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MICROGENERATIONS:
BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP IN WORKPLACE VALUES

By

Melissa Kempf Taylor
B.S., Indiana University, 2000
M.S., University of Louisville, 2013

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Education and Human Development
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in Educational Leadership and Organizational Development

Department of Educational Leadership, Evaluation, and Organizational Development
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2023

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A Dissertation Approved on

April 12, 2023

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Dr. Matthew Hurtienne

ABSTRACT

MICROGENERATIONS:
BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP IN WORKPLACE VALUES

Melissa Kempf Taylor

April 12, 2023

Generational differences are a popular topic, and attention to them is heightened each time a new generational cohort comes of age. This trend continues with increasing interest in the Homelander generation that is now entering the workforce. Differences in values are often blamed for tensions in generationally diverse organizations. Past generational research has reported mixed results and acquired many critics. This study aimed to address common challenges with generational research and assist in distinguishing between truly valid and simply popular information. This study's purpose was to identify differences in values between members of major generational cohorts and individuals in microgenerations overlapping them.

The present study examined values of members of various generations by first separating them into traditional generational cohorts and then by excluding members of the microgenerations. An ex-post facto design applying a time-lag framework with data from 2,327 participants was used. Interviewees of the World Values Survey who answered eight values questions comprised the study's sample. Two variables – honesty and autonomy - were identified through exploratory factor analysis. Kruskal–Wallis H tests were used to analyze the two variables for the study's three research questions.

Significant differences in honesty and autonomy were revealed using the three traditional generational cohorts for analysis and when members of microgenerations between them were removed. When the sample was divided into five generational cohorts to include the microgenerations, significant differences were found between traditional generational cohorts; however, microgenerations were not found to be significantly different than some of the traditional generational cohorts. Findings suggest that differences in generational values are more than simply the punchline of a generational joke or casual stereotype and that including microgenerations in traditional generational cohorts may have clouded past research results. Members of microgenerations, with their ability to relate to members of multiple major generational cohorts, may be a key in bridging the generation gap in today's workplace. This study provides a strong foundation for additional research into the concept of microgenerations.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Be it an eye roll accompanied by an exasperated "Millennials!" (Howe & Strauss, 2000); a dismissive "Okay, Boomer" tossed out in conversation (Lorenz, 2019; Scott, 2019; Spector, 2019); or water cooler debates about the 2022 "Gen X" Super Bowl halftime show (Mazza, 2022), it is easy to observe generational tension in the workplace. Because generational stereotypes are such a hot topic in popular culture (Lorenz, 2019), a plethora of works have emerged on generational differences (Berge & Berge, 2019; Keengwe et al., 2014). Whether supported by empirical data or not, assumptions regarding generational cohorts influence interactions in today's workplace (Prawitasari, 2018). Generational stereotypes, like the examples mentioned above, deepen the perceived generational divide in organizations regardless of the potentially positive impact a generationally diverse workforce creates (Spector, 2019).

Generational tensions are often blamed on differences in values (Irhamahayati et al., 2018; Legas & Sims, 2012; van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010). While values are difficult to define, with some scholars deeming a precise definition inessential (Smith, 1978), a definition is necessary for the purpose of empirical study. Definitions of values tend to be too broad to be useful (Christians & Traber, 1997). Rokeach (1973), a seminal scholar of values theory, pointed to the excessive looseness when describing values as interests, pleasures, likes, preferences, duties, moral obligations, desires, wants, goals, needs, aversions, and attractions and provided a simple definition of values as the

presence of criteria or standards of preference. Values have been defined as enduring beliefs guiding human action (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Racko, 2019). They are standards or criteria for choosing goals or guiding actions and are relatively stable over time (Dose, 1997). Values reflect what is important in one's life (Weber, 2017) and are the force behind an individual's behavior and attitude (Codrington, 2008). They are at the core of who people are and influence their choices, investment of time, and placement of trust (Weber, 2015). Values define what individuals believe to be fundamentally right or wrong (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Research indicates that values may change over time as a person matures; however, generational experiences have more influence on values than other factors (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Although the general concept of values does not concern a specific life domain such as work (Roe & Ester, 1999), a complex workplace is an ideal context for studying the abstract concept of values (Dose, 1997; Schwartz et al., 2010). Employee tensions could be partially rooted in generational differences in values (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010) demonstrated in the work context (Prawitasari, 2018). Employees encounter people with different beliefs, attitudes, and convictions during each workday (Cooper, 2013). Work values are expressions of general life values in the workplace (Roe & Ester, 1999) and apply specifically to the type of task or environment an individual prefers and considers important in job decisions (Dose, 1997). Individuals unconsciously bring their whole selves to work each day (Girgis et al., 2018; Meinert, 2017). This includes not only their workplace preferences, such as dress code, schedule flexibility, and public recognition (Codrington, 2008; Drago & Cunningham, 2006; Lamm & Meeks, 2009) but also more general values like political, religious, and

moral beliefs (Kinnane & Gaubinger, 1963; Roe & Ester, 1999; Ros et al., 1999). Generational stereotyping is common in the workplace and often permitted, unlike other group assumptions (Yahr & Schimmel, 2013). The significance of differences in general values in the workplace should not be overlooked because organizations are influenced by the values their employees unconsciously bring with them to the office (Cohen, 2009; Prawitasari, 2018; Tang et al., 2017; van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010).

Scholars and practitioners have discussed the differences between major generational cohorts in the workplace for decades (Parry & Urwin, 2011), resulting in a large body of articles, reports, blogs, and stories (Lyons et al., 2015). The differing values of major generational cohorts are often the focus of such discussions on topics including schedule and dress code expectations, work/life balance, and relationships and communication with supervisors (Kelly et al., 2016; van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010; Zabel et al., 2017). Generational literature presents mixed results and questions the validity of the idea of differences in values between generational cohorts (Amayah & Gedro, 2014; Parry & Urwin, 2011). This creates a need to further empirically explore generational differences in values to distinguish between information that is truly valid and that is simply popular (Taylor, 2018).

Previous studies have shown that individual values such as political preferences (Bermiss & McDonald, 2018); religious beliefs (Cantone & Weiner, 2017; Freeman et al., 2015; Meinert, 2017); values placed on gender (Verniers & Vala, 2017) and sexual orientation (Gregory, 2011); and feelings on immigration (Enoksen, 2016) influence the workplace. Each person has a different set of values; for example, a single value may be of the highest priority to one individual but of little importance to another (Weber, 2017).

Conflict or miscommunication may arise between employees when they place different levels of importance on specific values in workplace situations (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010). Rather than celebrating their differences and collaborating to accomplish the organization's goals, employees may be distracted by values issues such as comparing the amount of time one spends in the workplace (Twenge, 2010) or how readily a coworker shares personal opinions (Bermiss & McDonald, 2018).

Researchers and practitioners have labeled four major generational cohorts currently within the United States workforce: Silents, Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials (Lyons & Kuron, 2013; Nwosu et al., 2016; Bennett et al., 2012). The newest generation -Homelanders (Howe, 2014), born after the year 2000 - are just beginning to enter the workforce and are igniting the generational conversation once again (Pekala, 2001). No clear consensus has been reached regarding the time definitions for generations (Amayah & Gedro, 2014; Bengtson et al., 1974), making it difficult to determine the points of separation (Macky, et al., 2008). Little agreement exists in research on the years encompassing major generational cohorts (Taylor, 2018); therefore, based on a review of previous generational studies, the following time ranges were used to define the traditional generational cohorts and microgenerations in this study. Born before 1940, the Silent generation comprises the oldest members of today's workforce (Kupperschmidt, 2000). They are the smallest generational cohort in the current workplace (Lamm & Meeks, 2009). Baby Boomers, or Boomers, were born between 1940 and 1959 (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Weston, 2001). Members of Generation X, or Gen Xers, were born between 1960 and 1979 (Drago & Cunningham, 2006; Gursoy et al., 2008; Lamm & Meeks, 2009). Millennials are individuals born between 1980 and

2000 (Drago & Cunningham, 2006). Generation Jones is the microgeneration falling in the overlapping years between the Boomers and the Gen Xers (Lang, 2000; Page, 2008; Wells, 2009). Members of the microgeneration between Generation X and the Millennial generation are commonly referred to as Xennials (Lamagna, 2015). Each of these generational cohorts is believed to have unique attitudes, behaviors, expectations, and motivators (Kelly et al., 2016) and tends to behave in predictable and identifiable ways (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). While individuals of all generations share similarities, each generational cohort appears to have distinct perceptions and expectations when it comes to the workplace (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010).

Problem Statement

Differing values may lead to conflict and misunderstanding between generations in the workplace (Kelly et al., 2016; Prawitasari, 2018). Different generational cohorts have distinctive ways of talking, dressing, and thinking at work (Gursoy et al., 2008). A generation's values affect the way its members communicate, which can lead to miscommunication between cohorts (Nwosu et al., 2016). Generational stereotypes insinuate that younger generations prefer to communicate via text and social media, whereas members of older generations fear technology (Bennett et al., 2017). Older generations may consider in-person conversations as more polite and professional, whereas younger employees feel they are less efficient in a busy organization (Pekala, 2001). Friction between employees due to differing values can distract them from work tasks affecting workplace productivity (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010). Awareness regarding the importance placed on specific values by members of different generations is critical to an organization's understanding of employee behavior (Weber, 2017).

Determining whether generational differences in values truly exist is the first step in educating leaders of a multigenerational workforce.

Multiple challenges have plagued generational research. First, as discussed earlier, the unclear edges separating generations are a major issue (Bennett et al., 2017). There is a lack of consensus regarding the years encompassing each generational cohort (Bengtson et al., 1974), making it difficult to determine the exact years to include for each one (Macky et al., 2008). Researchers often specify different beginning and ending years for major generational cohorts (Yahr & Schimmel, 2013), which is a significant limitation pointed out by the critics of generational studies (Zabel et al., 2017). This overlap of years, as a result of disagreement between researchers, creates a cusp generation or microgeneration of individuals who fall between the cores of two major generational cohorts (Codrington, 2008). These individuals, often called cuspers, may identify with characteristics of more than one major generation (Giancola, 2006). Second, not everyone agrees that generational differences in values truly exist (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015). Critics of generational theory dismiss the idea as being more of a myth than a reality (Giancola, 2006). Researchers who have tackled the subject have been met with strong feedback on the quality of their data (Bennett et al., 2017), the rigor of their methodological approach (Lyons & Kuron, 2013), and a lack of comparability between studies (Lyons et al., 2015). Third, generational research must differentiate between generational cohort and the effects of age, maturation, and stage of life on participants (Macky et al., 2008). To sufficiently control for the effects of age, data must be collected over time to allow comparisons of members of different generations at the same age (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). This approach is known as a time-lag framework

(Bennett et al., 2017). Unfortunately, most previous generational studies have used a cross-sectional framework where individuals of all ages are studied at a single point in time and cannot control for these effects (Bennett et al., 2017; Lyons & Schweitzer, 2016; Wilson et al., 2008). Researchers have recommended future studies apply a time-lag framework to strengthen findings (Bennett et al., 2017, Smola & Sutton, 2002). Despite the criticisms listed above, research on generational differences has gained support as a means to overcome the challenges of perceived generational tension in many organizations (Gursoy et al., 2008). Tensions rooted in contrasting generational values is not a new concept or a topic soon to be dismissed (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Generational differences remain an important area of study because the tensions they potentially create affect workplace morale, employee commitment, and organizational productivity (Legas & Sims, 2012; Nwosu et al., 2016).

Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the differences in values between members of major generational cohorts and those of microgenerations. Significant differences found in values between major generational cohorts but not between major generational cohorts and microgenerations imply cuspers could be equipped to help bridge the generation gap by assisting individuals with different values in working together successfully (Fluck & Dowden, 2011). Cuspers appreciate both contemporary and traditional ways of doing things (Garvey, 2015) and are able to relate to members of multiple major generational cohorts (Stankorb & Oelbaum, 2014).

Research Questions

This study sought to answer three primary research questions:

RQ1: Are there differences in values between Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials?

RQ2: Are there differences in values between the core members of the Baby Boomer generation, Generation X, and the Millennial generation when removing the microgenerations in the overlapping years between them?

RQ3: Are there differences in values between the members of the Generation Jones and Xennial microgenerations and the core members of the three major generational cohorts?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the advancement of generational research, furthers the development of generational theory (including theory specifically related to microgenerations), and can positively impact practice in multigenerational organizations.

Research

This study aimed to address the question of whether generational differences in general values exist and are worth the time invested in exploring them. Generational research has been criticized for a lack of depth and rigor (Lyons et al., 2015). Some scholars feel that "generation" is not a valid explanatory concept (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015) and have focused on discrediting the available generational literature (Lyons et al., 2015). Considerable methodological issues have been cited in previous generational studies (Lyons et al., 2015). A major challenge for generational researchers is untangling the effects of generational cohort from those of participant age and time period (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). Considering the difficulty in separating differences related to generational cohort, age or maturation, and time period, many empirical studies

simply do not distinguish between these aspects (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Longitudinal research frameworks, such as time-lag studies, offer better insights into generational changes over time (Lyons et al., 2015). In a generational study, a time-lag framework considers the responses of members of each generation when they are around the same age and point in life (Bennett et al., 2017). For instance, in this study, the researcher analyzed responses to the same questions from Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials when they were all between the ages of 18 and 32 years. In contrast, the typical cross-sectional framework used in many generational studies analyzes responses of the members of each generation at a single point in time (Salkind, 2010). This research framework is convenient but does not consider the influence of life experience or maturity on participants' answers (Lyons et al., 2015). Time-lag studies are rare because they require similar samples of same-age participants to be asked the same questions over a period of many years (Twenge, 2010). This study employed a time-lag framework using data from multiple waves of the World Values Survey (WVS) to contribute to this gap in generational literature (Inglehart et al., 2014).

Although several blog posts and popular press articles have been written on the Xennial microgeneration, few academic articles mention cusp or microgenerations. While the existence of subcultures within a generation whose values are more aligned to those of another generation has been discussed in academic literature, empirical studies specifically analyzing microgenerations are difficult to find (Robertson et al., 2012). A few researchers have studied the characteristics of members in the microgeneration between the Silents and the Boomers and compared them to members of the major generational cohorts (Codrington, 2008; Hart, 2006). Studies on more recent

microgenerations have focused mainly on how cuspers may enhance organizational practices with emerging technology rather than how the values of these microgenerations compare to those of major generations (Fluck & Dowden, 2009). This study filled a gap in academic literature by pulling Generation Jones and the Xennial microgeneration out of the major generational cohorts to identify differences between their values and those of traditional generational cohorts.

Theory

A strong theoretical base is needed in generational studies (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). Empirical studies on generational differences often rely on popular press and opinion pieces in their literature reviews (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Lyons et al., 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to determine whether the study of generational differences in values has a sound theoretical and empirical foundation (Parry & Urwin, 2011). This study employs two complementary theories - generational theory (Strauss & Howe, 1991) and values theory (Rokeach, 1973) - to explore the idea of generational differences in values. Although non-academic articles were cited due to the limited availability of empirical information on the topic, the literature review for this study relies heavily on empirical sources. Because microgenerations are rarely mentioned in empirical generational studies, a theory specific to them has not yet been proposed. This study provides a foundation for the future creation of a generational theory related specifically to microgenerations.

Practice

Not every employee relations issue that organizations encounter can be attributed solely to generational differences (Kupperschmidt, 2000). However, understanding

generational differences can help increase organizational productivity, workplace morale, and employee retention (Gursoy et al., 2008; Prawitasari, 2018). Many packaged programs addressing generational differences that are marketed to today's organizations have not been empirically verified (Twenge, 2010). Evidence-based support of generational differences in the values employees bring into the workplace may open conversations to address tensions they create in organizations. Significant differences between the core members of major generational cohorts but not the microgenerations revealed in this study suggest that strategically placing cuspers within work groups could possibly ease generational tensions, creating a competitive advantage for organizations (Taylor, 2018). Discussions on generational differences in values surge as each new generation enters the workforce (Pekala, 2001), and the newest generation now coming of age is no exception. Homelanders in the workplace are bringing forth a new wave of discussions regarding generational stereotypes (Drago & Cunningham, 2006). This study aimed to provide a clearer picture of the differences in values between the generational cohorts in today's workplace.

Delimitation and Assumptions

As with any research study, clarifying boundaries is important (Roberts, 2010). The time period covered in this study was 1981 to 2014. The study's data set included more than 300,000 individuals believed to be representative of more than 90 percent of the world's population (Glanville & Story, 2018); however, only participants from the United States were included in this study. Generational differences vary by country (Bennett et al., 2017) because generational cohorts differ by geographic location (Safeer et al., 2023; Zabel et al., 2017). Generational categorizations cannot typically be applied

from one society to another (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). The most commonly used generational categorizations in literature are those from the United States (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010).

Assumptions are the aspects a researcher takes for granted while conducting a study (Roberts, 2010). This study assumed that the archived data sample is representative of the total population of each generation interviewed (Inglehart et al., 2014), the responses provided by participants accurately reflect their values, and participants answered interview questions truthfully.

