ABSTRACT

WYATT, ELIZABETH. Understanding Millennials’ Perspectives on Work-Life Balance: A Modified Instrumental Case Study. (Under the direction of Dr. Julia Storberg-Walker).

As Millennials enter the workplace in rapid numbers, organizations are forced to learn more about the work, communication, and social styles of this generation as they differ from those who came before them. While many workplaces have attempted to make themselves more ‘Millennial-friendly,’ studies suggest that, based on Millennials’ characteristics, one of the most attractive qualities in a workplace to this generation is its ability to help them achieve a healthy work-life balance. The purpose of this study was to better understand the millennial generation’s perceptions about work-life balance. This modified instrumental case study examined six individuals from an organization that is considered Millennial-friendly. Findings were examined using the Theory of Reasoned Action, a theory that suggests background and cultural factors influence human social behavior in the form of behavioral, normative, and control beliefs. The study determined that much of the participants’ perceptions regarding work-life balance reflected that described in the previous research involving Millennials. In addition, The Theory of Reasoned Action approach can help explain participants’ decisions involving work-life balance based on background factors and their beliefs. While the study contributes to understanding Millennials’ perceptions about and decisions involving work-life balance, further research might be helpful in determining work-life balance offerings that are most likely to recruit and retain this generation.
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Understanding Millennials’ Perspectives on Work-Life Balance:  
A Modified Instrumental Case Study

by
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents who have been continual sources of support, encouragement, and inspiration.
BIOGRAPHY

Elizabeth Anne Wyatt was born in Sparta, North Carolina, a small town in the Blue Ridge Mountains. She graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a B.A. in Psychology in 2011. Immediately following, she enrolled at North Carolina State University to pursue a M.S. in Human Resource Development. While finishing her last few courses for the degree, Elizabeth began working full time as a Human Resources Co-Op. The struggle of balancing work, school, family, and friends led her to the topic of work-life balance. She hopes to impart what she has learned from the HRD program and her thesis research to help Millennials and other works achieve a healthy work-life balance tailored to their needs.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend a special thank you to my parents for providing the financial opportunity to attend graduate school, for always lending an ear, and for encouraging me to continue despite difficult times. I would also like to thank Glenda Harrell for giving me the jumpstart I needed to begin my thesis.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“The Baby Boomer generation pursued pension plans, corner offices and a linear career path. In return, many Boomers committed the duration of their careers to their organization. As they settled into those corner offices and put their feet up on their desks, their world turned upside down as the millennial generation entered the workforce.”

-Jenny Dearborn, Vice President, Chief Learning Officer, SuccessFactors – an SAP company
Forbes, 2013

Context of the Problem

From pre-computer offices to portable electronic devices, organizations have seen a shift through the years in day-to-day business technologies critical to remaining competitive in the marketplace (Hill, Miller, Weiner, & Colihan, 1998). Just as the needs of a business are reshaped by technological innovations, social and cultural changes have the capacity to influence beliefs about and expectations for work (Putre, 2013). As a result, workplace preferences, life goals, and attitudes vary from generation to generation and are largely determined by the eras in which the workers were raised (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011). If organizations wish to stay competitive in the marketplace, they must identify and understand these generational differences and shape their organizational cultures to accommodate these workers, most arguably the Millennials (Bannon, Ford, & Meltzer; Kaifi, Nafei, Khanfar, & Kaifi et al., 2012)

Definitions. The millennial generation is comprised of individuals born as early as 1976 and as late as 2001 (Wright, 2013). Considered ‘digital natives’ (Glass, 2007), this generation has a unique approach to work-life balance and prefer to use technology as one method to help them balance work and life. Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003) offer the
following definition of work-family balance: “the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role” (p. 513). Although researchers such as Greenhaus et al. (2003) divide the realms into work and family, the term ‘life’ is typically used to refer to all activities outside of work. Simply put, ‘work’ refers to any aspect of one’s professional life and ‘life’ refers to one’s private or personal activities.

A growing presence. Doherty (2013) estimates that there are 86 million Millennials to date, making up 27% of the US population with the number of Millennials expected to rise to 88.5 million by 2020. The first group of Millennial college graduates entered the workforce in 2004 (Hershatter, 2012) and each day, approximately 10,000 Millennials turn 21 (Schawbel, 2012). In 2012, there were 76 million Baby Boomers in the United States and 80 million Millennials with 40 million of those Millennials already in the workplace (Wright, 2013; Schawbel, 2012). The largest generation to date, Millennials are expected to dominate the workforce just as their Baby Boomer predecessors once did (Dearborn, 2013; Johnson Controls, 2010; Wright, 2013). By 2020, 46% of workers in the US will be Millennials (Wright, 2013) and by 2025, three out of four workers globally will be Millennials (Schawbel, 2012). As the Baby Boomers showed us, the largest generations have the greatest capacity for influence over norms, expectations, and behavior (Jenkins, 2013).

The intergenerational workforce. A considerable amount of research has been conducted on the balance between work and life sought by employees in a variety of different disciplines and fields including but not limited to accounting, business management,
marketing, law, medicine, higher education, veterinary studies, and pharmacy (ASHP, 2007; Quinn, 2011; Rowarth, 2008; Smith 2010). Much of the earlier research on work-life balance followed the notion that women stayed at home to care for their families while their husbands worked, often in a demanding workplace environment that allowed no time for familial duties (Bruce and Reed, 1994; Kanter, 1977 as cited in Saltzstein, Ting, & Saltzstein, 2001). By the turn of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, the demographics of the workforce had shifted and the traditional workplace is currently comprised of a range of employees including men, women, the disabled, the elderly, and students (Saltzstein et al., 2001). The most defining difference between coworkers today is their age and it is becoming increasingly obvious to employers that different generations have different work-life balance perceptions (Saltzstein et al., 2001). For example, a study by Ayudhya and Lewis (2011) revealed that young workers are redefining work-life balance by no longer seeing the two domains as separate. Instead of sacrificing one or the other, these workers seek integration or merging of work and life (Ayudhya & Lewis, 2011).

The literature provides descriptions of the various generations in today’s workforce. Those born before 1946 are referred to as the Veterans, the Silent Generation, or the Traditionals. Those from the next and largest cohort, the Baby Boomers, were born between 1946 and 1964. Generation X is comprised of individuals born between 1965 and 1977, and are followed by Generation Y or Millennials who were born between 1976 and 2001 (Byrd, 2008; Drug Formulary Review, 2009; Wright, 2013). According to a study by the Society for Human Resource Management (Glass, 2007), the most common areas disagreed upon by
generations in the workplace include work ethic, managing change, and the perception of organizational hierarchy. In a survey by BridgeWorks (Downing, 2006), a company that examines generational trends in the work world, 70% of those born before 1946, or “Traditionalists,” believed that a lifetime career with one organization is a good goal. However, only 35% of Baby Boomers and 17% of Millennials agreed (Downing, 2006). Similarly, Generation X employees do not believe Baby Boomers have a healthy work-life balance (Glass, 2007).

Workplaces have, until recently, been created to respond to the work styles of Baby Boomers. However, these needs are different from those of the millennial generation. As Putre (2013) describes, Baby Boomers typically work in the office from 8-5 and possess a sense of loyalty to their organization. However, Millennials are more flexible when it comes to changing jobs every few years and want their jobs to accommodate their personal lives. While Millennials may prefer to come into the office at 9 and leave at 4:30, “they may still be as productive as the boomers – it’s just how they do their work that’s different” (Putre, 2013, p. 18). In addition, Millennials and Gen Xers watched Baby Boomers lose their jobs with the downtown of the economy, forcing many from the younger generations to lose faith in job security (Byrd, 2008). While Baby Boomers are characterized by possessing loyalty to their organizations, accepting long hours, and climbing the career ladder, Millennials are believed to be entrepreneurial at a young age, prefer teamwork, excel at multitasking, and need constant feedback (Byrd, 2008).
Differences such as those described above make the gap between generations’ attitudes and beliefs in the workplace increasingly apparent. Generations are challenged to work side-by-side despite varying attitudes toward work, life, and the relationship between the two (Glass, 2007; Harrington & Ladge, 2009; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Baby Boomers manage Millennials and vice versa. Each generation has different organizational strengths that were shaped by their unique cultural and social experiences (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011). Most workplaces are not equipped to integrate the needs and expectations of successive generations of workers, each of which is markedly different than the others (Behrens, 2009). As Favero and Heath (2012) note, generational differences in the workplace continue to create conflict and impact job satisfaction, retention, and ultimately productivity. This generation gap can generate mistrust and lapses in communication, preventing teamwork and collaboration (Favero & Heath, 2012), which, for Millennials, are critical in the workplace. Although researchers and employers have recognized generational differences in the workplace, little has been done from an organizational standpoint (Kaifi et al., 2012). If employers hope to create a work environment that fosters productivity for each generation, they must begin by becoming familiar with and understanding the unique characteristics of each generation (Harrington & Ladge, 2009; Kapoor & Solomon, 2011). While satisfying each generation’s different needs for work-life balance while still maintaining the continuity of the business is challenging, it is clear that organizations need to put more effort into understand the most rapidly growing presence in the workforce: the Millennials (Bannon, Ford, & Meltzer, 2011; Kaifi et al., 2012).
A study by the Society of Human Resource Management found that among all generations, 89% of workers in the United States felt that work-life balance is a problem and nearly half believe that the recession has worsened the issue (Sonier, 2012). However, there is a diversity of perspectives within the 89% on what the actual problem is. Not all workers in the United States view work-life balance in the same way and it is important for employers to understand and manage the diverse work-life needs of the workforce (Smola and Sutton, 2002; Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). One explanation for the Millennial perspective on work-life balance is that Millennials place a greater emphasis on family time than previous generations (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010; Smith, 2010). Green (2012) suggests that because Millennials are more likely to have grown up in households with divorced parents, they want to provide a different experience for their children, and place a greater emphasis on work-life balance. In addition, Millennials saw their Baby Boomer parents sacrifice time with their families in order to ‘make it’ in the business world only to be downsized, leading Millennials to place a greater emphasis on a balance between work and life (Bannon, Ford, & Meltzer, 2011; Favero and Heath, 2012; Hershatter and Epstein, 2010; Loughlin and Barling, 2001; Rowarth, 2008; Smith, 2010; Smola and Sutton, 2002; Sonier, 2012).

The millennial-friendly workplace. According to a career survey by the National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS), nearly 70% of Millennials viewed encouraging work-life balance as one of the most important factors in choosing an employer (Thurman, 2013). Work-life balance options that appeal to Millennials include flexible work schedules, vacation time and paid-time-off, and opportunities for telecommuting (Brill Street &
Company, 2013; Fallon, 2014; Thurman, 2013). Other Millennial-friendly workplace characteristics include technology savvy facilities and environments, fun and collaborative cultures, the opportunity to develop friendships with coworkers, and workplaces that encourage input and allow employees’ voices to be heard (Brill Street & Company, 2013; Fallon, 2014; Thurman, 2013).

Enova International, a global leader in online financial services, ranked #2 on Chicago’s top places for Millennials to work and creates an attractive atmosphere for Millennials by focusing on employees’ preferences in order to encourage productivity. For example, Enova International has no dress codes or strict work hours and the workplace serves as a relaxed environment (Brill Street & Company, 2013). Sprout Social, a social media management platform, ranked #4 on the aforementioned list, attributes their recognition partly to providing flexibility and top notch technology for tech-savvy Millennials, a technique also used by #5 on the list, UrbanBound (Brill Street & Company, 2013). Finally, Coyote Logistics at #1 on the list encourages employee input at every level and is described as “owning your own business with 100 of your closest friends” (Brill Street & Company, 2013). The organization used in this study is considered Millennial-friendly based on its recognition by various business journals and other documents that serve as marketing tools or depict the organization’s culture and mission.

**The organizational value of work-life balance.** As Konrad and Mangel (2000) suggest, organizations that provide employees with work-life balance policies including flexibility and opportunities to integrate work and life are likely to enhance their ability to
recruit and retain top talent. Employees with poor work-life balance may be forced to spend less time and effort on their current jobs, move to a position that generates less tension, or leave their jobs all together (Konrad and Mangel, 2000). Further, research has shown that finding a comfortable work-life balance between the office and outside activities not only produces stronger leaders but also increases engagement, ultimately producing more creative, productive, motivated, and satisfied employees (Sonier, 2012). Organizations with a range of work-life policies have higher levels of organizational performance, market performance, and profit-sales growth (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000). These policies are capable of increasing bottom-line results in the form of reduced absences and turnover (Abbott, De Cieri, & Iverson, 1998).

According to an article by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2012) 24% of organizations surveyed had formal work-life balance policies in place and 52% of organizations implemented informal work-life balance policies. Eighty percent of organizations surveyed said that their supervisors and managers encourage a healthy work-life balance within their unit or work group (SHRM, 2012). Though the presence of work-life balance options in today’s workplace seems clear, researchers and practitioners are undecided on the best way to tailor options to specific generations. Harrington and Ladge (2009) suggest that employees’ greater desire for work-life balance has shifted to a model in which individuals, rather than their employers, manage their own careers and goals with a focus on subjective rewards including feeling respected and working for an organization that matches one’s values. Instead of focusing on Human Resources policies and programs,
work-life efforts might benefit from shifting toward a change in workplace culture (Harrington & Ladge, 2009). Using Fishbein and Ajzen’s Theory of Reasoned action might help employers better understand Millennials’ decisions involving work-life balance based on their generation-specific beliefs.

**Statement of the Problem**

This study addresses the problems that arise as the values and work-life aspirations of Millennials continue to challenge organizations, causing the organizations to lose valuable human capital as a result (Konrad and Mangel, 2000). Millennials differ from previous generations in that they do not want their careers to jeopardize the time they spend on family, play, and community service (Sonier, 2012) as they believe there is more to life than work (Smith, 2010). Instead, they value organizations that embrace technology, promote family-friendly workplaces, and encourage community engagement (Brill Street & Company, 2013; Fallon, 2014; Thurman, 2013). According to a survey of millennial workers by Sanford Rose Associates, 87% of workers plan to pursue and create a career path that highlights work-life balance and 91% perceive work-life balance as a significant factor in their next career move (Sonier, 2012).

