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# HOW DO THEY FIT IN?:
# MILLENNIALS IN THE WORKPLACE

by

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for the degree of Master of Arts
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# ABSTRACT

In some organizations four generations work together creating a unique culture. Millennials are the second largest generation currently in the workforce. Organizational culture is affected by interpersonal communication. Interviews were conducted with 17 workers between the ages of 19 and 30. Interviews consisted of 22 open-ended questions regarding daily tasks, organized activities, and interpersonal interaction. The perspective of organizational culture was evaluated through personal, task, social, and organizational rituals. Membership categorization was used to determine common vocabulary used to identify with coworkers. Duck's theory on attraction was used to evaluate interpersonal behavior seeking to determine psychological attractors acting as catalysts for relationship building. Data found suggests that Millennials create a culture similar to the tribal example suggested in previous research. Rituals act as forms of cultural dissemination and strengthening. The use of membership categorization devices reflected the structure of the organization and relationships between coworkers. Using Duck's attraction theory, an analysis reflected the identification factors that act as catalysts for relationships. Psychological attraction was linked to common interests.

This work is dedicated to my family and friends who have supported me and cheered me on during every stage of my non-traditional college student experience.

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# CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

**How Do They Fit In?: Millennials in the Workplace**

Employees spend upwards of two-thirds of their day interacting with coworkers and building relationships as well as learning and enacting company policies. Any good manager can tell you that happy employees equal productivity (Harter, Schmidt, Asplund, Killham, & Agrawal, 2010). Although in scholarly research the jury is still debating the truth of such claims (Wright, Cropanzano, Denney & Moline, 2002), business professionals express the opinion that happy workers work harder and express job satisfaction (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). Job satisfaction comes when employees are able to identify with the company and their coworkers (Asgari, Nojavaee & Hadipoor, 2011). Corporations are in the middle of an evolution of technology and communication culture. Organizational leaders find themselves challenged by the expansion of today's workforce that includes members from four generations with differing work ethics and communication styles (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). Communication processes facilitate the assimilation of individuals into a cohesive team (Meyers & Sadaghiani, 2010). However, each generation communicates in its own way conveying values, ethics, and principles differently often to the point of creating conflict (Crowley, 2011; Schoch, 2012; Meyers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

Organizational leaders must maintain a productive environment. Considering that today most people spend more waking hours at work than they do anywhere else makes it necessary for company leaders to understand how the differences in communication styles are affecting the culture of their corporations. Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (2000) explain how the generational

differences often create an 'us versus them' environment when employees from different generations are required to work together. However, this type of conflict does not bode well for the development of an organizational culture that leads to a successful company. Gaining an understanding of how members of the different generations view each other and integrate their styles will help corporate leadership improve work experiences and reduce workplace conflict (Zemke, et al., 2000).

Studies in generational differences within the realm of communication scholarship are limited. Most information available revolves around human resources management. These studies, focused on work ethics and values, and identify trait differences between generations that affect workers' commitment to the organization (Hanson & Leuty, 2012). They do not, however, provide insight into relationship building between workers, nor how workers create and recreate the social experiences of work. They also do not provide any understanding related specifically to the Millennials.

Millennials are the second largest generation to join the workforce with the largest being the Baby Boomers (U.S. Department of Vital Statistics, 2012). With members of the Silent Generation (defined later), facing the twilight of their years in the workforce, Millennials stand poised to take their place as the next most influential generation. Unlike their older coworkers who had to learn as technology developed, Millennials grew up with the tools such as computers, cell phones, and instant messaging that currently dominate communication practices in the workplace. This technology plays a large role in how Millennials communicate with each other, as well as how they identify with and relate to their peers. However, in the workplace their

identification and communication must adapt to those whose styles differ in order to develop satisfying working relationships with their older counterparts. The way Millennials communicate and identify with coworkers, their perceptions of coworkers, the goals and perspectives they have, and their way of developing relationships have an impact on organizational culture and may challenge traditional organizational norms.

Members of the Millennials generation were born after1982 (Giancola, 2006). To gain a better understanding of the communication style of the members of the Millennials three theoretical perspectives of workplace communication provide insight. By focusing on theories of organizational culture, membership categorization, and interpersonal attraction this study seeks to reveal some perceptions that Millennials have of other generational coworkers.  In addition, by understanding how Millennials use organizational rituals, interpersonal communication characteristics, and attraction tenets, this study will explore ways that Millennials attempt to identify with and develop interpersonal relationships with their coworkers from other generations. The newest generation's different communication style and work ethic presents an opportunity to expand the discussion about intergenerational communication in the workplace. This case study will provide a framework for addressing the topic on a larger scale. The small group of employees interviewed is a sample of the currently expanding workforce providing the challenge to leaders managing multiple generations at many organizations.

The expansion of the workforce to include members of the four current generations has created new challenges for human resources professionals and those in management positions. The various communication styles of each generation can be cause for new types of conflict in

the workplace. The differences in personal rituals reflect the changes in how workers identify and connect with each other. Learning the way younger individuals categorize coworkers and what characteristics attract them to develop relationships with their older counterparts can help us better understand the changing workplace.

# CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

The Industrial Revolution, which spanned the latter portion of the 19th Century, changed the dynamic of how people worked together, bringing people out of family dominant organizations from all parts of the country into one location to create one culture out of many. Although the workers came from different age groups, they shared many of the same work ethics and communication styles that developed within their family units. At that time, the factories focused mostly on creating products to sell. Workers' needs or personal accomplishments were the last consideration of management (Kluge, 1993). The concern of managers was not creating a comfortable and unified work environment, much less understanding how the workers affected the company's culture. Industry thrived at the expense of workers' well-being (Kluge, 1993). Principles of scientific management had a major impact on industry during the turn of the century (Guillén, 1997). Workers, seen as parts of a machine gained little appreciation from managers during much of the industrial age (Guillén, 1997; Kluge, 1993). It was not until the early 20th Century when a less scientific approach to organizational studies addressed workers and organizational culture (Guillén, 1997).

The Progressive Movement, developing in the 1880s and continuing into the 1920s has, with its social and political focus introduced a new perspective regarding workers and their effects on organizations (Guillén, 1997). It challenged the beliefs that had driven the business leaders to success, claiming that everyone had the ability to change society, no matter his or her position (Sage, 2010). Progressive activists believed that times needed to change from the

individualistic ideals of the Gilded Age that punctuated the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and

growth of industry that brought about poverty and overcrowding (Schmitt, 2010). They believed

that community was important and that a sense of belonging to something greater than oneself

and respect from others drove individual and business success. Progressives wanted a society in

which citizenship and humanity guided the decisions of all members of the community,

including management (Schmitt, 20102). They worked to bring this philosophy into the entirety

of society during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Today's companies face new economic,

social, and political uncertainty that makes scientific management's approach to organizational

development much less effective (Gayeski, 1992). Following the lead of the Progressives,

industry leaders seek ways to build company leadership and communication that encourages

employees to become more involved in the development of the organization and its

organizational culture (Gayeski, 1992). Even more so today, the Progressive philosophy of

belonging to a society or organization resonates as leaders work to manage employees with

varying ideas of social and organizational structure because of their generational differences.

Over the past century, research on how organizational communication developed and

changed has provided ways to understand and improve work conditions and relationships for

employees (Cheney, 1983). As work conditions improved for employees through the Progressive

Movement, organizations and their employees began to develop a sense of belonging and with

that their own cultures. Much of past organizational communication theory was centered on the

idea that communication was nothing more than information transfer; however, Pacanowsky and

O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) provide a different perspective. They infer the idea that organizations

are more like tribes than machines. In their interpretation, the idea of a tribal culture reflects in

the development of the organization's culture. In the tribal perspective Pacanowsky and

O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) suggest the connection between organizational culture and language

use. Language use suggests a continued development, rather than a stagnant existence. Just as

tribes grow and change as new members contribute to the culture, so too does the culture of an

organization change and grow as members come and go. The study of organizational culture

brought about the development of communication theories derived from sociological theories.

These theories attempt to explain how workers come together to bond and create a unique

environment in which all members have a place and function, leading to the success of the

company (Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996).  This bonding through communication

creates and recreates the organization's culture. Organizations are social structures because the

people who make them up are social beings (Smith, 2010).  According to Smith (2010, p. 18)

"social structures are real entities with causal powers generated through emergence from the

tension created between human capacities and limits as given by the nature of the real world."

Daily interaction among coworkers constructs and re-constructs the culture of an organization.

As more research becomes available, management training continues to evolve to

incorporate understanding the differences between the generations and how they face workplace

challenges (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000). Johnson and Johnson (2010) explain that

managers must know enough about the differences in the generations to manage effectively.

Researchers show that individuals bring to the workplace their personal experiences and the

traits that link them to the generation in which they belong (Giancola, 2006; Johnson & Johnson,

2010). These traits also affect their personal behaviors, habits, the language, and vocabulary they use, and their communication styles. A general breakdown of the years of birth provides guidance for understanding the generations and the social factors that tend to shape their communication, attitudes, and ethics. This study focuses on the Millennials; however, a brief description of the preceding generations as well as the Millennials may shed light on generational differences that help provide the context for this study.

## Defining the Generations

Johnson and Johnson (2010) expand the Merriam-Webster definition of generation to "a group of individuals born and living contemporaneously who have common knowledge and experiences that affect their thoughts, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors" (Kindle Location 99). Debate occurs among authors about the exact time lines delineating each generation because of major social, political, and economic events. Johnson and Johnson (2010) refer to those individuals born near the beginning and end of each timeline as Cuspers, as they may share the major events of both generations. Guided by most of the same major historical events, the definitions used by most authors typically encompass much of the same decades.

Born between 1925 and 1942 the Silent (also known as the Traditional or Veteran) generation came to maturity during World War II (Giancola, 2006). The oldest members spent their formative years learning to preserve what little they had during the Great Depression (1930s to 1940s). Their parents, if employed were grateful for their position and believed in loyalty to their employer even though the industrial age placed little value on them as individuals (Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Kluge, 1993). Silent Generation members often spent as much as 40 years at

one job (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). Many of those born in the early part of generational timeline fought in World War II. Loyalty that passed down to their children was a common theme that resonated through the Silent generation. Many of their younger counterparts fought in Korea and Viet Nam alongside the Baby Boomers born between 1943 and 1960(Giancola, 2006).

The prosperity that followed World War II marked the beginning of the Baby Boomer generation. Named for an increased population of live births after World War II, this group is the largest in the history of the United States (U.S. Dept. of Vital Statistics, 2012). More babies had been born by the end of the 1940s compared with the number born in the 1930s with a continuing upward population climb culminating in the mid-1960s (U.S. Dept. of Vital Statistics, 2012).  The graph in Figure 1 reflects the birthrates over the decades clearly showing the baby boom. Baby Boomers are also known as the Woodstock generation (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). Danielsen (2011) recalls growing up during the time of the Hippie movement, and the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. Seventy-plus million Baby Boomers influenced by strong political events, the first televised images of war, and various social movements began to focus on other aspects of life than reproduction. Thanks to women's education and work opportunities along with birth control, they ushered in the smallest generation in American history, Generation X (Johnson & Johnson, 2010).
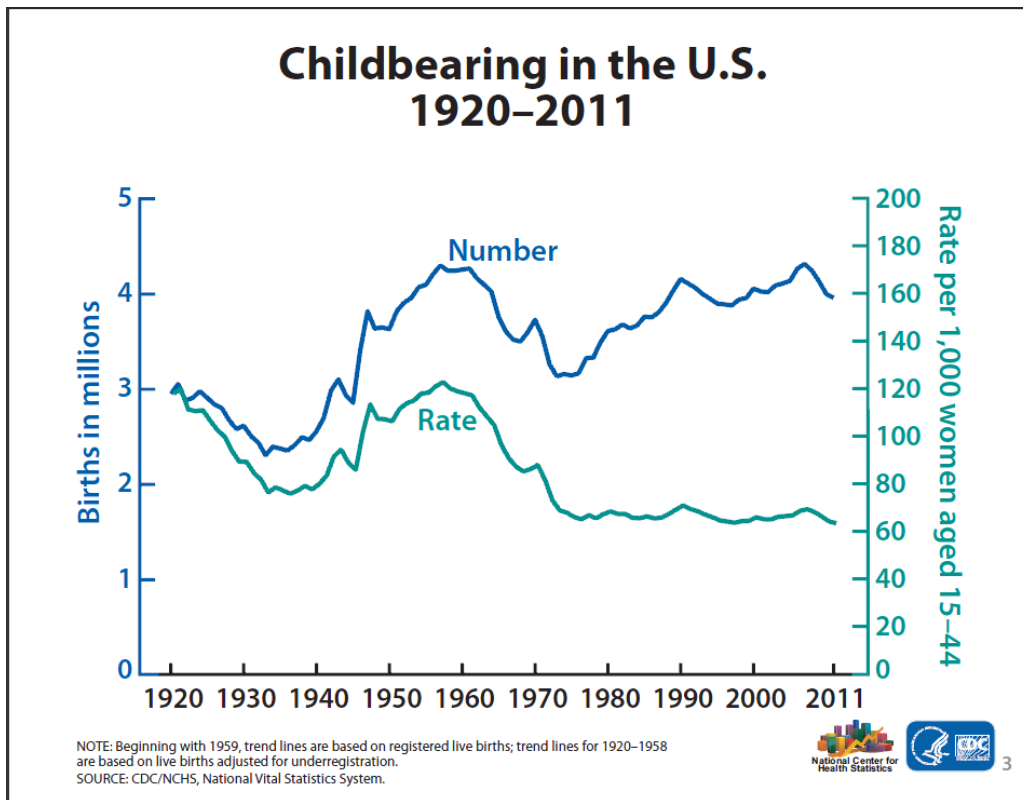
Figure 1 Childbearing in the US 1920-2011 (U.S. Department of Vital Statistics)

