasian (3)
- Hispanic (4)
- Native American (5)
- Other (6)

Q37 The agri-workplace tends to be a traditional working environment.
- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)
Q72 Are you the formal leader of a non-profit? (e.g., executive director, president, etc.)

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Display This Question:
If Please list the volunteer boards that you serve. No Is Selected

Q92 Please list your employer. (e.g., AgSouth Farm Credit, Kroger, etc.)

Display This Question:
If Please list the volunteer boards that you serve. No Is Selected

Q74 Please list the volunteer board(s) that you serve. (e.g., FFA Association, 4-H Foundation, etc.)

Q73 Please write the year you were born in the space below.
If Please write the year you w... Is Greater Than 1981, Then Skip To End of Survey
APPENDIX C

Verbal Script

Perceptions of Millennials Recruitment Script

(Could be Discussed via E-mail or Face-to-Face)

Dr. Lauren Griffeth, faculty member, and Anna Strickland, Master’s student, both at the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, are co-investigating a pilot study on generational differences in the agri-work place, primarily focusing on older generations’ perceptions of the millennial generation.

The target population for the study is the board members of various agri-organizations, including the formal leaders of those organizations (e.g. executive director, president, etc.), within the agriculture industry and related sectors. Data collection involves the target population completing a one-time 45-minute survey before October 2016. After all data is collected, the results will be shared with the participants by Spring of 2017.

The purpose of this pilot study is to help millennials better understand other generations’ perceptions of their behavior in the workplace, specifically the agri-workplace. The findings from the survey will serve as a tool to reveal what older generations perceive about millennials in general, what older generations think about millennials’ behavior and how they feel about working with millennials. millennials will likely utilize these findings in an effort to become
more self-aware about how their behavior is affecting their workplace, both positively and negatively.

For the purposes of this study, agri-workplace is considered any company, organization or association that works in the any of the following sectors: forestry, agriculture, natural resources, government, food distribution, rural economic development, Extension, banking or the farm credit system. Anytime the word "workplace" is presented in a question, this is synonymous with "agri-workplace"; so, they can be used interchangeably. Millennial refers to an individual who was born in 1981 or thereafter, thus being considered a member of the millennial generation.

Your participation in completing the survey is completely voluntary. Should you choose to complete the survey, it is important for you to recognize that people exhibit individual characteristics regardless of their generation group; therefore, this survey is meant to capture your general perceptions of the millennial workforce as a whole and not your perceptions of a particular individual. Your responses will be kept anonymous and completely confidential.

Those who serve as a board member for multiple organizations should complete only one survey.

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<tr>
<th>Face-to-Face Scenario:</th>
<th>E-mail Scenario:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Do you think you might be willing to participate?</td>
<td>If you are indeed willing to participate, please sign the attached consent form. Keep one for your records and return one to me. For your convenience, there are two different versions of the form - a PDF form and a fillable PDF. Please sign either version of form and return one copy to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• (If no, thank them for their time. If yes, then continue.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you for your willingness to participate! Please sign both copies of the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consent form-keep one for your records and return one to me. Tomorrow, you will receive an e-mail with the link to complete the survey.</td>
<td>Anna Strickland via the “Submit Form Button” or e-mail it to <a href="mailto:annamac00@gmail.com">annamac00@gmail.com</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact Dr. Lauren Griffeth at 706-542-4753/lauren1@uga.edu or Anna Strickland at 770-851-5351 or <a href="mailto:annamac00@gmail.com">annamac00@gmail.com</a>.</td>
<td>After we receive the consent form from you, you will receive a second e-mail with the link to complete the survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you have questions, you are encouraged to contact: Dr. Lauren Griffeth at 706-542-4753/lauren1@uga.edu or Anna Strickland at 770-851-5351 or <a href="mailto:annamac00@gmail.com">annamac00@gmail.com</a>.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
APPENDIX D

Consent Form

You are being invited to participate in a research study entitled *Perceptions of millennials in the agri-workplace*. The goal of this pilot study is to help millennials better understand other generations’ perceptions of their behavior in the workplace.

Your participation will involve allowing the researchers to use the information/data that is collected through your completing a survey— that is all that participation entails. The findings from the survey will serve as a tool to reveal what older generations perceive about millennials in general, what older generations think about millennials’ behavior and how they feel about working with millennials. Your responses will be kept anonymous and completely confidential.

Your participation, of course, is voluntary but would be greatly appreciated. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you agree to the use of your information/data for this research project, please simply sign on the line below; if you don’t agree, none of your data will be included in the research and you can still participate in the program. If you chose to not participate, the investigator will honor your request to destroy your data and exclude it from analysis. If you decide to stop or withdraw from the study, the information/data collected from or about you up to the point of your withdrawal will be kept as a part of the study and continue to be analyzed.
Should you choose to complete the survey, it is important for you to recognize that people exhibit individual characteristics regardless of their generation group; therefore, this survey is meant to capture your general perceptions of the millennial workforce as a whole and not your perceptions of a particular individual.

The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used. Published results from the survey will be presented in summary form. Data will be accessible by the research team with no direct identifiers. There are no known risks associated with this research. Overall, your survey responses will provide insight into the different factors contributing to workplace conflict due to generational differences within Georgia’s agri-workplace. Millennials will likely utilize these findings in an effort to become more self-aware about how their behavior is affecting their workplace, both positively and negatively.

Dr. Lauren Griffeth and Anna Strickland are co-investigating this pilot study. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact Anna Strickland at 770-851-5351 or annamac00@gmail.com.

Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, telephone 706-542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.
Research Subject’s Consent to Participate in Research:

I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Anna Strickland

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.