Despite the wealth of research conducted in this area, it is not clear how companies should structure their work-life policies to meet Millennial demands (Kaifi et al., 2012). A strategic place for employers to start bridging this gap would be considering the unique work-life balance needs for the incoming talent: the Millennials (Smith, 2010). Integrating millennial employees into the workplace may prove challenging to organizations but, if
successful, will offer rewards by recruiting and retaining a tech-savvy, well-connected, problem solving, and diverse talent pool (Behrens, 2009).

This study will contribute to both scholarly and practitioner needs on the topic of Millennials’ perceptions of work-life balance. Further, the implications of this study may help Baby Boomer and Generation X organizational leaders develop more targeted, effective policies, practices, and cultures in alignment with millennial workers’ expectations and values.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to gain a better understanding of members of the millennial generation’s perspectives on work-life balance and how they enact this balance using options offered by Millennial-friendly workplaces.

Specifically, this study will ask the following research questions:

1. How do Millennials perceive work-life balance?

2. How can the Theory of Reasoned Action help explain Millennials’ decisions involving work-life balance?

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for two reasons. First, it is significant because it re-frames the typical dichotomy (work vs. life) into an integrated continuum that offers a holistic understanding of Millennial perspectives. Given the Millennials’ desire for an integration of work and their personal lives (Ayudhya & Lewis, 2011), a better understanding can be offered by applying Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) Theory of Reasoned Action to the real-life
experiences of employees from this generation. The reasoned action approach can generate a
new way to explain Millennials’ beliefs, intentions, and actions in terms of turning work-life
balance needs into reality.

The second reason the study is significant is based on the millennial generation’s
continued expansion in the workplace. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 80
million Millennials were born between 1976 and 2001 and by 2014, this group will make up
36% of the workforce. By 2020, almost half of the United States workforce will be
comprised of Millennials. This generation will control the corporate world just as the Baby
Boomers once did (Wright, 2013). Ultimately, understanding this generation’s expectations
and priorities now will allow businesses to proactively train their employees to be sensitive to
the balancing styles of generations different from their own, increasing cooperation and
productivity in the workplace (Byrd, 2008).

**Study Design and Rationale**

Social constructivism, as described by Creswell (2007), is a paradigm or worldview
in which individuals give subjective meanings to their experiences while attempting to better
understand the world in which they live. The array of meanings that individuals give to
objects or experiences is vast and should be understood as complex and intertwined. In
research, participants’ different views of a situation yield different meanings and these
different meanings are the products of interactions with others as well as prevailing cultural
norms. This worldview allows researchers to identify patterns of meaning through open-
ended discussions with participants. In order to understand participants’ views of a situation,
researchers must understand the context in which these individuals live and work. Most importantly, researchers who operate under the constructivist paradigm recognize that our experiences and backgrounds shape our interpretations of objects and events. Just as the participants’ views are shaped by their past, so are the researcher’s interpretations of the data. Ultimately, the constructivist researcher’s goal is to make sense of others’ interpretations or meanings about the world. (Creswell, 2007)

This study employs a modified instrumental case study approach to explore the perspectives of the millennial generation on the topic of work-life balance. This particular type of case study, according to Stake (1995), allows researchers to gain insight and understanding of a certain situation or phenomenon. Instrumental case studies look at cases in depth by scrutinizing contexts and activities (Stake, 1995) and provide insight to issues that may be generalizable (Creswell, 2002). The context-specific or ‘naturalistic’ generalization proposed by Stake (1978 as cited in Zucker, 2009) is believed to appeal to readers’ tacit knowledge from which they build understanding. Purposeful sampling was used to choose individuals who represented the target population (millennial workers). Data was collected using questionnaires, worksheets, semi-structured interviews, and organizational documents. Finally, the data was analyzed in two ways: open coding processes were used to understand emergent ideas and a-priori coding, guided by the theoretical framework, was used to extend our understanding of millennial workers’ perceptions of work-life balance offerings by organizations. Chapter three discusses the methods used in more detail.
Researcher Statement

My motivation for conducting this study stems from two sources: first, my interest in my own generation, and secondly, my own struggle with work-life balance. As a part-time student and a new addition to the workforce, I have found myself constantly striving to find a balance between school, work, my family, and my friends. Based on experience, I have learned that contentment with one area of my life is more likely to lead to satisfaction and success in other areas of my life. For example, when I feel organized and prepared at work and at school, I am better able to enjoy the time I spend with my family and friends. I am also aware that my work-life balance perceptions and needs differ from those of my parents’ and grandparents’ generations.

While researching the topic, I have realized that the literature on Millennials, more specifically Millennials and work-life balance, is quickly growing and I want to contribute to the effort. In addition, I hope that my exploration of Millennials perceptions of work-life balance will help me better manage my own struggle, allow me to coach my peers, and help me be more cognizant of others in the multigenerational workplace. Better understanding individuals’ work-life balance needs will only positively affect organizations and their employees. It is important to create awareness that work-life balance is important for employees as individuals and organizations as competitive entities.

Chapter Summary

To fill a gap in social science literature, this research project focuses on the rising generation in the workforce, the Millennials. I conducted a modified instrumental case study
to better understand Millennials’ perceptions of work-life balance and how organizational offerings live up to Millennials’ expectations. This chapter reviewed the context of the problem, clarified the issue being addressed, and presented the research questions that guided the study. Employees with healthy work-life balances are valuable to organizations, allowing them to remain profitable and competitive. As Millennials enter the workforce, it is critical for employers to understand this generation’s distinctive characteristics and ideas about work-life balance if organizations wish to attract and engage millennial workers. Finally, this chapter provides a brief description of the constructivist paradigm from which I wrote, the rationale for the study’s design, and a statement describing my motivation and goals for conducting this study. The next chapter will review the literature regarding the growth of the millennial population, their characteristics, definitions of work-life balance, and Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) Theory of Reasoned Action as an approach to understand Millennials’ perceptions of work-life balance.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

As discussed in chapter one, the purpose of this qualitative case study is to gain a better understanding of the factors or values supporting the millennial generation’s perspectives on work-life balance. A comfortable work-life balance ultimately produces more creative, productive, motivated, and satisfied employees (Sonier, 2012). To an organization, these employees translate into profitability and bottom-line results (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000 as cited in Carless & Wintle, 2007; Abbott, De Cieri, & Iverson, 1998 as cited in Carless & Wintle, 2007). The millennial generation is entering the workforce in large numbers and perceives work-life balance as a critical determinant in choosing a career (Forbes, 2013; Sonier, 2012). Developing a better understanding of Millennials’ expectations and priorities for work-life balance will give organizations a competitive edge in recruiting and retaining this in-demand generation of employees.

The study aims to find out how Millennials think about and ‘do’ work-life balance. The following research questions guided the study: 1) How do Millennials perceive work-life balance, and 2) how can the Theory of Reasoned Action help explain Millennials’ decisions involving work-life balance. This chapter further explores the literature supporting the topic. First, I illustrate the rapid growth of Millennials as a generation and in the workplace. Second, I describe the most common characteristics of the individuals who make up the millennial generation as employees. Third, I present the various ways in which work-life balance is defined and how the literature on the topic has evolved. Finally, I examine the
theory I used to explain how Millennials perform or enact their ideal work-life balance situation with the help of their Millennial-friendly organization.

**Theoretical Foundations**

While no theories are specifically designed to understand Millennials’ perceptions of work-life balance, I chose to use Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) Theory of Reasoned Action to better understand the work-life balance decisions of these individuals. This theory attempts to explain human social behavior. As participants shared stories of their experiences with work-life balance, I used the Theory of Reasoned Action to uncover the individuals’ intentions which are determined by attitudes toward a behavior, perceived norms about a behavior, and perceptions of control regarding the behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010). In this study, the behavior under examination is the intentional seeking out, taking advantage of, and ‘doing’ of work-life balance practices. This theory not only illustrates the psychology behind Millennials’ expectations for work-life balance but helps explain: 1) why Millennials choose positions at certain Millennial-friendly organizations, 2) how Millennials take advantage of the work-life balance offerings at their workplace, and 3) the actual steps millennial workers take to achieve a work-life balance with the help of their employer.

Finally, beliefs vary across individuals, populations, and over time. The culture in which we grow up has a significant influence over our beliefs and general understanding of the world. As a result, different cultures exhibit different behaviors. Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) theory helps position the behaviors of the Millennials within their culture and leads us to a better
understanding of the perceived differences between cultures. This theory is explained in more detail at the end of this chapter.

**Millennials: A Growing Workforce**

According to some, Millennials were born as early as the mid- to late-1970s and as late as 2001 (Bannon, Ford, & Meltzer, 2011; Downing, 2006; Glass, 2007;). Although there is no one universally accepted definition, most researchers agree that Millennials are individuals who were born between about 1980 and the early- to mid-1990s (Bannon et al., 2011; Behrens, 2009; Loughlin and Barling, 2001; Smola & Sutton; 2002). For the purpose of this paper, we will use the more common demographics identifying Millennials as those born between the late-1970s and the mid-1990s.

The Baby Boomer generation is succeeded by Generation X, a generation with too few available workers to fill the vacant positions left by retiring Boomers. This is where the millennial generation plays a critical role. The need for employers to adapt to the demands of the multigenerational workplace is becoming increasingly evident as Millennials enter the workforce in large numbers. It has even been suggested that achieving work-life balance is a main cause of intergenerational conflict in the workplace (Favero and Heath, 2012). Growing more familiar with the characteristics of each generation will aid organizations in the recruitment, engagement, and retention of sought-after employees. (Rikleen, 2011)

Doherty (2013) estimates that there are 86 million Millennials to date, making up 27% of the US population with the number of Millennials expected to rise to 88.5 million by 2020. The first group of Millennial college graduates entered the workforce in 2004.
(Hershatter, 2012) and each day, approximately 10,000 Millennials turn 21 (Schawbel, 2012). In 2012, there were 76 million Baby Boomers in the United States and 80 million Millennials with 40 million of those Millennials already in the workplace (Wright, 2013; Schawbel, 2012). The largest generation to date, Millennials are expected to dominate the workforce just as their Baby Boomer predecessors once did (Dearborn, 2013; Johnson Controls, 2010; Wright, 2013). By 2020, 46% of workers in the US will be Millennials (Wright, 2013) and by 2025, three out of four workers globally will be Millennials (Schawbel, 2012). As the Baby Boomers showed us, the largest generations have the greatest capacity for influence over norms, expectations, and behavior (Jenkins, 2013).

Clearly, the millennial generation is booming as a population and as a force in the workplace. It only makes sense that organizations wishing to recruit and retain these individuals must put forth the effort to better understand them. As Smith (2010) describes, a healthy work-life balance translates into a win-win situation for both the organization and the employee.

**Millennial Characteristics**

This section uses literature to compile a profile of millennial employees, unique individuals in their upbringing, skills, and expectations for work.

**Technology.** Millennials are the first generation to be ‘connected’ 24 hours a day, seven days a week (Bannon et al., 2011; Behrens, 2009; Loughlin and Barling, 2001; Smola and Sutton, 2002). Not only do they value the use of technology (Bannon et al., 2011), but Millennials are also comfortable with, experienced in, and committed to technology both in
the workplace and in other areas of life (Loughlin and Barling, 2001; Byrd, 2008). This technologically advanced generation has been immersed in computers, cell phones, and other devices throughout their lives (Drug Formulary Review, 2009; Glass, 2007; Rikleen, 2011) and is comfortable with social media use (Putre, 2013). Herschatter and Epstein (2010) describe technology as a ‘sixth sense’ to Millennials and Glass (2007) coins them ‘digital natives.’ This group of employees wants to use technology to help do their jobs and balance work and life (Sonier, 2012).

**Relationships with employers.** Millennials tend to have high expectations of their managers (Drug Formulary Review, 2009; Ng et al., 2010) and would prefer to be mentored rather than bossed (Smith, 2010). A close relationship with their employers and coworkers is important to these individuals (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010). They value the social aspect of work (Ng et al., 2010) are more likely to stay with an organization if they work alongside someone they consider a personal friend (Dearborn, 2013). Speed and efficiency in the workplace are often more important to this group than face time with coworkers (Rikleen, 2011; Sonier, 2012). Not afraid to express themselves or voice their opinions (Smith, 2010; Smola and Sutton, 2002), Millennials were often raised by parents who encouraged these characteristics (Rowarth, 2008). Loyalty to an organization is a capability of a Millennial, but he or she can also be quick to take a better position with another organization in order to advance and maximize their opportunities (Drug Formulary Review, 2009; Hershatter and Epstein, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Rikleen, 2011). Generally speaking, Millennials are prone to job-hopping, switching jobs every one to three years (Putre, 2013), and are more open to
experimenting with their careers (Rowarth, 2008; Smith, 2010). Quick success and the prospect of rapid advancement are important to Millennials (Byrd, 2008; Ng et al., 2010), with career growth and development favored over job security (Bannon et al., 2011). Job mobility and international assignments allow this age group of employees to broaden their career horizons (Ng et al., 2010).

**High achievement and a need for feedback and praise.** As suggested in Howe and Strauss’ (2000) publication, “Millennials will definitely not want to be known as Gen Y. Generation A plus, though – that might be a different story.” Achievers in school and overall achievement-oriented (Rikleen, 2011), Millennials are naturally competitive (Byrd, 2008) and according to some, exhibit a sense of entitlement (Ng et al., 2010). Parents of Millennials listened to and celebrated their children (Rowarth, 2008) leading them to be known as ‘trophy kids’ (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010). These children who were coddled by their hovering ‘helicopter parents’ (Behrens, 2009; Glass, 2007) grew into a group of adults that responds well to personal attention (Rowarth, 2008). Constant praise and rewards for achievement are expected by this generation along with a need for continual guidance, direction, reassurance, and feedback (Behrens, 2009; Byrd, 2008; Drug Formulary Review, 2009; Glass, 2007; Hershatter and Epstein, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Rowarth, 2008). Putre (2013) points out that Millennials often ask for rewards in exchange for extra work. In return for hard work and success, Millennials feel that they should be given acknowledgment, encouragement, and access (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010). As Ng and colleagues (2010) describe, this generation is ‘impatient to succeed.’ Millennials are confident in their skills
(Byrd, 2008; Glass, 2007; Rikleen, 2011), possibly a result of constant praise during their upbringing.