Generation Xers are those born between 1961 and 1981 relatively speaking (Giancola, 2006). This generation saw major changes to the nuclear family (Danielsen, 2011). High divorce rates and families with two-working parents left many children fending for themselves, bringing about the term "Latchkey kids" (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). Quality time versus quantity instilled a strong sense of family in the members of Generation X (Danielsen, 2011). Between this, the ticking biological clocks of the Baby Boomers who had postponed their families for their careers, and second families coming out of the divorced population, the birthrate again increased bringing us the second largest generational population who are currently filling the

workplace, the Millennials (Johnson& Johnson, 2010; Giancola, 2006). The youngest generation today is the up and coming Generation Z.

**Who Are the Millennials?**

The Millennials, sometimes referred to as Generation Y are those members of the population born after 1980.  Some researchers put their birth years beginning in 1982 and concluding near the end of the 1990s (Coomes, 2004; Danielsen, 2011; Giancola, 2006; Johnson & Johnson, 2010). This generation reached maturity in the early part of the 21$^{st}$ Century. At 70-million strong, events such as the death of Princess Diana in 1997, the Columbine High School shootings (1999), and the events of September 11, 2001 influence their world-view (Coomes, 2004). They grew up during a time of economic growth and technological development (Coomes, 2004; Giancola, 2006).  They gained much of their social development from popular culture through such icons as the Olsen twins and Harry Potter, the Real World, and the Osborne's (Coomes, 2004). They are advocates of the environment and support ecological movements such as recycling, reducing their "carbon foot-print," and wildlife protection (Snow, 2011). The Millennials raised by "helicopter parents," had every aspect of their educational and social lives organized and supervised during their formative years because their Generation X parents wanted to make sure they did not make the same mistakes their own parents made (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). Finally, they grew up with all of the most current technology such as mobile telephones, video and television recording devices, and mobile computers (Beckman, 2011). Often called "Entitled Ones" because of their parents over-indulgence, they value work and personal life balance more than any other generation and have yet to develop a commitment

to their employer in the same sense that their predecessors had (Danielsen, 2011). According to

Johnson and Johnson (2010), they have one of the highest turnover rates compared to their

parents and grandparents. They find their identity outside the workplace rather than from their

work as their grandparents once did (Giancola, 2006).

**Millennials in the Workplace**

For the first time in history, the workforce contains members from four different

generations, whose differing worldviews, work ethics, communication styles, and personal

beliefs weigh heavily on the creation of workplace culture (Giancola, 2006). Each generation

exhibits traits influenced by the major social events of the era in which they came to maturity

(Giancola, 2006). Bratu (2011) describes the development of an organization as a socially

constructed system created by shared goals and values. However, Giancola (2006), Johnson and

Johnson (2010), and Zemke, et al. (2000) remind us that each generation has different goals and

values. Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) in their comparison of the creation of an

organization to the formation of a tribe, believe that organizations and the communication that

occurs within them develop within the context in which they occur, creating socially constructed

meanings. They explain that organizations reflect a contextual development rather than a

systematic formation. This contextual development comes from the interactions of the

individuals during their daily communication. Furthermore, they note how earlier concepts of

organizational communication development based on the systems approach inferred that

organizations and the communication within fit the model of information processing. Perhaps the

development of organizational culture brings together both; the concept of shared goals and

values, and contextually constructed shared meaning considering how coworkers bring together their differences and find common communication, goals, and values that over shadow their generational differences.

In general, the development of culture assumes common beliefs, shared interests, goals, and attitudes. However, this concept implies that those who come together to create a culture already have these shared traits.  Within the environment of a blended organization, one that includes members with varying goals, interests, and work ethics, this definition still carries over. Workers tend to adopt the goals and interests of the organization (Ferraris, Carveth, & Parrish-Sprowl, 1993). If not they tend to move on to another job. The social interaction relevant to the development of an organization is the foundation for the development of that organization's culture (Bratu, 2011). The diversity of individuals' values, work ethics, and beliefs create the reality that is the organization and its culture (Bratu, 2011). Although workers in an organization have varying traits associated with their generation as previous research has described, one can argue that emerging scholarship on intergenerational communication in the workplace has begun to study how the interaction of the generational members acts as forms of co-cultural communication within the broader context of the organizational culture.  Orbe and Roberts (2012) explain that co-cultural theorizing provides a framework that helps us to understand how people determine their way of interacting with others in a specific context (p. 294). The co-cultural communication then serves a unique function as well as playing a role in defining the culture of the broader organizational context (Orbe & Roberts, 2012). Because co-cultural

theorizing applies to negotiating cultural communication differences, the concept can also apply to negotiating intergenerational communication differences (Orbe & Roberts, 2012).

Studies show that Baby Boomers value learning new things while Generation Xers value less supervision (Hanson & Leuty, 2012). Millennials value strong leaders who provide guidance to them as they work (Williams, 2008). Baby Boomers also place less value on status in the workplace than do their younger counterparts (Hanson & Leuty, 2012). Hanson and Leuty's study shows that Millennials tend to place more significance on social and intrinsic values often expecting overt signs of public approval from supervisors instead of financial reward. Intrinsic values, such as coworker acceptance and internal satisfaction are highly rated among Millennials. They had the lowest concern for altruistic values, such as involvement in social programs, of all the generations according to Hanson and Leuty (2012), although some studies they reviewed showed little or no difference between the generations in altruistic values. In contrast to Hanson and Leuty's (2012) findings, Williams (2008) states that Millennials value work that indicates they are making a difference in the world. This would be more in agreement with their attitudes regarding today's social and environmental concerns.

Another aspect new to the Millennials is the involvement of their "helicopter" parents in their job decisions (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). Johnson and Johnson explain that some human resources managers receive requests to allow the parents of the Millennials to sit in on interviews. The over-protection they experienced in their childhood continues to overflow into their expectations of managers regarding correction or discipline (Johnson & Johnson, 2010).

They tend to expect more rewards and applause rather than correction (Johnson & Johnson, 2010).

Although there are differences apparent in the generations' work values, such as the social, intrinsic, and altruistic values, research shows that more common factors exist among the generations. Some evidence shows the generations have no differences on such extrinsic values as "salary, benefits, and job security" (Hanson & Leuty, 2012, p. 37). These conflicting data present an interesting situation. Results of past studies imply that the interaction between the generations may have an effect on the values of those within the workplace (Hanson & Leuty, 2012). This information provides better understanding on how an organizational culture can develop because beliefs and attitudes taught by coworkers, just as in the tribal setting that Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) describe create shared goals and beliefs. These studies are lacking, however, in providing insight into how Millennials communicate and identify with their coworkers.

Following the ideas of Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983), when one considers the physical make-up of organizations the concept of a tribe helps in the development of an organization's culture. Traditions and ways of doing things as taught by elders who have been in the tribe longer aid in the conveying of organizational culture. Those in leadership roles in a tribe reflect the managers of an organization, and the ranks below can fall in line with the rest of the tribal model. One difference is the elder members of the workplace do not always become the leaders, although they may facilitate assimilation of their younger coworkers. Some Baby Boomers and Generation X members find themselves under the supervision of younger, more

formally educated counterparts (Williams, 2008). Researchers suggest that generational

differences in the workplace are the source of conflict, while other research reflects the opposite

of this position (Giancola, 2006). Most conflict in the workplace seems to come from political

differences and attitudes toward technological changes (Crowley, 2011; Schoch, 2012). Meyers

and Sadaghiani (2010) suggest that communication characteristics of Millennials cause

disruption or complicate working conditions with coworkers from other generations. No matter

what stand one takes on the issue, it is evident that each generation brings something unique to

the workplace.

## Communication Theory

Communication research has made strides in developing theory regarding how

individuals come together, build relationships, and create organizational culture; however, little

has yet addressed the specific role of generational differences and in particular, the influences

exerted by the newest generation. Because the Millennials are still reasonably new to the

workforce, we know more about their work values, their need for strong supervision, and desire

for balance between work and social life than we do their communication attributes (Williams,

2008). It is important to understand how they identify with their coworkers from other

generations when their beliefs and values differ. Understanding how their communication and

work habits translate into relationships provides a better understanding of their effect on

organizational culture. Work habits recognized in behavior in turn manifest themselves in

components of organizational culture according to Rahmati, Darouian, and Ahmadinia (2012).

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This project will focus on aspects of communication and organizational culture as they relate specifically to the Millennials.

Although work ethics, values, and beliefs play an important role in the development of culture, other factors help culture to develop within an organization (Rahmati, et al., 2012). These factors revolve around manifested elements such as actions, artifacts, symbols, and language used by the individuals (Pettigrew, 1979, Rahmati, et al., 2012). The application of the organizational culture perspective provides a look at the grand scheme of behavior within a workplace. By identifying personal behavior and its connection to others in the workplace, one can see how workers identify with each other and the company. Furthermore, applying the principles of membership categorization can provide understanding about how Millennials view their older coworkers. Finally, identifying with one's company and coworkers is important to the relationships workers build. Duck's interpersonal theory relating to attraction helps one to recognize how the Millennials develop working relationships and what personal traits of their coworkers they identify with. The belief is that together these concepts can provide a better understanding of how Millennials affect the culture of an organization.

**Organizational Culture**

Organizational culture is the "climate and practices that organizations develop around the handling of people, or to the espoused values and credo of an organization" (Schein, 2004, p. 7). Each culture is unique to the needs of the organization and the people it serves. The key factor of becoming a member of an organization is the need to identify (Cheney, 1983). Identifying with the company, the coworkers, the policies, and all the other aspects of the organization is

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important to individuals attempting to fit in.  New workers are oriented into the organization with

the aid of other workers. Many forms of orientation play a role in the identification process that

helps workers become part of the organizational culture (Stephens & Dailey, 2012). Orientation

comes in the form of group training and individual attention from coworkers, who are the entities

from which culture germinates.  Identification plays an important role in "decision making,

persuasion, control, alienation, and communication" in companies (Cheney, 1983, pg. 342).

Members of the organization identify with others through common goals, and language as well

as through tasks and rituals they share. Each employee identifies with different coworkers in

different ways.

Organizational culture, defined as the assumptions and values that guide how people

work together to reach common goals, is developed both individually through personal and task

rituals and collectively through social and organizational rituals (Hatch & Zibler, 2012).  Trice

(1984) describes culture as "the system of such publicly and collectively accepted meanings

operating for a given group at a given time" (p. 654).  Furthermore, he explains that

organizational researchers have employed cultural concepts to understand better organizational

behavior (Trice, 1984). The culture of an organization grows from dialogue that expresses shared

meaning (Querubin, 2011). It is the everyday communication of the workers in their personal

contributions and their interactions with others (Hatch & Zibler, 2012).

Scholars of organizational culture believe that "meanings are worked out in multiple

registers, contextualized, embodied, and negotiated within social action" (Hatch & Zibler, 2012.

p. 96). As workers come together in the workplace, organizational culture helps them to find

common ground from their differing generational traits. Dextras-Gauthier and Haines (2012) describe several forms of organizational culture relying on various values. For example, group culture is employee-oriented. It involves the development of trust and cohesion relying on group support. Other cultures include the hierarchical culture that is primarily based on rules and regulations. The developmental culture focused on external aspects that involve the need for innovation. Finally, the rational culture relies primarily on accountability and achieving goals. These values may reflect in generational differences as organizations evolve.