Definition of Terms

The terms used in this research study may be found in a variety of contexts. Definitions for the purpose of this study are provided for clarity.

- *Generation or generational cohort*: a group sharing birth years and significant life events at critical stages of development (Amayah & Gedro, 2014; Dries et al., 2008; Kupperschmidt, 2000; Parry & Urwin, 2011; Smola & Sutton, 2002)
- *Microgeneration or cusp generation:* a group of individuals born during the overlapping years between major generational cohorts (Giancola, 2006)
- *Cuspers:* members of a microgeneration or cusp generation (Codrington, 2008)
- *Baby Boomers or Boomers*: individuals born between 1940 and 1959
- *Generation Jones or Jonesers:* individuals born between 1960 and 1964
- *Generation X or Gen Xers*: individuals born between 1965 to 1976
- *Xennials*: individuals born between 1977 and 1982
- *Millennials*: individuals born between 1983 and 2000
- *Homelanders* (Howe, 2014): individuals born after 2000

- *Values*: standards or criteria for choosing goals or guiding actions that endure over time and are relatively stable (Dose, 1997; Rokeach, 1973). Values convey what is important in an individual's life (Weber, 2017), create the foundation for attitudes (Hills, 2002), and influence behavior (Weber, 2015).
- *General values* encompass concepts such as honesty, courage, wisdom, autonomy, choice, equality, voice, respect for authority, health, happiness, love, power, family, justice, forgiveness, helpfulness, comfort, cheerfulness, obedience, and responsibility (Baker & Forbes, 2006; Cohen, 2009; Elizur & Sagie, 1999; Hills, 2002; Lyons et al., 2006; Manders-Huits, 2011; Schwartz et al., 2010; Welzel, 2013; Yang et al., 2015).

Summary

This study's purpose was to identify differences in general values between members of different major generational cohorts and the microgenerations overlapping them. Although many critique the concept of generational differences, evidence indicates that generational tensions rooted in varied values systems affect workplace morale and productivity. This study aimed to clarify the existence of generational differences and evaluate the impact of microgenerations on identified differences. Empirical findings that fill current gaps in generational research may enable future studies to dig deeper into the implications of differences in values in the multigenerational workplace. It is possible microgeneration employees are naturally equipped to assist in bridging the workplace generation gap.

This study's results have implications for academic research, conceptual theory, and organizational practice. First, because the core members of the major generations

were found to be more different when the members of microgenerations were pulled from the major generational cohorts, findings could help explain the conflicting results of previous empirical generational studies. Support to the validity of generational differences as an indicator of workplace tensions and conflict provides a foundation for developing solutions to this issue. Second, microgenerations are yet to be theorized. Because this study revealed significant differences between core members of different major generational cohorts but not the individuals who are part of the beginning and end of traditional generations, this idea requires additional attention and theoretical consideration. Finally, this study's findings could be instrumental in contributing to success in organizations, where the topic of generational differences remains extremely pertinent. Because true differences in values between the core members of major generational cohorts were identified, cuspers could be contributing to the mixed results found in previous studies where they were included alongside the core members of major generations. Findings suggest that members of microgenerations hold values similar to the major generational cohorts before and/or after them. Having the ability to relate to members of multiple generations suggests that cuspers are a key asset to bridging the generation gap in the workplace and fostering collaboration in a multigenerational workforce. Recommendations based on the findings of this study are noteworthy as a new generation begins entering the workforce, renewing interest in this theory and igniting the generational conversation once again.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The differences in values between generational cohorts are a popular topic in generational research (Zabel et al., 2017). Values convey what an individual deems important (Weber, 2017). They are beliefs (Parry & Urwin, 2011) laying the foundation for a person's behavior (Weber, 2015) and attitude (Hills, 2002). An individual's generational cohort influences their value system (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), and organizations are influenced by the values their employees bring into the workplace (Prawitasari, 2018). When considering the values that individuals bring to organizations, work values such as job security (Bristow et al., 2011); the balance between work and personal time (Codrington, 2008; Drago & Cunningham, 2006; Lamm & Meeks, 2009); and power (Egri & Ralston, 2004) come to mind. Notably, these work values are an expression of one's general values in a workplace setting (Kinnane & Gaubinger, 1963; Roe & Ester, 1999; Ros et al., 1999). Although the research on work values is often independent of the study of general values (Elizur & Sagie, 1999), the effect of general values in the workplace should not be overlooked (Cohen, 2009) or ignored in workplace research (Elizur & Sagie, 1999). Understanding individuals' values system is crucial (Ye et al., 2017) because values play a critical role in organizational performance (Weber, 2017). As employees become increasingly more comfortable with openly bringing their personal values to work (Krahnke & Hoffman, 2002), the potential for conflict and misunderstanding between members of different generations rises (Kelly et al., 2016).

Although generational diversity should be celebrated, distracting friction between employees may affect workplace productivity (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010) and employee morale and retention (Nwosu et al., 2016).

The recognition garnered by this topic - both within the realm of academia and in popular culture - has led to several articles and research studies on the topic. However, generational research presents three major challenges. First, major generational cohorts must be clearly defined, but authors are unable to reach a consensus regarding the years encompassing them (Bengtson et al., 1974; Macky et al., 2008). Second, the effects of age and location on individuals must be accounted for in addition to generational cohort (Baltes, 1968). Finally, individuals falling at either end of a generational cohort could skew research results (Taylor, 2018). An individual born just a single year after another person cannot be expected to hold entirely different values (Lamm & Meeks, 2009). This study aimed to address these gaps in generational literature. Past research was used to identify years encompassing the core groups of each traditional generational cohort as well as the microgenerations in overlapping years to address the first and third challenges. A time-lag framework was used to control for the participants' age and location at the time of their interviews to address the second challenge.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

This study investigated the differences in values between members of major generational cohorts and the microgenerations overlapping them using a time-lag framework and sought to answer three primary research questions:

RQ1: Are there differences in values between Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials?

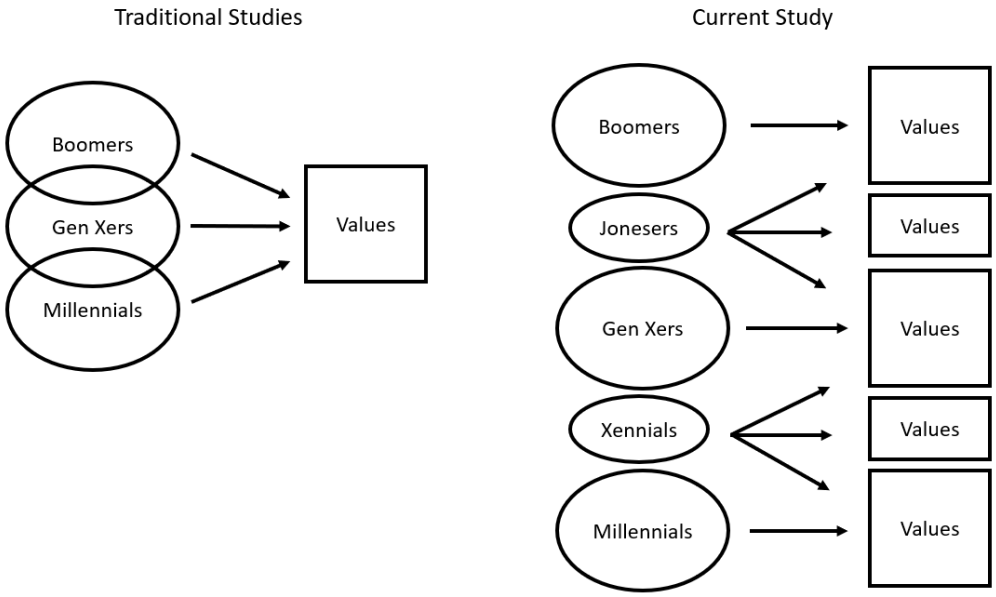
RQ2: Are there differences in values between the core members of the Baby Boomer generation, Generation X, and the Millennial generation when removing the microgenerations in the overlapping years between them?

RQ3: Are there differences in values between the members of the Generation Jones and Xennial microgenerations and core members of the three major generational cohorts?

A conceptual model provides a framework for the course of action in a study (Elangovan & Rajendran, 2015). Figure 1 illustrates how this study compares to traditional generational studies and how it strives to fill a gap in the existing generational research. Traditional studies often use different year ranges to define generational cohorts (Codrington, 2008). The left side of the conceptual model illustrates how the overlapping of generational cohorts may contribute to mixed results found in prior studies, leading many critics to say that true differences do not exist between generational cohorts (Bennett et al., 2017; Bristow et al., 2011; Dries et al., 2008; Twenge, 2010). The right side of the conceptual model illustrates the current study, which seeks to delineate microgenerations from traditional major generational cohorts. With the overlap in traditional studies removed, distinct differences between the major generational cohorts were revealed. Data from members of microgenerations revealed their own unique values or showed they display a mix of values of the major generational cohorts directly before and after them (Codrington, 2008).

Figure 1

Conceptual Model Comparing Traditional Generational Studies with Current Study



This chapter comprises four major sections. The first section provides a description of the literature related to the dependent variable of values. The second section provides a background of the independent variable of generations. The popular characteristics of the major generational cohorts and microgenerations represented in today's workforce are described. The third section introduces the data collection instrument, the WVS, and reviews past studies that have used the data (Inglehart et al, 2014). Finally, available generational research is reviewed, including conceptual articles and empirical studies on generational differences in values and literature mentioning the concept of microgenerations.

A History and Background on Values

Values guide human behavior (Kistler et al., 2017) in terms of how individuals believe they should behave in social environments, including the workplace (Egri &

Ralston, 2004). Values encompass qualities that an individual considers important in life, and therefore, guide, motivate, and influence individuals' attitudes and behaviors (Bennett et al., 2017; Boer & Fischer, 2013, Weber, 2017). Values may be measured in terms of their importance in individuals' lives (Schwartz et al., 2010). Scholars have asked which are the values that matter and why and who decides this (Manders-Huits, 2011). General values do not concern a specific life domain such as work but influence individual's actions in terms of attitudes and goals in the workplace (Roe & Ester, 1999). Values define what people believe to be fundamentally right or wrong (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Smola & Sutton, 2002). They shed light on personal interests and affect social relationships (Enoksen, 2016). Values form the core of who people are, influencing their choices, investment of time, and placement of trust (Weber, 2015). They are developed during impressionable years (Parry & Urwin, 2011) and tend to remain relatively stable (Robertson et al., 2012) but may evolve over time (Kelly et al., 2016). Values reflect what a person deems desirable, provide meaning for action (Weber, 2015), and influence decision making (Bennett et al., 2017). Every individual's value set is different - a single value may be the highest priority to one person and of little importance to another (Weber, 2017).

A construct like values is difficult to define because individuals attempt definitions from their unique perspectives (Christians & Traber, 1997; Lee-Ross, 2015); however, researchers must use operational definitions of the variables they are studying (Runyon et al., 1996). Although the concept of "values" is often presented in the literature, there is little consensus on its definition (Dose, 1997), in part; because values are abstract (Manders-Huits, 2011; Schwartz et al., 2010). Past research has studied

values such as autonomy, justice, trust, honesty, kindness, and respect for others (Manders-Huits, 2011; Yang et al., 2015); concepts such as God, country, work attitudes, and family (Baker & Forbes, 2006); and assumptions about government, citizenship, and society (Schwartz et al., 2010). Overall, scholars have explained values as cognitive representations of desirable goals (Schwartz et al., 2010), beliefs that individuals use to identify life principles that guide their actions (Boer & Fischer, 2013), and concepts central to human existence (Manders-Huits, 2011).

Values analyzed in existing generational research are typically job-related (Parry & Urwin, 2011), political (Bermiss & McDonald, 2018), or religious in nature (Cantone & Weiner, 2017; Freeman et al., 2015; Meinert, 2017). They have been labeled by generational researchers as personal values (Egri & Ralston, 2004, Weber, 2017), generational work values (Smola & Sutton, 2002), work values (Gursoy et al., 2008; Parry & Urwin, 2011), managerial values (Weber, 2015), generational values (Kelly et al., 2016), workforce values (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010), and cultural values (Robertson et al., 2012). In addition to the use of varying terms for the construct of values, it has been revealed that study participants from different generational cohorts may also attribute different meanings to the variable labels (van der Walt & de Plessis, 2010). Dose (1997, p.220), embracing the collection of these ideas, provided a concise definition of values as "standards or criteria for choosing goals or guiding action that are relatively enduring and stable over time."

Rokeach and Schwartz are most often credited with developing values theory (Cohen, 2009; Lyons et al., 2006; Roe & Ester, 1999). Values theory suggests that individuals' values are formed by upbringing and life experience, which influence

decisions, ways of thinking, and behaviors (Weber, 2017). Values are deeply personal and unique to individuals (Weber, 2015). Individuals attribute differing levels of importance to specific values (Weber, 2017). An individual's values system is an enduring set of beliefs along a continuum of importance (Weber, 2015) that can be measured according to their significance as guiding principles in one's life (Schwartz et al., 2010). Individuals are rarely motivated by a single value when making decisions (Weber, 2017). Multiple values come into play, and there are compatibility and conflict among them (Schwarz et al., 2010).

Individuals typically spend more time at their workplace than any other place outside their home (Beane et al., 2017). Although some believe individual values have no opportunity to surface in organizations (Gupta et al., 2016), employees do not have the luxury of shutting off their value systems upon entering the workplace (Meinert, 2017). They bring their unique value sets into organizations (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010), and these values influence their attitudes toward coworkers (Enoksen, 2016). Employees act following their personal values (Gupta, et al., 2016). They are guided by their value system and make decisions considering the consequences for their treasured values (Enoksen, 2016), including not only work-related values such as job security (Bristow et al., 2011); work-life balance (Codrington, 2008; Drago & Cunningham, 2006; Lamm & Meeks, 2009); and power (Egri & Ralston, 2004), but also general values (Cohen, 2009) defining what they perceive as fundamentally right or wrong (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Previous research on values supports the idea that it is not only social and economic values that influence the workplace, but also values related to politics (Bermiss & McDonald, 2018); religion (Cantone & Weiner, 2017; Freeman et al.,

2015; Meinert, 2017); gender (Verniers & Vala, 2017); sexual orientation (Gregory, 2011); and immigration (Enoksen, 2016).

Employees want to work in an environment that provides a feeling of comfort (Gupta, et al., 2016) because experiences at work affect their quality of life in the workplace, as well as that at home (Benefiel et al., 2014). They seek a close fit between their personal lives and work lives (Krahnke & Hoffman, 2002). This desire encourages individuals to pursue jobs that not only provide financial rewards but also meaningful work that aligns with their personal values (Freeman et al., 2015; Shufutinsky & Cox, 2019), which allows employees to feel less like expendable organizational resources (Benefiel et al., 2014). Individuals' social identities are defined by their values (Beane et al., 2017), and social identities at work influence employee behaviors and attitudes (Cantone & Wiener, 2017). Employees desire to fit into the workplace while being themselves (Freeman et al., 2015) and thrive when they feel they belong (Meinert, 2017). Employees whose values do not align with those of their organization are more likely to seek other opportunities (Bermiss & McDonald, 2018) and are attracted to organizations where current employees' values appear to fit more easily with their own (Bermiss & McDonald, 2018; Gupta, et al., 2016). A disagreement between individual and organizational values is unsettling for employees (Freeman et al., 2015) so individuals often land and persist in organizations where they feel aligned with the prevailing workplace value system (Gupta, et al., 2016).

The goals of diversity and inclusion limit what values are shared in the workplace (Beane et al., 2017). Although generational categorizations are not universally accepted, this type of labeling is often permitted where other stereotypes would never be allowed

(Yahr & Schimmel, 2013). Vocal majorities may create barriers for employees who hold less popular values and keep them from sharing their whole selves in the workplace (Kegan et al., 2014; Verniers & Vala, 2017). Values related to sexual orientation and gender are made known more often in the workplace than those related to racial differences or religious beliefs (Cantone & Wiener, 2017; Gregory, 2018). Many organizations do not consistently recognize discriminatory practices based on values related to race, ethnicity, age, disability, or sexuality (Freeman et al., 2015). Organizations may find it difficult to choose topics for discussion in corporate diversity training sessions without excluding or discriminating against specific value systems (Gregory, 2018). Expressing one's personal values presents a threat of divisiveness and discrimination in the workplace (Benefiel et al., 2014). Differing values on incompatible topics such as religion and sexual orientation create tension (Gregory, 2018), and tensions over divided values on sensitive subjects can negatively impact organizations (Meinert, 2017).