**Challenge, curiosity, and collaboration.** Recognized for their ability to multitask (Byrd, 2008; Drug Formulary Review, 2009; Putre, 2013), Millennials are naturally curious and investigative (Behrens, 2009; Smith, 2010), often questioning rules (Putre, 2013) and possessing a need to authenticate (Smith, 2010). This generation values independent thinking and the freedom to choose (Rowarth, 2008) but can be somewhat demanding about which tasks they want to undertake and under what circumstances (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010). Overall, Millennials have a desire to be continually challenged on the job (Behrens, 2009; Ng et al., 2010; Drug Formulary Review, 2009) and prefer work that is intellectually stimulating (Ng et al., 2010; Rowarth, 2008). Naturally team players, this generation enjoys collaboration (Byrd, 2008; Glass, 2007; Ng et al., 2010; Rikleen, 2011; Smith, 2010).

**Ethics and value alignment.** Members of the millennial generation are optimistic about the future of their organizations (Drug Formulary Review, 2009; Hershatter and Epstein, 2010), have positive expectations (Loughlin and Barling, 2001), and possess a strong work ethic (Behrens, 2009; Smola and Sutton, 2002). A positive work environment is important to these individuals (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010). Millennials place importance on an organization’s culture and reputation and are likely to choose employers with values that match their own (Bannon et al., 2011; Ng et al., 2010; Sonier, 2012). Employees from the millennial generation are rule followers (Rikleen, 2011), value corporate responsibility and social awareness (Ng et al., 2010) and want their employers to have high ethical
standards (Sonier, 2012) as they have strong morals of their own (Bannon et al., 2011). This generation possesses a genuine care for and interest in their organization’s mission and objectives (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010; Ng et al., 2010). Ultimately, they hope to make a contribution (Ng et al., 2010) and bring more value to their organizations (Sonier, 2012).

Millennials are proactive (Loughlin and Barling, 2001) and possess a strong sense of commitment to their communities (Sonier, 2012). Not only are they ethnically diverse as a group (Rikleen, 2011), but are also accepting of diversity (Drug Formulary Review, 2009) and value inclusion and a diverse culture in the workplace (Bannon et al., Byrd, 2008; 2011; Sonier, 2012). This group of employees is more tolerant and open-minded of all generations than their predecessors (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010). These civic-minded employees fight for social justice in the workplace (Glass, 2007; Loughlin and Barling, 2001), care about the environment and ecology (Byrd, 2008), and have a desire to better the world in general (Behrens, 2009; Glass, 2007).

**Miscellaneous characteristics.** Individuals who fall into the millennial generation are well educated (Loughlin and Barling, 2001), possibly the most well educated and affluent generation in history (Rikleen, 2011). Despite taking longer to reach adulthood, Millennials are more likely to pursue higher education than other generations (Rikleen, 2011). Individuals from this generation are more likely to come from single-parent homes, blended families, and families with same-sex parents than previous generations. This group also possesses more egalitarian views about the roles of women than their predecessors. While Rikleen (2011) suggests Millennials are trusting of authority, Smola and Sutton (2002)
previously stated that this generation has seen their parents downsized and they have distrust for institutions. Individuals from this generation became entrepreneurs at a young age (Byrd, 2008). Finally, good pay and benefits (Ng et al., 2010) as well as leading-edge training (Byrd, 2008) are important to Millennials.

**Work-Life Balance**

Definitions of work-life balance differ from researcher to researcher, focusing on an array of techniques including conflict, harmony, blending, and alignment. The word ‘balance’ itself has a variety of definitions including equally distributed weight or amount, stability or steadiness, and, as a verb, “to off-set or compare; to equal or neutralize, to bring or come into equilibrium” (Oxford English Dictionary). As Guest (2002) describes, ‘work’ can be defined as paid employment, but can become more complicated when considering unpaid hours, the commute to work, and working from home. Life, or non-work, constitutes any activity outside of work and can include family, friends, community involvement, or hobbies (Guest, 2002).

The interaction between work and life has been defined as work-family conflict, work-family spillover, and work-life balance to name a few (Parris, Vickers, & Wilkes, 2008). Kirby, Wieland, & McBride (2006) describe how “conflicts and initiatives that used to be framed as work/family have in recent years been recast as work/life initiatives in recognition of the home and personal pressures that may conflict with work for all employees” (p. 327, as cited in Favero and Heath, 2012). Other definitions include Clark’s (2000, p. 349) interpretation of work-life balance as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home
with a minimum of role conflict.” Kirchmeyer (2000, p. 81, as cited in Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003) describes living a balanced life as “achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains, and to do so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains.” Common themes found in the existing definitions of work-life balance include those of satisfaction, equality, low conflict, and functionality.

As Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno, and Tillemann (2011) describe, a balance between work and life is generally perceived as necessary for an individual’s psychological well-being and a healthy balance can be indicated by high-self esteem, satisfaction, and a sense of harmony between the different roles. Yet, researchers have not come to a consensus on the definition of work-life balance or how it should be measured or studied. Therefore, research on what creates work-life balance, how it develops, and what enables or hinders it is ongoing. (Rantanen et al., 2011)

**Work-Life Balance for Millennials**

Millennials may have a different approach to or opinion of work-life balance than other generations due to several factors. First, this group watched their Baby Boomer parents make balance sacrifices in order to ‘make it’ in the business world only to later be downsized, ultimately leading Millennials to place a greater emphasis on a balance between the two domains (Bannon et al., 2011; Favero and Heath, 2012; Hershatter and Epstein, 2010; Loughlin and Barling, 2001; Rowarth, 2008; Smith, 2010; Smola and Sutton, 2002; Sonier, 2012). Millennial workers are already proving that they are more family-oriented than other generations (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010) and flexibility is important to them (Bannon et al.,
2011) as they hope to ‘work to live’ rather than ‘live to work’ (Loughlin and Barling, 2001). Instead of security and stability, they prefer organizations that offer options for blending their personal and work lives (Bannon et al. 2011; Hershatter and Epstein, 2010; Ng et al., 2010). Millennials are also more likely than other generations to have the confidence to demand better work-life balance policies from their employers (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010; Ng et al., 2010) and are more likely than previous generations to stay true to their guiding principles in terms of balance (Downing, 2006).

Millennials lead lives that are less structured than other generations and need more time for themselves outside of work (Smith, 2010). An alternative work style helps Millennials achieve their desired work-life balance by allowing them to work from home or on the go (Bannon, et al., 2011; Hershatter and Epstein, 2010; Sonier, 2012). Millennials tend to seek alternative work arrangements to the typical 9AM-5PM, 40-hour workweek including telecommuting, flexible hours, more vacation days, and temporary family leaves (Behrens, 2009; Drug Formulary Review, 2009; Rikleen, 2011). Technology is the tool that best allows Millennials to achieve a balance between work and life, most commonly through telecommuting (Drug Formulary Review, 2009; Favero and Heath, 2012; Hershatter and Epstein, 2010; Sonier, 2012). Telecommuting allows employees to work when and where it is convenient for them (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010; Smith, 2010; Sonier, 2012).

Family, friends, and lifestyle are priorities for Millennials (Smith, 2010) and they do not want their careers to jeopardize the time they spend these activities (Sonier, 2012) as they believe there is more to life than work (Smith, 2010). At work, this group of employees
wants to see their results managed but not their flexibility (Sonier, 2012). Millennials believe the quality of one’s performance is more valuable than the amount of hours worked (Bannon et al., 2011). Overall, employees from the millennial generation want to see their jobs to accommodate their personal lives (Putre, 2013).

**Theory of Reasoned Action**

The Theory of Reasoned Action was developed in the 1960s by Martin Fishbein, a professor in Communication, and Iceck Ajzen, a professor of Psychology (Gold, 2011). Previous researchers attempted to explain why understanding individuals’ attitudes alone was not enough to predict their behavior. Fishbein and Ajzen determined that intentions, not attitudes, are the best predictors of behavior. Reasoned Action Theory is a result of the professors’ attempts to understand what causes or produces intentions. Over time, Fishbein and Ajzen’s theory has advanced, the most recent development suggesting it is possible to use the same determinants that predict intentions and behavior to change intentions and behavior. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010)

Fishbein and Ajzen’s Theory of Reasoned Action can be used to explain the intentions and behaviors of Millennials in terms of work-life balance decisions. In other words, how do Millennials turn their need for work-life balance into a reality? By understanding the behavioral, normative, and control beliefs that guide Millennials’ behavior, organizations might better understand this generation’s workplace needs, ultimately benefiting the individual and the organization. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010)
The reasoned action approach. The first step in Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) reasoned action approach is identifying a particular behavior of interest to the researcher. This behavior can be understood by an individual’s beliefs about the behavior. Often, these beliefs arise from an array of sources including personal experience, media, and interactions with others. Individual differences including demographic characteristics or personality can influence an individual’s exposure to various sources as well as their interpretation of the information they gather. In other words, the culture in which we grow up can influence our beliefs and general understanding of the world. As a result, individuals from different backgrounds or cultures may not have the same beliefs. Despite varying methods of acquiring beliefs, there are three main categories of beliefs that are thought to guide decisions to perform behaviors: 1) behavioral beliefs that form attitudes, 2) perceived norms, and 3) perceived behavioral control. Observing the salience of these three beliefs in various cultures can help us gain a better understanding of the perceived differences. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010)

Behavioral beliefs. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2010), behavioral beliefs form an individual’s attitudes toward a behavior. An attitude is defined as “a latent disposition or tendency to respond with some degree of favorableness or favorableness to a psychological object” (p. 76). The object of an attitude can be any part of an individual’s world, including a behavior. One determinant of human social behavior is individuals’ behavioral beliefs or their evaluations regarding a behavior’s likely consequences or outcomes. In other words, an individual’s attitude about a behavior is a result of his or her beliefs. Individuals will have a
positive attitude toward a behavior when they believe that performing the behavior will result in mostly favorable consequences. Individuals will possess a negative attitude toward a behavior when they believe that performing the behavior will result in mostly negative outcomes. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010)

**Normative beliefs.** Social environments are generally believed to be powerful influences on people’s intentions and actions. Social norms determine what is acceptable behavior in certain groups or societies and provide a set of rules or guidelines for behaviors. Since violations of these norms are typically frowned upon or even punished, individuals often wish to conform to social norms. These perceived demands of the social environment influence behavior in two ways. First, individuals have important others in their lives with whom they are motivated to comply. When these important others think that an individual should perform a behavior or when the important other performs the behavior themselves, individuals perceive social pressure to perform the behavior. Similarly, when important others discourage a behavior or do not engage in the behavior themselves, individuals perceive social pressure not to engage in the behavior. In other words, either perceived approval and engagement or perceived disapproval and non-engagement by important others can determine an individual’s willingness to perform a behavior. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010)

**Control beliefs.** While the terms used to define control constructs vary from researcher to researcher, most can agree that individual differences in perceived control are important to human functioning. Availability of information, skills, opportunities, and other facilitators along with possible barriers or obstacles in one’s path are all considered when
determining one’s perceived behavioral control. When individuals believe there are more facilitators than barriers present, they are more likely to attempt to perform the behavior and believe that they can overcome the obstacles. This is an instance of perceived high behavioral control or self-efficacy. When individuals believe they lack the resources needed to overcome these obstacles, they are less likely to perform the behavior. This is an example of perceived low behavioral control. Generally, the greater individuals’ perceived control, the stronger their intention is to perform the behavior. Despite holding positive attitudes and perceiving strong social pressure to perform a behavior, perceived low behavioral control may reduce individuals’ intentions to do so. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010)

**Predicting intentions and behavior.** Attitudes, perceived norms, and perceived behavioral control combine to form a foundation for behavioral intentions or a readiness to perform a behavior. Typically, the more positive the attitude and perceived norm and the greater the perceived behavioral control, the stronger an individual’s intention to perform the behavior. However, these three determinants vary in importance from behavior to behavior and from population to population. This can explain why individuals with similar attitudes, perceived norms, and perceptions of control engage in different behaviors. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010)

Understandably, the stronger the intention to perform a behavior, the more likely the behavior will be performed. Yet, people may lack actual control over a behavior if the skills and abilities needed are not available or if environmental constrains prevent them from acting
on their behavior. Therefore, intention is only a good predictor of behavior when individuals do have control over behavioral performance. Intentions are examined alongside actual behavioral control to predict and understand behavior. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010)

**Changing behavior.** While Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) suggestions for changing behavior are beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note that identifying behavioral, normative, and control beliefs in individuals who perform a behavior versus individuals who do not perform a behavior can help design specifically aimed behavioral interventions. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010)

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I discussed the literature informing my study on Millennials’ perceptions of and approach to work-life balance. Statistics suggest that the millennial generation is entering the workforce in large numbers as they graduate from college and seek employment. Research indicates that this younger generation has a unique set of characteristics and needs in the workplace, more specifically in terms of work-life balance. Different definitions of work-life balance are presented to illustrate the scope of the topic and inconclusiveness among researchers. Finally, an overview of the Theory of Reasoned Action is offered as a framework for understanding why Millennials perceive work-life balance the way they do. The next chapter will describe the study design and methodology I used to explore Millennials’ perceptions of work-life balance.
Chapter Three: Methods

Design of the Study

This study proposed a qualitative research design to examine members of the millennial generation’s perceptions of work-life balance. Creswell (2009) describes qualitative research as “a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or group ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4). Techniques that can be used during qualitative research include emerging processes, inductive data analysis built upon patterns and themes, and the researcher interpreting the meaning of the data. Five types of qualitative research strategies are discussed by Creswell (2009): 1) ethnographies, which are used to observe and study a group in its natural setting for an extended period, 2) grounded theory in which the researcher develops a theory based on the views of the participants, 3) case studies, which are used to explore a system (program event, activity, process, or one or more individuals) bounded by time and activity, 4) phenomenological research in which the researcher uses the lived experiences of participants to understand a phenomenon, and 5) narrative research, which is used to provide in-depth looks at the lives of individuals through stories.

A modified instrumental case study was chosen to investigate the millennial generation (bounded by time) and their perceptions of work-life balance (bounded by activity). Case studies are intended to explore a topic thoroughly and reveal the essence of a phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Robert Stake (1995) suggests using a naturalistic generalization approach, stresses the importance of the philosophical underpinnings of the
case study method, and the importance of context description. In a case study, the researcher is a biographer who examines a certain section of an individual’s life through rich and comprehensive description (Stake, 1995).