Developed over time, by diffusion of behavioral patterns, culture within an organization comes from the definition of how things are done or organizational protocol (Rahmati, et al., 2012). The development of culture in an organization consists of many components, such as personal behavior patterns and group activities (Pettigrew, 1979). Some researchers believe that the study of individual components of organizational culture provide a skewed understanding of its development; however, understanding each component can often lead to better understanding of how it relates to other components (Trice, & Beyer, 1984). Pettigrew (1979) identifies the need to break down the concept of culture into its individual components even though they are interdependent. Focusing on the individual components that play part in the development of culture helps one better understand the interconnectedness not only of those concepts but also of people involved. These components, including rituals, play a major role in the creation of the organization and its culture, providing "functional consequences for the organization" (Pettigrew, 1979, p. 575).

The organizational culture perspective provides insight into how individuals identify with their coworkers and companies, thus learning and following protocol. Through stories, rituals, symbols, and activities employees learn about the culture of the organization and shape their place within the workplace (Rahmati, et al., 2012; Stephens & Dailey, 2012). This idea leads to the ability to evaluate the components as they relate to the specific generations as well

Symbolic actions that do not always seem productive are sometimes the rituals employees use to bring meaning to their environment (Islam & Zyphur, 2009). Employees have ways they do things unique to them. These unique ways of performing tasks regularly elevates them to ritual status (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). Smith and Stewart (2011) explain that there are different definitions given to rituals, but they agree that they are important to social identity. Smith and Stewart, (2011, p. 114) tell us "in the workplace setting, ritualized behavior can be best understood as both an input and output of organizational culture, channeling social interaction and behavioral custom." Rituals help the creation of organizational culture by helping to form and change emotions and identities (Islam & Zyphur, 2009). Bratu (2011, p. 90) explains, "Rituals affect the development and maintenance of social symbols at the micro level." These rituals, which are different from daily routines, may present themselves in the form of personal, task, social, and organizational activities performed on a regular basis to the point of providing a form of identification (Connelly, 2010).

Trice (1984, p. 655) defines rituals as "a standardized, detailed set of techniques and behaviors that manage anxieties, but seldom produce intended, technical consequences of practical importance." Based on Trice's (1984) definition one may explain personal rituals as

those behaviors not job related played out by individuals. They may include such behaviors as acquiring a cup of coffee or reading the morning news blog before starting work or visiting with coworkers on the way to one's desk. They are unique undertakings that may attach to one's identity. Task rituals within Trice's definition are those behaviors performed in relation to the job, however not necessarily directly influencing a specific project. For instance, one may organize daily work, or read e-mail before undertaking any projects.

The rituals of some successful business leaders present an example of such rituals in the workplace (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). The task ritual of Lou Polito, the owner of Polito Dodge, who personally delivers the company mail to his employees and the personal ritual of Jeff Brown, CEO of Blue Cod Technologies, who parks in the furthest parking space at work so that he must walk past all of the other employees' cars, meet the definition provided by Trice. These rituals help the men connect with and remember the importance of their employees but may not have a practical importance to the job. Brown explains, "It forces me to walk by every single employee's car and reminds me every day that our company is about creating a rewarding culture and environment for the employees that drive our business" (Evans, 2010, p. 1).

Social rituals represented by informal after hour gatherings also act as settings for cultural expression (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983, Trice, 1984). An example of a social ritual performed by the supervisors of Steele Manufacturing occurs when they meet at the pub after work for "shop talk" over a beer. This helps to create and strengthen bonds between workers (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983) and to signify for self and others the nature of

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these relationships. Through these rituals, workers create meaning in their communication processes and find ways to identify with coworkers. Rituals help coworkers develop solidarity with one another (Bratu, 2011).

On a larger scale, Trice describes the importance of rituals to the culture as a whole. He states "in performing the activities of a rite or ceremonial, people make use of other cultural forms—certain customary language, gestures, ritualized behaviors, artifacts, other symbols, and settings—to heighten the expression of shared meanings appropriate to the occasion" (Trice, 1984, p. 654). Some research explains rites and rituals to mean the same thing. However, Trice (1984) describes rituals as more common activities such meetings, while rites are special events, such as award ceremonies or retirement parties. Organizational rites and rituals provide an opportunity for coworkers to create shared meaning with the organization itself. Such events as retirement parties, company meetings, or the celebration of a successful new product are events that propagate the organization's culture (Connolly, 2010). Organization rituals sometimes performed during off hours, such as company sponsored weekend sporting events, company picnics, and company volunteerism are another way of displaying and propagating organizational culture.

The variety of rituals range from the micro-cultural performed at the individual level to the macro-organizational that involve the organization itself. Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) and Trice (1984) stress the importance of learning about how individuals communicate, through personal, task, social, and organizational rituals to understand communication's importance to the development of an organization's culture.

Research Question 1: What types of personal, task, social, and organizational rituals do Millennials perform and participate in at work?

Research Question 2: What role do rituals play in how Millennials identify with their coworkers?

**Membership Categorization Devices (MCD)**

*"A vocabulary is not merely a string of words; immanent within it are societal. textures — institutional and political coordinates. Back of a vocabulary lie sets of collective action" (Mills, 1972: p. 62).*

Language is an important aspect of organizational development. Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) assert the importance of language to the social construction of organizational culture. Within language, symbols in the form of vocabulary create a way of grouping people, places, and things (Pettigrew, 1979). Language provides a means of establishing power and expressing ideologies (Pettigrew, 1979). A dialogue comes in the form of common language, although not always consisting of common vocabulary. Each generation has its own vocabulary that helps to provide order and identity to the organization and its members (Pettigrew, 1979).

Within mundane language practices, individuals learn about each other and create understanding of their places in the company. Asking question like "what do you do here, and how long have you been here" workers define those around them. One way of achieving common understanding is by applying labels to people. Silverman (1998) in his interpretation of the groundbreaking work of Harvey Sacks describes the labels that people use to identify those

around them as membership devices. The membership categorization devices (MCD) are descriptive terms that may have a socially applied meaning within the work environment or within local culture (Silverman, 1998). For example, for most people the label *mother* has a common meaning that infers a caregiver of young children, or the female head of the home. The label *mechanic* infers a person who can repair one's car. People may fall under more than one of these categories. Category sets can also contain multiple collections (Schegloff, 2007). For example within the membership category of Millennials, collections such as students, *twenty-somethings*, or interns, along with others can describe specific groups. These collections are also contextual to the culture in which they are used (Schegloff, 2007). This would also agree Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo's (1983) characterization of organizational culture as performance by cast members with specific roles. Within the workplace, the collection management would include categories of supervisors, managers, and team leaders. The previous descriptions on generational differences in the workplace posited categories such as Traditionalist, Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Millennials (Johnson& Johnson, 2010; Giancola, 2006).

In his lectures on the studies of conversation, Sacks (1989) explained that there are classes of category sets. Within each set, there exist multiple categories. For instance, within the category set sex there are male and female. Within the category set of male, there are boys, grown men, fathers, etc. These sets help one to establish a conversational understanding of the group without knowing anything specific about the group (Sacks, 1989). Sacks (1989) continued to explain that a difference exists in the category sets and organized groups. Within the category

sets, any member is representative of the set. However, in an organized group, such as a company, the group chooses representatives.  In these sets referred to by Sacks (1989)  as M.I.R. or Membership Inference-Rich Representative, the assumption is that without knowing all there is to know about a person, one can infer based on obvious membership in a category, specific information about another (Sacks, 1989). From these inferences, one can maintain a conversation. Established category sets vary from culture to culture, including organizational cultures. Within the workplace, such category sets as management and workers vary dependent on the industry and the level of superiority.

Membership categorization also maintains rules for application.  Housely and Fitzgerald (2000) explain that in conversation analysis, membership categorization devices (MCD) play an important role in "recognizability" (p. 61) and orientation, which in turn aid the construction of the organizational culture.  The use of categorization helps sustain order in the mind with reference to personal interaction by providing an expected behavior related to the category set (Housely & Fitzgerald, 2000). Within the workplace, one can recognize the location within the hierarchy, by application of MCDs and define one's own position in the establishment aiding in the construction of the organization's culture. Within the relationships that one constructs, MCDs can help define the roles of the participants. The use of MCD's by workers helps them to identify traits of their coworkers, aiding in the attraction and relationship-building concept. Naming those categories in which coworkers belong also falls in line with Duck's (1995) cues. Duck and Craig (1975) explain that the initial evaluation of strangers begins with inferred characteristics. Membership categories and Membership Inference-Rich Representatives applied to coworkers

help one to filter coworkers into relationship types (Sacks, 1989). They also help one to label traits one finds attractive. One applies MCD's to oneself, which also places him or her into a category easily identifiable to others as well. Most studies on MCD's focus on general populations, identifying general characteristics, categories, and collections (Schegloff, 2007). However, Schegloff (2007) explains that the use of conversation analysis and the application of MCD's must apply to the culture as a unique communication. One must not assume that one set of categories or collections will bear the same meaning in two different cultures. Thus, research questions three and number four come to mind.

Research Question 3: What MCDs and M.I.R.s do Millennials apply to coworkers?

Research Question 4: How do these MCDs and M.I.R.s affect Millennials' identification with their coworkers?

**Theories of Attraction**

As noted by Cheney (1983), through identification one achieves job satisfaction. Although his work focuses on identifying with the company, identification with other coworkers links strongly to job satisfaction as well (Asgari, Nojavaee & Hadipoor, 2011). Workers come together regularly to perform their duties but not all workers develop relationships with all of their coworkers. For instance, some relationships develop into friendships that last for years past employment in the same company, yet others never goes past the work desk. How individuals come together to build relationships is a topic not yet fully understood. The characteristics of individuals ranging from physical to psychological attract them to one another (Duck & Craig, 1975). Strangers first assess each other by way of physical attributes and in the course of time

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spent together begin to assess attractiveness based on similarities such as common interests or attitudes (Duck & Craig, 1975). In the workplace, individuals often find themselves interacting in interpersonal situations. During these interactions, along with typical daily work discussions, they may engage on non-work related topics. These topics tend to come from common interests and attitudes about the non-work world. Those displaying more common ground are seen as more attractive than those with fewer commonalities (Duck & Craig, 1975).

Duck and Craig (1975) explain that several attributes provide context for attraction, such as physical attractiveness, personality, and attitude. Much interpersonal activity begins because of some form of attraction. Interpersonal activities act as a catalyst for the creation of cultures and societies (Finkelstein, 2008). "Cultures include a vast range of roles and relationships in which behavior is variable and negotiable, although some forms of individual behavior seem to be more acceptable to the wider group" according to Finkelstein (2008, p. 2). Asgari, et al. (2011) found a strong correlation between social relationships in the workplace and job satisfaction. Employee job satisfaction plays an important factor in the development of organizational culture (Asgari, et al., 2011). "Communication that reveals shared values and reflects common commitments to organizational goals" is the foundation for building relationships in the workplace (Meyers & Sadaghiani, 2010, p. 1). The factors that one identifies with whether related to the company or fellow workers strongly influence the company culture. Cheney (1983) continues to explain how identification is a process rather than a product. Duck's theory identifies the process of developing a relationship by way of identifying characteristics of

attractiveness that include physical and psychological traits (Duck & Craig, 1975). These characteristics may also come from categories used in membership categorization.

Although relationships in the workplace aid in the development of the culture, younger workers reflect an attitude that places less importance on the development of relationships at work (Hanson & Leuty, 2012). Regardless of whether they choose to develop relationships voluntarily, some kind of relationship develops with most coworkers. Duck (1995) explains that the concept of relationship comes at least partially out of social construction that does not occur naturally. What this suggests is that the realm of the workplace may not be a situation in which relationships develop naturally. The forced coming together of coworkers obliges the development of relationships. Even those who do not wish to develop relationships do develop some sort of relationship with those coworkers they are in contact with on a regular basis. Duck's (1995) theory on attraction may also provide an explanation for why some coworkers develop stronger or better relationships than others, perhaps explaining as well why some coworkers participate in social rituals while others do not. Good or bad, these relationships function as the foundation for an organization's culture. He argues that relationships are under continuous construction, modified by memory and outside forces (Duck, 1995). The ever-changing nature of relationships, managed by cues determined by the context of the relationship present themselves in the communication processes. Those in the relationship create shared meaning from differing experiences. The definition of relationships lies in the community in which they function (Duck, 1995). Interpersonal relationships are a bond between those with common goals and interests (Babonea, 2012). They are contextual. Interpersonal relationships

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facilitated by communication, are dependent on not only verbal interaction but also non-verbal acts (Babonea, 1995). Good communication is important to a satisfactory relationship. Within the daily context of work, relationships develop between coworkers through communicative acts. These acts determine the strength of the relationships (Babonea, 1995).