Global changes in values are also spilling into the workplace (Benefiel et al., 2014). Organizations are more often being asked to accommodate the unique values of employees (Krahnke & Hoffman, 2002) and are learning that cultivating individual values could increase organizational performance (Benefiel et al., 2014). Employers now encourage employees to talk about sensitive subjects which were once considered off limits in the workplace (Meinert, 2017). Individuals' perceptions of the workplace are influenced by their personal experiences (Enoksen, 2016), so they may perceive values differently from their coworkers (Krahnke & Hoffman, 2002). Members of the same group, such as a shared gender or race, are less likely to be viewed as discriminatory than

individuals who do not belong to the group (Verniers & Vala, 2017). When others are perceived as similar to oneself, it is easier to adopt their perspective (Cantone & Wiener, 2017). Therefore, it is important for organizations to foster a sense of community in the workplace among all employees (Benefiel et al., 2014). New employment regulations in the United Kingdom even emphasize a concern for individual values rather than the collective rights of the workforce (Freeman et al., 2015).

One of the first steps toward reducing workplace discrimination is communication (Legas & Sims, 2012; Verniers & Vala, 2017), where values are discussed more openly in organizations (Krahnke & Hoffman, 2002). Individuals find comfort in their values and desire to express them (Beane et al., 2017). There is no universal consensus regarding acceptable ways of communicating one's values in the workplace (Beane et al., 2017); however, encouraging difficult conversations between employees builds trust and compassion within organizations (Meinert, 2017). Although discussing polarizing values, such as religion, at work has historically been discouraged (Krahnke & Hoffman, 2002), conversations about these values have increased (Benefiel et al., 2014). Employees are becoming more comfortable with overtly bringing their personal values into the workplace (Krahnke & Hoffman, 2002), and employees who feel they can share their life experiences at work are less likely to leave an organization for other endeavors (Meinert, 2017). Employees who are able to openly discuss their values at work feel empowered (Meinert, 2017), and those who are provided the opportunity to engage in work activities in line with their values report a positive workplace experience (Freeman et al., 2015). Individuals' values encourage them to put forth their best effort (Benefiel et al., 2014), and employee behavior influences an organization's overall performance

(Brown et al., 2015). Organizations without an understanding of employees' values are unlikely to be performing at their full potential (Benefiel et al., 2014); whereas, organizations whose decision makers are vocal about their values are more likely to contribute positively to their local communities (Gupta, et al., 2016).

Challenges are possible in a multigenerational workplace where diverse individuals hold different values (Byrne, 2007), and the differing values members of the major generational cohorts are often the focus of generational research (Kelly et al., 2016; van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010; Zabel et al., 2017). The evidence for generational differences in work values is mixed (Parry & Urwin, 2011), and there is no clear consensus available on whether differences between older and younger employees can be partially attributed to generational cohort (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015). Some values have been found to be shared between all generations within the workforce, whereas others were found to be more specific to individual generational cohorts (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010). Although it is difficult to define values held by specific groups because it cannot be assumed that all values are shared by every individual within the group (Roe & Ester, 1999), relative agreement has been noted among members of a generational cohort with regard to work values (Zabel et al., 2017); further, there is evidence that each generation thinks differently and holds unique values (Kelly et al., 2016). Some research has determined that there appear to exist more similarities than differences in values between generational cohorts (Giancola, 2006). While individuals of all generations share similarities, each generational cohort seems to have distinct perceptions and outlooks in the workplace (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010), but

differences in fundamental beliefs across all four generations may be minimal (Giancola, 2006).

Members of every generation desire to belong in their workplace (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010) but tend to have unique ways of talking, dressing, and thinking (Gursoy et al., 2008). Just as it is expected that members of each generational cohort will have similar value systems (Codrington, 2008), values of employees from different generations are likely to be dissimilar (Dries et al., 2008; Kegan, 2018). Differing values may cause distractions, conflict, or miscommunication that impacts workplace productivity (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010), so identifying the importance placed on specific values is central to an organization's understanding of employee behavior (Weber, 2017). Knowledge of these value orientations assists organizations in employee recruitment and retention (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010). Awareness of values that are significant to each generation is beneficial (Weber, 2017) for organizations to emphasize shared values between generational cohorts and encourage productive collaboration rather than highlighting differences (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010).

In summary, personal value systems are the force behind individual behavior and attitude (Codrington, 2008). Research has indicated values may change over time as individuals mature; however, overall, generational experiences have more influence on values than merely age (Smola & Sutton, 2002). A generational cohort's value system affects the way its members communicate (Nwosu et al., 2016), and differing values may contribute to misunderstandings between members of different generations (Kelly et al., 2016). Understanding each generation's value system is beneficial (Weber, 2017)

because individuals cannot help but bring their values with them into the workplace (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010).

A History and Background on Generations

Generational differences are a popular subject of research (Lyons et al., 2015). Researchers have attempted to establish the existence of differences between generational cohorts (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015), and mixed evidence has been found in academic literature (Zabel et al., 2017). While generational differences may be perceived to be stronger than they truly are (Twenge, 2010), generational stereotypes are hard to dismiss when evidence of their apparent existence is readily available (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015). Due to the popularity of this topic, some describe generational stereotypes as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). The ongoing, heavy focus on this topic, despite past mixed results in generational studies, emphasizes the need for additional empirical research (Twenge, 2010).

Discussion of generational differences can be traced back by nearly a century to the work of Karl Mannheim (Parry & Urwin, 2011), who argued that experiences during formative years serve as the basis for a shared way of experiencing life (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). Significant life experiences during formative years define each generational cohort (Bristow et al., 2011). Members of each generation develop unique personality traits and sets of values (Zabel et al., 2017) and form a bond based on shared experiences (Parry & Urwin, 2011), which influence their values, attitudes, and behaviors (Sakdiyakorn & Wattanacharoensil, 2017). Although each member of a generation is a unique individual (Nwosu et al., 2016), evidence suggests that generational cohorts tend to behave in predictable and identifiable ways (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

Strauss and Howe (1991) are credited with the development of generational theory. The basis of generational theory is that individuals born in a particular moment in time develop unique values, beliefs, and personalities (Lamm & Meeks, 2009; Safeer et al., 2023). The theory posits that the era in which a person is born affects the lens through which they view the world (Codrington, 2008). Members of a generation share not only years of birth but also common experiences, leading to the creation of an identity (Parry & Urwin, 2011) or shared consciousness shaped by historical events and experiences (Gilleard, 2004). Individuals carry deep associations with major events in their lives (Strauss & Howe, 2007). This sense of unity between members becomes the foundation of a generational cohort (Mannheim, 1998). Generational theory relies heavily on the social identity of and self-categorization within these cohorts (Lyons et al., 2015).

Many members of the workforce are now delaying retirement and working later into their lives (Legas & Sims, 2012; Zabel et al., 2017). The result is four major generational cohorts - Silents, Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials - comprising today's workforce (Nwosu et al., 2016). Resultantly, generational differences in work values, ways of thinking, and communication styles have become more pronounced in organizations (Kelly et al., 2016). The following sections elaborate on the three largest generational cohorts and the microgenerations between them comprising the majority of the current workforce (Legas & Sims, 2012).

Boomers

As the generation born after World War II (Weston, 2001), Boomers grew up during a time of extreme optimism (Gursoy et al., 2008) and economic prosperity (Egri & Ralston, 2004; Nwosu et al., 2016). They were raised in traditional households where the

father was the head of the family, and they were doted upon as children (Weston, 2001). Boomers are highly competitive (Nwosu et al., 2016), but strive to be fair (Pekala, 2001). They are described as loyal (Zabel et al., 2017); driven and dedicated (Weston, 2001); innovative (Dries et al., 2008); and committed and hardworking (Nwosu et al., 2016). Many Boomers cared for both their parents and children simultaneously (Bennett et al., 2017; Murphy, 2012). They had little free time due to work, family, and community commitments (Weston, 2001). Boomers desire a simple life with less stress (Pekala, 2001) and more free time (Weston, 2001). Although they love challenges (Nwosu et al., 2016), many Boomers feel like digital immigrants because of growing up prior to recent technological advances (Knouse, 2011; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Therefore, they are perceived as having a fear of technology and being slow at learning new things (Bennett et al., 2017; Bennett et al., 2012). Boomers desire to make the world a better place (Weston, 2001) and often use their vacation time to explore fresh ideas and learn new skills (Pekala, 2001).

Boomers place work at the center of their lives and find fulfillment in it (Kupperschmidt, 2000). They equate work with self-worth (Knouse, 2011; Weston, 2001); typically work outside the home (Nwosu et al., 2016); and believe their value is connected to the number of hours they put in at the office (Pekala, 2001). They have been guilty of viewing family as an intrusion into their careers (Bennett et al., 2017) and attaining career success at the expense of their personal lives (Egri & Ralston, 2004). Boomers are perceived to have a stronger work ethic than the generations following them (Knouse, 2011, Twenge, 2010), often being described as hard workers (Weber, 2017) even to the point of being work-obsessed (Kelly et al., 2016). They are defined by their

jobs (Pekala, 2001) and report high levels of stress (Nwosu et al., 2016). Boomers expect their hard work to be rewarded with future job security (Bennett et al., 2017) and highly value social recognition at the workplace (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Although they seek status and success within their organizations (Nwosu et al., 2016), their commitment has been described as misguided because many members of this generation lost their jobs during economic downturns (Lamm & Meeks, 2009).

Gen Xers

Unlike Boomers, Gen Xers grew up in a time of change and social turbulence, moving frequently when their parents changed jobs or got divorced (Kupperschmidt, 1998). They lacked stability as children (Pekala, 2001) and view life as not being a level playing field (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Gen Xers were often raised by working parents (Kupperschmidt, 1998) and came home from school to empty houses (Weston, 2001). They became independent and self-reliant (Pekala, 2001) and formed strong bonds with friends because of the unavailability of their families (Weston, 2001). As children, Gen Xers have been described as overlooked (Drago & Cunningham, 2006), under-protected (Kupperschmidt, 1998), and even neglected (Lamm & Meeks, 2009). Exposure to violence on television forced young Gen Xers to confront adult issues before they were ready (Weston, 2001), and the line between adults and children became blurred (Kupperschmidt, 1998). As adults, Gen Xers place higher value on family time than the generation before them (Nwosu et al., 2016).

Gen Xers are independent, (Kelly et al., 2016; Bennett et al., 2012) and self-reliant (Yahr & Schimmel, 2013). They are often highly educated and place importance on learning opportunities (Nwosu et al., 2016). Gen Xers are resourceful and adaptable

(Nwosu et al., 2016); however, they have also been described as skeptical (Knouse, 2011; Weber, 2017) and even pessimistic about the future because of their prior experiences (Yahr & Schimmel, 2013). Gen Xers were raised in the Information Age (Weston, 2001) and came of age while using technology (Hart, 2006). They were the first generation of children to use technology both in school and at home (Kupperschmidt, 1998). Gen Xers are tech-savvy (Pekala, 2001) and very comfortable with computers (Drago & Cunningham, 2006).

Gen Xers hold very different work values than the generational cohorts before them (Kupperschmidt, 1998). Gen Xers believe that their true value lies in what they know (Pekala, 2001) and strive to keep their skills updated for future job security (Bristow et al., 2011). They crave work-life balance (Amayah & Gedro, 2014; Codrington, 2008; Drago & Cunningham, 2006; Lamm & Meeks, 2009) and, unlike the workaholic Boomers before them (Kelly et al., 2016), feel work should be left at the office (Gursoy et al., 2008). Gen Xers work hard for more free time rather than more money (Pekala, 2001) while viewing work as something to be endured rather than enjoyed (Kupperschmidt, 1998). Unlike Boomers, they place little value on hierarchical status (Kelly et al., 2016) and do not seek prestige from titles (Bristow et al., 2011) or power over others (Egri & Ralston, 2004). Gen Xers grew up in a time of economic uncertainty (Parry & Urwin, 2011) and, therefore, tend to save money (Yahr & Schimmel, 2013). They are unlikely to match the economic success of their parents (Kupperschmidt, 1998). Gen Xers distrust authority but desire quality mentors (Pekala, 2001). They lack a sense of community in the workplace (Kupperschmidt, 1998) and

change jobs frequently (Bristow et al., 2011), placing their loyalty in people rather than organizations (Murphy, 2012; Pekala, 2001).

Millennials

Millennials comprise the largest (Byrne, 2007; Carter, 2008), most diverse (Knouse, 2011; Yahr & Schimmel, 2013), and highest educated generation to date (Chillakuri, 2020; Nwosu et al., 2016). They are described as academically gifted (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Unlike Gen Xers, they were sheltered (Nwosu et al., 2016) and led very structured lives (Bristow et al., 2011), becoming the most highly protected children in history (Codrington, 2008). Millennials were born completely immersed in technology (Nwosu et al., 2016; Shufutinsky & Cox, 2019; Spodark, 2005) and are therefore, tech-savvy (Carter, 2008; Drago & Cunningham, 2006; Murphy, 2012; Weber, 2017). Unlike the generations before them, they grew up with cell phones and social networks (Carter, 2008; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010) and take technology for granted (Hart, 2006). Millennials are viewed as optimistic (Drago & Cunningham, 2006; Pekala, 2001; Shufutinsky & Cox, 2019); flexible, fun, and ambitious (Lamm & Meeks, 2009); confident (Bristow et al., 2011); and team-oriented (Carter, 2008; Yahr & Schimmel, 2013). They tend to have short attention spans and are easily bored (Pekala, 2001).

Perceptions of Millennials in organizations are not entirely positive (Keengwe et al., 2014), and they are often described as unprepared for the workplace (Pekala, 2001). They expect quick promotions and close relationships with supervisors (Nwosu et al., 2016). Millennials want to change the world (Codrington, 2008; Fu & Liang, 2019; Shufutinsky & Cox, 2019) and seek interesting and meaningful jobs (Byrne, 2007). They expect clear objectives and expectations and prefer to choose their work tasks rather than

having them assigned to them (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Bennett et al., 2012). As with Gen Xers, flexibility in the workplace is very important to Millennials (Pekala, 2001), but they also express the desire for a structured work environment with distinct rules (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Although they are more trusting of organizations than Gen Xers (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), they do not view work as central in their lives (Twenge, 2010). Similar to Gen Xers, Millennials highly value free time (Kelly et al., 2016) and typically work until they earn enough to play (Pekala, 2001). They gravitate toward informal workplaces (Twenge & Campbell, 2008) with flexible schedules and telecommuting options (Bennett et al., 2017). Unlike the independent generation before them, Millennials value teamwork, collaboration (Knouse, 2011; Nwosu et al., 2016), and cooperation in the workplace (Pekala, 2001). Many of them choose not to move into positions with greater responsibility where longer work hours may be required of them (Twenge, 2010). Millennials are multitaskers who like to stay busy and ask numerous questions to understand how they uniquely fit within an organization (Byrne, 2007). They require routines in a highly structured work environment (Bristow et al., 2011; Yahr & Schimmel, 2013) and, similar to prior generations, want their talent to be publicly recognized and rewarded (Nwosu et al., 2016).

Cuspers

A microgeneration, is defined as the group of individuals born during the overlapping years between two major generational cohorts (Codrington, 2008). In the first and last five to seven years of a major generational cohort exists a group of individuals who fall outside the core of that generation (Dries et al., 2008;

Kupperschmidt, 2000; Smola & Sutton, 2002). These individuals born at the very beginning or end of a traditional generation will likely not closely resemble those of the core (Giancola, 2006). Individuals with birth dates differing by merely a single year will not behave completely differently although they are traditionally classified as members of different major generational cohorts (Lamm & Meeks, 2009). A microgeneration straddles two unique worlds (Fluck & Dowden, 2011). Cuspers are influenced by the generations directly before and after them (Codrington, 2008), and many identify with the characteristics of both (Giancola, 2006). A microgeneration creates a bridge between two major generational cohorts (Codrington, 2008). The concept of a microgeneration is not new, but it is rarely mentioned in academic literature (Taylor, 2018). In the past, researchers have questioned the existence of subcultures within major generational cohorts whose values are more aligned with those generation different from their own (Robertson et al., 2012).

The microgeneration between the Boomers and Gen Xers is commonly referred to as Generation Jones (Giancola, 2006) and has been called the twilight of the Baby Boomer generation; however, they have been described as cynical and apathetic, more like the core members of Generation X (Wells, 2009). The name Generation Jones is derived from the term "jonesin," which means having a yearning or craving for something (Lang, 2000) and the phrase "keeping up with the Joneses" (Page, 2008; Wells, 2009). As expected, there is variation in the range of birth years attributed to the Jonesers, with authors identifying them as born between 1954 and 1965 (Lang, 2000) or 1964 and 1969 (Codrington, 2008). Jonesers came of age in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Wells, 2009) and are described as witnesses, rather than participants of the 1960s

(Page, 2008). As children, they bounced between the excitement of Woodstock and the terror of the Manson murders (Lang, 2000). As a microgeneration, Generation Jones is less visible and defined (Wells, 2009) with its members typically lumped with the Boomers or Gen Xers (Lang, 2000) so it has been called a lost generation (Wells, 2009). Jonesers tend to seek answers over ideology (Page, 2008). They are more open-minded, less fearful of other races (Wells, 2009), and less partisan during political elections than Boomers (Page, 2008). Jonesers began elementary school at the start of school desegregation and, therefore, graduated from high school with a deeper understanding of people from other backgrounds than previous generations (Wells, 2009). Jonesers had fewer job opportunities upon graduation than core Boomers (Lang, 2000), coming of age in a time of economic struggle (Wells, 2009). Like Boomers, many Jonesers simultaneously cared for both their parents and their children (Page, 2008); nevertheless, they have been said to exemplify the selfishness and self-absorption of Gen Xers (Wells, 2009).