A modified instrumental case study technique was used to provide a detailed understanding of the phenomena of this rising generation’s perceptions of work-life balance through in-depth data collection and holistic analysis. The research questions that guided this study were: 1) how do Millennials perceive work-life balance, and 2) how can the Theory of Reasoned Action help explain Millennials’ decisions involving work-life balance? This study used a multiple-case study approach, examining six cases total with common themes compared as they emerged. I chose to study six cases in order to provide significant depth for each case without weakening the overall analysis (Creswell, 2009).

Robert Stake (1995) describes the nature of case study research as involving the use of experiential understanding, interpretation as a method, and a holistic approach to understanding phenomena. Further, he suggests using the following protocol to conduct case study research:

1. **Determine the criteria for the selection of cases.** The first step according to Stake (1995) is determining whether the case is intrinsic or instrumental. Intrinsic case studies are used when researchers want to learn about a particular case or cases. Instrumental case studies are used when, by understanding a particular case, researchers are able to understand or provide insight to something else.
Cases are then selected in a way that maximizes what the researcher can learn while also taking into consideration the limits of time and access.

2. **Form research questions, issues, and information questions.** Conducting a case study involves developing conceptual structures or ‘issues’ as they are referred to by Stake (1995). Issues are connected to political, social, historical, and personal contexts and help researchers develop a conceptual framework that will guide the study. The ‘issue’ or research questions are accompanied by ‘issue statements,’ evolve over the course of the study, and guide the data gathering and report writing processes.

3. **Gather data.** Forming a data gathering plan includes forming a) the definition of the case, b) the research questions, c) identification of helpers, d) data sources, e) allocation of time, f) expenses, and g) intended reporting. Researchers may also need to gain access by obtaining the appropriate permissions, perform observations, create a description of the context, conduct interviews, and review documents.

4. **Analyze and interpret data.** Stake (1995) recommends two methods of gathering meaning from a case: 1) through direct interpretation of the individual instance, or 2) through aggregation of instances until something can be said about them as a group. Also noted is the search for patterns and consistency or ‘correspondence.’ Finally, the researcher makes naturalistic generalizations or conclusions that are reached when a researcher constructs the vicarious
experience of the participant so well that the reader feels as if they experienced it themselves. This makes the case more understandable for the reader.

5. **Consider case study research roles.** Stake (1995) suggests that the case study researcher plays several roles including that of a teacher, advocate, evaluator, biographer, and an interpreter. More specifically, the role of an interpreter is central as case study research requires that the researcher clarify descriptions and shape interpretations. Using a constructivist point of view encourages providing readers with enough ‘thick description’ that they are able to come to their own generalizations, thus justifying the use of narrative description in the final report. Stake (1995) also mentions relativity and the idea that the value of interpretations can vary based on their credibility and utility.

6. **Use triangulation.** To ensure that researchers are accurate in their measurement and logical in their interpretation, Stake (1995) suggests validation through the use of triangulation. Four methods of triangulation are mentioned including: 1) data source triangulation, 2) investigator triangulation, 3) theory triangulation, and 4) methodological triangulation. In addition, using member checking to ensure that data is represented accurately and provide room for alternative interpretations.

7. **Write the report.** In order to complete the final step of writing the report, Stake (1995) suggests organizing the report early on. Reports should be written in a way that enhances readers’ understanding of the case and promotes naturalistic generalization. Instead of using a storytelling technique, case studies should be
written as either 1) a chronological or biographical development of the case, 2) a researcher’s experience of getting to know the case, or 3) individual descriptions of major components of the case.

I followed Stake’s (1995) protocol closely with only a few modifications. While I did form research questions, I did not utilize his suggestion of creating ‘issue statements.’ I felt they were not necessary, as the conceptual framework emerged solely based on the research questions. Also, I used data source triangulation and chose to write the review in a narrative form through participant profiles to provide thick, rich description of the participants’ experiences to the reader.

**Participant Selection and Recruitment**

This study explored the perceptions of the individuals from the millennial generation about work-life balance. Qualitative studies often employ a purposive sampling technique which allows researchers to choose participants and research sites based on their ability to purposefully provide an understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Workers from the millennial generation who are employed by Millennial-friendly organizations were selected to share their experiences with work-life balance. The initial organization recruitment was conducted through the researcher’s personal and professional networks, through person-to-person conversation, telephone, and email. A sample narrative used during the recruitment process is attached (Appendix C).

The first phase of participant selection consisted of finding participants who met the following criteria: 1) born within the millennial generation (1978-1995); and 2) had worked
full-time or part-time for at least 6 months. The second phase of participant selection used a pool of individuals who met the first set of criteria provided by the Human Resources manager. This pool was directly contacted by the HR manager with a description of the research project and was invited to participate in the study. The individuals were sent a recruitment questionnaire (Appendix D) that measured their interest in employer responses to employee work-life balance issues. The first six individuals who responded and self-identified (via the questionnaire) as being ‘interested’ or ‘highly interested’ were selected to participate in the study. The purpose of this questionnaire was to determine which potential participants have the highest passion for work-life balance. By understanding workers with the most extreme views toward this phenomenon, even partial solutions to their issues will be helpful to a larger group of millennial employees. All people from the convenience network who expressed an interest in participating in the study had the same chance to be selected; no specific group was excluded. The only determining criteria was scoring “high” on the recruitment questionnaire and returning the completed questionnaire quickly. A thank you letter was sent to those not selected letting them know the study was filled.

The three male and three female participants selected for the study range in age from 21 to 32 and hold a variety of positions within the organization. Table 3.1 depicts the demographics of the participants in the study. Their experiences are outlined in a narrative form in chapter four.
Table 3.1 *Participant Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Lead Generation Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Subject Matter Expert Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Regional Account Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Accounts Receivable Team Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Accounts Receivable Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spencer</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Accounts Receivable Associate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection Procedures**

Before conducting the actual study, I interviewed two individuals from the millennial generation who were not participants but met the criteria mentioned above. Interviewing these individuals allowed me to practice my interviewing techniques and determine how I needed to modify the process. Discussions following the pilot interviews revealed the areas to which I needed to make improvements.
After the participants were identified for the study but prior to the interview, they were asked to complete a worksheet about their current work-life balance situations (Appendix E). The worksheet asked participants to list activities and responsibilities involving work, family, friends, and other engagements and to describe work-life balance options that they considered important. This worksheet was intended to prompt participants’ reflection about their work lives versus their after-work activities and responsibilities as well as the work-life balance policies that accommodate their needs (Atkinson, 1998).

Interviews were scheduled at a time and location that was convenient to the participant and lasted, on average, approximately 40 minutes. The interviews consisted of questions that examined the participant’s experiences with work-life balances as well as their experiences with the policies available at their organization. Participants were made aware that they did not have to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable and they could terminate the interview at any time for any reason. I used post-interview comment sheets to record my initial thoughts about the interviews, determine ways I could improve the next interview, and record anything that need further explanation by the participant. The interviews were recorded on a password-protected phone and audio recordings of the interviews were destroyed upon completion of the study.

Data Analysis Procedures

According to Rossman and Rallis (1998, p. 171 as cited in Creswell, 2009), “coding is the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information.” In order to make sense of the information collected, the text or
data gathered during a qualitative inquiry is broken down piece by piece (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) suggests beginning by organizing and preparing the raw data (transcripts, field notes, images, etc.) for analysis. After reading through all the data, the researcher should then code the data either by hand or using a computer. The researcher identifies themes and creates a description from the codes, interrelating the two. Finally, the meanings of the themes and descriptions are interpreted.

For my study, I closely followed this coding method, first through open coding and then through a-priori coding. After interviewing all six participants, the interviews were transcribed, the texts were examined word-by-word using open coding, and common themes began to emerge. These initial codes were then grouped together to form categories based on similar themes. Next, the transcripts were coded for a second time using a-priori coding to reflect the ideas of Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) theory. This theory was used to help understand Millennials’ decisions involving work-life balance. The generation of these two sets of codes provided new knowledge about the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. Both types of coding are described in more detail below.

**Open coding.** In-vivo or open coding was the first type of coding used during the analysis and was used to code data for its major categories of information (Creswell, 2007). Small sections of text were closely examined including sentences, phrases, and words. Excerpts of the text were organized into categories or codes that were frequently discussed by the participants. Many of these codes reflected the literature describing characteristics of Millennials. Approximately 30 codes were identified initially and the language used by the
participants guided the naming and description of these codes. The original codes were grouped together by theme and three dimensions were determined. They were: 1) what Millennials recognize, 2) what Millennials want, value, and appreciate, and 3) how Millennials think. Individual themes were grouped together beneath these four dimensions. More specifically, Millennials recognize differences in generation’s perceptions of work life balance, have learned from the perceived successes and failures of their parents, and have experienced work-life balance conflicts of their own. Millennials value flexibility, positive relationships with managers, and positive workplace cultures and environments. Finally, Millennials do not think their work defines them, they create a work-life balance through outside activities, and they ‘work to live’ while making the most out of life. Figure 2.1 helps conceptualize the findings from the open coding process. More on this is provided in chapter 4.
A-priori coding. Following the open coding, a-priori coding was used to link the words, phrases, and ideas from the transcripts to Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) theory to better understand Millennials’ intentions involving work-life balance. The intent of a-priori coding is to understand, from a particular point of view (in this case, Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) theory), more about the phenomenon at hand. A-Priori codes are pre-existing codes that were created from the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010) and were applied to text data when the text content ‘matched’ the code. Peer coding techniques were
used to improve trustworthiness of the a-priori coding process used for the study. This approach holds that human social behavior is guided by behavioral, normative, and control beliefs. These three combine to produce an intention to perform or not to perform a behavior. Further, these beliefs vary across populations due to background and cultural factors, in this case: generation. Codes were created to reflect the three dimensions of the theory as well as contributing factors that stem from being born into the millennial generation. The codes include, 1) Millennials’ attitudes toward work-life balance based on their beliefs about consequences and outcomes, 2) Millennials’ perception of support for or discouragement of work-life balance, and 3) Millennials’ perceptions of facilitators and barriers to achieving a desired work-life balance. Each of these three categories was created based on the three beliefs that determine an individual’s intention to perform a behavior. The transcripts were also coded for generational factors which are capable of influencing individual’s beliefs. Figure 2.2 helps conceptualize the a-priori codes.

**Reporting the Findings**

The intent of the study was to understand the perceptions of Millennials who balance work and life. Upon coding the interview data, codes were organized in a way that illuminated the stories of the participants. Guided by the themes and patterns that surfaced during the interviews, participant profiles were created to describe each participant’s perceptions of work-life balance as a member of the millennial generation in a narrative form. Direct quotes were used to connect the reader to the participants’ experiences through authenticity. The profiles are presented in chapter four to provide in-depth looks at these
experiences. I created tables and figures to illustrate the various themes, patterns, and findings. Finally, I directly answered the research questions based on the data gathered during the study.

Figure 2.2 A-Priori Codes
Ethical Considerations and Trustworthiness

A qualitative study such as this requires that the researcher understand his or her role in the participant-researcher relationship and uphold appropriate responsibilities for conducting ethical, trustworthy research. Researchers are responsible for maintaining three types of trustworthiness standards when conducting research that involves human subjects: 1) the researcher needs to maintain the trust of the sponsoring organization (e.g., NCSU); 2) the researcher needs to maintain the trust of the participants; and 3) the researcher needs to earn the trust of readers in that they believe the results and implications of the study are accurate. Several steps were taken to develop and maintain this trust.

First, I obtained approval from North Carolina State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that my study complied with ethical standards (Appendix A). Second, I carefully described the Informed Consent process (Appendix B) with each participant before starting the interviews, obtaining participants’ signatures acknowledging the benefits and risks of the study. The interviews were arranged to be convenient for the participant. Individuals were not pressured to participate and were told they could withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. There were no anticipated negative results from participating in this study. Further, confidentiality of the participants was maintained throughout the study (as described above) by creating pseudonyms, storing real names in a separate location from the electronic records and any transcripts, and altering or not using quotes that could disclose the participant’s identity. Third, to develop trust with participants as well as readers, I used member checking to ensure that my transcriptions were accurate.
Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 314 as cited in Creswell and Miller, 2000) describe member checking as “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). I provided each participant with my interpretation of his or her interview responses and each participant was given the opportunity to offer feedback and suggest changes to the texts. Fourth and finally, to earn the reader’s trust, the decisions I made during completion of the study were as transparent as possible.

Parties interested in the results of this study may include Human Resource Development professionals and those interested in the Millennial perception of work/life balance. Employers and organizations will find information regarding recruitment and retention of the millennial generation advantageous as this talented generation continues to enter the workforce.

**Limitations**

There are standard limitations to this qualitative, modified instrumental case study that are generic to studies of this sort. Since the Human Resources manager at the organization provided the initial list of potential participants, some control was lost over the selection process. This step was necessary to gain access to participants and is attributed to the purposive sampling technique. In addition, the case study approach is meant to describe a group’s behavior and is not designed to offer a cause-and-effect relationship. Further, since the case study only focuses on experiences of six individuals from one organization North Carolina, the results cannot be generalized to represent individuals in other settings or the population as a whole. Finally, case studies require researchers to decipher and make
conclusions about the data. This may mean that the findings are not completely objective. However, strict measures were taken to uphold ethical standards, ensure trustworthiness of the data analysis procedure, and to present the findings fairly and accurately.

Chapter Summary

The data gathered for this modified instrumental case study included six interviews averaging 40 minutes in duration with individuals from the millennial generation, questionnaires, worksheets, and organizational documents. First, open or in-vivo coding was used to identify major categories of information. Next, A-Priori coding was used to understand the phenomenon through the lens of Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) Theory of Reasoned Action and generate new patterns and themes. This study ensured trustworthiness and the upholding of ethical standards through the use of IRB approval, an informed consent process, member checking, and reflective awareness. Finally, the limitations of the study are provided as they relate to the research method, sampling, and other weaknesses. The data collected from the case study is presented in chapter four along with more description of the coding process. Chapter five provides an analysis and discussion of the data gathered during the study.
Chapter Four: Findings

This modified instrumental case study examined millennial employees’ perceptions of work-life balance. Specifically, the study investigated the perceptions of one group of millennial participants about work-life balance. The study uses Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) Theory of Reasoned Action to determine how background factors and culture shape employees’ belief about performing work-life balance. These beliefs guide Millennials’ intentions and decisions to perform work-life balance behaviors. Data was collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews with six millennial employees who have worked at the organization used in the study for at least 6 months. The study also used a questionnaire, a worksheet, and organizational documents to gain more insight into employees’ experiences with work-life balance as well as the workplace’s espoused Millennial-friendly offerings.