Within the work environment, specific factors affect the development of relationships. New coworkers often rely on others to learn the company's protocol (Rahmati, et al., 2012).They become dependent on their coworkers to learn acceptable behavior in the company. Socialization of coworkers in the interactional communication process called membership negotiation functions as an organizational tool that facilitates the development of relationships. New employees learn organizational policies as well as how to engage with other workers through this socialization process (Meyers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Workers often spend many hours with another coworker for training, thus developing a relationship. One of the basic principles of attraction is this type of familiarity (Reis, et al., 2011). When one spends one-third of his or her day in the same place with others, familiarity begins to dominate the reasons for forming relationships. Reis and colleagues (2011) found that a direct correlation between exposure and attraction existed. Their study posits that individuals assess the traits of others differently during interaction and evaluate the importance of the traits to the relationship in such context (Reis, et al., 2011). This may help explain why some coworkers build stronger relationships than others do.

Compared to showing an individual a list of traits and asking him or her to evaluate the likelihood of developing a relationship with that person, Reis et al. (2011) believe that the contextual evaluation of the traits in personal interaction determines their importance to the relationship. Younger coworkers may depend on older coworkers, who exhibit certain shared traits as mentors to navigate the membership negotiation described by Meyers and Sadaghiani (2010) as they determine who will fit in where. These relationships then become a part of the company culture. Sometimes strong relationships can also affect the culture of the workplace by creating co-cultures within the company (Momeni, Momeni, Marjani, & Saadat, 2012). Occasionally these relationships even develop into friendships that carry on outside the work environment providing a foundation for social rituals or long-standing friendships.

Along with the studies on familiarity and the importance of proximity on the development of relationships, other factors may affect the choices workers make about the workplace relationships. Once acclimated to the work environment and the organization's policies, the reduced dependence on training changes the dynamics of interaction. Workers look to others in their environment to develop relationships with based on personal goals. Duck's (1995) theory of interpersonal attraction expands on previous attempts to establish theory regarding relationships. He hypothesizes that relationships develop through a serious of filters. These filters determine how strong the relationship will be. According to Duck (1995), psychological and physical filters often affect the level of attractiveness individuals apply to those they meet. Similar physical attributes often rank high in what one considers attractive,

however, when one is presented with psychological characteristics, such as personality and attitudes, beliefs, and goals these features can outweigh physical features in attractiveness scores (Duck & Craig, 1975).

When one considers these aspects of attraction within the realm of the workplace, one can see how context comes into play. First, as mentioned by Duck and Craig (1975), relationships are not always naturally occurring. For instance, the likelihood of two coworkers entering into a relationship outside the workplace is often very unlikely. Proximity, common interests, and attractiveness scores are only a few elements that influence the development of relationships. However, in the workplace, these attributes are the most prevalent. Obviously, when people are in the same place for long periods on a daily basis, some kind of relationship is likely to evolve. Workmates interact on a level that rarely seems personal. Nevertheless, for a culture to develop in the workplace, more has to take place, something that bonds workers together beyond just showing up at the same time to the same place.

According to Duck's (1995) theory, physical and psychological traits act as catalysts to the development of relationships. In a work environment consisting of workers from multiple generations, one tends to see unlikely pairings between coworkers. There seem to be few commonalities between the generations as we have seen in the descriptions above. It becomes important to determine what traits coworks view as attractive when there seems to be little common ground to determine how they come to form their work relationships.

Although research exists to explain how strangers are attracted to one another in the social world and develop intimate relationships (Duck, 1995), little research exists on how

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workers assess the attractiveness of coworkers to developing relationships that create organizational cultures. Workers somehow find common traits with other workers or admire traits in coworkers that draw them to each other. Common workplace rituals may also provide cues for attracting coworkers. Reis, et al., (2011) propose that positive and negative traits are incorporated into one's own traits during interpersonal interaction with others. Participating in similar personal and task rituals may reflect commonalities that attract Millennials to identify with their coworkers. This leads to another set of research questions.

Research Question 5: What role do common rituals play in attraction to coworkers?

Research Question 6: What MCDs and M.I.R.s do Millennials use to define attractiveness?

## Social Context of the Research

The University of Central Florida houses one of the largest populations of students in the state of Florida. Its population boasts more than 56,000 students, the majority falling into the membership collection of Millennials, who attend classes at the main UCF campus and remote campus locations, including online (UCF, 2012). Many Millennial students function as employees within the various departments serving the UCF community, providing yet another membership collection to which they belong. One such department is the Center for Distributed Learning that provides technical and educational support for the university's online programs. The award-winning department maintains employees from three of the current generations. It also boasts one of the largest student employee populations on campus as well as one of the largest student staffed departments of its kind within the United States university system.

Participants for this study are Millennial members of this department's staff. Although the employee population includes current students, many are also full-time employees who continue to work there beyond their educational experience. These student employees bring to the department's culture their own worldviews, social experiences, and work ethics (Coomes, 2004, Danielsen, 2011, Giancola, 2006, Johnson & Johnson, 2010). They participate in daily rituals that contribute to the culture of the organization and they develop relationships by identifying with coworkers in the various generations using membership categorization devices and relationship filters (Bratu, 2011, Duck, 1975, Sacks, 1989, Silverman, 1998). This group is the population interviewed for this thesis.

**Conclusion**

Organizational culture develops through the interactions of workers. Workers exhibit personal habits regularly that elevate them to ritual status. Within their work environment, they categorize their coworkers by using membership categorization devices. They interact with coworkers with whom they develop relationships based on their reasons for attraction. Specific characteristics of the Millennials generation affect these aspects of relationship development and organizational culture. There are many articles relating to the attitudes and work ethics of the younger generation. They act as guides for how managers effectively can lead this generation in the workplace. However, the lack of communication research directly related to Millennials and their effects on organizational culture leaves many questions unanswered. By interviewing members of the staff at the university's Center for Distributed Learning department, the goal of this research is to gain a better understanding of how Millennials are affecting the culture of

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organizations.  More specifically, it will explore how Millennials define the different

generational groups in their workplace and will explore how these characterizations influence

organizational attraction.  This case study of the discourses in one organization will then to add

to existing research more specific information relating to Millennials' experiences of the

organization.

# CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH METHODS

The decision to do a case study using a minimum number of participants provided the opportunity to gather information that was more comprehensive than general surveying. According to Desimone & Le Floch (2004, p. 3) "smaller studies provide the opportunity for the collection of richer, more complex data." The goal of understanding the context in which relationships develop and culture is shaped lends itself to more focused qualitative approaches. Although some researchers believe scientific precision and rigor are achieved only through mathematical representations of data, varying ideologies allow greater discourse in the research world (Blyler, 1995). Surveys, while effective for measuring superficial aspects of behaviors cannot expose the full meaning behind actions and communication. Putnam (1983) suggests that the functionalist view of research provides knowledge lacking in value in the discovery of meaning in communicative behavior. Interviews present the researcher with a better understanding of the social and organizational context in which communication acts occur (Granot, Brashear, & Motta, 2012). While some scholars believe research aims to predict and control social outcomes, and that testability requires rigorous control, the construction of social experiences through communication requires multiple approaches for a better understanding (Blyler, 1995).

Although Hanson and Leuty (2012) and Williams (2008) provide a discussion regarding many of the Millennials generation attitudes and values with comparisons to the other generations, this information does not provide insight into the context and construction of the

relationships in the workplace. This study intends to provide a better understanding of the communication attributes expressed through rituals, membership categorization, and attraction principles. Interviews offer an opportunity to understand better the context of actions, thoughts, and beliefs (Granot, et al., 2012). Granot, et al. (2012, p. 547) "suggest that data collection and analysis be performed with careful attention given to sociocultural and personal lived experiences, thus allowing for representation of context and meaning in participants' experiences."

Primary surveys (Appendix A) submitted to all members of the department aided in determining the participant group. Questions on the survey requested general demographic information, including birth year, gender, employment status, and student status. Candidate selection attempted to provide gender variety and age ranges within the Millennial Generation.

Once volunteers were available and scheduled, recorded interviews took place. Seventeen interviews consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions regarding workday routines and coworker relationships. Untimed interviews provided a relaxed atmosphere so participants would not feel rushed or stressed. Interview time depended on the participant's willingness to converse on the topic. Interviews, conducted in a meeting space away from other workers allowed privacy for candidates to speak freely about coworkers. The average interview time was 20 minutes. Appendix B contains questions that ask about the candidates' work and non-work related activities with coworkers. Semi-structured questions intended to be casual and comfortable for participants encouraged them to share their thoughts without direction. The questions asked intended to inspire more discussion about the candidates' work experiences.

Interview notes and recordings were transcribed. These yielded approximately 85 pages of data. Because the goal of this study is to understand the development of relationships within the context of the work environment and the development of organizational culture, candidates' interviews were analyzed for specific content. Descriptions of daily routines determined if activities displayed ritualistic traits as described in organizational culture research. Vocabulary content and situational context revealed MCDs and M.I.R.s coded to reflect work related labels and non-work related labels. Furthermore, MCD coding included age group related definitions. Traits of attractiveness were listed and analyzed to reflect how they related to Duck's cues.

# CHAPTER 4 – DATA ANALYSIS

## **Rituals**

In an attempt to understand the effects of Millennials on organizational culture, several research questions were used to explore various theoretical approaches that created the foundation for this research. The first set of research questions asked what types of personal, task, organizational, and social rituals do Millennials perform and participate in at work. Second, what role do these rituals play in how Millennials identify with their coworkers? Several questions in the interview inquired directly about daily routines, social behavior, and organized activities in which the participants took part.

Each participant described his or her daily routine upon arrival at the workplace. Upon greeting their coworkers at the reception desk, all the participants described the same routine of immediately logging into their computer and checking the messaging, e-mail, and work ticket programs to assess the needs that they would address that day.

Wynona describes her morning routine.

1W      So, I head over to the Tech Ranger room which that's where I work and I log in to

2         my computer and then I say good morning to everyone. That's probably what I do

3         first. I say 'oh hey'. Then I open (software) which is internet. First thing I do is open

4         [Social Network Site] on instinct.

5         I also go to the [Proprietary Software Name] to see what needs to be done. We use

6         two screens so I have social things on one screen (right) and the left monitor that is

7         dead on is more work related. We use [Messaging Software Name] to message other

8      people and that's on the right monitor.

Boyd describes his morning routine describing the same list of programs in line 10 that Wynona referred to in lines 4 -7.

9B      Uhm, basically first is just log into my computer open up all the programs that I

10      will need for the day….*list of programs*…. Open up the things that we support just

11      basically get going. Start looking  at e-mails to see what needs to be done. That's

        basically

12      it. And just go from there. We're kind of like an on demand team since we do support so

13      after we get caught up if we have testing to do we do that. If we have any sort of research

14      projects which is rare for us we do that.  And then we just wait for the problems to

15      happen. That's it basically.

Baxter gives a description of his morning also referring to specialized software he uses for his job.

16B      I come into work and we usually work on something called [Proprietary Software Name]

17      which is just a lot of coding which is pretty much what I do all day is just code things.

Prewitt explains what he does when he arrives at work consolidating the list of programs into one statement.

18P     Start up my computer, start up all the applications, the first thing I do is check my

19      personal Outlook to see if there is anything there that I need to do. Then if there is

20       nothing there I check the team inbox and then that has things to start working on. That's

21      how I pretty much start the day and go through the day.

The remaining interviewees gave similar descriptions of their morning or shift start-up routine. Because of the technical nature of the department's positions, the tasks noted by Wynona in lines 1 and 2, Boyd in line 10, Baxter in line 16, and Prewitt in line 18 are descriptive of the common task rituals performed by all the department staff.

Very few of the participants described rituals that might fall into the definition of personal rituals as defined by Trice (1984), intended to manage anxieties and having little practical importance. However, a couple of the interviewees did describe non-functional habits such as locating specific programs to one computer screen or first acquiring refreshments before starting work as Sheldon explained.

22S     I get here at 8:30. I uhm clean my coffee mug. Make a cup a tea and get started.