The microgeneration between Generation X and the Millennial generation is most commonly referred to as the Xennial microgeneration (Dhami, 2014; Lamagna, 2015). Although some authors classify this microgeneration as Millennials (Garvey, 2015), most place Xennials at the end of Generation X (Shafrir, 2011). There is also disagreement regarding the years encompassing this microgeneration with authors indicating they were born between 1978 and 1984 (Lamagna, 2015) and 1977 and 1981 (Shafrir, 2011). Technology rapidly advanced as Xennials were transitioning into the workforce (Garvey, 2015). These cuspers have been described as merging the ballpoint pen and computer mouse (Fluck & Dowden, 2011). Xennials were the first children to have computers at

home (Garvey, 2015), and getting to use them was special (Stankorb & Oelbaum, 2014). They did not have access to many new technologies while in school; however, like Millennials, they have always used technology in the workplace (Fluck & Dowden, 2011). Xennials became adults before the advent of texting, social media, and instant messaging (Shafrir, 2011) but have adapted easily to their frequent use (Stankorb & Oelbaum, 2014).

A History and Background on the World Values Survey

The WVS is a large-scale representative survey (Tausch & Heshmati, 2016) of worldwide sociocultural and political change (Becker et al., 2017). It measures social capital, tolerance, trust, happiness, and civic engagement (Kistler et al., 2017) and reports attitudes related to work, religion, culture, diversity, and politics (Lee-Ross, 2015). The WVS was developed in the late 1970s to investigate fundamental value orientations in Western Europe (Peterson, 2003) and has since grown into one of the world's most heavily utilized empirical social science resources (Ludeke & Larson, 2017). Eighty percent of the world's population is represented over the first four waves of the survey administration (Pettersson, 2003), and ninety percent of the world's population is represented over the first six waves (Glanville & Story, 2018) of the survey. A seventh wave of the WVS was recently completed in 2022 (Haerpfer et al., 2022). All data collected is available in the public domain (Kistler et al., 2017). The WVS began with only 25 countries (Pettersson, 2003) and has grown to include over 300 national surveys (Kistler et al., 2017). A minimum sample of 1,000 individuals are surveyed per country (Kistler et al., 2017; Lu & Liu, 2018). Adult residents are selected randomly (Kistler et al., 2017) and are typically between 18 and 85 years, with a handful of countries allowing

those as young as 16 years old to participate (Ludeke & Larson, 2017). Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with the subjects (Lu & Liu, 2018; Ludeke & Larson, 2017) using a master questionnaire in English (Kistler et al., 2017). Changes have been introduced to the WVS questionnaire during every wave (Bruni & Stanca, 2006; Lee-Ross, 2015). These adjustments to the questions asked between waves were considered while determining the data that could be used for this study because of its use of a time-lag framework.

Thousands of publications have relied on the data provided in the WVS (Ludeke & Larson, 2017), and the topics of these studies vary widely. Several studies focus on broad topics such as the dimensions of natural cultures (Minkov & Hofstede, 2012); personalities of the self-employed versus the general population (Lee-Ross, 2015); the importance of friendship (Lu et al., 2020); the effect of support for democratic values on the persistence of democracy (Becker et al., 2017); and gender relations in the Muslim world (Tausch & Heshmati, 2016). Researchers have used the data to investigate happiness (Bruni & Stanca, 2006); the link between moral values and prosocial behavior (Kistler et al., 2017); the impact of values on political non-violent protest (Welzel & Deutsch, 2011); and the relationship between values and approval of bribery (Kravtsova et al., 2017). There are studies on the influence of technology including the effect of television on material aspirations (Bruni & Stanca, 2006) and the internet's impact on national identity and trust (Lu & Liu, 2018). Other research studies have evaluated portions of the WVS data itself, including the quality of the Big Five assessment used in more recent waves (Ludeke & Larson, 2017) and questions regarding trust (Johnson &

Mislin, 2012). Another study used the WVS data to teach advanced statistical analysis strategies (Becker et al., 2017).

While only a single study specifically analyzing generational differences in values was discovered in the WVS library, related research has been conducted (Thomason et al., 2022). Some WVS studies have focused on specific age groups like adolescent orientations toward gender equality and good citizenship (Peterson, 2003) and cultural differences in stereotypes concerning older people (Stanciu, 2022). While less common, there are recent studies available using the WVS data to explore general values related to a workplace setting (Mitra et al., 2021; Pathak, 2021; Vo et al., 2022). The current study contributes to filling the gap of generational research in the WVS literature.

Just as researchers have used the WVS data to explore a variety of topics, the way data have been used also varies from study to study. The WVS survey data have been used in original studies like the current study (Ludeke & Larson, 2017; Pettersson, 2003); replication of previous studies (Lee-Ross, 2015; Minkov & Hofstede, 2012); continuation of former studies (Tausch & Heshmati, 2016); and in response to studies with which researchers disagreed (Johnson & Mislin, 2012; Welzel & Deutsch, 2011). Numerous researchers have analyzed data from multiple countries using the WVS data (Becker et al., 2017; Bruni & Stanca, 2006; Johnson & Mislin, 2012; Kassa & Minkov, 2022; Lu & Liu, 2018; Ludeke & Larson, 2017; Mitra et al., 2021; Pettersson, 2003). Others have selected specific geographic regions for their sample (Tausch & Heshmati, 2016) or pulled data from only a single country of interest (Hed & Grasso, 2020; Kistler et al., 2017). This study used data only from interviews conducted in the United States.

Six waves of data were available from the WVS at the time of this study. Some researchers have used the longitudinal file containing data collected in all waves from 1981 to 2011 (Becker et al., 2017; Tausch & Heshmati, 2016), while others have used only the most recent data collected in wave 6 (Forteza & Noboa, 2021; Hed & Grasso, 2020; Kistler et al., 2017; Kravtsova et al., 2017; Lu & Liu, 2018; Ludeke & Larson, 2017). Because of the changes in questions between waves of the survey, many authors use data from a combination of multiple individual waves containing the data of interest (Bruni & Stanca, 2006; Glanville & Story, 2018; Johnson & Mislin, 2012; Kassa & Minkov, 2022; Lee-Ross, 2015; Lu et al., 2020; Minkov & Hofstede, 2012; Pettersson, 2003; Welzel & Deutsch, 2011). This study pulled data from the five of the six available waves that included interviews conducted in the United States.

Because of the use of different measurement scales, the entire WVS data set cannot be analyzed in a single study. Creating a standard score for each participant from the WVS is impossible because of varied answer types (Minkov & Hofstede, 2012). WVS authors pull data from questions addressing their specific research questions (Ludeke & Larson, 2017). Some use only one (Johnson & Mislin, 2012) or two (Lu & Liu, 2018) questions from the entire survey, while others include responses to several questions (Lee-Ross, 2015). The WVS Likert items are a popular choice among researchers (Becker et al., 2017; Bruni & Stanca, 2006; Lu & Liu, 2018). Variations in the measurement of a single variable, such as trust, are found in the WVS library where the variable was analyzed with a single question by Johnson and Mislin (2012) and six questions by Lu and Liu (2018). This study used eight WVS questions that participants responded to using a Likert-type scale to determine two average values scores for each

subject. Factor analysis has been commonly employed across WVS studies to ensure that selected questions appropriately measure what was intended; this method was used in the present study, as well (Glanville & Story, 2018; Kravtsova et al., 2017; Lee-Ross, 2015; Lu & Liu, 2018; Ludeke & Larson, 2017; Minkov & Hofstede, 2012; Pettersson, 2003; Tausch & Heshmati, 2016).

When completing a study, it is important to consider the effects of variables that are not the focus of the current research. The majority of the studies reviewed in the WVS library controlled for the common variables of age (Becker et al., 2017; Bruni & Stanca, 2006; Kistler et al., 2017; Lee-Ross, 2015; Lu & Liu, 2018); gender (Bruni & Stanca, 2006; Kistler et al., 2017; Lee-Ross, 2015; Lu & Liu, 2018); and education (Becker et al., 2017; Bruni & Stanca, 2006; Forteza & Noboa, 2021; Lu & Liu, 2018). Other variables including social class (Becker et al., 2017); religious affiliation (Vo et al, 2022); employment status (Bruni & Stanca, 2006); socio-economic status (Lee-Ross, 2015); political interest (Kistler et al., 2017); gross domestic product (Pathak & Muralidharan, 2021); political participation (Vo et al., 2022); income (Lee-Ross, 2015; Lu & Liu, 2018); marital status (Bruni & Stanca, 2006); and media use (Lu & Liu, 2018) were controlled for when relevant to the study's research questions. A limitation of this study was the inability to control for gender and race because test assumptions were not met.

Past Generational Research

Finding studies on generational differences is a simple task; however, finding consistency in the approach, methods, and results of these studies is difficult. The evidence for generational differences in values within academic literature is mixed (Parry

& Urwin, 2011). Some generational studies reveal significant differences between the major generational cohorts across various areas (Bennett et al., 2017; Bristow et al., 2011), while others found no significant differences between the major generations (Dries et al., 2008). Some authors simply deemed their results inconclusive (Noble & Schewe, 2003). The significance of generational differences often depends on the specific value in question (Twenge, 2010). Research has shown that Millennials are not fundamentally different from former generations (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), and intrinsic values have been found to be relatively consistent across all major generations (Twenge, 2010). The idea that values held by generational cohorts transform slowly over time from generation to generation (Kelly et al., 2016) is supported by evidence that Gen Xers and Millennials tend to share many values (Bristow et al., 2011). For example, Millennials are more different from members of the Silent generation than Generation X (Kelly et al., 2016); however, Millennials most highly admire Silents as mentors (Pekala, 2001). Research has even claimed more variation exists in values within generational cohorts than between them (Twenge, 2010). Lyons and Schweitzer (2016) suggest that significant media attention has heightened awareness regarding generational differences in the workplace and may have affected the data gathered on them.

Although many of the available generational studies have been critiqued, their findings indicate that generational differences are not merely superficial (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Thus, the need for comprehensive future generational studies has been noted (Gursoy et al., 2008; Wilson et al., 2008), considering several gaps in the available generational literature. First, generational researchers often rely heavily on mainstream media in their literature reviews rather than peer-reviewed, evidence-based information

(Lyons et al., 2015). Second, concerns with the quality of prior research have been voiced (Lyons & Kuron, 2013; Macky et al., 2008). Finally, the need to separate the effects of age and location from those of generational cohort are emphasized (Parry & Urwin, 2011). A clear understanding of how members of each generation define values (van der Walt & de Plessis, 2010) and empirical research on the impact of microgenerations in generational differences would also be helpful (Taylor, 2018).

Past generational research has been criticized for the heavy use of non-academic sources in literature reviews (Lyons et al., 2015). Verifying that the study of generational differences in values has a sound theoretical and empirical foundation is important before embarking on further research (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Generational differences have been discussed for decades (Parry & Urwin, 2011), gaining attention from both academia and popular media (Sakdiyakorn & Wattanacharoensil, 2017). This interest has resulted in a large body of academic articles, consulting reports, amateur blogs, and magazine stories on the topic (Lyons et al., 2015). Some scholars view generational research as simply a popular practitioner idea (Parry & Urwin, 2011) rather than a social science concern (Macky et al., 2008), and critics consider differences between generations more myth than reality (Giancola, 2006). Researchers have noted that the additional study of generational differences should be grounded in theory, a request this study aimed to achieve (Lyons & Kuron, 2013)

The methodological quality of past generational studies has been criticized for several reasons, resulting in calls for greater rigor in generational research (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). Methodological inconsistencies between generational studies make comparisons and generalizations difficult (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). Even when significant

differences between generations were found, the results often contradicted the findings of other generational studies (Stark & Poppler, 2017). The key to successful research is careful planning (Runyon et al., 1996), and the need for more empirical study on generational differences is clear (Noble & Schewe, 2003). Past generational researchers have identified specific limitations in their studies' methodology. Although Baltes (1968) emphasized the shortcomings of using a cross-sectional framework in generational research because differences between age groups cannot be interpreted exclusively as generational effects, many authors have continued to employ it (Bennett et al., 2017; Dries et al., 2008; Lamm & Meeks, 2009; Wilson et al., 2008.) Another common critique of generational research is related to effect sizes. Generational differences discovered in some previous research studies are not as significant as believed because low reported effect sizes indicate little practical importance (Lyons & Kuron, 2013, Macky et al., 2008; Stark & Poppler, 2017). Other studies have been criticized for not reporting effect sizes at all (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). Generational researchers often cite Twenge's (2010) study an example of this. Dries et al. (2008) acknowledged problems with sample size, survey design, and unaddressed covariates in their study.

Although the importance of controlling for the effects of age and location in generational research has been emphasized (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Sakdiyakorn & Wattanacharoensil, 2017), many studies fail to control for participants' age so differences between participants cannot be solely attributed to generational cohort (Bennett et al., 2017; Egri & Ralston, 2004; Gursoy et al., 2008; Lyons & Schweitzer, 2016; Wilson et al., 2008). A deeper consideration of the effects of age, life cycle, and career stage is needed in future generational research (Macky et al., 2008). Recent generational research

has continued to use a cross-sectional framework (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2016). Scholars have recommended longitudinal studies (Smola & Sutton, 2002) and strongly suggested that future studies employ a time-lag framework (Bennett et al., 2017), which considers the effects of age and location on generational research (Baltes, 1968).

Within generational literature, there is little empirical research on microgenerations (Taylor, 2018). Stark and Poppler (2017) suggest that more accurate boundaries between generations are not important because generational trends reveal themselves despite the discrepancy between studies. One microgeneration study found that Jonesers tended to choose the characteristics of either the Boomers or Gen Xers rather than a mix of the two (Codrington, 2008). Studies on the Silent generation show that its youngest members shared more attributes with Boomers than core Silents (Hart, 2006). Fluck and Dowden (2011) studied the Xennial microgeneration in an educational setting focusing on how teachers view new technologies in the classroom. Rather than commenting on the differences between members of a major generational cohort and those of a microgeneration, the study's conclusions indicated that microgeneration teachers are more prepared to use technology in their workplace when teaching than they were during their time as students in the classroom (Fluck & Dowden, 2011). Interestingly, in a study that did not mention microgenerations, 10 percent of participants correctly identified themselves as members of a microgeneration rather than members of one of the well-known major generational cohorts (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2016).

Conclusion

This study attempts to identify differences in values between members of major generational cohorts and those of microgenerations. Although the concept of

generational differences has many critics, empirical evidence suggests generational tensions affect workplace morale and productivity. This study's findings support workplace attempts to minimize the negative effects of generational tension on organizational success. Providing empirical evidence of the presence of generational differences in the workplace allows for continued conversations on this issue, which many have already dismissed. Because the findings indicate less differences between the major generational cohorts and members of the microgenerations, cuspers may play an important role in bridging generation gaps in multigenerational organizations.

The review of literature illustrates the need for additional empirical research on generational differences in values; meanwhile, popular media appears saturated with this topic. The academic and practitioner literature reveals conflicting information and a lack of comparability between previous studies within this research area. This study attempted to fill three gaps in generational research. First, it acknowledged the possible effect of factors such as age and location on values frequently left out of generational research that employs a cross-sectional framework and attempts to address this by using the less common time-lag framework. Second, the use of a time-lag framework to control for these additional effects provides comparability to previous empirical work. Finally, and most importantly, this study empirically addresses the concept of microgenerations that fall in the overlapping years of two major generational cohorts. The idea of a microgeneration, though infrequently mentioned in empirical study, is a popular topic in mainstream media. Empirical study of members of microgenerations is an area ripe for additional exploration.

This study's results have implications for academic research, conceptual theory, and organizational practice. First, because differences between the core members of the major generational cohorts were identified, cuspers could be contributing to the mixed results found in previous studies where they were included with the core of the major generations. Support to the validity of generational differences as an indicator of workplace tensions and conflict provides a foundation for addressing the issue. Second, no conceptual theory specific to the idea of microgenerations has been developed so far. Because this study revealed significant differences between core members of the major generational cohorts and the individuals born in the years at the beginning and end of major generations, this idea requires additional theoretical consideration. This study's findings suggest that this path of inquiry is deserving of additional attention in future research endeavors. Finally, implications for organizations - where the topic of generational differences remains extremely popular - could be instrumental in contributing to organization success. Findings suggest members of the microgenerations hold values similar to the major generational cohorts before and/or after them. Having the ability to relate to members of multiple generations positions cuspers as a key to closing the generation gap in the workplace and fostering positive collaboration in a multigenerational workforce. Recommendations based on this study's findings are highly relevant as the next generation, the Homelanders, begins entering the workforce renewing interest in generational theory and igniting the conversation on generational values once again.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This study examined the values of members of microgenerations and compared them to those of core Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials to identify differences. It resolves past concerns of not controlling for the subject's age in cross-sectional generational studies by using a time-lag framework. This framework allows analyzing the responses of subjects within the same age range rather than the responses of all subjects at a single point in time regardless of their age. At present, the concept of microgenerations has not been theorized. The microgenerations analyzed in this study were found to influence the results of generational research, indicating that the field is ready for theoretical development of the concept of microgenerations.