First, the data was using open coding to determine emergent categories or themes that were particularly important to the participants or that they discussed frequently in the interviews. The purpose of this coding method was to group together the common perceptions and ideas of the millennial employees and organize them into a comprehensive model. The second step in the data analysis consisted of using a-priori coding with codes developed from Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) theory. The interviewees were asked questions about their current and ideal work-life balance situations, the offerings of their organization that help them reach their work-life balance goals, and barriers to their work-life balance goals. The purpose of the questions was to gain a deeper understanding of the employees’
perceptions in order to create a thick, rich description of their experiences. Interview recordings were transcribed and analyzed using the coding methods mentioned above.

A recruitment questionnaire was used to gauge the participants’ interest in work-life balance and work-life balance solutions. A worksheet was provided to the participants prior to the interview to prompt thinking about their current and ideal work-life balance situations and, finally, organizational documents were used to examine the way the company promotes their Millennial-friendly work environment. Examining data collected through different methods along with member checking served as a means of triangulation. Triangulation, according to Stake (1995) helps ensure that researchers are accurate in their measurements and logical in their interpretations.

Overall, much of the participants’ perceptions regarding work-life balance reflected that described in the literature and the characteristics of the participants matched those of Millennials from previous research. The Theory of Reasoned Action approach can help explain participants’ decisions involving work-life balance based on background factors and their beliefs. This chapter will describe the organization used in the study and will present profiles of all six participants in narrative form based on the two coding methods used during analysis. Finally, the findings are presented in detail.

Organization Profile

The organization used in this study was founded in 2002 and is comprised of 271 employees who either work remotely or from one of four locations with the North Carolina office being the largest. Named one of Deloitte’s top 500 fastest growing technology
organizations, the company provides online training to senior care, health and human services, corrections, and intellectual and developmental disabilities organizations. These online training programs provide courses and support to help clients reach their compliance needs without the demands of scheduling live training or maintaining paper documentation. The organization prides itself on its intuitive interface and learning experiences that are engaging, enjoyable, relevant, and timely. In addition to the office of the CEO, departments within the company include Accreditation, Content Development, Engineering, Finance, Human Resources, Implementation, IT, Legal, Market Research, Marketing, Migration, Partnerships, Product Management, Sales/Operations, and Support. Employees range in age from 21 to 66 with 67% of employees being 35-years-old or younger. At the time of this study there were 147 male employees and 123 female employees. Finally, the organization’s website promotes a fun, energetic workplace and describes its employees as dedicated, passionate, intelligent and enthusiastic.

**Participant Profiles**

The participants range in age from 21 to 32 and hold a variety of positions within the organization (see Table 3.1). For anonymity purposes, the participants are referred to by the pseudonyms Hannah, Emily, Justin, Thomas, Lauren, and Spencer. The participant profile structure is intended to provide in-depth looks at their personal experiences and the background factors specific to their generation that shaped their perceptions. Direct quotes from the interviews are interspersed throughout as markers of authenticity.
Hannah. Hannah is a 21-year-old female who works as a Lead Generation Specialist for the sales department at the organization. She graduated in 2012 with a bachelor’s degree in Biology and a minor in Chemistry. During college she worked for a lab that focused on sea turtle husbandry. Originally from Florida, she was raised near Raleigh, the state’s capital. Both of Hannah’s parents are teachers, but since North Carolina does not value teaching the way other states do, Hannah decided against becoming a teacher at the moment. However, she would like to enter the field eventually, preferably as a biology teacher.

Hannah remembers her parents having a comfortable work-life balance as they had summers off which allowed for more family activities. In addition, when Hannah was sick, she was able to rest in one of her parents’ classrooms while he or she finished the workday. However, she recognizes the commitment her parents had to their jobs, staying late and spending weekends grading papers, creating lesson plans, and preparing for the next week. Hannah is thankful that she does not have to bring work home with her too frequently. She feels that, in the past, getting a job was valued first and foremost. People wanted to get a job first, create income, and build their life from there. However, Hannah feels that there are more important things in life. “I’d feel unhappy if I didn’t at least allow myself to enjoy life because we’re put here for a purpose.” Finally, she feels that there has been a shift in what employees want from the workplace. Before, workers aimed for the higher positions that would not allow for as much time spent at home where “you are the work, you are the job.” While she realizes that you need money to have life experiences, she hypothesizes that compensation is less important to the millennial generation than leading a meaningful life.
outside of work. She feels that jobs are able to be more specialized or tailored to the
individual, usually resulting in a better work-life balance.

In her free time outside of the office, Hannah enjoys spending time with her family
who lives close by, training at the gym, volunteering, and socializing with her friends. She
tries to live by her parents’ example of putting family first and notes that having her dream
job is not as important as spending time with family and friends. At the time of the interview,
she was excited for her sister’s upcoming birthday party and volunteering over the weekend
at local museum. Hannah notes that she often too tired after work or does not have time to
engage in some activities. Still, maintaining a healthy work-life balance is important for
Hannah to maintain her own identity outside her job title and she’d rather make sacrifices at
work instead of her personal life to achieve this balance.

Hannah has worked from home if absolutely necessary and occasionally makes work-
related calls and emails outside of work in order to fulfill her duties. While at work, she
adjusts her schedule when she has to take care of other responsibilities such as picking up her
niece from daycare. She can make up the missed hours later in the week or use her PTO.
One of Hannah’s favorite incentives offered by the organization is the option to leave early
on Fridays if she completes certain tasks on time. She notes that the following week has a
particularly exciting incentive – if the employees in sales hit their numbers, the organization
will take them to a restaurant/arcade for drinks and appetizers. Hannah feels that the
organization is successful at offering incentives to ‘amp up’ their employees and create an
encouraging work environment. Although she works individually as a Lead Generation
Specialist, she is also part of a team and feels that the organization encourages collaboration by team members.

Hannah was not sure what she wanted to do following graduation and began to question the importance of the array of classes she took as an undergrad. She started working for this organization after a family friend remembered her being bright and a quick learner and referred her for an interview. Despite not having a background in sales, the organization offered to train her for the position and she was attracted to the role’s challenge and opportunity. She remarked, “It was open to anybody really (...) they invest in us and that’s what really piqued my interest.” Hannah holds herself accountable for her job duties and values the autonomy to complete her tasks on a loose schedule as long as she completes them on time.

Hannah describes how the open layout of the office, bright colors, and modern furniture create a social, energetic, fun work environment. Employees are encouraged to take breaks throughout the workday and she takes advantage of the in-office gym and the Ping-Pong room where tournaments are regularly held. She recalls one tournament in which she faced the CEO of the company and slammed the ball to score a point, forcing him to duck. Every time he sees Hannah he jokes with her about the match. It is important for her to have coworkers with whom she enjoys working and the organization encourages its employees to be social. She wants to feel validated in her job and acknowledges that she is naturally competitive. Department and office-wide get-togethers (holidays, baby showers, corn hole tournaments, etc.) help Hannah feel a connection to her coworkers outside of their job duties.
The flexibility offered by her job is most important in helping Hannah reach her work-life balance goals.

Although she enjoys her job now, Hannah hopes to one day have a job that she loves. She notes the saying that if you find something you love, you never have to work a day in your life. Five to ten years from now, she hopes to find a job that allows her to travel, start a family, and enter a more challenging role in the office. As for now, Hannah sees higher-up employees working on New Years Eve to close deals and emphasizes that she does not want to sacrifice her personal time for work.

Emily. Emily is a 32-year-old female and works as a Subject Matter Expert Coordinator at the organization. She has an undergraduate degree in Music Education and a Master’s in English. She is originally from Delaware but moved to North Carolina when she was 8-years-old. She is married and does not yet have children. Emily’s mother has a history degree and was a stay-at-home mom while her father has a Ph.D. in history and worked in various settings including the chemistry department of a university and the National Science Foundation. She remembers her father working from 8:00am until 5:00pm or 6:00pm and is appreciative that her mother was able to stay home to help with extra-curricular activities and homework. While her father often traveled for work and had to miss her sister’s birthday for a yearly business trip, he was still able to come to her softball games and marching band competitions. Due to the level of his position, he was able to be more flexible in his work schedule. Her father “has retired about three times now. He keeps
working. He loves to work.” Overall, Emily believes her parents were satisfied with their work-life balance situations.

As she puts it, Emily “works to live” and schedules work duties and life activities accordingly to make the most out of both. Family is extremely important to her and she enjoys spending her free time with her husband traveling, watching sports, and walking the dog. Also, she is active in an orchestra, attends board meetings for her band, and schedules freelance performances. She believes that it is important to one’s mental health to take time outside of work to do the things one enjoys.

Although she does not directly use her degrees, Emily’s role involves extensive research and she thanks her graduate degree for sharpening this skill. It is important that she feels her job is needed and she feels that with this organization. In addition, she feels that the executives do not want mindless ‘drones’ as workers as they encourage employees to take breaks and enjoy the facilities. As she frames it, the executives say, “you guys are people first, then employees.” The organization creates a fun, engaging environment with holiday decoration contests, tailgate parties, sports teams, and volunteering for the Special Olympics. The organizational culture is important to Emily as it focuses on helping the underserved and bettering people. Since the organization is technology based, the workplace environment lends itself to the millennial generation. She hopes to see the organization offer online trainings or certifications in the future and believes this will appeal to the millennial generation in particular.
Emily values the flexibility offered by her role that allows her to take care of personal responsibilities while also devoting herself to her job. If she needs to schedule a doctor’s appointment during the day, she is able to make up the hours by staying later another day that week. Before working for this organization, Emily worked for a country club where she was expected to work weekends and holidays. She also worked as a teacher, which required long hours, grading, and preparation outside of the classroom. Now, she feels that she is able to leave work at the office and enjoy her personal life as she pleases. Five to ten years from now, Emily hopes to be starting a family. She hopes to be able to stay home with the children while they are young just as her mother did. However, women at the office who successfully split time between the office and home while also raising children encourage her that work-life balance is possible as a young mother. For now, Emily has achieved her ideal work-life balance.

**Justin.** Justin is a 23-year-old male who works as a Regional Account Executive in the sales department at the organization. He has a bachelor’s degree in business with a concentration in marketing and has been in the workforce for just over a year. Justin is married but does not yet have children.

During college, Justin worked approximately 30 hours a week at a building on campus making student ID cards. His father began his career at the post office but took over the family business, an auto shop, when Justin’s grandfather passed away. His mother has worked in the healthcare industry her entire career, mostly in HR and billing. Justin remembers his father working many hours but being able to control his schedule when he
took over the auto shop. Both of Justin’s parents were able to attend his various sporting events as a child. He notes that neither of his parents changed jobs frequently, adding that his mother has been with the same organization for over 20 years. Justin feels that sticking to one or two jobs throughout one’s career was common for his parents’ generation and feels that has changed. Overall, Justin believes that his parents were satisfied with their work-life balance.

After getting married, Justin’s priorities and perspectives have changed. Family is his number one priority and after putting in his 40 hours each week, he tries his best to leave work at the office in order to enjoy his personal life. He and his wife are involved in a mentoring program that was created by 12 couples in 2006 who had created financial freedom for themselves in their 20s and 30s. They developed a program to mentor Millennials on five key ideas: 1) having a balanced lifestyle, 2) creating personal wealth through better control of your time, 3) having fun while making a living, 4) having a positive mentor, and 5) making a difference by helping others. This mentoring program allows Justin to simultaneously spend time with his wife and friends while learning about something that is important to him. Justin also enjoys playing tennis, basketball, and other sports but does not have as much time for these activities as he would like. He notes that the weekends, only being two days, seem very short.

Justin does not find himself dealing with his personal life very frequently at work, but when he does, his job allows him the flexibility to do so. He does not receive work emails on his personal phone, a way of ensuring work stays at the office. However, if anything urgent
and work-related comes up outside of the office, Justin attends to it immediately. Justin realizes that he spends most of his waking hours at work and hopes to spend more time with family. He thinks he could achieve this by working from home at least one day a week.

Justin is self-motivated and enjoys the seclusion provided by working at home as it makes him more productive. He prefers to work harder for fewer hours in order to spend more time doing the things he enjoys. At this organization, Justin enjoys the eleven paid holidays employees receive as well as PTO days. The relaxed, business casual dress code, the Ping Pong room, and the mostly younger staff appeal to him as a member of the millennial generation. Liking his coworkers and managers and having fun while working are important to Justin. While he would always like to have more flexibility and time off, he realizes that this is something that may not happen until he is self-employed.

The millennial generation, Justin believes, values time more than previous generations. While other generations may perceive Millennials as lazy, Justin feels that Millennials are actually more productive. He suggests that some workplaces value physically being in the office for eight hours more than quality work. Previous generations, he believes, valued income and hoped that their children would benefit from their hard work. Instead of enjoying their children, Justin feels that older generations were focused on providing the best. While he acknowledges that planning for the future is important, he believes that previous generations were, “blinded of the present time because they were so future focused.” While his parents stuck with ever jobs throughout their careers, Justin has changed careers three times in less than two years. One of his previous managers based
Justin’s commitment on the amount of hours spent in the workplace instead of the quality of his work. Justin believes he works hard and he wants a manager who recognizes this, even if his productivity may look different from that of another worker’s.

Justin notes that this organization offers the best work-life balance options of any of his previous employers. While he enjoys keeping work and life separate for now, he would consider integrating the two if it allowed for more flexibility. Five to ten years down the road Justin hopes to be starting a family and working in a position that allows him to make his own schedule in order to devote more time to his personal life.

**Thomas.** Thomas is a 27-year-old male who works as an Accounts Receivable Team Lead at the organization. He is originally from Michigan and is married without children. He received a bachelor’s degree in Hospitality Business and worked for Harrah’s Entertainment (now called Caesar’s Entertainment) as a hotel manager for about nine months. He then joined the Marine Corps where he stayed for almost four years before deciding to enter finance and accounting, leading him to his current role.