Beyonce' explains that she arrives early and uses the time to relax before starting to work.

23B     Usually, I'm usually early, so I really sit down, get a cup of coffee, kind of relax for a

24      few minutes, hang out, kinda sometimes surf the internet, check some news.

Finally, Sonia explains her personal ritual before beginning work.

25S     I come in fill up my water bottle, if I bring lunch put it in the kitchen.

When asked about their morning routines, each of the participants presented their task rituals without hesitation, but during the interview, it was necessary to bring to their attention if there were any personal rituals they had such as the personal rituals described in lines 22, 23, and 25. Most of the interviewees did not identify performing any such rituals. However, it is possible they did not recognize their own behaviors as ritualistic. Furthermore, none recognized any

ritual-like behaviors performed by their coworkers; perhaps because of the nature of working on their projects at their computers.

**Social Rituals**

Coworker Rituals

Along with interaction at work, several social opportunities created by both the organization and the workers exist. Some events are regular work breaks and some are scheduled social events.

Prewitt explains how the teammates take breaks together to get coffee.

50P     I say hi to the front desk. After about 15 to 20 minutes we'll take a break and go to the

51      coffee shop.

Baxter shares non-work activities he does.

52B     Non-work specific acts I perform usually bathroom breaks. We have a daily routine of

53      going to get coffee.

Prewitt and Baxter shared in lines 50 through 53 a social ritual that employees take part in together. These coffee shop visits allow the team members time to bond outside of the office environment. Through these rituals, they strengthen bonds between themselves and their teammates on an individual level.

## Group Rituals

Furthermore, participants described luncheon type events where supervisors order in lunch or they all bring in potluck style dishes. These luncheons may be limited to one team or may involve teams from the entire department.

54B    Every once in a while we'll have lunch or pizza provided or something like that by our

55    bosses. So, it's more of like team building stuff than anything else.

Beyonce' explains job related activities in which she participates.

56B    I'm on the social committee here so we plan picnics, parties, potlucks, other fun stuff.

Baxter explains in line 55 that luncheons provided by the superiors are a tool for teambuilding. Beyonce''s potlucks and parties (line 56) incorporate the teams into department wide events that aid the reinforcement of the organization's culture. The examples of coffee shop visits and department luncheons in the data show how individuals are provided the opportunity to interact in unstructured ways allowing the development of personal bonds that act as social construction of the organization's culture.

The organization-wide picnic described by several of the participants (line 56) is a planned opportunity for employees to interact socially. This event, scheduled during the workday, takes place at one of the university's parks for staff convenience. Some participants explained that department closes down for the afternoon so that all the employees can attend.  In addition, the department acts as an organizer for individuals interested in participating with a local 5K charity run.  These events are also examples of opportunities the organization uses to

build the relationships between the workers that in turn create and recreate the organizations culture.

Along with events planned as official organization events, workers identified activities organized by individuals on their teams such as movie nights, happy hours, and basketball games that present informal conditions for social interaction. Participants attended these activities based on common interests, age appropriateness, scheduling, ability to bring their significant other, and travel distance from home.

Baxter explains why he avoids certain events.

57B    Those I tend to avoid because not because the people who are under 21 can't come, but

58      because it's too small. Like if it's only out of our department out of all of CDL if it's like

59      maybe an ID, two people from Online support and me, I'm not going to go to it because I

60      don't know them too well.

Wynona explains why she does not attend all of the events.

61W     I don't think I try to avoid anything. If I've done it a lot I don't always have to do it.  I

62      live in *location* so I don't want to be out that late. I don't want to go to parties unless my

63      boyfriend is also invited.

Beyonce' explains that her schedule prevents her from attending often.

64B    Ah, I haven't in a really long time.

65I    What about like the Game of Thrones thing?

66      I was there for that. I usually don't though. My schedule is kind of ridiculous.

This data would suggest that not all Millennials feel the need to interact outside of work to maintain cohesion in the workplace. Wynona confirms this with her comment in line 61E "I don't always have to go". The reference to the different teams by Baxter in lines 58 and 59 also confirms the nature of the group culture of the organization in which the teams are separated even though they are part of the same organization.

Although not all interviewees participated in all events, they were aware of them. They also might be selective about events they attend. Although Baxter explained above why he did not attend some events, he did explain that he had hosted another event.

67B    We do have like Tech Ranger parties where the last one I did, *the last one I did* and it was

68      an Adventure Time potluck party where we all went to my apartment and watched

69      Adventure Time and that was like a work group team thing, and so yeah, that's it.

Sonia explained the most recent event she attended.

70S    Yeah, totally. Just last night I went over to Dan's house and we watched Game of

71      Thrones together. The whole team was invited.

These non-work related social rituals allow workers to bond on a personal level aiding in their ability to relate to one another. The shows provide an opportunity for the workers to identify with each other and share common pop culture meanings that carry over to their work. Brent explained how these non-work related events sometimes made generational differences apparent.

72B    I do. Between me and the part-timers; I notice generational differences as far as pop

73      culture. Like what we recognize.

Organizational culture is developed through the communication process that occurs between workers. As Bratu (2011) explained, through rituals members of the culture develop solidarity. Rituals help workers identify with each other creating shared meaning in their communication (Trice, 1984). The data supports these claims by providing examples of task rituals taught by employees to trainees reconstructing the culture of the organization. Organizational rituals in the form of interviews and meetings propagate the culture by introducing new members to the culture and disseminating organizational rules and information within group settings. Social rituals organized by members of the organization strengthen the culture by providing members opportunities to interact in ways that create shared meaning.

**Organizational Rituals**

Interviews

Another ritual described by participants from one of the teams was the interview process. When asked how they became acquainted with their coworkers they all described the same procedure. The team-oriented nature of the department allows all members of the team to participate in the interview of a potential new employee. This is the workers' first encounter with all of the employees on the team. This ritual works to strengthen the team and insures that all of the members agree about accepting the potential new team member.

When asked how he became acquainted with his coworkers, Sheldon explained interacting with them during training and the interview process.

37I     Did you go through the interview process where you had to sit in front of everybody?

38S     Oh yeah, that was the worst. I think our boss wants everyone to agree on the new

39    members of the team.

Magnus, also on the team that does group interviews, explained how he first became acquainted

with his coworkers.

40M    It would actually be the interview. Because the way we do interviews here everyone on

41    the team sits in on it and can ask you questions no matter what level of employment.

Based on the data presented, participants were introduced to the team and an important

aspect of organizational culture through the interviewing process.  Not only does it strengthen

the existing culture, it allows members to choose a candidate they believe to be most suitable for

the culture as Sheldon explains in lines 38 and 39.


Training

Considering Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo's (1983) tribal concept describing the

idea that elders teach the ways of the organization to the newer members, training is an important

factor in creating and recreating organizational culture. During the interview, participants

described how they became acquainted with their coworkers.  Particular to the two teams from

which the participants came was the shadowing process for training. Newer workers who

participated in this case study described the process as an extended training program through

which they first encountered many of their coworkers.  Because most of the employees are

students working part-time and have varying schedules, new team members shadow different

coworkers available for training at a given time.

Magnus shared his training experience.

26M    Well, the last training session was when I first started on the team which was a two

27      month long training session just getting you into the job learning different programming

28      languages and learning how to make accessible web courses.

This training propagates the culture by teaching workers company protocol regarding tasks and

behavioral patterns (Rahmati, et al., 2012). Similar to the tribal concept, experienced team

members teach new members how the organization functions. Although, the coworkers

shadowed have more experience they are not necessarily the senior or oldest members of the

team as would be expected. The concentration of workers from the Millennial generation in the

particular teams studied means that most trainers are within the same age group.

    Several of the participants newly employed in the organization explained that they were

still in the training process. They shadowed coworkers who were also participant volunteers in

the study within the Millennial generation. The work routines each participant described in lines

1 through 24 came from the training process. The data shows the diffusion of culture within this

organization as each individual described his or her startup routine and explained that much of

what they did came from training received.

Sylvester described his training and how, once finished, he will become the trainer.

29S     Uhm, the last few weeks like at the beginning when I came in I would work on modules

30      that they would have me work on to get the general idea of what was going on. What I

31       would be doing and uh the past week or so I've been shadowing uhm other support

32      people so that I can have more hands on experience. And then once I have enough then

33      they'll shadow me while I work on the team's inbox and stuff like that.

Constance, who is one of the newest employees, also mentioned in her routine the shadowing that takes place for her training.

34C    Then because I'm still in training I go to like my supervisor to see what I have to do for

35    the day. Which is usually like fixing any mistakes I've made in training assignments or

36    shadowing other employees.

Sylvester described in lines 31 and 33, and Constance in line 36 the same shadowing of coworkers other participants described when asked how they became acquainted with their coworkers. Some of the participants explained that they had shadowed coworkers for their training or were currently being shadowed by new members of the team (lines 29-30). This affords new team members the opportunity to become acquainted with each member of their team. The training each team member receives through shadowing bears on the task rituals as described above as they learn the various projects for which their position is responsible. Magnus and Sylvester refer to how their training helps them to understand the components of their responsibilities in lines 26, 27, and 33 and 34. This data shows how members of the organization socially construct and reconstruct the culture by teaching coworkers what they previously learned from their peers as they progress from trainee to trainer.

The organization also hosts a variety of training sessions for both employees of the department and for training those outside the department on the use of the tools. One team supervisor explains, "My team has begun doing some community outreach training for students and faculty and staff that we call Tech-time." This training, intended to increase user understanding and confidence in the online programs the university offers, provides an

opportunity to introduce the organizations culture to those outside the department. These training sessions teach specific activities, use of tools, and university specific language that propagate the culture.

<div align="center">Meetings</div>

Another example of how the organization strengthens its culture is through meetings. Connolly (2010) describes formal rituals such as meetings as a way for organizational culture to strengthen by creating shared meaning. Dextras-Gauthier and Haines (2012) explain how group culture within an organization consists of participation, team spirit, and learning.  Formal structured meetings and informal group meetings provide the setting for cultural reinforcement. Team leaders described organizational meetings that included leadership from all the teams in the organization. Other participants from each team described in their daily routines the use of informal meetings to inform other team members of outstanding projects and to learn about other team members' progress.  Magnus explained his experience with organizational meetings.

42M    As for meetings, it's really a give or take kind of thing depending on if there are

43       meetings associated with the projects I'm working on, but there is also a daily, we call

44       them Stand-up Meetings, where everyone gets up and tells what they worked on the day

45       before. It usually takes 10-15 minutes.

Brent explains the meetings he attends are useful for accomplishing team projects.

46B    But usually it's the meetings with colleagues, people at the same level, or my boss or

47       some part-timers those are where the real work gets done kind of meetings. Where we're

48       all brainstorming and writing up notes depending on the project we're working on.

Sonia describes meetings she attends.

49S     We have a weekly team meeting. Then specific meetings about jobs I'm working on.

The descriptions used to define the types of meetings in lines 43 and 44 from Magnus and lines 46-48 by Brent and from Sonia in line 49 show how the teams communicate to maintain a cohesive environment.  Brent explained that as a team lead he attended meetings outside of his team as well as within the department (line 46). These meetings allowed him to stay connected to the other teams maintaining relationships within the organization. Sonia's comment in line 49 infers that some meetings involve team wide communication and others are just between herself and other coworkers from her team or other teams working on a specific project.  This data example shows how the group works together to maintain and strengthen the organization's culture as its members participate in organized communication events that require shared meaning. Although the teams are separate, they are interdependent and do not compete with each other within the organization.

## Membership Categorization

Research question three inquired about the types of MCD's (Membership Categorization Devices) and M.I.R.s (Membership Inference-Rich Representative) Millennials apply to their coworkers. Research question four asked how these MCD's and M.I.R.s affected how Millennials identified with their coworkers. Throughout the interviews, questions regarding interpersonal interactions attempted to elicit common terms used to categorize individuals. A common theme that surfaced was the use of such MCD's as teams, friends, team lead, part-timers, and full-timers.

**Teams**

When asked to explain where they fit in the organization, participants used the term "team" several times. This term, used often throughout the interviews by all of the participants, provided the most insight into the structure of the organization. The team membership categorization identified the responsibilities of the participant when using the team's name. It also indicated the relationship one had with specific coworkers or how the participant felt connected to the organization.

When asked about generational differences Blaine used the term team several times.

74B     Uhm yes, in this it might partly be because of their expertise. We have like our design

75         team and we have like our instructional designer team, and our administration team. So I

76         kind of expect the ah, development teams to be able to communicate with them in the

77         development language.