This chapter is divided into three main sections after the presentation of the study's research questions. The first section describes the research design. This study used existing data in an ex-post facto, non-experimental, time-lag, intact group design. The existing data were pulled from the publicly available WVS data sets (Inglehart et al., 2014). Second, this study's procedure is introduced, with data provided on how the subjects were sorted into generational cohorts for each of the three research questions. The final section of the chapter describes the statistical methods applied for understanding the data. The eight items chosen to measure values in this study were first tested for reliability and validity using Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was the researcher's original approach to

permit the consideration of gender and race as covariates. Tukey's post hoc test was to be conducted for the significant results obtained. Because the data did not meet ANCOVA assumptions, the researcher proceeded with Kruskal–Wallis H tests.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer three primary research questions:

RQ1: Are there differences in values between Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials?

RQ2: Are there differences in values between the core members of the Baby Boomer generation, Generation X, and the Millennial generation when removing the microgenerations in the overlapping years between them?

RQ3: Are there differences in values between the members of the Generation Jones and Xennial microgenerations and the core members of the three major generational cohorts?

Research Design

The extant literature has recommended both additional qualitative (Lyons et al., 2015) and quantitative (Twenge, 2010) generational studies to fill gaps in the field. This quantitative study examined the differences in values between generational cohorts by employing an ex-post facto design using preexisting data. Ex-post facto studies examine facts occurring in the past (Simon & Goes, 2013), and the investigation takes place without interference from the researcher (Salkind, 2010). The researcher studied the variable of generational cohort in retrospect for possible effects on personal values (Lord, 1973). Ex-post facto designs are used to examine cause and effect relationships (Salkind, 2010) between events and circumstances (Lord, 1973). Generalization in ex-post facto

research is limited because the samples cannot be considered random (Simon & Goes, 2013); however, the use of existing data allowed the researcher to analyze responses from interviews that occurred decades ago in this study, which is advantageous in generational research.

There are three main frameworks of survey research - cross-sectional, time-lag, and longitudinal (Creswell, 2022). Cross-sectional studies involve collecting data from participants of many ages at a single point in time (Salkind, 2010); they cannot pinpoint whether differences in participants' values may be attributed to age or generational cohort (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). A time-lag study uses participants' responses when they are of similar ages at different points in time (Salkind, 2010) and allows researchers to compare responses of members of different generations when they were in the same age range (Bristow et al., 2011). Time-lag study results allow the comparison of current and prior participants (Runyon et al., 1996). A longitudinal study collects data from the same participants at multiple points in time (Salkind, 2010). Although the age effect in a longitudinal study is considered generation-specific (Baltes, 1968) and this type of study could contribute to this field (Smola & Sutton, 2002), longitudinal generational research is rare because of its complexity and cost (Salkind, 2010). Although it is challenging to separate the effects of generational cohort, age, and location, it is important to attempt this (Sakdiyakorn & Wattanacharoensil, 2017). This study employed a time-lag, intact group design; the study's sample were members of their respective generational cohorts prior to the research (Runyon et al., 1996). This framework addressed gaps in generational literature, identified by past researchers, by attempting to control for the

participants' age at the time of the study (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Sakdiyakorn & Wattanacharoensil, 2017).

Instrumentation

The instrument used to collect the data for this study was the WVS (Inglehart et al., 2014), which is a cross-national survey investigating worldwide sociocultural and political change (Becker et al., 2017). The WVS collects data on social, political, economic, religious, and ethical values as well as participant opinions on societal well-being, corruption, migration, gender roles, tolerance, security, and science and technology (Inglehart et al, 2014). There are now seven completed waves of the survey with data collected over a period of 33 years, from 1981 to 2020. WVS waves 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 include samples from the United States whose data were collected between 1981 and 2011 and were available for use in this study (Inglehart et al., 2014). Interviews for waves 1 and 3 were conducted by The Gallup Organization. Wave 4 data were collected by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. Interviews for waves 5 and 6 were completed by Knowledge Networks' Government and Academic Research Unit, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Data Collection Organizations for WVS Waves Used in This Study

Wave	Year	Organization
Wave 1	1981	The Gallop Organization
Wave 3	1995	The Gallop Organization
Wave 4	1999	Institute for Social Research
Wave 5	2006	Knowledge Networks
Wave 6	2011	Knowledge Networks

WVS United States data sets allow the researcher to address the most commonly mentioned criticisms in generational research - separation of the effects of age, location,

and generational cohort. In this study, using the data only from the interviews conducted in the United States acknowledges the effects of participant location and generational cohort because the characteristics and year ranges of generational cohorts tend to be specific to geographic location. Combining the data from five waves of WVS allowed for a time-lag analysis of responses to the same questions from individuals of different generational cohorts when they were approximately of the same age and at a similar point of life, which addressed the desire to separate the effects of age and generational cohort (Sakdiyakorn & Wattanacharoensil, 2017).

WVS data have been used in numerous studies (Inglehart et al., 2014). A few of these recent studies have been reviewed to determine how the data have been used (Becker et al., 2017; Glanville & Story, 2018; Lu & Liu, 2018). Using the WVS data, researchers have analyzed participants' trust (Glanville & Story, 2018; Lu & Liu, 2018); national identity, civic approach, traditional and secular values (Lu & Liu, 2018); health, social capital (Glanville & Story, 2018); and democratic values (Becker et al., 2017). Similar to this study using only US data, past studies using the WVS data have included information only from specific countries of interest (Lu & Liu, 2018). As in this study, prior research has focused on selected relevant items within the extensive WVS data sets (Glanville & Story, 2018). Also, like this study, researchers have combined responses to the same questions from multiple waves of the survey (Becker et al., 2017; Glanville & Story, 2018), allowing the researcher to employ a time-lag framework.

Generation

The independent variable of generational cohort is the key variable in this study. To answer the first research question, generational cohort was divided into three levels -

Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials - as in previous generational research. Traditional distinctions were made between the generations, as noted in Table 2. Boomers included individuals born between 1940 and 1960 (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Weston, 2001). Those born between 1961 and 1980 (Drago & Cunningham, 2006; Gursoy et al., 2008; Lamm & Meeks, 2009) were classified as Gen Xers, and Millennials were individuals born between 1981 and 2000 (Gursoy, et al., 2008; Lamm & Meeks, 2009).

Table 2
Traditional Generational Distinctions

Generation	Beginning Year	Ending Year
Baby Boomer	1940	1960
Generation X	1961	1980
Millennial	1981	2000

Unlike previous generational studies, for the second and third research questions, generational cohort was divided into five levels adding the Generation Jones and Xennial microgenerations to the three major generational cohorts. For these two questions, Boomers were individuals born between 1940 and 1959; Jonesers were individuals born between 1960 and 1964 (Codrington, 2008; Lang, 2000); Gen Xers were individuals born between 1965 and 1976; Xennials were individuals born between 1977 and 1982 (Lamagna, 2015; Shafrir, 2011); and Millennials were individuals born between 1983 and 2000. These levels are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Generational Distinctions including Microgenerations

Generation	Beginning Year	Ending Year
Baby Boomer	1940	1959
Generation Jones	1960	1964
Generation X	1965	1976
Xennial	1977	1982
Millennial	1983	2000

Values

The dependent variable in this study is values. Values were measured based on participants' responses to eight Likert statements (Inglehart et al., 2014). Likert-type scales comprise multiple items or averages of answers; the responses are, therefore, considered continuous data measured using an interval scale (Brown, 2011). The question presented to the participants was, "Using this scale, can the following statements be justified?" The Likert-type scale ranged from *1 - Never Justifiable* to *10 - Always Justifiable*. The eight statements were claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled, avoiding a fare on public transport, cheating on taxes if you have a chance, someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties, homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and suicide. These eight items were selected because they were posed to participants during all five waves of the WVS in the United States. They fit the description of general values concepts mentioned in prior research, including autonomy, respect for authority, honesty, choice, power, justice, obedience, and responsibility (Baker & Forbes, 2006; Cohen, 2009; Elizur & Sagie, 1999; Hills, 2002; Lyons et al., 2006; Manders-Huits, 2011; Schwartz et al., 2010; Welzel, 2013; Yang et al., 2015).

Study Participants

This study's participants were selected using random stratified sampling (Lu & Liu, 2018), creating representative samples of noninstitutionalized adult populations for the countries surveyed (Glanville & Story, 2018). The WVS Association requires national samples to be representative of all adults in the country residing in private households irrespective of nationality, citizenship, or primary language (Inglehart et al., 2014). Participant data were collected through individual interviews, conducted mostly

in the participants' place of residence; however, individuals in very remote areas were sometimes interviewed by phone. Participant answers were recorded either on a paper questionnaire or digitally (Inglehart et al., 2014).

The most commonly used cohort categorizations in previous generational literature are those from the United States (van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010). The number and types of generational cohorts vary greatly by country (Zabel et al., 2017); therefore, generational categorizations cannot typically be applied uniformly across all societies (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). Similarly, an individual's value orientation is also influenced by physical location (Robertson et al., 2012). As previously mentioned, only data from interviews conducted in the United States were used in this research because the traditionally discussed generational cohorts are specific to this country. The United States waves of the WVS were completed over a span of 30 years - wave 1 in 1981, wave 3 in 1995, wave 4 in 1999, wave 5 in 2006, and wave 6 in 2011. Wave 2 did not include interviews with participants from the United States.

The five data sets included a total of 8,517 subjects. Some of these subjects (23.8%) fell into the Silent, Greatest, Interbellum, and Lost generational cohorts which are not substantially represented in today's workforce (Giancola, 2006; Hart, 2006; Pekala, 2001). This study's focus begins with the Baby Boomer generation, or those participants born in or after 1940. The sample was comprised of 6,488 individuals born between 1940 and 1993 from the United States data sets with complete information on values, falling into the traditional Boomer, Generation X and Millennial generational cohorts. Participants born in 1993 met the minimum age of 18 years at the time of data collection for wave 6 in 2011. In the sample for this study, as illustrated in Table 4, 1,425

participants were interviewed in wave 1; 979 in wave 3; 1,005 in wave 4, 1,050 participants in wave 5; and 2,029 in wave 6.

Table 4
World Values Survey Waves: US Data Sets

Wave	Year	Subjects	Percent
Wave 1	1981	1,425	22.0%
Wave 3	1995	979	15.1%
Wave 4	1999	1,005	15.5%
Wave 5	2006	1,050	16.1%
Wave 6	2011	2,029	31.3%

Study data were downloaded by the researcher from the WVS website (Inglehart et al., 2014). Participant interviews were not conducted by the researcher. Participants' personally identifiable information was anonymized, and the archived data files provided no way of tracing respondents (Inglehart et al., 2014). The Internal Review Board chair classified this study as Non-Human Subjects Research and gave permission for the researcher to proceed with data analysis.

Procedure

Three research questions were addressed using a time-lag framework. Data were obtained from the results of five waves of the WVS in the United States. For this study, participants aged 18 to 32 years at the time of their interviews and born in or after 1940 were included. This provided a sample of 2,327 subjects with complete data for race, gender, and the 8 Likert items used to measure participants' values. For this study, two categories of gender were considered: male and female. Of the 2,327 participants across the five waves, 1,088 (46.76%) were male and 1,239 (53.24%) were female. Both categories were fairly evenly represented across individual waves, with the largest

difference being in wave 5, in which females comprised nearly 58% of the total. The gender division of individual waves is provided in Table 5.

Table 5
Time-Lag Sample Gender Breakdown by Wave

Wave	Subjects	Percent	Male	Percent	Female	Percent
Wave 1	985	42.33%	443	44.97%	542	55.03%
Wave 3	297	12.76%	149	50.17%	148	49.83%
Wave 4	367	15.77%	185	50.41%	182	49.59%
Wave 5	238	10.23%	100	42.02%	138	57.98%
Wave 6	440	18.91%	211	47.95%	229	52.05%

In this study, four racial groups were considered: White, Black, Hispanic, and Other. Of the 2,327 participants, 1,538 (66.09%) identified as White, 417 (17.92%) identified as Black, 264 (11.35%) identified as Hispanic, 108 (4.64%) identified as Other. The racial breakdowns of each wave are listed in Table 6. As would be expected, the sample has become more diverse over time.

Table 6
Time-Lag Sample Race Breakdown by Wave

Wave	White	Percent	Black	Percent	Hispanic	Percent	Other	Percent
Wave 1	656	66.60%	220	22.34%	109	11.07%	0	0.00%
Wave 3	216	72.73%	33	11.11%	0	0.00%	48	16.16%
Wave 4	218	59.40%	81	22.07%	52	14.17%	16	4.36%
Wave 5	170	71.43%	25	10.50%	27	11.34%	16	6.72%
Wave 6	278	63.18%	58	13.18%	76	17.27%	28	6.36%

Research Question One

RQ1: Are there differences in values between Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials?

To answer the first research question, the sample of 2,327 subjects was divided using traditional years of separation for the three major generational cohorts of interest – Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials. As mentioned previously, Boomers included

individuals born between 1940 and 1960 (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Weston, 2001); those born between 1961 and 1980 (Drago & Cunningham, 2006; Gursoy et al., 2008; Lamm & Meeks, 2009) were classified as Gen Xers, and finally, Millennials included individuals born from 1981 to 2000 (Gursoy, et al., 2008; Lamm & Meeks, 2009). The sample for this research question included 611 Boomers, 1,189 Gen Xers, and 527 Millennials.

Research Questions Two and Three

RQ2: Are there differences in values between the core members of the Baby Boomer generation, Generation X, and the Millennial generation when removing the microgenerations in the overlapping years between them?

RQ3: Are there differences in values between the members of the Generation Jones and Xennial microgenerations and the core members of the three major generational cohorts?

For the second and third research questions, the sample of 2,327 subjects was divided into five groups. Three of these groups were major generational cohorts – Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials. The remaining two groups were microgenerations born during the overlapping years between major generational cohorts: Jonesers and Xennials. As mentioned previously, for this study, Boomers were participants born between 1940 and 1959. Generation Jones included individuals born between 1960 and 1964 (Codrington, 2008; Lang, 2000). Individuals born between 1965 and 1976 comprised Generation X. The Xennials were participants born between 1977 and 1982 (Lamagna, 2015; Shafrir, 2011), and Millennials were defined as those individuals born between 1983 and 2000. The sample for these research questions included 533 Baby Boomers, 518 Jonesers, 482 Gen Xers, 391 Xennials, and 403 Millennials.

Statistical Analysis

Once the study variables are selected and defined, statistical methods are applied to aid in the understanding of the data (Cohen, 2008). A non-experimental, intact group, time-lag framework with existing data was used for this study. The original focus of this research was on a single outcome - the difference in values of individuals belonging to differing generational cohorts; however, the influence of covariates should be taken into consideration. Demographics are driving the current interest in generational differences (Stark & Poppler, 2017) because individuals are complex with many variables contributing to their values (Elizur & Sagie, 1999). Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is an extension of analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the ability to take covariates, such as demographics, into consideration. A covariate is a variable related to the dependent variable (Salkind, 2010). ANCOVA combines a simple ANOVA with regression analysis (Siegel, 1997), allowing the researcher to increase test sensitivity and eliminate unwanted variance on the dependent variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018). The WVS data include subjects' gender and race (Inglehart et al., 2014). These demographic details were originally included as covariates in this study.

Factor Analysis

Previous studies using the WVS data have employed a form of factor analysis to measure validity (Becker et al., 2017; Glanville & Story, 2018; Lu & Liu, 2018). Factor analysis can be either exploratory or confirmatory (Schervish, 1987). For this study, EFA was the more appropriate choice. EFA is a first step in the early stages of building a scale of measurement (Yong & Pearce, 2013) and provides an instrument's initial validation (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). The construct of general values was

assessed with eight Likert items: claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled, avoiding a fare on public transport, cheating on taxes if you have a chance, someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties, homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and suicide. Factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1 were retained. Factor loadings with a value of .3 or higher were considered meaningful.

The analysis yielded two factors. Factor one comprised four Likert items of interest: claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled, avoiding a fare on public transport, cheating on taxes if you have a chance, and someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties. In this study, this factor was labeled as the value of *honesty*. Factor two, labeled as the value of *autonomy* in this study, comprised the other four Likert items: homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and suicide. Table 7 provides the details of the factor analysis.