Thomas’s mother, who is legally blind, received a bachelor’s degree in business and worked in retail before becoming a stay-at-home mom. His father is currently working to finish his degree but worked as a new-car salesman for 25 years. He now works for Chrysler in the Special Vehicles Division. Thomas remembers his mother being in the home for most of his childhood and his paternal grandmother helping her out with driving to errands or extracurricular activities. His father, on the other hand, worked long hours, sometimes from 7:30am until 9:00pm. He was home on the weekends but had to spend a fair amount of time
taking care of other familial duties. Looking back, Thomas realizes his dad did not enjoy his job despite making a comfortable living. His dad, Thomas thinks, may have felt stuck in the role or that he would not be able to make that kind of money elsewhere. Not being able to leave his work at the office caused long-lasting problems for the family. While growing up, Thomas recalls how the family always drove new cars and went on family vacations, something he believes the family could have scaled back. In college, Thomas wanted to buy a used car and spend only $3,000 to $4,000 but his father insisted on Thomas leasing a new car. These expensive choices, Thomas feels, were his father’s attempts to live up to the expectations of friends and neighbors.

In his free time, Thomas enjoys going to the gym, spending time with his wife, fixing up a rental duplex they recently purchased, and working on cars although he has not had as much time for this recently as he would like. He is actively trying to spend more time with his wife and is taking classes in preparation to obtain his master’s degree. He still stays in touch with his best friend from Michigan and will attend his wedding this year. Thomas acknowledges that he has bounced around from place to place and considers himself a fairly private person.

While at work, Thomas has the freedom to take a lunch break when he pleases and take care of important outside activities as they arise. His role keeps him busy as he is a manager but also a team lead. He must perform individually while still assisting his direct reports. Working from home allows him the privacy to be more productive without interruptions. However, Thomas often finds himself working into the night while at home,
something that has caused tension between he and his wife. Since he is a salaried employee, he decided that working from home is not worth causing a rift in his marriage. “Work is work (...) but that’s not who I am,” he states.

Thomas believes that the organization where he works is beneficial for the community, something he did not see while working at Harrah’s. The casino industry’s lifeblood is problem gamblers and this is unethical to Thomas. Not only did he not believe in Harrah’s values, they were completely against his own. Being an e-learning company, Thomas knew his current employer’s workplace would be vigorous, tech-savvy, made up of primarily young people, and would be growth oriented – all characteristics that were attractive to him.

Work-life balance is important to Thomas because, as he puts it, “you’re selling the best hours of your life and for what?” Thomas realizes a balance is critical and the fear of losing your job should not keep you from doing what you enjoy. “How much of this is worth it? So you can get home at 7:00pm and not have time for anything? So you can get to retirement at 60 and not be able to walk anymore?” he wonders. As long as you are putting in your best effort and are a strong performer, that is what truly matters and employees should be able to take care of personal responsibilities as necessary without any questions asked. He also thinks that Millennials are more likely than other generations to enjoy the flexibility of being able to take time off work to take care of personal responsibilities. He recalls that, during their performance reviews, several Millennials he managed were concerned with lack of feedback and wanted to know about opportunities for advancement.
He also feels that Millennials are much more willing than other generations to go back to school if it means enhancing their career opportunities.

Although he keeps work and life separate now, Thomas would like to see them become more blended. He would like to create more passive income, possibly in the form of purchasing another duplex to rent so that he can retire from the corporate world. Turning his hobby, fine carpentry, into a career would be ideal for Thomas. Personal freedom is something Thomas values most and being self-employed would allow him to make his own schedule, to choose his own employees, and to be his own boss. Creating personal freedom allows individuals to feel that they have better control over their lives, something that could help reduce anxiety and depression, Thomas believes. Five to ten years from now, Thomas hopes to be starting a family and would like his wife to stay home to raise their children just as his mother did. While he does not expect that he will ever be ‘rich,’ he wants his family to live comfortably and not to feel ‘under the gun’ in his work life. “I’d rather be free of all that than rich,” he comments.

**Lauren.** Lauren is a 24-year-old female who works as an Accounts Receivable Associate under Thomas. She was born in Virginia but has lived in North Carolina for 15 years. She is a first generation college graduate and obtained a bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice. Her mother works as a caterer and her father is unemployed but previously worked in manufacturing as a product manager. Lauren recalls her mom being able to balance work and life, unlike her father who she describes as a workaholic. Often, her father would not be home until after midnight. When Lauren was in middle school, her father worked in Mexico
and would be gone for a month only to come back home for a week. Being on two different ends of the work-life balance spectrum caused marital problems for her parents.

Lauren loves her job and puts her work first. She enjoys arriving to work early if she can and takes short lunch breaks. She often takes her laptop home to respond to calls and emails off the clock, admitting that she is more of a workaholic than most people her age. Lauren’s social life comes second and she enjoys spending her free time with her boyfriend. Others from her generation may have a better work-life balance she speculates and she thinks her workaholic-tendencies may stem from her upbringing. However, work-life balance is important to her, as she recognizes that it can be unhealthy to focus too much on one thing. Millennials as a generation, Lauren feels, are more laid-back in their approach to work-life balance.

Lauren began as a temp in the office and, despite having a degree in Criminal Justice, decided that she wanted to work in Accounts Receivable. She worked hard to prove to Thomas that she was capable. Lauren believes the organization succeeds at targeting younger people with their bright walls, modern furniture, sports teams, and health and wellness programs. The organization is very team-oriented, which she enjoys. However, she does not enjoy the gossip in the workplace, something she feels puts negative thoughts into employees heads about others. Her relationship with her manager, Thomas, is a major factor in her satisfaction with this organization. She relies on him for help and guidance and feels that they have similar styles. Five to ten years from now, Lauren hopes to be entering a
higher role, starting a family, and taking advantage of the organization’s maternity leave options.

**Spencer.** Spencer is a 23-year-old male who also works as an Accounts Receivable Associate under Thomas at the organization. He was raised in North Carolina and received a bachelor’s degree in History and Political Science. His father was a lawyer for 40 years and is recently retired. His mother has a degree in history but has worked in Human Resources for 30 years. Spencer recalls his father having a healthy work-life balance, while his mother left the office significantly later than his father, worked weekends, and was also expected to travel for her job. He remembers work seeping into her personal life, particularly when she and her boss did not get along well. Growing up, Spencer remembers missing his mother when she was away on business trips and wishing she were home. Although her work-life balance situation was not ideal, Spencer believes it was a sacrifice she had to make.

Spencer enjoys spending his free time with his friends, family, and girlfriend. He is also a part of a young professionals club that focuses on service, networking, professional development, and socialization. Taking weekend trips, going to the gym, going out for drinks with friends, reading, and goofing around on the Internet help Spencer feel that his work life is balanced by his personal life.

At work, Spencer feels that he has the freedom to take care of personal responsibilities as he pleases. The organization, he says, knows that its employees work hard and that they will put in the required hours one way or another. He occasionally answers emails and creates reports outside of the office, but only remembers one week in particular
when he felt he had an imbalance between work and life. The organization took on a new approach to billing and there was a lot of customer feedback, requiring Spencer to work approximately 50 hours a week plus a few extra hours from home each day. He likes that the work environment is self-directed and he does not feel pressured to start working at an exact time each day. Spencer was attracted to the young work environment offered by this organization and enjoys the holiday parties, Ping Pong room, sports teams, and the informality of the office. The executive team is more in tune to youth culture than most other organizations, which he feels is evident by several of the organization’s offerings. “Business is business, but there are certain fun things you can incorporate into that,” he believes.

Overall, Spencer feels that he has a healthy work-life balance with time for work but also time to take care of his personal health. He feels that work-life balance is like sleep and if you neglect this balance, you will eventually burn out. Spencer believes that the millennial generation feels more entitled to work-life balance than older generations who believe that work is the most important thing in life. These generations feel that “it shouldn’t be taken for granted and it’s a privilege to have a good job.” Work-life balance is a perk instead of an expectation for older generations, he believes. Five to ten years from now, Spencer hopes to have a general idea of his career path and to be in a higher position with more responsibility. He would like to be married and possibly starting a family. He realizes that with a higher position comes more hours and that he may have to sacrifice time surfing the Internet and going out with friends in order to focus more on his family. He hopes that he would not
necessarily be spending more time at work, “just the time outside of work would be more geared toward family.”

**Answering the Research Questions**

The above pages have presented profiles that represent the in-depth analysis of interview transcripts. Below, I will directly answer the following research questions:

1. How do Millennials perceive work-life balance?

2. How can the Theory of Reasoned Action help explain Millennials’ decisions involving work-life balance?

**Research Question 1.** Open coding was used to reveal themes among participants involving their perceptions about work-life balance. My study showed that participants’ perceptions are a combination of what they know, what they value, and how they think. More specifically, Millennial participants of the study recognize that they are different from previous generations, have learned from the successes and failures of their parents’ generation, and have experienced work-life conflict themselves. These participants value flexibility, positive relationships with their employers, and positive workplace environments and cultures. They do not want their work to define them and they hope to create a work-life balance through outside activities, as they want to make the most out of their free time. See figure 2.1.

**What Millennials know.** Based on the data collected, the participants recognize that there are significant dissimilarities in the way different generations think about work and, more specifically, work-life balance. Participants’ responses revealed that they believe the
millennial generation is more laid-back in their approach to work-life balance and, as Thomas suggests, “I think we [Millennials] definitely feel more entitled to it [work-life balance] than other generations.” Other generations, they suggest, see work-life balance options as a perk, see having a job as a privilege, and see the hours spent in the office as an indicator of one’s dedication or productivity. Participants have also learned from the perceived successes and failures of their parents. Some appreciated having a stay-at-home mother and hope to provide the same for their children and others are encouraged by the healthy work-life balance their parents achieved. When discussing her own mother who was a stay-at-home mom, Emily states, “It enabled us to do a lot of stuff that not everybody could do including extracurriculars. She was there to help with homework and make dinner. I thank them [her parents] all the time.” Thomas describes, “My wife wants to be a stay-at-home mom while we have young kids and I’m totally fine with that. That’s the way my mom raised us and I think that was important for us.” However, several participants recognize that their parents were overworked, stressed, and often brought work home or missed out on family activities. Lauren recalls her father working out of town for weeks at a time, “He was gone for a good part of my life growing up. That wasn’t pleasant by any means.” The participants who were negatively affected by this are determined to change this experience for their children. Finally, most of the millennial participants have experienced short instances of work-life conflicts in their careers at least once. Common results of these experiences include stress, a feeling of imbalance, and negatively affecting personal relationships. Spencer recalls a week in which he worked
**What Millennials value.** In order to achieve a healthy work-life balance, participants want flexibility in the form of holidays, PTO, flexible start times, and working from home (telecommuting). Several participants acknowledged that individuals have different work styles that best enhance their productivity. For some, this may mean working from home at least one day a week to provide seclusion or to allow the flexibility to take care of personal responsibilities while working. Justin notes, “Everything I do here can be done from a laptop and a cell phone.” He feels that he works better from home and enjoys working harder for fewer hours in order to spend time doing the things he enjoys. Justin believes that “based on who you are, you can determine how you work best.” Positive relationships with employers were also mentioned frequently. First, participants mentioned that they want to work for an organization whose values match their own. Making a difference is important to them, evident by their volunteering outside of work. Second, positive, mentor-like relationships with their managers make the participants feel more comfortable in the workplace and they value the guidance and support of their managers. Lauren values her relationship with her manager, Thomas, and states “I think it’s very important to have a good relationship with your manager. I feel that can affect your day at work and how you feel about your job. I rely on him [Thomas] a lot for help and guidance.” Third, the participants value executives who treat their employers as people instead of workers. Emily notes “the executive team doesn’t want drones. They don’t want just workers.” She goes on to state that the executives believe, “you guys are people first and then employees.” When asked about her initial attraction to the company, Hannah said “they invest in us and that’s what really piqued my interest.”
Finally, fun, energetic workplaces that encourage collaboration, promote interaction, and facilitate a healthy work-life balance are most attractive to the participants in this study.

**How Millennials think.** As a group, the millennial participants felt that work does not define them as a person. While some admit that they currently work-to-live, others hoped that they could eventually live-to-work, possibly by doing something that creates income but feels like a hobby instead of a job. Hannah acknowledges, “They say if you find something that you absolutely love, sing-to-the-hills love doing, you never have to work a day in your life and I want to get to that point.” Thomas, who emphasizes personal freedom, hopes to eventually retire from the corporate scene and turn his hobby, carpentry, into a job that allows him to be his own boss and make his own schedule. Each Millennial interviewed stressed the importance of balancing work with their personal lives through outside activities. Maintaining physical and psychological health was often mentioned. Spencer notes “if you don’t maintain a work-life balance, it’s definitely easy to burn out.” Family, friends, hobbies, and volunteering were the most frequent activities mentioned. Other outside activities included traveling, exercise and leisure, and continuing education. Almost every participant mentioned making the most out of their time outside of the office and did not want to sacrifice their free time for work-related responsibilities. The participants frequently mentioned having to decide when work was ‘worth it’ in comparison to their personal lives.
### Table 4.1 Open Coding Results

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Dimension</th>
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<td>Hannah</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Justin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Lauren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spencer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Recognize differences in generations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learned from perceived successes/failures of parents</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have experienced work-life balance conflicts</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Positive relationships with managers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive environments/cultures</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Work does not define them (work to live)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important to create a balance through outside activities</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important to make the most out of personal time</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Research Question 2.** A-Priori coding was used to glean codes from Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) Theory of Reasoned Action. This theory can provide a better understanding of Millennials’ decisions regarding work-life balance based on their beliefs, which are a product of their generation. The Theory of Reasoned Action approach can help explain participants’ decisions involving work-life balance based on background factors and their beliefs. More specifically, the millennial generation’s upbringing resulted in a different set of attitudes, normative beliefs, and control beliefs than their predecessors. Participants’ attitudes toward work-life balance were mainly positive as they all recognize that a healthy work-life balance results in positive outcomes both at work and in their personal lives. In addition, participants’ decisions to create a balance between work and life are fostered by the belief that their employers support and encourage this balance. Finally, participants are more likely to engage in work-life balance when their workplace offers options that act as facilitators to creating a balance. See figure 2.2.