Baxter explains about being part of the organization using the term team several times.

78B     I don't feel isolated at all, like we're very big on group dynamic, so I definitely do feel

79         part of a team. I just don't feel part of the entire organization.

80         I do feel team cohesion more so than with CDL, but I do feel cohesion with CDL as a

81         whole just because it's like we do comp …CDL wide picnics and like team building

82         exercises and as a Tech Ranger we work closely with Online Support and the IDs so I

83         feel more dynamic with them rather than something like graphics or video because

84         they're in complete separate building in a completely separate place like I don't ever talk

85         to them.

Padme' explains the routine as a trainee referencing the term team in several comments.

86P    Okay, uhm, right now, I'm actually getting probably in the middle of my training here in

87    CDL. Right now, my routine is to log into my workstation, open up my e-mail and our

88    team IMing and check for any announcements for the team.

Wynona explains how she feels when she comes to work in the organization.

89W    No, no, no, I feel like I'm part of a team. I come in and I'm hey guys.  I'm like hey

90    guys I'm home.

In lines 75and 76 Blaine uses the term "team" to identify the various groups within the department. Baxter explains the relationship between coworkers by referencing the term team in line 79. In line 80, he describes how the organization is connected. In line 89, Wynona describes how she feels belonging by using the term team. Finally, Padme' references the term team in line 88 as she describes the software she uses to communicate within the organization.

**Friends**

Within their interviews, several participants identified their coworkers with MCD's. The term "friends" was another term used to describe one's connections within the organization. This term reflected a more personal relationship with coworkers. Prewitt shared his thoughts about working in the organization.

91I    When you come to work, do you feel like you are part of an organization or do you feel

92    isolated?

93P    I enjoy work a lot because I work with pretty much my friends. I feel like I'm coming

94     into work but at the same time it's an enjoyable environment.

Wynona, one of the support assistants explained how she feels when she comes to work.

95 I    Do you interact with any of your coworkers outside of the job?

96W    Oh, yeah. All the time. They're my friends.

Sonia explains the development of a relationship she has with a fellow coworker because of the social events the team members attend.

97S    Umm mainly because they're the ones to show up. I would say the one I hang out with

98        the most is Baxter and we've developed a friendship.

The term "friend" expresses a closer relationship among coworkers that further strengthens the organizational culture. Although not voiced by every participant this bond reflects in the attitudes of the study volunteers as they describe "hanging out" before work or "at someone's house" as mentioned by Beyonce' (line 24) and Sonia (line 97) in their interviews.

**Team leads**

The group structure of the organization also appears in the position titles of the team members. Team lead is the term used for the organizations supervisors. Although not included in among the interviewees, one of the supervisors outside the Millennials group introduced herself and identified herself with the title.  One interviewee used the term to identify the first coworker she would seek out if she had questions or needed assistance.

Paige explained.

99P    If I can't get in touch with one of the team leads I can go to anyone.

Brent used the term to explain his place in the hierarchy.

100B   I'm the Tech Rangers team lead.

Although most of the participants did not mention the term, the label was understood as a form of organizational structure. The hierarchy of the organization provides another source of propagating organizational culture.

**Part-Timers/Full-Timers**

Interviewees termed "full-timers" categorized those employees who hold permanent positions within the department and "part-timers" categorized those who were students most likely to leave after graduation. The term" part-timers" was the most common MCD used throughout the interviews. Participants either identified themselves as part-timers or their relationship to their coworkers by differentiating themselves.

Brent, one of the team supervisors described his duties as supervisor over the "part-timers" and the layout of the office space as it is associated with them. He also identifies the separation between himself and his subordinates with the terms "full-timers" and "part-timers."

101I  Do you have a title for your position and where does it rank in the company hierarchy?

102B  Usually what I do, I'm their supervisor but also I do some website maintenance on

103    some of our websites like fixing some forms. A lot of it is delegating those tasks to the

104    part-timers.

105I  When you come to work, do you feel like you are part of an organization or do you feel

106    isolated?

107B  It's hard not to feel like part of an organization when you're in a room with 13

108    other people. We have big room where the part-timers are. There's an office connected

109    to that that we call the fishbowl because it has windows to the outside. That's where

110    Anthony and myself are situated, the two full-timers are. But we always keep the door

111    open, that we can hear the conversation in the room.

He continued to refer to those student employees who worked in his department as part-timers

for the duration of his interview.

Sonia explains her place in the hierarchy defining herself as a "part-timer."

112S    Probably pretty low. I'm a part-timer. This is entry level. I haven't gone up any

113     levels yet.

114I    How long have you been here?

115     Over a year.  Less than two.

When asked about any other observations he might be able to share beyond the interview

questions, Boyd shared this insight about the use of communication systems in the department.

116B    I think so yeah, I mean since the younger teams which is usually the part-timers,

117     they're always on there and they're all always quick to respond, because it's kind of

118     what they're used to and they grew up with it.

Brent used the terms most often during his interview. The term part-time appears in his

answers to several of the questions regarding his interactions with his coworkers. He uses the

term in lines 47 when discussing the meetings, 72 identifying generational differences, 104

describing his supervisory duties, and 108 to describe the physical features of the office. He also

separates himself in line 110 by use of the term "full-timer". Sonia used the term to describe her

own position in the organization (line 112).  Boyd used the term to identify specific attributes of

some of the teams (line 116).

The use of the various MCD's helps members of the organization identify workers within teams, understand how they fit in the hierarchy, and describe their relationships with other coworkers. MCD's help coworkers identify with the organization and their coworkers, which in turn establishes how they fit in the organizational culture.

## Member Inference-Rich Devices

M.I.R.s referred to work specific categories that identified coworkers. Team lead is the term used to categorize supervisory positions. The term "team" identified the subgroup of the department as it related to other members of the department. M.I.R.s in the form of team titles such as Tech Ranger, Instructional Designers (also referred to as ID's), New Media, and Support Assistant inferred representative information regarding technical skill and team membership.

The department, although diverse in age groups is divided into several teams that tend to contain members different generation cohorts. When asked about older coworkers, most participants identified them as being on a specific team because of the experience and technological training required for the positions. Instructional Designers (ID's) was the M.I.R. referred to most when asked about these older coworkers. Anytime interviewees were asked about generational difference, the interviewee would reference the ID's. When identified as an ID, one knew that these coworkers had post-graduate degree and several years of experience in their field above that of the members of the two teams from which the participants came. Other M.I.R.s referred to the professors, faculty, and students. These terms inferred membership in categories outside of the specific department.

Sheldon describes his older coworkers.

119I    Let's say anyone over 30…

120S    Yeah mostly the IDs are over 30. Sometimes they will come over with a problem and I'll

121     help them out.

Explaining a difference in behavior of the ID's Sheldon determines,

122S    But that's just because they are ID's. They've been working here longer so they have

123     seniority.

Brent describes other coworkers from the older generation.

124B    I guess I'm kind of referring to the Instructional Designers. They all come from an

125      instructional design or teaching background. A lot of them are used to dealing with a

126     room full of kids and keeping things structured and on task

In lines 120, 122, and 124 the participants label the older coworkers from other teams with the

term Instructional Designer or ID. This label infers specific information about the group.

One interview question asked for the titles of the positions the interviewees had. These

titles, which specified the group participants belonged to, also yielded information about the

duties of the position.  The M.I.R.s provide one with an understanding of the duties, education

level, and location within the organization without one providing detailed descriptions.

Wynona explains her position.

127I    Do you have a title for your position and where does it rank in the company hierarchy?

128W    Tech Ranger-I've been there for about a year. There are a couple of people who like

129     don't have the same seniority, but I wouldn't say I'm better than anybody. We are all

130     equal. Everyone has their specialty. So sometimes people ask me for help; sometimes I

131     ask them for help.

Wynona also described coworkers she interacts with outside of work using an M.I.R.

132W   There are some in New Media.

Baxter is on the same team.

133B   Yes, I'm a Tech Ranger.

Brent explains his title and responsibilities using the same identifier.

134B   I'm the Tech Rangers team lead. I guess officially I'm a web developer but I don't

135     really develop many web applications.

Sylvester gives his title.

136S   Support Assistant

Sheldon describes that he works on two teams.

137S   I work for New Media team and I also work for the Tech Ranger team. I work part-time.

138     I split 20/20.

Magnus gives a description of his title and duties.

139M   Tech Ranger and we deal with course requests from professors, so turning documents

140     into HTML pages or editing on line courses as well as doing software application as well.

In line 128, Wynona uses the title Tech Ranger, but explains that there is no hierarchical

connection to the title. Brent and Magnus explain in line 124 and line 139 what responsibilities

some titles encompass. For members who work within the organization, the titles represent the

duties without need of explanation.

Organizational culture relies on individuals identifying with their coworkers. The department's titles and team divisions are a way the organization creates identities for its employees (Cheney, 1983). The workers then are able to identify themselves within the organization and with their coworkers. The MCD's and M.I.R.s that workers identify also create organizational culture by providing a unique environment or social structure that has an identifiable place for each worker. Knowing the names of positions, the titles of coworkers, or the location of their position within the hierarchy helps workers know where they fit in (Cheney, 1983). Querubin (2011) reminds us that organizational culture grows from shared meaning. MCD's and M.I.R.s create shared meanings for positions in the organization that are consistent and taught to new members, thereby recreating the culture of the organization.

**Attraction**

Research question 5 asked what role do common rituals play in attraction to coworkers? In addition, research question 6 inquired what MCDs and M.I.R.s do Millennials use to define attractiveness? To elicit specific terms, one question asked if participants felt a part of the organization or if they felt isolated because of their task responsibilities requiring focus on the computer. Overall, the participants describe the feeling of being part of a team. Some expressed belonging to the entire organization of the university, while others felt connected only to their teammates.

Mostly, the participants expressed common interests as an attractor by which they identified with coworkers. Along with their interest in technology, some expressed common interest in television programming, music, and sports. The rituals described above provide

opportunities to interact with those coworkers to whom they are attracted. This is seen in the comments made regarding the social gatherings the coworkers attend. Beyonce' explains in line 66 that even though her schedule is hectic, she attended the Game of Thrones event. Sonia also referenced the event in line 70 indicating the knowledge of the event throughout the organization. Baxter references another social ritual in his statements in line 67-69. These social events attended voluntarily provide more opportunities for interacting with coworkers, whose company organizational members enjoy.

The shadowing that occurs during the training ritual creates an opportunity for new workers to learn about their teammates' skills. Once complete, new team members may be attracted to those coworkers whose skills they find most accomplished. They learn which teammates are most approachable when they need assistance. This is evident in Paige's comment in line 96 and Wynona's remarks in lines 129-131. Furthermore, the attraction to teammates reflects in the decision about attending certain organizational events as Baxter described in lines 57 through 60. This also indicates how security within the team acts as an attractor for some.

Most participants described their fellow coworkers as "fun to work with," and "helpful." The atmosphere the participants described shows that the similar interests act as a strong attractor because of the common language and shared meaning the teammates have developed. Security and comfort in the team environment also reflects the strength of the organizational culture.

Depending on the team participants worked on, work levels fluctuated allowing for some social interaction between tasks. During this time, social conversation might take place along with discussion about tasks and projects in which each team member was involved.

Baxter explained how he discusses other projects with fellow employees. The common interests that attract the teammates to each other are the type of psychological attractors that Duck (1975) refers to as attraction scores. Those coworkers interested in this type of interaction would rank this as having a high attraction score.

141B    We do… the things that we do that I participate is sometimes we'll do like... Hey, I'm

142     doing this open source project and I need help with it does anyone what to help me? And

143     we like collaborate on it a little bit outside of work on things like that. But well it's not

144     considered work because it doesn't have anything to do with school stuff.

Participants described the coworkers they interacted with the most during these times and which coworkers they identified with the most. In many cases, the proximity of the coworker was the identifying factor. For example, Wynona (who was one of the most descriptive participants on the topic) explained about which coworkers she preferred to interact with and why.

145I    Please describe some of the coworkers with whom you prefer to interact.

146W   That's a tough one it's like choosing a favorite. Baxter sits right next to me. I'm

147     too lazy to go anywhere so he's easy to reach."

According to Duck and Craig (1975), proximity as Wynona refers to in line 144 is one of the elements that influence the development of relationships. However, this alone is not sufficient for attraction. In lines 146 and 147, she continues to explain what attracts her to other coworkers. These examples represent more of the psychological level aspects of attraction discussed by Duck and Craig (1975).