Table 7
Exploratory Factor Analysis of Eight Likert Items of Interest

Item	Commonalities	Factor		Label
		1	2	
Claim Benefits	.42	.733	.069	Honesty
Avoid Fare	.41	.708	.123	Honesty
Cheat on Taxes	.40	.700	.126	Honesty
Accept Bribe	.36	.650	.139	Honesty
Homosexuality	.37	.074	.689	Autonomy
Abortion	.46	.103	.790	Autonomy
Divorce	.41	.070	.716	Autonomy
Suicide	.30	.289	.504	Autonomy
Eigenvalues		3.14	1.81	
Percentage of Total Variance		39.23%	22.70%	
Number of Test Measures		4	4	

Notes. Extraction method: principal axis factoring; Rotation method: varimax with Kaiser normalization.

The Cronbach's alpha reflects internal reliability, allowing the researcher to determine how consistently each of the dependent variable items measured the same

underlying construct (Salkind, 2012). A scale with a Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.70 was considered acceptable. The first factor, honesty, had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.80. The second factor, autonomy, had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.78. Each of the three research questions was analyzed using average honesty and average autonomy scores for each of the participants.

Analysis of Covariance

ANCOVA testing assumes the samples are selected from normally distributed populations (normality), have equal variances (homogeneity of variance), are independent (independence) (Kucuk et al., 2015). The assumption of normality can be tested using a histogram of frequencies (Garson, 2012). A normal distribution forms a bell curve (Mendenhall et al., 1993) that should be symmetrical about its middle (Runyon et al., 1996). Homogeneity indicates that each generational cohort has the same variance on values (Garson, 2012). When addressing the assumption of homogeneity, a researcher seeks to determine if the variances of the groups in a study are significantly different from one another (Runyon et al., 1996). Levene's test is the most common method of testing this assumption (Garson, 2012.) ANCOVA also assumes that there is no interaction between the factor (i.e. values) and the covariates (i.e. gender and race; Leppink, 2018). This requires testing for the homogeneity of regressions to limit the risk of making a Type II error (Garson, 2012), where the researcher dismisses truly significant differences (Kucuk, et al., 2015). The assumption of independence is met when subjects in the study cannot be included in more than one of the levels of the independent variable (i.e. generational cohort; Runyon et al., 1996). These levels should be mutually exclusive

(Mendenhall et al., 1993). A scatterplot may be used to test this assumption (Garson, 2012).

The IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28 was used for data analysis. When the study analysis began, the first assumption of normality was violated for the first factor, honesty, using histograms. The second factor, autonomy, met the first assumption of normality but violated the second assumption of homogeneity of variance with a significant Levene's test. The researcher chose to proceed with Kruskal–Wallis H tests, which are the nonparametric alternative to ANCOVA, to approach the three research questions. The Kruskal–Wallis H test did not allow the researcher to control for the covariates of race and gender. Results were considered significant in this study if $p > .05$.

Summary

This study attempted to fill three gaps in current generational literature. First, microgenerations were separated from the traditional generational cohorts identified in previous studies. Next, this study controls for participants' age at the time of data collection by using a time-lag framework, recommended by previous generational researchers. Finally, the study provided support for the development of a generational theory specific to microgenerations because significant results were obtained.

In summary, this study used preexisting data from WVS interviews conducted in the United States following an ex-post facto approach. Participants were already members of their respective generational cohorts at the time of data collection so a non-experimental, intact group design was employed. Data were analyzed from when members of each generation were within the same age range at the time of their

respective interviews to employ a time-lag framework. The Cronbach's alpha and EFA were employed to assess the reliability and validity of the eight Likert items chosen to measure values in this study. Originally, ANCOVA was chosen as the desired method of analysis with gender and race selected as covariates, and Tukey's post hoc test was to be used when significant results were found in the data analysis. Because the data violated the assumptions of ANCOVA, the researcher chose to proceed with the nonparametric Kruskal–Wallis H-test.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The library of generational studies is extensive; however, more research is needed using a time-lag framework controlling for the effects of participant age and maturation. Further, very few empirical studies include the idea of a microgeneration in the overlapping years between major generational cohorts. This chapter presents the results of the time-lag study conducted to answer the following three research questions:

RQ1: Are there differences in values between Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials?

RQ2: Are there differences in values between the core members of the Baby Boomer generation, Generation X, and the Millennial generation when removing the microgenerations in the overlapping years between them?

RQ3: Are there differences in values between the members of the Generation Jones and Xennial microgenerations and the core members of the three major generational cohorts?

Data Collection

Publicly available data sets (at worldvaluessurvey.org/wvscontents.jsp) of five waves (1, 3, 4, 5, and 6) of the WVS were used for this study (Inglehart et al., 2014). The data collected via face-to-face interviews in the United States between 1981 and 2011 were used because generational research is sensitive to location. The traditional generations of interest in this study - Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials - are specific to

the United States. Wave 2 of the WVS did not include interviews from residents in the United States and was, therefore, excluded.

Sample

This study's sample comprised the interviewees who answered the eight Likert items of interest in this study: claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled, avoiding a fare on public transport, cheating on taxes if you have a chance, someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties, homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and suicide and whose birthdate, gender, and race data were available. To control for age and maturation, only those between the ages of 18 and 32 years at the time of their interviews were included. This resulted in a data set of 2,327 subjects, which is 27.32% of the entire sample of 8,517 individuals interviewed in the United States during the five waves of the WVS considered in this study.

For the first research question, the 2,327 subjects were divided into the three traditional generational cohorts of Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials. Traditional Boomers were defined as those born between 1940 and 1960 and comprised 26.25% of the total sample. Traditional Gen Xers were defined as those born between 1961 and 1980 and comprised 51.10% of the total sample. Traditional Millennials were defined as those born between 1981 and 2000 and comprised 22.65% of the total sample.

For the second research question, the subjects in the Generation Jones and Xennial microgenerations were pulled out of the data set. Jonesers were defined as those born between 1960 and 1964 and Xennials as those born between 1977 and 1982. This left a total of 1,418 subjects making up the cores of the traditional generational cohorts when the 909 overlapping members of the microgenerations were removed. Boomers

were defined as those born between 1940 and 1959 and made up 37.59% of the total sample. Gen Xers were defined as those born between 1965 and 1976 and comprised 33.99% of the total sample. Millennials were defined as those born between 1983 and 2000 and comprised 28.42% of the total sample.

For the third research question, the subjects were divided into the five generational cohorts of Boomers, Jonesers, Gen Xers, Xennials, and Millennials. Boomers were defined as those born between 1940 and 1959 (22.91%); Jonesers as those born between 1960 and 1964 (22.26%); Gen Xers as those born between 1965 and 1976 (20.71%); Xennials as those born between 1977 and 1982 (16.80%); and Millennials as those born between 1983 and 2000 (17.32%). The number of individuals categorized into generational cohorts for each of the three research questions is displayed in Table 8.

Table 8
Subjects per Generational Cohort by Research Question

	Research	Question 1	Research	Question 2	Research	Question 3
Cohort	Subjects	Percent	Subjects	Percent	Subjects	Percent
Boomers	611	26.25%	533	37.59%	533	22.91%
Jonesers	-	-	-	-	518	22.26%
Gen Xers	1,189	51.10%	482	33.99%	482	20.71%
Xennials	-	-	-	-	391	16.80%
Millennials	527	22.65%	403	28.42%	403	17.32%

Note. "-" indicates that the generational cohort was not included for the question.

Variable Scoring

Each subject in the data set was coded according to a traditional generational cohort comprising three levels and an adjusted generational cohort comprising five levels. Generational cohorts were mutually exclusive meaning each subject could only be included in a single cohort for each of the research questions. For the first research question, Boomers were coded as 1; Gen Xers as 2; and Millennials as 3. For the second

and third research questions, Boomers were coded as 1; Jonesers as 2; Gen Xers as 3; Xennials as 4; and Millennials as 5. There were originally two covariates in this study: gender and race. Gender was coded with 1 representing males and 2 representing females. Race was coded with 1 representing White, 2 representing Black, 3 representing Hispanic, and 4 representing Other.

The 2,327 subjects included in the data set had answered the eight Likert questions of interest in this study: claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled, avoiding a fare on public transport, cheating on taxes if you have a chance, someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties, homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and suicide. Average honesty and autonomy scores were derived for each subject using these eight responses.

Descriptive Statistics

This study analyzed the two dependent variables identified in the factor analysis: honesty and autonomy. The question presented to participants for the eight items used to measure these variables was, "Using this scale, can the following statements be justified?" The Likert-type scale ranged from *1 - Never Justifiable* to *10 - Always Justifiable*. The mean score for the value of honesty was 2.38 (SD = 1.64). This mean indicates that the participants overall considered claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled, avoiding a fare on public transport, cheating on taxes if you have a chance, and someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties rarely justifiable. The mean score for autonomy was 4.13 (SD = 2.15), indicating that the participants overall felt that homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and suicide were more justifiable than the four

items used to measure honesty but still considered them not often justifiable. The overall sample descriptive statistics are listed in Table 9.

Table 9
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
Honesty	2327	1.00	10.00	2.38	1.75	1.00	1.64
Autonomy	2327	1.00	10.00	4.13	4.00	1.00	2.15

The means of the honesty and autonomy variables were analyzed across the categories of the independent variable, generational cohort. For the first research question, the data set was divided into the three traditional generational cohorts of Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials. For the second research question, Cuspers were excluded from the data set to leave only the core members of the three traditional generational cohorts of Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials. For the third research question, the data set was divided into five generational cohorts to include the Generation Jones and Xennial microgenerations along with the Baby Boomer, Generational X, and Millennial generations.

Table 10 presents the means for the value of honesty for each of the three research questions. For the first research question using the three traditional generational cohorts, Boomers had a mean score of 2.01 (*SD* = 1.32); Gen Xers a mean score of 2.39 (*SD* = 1.60); and Millennials a mean score of 2.38 (*SD* = 1.64). This indicates that the participants considered the four honesty items - claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled, avoiding a fare on public transport, cheating on taxes if you have a chance, and someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties - rarely justifiable. For the second research question, cuspers were removed. When only the core members of each generational cohort were included in the analysis, Boomers had a mean score of

1.96 (*SD* = 1.26); Gen Xers a mean score of 2.28 (*SD* = 1.52); and Millennials a mean score of 2.80 (*SD* = 1.92). While these scores still indicate that the participants considered the four items measuring honesty rarely justifiable, Boomers felt these were less justifiable than the generational cohorts following them. For the third research question dividing the sample into five generational cohorts, Boomers had a mean score of 1.96 (*SD* = 1.26); Jonesers a mean score of 2.34 (*SD* = 1.58); Gen Xers a mean score of 2.28 (*SD* = 1.52); Xennials a mean score of 2.72 (*SD* = 1.82); and Millennials a mean score of 2.80 (*SD* = 1.92). These results are surprising because Jonesers considered the four items measuring honesty slightly more justifiable than members of both the major generational cohort directly before and after them rather than falling somewhere in the middle as anticipated. Prior research suggests that Xennials tend to show a mix of the characteristics of the major generational cohorts before and after them; however, the Xennials' mean score for this question reveals they align more closely with the feelings of Millennials with regard to the four items used to measure honesty.

Table 10
Mean Comparisons on Honesty by Research Question

	Research Question 1			Research Question 2			Research Question 3		
Cohort	Subjects	Mean	SD	Subjects	Mean	SD	Subjects	Mean	SD
Boomers	611	2.01	1.32	533	1.96	1.26	533	1.96	1.26
Jonesers	-	-	-	-	-	-	518	2.34	1.58
Gen Xers	1,189	2.39	1.60	482	2.28	1.52	482	2.28	1.52
Xennials	-	-	-	-	-	-	391	2.72	1.82
Millennials	527	2.38	1.64	403	2.80	1.92	403	2.80	1.92

Note. "-" indicates that the generational cohort was not included for the question.

Table 11 presents the means of autonomy scores for each of the three research questions. For the first research question using the three traditional generational cohorts, Baby Boomers had a mean score of 3.46 (*SD* = 1.82); Gen Xers a mean score of 4.08 (*SD*

= 2.12); and Millennials a mean score of 5.03 (*SD* = 2.26). This indicates that the participants were more diverse in their feelings on the four items measuring autonomy - homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and suicide - with Boomers and Gen Xers considering them less justifiable and Millennials falling near the middle of the scale. For the second research question, cuspers were removed. When only the core members of each generational cohort were included, Boomers had a mean score of 3.45 (*SD* = 1.82); Gen Xers a mean score of 4.36 (*SD* = 2.18); and Millennials a mean score of 5.08 (*SD* = 2.18). These results indicate that Jonesers' and Xennials' responses most affected the mean of Gen Xers for the first research question. The means for the core Boomers and core Millennials were nearly the same with and without the cuspers included. For the third research question dividing the sample into five generational cohorts, Boomers had a mean score of 3.45 (*SD* = 1.82); Jonesers a mean score of 3.46 (*SD* = 1.85); Gen Xers a mean score of 4.36 (*SD* = 2.18); Xennials a mean score of 4.70 (*SD* = 2.24); and Millennials a mean score of 5.08 (*SD* = 2.18). These results support prior authors' assertions on the subject of microgenerations. Generation Jones is described as choosing to align more with the major generational cohort either before or after them. On the justifiability of homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and suicide Jonesers aligned very closely with Boomers considering these items rarely justifiable. As mentioned above, prior research suggests that Xennials tend to show a mix of the characteristics of the major generational cohorts before and after them. Their feelings on homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and suicide support this claim; Xennials' mean falls nearly in the middle of the means of Gen Xers and Millennials. Millennials considered these items to

be the most justifiable of the five generational cohorts; however, their mean still fell in the middle of scale.

Table 11
Mean Comparisons on Autonomy by Research Question

	Research Question 1			Research Question 2			Research Question 3		
Cohort	Subjects	Mean	SD	Subjects	Mean	SD	Subjects	Mean	SD
Boomers	611	3.46	1.82	533	3.45	1.82	533	3.45	1.82
Jonesers	-	-	-	-	-	-	518	3.46	1.85
Gen Xers	1,189	4.08	2.12	482	4.36	2.18	482	4.36	2.18
Xennials	-	-	-	-	-	-	391	4.70	2.24
Millennials	527	5.03	2.26	403	5.08	2.18	403	5.08	2.18

Note. "-" indicates that the generational cohort was not included for the question.

The correlations among the independent variable, generational cohort, and the dependent variables, the values of honesty and autonomy, were analyzed. Low correlations (< +/- .30) indicate weak relationships between the independent and dependent variables (Mendenhall et al., 1993). The Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to measure the strength of the relationship between honesty and traditional generation cohort. There was low positive correlation between the two variables, $r(2325) = .17$, $p < .001$. The Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to measure the strength of the relationship between honesty and microgeneration cohort. There was low positive correlation between the two variables, $r(2325) = .18$, $p < .001$. The Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to measure the strength of the relationship between autonomy and traditional generation cohort. There was low positive correlation between the two variables, $r(2325) = .25$, $p < .001$. The Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to measure the strength of the relationship between autonomy and microgeneration cohort. There was low positive correlation between the two variables, $r(2325) = .29$, $p < .001$.

Assumptions

This study began using ANCOVA to compare the variables of honesty and autonomy across generational cohorts while attempting to control for the variables of gender and race. A one-way ANCOVA requires the consideration of multiple assumptions, including normality, homogeneity, and independence. The normality assumption was analyzed using histograms. The homogeneity assumption was analyzed using Levene's test. The independence assumption is met when the subjects are members of only a single generational cohort. This study's generational cohorts were mutually exclusive so the third assumption was met.

Honesty

Normality for the variable of honesty was analyzed using histograms created in SPSS. The results showed that average honesty scores were positively skewed, so this assumption was not met. When this assumption is violated, a nonparametric test is recommended. The Kruskal–Wallis H test is considered the nonparametric alternative to the one-way ANCOVA. There are four assumptions associated with the Kruskal–Wallis H test. First, the dependent variable should be measured at the ordinal or continuous level. This study's average honesty scores were continuous, so the first assumption was met. Second, the independent variable should consist of two or more categorical, independent groups. This study's generational cohorts consisted of either three or five groups depending on the research question being analyzed, so this assumption was met. Third, there should be independence of observations meaning no participant may fall into more than one group of the independent variable. Each subject was a member of only one generational cohort for this study's research questions, so this assumption was met.

Finally, the distributions of all groups of the independent variable should have the same variability. This study's distributions of average honesty score were similar for all groups as assessed by visual inspection of a boxplot. This final assumption was met.

Autonomy

The assumption of normality for the variable of autonomy was analyzed using histograms. The results showed that the subjects' average autonomy scores were roughly normal, so this assumption of ANCOVA was met. Next, the assumption of homogeneity was analyzed using Levene's test. Results were considered significant if $p < .05$. The p-value for the Levene's test was significant ($p < .001$), indicating there was a significant difference between the variances. The assumption of homogeneity was not met, which led the researcher to proceed with the recommended nonparametric test. The Kruskal–Wallis H test was employed for the analysis of the value of autonomy. For the first assumption, the average autonomy scores were continuous, so this assumption was met. Second, generational cohort had either three or five groups depending on the research question, so this assumption was met. Third, subjects were members of only one generational cohort for each research question, so this assumption was met. Finally, the distributions of each group of the independent variable should have the same variability. In this study, distributions of the average autonomy scores were similar for all groups based on the visual inspection of a boxplot. This final assumption was met.