**Background and cultural factors.** Background and cultural factors present in this study include participants’ belonging to the millennial generation as well as their parents’ work-life balance experiences. Growing up in different cultures or, in this case different generations, determined which social norms we are aware of and our beliefs about the world. These factors, guided by three main beliefs, play a role in determining whether or not an individual performs a behavior. In this case, the behavior in question is the performance of work-life balance or activities that will enhance an individual’s work-life balance. Participants in this study recognize that their generation thinks about work-life balance
differently than other generations. As several noted, this may have been a result of watching their parents work tirelessly only to miss out on their children’s lives. In addition, participants recognize that their generation is often perceived as lazy, that Millennials may feel more entitled to work-life balance than other generations, and that Millennials are more laid back in their approach to work and the office. Each of these, shaped by generational factors, lead to a unique set of beliefs involving work-life balance.

**Attitude toward behavior.** According to the study’s participants, Millennials believe that reaching a healthy work-life balance is critical to one’s personal health as well as his or her productivity in the office. Although arriving late or leaving early might benefit the employee’s work-life balance, they realize that this will result in negative outcomes in the form of loss of accountability and trust from their manager or, ultimately, loss of their job. On the other hand, spending one’s free time with family or friends, volunteering, or participating in hobbies helps Millennials feel a sense of work-life balance and they are more likely to engage in these activities to achieve a healthy balance. As Thomas described, failing to maintain a healthy balance can result in ‘burn out.’

**Perception of support or discouragement of behavior.** The workplace used in this study promotes achieving work-life balance as an acceptable behavior. As a result, the participants viewed this perceived approval from their employers as an indicator to engage in work-life balance behaviors. Employees are encouraged to take breaks throughout the day, to be social with their peers, and to partake in wellness programs. Each of these serves as an indicator of support for the behavior of performing work-life balance. Consequently, the
participants in this study perceive this support and use it to their advantage to balance work and life. Instead of only seeing its employees as workers, Emily feels that the organization supports work-life balance and says to its employees, “live your life and be a person first.”

**Perception of facilitators and barriers to behavior.** Millennials who believe they have control over their personal work-life balances and perceive more facilitators to achieve this balance are more likely to perform the behavior. Conversely, Millennials who do not feel a sense of control and feel that they cannot overcome the barriers to achieve work-life balance are less likely to participate in work-life balance behaviors. For instance, the organization used in this study has a Ping Pong room, gym, and bright, modern furniture placed throughout the office. These combine to create a relaxed, playful setting that facilitates work-life balance. The participants see these factors as facilitators to work-life balance whether through play, fitness, or uplifting one’s mood. On the other hand, having to be physically present in the office each day (as opposed to working from home) is a minor barrier to achieving a work-life balance. This study shows that the participants are likely to take advantage of any facilitators put in place by the organization to help reach a healthy work-life balance.

**Chapter Summary**

For the purpose of this study, I recruited six individuals from a recognized Millennial-friendly organization to share their experiences with and perceptions of work-life balance. Common themes across the interviews were revealed during analysis using two coding
methods. The findings from their interviews are presented in narrative form in order to explicate the common themes and highlight their personal journeys.

Overall, much of the participants’ perceptions regarding work-life balance reflected that described in the literature. The characteristics of the participants matched those of Millennials from previous research most notably in the form of, 1) recognizing when their parents sacrificed family for work and wishing to change this for their own family, 2) desiring flexibility, positive relationships with managers, and positive work environments or cultures, and 3) a ‘work-to-live’ attitude and not wanting to sacrifice personal time for work. The Theory of Reasoned Action approach can help explain participants’ decisions involving work-life balance based on background factors and their beliefs. More specifically, the millennial generation’s upbringing resulted in a different set of attitudes, normative beliefs, and control beliefs than their predecessors. Participants’ attitudes toward work-life balance were mainly positive as they all recognize that a healthy work-life balance results in positive outcomes both at work and in their personal lives. In addition, participants’ decisions to create a balance between work and life are fostered by the belief that their employers support and encourage this balance. Finally, participants are more likely to engage in work-life balance when their workplace offers options that act as facilitators to creating a balance. The next chapter provides an analysis of the findings. Implications, strengths, and limitations of the study are also discussed.
Chapter Five: Analysis and Discussion

Chapter four presented findings based on participants’ experiences while this chapter provides an overview of the research followed by the implications for practice and research. Strengths and limitations of the study are presented followed by conclusions and future research.

Overview of Findings

The purpose of this modified instrumental case study was to explore the millennial generation’s perceptions of work-life balance. The study also sought to determine how Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) Theory of Reasoned Action could provide a better understanding of Millennials’ decisions involving work-life balance. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with six individuals from a Millennial-friendly organization, questionnaires, worksheets, and organizational documents. Using two forms of coding, an analysis of the data was conducted to arrive at an understanding of the millennial generation’s perceptions of work-life balance. The findings from this study suggest that Millennials are unique in what they know, what they value, and how they think.

The characteristics of the participants reflected those of Millennials from previous research most notably in the form of, 1) recognizing when their parents sacrificed family for work and wishing to change this for their own family, 2) desiring flexibility, positive relationships with managers, and positive work environments or cultures, and 3) a ‘work-to-live’ attitude and not wanting to sacrifice personal time for work. The Theory of Reasoned Action approach can help explain participants’ decisions involving work-life balance based
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Findings from my study confirmed those of Hershatter and Epstein (2010) in that Millennials value close relationships with their managers, place importance on a positive work environment or culture, and are attracted to employers whose values match their own. As predicted by Bannon et al., (2011), the participants of this study recognized that their parents sacrificed time with family in order to be successful in the working world, causing the participants to place a greater value on family as opposed to work. Just as Loughlin and Barling (2001) suggest, the participants in this study ‘work to live’ rather than ‘live to work.’ The participants in my study confirmed the findings of Bannon et al. (2011) in that flexibility is invaluable to Millennials trying achieve a work-life balance. Sonier (2012) and Bannon et al. (2011) mention that Millennials believe the quality of one’s performance should be more important to employers than the amount of hours worked, a finding that was confirmed by my study. Putre (2013) describes Millennials as wanting to see their jobs accommodate their personal lives, however this was not confirmed by my study. Instead, the participants
seemed content with and grateful for the personal freedom that their organization allows them and did not demand more. Finally, as Byrd (2008) described, there are differences in the work styles of Millennials and their Baby Boomer predecessors. These were confirmed in my study, more specifically Millennials’ desire for flexible work hours and the predisposition to change jobs mid-career.

Fishbein and Ajzen’s Theory of Reasoned Action can be used to explain the intentions and behaviors of Millennials in terms of work-life balance decisions. By understanding the behavioral, normative, and control beliefs that guide Millennials’ behavior, actions or decisions, changes can be made by organizations to accommodate this generation’s workplace needs, ultimately benefiting the individual and the organization. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2010), individual differences including demographic characteristics can influence an individual’s exposure to various sources ads well as their interpretation of the information they gather about the world. In the case of this study, the time frame in which the Millennial generation was raised influenced their attitudes and perceptions of social norms. My study extended the use of Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) framework into the work-life balance literature to understand this concept. As mentioned earlier, the study confirms Bannon et al.’s findings that individuals from the Millennial generation, many with Baby Boomer parents, do not want to sacrifice family or personal time for work. This is potentially a product of growing up as a Millennial with parents who missed out on important events in their children’s lives in order to be successful in the workplace. Similarly, it might
be in response to the benefits that individuals from the generation appreciated if they had parents who had healthy work-life balances.

**Implications for Practice and Research**

Human Resource practitioners may see the growing focus on Millennials in the workplace and intergenerational conflict as a call to change work-life balance policies to better fit all generations in their workplace. Future research can incorporate the findings from studies like this one about the characteristics of millennial employees to develop guides for employers seeking to attract and retain millennial talent. The more organizations understand about this generation, the more likely they are to recruit, engage, and retain its workers. As work-life balance options become more sought after, practitioners and researchers should consider the organizational benefits of offering policies and programs to their employees. Offering flexible hours, encouraging healthy work-life balance, and appealing to Millennials’ attraction to fun, energetic workplaces might benefit organizations that wish to hire more millennial talent. In addition, managers who are able to serve as mentors might be better suited to supervise Millennials employees as this relationship is particularly important to this generation. Using the Theory of Reasoned Action, practitioners can better understand what work-life balance options Millennials will be most likely to use to their advantage. Creating a supportive culture that encourages a balance would be most beneficial to employees and the organization as a whole.

Based on the findings, Millennials may be more inclined to take advantage of organizations’ gradual shift toward Millennial-friendly workplaces and work-life balance
options. Changes in organizational cultures do not happen overnight and the increase in Millennial-friendly options is a healthy compromise for organizations seeking to employ Millennials while still providing the structure that other generations may value. While competitive compensation might attract Millennials to organizations, work-life balance appears to be just as important to this population of workers.

**Strengths and Limitations**

The main strength of this study was the participants’ interest in the study, which resulted in sincere answers. Also, a variety of work and personal situations were examined, enhancing the scope of the study. Finally, Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) Theory of Reasoned Action provided a framework to explore the participants’ decisions to perform the necessary actions to obtain a healthy work-life balance.

Several limitations were present in the study and are discussed to guide future research. First, the Human Resources manager at the organization provided the initial list of potential participants, which meant some control was lost over the selection process. However, this step was necessary to gain access to participants and is attributed to the purposive sampling technique. In addition, the case study approach is meant to describe a group’s behavior and is not designed to offer a cause-and-effect relationship. Further, since the case study only focuses on experiences of six individuals from one organization in North Carolina, the results cannot be generalized to represent individuals in other settings or the population as a whole. A larger sample size would yield more data from which to draw results. This may include interviewing millennial employees from several organizations who
pride themselves on being Millennial-friendly. The study collected significant data but expanding the recruitment process to include other organizations would provide more generalizable results. Finally, case studies require researchers to decipher and make conclusions about the data, which means that the findings may not be completely objective. Perception, the focus of this study, can be created differently based on several factors including backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. However, strict measures were taken to uphold ethical standards, ensure trustworthiness of the data analysis procedure, and to present the findings fairly and accurately.

**Conclusion**

The findings from this study reflect the literature on the topic and support the notion that Millennials have a different set of characteristics as employees when compared to other generations. These traits are largely products of their upbringing and translate into unique aspirations for work-life balance. Millennials recognize that they are different from previous generations, have learned from the successes and failures of their parents’ generation, and have experienced work-life conflict themselves. Millennials value flexibility, positive relationships with their employers, and positive workplace environments and cultures. This generation does not want their work to define them and they hope to create a work-life balance through outside activities, as they want to make the most out of their free time. Finally, Millennials’ attitudes, perception of social support, and perceptions of control influence their intentions to perform behaviors that help them achieve a healthy work-life balance. Implications from this study can aid Human Resource practitioners in creating
programs and policies aimed at Millennials and future research might focus on determining how Millennials’ perceptions will change as they age.

**Chapter Summary**

Overall, by examining Millennials’ perceptions of work-life balance, this study has contributed to the growing field of literature on the topic by identifying what Millennials know, value, and think about work-life balance. The qualitative approach yielded rich, detailed descriptions of employees’ perceptions based generational characteristics and personal experiences. A qualitative approach may not have been sufficient to understand the underlying factors behind participants’ perceptions.

As Millennials enter the workplace rapidly, understanding their unique ways of thinking and approaches to work-life balance could benefit employers in several ways. First, intergenerational conflicts due to misunderstandings about one another’s work styles and preferences may decrease. Second, decreasing generational conflicts could increase productivity in the workplace. Finally, tailoring work-life balance options to meet Millennials’ needs may result in higher retention, translating into profit for the organization. Additional research into specific work-life balance policies and programs that are attractive to Millennials could prove more beneficial to employers. The values and perceptions of the millennial generation may change over time as they continue to age, start families, and change positions and jobs. Commitment to understanding this generation will further the field of Human Resource development as well as the field of work-life balance literature.
REFERENCES


http://onlinemba.unc.edu/blog/geny-in-the-workplace/


Appendix A: IRB Application

North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
Submission for New Studies

GENERAL INFORMATION

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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Title of Project:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Principal Investigator:</strong></td>
<td>Elizabeth Wyatt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Principal Investigator Email:</strong></td>
<td><a href="mailto:eawyatt@ncsu.edu">eawyatt@ncsu.edu</a></td>
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<td>5. <strong>Department:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <strong>Phone Number:</strong></td>
<td>(919) 619-2286</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. <strong>Faculty Sponsor Name if Student Submission:</strong></td>
<td>Dr. Julia Storberg-Walker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. <strong>Faculty Sponsor Email Address if Student Submission:</strong></td>
<td><a href="mailto:julia_swalker@ncsu.edu">julia_swalker@ncsu.edu</a></td>
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<td>10. <strong>Source of Funding</strong> <em>(Sponsor, Federal, External, etc)</em>:</td>
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**RANK:**
- Faculty: ☐
- Student: ☑Undergraduate ☒ Masters ☐ PhD: Other:  ☐

2. As the principal investigator, my signature testifies that I have read and understood the University Policy and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research. I assure the Committee that all procedures performed under this project will be conducted exactly as outlined in the Proposal Narrative and that any modification to this protocol will be submitted to the Committee in the form of an amendment for its approval prior to implementation.

*Electronic submissions to the IRB are considered signed via an electronic signature*

**Principal Investigator:**

Elizabeth Wyatt

(typed/printed name) (signature) (date)

*As the faculty sponsor, my signature (or electronic submission) testifies that I have reviewed this application thoroughly and will oversee the research in its entirety. I hereby acknowledge my role as the principal investigator of record.*

**Faculty Sponsor:**

Dr. Julia Storberg-Walker

(typed/printed name) (signature) (date)

PLEASE COMPLETE AND E-MAIL TO: irb-coordinator@ncsu.edu
Please include consent forms and other study documents with your application and submit as one document. *Electronic submissions to the IRB are considered signed via an electronic signature. For student submissions this means that the faculty sponsor has reviewed the proposal prior to it being submitted and is copied on the submission.