Wynona goes on to describe some other factors that have influenced with whom she interacts.

148W   All of the girls have significant others and I don't think all of the guys do. So

149      it's easier to talk to them about things. I get advice from female coworkers within my

150       age group.

Finally, she uses the MCD friends in line 96 to describe those coworkers she identifies with

most.

151W   I don't know if they're older or just more mature. They're like big brothers. We're

152      like childish and say something silly and they're like they'll get work done.

153      Sometimes they joke with us. We're like a big family. If they're out of my generation

154      they're like my big brother.

She elicits descriptive terms in line149 that describe personality traits of children that to describe

her younger coworkers in comparison to her older coworkers. Furthermore, she uses the MCDs

related to family identification in lines 151E and 154 to express how she feels about the

coworkers to whom she is attracted. These comments imply that she feels the organization's

culture is that of a family. This description aligns Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo's (1983)

tribal analogy of organizational culture.

        When asked to describe some of the activities that he enjoys with his coworkers, Prewitt

stated:

155P   Every two weeks when we have payday we do payday happy hour.  Like I said I work

156      with my friends so we have other social outings.

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Prewitt uses the MCD friends multiple times in his discussion about coworkers. This relationship requires shared meaning (Duck, 1995) which in turn helps to reinforce the shared meaning required to construct organizational culture.

Sheldon explains that he is comfortable interacting with all of his teammates.

157I     Please describe some of the coworkers with whom you prefer to interact.

158S     Everyone on both of my teams.

159I     Why did you choose these specific coworkers?

160S     They're all just really great to hang out with and talk to and work with.

Sheldon's comment in line 160 also fits Duck's (1975) reference to attitudes as attracters. His statement "both of my teams" in line 158 would imply that coworkers from the two separate teams have similar interests and attitudes. These commonalities again support the (re)creation of the organization's culture.

While all participants expressed interest in the organizational and social activities that occur within the department, there were no repetitive uses of MCD's related to how coworkers were attracted to each other. References to family structure and friendship filter through the interviews. Most participants described common interests or like-mindedness as reasons for interacting with specific coworkers. Normal work interactions might indicate the highest attraction score. The positive use of the term team by most of the interviewees indicates a cohesive environment indicative of a healthy culture.

# CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

This case study examined the organizational culture of a department within a local university. It found a unique culture with divisions creating teams of workers of which two are dominated by Millennials. These Millennials create and recreate an organizational culture that mimics the ideas of Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo's (1983) tribal communication concepts. They have organizational rituals, such as training, meetings, and social events that teach new members the ways of the organization and help strengthen team units. Their vocabulary consists of membership categorization devices (MCDs) that identify coworkers' positions, internal department divisions, and the social structure of the organization. They identify with their coworkers because of the training process that helps them understand the culture and are attracted to coworkers by psychological attractors such as common interests in technology and popular television programming. These ritual acts are ways of dissemination and for the proliferation of the culture of this unique organization. Many of the rituals are team-oriented and serve to support positively the functions of the organization.

## Rituals

Pettigrew (1979, p. 575) explains that rituals provide "functional consequences" to the organization and its culture. Through rituals, members interact and learn about the organization as well as their place within it. Some rituals described by participants are unique to the individual, such as coming in early to "hang out." Some rituals act as catalysts for interaction among coworkers, the coffee shop visits, and the social activities.

Some rituals are forms of indoctrination into the culture, such as the shadowing that takes place in the training, and some have functional purposes for connecting each team in this organization to the others teams, such as the interview process, the meetings, and the department picnic. The rituals described by the interviewees engage workers to interact with others within the department.  The extended nature of the training initiates the workers deeply into the culture. The meetings afford the workers the opportunity to provide information and opinions about work and make them feel more connected to the organization. Social rituals provide opportunities for workers to bond personally thereby enriching the culture. Understanding how these rituals function to strengthen the organization's culture offers insight into how a successful organizational culture is (re)created.  The use of rituals within an organization unites coworkers and helps create solidarity. When used well, rituals can help coworkers identify more with the organization and help the organization become more successful, as has been found in this study. The Millennial population unique to this organization's teams provides an interesting perspective on organizational rituals and suggests that this generation relies heavily on certain rituals that teach them how to function within the organization.

**Personal Rituals**

Employees in any organization tend to have a routine for starting their day. Some of these routines are personal rituals uniquely identifiable to the person, others are tasks performed by all members of the organization. They attain a status of importance that raises them to ritual level (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983).  Trice (1984)

explains that task rituals are job related behaviors not necessarily project specific. The

rituals each participant described as preparation for work would fall under this definition.

Such rituals as starting up the computer, logging into all the functional programs and

communication network, identifying daily tasks and daily team meetings, were described

often through the interview process. They are functional but not necessarily project

specific. The fact that all the participants had the same type of start-up routine reflects a

cultural behavior. Rahmati and colleagues (2012) believe that work habits are a

manifestation of organizational culture. The examples of the start-up routine that

interviewees described also fall in line with Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo's (1983)

and Trice's (1984) descriptions of personal rituals helping the proliferation of the

organization's culture. Within this organization, these rituals are taught by team members

to new members. This teaching continues the recreation and propagation of the

organizations culture and strengthens the teams' connections between employees. This

suggests that members of the organization learn expected and acceptable behavior from

other members of the organization just as members of a tribe learn from their leaders.

**Social Rituals**

As Cheney (1983) and Asgari, Nojavaee and Hadipoor, (2011) note, identification with

job, coworkers, and the organization is important to achieving job satisfaction. This increases the

strength of the organizational culture by creating shared meaning, beliefs, attitudes, and goals

(Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). Participants described social rituals organized by

coworkers for off-hours as well as events scheduled by the organization during work-hours.

Department-wide picnics and luncheons promote the co-cultural communication between members of the department from other teams who belong to other generational cohorts. Participation in these events is voluntary and attendance varied among interviewees. The attendance of the participants shows the strong team identification and cohesion the culture encourages. Furthermore, their participation shows the importance of work and personal life balance as suggested by Danielsen (2011). Some of the newer members of the team who participated in the study were aware of these rituals even though they had not attended any yet. This suggests that these social rituals are an important part of the organization's culture and members shared information about the events during the training process. Social rituals also provide members ways to identify with the organization (Cheney, 1983). He explains that individuals who are inclined to identify with an organization are more prone to openness regarding persuasive communication within the organization (p. 347); thus the organization uses communication events such as meetings, social events, and organized activities to induce submission to organizational culture.

**Organizational Rituals**

Another way organizations propagate culture en mass is through activities in which members participate. Organizational rituals described by participants in this study take the form of training, interviewing potential new team members, meetings, social gatherings, and organizational events. Although many of these events, such as training and meetings require participation for the successful functioning of the organization, some of the events are created for the sole purpose of team building, such as the luncheons and picnic. The voluntary attendance by

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participants of the study suggests that within this organization there have developed strong bonds that translate into effective teams with good relationships among members. These relationships strengthen the organizations culture. Although the culture of this organization is strengthened by its rituals, one area that appears contrary to some research is the idea of social responsibility (Hanson & Leuty, 2012). During interviews, many participants explained the organization's participation in a fund-raising 5K event. Contrary to the assertion that Millennials are more concerned with social and intrinsic issues, none of the participants expressed a desire to participate in the event for the sake of its fund-raising purpose. Their own physical condition was the only thing they mentioned.

## Interviews

The interview process described by some of the participants is another example of the team culture the organization promotes. The interview process, treated as a group activity is another opportunity for the dissemination of the organization's culture. The selection of new members by multiple members of the team is a way to ensure the proliferation of the culture by consensus. This ritual requires the agreement of the team regarding the fit to the organization of the new member. Cheney (1983) explains the importance of inclusion in decision-making as a factor that influences identification with the organization. When a "decision maker decides with the welfare of the entire organization as the primary concern, he or she likely identifies with the organization" (p. 346). This identification contributes to the proliferation of the culture. Furthermore, it presents to the potential new member the group-oriented nature of the culture, providing the interviewee with a glimpse of what to expect.

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Training

Training described by the participants is an organizational ritual that all members of these teams experience. This training, which is a form of communication used to transfer knowledge of the organization, the tasks at hand, and the protocol of the organization, is a common ritual in most organizations. Within the organization studied training introduces the new team members to the organization's culture and provides them with the information on how the organization functions. This coincides with the description of Stephens and Dailey (2012) regarding the orientation of members that is instrumental in creating organizational culture. As Rahmati and colleagues (2012) explain, organizational culture comes from the diffusion of behavioral patterns. By shadowing workers new members become familiar with their teammates while acclimatizing to the culture. Behavioral patterns diffused within this organization are reflected in the routines described by the participants. The members described how they are part of a unit guided by the idea that everyone is equal, and everyone's strengths are there to help where others may lack. This is reflected in how training is done by all team members, even those who have recently completed their own training. Participants described how once they completed training they would become the worker shadowed by newer members. Members, although claiming working for various lengths of time with the organization, explained that they were trained by their peers, not their superiors. This suggests that in this organization the bonds created through the training ritual encourages the group-oriented culture and deters competitiveness. This information would suggest

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that the training ritual acts as a way of disseminating the organization's beliefs, values, and work ethics, and creates shared meaning, thereby strengthening the organizational culture. By understanding this phenomenon, organizations may learn ways to adapt training processes to reflect their organization's belief systems and thus creating a successful organization.

## Meetings

Another way organizations disseminate their culture is through meetings. Meetings provide a way for organizations to strengthen the relationships between individuals as they work on projects (Bratu) and inform coworkers of new information (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). As Trice (1984) describes, culture spreads through ceremonial activities that employ cultural language, gestures artifacts, and symbols. Meetings, according to Trice (1984) are social dramas with defined roles acted out by workers. In the meetings described by participants, interactions are dictated by the type of meeting taking place. Members described meetings that take place within their team as well as between multiple teams. Within-team meetings are informal rituals called stand-up meetings that provide each member an opportunity to contribute to the culture. This ritual is similar to that created by Zack Kaplan, founder of the company Inventables, allowing workers the opportunity to feel a sense of accomplishment each day (Evans, 2010). This may also be a reflection of the participation award culture common to Millennials. By allowing all members of the team to share opinions and information about projects, this ritual allows members to identify with the organization and feel as if they are important to its success. Identification with the organization is important to job satisfaction

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(Cheney, 1983). Furthermore, stand-up meetings allow members to share advice about how to complete a project which fits with the idea that Millennials prefer strong leadership and instruction, even if it comes from peers as opposed to leaders. Multi-team meetings are formal opportunities for the organization to disseminate culture through team supervisor. These meetings are attended by team leaders who then relay information back to their teams continuing the cultural connection to the larger organization.

## Membership Categorization Devices (MCD)

The vocabulary used in communication has unique meaning within the organization (Pettigrew, 1979). The use of terms that describe the structure of the organization and define the location of members aids the (re)creation of the organizations culture. Membership categorization devices (MCD's) are terms used by members of the organization to identify those with whom they work. They have meaning unique to the social structure of the organization (Silverman, 1998).  The membership categorization devices used within the interviews in this study identified the work units, supervisor positions, and coworker relationships. The terms team, friends, team lead, full-timers and part-timers occurred repeatedly. Housely and Fitzgerald (2000) note that understanding the terms and their use is important to the "recognizability" and orientation of members of the organization, further supporting the recreation of the organizational culture.

The term "team" identified the structure of the department divisions within the organization.  "Friends" most often described the relationship between coworkers. "Team lead" was the term used when referring to organizational structure. "Full-timer" was the term used to

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identify more permanent members of the team and "part-timers" was used to identify those workers less likely to remain with the organization beyond their educational career. Although these terms are common terms with generally understood definitions, they hold unique social meaning for the group of interviewees (Schegloff, 2007). One member of the department (from the Baby Boomer generation) that was not part of the interviews shared her observation about enjoying watching the success of some of the part-time employees who completed their education and became a "full-timer" in the department. For many of the interviewees, the part-timer status was acceptable as it provided them the time and flexibility to complete their educations as well as practical training that would help them in their future endeavors. Several full-times who had once been part-time staffers respected the position of the part-timers because of their commitment to their education and the ability to learn their jobs. Finally, supervisors aware of part-timers using slow times to study for their classes support their efforts. This also supports the notion of balance between work and personal life that Millennials prefer.