Statistical Findings

Research Question 1

RQ1: Are there differences in values between Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials?

Honesty

A Kruskal–Wallis test was conducted to determine if there were differences in average honesty scores between generational cohorts: Boomers (n = 611), Gen Xers (n = 1,189), and Millennials (n = 527). Distributions of average scores for the value of honesty were similar for all groups, based on the visual inspection of a boxplot. Median average scores for the value of honesty were statistically significantly different between the generational cohort levels, $X^2(2) = 45.732$, $p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons were performed with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. Adjusted p-values are presented. Post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences in honesty scores between Boomers (*Mdn* = 1.50) and Gen Xers (*Mdn* = 2.00) (p = .000), Gen Xers (*Mdn* = 2.00) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 2.25) (p = .003), and Boomers (*Mdn* = 1.50) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 2.25) (p = .000). The pairwise comparisons are displayed in Table 12. While the differences in responses were significant, the results indicate that members of all three traditional cohorts consider the four items measuring honesty to be rarely justifiable.

Table 12
Pairwise Comparisons on Honesty with Traditional Generations

Cohort	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	*p*-value	Adj. *p*-value
Boomer – Gen X	-147.95	32.82	-4.51	<.001	.000
Boomer – Millennial	-262.34	39.20	-6.69	<.001	.000
Gen X – Millennial	-114.39	34.50	-3.32	<.001	.003

Note. Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

Autonomy

A Kruskal–Wallis test was conducted to determine if there were differences in average autonomy scores between generational cohorts: Boomers (n = 611), Gen Xers (n

= 1,189), and Millennials (n = 527). Distributions of average autonomy scores were similar for all groups, based on the visual inspection of a boxplot. Median average scores of the value of autonomy were statistically significantly different between generational cohort levels, $X^2(2) = 143.024$, $p = .000$. Pairwise comparisons were performed with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. Adjusted p-values are presented. Post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences in average autonomy scores between Boomers (Mdn = 3.00) and Gen Xers (Mdn = 4.00) (p = .000), Gen Xers (Mdn = 4.00) and Millennials (Mdn = 5.00) (p = .000), and Boomers (Mdn = 3.00) and Millennials (Mdn = 5.00) (p = .000). The pairwise comparisons are displayed in Table 13. The responses regarding autonomy were more distinct between generational cohorts than those regarding honesty. Boomers considered homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and suicide less justifiable than Gen Xers or Millennials. Of the three generational cohorts, Millennials considered homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and suicide the most justifiable; however, their responses still fell in the middle of the scale.

Table 13
Pairwise Comparisons on Autonomy with Traditional Generations

Cohort	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	*p*-value	Adj. *p*-value
Boomer – Gen X	-192.70	33.41	-5.77	<.001	.000
Boomer – Millennial	-475.55	39.90	-11.92	.000	.000
Gen X – Millennial	-282.85	35.12	-8.05	<.001	.000

Note. Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

Research Question 2

RQ2: Are there differences in values between the core members of the Baby Boomer generation, Generation X, and the Millennial generation when removing the microgenerations in the overlapping years between them?

Honesty

A Kruskal–Wallis test was conducted to determine if there were differences in average honesty scores between generational cohorts: Boomers (n = 533), Gen Xers (n = 482), and Millennials (n = 403). Distributions of average scores for the value of honesty were similar for all groups, based on the visual inspection of a boxplot. Median average scores for the value of honesty were statistically significantly different between the generational cohort levels, $X^2(2) = 40.980$, $p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons were performed with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. Adjusted p-values are presented. Post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences in average honesty scores between Boomers (*Mdn* = 1.50) and Gen Xers (*Mdn* =1.75) (p = .006), Gen Xers (*Mdn* = 1.75) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 2.00) (p = .002), and Boomers (*Mdn* = 1.50) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 2.00) (p = .000). The pairwise comparisons are displayed in Table 14. The results indicate that when cuspers were not included, the core members of the three traditional generational cohorts considered claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled, avoiding a fare on public transport, cheating on taxes if you have a chance, and someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties less justifiable. This result supports prior research suggesting that cuspers may have skewed results of previous studies when included in traditional cohorts.

Table 14
Pairwise Comparisons on Honesty with No Microgenerations

Cohort	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	*p*-value	Adj. *p*-value
Boomer – Gen X	-78.29	25.19	-3.12	.002	.006
Boomer – Millennial	-169.24	26.46	-6.40	<.001	.000
Gen X – Millennial	-90.95	27.05	-3.36	<.001	.002

Note. Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

Autonomy

A Kruskal–Wallis test was conducted to determine if there were differences in average autonomy scores between generational cohorts: Boomers (n = 533), Gen Xers (n = 482), and Millennials (n = 403). Distributions of average autonomy scores were similar for all groups, based on the visual inspection of a boxplot. Median average scores for autonomy were statistically significantly different between generational cohort levels, $X^2(2) = 127.801$, $p = .000$. Pairwise comparisons were performed with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. Adjusted p-values are presented. Post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences in average autonomy scores between Boomers (*Mdn* = 3.00) and Gen Xers (*Mdn* = 4.25) ($p = .000$), Gen Xers (*Mdn* = 4.25) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 5.00) ($p = .000$), and Boomers (*Mdn* = 3.00) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 5.00) ($p = .000$). The pairwise comparisons are displayed in Table 15. The results indicate that when cuspers were not included, the core members of Generation X considered the four items used to measure autonomy - homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and suicide - more justifiable. However, the median scores of Boomers and Millennials for the value of autonomy did not change when the Jonesers and Xennials were removed from the data set. For this variable, Jonesers and Xennials skewed the Gen Xer results in research question one.

Table 15
Pairwise Comparisons on Autonomy with No Microgenerations

Cohort	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	*p*-value	Adj. *p*-value
Boomer – Gen X	-168.64	25.71	-6.56	<.001	.000
Boomer – Millennial	-301.86	27.00	-11.18	.000	.000
Gen X – Millennial	-133.22	27.61	-4.83	<.001	.000

Note. Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

Research Question 3

RQ3: Are there differences in values between the members of the Generation Jones and Xennial microgenerations and the core members of the three major generational cohorts?

Honesty

A Kruskal–Wallis test was conducted to determine whether there were differences in average honesty scores between generational cohorts: Boomers (n = 533), Jonesers (n = 518), Gen Xers (n = 482), Xennials (n = 391), and Millennials (n = 403). Distributions of average scores for the value of honesty were similar for all groups, based on the visual inspection of a boxplot. Median average scores for the value of honesty were statistically significantly different between generational cohort levels, $X^2(4) = 58.140$, $p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons were performed with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. Adjusted p-values are presented. Post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences in average honesty scores between Boomers (*Mdn* = 1.50) and Jonesers (*Mdn* = 1.75) (p = .004), Boomers (*Mdn* = 1.50) and Gen Xers (*Mdn* = 1.75) (p = .020), Boomers (*Mdn* = 1.50) and Xennials (*Mdn* = 2.25) (p = .000), Boomers (*Mdn* = 1.50) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 2.00) (p = .000), Gen Xers (*Mdn* = 1.75) and Xennials (*Mdn* = 2.25) (p = .010), Gen Xers (*Mdn* = 1.75) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 2.00) (p = .007), Jonesers (*Mdn* = 1.75) and Xennials (*Mdn* = 2.25) (p = .026), and Jonesers (*Mdn* = 1.75) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 2.00) (p = .019), but not between Gen Xers (*Mdn* = 1.75) and Jonesers (*Mdn* = 1.75) (p = 1.00) or Xennials (*Mdn* = 2.25) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 2.00) (p = 1.00). The pairwise comparisons are displayed in Table 16. While some of the differences in responses were significant, the results indicate that members of all three

traditional cohorts consider claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled, avoiding a fare on public transport, cheating on taxes if you have a chance, and someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties rarely justifiable. Jonesers responded in line with the core members of Generation X. This supports prior literature asserting that Jonesers tend to take on the characteristics of the major generational cohort either before or after them. Interestingly, Xennials' responses were significantly different from those of the core members of Generation X. Prior literature suggests that Xennials tend to display a mix of the characteristics of both Gen Xers before them and Millennials after them.

Table 16
Pairwise Comparisons on Honesty with Microgenerations

Cohort	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	*p*-value	Adj. *p*-value
Boomer – Gen X	-128.34	41.44	-3.10	.002	.020
Boomer – Jones	-143.75	40.68	-3.53	<.001	.004
Boomer – Xennial	-276.54	43.90	-6.30	<.001	.000
Boomer – Millennial	-279.93	43.52	-6.43	<.001	.000
Gen X – Jones	15.41	41.73	0.37	.712	1.000
Gen X – Xennial	-148.20	44.87	-3.30	<.001	.010
Gen X – Millennial	-151.59	44.50	-3.41	<.001	.007
Jones – Xennial	-132.79	44.17	-3.01	.003	.026
Jones – Millennial	-136.18	43.79	-3.11	.002	.019
Xennial - Millennial	-3.39	46.80	-0.07	.942	1.000

Note. Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

Autonomy

A Kruskal–Wallis test was conducted to determine if there were differences in average autonomy scores between generational cohorts: Boomers (n = 533), Jonesers (n = 518), Gen Xers (n = 482), Xennials (n = 391), and Millennials (n = 403). Distributions of

average scores for autonomy were similar for all groups, based on the visual inspection of a boxplot. Median average scores for autonomy were statistically significantly different between generational cohort levels, $X^2(4) = 208.302$, $p = .000$. Pairwise comparisons were performed with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. Adjusted *p*-values are presented. Post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences in average autonomy scores between Boomers (*Mdn* = 3.00) and Gen Xers (*Mdn* = 4.25) (*p* = .000), Boomers (*Mdn* = 3.00) and Xennials (*Mdn* = 4.75) (*p* = .000), Boomers (*Mdn* = 3.00) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 5.00) (*p* = .000), Gen Xers (*Mdn* = 4.25) and Jonesers (*Mdn* = 3.25) (*p* = .000), Gen Xers (*Mdn* = 4.25) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 5.00) (*p* = .000), Jonesers (*Mdn* = 3.25) and Xennials (*Mdn* = 4.75) (*p* = .000), and Jonesers (*Mdn* = 3.25) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 5.00) (*p* = .000), but not between Xennials (*Mdn* = 4.75) and Millennials (*Mdn* = 5.00) (*p* = .173), Boomers (*Mdn* = 3.00) and Jonesers (*Mdn* = 3.25) (*p* = 1.00), or Gen Xers (*Mdn* = 4.25) and Xennials (*Mdn* = 4.75) (*p* = .209). The pairwise comparisons are displayed in Table 17. Jonesers were not significantly different than Boomers on the value of autonomy, supporting prior literature asserting members of this microgeneration tend to display the characteristics of either Boomers before them or Gen Xers after them. Interestingly, Jonesers were more aligned with the responses of Gen Xers on the variable of honesty and more aligned with the responses of Boomers on the variable of autonomy. In alignment with prior literature describing Xennials, their responses regarding the four items measuring autonomy were not significantly different from those of either Gen Xers or Millennials. This finding supports the idea of cuspers bridging the gap between major generational cohorts because the responses of Gen Xers and Millennials were significantly different from one another.

Table 17
Pairwise Comparisons on Autonomy with Microgenerations

Cohort	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	*p*-value	Adj. *p*-value
Jones – Boomer	4.42	41.41	.017	.915	1.000
Jones – Gen X	-280.99	42.48	-6.62	<.001	.000
Jones – Xennial	-386.48	44.96	-8.60	.000	.000
Jones - Millennial	-499.86	44.58	-11.21	.000	.000
Boomer – Gen X	-276.56	42.19	-6.56	<.001	.000
Boomer – Xennial	-382.06	44.69	-8.55	.000	.000
Boomer – Millennial	-495.44	44.31	-11.18	.000	.000
Gen X – Xennial	-105.49	45.68	-2.31	.021	.209
Gen X – Millennial	-218.88	45.30	-4.83	<.001	.000
Xennial - Millennial	-113.39	47.64	-2.38	.017	.173

Note. Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The rapidly increasing conversations regarding generational differences as the Homelander generation finds its footing in today's workforce emphasize the continued importance of empirical research on generational differences amidst a myriad of stereotypes and opinions. Differences in values are often blamed for tensions manifesting between members of different generations in the workplace (Irhamahayati et al., 2018; van der Walt & du Plessis, 2010). This time-lag study using data from the WVS was conducted to investigate three research questions related to the general values of honesty and autonomy (Inglehart et al., 2014).

The first research question asked if there were differences in the values of honesty and autonomy between Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials. Results suggest that the three traditional generational cohorts differ in their values of honesty and autonomy. Boomers showed the lowest level of tolerance toward dishonesty, while Gen Xers and Millennials were slightly more tolerant than the generation before them. Results for autonomy indicate Millennials consider having control over one's actions most justifiable, while Gen Xers and Boomers consider it less justifiable than the generation after them. Findings support the empirical studies of Bennett et al. (2027), Bristow et al. (2011), Kelly et al, (2016), and van der Walt & du Plessis (2010) whose research also provided evidence of generational differences in values.

The second research question asked if there were differences in the values of honesty and autonomy between the core members of the Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials when removing the microgenerations in the overlapping years between them. Differences in the values of honesty and autonomy were the same as the first research question for the second research question with the members of the microgenerations removed. The most notable change between the first and second questions was found in the larger difference between Generation X and the Millennial generation when the Xennials were removed with Millennials again finding dishonesty and having control over one's actions more justifiable than Gen Xers. Findings support the idea that cuspers possibly skewed the results of previous generational research when included in traditional generational cohorts rather than separated as a microgeneration with its own unique set of values (Taylor, 2018). For the variable of autonomy, the largest difference between the first and second research questions was found between the traditional Gen Xers cohort and core Gen Xers. Core Gen Xers considered having control over one's actions more justifiable than when cuspers were lumped into Generation X. Findings again support the assertion that cuspers likely influenced the conflicting results revealed in past generational studies.

The third research question asked if there were differences in the values of honesty and autonomy between members of the Generation Jones and Xennial microgenerations and core members of the three major generational cohorts. Results for the value of honesty revealed differences between Boomers and the other four generational cohorts, as well as differences between Gen Xers and Xennials and Millennials on the value of honesty. Gen Xers were not found to be different than

Jonesers for the value of honesty. Findings support prior literature asserting that Jonesers tend to display the characteristics of either Boomers or Gen Xers (Codrington, 2008). In this case, Jonesers were different than Boomers and displayed characteristics more like those of Gen Xers. Interestingly, Jonsers considered dishonesty more justifiable than Boomers and Gen Xers. Results also suggest differences between Millennials and Jonesers, but Millennials were not found to be different than Xennials. Although Xennials considered dishonesty more justifiable than Gen Xers and less justifiable than Millennials as expected, the Xennials' responses were more similar to those of the Millennial generation. Findings differ from previous literature suggesting that Xennials display a mix of the characteristics of Gen Xers and Millennials rather than choosing one or the other. Xennials in this study behaved more like what would be expected from Jonesers according to prior literature. Results for the value of autonomy suggest differences between Boomers and Gen Xers, Xennials, and Millennials but no differences between Boomers and Jonesers. The differences were in the direction expected, with Boomers and Jonesers considering having control over one's actions less justifiable, and Gen Xers, Xennials, and Millennials considering it more justifiable. Findings again support prior literature that asserts Jonesers tend to display the characteristics of either Boomers or Gen Xers (Codrington, 2008). Results suggest differences between Gen Xers and Jonesers and Millennials and differences between Millennials and Jonesers on the value of autonomy. There were no differences on the variable of autonomy between Xennials and Gen Xers or Millennials. Findings support prior research describing Xennials as displaying a mix of the characteristics of both Gen Xers and Millennials with

Xennials considering having control over one's actions more justifiable than Gen Xers and less justifiable than Millennials as expected.

Implications for Research

This study's primary research contribution is the inclusion of the concept of microgenerations. Microgenerations are most commonly mentioned in nonempirical generational articles. Codrington (2008), in *Tomorrow Today*, observed that Jonesers tend to choose the characteristics of either Boomers or Gen Xers rather than displaying a mix of both generational cohorts. This study found no significant difference between Gen Xers and Jonesers on the value of honesty but revealed significant differences between Boomers and Jonesers. For autonomy, this study revealed no significant difference between Jonesers and Boomers; however, there were significant differences revealed between Jonesers and Gen Xers. These results indicate Jonesers do not completely align with the values of the generations before or after them, but in specific areas, they tend to favor the characteristics of one or the other, as described in prior literature. Giancola (2006) found that Xennials were more likely to display characteristics of both Gen Xers and Millennials. This study found no significant difference between Xennials and Gen Xers or Millennials on the value of honesty, while there were significant differences between Gen Xers and Millennials. This result supports the assertion in past literature that Xennials tend to display a mix of the characteristics of the generations before and after them. This study provides empirical support for the concept of microgenerations that, until now, has heavily relied upon scholars' opinions.