*************************************************************************
**
For SPARCS office use only

Reviewer Decision (Expedited or Exempt Review)

[ ] Exempt
[ ] Approved
[ ] Approved pending modifications
[ ] Table

Expedited Review Category: [ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ] 6 [ ] 7 [ ] 8a [ ] 8b [ ] 8c [ ] 9

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

Reviewer Name
Signature
Date

North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
GUIDELINES FOR A PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

In your narrative, address each of the topics outlined below. Every application for IRB review must contain a proposal narrative, and failure to follow these directions will result in delays in reviewing/processing the protocol.

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Briefly describe in lay language the purpose of the proposed research and why it is important.

   The purpose of this study is to understand the Millennial generations’ perceptions about work-life balance. By better understanding this generation’s unique needs, desires, and goals, employers can determine how to recruit and retain this population as they continue to enter the workforce in large numbers.

2. If student research, indicate whether for a course, thesis, dissertation, or independent research.

   This research is for my thesis for my master’s degree in Human Resource Development.

B. SUBJECT POPULATION

1. How many subjects will be involved in the research?

   Five to seven subjects will be interviewed for this study.

2. Describe how subjects will be recruited. Please provide the IRB with any recruitment materials that will be used.

   I will first find an organization willing to participate in the study from my professional network. From there, I will ask my contact within the organization to help recruit five to seven employees who meet the criteria listed below. I will ask my contact to distribute a call for volunteers (draft copy attached). The call for volunteers will contain my contact information, and interested participants will be asked to either call or email me. The first five to seven volunteers who contact me and meet the selection criteria below will be invited to participate. If more than
seven people volunteer, I will thank them and let them know that the recruitment call has been filled.

3. List specific eligibility requirements for subjects (or describe screening procedures), including those criteria that would exclude otherwise acceptable subjects.

Eligible participants are those from the Millennial generation who are interested in sharing their story. Participants must have been born between 1978 and 1995 (19- to 36-years of age) and be employed by the organization being studied for at least six months.

4. Explain any sampling procedure that might exclude specific populations.

Participants who do not meet the selection criteria above will be excluded.

5. Disclose any relationship between researcher and subjects - such as, teacher/student; employer/employee.

The researcher and subjects will be from the same generation.

6. Check any vulnerable populations included in study:

- minors (under age 18) - if so, have you included a line on the consent form for the parent/guardian signature
- fetuses
- pregnant women
- persons with mental, psychiatric or emotional disabilities
- persons with physical disabilities
- economically or educationally disadvantaged
- prisoners
- elderly
- students from a class taught by principal investigator
- other vulnerable population.

4. 7. If any of the above are used, state the necessity for doing so. Please indicate the approximate age range of the minors to be involved.

N/A

C. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

1. In lay language, describe completely all procedures to be followed during the course of the experimentation. Provide sufficient detail so that the Committee is able to assess potential risks to human subjects. In order for the IRB to completely understand the experience of the subjects in your project, please provide a detailed outline of everything subjects will experience as a result of participating in your project. Please be specific and include information on all aspects of the research, through subject recruitment and ending when the subject's role in the project is complete. All descriptions should include the informed consent process, interactions between the subjects and the researcher, and any tasks, tests, etc. that involve subjects. If the project involves more
than one group of subjects (e.g. teachers and students, employees and supervisors), please make sure to provide descriptions for each subject group.

First, the researcher will recruit potential organizations through her professional and personal networks. She will provide information on the study to the CEO (or other official) of potential organizations. Once an organization has agreed to participate, individual recruitment will begin and a representative of the organization will be asked to distribute a recruitment memo (copy attached). Potential participants will be informed that their participation is optional and that they can withdraw from the study at any time. After five to seven participants agree to participate in the study, recruitment will close. Volunteers will sign a consent form and determine the pseudonym that will be used in the interview, transcriptions, and reporting to protect their identities. The researcher will propose interview times after work hours (either on-site at the organization or off-site) and one that is convenient for the participant will be chosen. Interviews will be open-ended and participants will not be required to answer all the questions if they do not feel comfortable. The researcher will record and transcribe the interviews to identify recurring patterns and themes. Participants will be asked to review the transcriptions for accuracy and for any suggestions or comments. All identifying information will be stripped from transcripts before sent to participants for review. The email will be generic so that no one will link the email recipient with the person on the transcript. The researcher will remain in contact with the participants via email throughout the duration of the study. The data will be analyzed, compiled, and reported in the findings.

2. How much time will be required of each subject?

Each interview will last approximately forty-five minutes to one hour. Time spent following up via email (clarification of interview responses) will take less than one hour total.

D. POTENTIAL RISKS

1. State the potential risks (physical, psychological, financial, social, legal or other) connected with the proposed procedures and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

None anticipated.

5. Will there be a request for information that subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive (e.g. private behavior, economic status, sexual issues, religious beliefs, or other matters that if made public might impair their self-esteem or reputation or could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability)?

We are asking participants to share their experiences as Millennial employees with work-life balance. These interviews are open ended and participants have the option to share what they want to share and nothing more. However, the experiences that the participant will be sharing are personal in nature.

a. If yes, please describe and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

The identities of the participants will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. If the participant feels uncomfortable at any time, they can take a break, change the course of the conversation, or terminate the interview.
b. Could any of the study procedures produce stress or anxiety, or be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading? If yes, please describe why they are important and what arrangements have been made for handling an emotional reaction from the subject.

No. The dialogue will be open-ended and non-threatening. The researcher will work to make the participant feel that they are in control and are not pressured to answer questions or continue the interview if not desired. Resources will be available to handle any type of situation. Dr. Julia Storberg-Walker will also be available.

3. How will data be recorded and stored?

The interviews will be digitally recorded and stored on a password-protected computer.

a. How will identifiers be used in study notes and other materials?

Demographic information will be collected and matched to the fictitious name. The list matching real names with fictitious names will be kept on paper in a secret location away from the computer.

b. How will reports will be written, in aggregate terms, or will individual responses be described?

Interviews will be transcribed and then put into a narrative form for the final report.

4. If audio or videotaping is done how will the tapes be stored and how/when will the tapes be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

All electronic files will be erased at the conclusion of the study.

5. Is there any deception of the human subjects involved in this study? If yes, please describe why it is necessary and describe the debriefing procedures that have been arranged.

No.

E. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

6. This does not include any form of compensation for participation.

1. What, if any, direct benefit is to be gained by the subject? If no direct benefit is expected, but indirect benefit may be expected (knowledge may be gained that could help others), please explain.

Participants will have the opportunity to share their stories with others who may not understand the unique needs, goals, and perceptions of the Millennial generation and their pursuit of work-life balance. Participants’ stories will expand on the limited knowledge that researchers currently have on the topic, may help other generations better understand Millennials, and may help other Millennials feel that they are not alone in their struggle.
F. COMPENSATION
Please keep in mind that the logistics of providing compensation to your subjects (e.g., if your business office requires names of subjects who received compensation) may compromise anonymity or complicate confidentiality protections. If, while arranging for subject compensation, you must make changes to the anonymity or confidentiality provisions for your research, you must contact the IRB office prior to implementing those changes.

1. Explain compensation provisions if the subject withdraws prior to completion of the study.
   N/A

2. If class credit will be given, list the amount and alternative ways to earn the same amount of credit.
   N/A

G COLLABORATORS
1. If you anticipate that additional investigators (other than those named on Cover Page) may be involved in this research, list them here indicating their institution, department and phone number.
   N/A

2. Will anyone besides the PI or the research team have access to the data (including completed surveys) from the moment they are collected until they are destroyed.
   No

H. CONFLICT OF INTEREST
1. Do you have a significant financial interest or other conflict of interest in the sponsor of this project?
   No

2. Does your current conflicts of interest management plan include this relationship and is it being properly followed? N/A

I. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
1. If a questionnaire, survey or interview instrument is to be used, attach a copy to this proposal.

2. Attach a copy of the informed consent form to this proposal.

3. Please provide any additional materials that may aid the IRB in making its decision.

J. HUMAN SUBJECT ETHICS TRAINING
*Please consider taking the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), a free, comprehensive ethics training program for researchers conducting research with human subjects. Just click on the underlined link.
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Revised 04/2009

North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board For The Use of Human Subjects in Research

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PLEASE READ ALL OF THIS INFORMATION CAREFULLY PRIOR TO COMPLETING THE CONSENT FORM

An Informed Consent Statement has two purposes: (1) to provide adequate information to potential research subjects to make an informed choice as to their participation in a study, and (2) to document their decision to participate. In order to make an informed choice, potential subjects must understand the study, how they are involved in the study, what sort of risks it poses to them and who they can contact if a problem arises (see informed consent checklist for a full listing of required elements of consent). Please note that the language used to describe these factors must be understandable to all potential subjects, which typically means an eighth grade reading level. The informed consent form is to be read and signed by each subject who participates in the study before they begin participation in the study. A duplicate copy is to be provided to each subject.

If subjects are minors (i.e. any subject under the age of 18) use the following guidelines for obtaining consent:

- **0-5 years old** – requires signature of parent(s)/guardian/legal representative
- **6 – 10 years old** - requires signature of parent(s)/guardian/legal representative and verbal assent from the minor. In this case a minor assent script should be prepared and submitted along with a parental consent form.
- **11 - 17 years old** - requires signature of both minor and parent/guardian/legal representative

If the subject or legal representative is unable to read and/or understand the written consent form, it must be verbally presented in an understandable manner and witnessed (with signature of witness). If there is a good chance that your intended subjects will not be able to read and/or understand a written consent form, please contact the IRB office 919-515-4514 for further instructions.

*For your convenience, attached find a sample consent form template that contains necessary information. In generating a form for a specific project, the principal investigator should complete the underlined areas of the form and replicate all of the
What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate, or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form, it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher named above.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this study is to better understand and expand research on Millennials’ perception of work-life balance using an instrumental case study method.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to share your experiences in balancing work and life as a young adult in the workforce. I will schedule a time to speak with you one-on-one to get to know you, your experiences looking for work, and how you prioritize work and life. I will also inquire about your overall perceptions about work-life balance, attempt to understand your goals for your future, and gather insight on your generation’s needs and goals.
I will schedule one in-person interview with you that will be recorded and transcribed. The interview will take place at a time and location that is convenient for you. I will then follow up with you via email to clarify any questions I may have about your responses and to ensure the accuracy of the data collected. The interview will last approximately forty-five minutes to one hour and email communication afterward may take an additional hour. I want to understand your experiences with and perceptions about work-life balance as a Millennial employee. I will use your story, with your approval, in the findings of my research. I will share with you what I write using your interview and will obtain your approval and corrections to ensure accuracy.

**Risks**
Since I am requesting that you share your personal experiences with me, you may find some parts of the interview to cause emotional reactions. If you experience any discomfort or would rather not discuss certain topics, you are welcome to tell me that you would like to change the subject, take a break from the interview, or terminate the interview at any time.

**Benefits**
You will have the opportunity to share your story with others who may not understand the unique needs, goals, and perceptions of individuals from the Millennial generation and their pursuit of work-life balance. Your story will expand on the limited knowledge that researchers currently have on the topic, may help other generations better understand Millennials, and may help other Millennials feel that they are not alone in their struggle.

**Confidentiality**
The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely on a password-protected computer. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study and your interview responses will be recorded under a pseudonym.

**Compensation**
You will not receive any compensation for participating.

**Employment**
Participation in this study is not a requirement of your employment at your organization and your participation, or lack thereof, will not affect your employment in any way.

**What if you have questions about this study?**
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Elizabeth Wyatt, at 4008 Grand Manor Court Apt 207, Raleigh, NC 27612, or (919) 616-2286.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**
If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

Consent To Participate
“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature ____________________________  Date ___________
Investigator's signature _________________________  Date ___________
Appendix C: Draft Participant Recruitment Memo

Dear participant,

My name is Elizabeth Wyatt and I am obtaining my Masters in Human Resource Development from North Carolina State University in Raleigh, NC. I graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2011 with a bachelor’s degree in psychology and went directly to graduate school. While obtaining my graduate degree, I started a full-time position in a local HR office and also attended classes. I was overwhelmed trying to find time for schoolwork and other activities in addition to working 40-hour weeks. I quickly realized that I needed to find a better work-life balance.

I am writing my master’s thesis on the Millennial generation’s perceptions of work-life balance. I am contacting you because you have been identified as an individual who fits the requirements for participating in my study. I would love to hear your personal experiences with balancing work, family, friends, and everything in between. If so, your participation would include two short questionnaires and an in-person interview.

The interview will last approximately 1 hour and will be recorded with a digital audio recorder. Your responses will be completely confidential. The recordings will be saved on my password-protected computer and erased once the analysis is complete. You will be provided with a consent form that you must review and sign before we begin the study. Finally, you will be provided with a copy of this form for your records.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating in this study. If so, I would like to set up a time and place to conduct the interview at a location that is comfortable and convenient for you. Please provide me with the best time and method for contacting you.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you!

Elizabeth Wyatt
eawyatt@ncsu.edu
Appendix D: Recruitment Questionnaire

Please read:

*Work-life balance is defined as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict.”* (Clark, 2000)

*For the purposes of this study, work can be defined as paid employment, but can become more complicated when considering unpaid hours, the commute to work, and working from home. Life, or non-work, constitutes any activity outside of work and can include family, friends, community involvement, or hobbies.* (Guest, 2002)

Please answer the following questions:

1. This study is to understand Millennial generation employees, born between 1978 and 1995. Do you belong to this generation?

2. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being ‘not important at all’ and 10 being ‘extremely important’ please rate:

3. How important do you think work-life balance solution should be for employers?

4. How important is work-life balance to you in making career decisions?
Appendix E: Work-Life Balance Worksheet

Work-life balance is defined as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict.” (Clark, 2000)

For the purposes of this study, work can be defined as paid employment, but can become more complicated when considering unpaid hours, the commute to work, and working from home. Life, or non-work, constitutes any activity outside of work and can include family, friends, community involvement, or hobbies. (Guest, 2002)

1. Please outline your typical workday from beginning to end.
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

2. What activities do you participate in or are responsible for outside of work? Please include those that involve family, friends, leisure, community service, etc.
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

3. How does your personal life interfere with your work schedule and vice versa?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

4. What work-life balance options are most important to you? This would include anything that helps you obtain a comfortable balance between work and life. Please include those currently offered by your organization as well as those not currently offered.
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________