Also in the area of vocabulary, Membership Inference-Rich Representatives (M.I.R.s) provide a way for participants to identify with other members of the organization. Participants referred to members of other teams by applying the team names. These team names inferred particular technical skills and organizational tasks. Team names mentioned were Support Assistants, New Media, Instructional Designers (I.D.s), and Admin. When referenced, these team names often inferred membership in a different generation from that of the participants. The use of these particular M.I.R.s is unique to this organization. It strengthens the

culture by providing vocabulary that enables members to identify relationships within the

organization (Housely & Fitzgerald, 2000).

## Attraction

Identification with coworkers and the organization is important for the existence of

organizational culture (Cheney, 1983). How employees identify with each other is often related

to factors of attraction (Duck & Craig, 1975). Workers develop relationships through

interpersonal interactions in which they develop shared meaning. Factors that relate to attraction

in the workplace exemplified by the interviewees related to psychological attractors, such as

common interests rather than physical attractors (Duck & Craig, 1975). Furthermore, the

development of relationships is facilitated by organizational protocol (Rahmati, et al., 2012).

During the interview process, individuals expressed attraction to coworkers who shared

interest in particular television shows, technical topics, and gender related experiences. Some

coworkers expressed the proximity of coworkers as reason for preferred interaction. This relates

to Reis and colleagues' (2011) claim that exposure is related to attraction. The training process

provides a guide for new members to navigate the development of relationships within the

organization. It places new members in close proximity of several of their coworkers through

shadowing.  The relationships then developed by new members of the team adds to the culture of

the organization (Meyers & Sadaghiani, 2010). The participants of the study new to the

organization described their training as a way to meet their coworkers. The time spent with them

during the shadowing part of the training provided an opportunity for workers to learn about

their trainers. Learning about the interests of coworkers determines attraction scores as described in Duck's (1995) work.

Along with Duck's (1995) traits that act as a catalyst to the development of relationships, the organizational culture itself can induce strong bonds. This is seen through the interviewees as they describe organizational rituals that allow them to interact with all members of the organization. Although the organization provides such events as the annual picnic and office luncheons, participation is voluntary. The strength of the organization's culture is reflected in the fact that all of the employees choose to attend and enjoy interacting with their coworkers in games played at the picnic or discussions about non-work topics during luncheons.

Finally, the group culture that the organization supports provides members with a non-competitive atmosphere that promotes team building. Some participants explained working with members of other teams or teammates on specific projects. Others describe collaboration on outside projects. These examples of interaction reflect the findings of Duck (1995) regarding the development of relationships to achieve personal goals. Furthermore, these team projects and team-oriented departments reflect the co-cultural development that occurs within a company that further strengthens the organizations culture (Momeni, Momeni, Marjani, & Saadat, 2012). The team-oriented nature that fosters a non-competitive environment may also be reflective of the "helicopter" generation's Participation Award upbringing. For many of this generation, their younger years were spent participating in youth activities that provided awards for participation for all rather than celebrating the success of individual team members. This attitude among Millennials may render competition obsolete. The team atmosphere prevalent in the culture of

this particular organization may be a small example of the entire generation's attitude toward competition.

These relationships are unique to this organization in that they are developed within a unique context (Reis, et al., 2011). Without the common connection of the organization, the development of relationships between most of the interviewees is unlikely considering the descriptions of how they became members of the group and their reasons for participating in non-work related activities.

## Summary

Organizational culture is a unique and constantly reconstructed phenomenon. Members come and go bringing to the organization their own characteristics while adapting to and adopting characteristics of the organization (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). A variety of factors influence the way organizations sustain and strengthen culture. Through coworker interaction, organized events, and organizational protocol members learn about acceptable and expected behavior (Rahmati, et al., 2012). Previous research in organizational culture has "focused on signs, symbols, myths, and stories" (Trice, 1984, p. 653). Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) discuss the weakness of previous researchers' focus on these structural features of organizations.

> The weakness with this focus, as we see it, is that in each case, the emphasis is on some structural feature…..without sufficient consideration given to how those features manifest themselves in the everyday interactions of the organizational members (p. 128).

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By focusing on these everyday interactions one can see how communication acts as the catalyst for the creation and recreation of organizational culture (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983).  The focus of this study on the organizational culture perspective aims to add to previous research by incorporating research on communication interaction through analyzing aspects of ritual behavior and common terminology used by Millennials within a unique organization.

Understanding organizational culture relies on more than just evaluating stories, myths, and symbols. This case study demonstrates how insights into organizational culture can be derived by understanding the many facets involved in the interactions of the workers culture (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). This case study involved a careful examination of an effectively functioning team. Studying some of the communication practices of the team provided insight into how that functional team is established and reinforced. Learning about common rituals, organizational events, and personal traits that form bonds between workers can provide insight into the creation and recreation of organizational culture. Evaluating the repetitive use of vocabulary unique to the organization provides information on how common meaning is developed further strengthening the organizations culture. Understanding the factors that help individuals identify with each other and develop relationships helps one to understand how culture is disseminated.

## Limitations of the Study

This study's intent was to add to understanding of the contributions different generations provide to organizational culture. Time constraints allowed the researcher only to evaluate members of one generation, the Millennials. The organization from which participants were recruited maintains a high population of Millennial employees. However, the opportunity to interview members of other generations would have provided a better balance of data. Along with the lack of time to interview a greater variety of participants, the interviewer's skills were lacking. Maintaining the same structure of questioning for each interview posed a challenge for the novice researcher; hence some questions were not asked consistently. Additionally, other theoretical lenses may have provided more insight into the communication events that aid in the development of organizational culture. Another aspect may have affected the research is self-report. Undoubtedly, many of the participants withheld information regarding their behavior and the behavior of coworkers because of concerns for their positions. Finally, although this organization was unique in its population of Millennial workers, more was learned about the culture of the specific teams than the entire organization. The inability to make comparisons to workers from other generations lacks the data to prove any generationally specific assumptions regarding the effects of the Millennials on a multi-generational organizational culture.

## Implications for Future Research

This study provides an insight into the culture of an organizational unit primarily staffed by Millennials. Although other teams in the organization were staffed by employees of different generations, the unique nature of the culture provided an opportunity to focus on one generation.

However, organizations are not typically limited to employees from a single generational cohort. As mentioned in the limitations, future research may benefit from inclusion of participants from multiple generations. The ability to compare the same data from many generations may provide more insight into the effects each generation has on the other. Also, as this was a qualitative approach to the subject, quantitative measures may provide insight into some aspects of culture, such as quantifying types of rituals engaged in by individuals in different generational cohorts. Consideration of other aspects of organizational culture related to rituals and the details of interactions that take place within such events as the company picnic or other organized events may reveal more intimate information regarding the relationships developed among coworkers from different generations. Finally, research that incorporates specific relationships of coworkers from differing generations may lead to a better understanding of the effects the generational differences have on each member in the relationship.

The new millennium brings with it many challenges for organizations. With each medical discovery individuals live longer more productive lives. This longevity means more generations interacting in the workplace. The unique nature of each generation and the cultural environment in which they develop means that each generation brings to organizations their own ideas and beliefs that affect the organization's culture. Leaders in organizations require an understanding of their workers to prevent conflict and increase productivity. A successful organizational culture can increase longevity and reduce the costs associated with employee turnover. It is also important to find ways to encourage Millennials to develop loyalty that reduces their nomadic tendencies. Only through continued research into the aspects communication, such as rituals,

MCD, attraction, and other communication events as they relate to each generation can one gain

an understanding of each generation's effects on organizational culture and how it can lead to the

success or failure of an organization.

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

## Research Questions

Research Question 1: What types of personal, task, organizational, and social rituals do Millennials perform and participate in at work?

Research Question 2: What role do rituals play in how Millennials identify with their coworkers?

Research Question 3: What MCDs and M.I.R.s do Millennials apply to coworkers?

Research Question 4: How do these MCD's and M.I.R.s affect Millennials' identification with their coworkers?

Research Question 5: What role do common rituals play in attraction to coworkers?

Research Question 6: What MCDs and M.I.R.s do Millennials use to define attractiveness?

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**Participant Information Sheet**

I am a graduate student interested in interviewing Millennial employees in your organization about their workplace experiences. Millennials are born between 1982 and 1999. Please complete the information sheet below if you are a Millennial and would be willing to participate in a recorded interview as part of a Master's thesis research project in Communication.

1. Were you born between 1982 and 1999? _____ What year? _____

2. What is your sex?            Male          Female

3. What is your work status?

      Full-time        Part-time          Permanent           Temporary           Work Study

4. What is your student status?

      Non-degreed                Undergraduate Student             Graduate Student

      Completed Bachelors Degree               Completed Masters Degree

      Other: _____

5. Please provide contact information here.

      Name: _____

      Best phone number to reach you at: _____

      E-mail Address: _____

      Best time to meet during work hours: _____

Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

APPENDIX C: SELECTED CANDIDATE INTERVIEW

<h1 style="text-align:center">Selected Candidate Interview</h1>

## Introduction

Hello, my name is Carolee Richendollar. I am a Graduate student at the Nicholson School of Communication here at UCF. This thesis research project, directed by Dr. Sally Hastings is part of the requirement for completion of my Master's degree. As part of this project, I am conducting interviews with employees from your organization who were born between 1982 and 1999 to learn about their work habits, relationships with fellow employees, and other aspects of their communication. The study focuses on how these topics relate to organizational culture. Other studies done in this regard do not focus on the Millennial generation. My hope is to add to the current discussion of generational differences in the workplace.

Today we will engage in a recorded interview that will provide information for this project. The compilation of data from your participation as well as that of the other participants will be analyzed as it applies to the theories of focus in this thesis. Your answers are confidential and will not be discussed with anyone else. Members of my thesis committee will have access to any of the information if they need it and pseudonyms would be used in any possible publications resulting from this study. You are free to decline answering any questions you do not feel comfortable answering and you may explain your answers to the extent you are comfortable participating.  Your privacy is of the utmost importance and your identity will not be revealed within the thesis. If it is necessary to identify any aspects of your identity a pseudonym will be used, but it is not my intention to reveal any personally identifying information.

## Interview Questions

1.  Please describe your daily routine from the time you arrive at work. Include any non-work

    specific acts you perform.

2.  Do you have a title for your position and where does it rank in the company hierarchy?

3.  When you come to work, do you feel like you are part of an organization or do you feel

    isolated?

4.  Do you participate in job related activities, such as meetings, training sessions, etc.?

    a.  Please describe some of these activities.

5. Are there any work-related social activities outside the workplace, such as a local happy hour?

   a. Please describe some of these activities.

6. Do you attend any organizational activities that occur outside of work time, such as company sponsored volunteering or fundraising events, sports activities, etc.?

   a. Please describe these activities.

7. Are there any common events, either work-related or outside of work, that you particularly prefer to avoid?

   a. Describe/ explain why you want to avoid it?

8. Among your coworkers, who has a work style most similar to your own? Is this coworker close to the same age as you?

   a. Describe the similarities.

9. Among your coworkers, who has a work style least similar to your own? Is this coworker close to same age as you?

   a. Describe the differences.

10. Please describe some of the coworkers with whom you prefer to interact.

11. Why did you choose these specific coworkers?

12. How did you first become acquainted with these coworkers?

13. Please describe some of the coworkers with whom you prefer not to interact.

14. Why did you choose these specific coworkers?

15. Do you identify more with any of your coworkers in particular?

16. Do you interact with any of your coworkers outside of the job?

17. If so, why do you choose to interact with this/these coworkers outside of work and not others?

18. Do you notice generational differences in work habits of your coworkers?

19. Do you notice generational differences in how coworkers organize their workday?

20. Are there any occasions or sites in your organization where generational differences are most noticeable or pronounced?

21. Are the generational differences more complementary or divisive? How so?

22. Is there anything you would like to share about your workday routine, coworker relationships or generational observations that we might not have covered?

**Conclusion**

Thank you for your time and participation in today's interview. Your responses will help me to complete my research on the topic of generational differences as it focuses on members of the Millennial generation. If you would like to know the results of this study, I may be reached via e-mail at crichendollar@knights.ucf.edu.


Thank you again for your participation.

APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

## Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
**FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Carolee E. Richendollar**

Date: **March 14, 2013**

Dear Researcher:

On 3/14/2013, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

| | |
|---|---|
| Type of Review: | Exempt Determination |
| Project Title: | How Do They Fit In? Millennials in the Workplace |
| Investigator: | Carolee E.  Richendollar |
| IRB Number: | SBE-13-09183 |
| Funding Agency: | |
| Grant Title: | |
| Research ID: | N/A |

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Patria Davis  on 03/14/2013 11:22:37 AM EST

IRB Coordinator

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