This study contributes to filling other gaps in generational literature. Past generational research has been criticized for its lack of a strong connection to theory and for relying too heavily on popular press and opinion pieces in literature reviews. Although the researcher acknowledges the acceptance of pop culture influences, this study applied the complementary theories of Strauss and Howe's generational theory and Rokeach's values theory in its approach. Connections to many other related theories can be made when one takes a closer look into the idea of generational differences. Three such theories are social constructivism theory, constructive development theory, and attribution theory. The idea behind social constructivism is that individuals construct their own meaning from their experiences (Spodark, 2005). This meaning has been described as one's own reality or a more expert view of external reality (Carter, 2008). The theory suggests that knowledge is constructed internally rather than transmitted externally (Spodark, 2005) and emerges as individuals construct meaning from experiences and information they receive (Keengwe et al., 2014). Kegan's (2018, pp. 41) constructive development theory describes development as "a gradual traversing of a succession of increasingly elaborate bridges." Individual's thought processes reach higher stages of development over time, and with cognitive development individuals become more aware of their emotions and beliefs (Girgis et al., 2018). As individuals age, they learn to separate what they should value from what they truly value (Kegan, 2018). Attribution theory suggests that individuals' reactions to events impact behavior (Safeer et al., 2023), and past experiences influence present decisions (Fu & Liang, 2019). Individuals' perceptions of cause and effect relationships help them understand situations and predict outcomes (Fu & Liang, 2019; Safeer et al., 2023). These additional theories

support past generational research claims that cohort members develop unique personality traits and sets of values (Zabel et al., 2017) based on significant life experiences during formative years (Bristow et al., 2011).

Another gap in generational literature may be found in the WVS library where several researchers have used WVS data sets in their studies. Among the multitude of studies using WVS data, only one other generational study was found (Thomason et al., 2022). The current research presents an additional generational study to help build this area of the WVS library using an alternative framework and sample with ultimately similar findings. While their focus was not on generational differences, Mitra et al. (2021), Pathak (2021), and Vo et al. (2022) used the WVS data sets to explore the idea of general values in workplace settings. The present study further contributes to the WVS body of literature by focusing on general values that individuals cannot help bring to the office.

Three major challenges facing generational researchers were introduced in Chapter 2. The most frequently mentioned concern is the lack of consensus regarding the years encompassing each of the traditional generational cohorts. This study used many previous generational studies in an attempt to identify the most common overlapping years between the cores of the traditional generational cohorts. Based on these overlapping years, the Generation Jones and Xennial microgenerations were identified as separate cohorts, which is an approach to microgenerations not followed in previous generational literature. A second issue in generational research is the need to account for the effects of age and location on the subjects. The traditional generational cohorts of Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials are specific to the United States. Therefore, this

study used only data collected during the WVS interviews conducted in the United States. By using WVS data collected from 1981 to 2011, this study was able to employ the less common time-lag framework. Prior generational authors, including Bennett et al. (2017) and Smola and Sutton (2002), requested additional time-lag studies to strengthen the body of generational literature. A final challenge with generational research is the idea that members of microgenerations potentially skew research results when they are lumped together into one the major generational cohorts (Taylor, 2018). Significant differences were found between generational cohorts when using the most common traditional years to distinguish them; however, members of microgenerations were not always found to be significantly different from the members of the major generational cohorts when pulled to create their own unique cohorts. Although effect sizes where low when comparing the variables of honesty and autonomy to traditional generational cohort and generational cohorts including microgenerations, the strength of the relationship was slightly stronger when the additional microgeneration cohorts were included. Findings support further research into the concept of microgenerations bridging the gap between traditionally researched generational cohorts. This study provides a foundation that supports development of a generational theory specifically focused on microgenerations.

This study's results support the findings of previous generational research and claims made in nonempirical pop culture references. Giancola (2006), in *Human Resource Planning*, concluded that differences in fundamental beliefs across generations may be minimal. This study found significant differences between generations; however, on a scale of 1 to 10 for Likert items questions related to honesty, the means of every generational cohort fell below the score of 3. This indicates that, although there were

significant differences between the generational cohorts, overall, all generations consider actions such as cheating, lying, and bribery rarely justifiable. Cohen (2009) and Elizur and Sagie (1999) emphasized the importance of not overlooking the significance of the influence of general values in the workplace. Findings of this study support further research into generational differences in values in a workplace setting.

Implications for Practice

Generational differences in values remain a popular topic in the workplace. References to the Homelander generation, often referred to as Gen Z in pop culture, are now commonly encountered on a weekly, if not daily, basis. The timely results of this study emphasize the need for acknowledging generational differences in values and their possible implications in organizations. Awareness is the foundation of acknowledging generational differences in organizations. Although this study provides additional empirical support for the existence of differences in values based on generational cohort, leaders within organizations must promote a work environment that avoids harmful generational stereotyping. Generational stereotypes and assumptions made about the specific generational cohorts are often negative in nature. Although generations as a whole may exhibit similar values, not all Boomers are workaholics who struggle with technology, not all Gen Xers are cynical loners, and not all Millennials are lazy and entitled as the stereotypes suggest. Individuals must acknowledge their personal biases toward and perceptions of members of different generational cohorts that may affect behavior.

This study's focus was limited to four questions regarding honesty and four questions regarding autonomy; however, there are likely many areas where generational

differences would be revealed upon closer examination. Action items specific to an individual organization cannot be supported by this study's general findings; however, leaders of organizations would be naïve in thinking the items used to measure honesty and autonomy in this study are irrelevant in the workplace. It is easy to assume that employees who consider cheating on taxes and accepting a bribe during the course of one's work duties rarely justifiable would likely not accept gifts from vendors or falsify company financial statements. The four items used to measure autonomy, or the ability to have control over one's actions, may seem less applicable in the transactional tasks comprising one's job duties; however, passing comments on federal legislation, overheard conversations regarding healthcare, and an organization's restroom policies all impact the extent to which an employee feels they can openly be themselves in the workplace.

Generational differences should be nurtured by organizations to promote collaboration and positive outcomes. Generationally diverse teams in the workplace have the opportunity to respectfully highlight the unique strengths of each individual to become more successful as a whole rather than avoiding all potential conflict. Developed strategies for utilizing the strengths, talents, and creativity of a multigenerational workforce are minimal (Legas & Sims, 2012); however, prior generational researchers Kelly et al. (2016) emphasize the need for members of all generations to be respected as individuals and feel their needs are being met in the workplace. Communication between employees regarding what they value most and a true effort by organizations to provide everyone the space to contribute their best work is a first step toward leveraging the collective strength of a generationally diverse workforce.

Inter-generational differences are a natural reality in all organizations (Chillakuri, 2020). Generational tensions should be addressed in preventative actions rather than reactionary measures (Legas & Sims, 2012). Organizations should not wait for generational conflict to arise, but strive to align business goals with the values of each generation so they may work in harmony (Bennett et al., 2012). Rather than ignoring or denying generational differences, organizations should leverage generational diversity to operate more effectively (Amayah & Gedro, 2014; Legas & Sims, 2012). Leaders must become knowledgeable about the organization itself in order to design policies and practices that address generational differences just as they would regional differences in organizations with multiple physical locations (Amayah & Gedro, 2014). Supervisors should identify ideal job assignments for each employee and review them on a weekly basis (Kegan et al., 2014). Office facilities can be adapted to improve the productivity of individual employees based on specific needs and preferences (Bennett et al., 2012).

Although organization-specific recommendations cannot be derived from the results of this study, there are three areas where leaders may take immediate steps toward bridging the generation gap within their organizations. Successful organizations will serve both employees' development needs and the organization's business needs simultaneously (Kegan et al., 2014). Different generations have different learning styles (Legas & Sims, 2012), and personal growth should be woven into daily work (Kegan et al., 2014). Organizations can do this from the start with new employees through the onboarding process, continue employee development through diversity training, and capitalize on the knowledge of long-term employees through mentoring programs and succession planning.

First, the onboarding process provides employees an idea of what they can expect in their daily work experiences within an organization (Shufutinsky & Cox, 2019). Although, the onboarding experience is vital to employee success (Chillakuri, 2020), many organizations are now outsourcing orientation and onboarding programs (Shufutinsky & Cox, 2019). Leaders are beginning to realize that effective onboarding is an urgent priority within their organizations (Chillakuri, 2020) because current onboarding programs may be having a negative effect on employee retention (Shufutinsky & Cox, 2019). Every new hire has their own set of expectations (Chillakuri, 2020) so employees should be introduced to the organization's people and ways of doing things during the onboarding process (Shufutinsky & Cox, 2019). A successful onboarding program needs to emphasize meaningful work, provide a connection between the new hire's job and the organization's mission, and clearly explain the organization's values and objectives to ensure a good fit from the beginning (Chillakuri, 2020).

Second, although many organizations focus diversity training solely on differences in gender and race (Legas & Sims, 2012), diversity training can also assist in eliminating generational biases and stereotypes by helping individuals understand their perceptions and beliefs (Legas & Sims, 2012). Organizations should be sensitive to the competing demands placed on their employees whether it be employees raising young children, working second jobs to attain financial stability, or caring for aging parents (Amayah & Gedro, 2014); however, this thread of professional development demands accountability and active participation from the learner (Keengwe et al., 2014). Active approaches to learning are more beneficial than passive approaches (Carter, 2008), and a

focus in training should be placed on what the learners do rather than what the teacher does (Spodark, 2005). Generational stereotypes and generalizations are frequently unfounded (Amayah & Gedro, 2014) so trial and error opportunities in a safe learning environment should be part of diversity training programs (Carter, 2008).

Finally, mentoring is an informal approach to bridging the generation gap in the workplace (Legas & Sims, 2012). Traditional mentor relationships involve a senior employee providing advice and counsel to a newer, often younger employee (Murphy, 2012). Embracing non-traditional hierarchical organizational structures can aid attracting and retaining high-performing employees (Bennett et al., 2012). Reverse mentoring that encourages learning through cross-generational relationships is one approach to implementing this idea in the workplace (Murphy, 2012). Succession planning will become even more important in organizations as Boomers begin retiring and Homelanders shift into their roles as the newest generation in the workplace (Legas & Sims, 2012). Boomers retain much of the corporate memory in today's organizations (Knouse, 2011); however, knowledge is not a one-way street (Murphy, 2012). Allowing retiring employees to phase out slowing by first transitioning to a part time role within the organization leverages organizational knowledge and wisdom attained by more experience professionals (Amayah & Gedro, 2014).

Remembering that individuals are unique in countless ways besides the generational cohort to which they belong is important. A group collaboration may face challenges because a Boomer prefers in-person meetings, whereas a Millennial would rather use technology meet virtually from a more convenient remote location. Work team challenges could also be rooted in the fact that one team member is an extrovert who

prefers to think out loud and brainstorm with a group, while another is an introvert who works best in a quiet space with uninterrupted time to process thoughts before sharing ideas. In another scenario, a morning person may accomplish a great deal before lunch and encounter workplace tension with a night owl who is wired for better focus on hard tasks in the late afternoon hours. In the last two examples, generational values could also play a role but may not explain the challenges the group is facing. While organizations must be aware of the impact of generational differences in values, these differences cannot be blamed for every issue arising in the workplace.

Study Limitations

As with any research, the present study has certain limitations. First, existing data from the WVS were used to analyze the differences between members of various generational cohorts. While this study filled a gap in generational research by employing a time-lag framework, this research method limited the scope of the study to the questions asked in the five waves of the WVS that were compiled to create the data set. Over the multiple iterations of the WVS interview questionnaire, items from the original instrument were removed, and new items were added with each subsequent wave. Although work-specific questions regarding values were added in later interviews, these questions could not be included in this study considering that earlier subjects were not asked the same questions. The newer work-specific questions present an opportunity for future researchers as Boomers transition out of the workforce.

Second, there remains the issue of consensus on the years encompassing each generational cohort in generational literature. The researcher attempted to identify the most typical overlapping years for the microgenerations used in this study; however,

there is likely to be dispute regarding the birth-year ranges of the Generation Jones and Xennial microgenerations. As the Homelander generation establishes itself in the workforce, its overlapping years with the Millennial generation will begin to take shape more firmly creating a new microgeneration. This new generational cohort has yet to emerge or be named at the time of this study but will interest future researchers.

Next, this study included subjects between the ages of 18 and 32 years at the time of their interviews to ensure adequacy of the size of the data set. With the timing of the available WVS data waves, this wide age range was necessary to include enough members of both the Boomer and Millennial generations in this study. It is unrealistic to assume that maturation and life experience would affect an 18-year-old and a 32-year-old in the same way. Individuals falling at the younger end of this study's age range may be students working toward degrees who do not yet boast significant work experience. Those at the older end of the age range may have mortgages and family responsibilities that factor heavily into career decisions. A smaller age range, such as subjects aged 25 to 30 years at the time of their interviews, would have been ideal if the data were available to control more strongly for this effect. The newest WVS wave released in 2022 and the current wave underway, which include older Millennials, will assist future researchers with this limitation.

Fourth, the large library of generational research is location-specific. Generational cohorts differ by geographic location, and those most commonly discussed in the body of generational literature, are specific to the United States. Advances in technology have allowed the world to become more connected than ever before, and the number of global organizations continues to grow. Leaders in today's workplace must

consider the needs of Americans working overseas, international employees working both stateside and abroad, and the generational nuances unique to each culture in which the organization operates. Research on traditional US generational cohorts in international settings as well as the generational cohorts specific to other geographic locations provides a springboard for countless future studies. The concept of microgenerations is relatively new to empirical generational research in the United States. Scholars would benefit from learning if this concept manifests in other geographical areas within their own traditional generational cohorts as well.

Finally, methodological rigor of generational studies has been criticized. This study's original plan was to use a stronger ANCOVA test to compare the generational cohorts for each of the three research questions. This approach would have allowed the researcher to control for the additional variables of gender and race. When the researcher proceeded with the test although the assumptions were violated, the ANCOVA findings were the same as those derived from the Kruskal–Wallis test. While meeting the assumptions for ANCOVA and proceeding with the original research plan would have been ideal, the similarity in these findings increases the researcher's confidence in the claims revealed by the Kruskal–Wallis analysis. Another methodological limitation of the current study is the low effect sizes achieved. This is a common issue that generational research critics have discussed in previous literature (Lyons & Kuron, 2013, Macky et al., 2008; Stark & Poppler, 2017).

Suggestions for Future Research

As with any study, new opportunities arise and beneficial lessons may be applied in future research endeavors. A challenge due to the study's time-lag framework was that

the researcher's scope was limited to the questions asked on the original WVS questionnaire in 1981. More recent iterations of the WVS questionnaire include work-specific value questions on topics including respect for supervisor authority, priorities when job seeking, work ethic, and relationships with coworkers outside the workplace. As Boomers transition out of the workplace through retirement and Homelanders become more prevalent in organizations, questions with a workplace focus should be included in future studies using only the more recent waves of the survey.

A new wave of World Values Survey interviews has been completed since the data sets used in this study were pulled, and another wave of data collection is now underway. The age range used in this study was subjects between the ages of 18 and 32 years at the time of their interviews. This range was chosen to provide an adequate number of subjects for each of the traditional generational cohorts of interest. The researcher acknowledges that fourteen years is a wide range, and the life experiences of an 18-year-old just leaving high school may differ greatly from those of a 32-year-old with a mortgage and family responsibilities. New data from the most recent waves of the WVS will allow future researchers to focus on a smaller age range such as 25 to 30 years to further account for the effects of maturation and life experience in generational research.

This study was conducted through the lens of generational theory and values theory. Future research on generational values would benefit from connections to other theoretical frameworks. As previously mentioned, social constructivism theory, constructive development theory, and attribution theory, which explore how individuals construct meaning and make decisions based on past experiences, fit nicely with the

concept of generational values. Constructive frameworks may assist future researchers in understanding the level of individuals' awareness of their values as they experience transition periods in their lives.

With the Homelander generation currently attending college or just entering the workforce, the microgeneration between Homelanders and Millennials has yet to be identified. This study sheds light on the significance of the concept and effects of microgenerations. Further research on Jonesers and Xennials will provide a foundation for the development of a generational theory specific to microgenerations and offer a framework for identifying the unique characteristics of the newest microgeneration as it distinguishes itself in the overlapping years between the Millennial and Homelander generations.

Conclusion

Generational differences in values are a popular topic that will continue to gain prominence as the Homelander generation enters adulthood and establishes its own identity. This study's purpose was to investigate the differences in values between members of the major generational cohorts and individuals in the microgenerations in the overlapping years between them. Findings support the idea that such differences are more than simply the punchline of a generational joke or casual stereotype. Organizations should use the knowledge of generational differences in values to leverage the strengths of their workforce rather than allowing these differences to manifest as unaddressed tensions that negatively affect the workplace. Every study has limitations; however, this study's findings indicate that the idea of a microgeneration and its role as a

bridge between traditional generational cohorts warrants further exploration and the development of a generational theory specific to microgenerations.

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