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Where Did All the Young People Go? Can the Organizations of the State of Maine Re-Enlist Its Native Youth?

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WHERE DID ALL THE YOUNG PEOPLE GO?

CAN THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE STATE OF MAINE RE-ENLIST ITS NATIVE YOUTH?

A thesis submitted

by

Tyler Norman McPherson

to

University of Southern Maine

in partial fulfillment of

the requirement for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Leadership Studies

This thesis has been accepted

for the faculty of

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Elizabeth Fisher Turesky, PhD, MPA

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Abstract

As Maine and other New England states continue to be amongst the oldest in the United States, organizations in these states continue to struggle to find and retain suitable younger replacements for their retiring leadership. As the millennial generation continues to become a significant portion of the American workforce, learning how to connect with, recruit, and retain this generation will prove useful when leadership succession is required. By exploring how this generation was nurtured and educated, we can begin to understand ways, such as non-traditional or reverse mentoring relationships, that New England's organizations can begin to recruit and retain their future leaders. Through a qualitative, experimental, ethnographical study of millennial employees at one global organization with five New England locations, this study builds upon previous research that suggest that one method to engage and retain millennial employees is to create non-traditional mentoring programs in which this cohort can participate. Through researching how it is that these millennials experience one of these programs over time, this study confirmed previous research showing that millennials appreciate and enjoy participation within such programs. This study also expands upon said research to discuss the best practices in creating a reverse mentoring program and outlines one way to structure similar programs regardless of industry or field.

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Introduction

I. General background for the study

According to the 2011 US Census, the state of Maine is the oldest state per capita with an average age of 42.7, nearly six years older than the national median (May, 2011). While the gap between Maine and other states shortened in the following year, due in large part to the aging of other New England states, Maine's age matured once again in 2012, to 43.5 (Miller, 2013). With 18,000 Maine residents turning of retirement age every year, the state faces potential problems as its retiring populations begins to require tax dollars and long term replacements to fill their positions (Miller, 2010; Wilson, 2013). As Maine's median age continues to rise, it is clear that without a deeper understanding of the wants and needs of the millennial generation, Maine and the other New England states may miss the opportunity to create succession plans for the retiring workforce.

II. Purpose of the study

The article contributes to the literature addressing the needs of millennial employees in the corporate workforce by identifying one area where progress can be made in improving the corporate culture for this growing cohort in the workplace. This paper derives from a three-month, ethnographic study of a group of six millennial aged employees within one international organization with four Maine locations. These participants experienced researcher structured, reverse mentoring relationships with more tenured, non-millennial aged, cross-functional colleagues. The focus on millennials reflects the fact that more tenured colleagues of a different cohort represent a different organizational subculture at the organization under study. The study analyzed the voices of these millennials as they experienced these relationships, to identify how these relationships would better serve them in future iterations of the same program.

III. Guiding Questions

With the aforementioned census data continues to display Maine's ever-growing age in mind, this research builds upon previous studies discussing when and why this trend began with the goal of understanding this cohort as a whole better. The research further analyzes how it is that organizations lose and gain these millennial employees through interviews with current professional millennial aged employees, with a specific focus on their responses to participation within a non-traditional mentorship relationship.

As previous research shows, Millennials believe that they are ill-prepared for the workforce and place immense importance on organizational development and professional growth opportunities (Lykins & Pace, 2013; Dulin, 2008). The combination of the two only further magnifies the millennial desire for training and growth opportunities. With previous research showing an educational paradigm shift from behaviorist (preferred by previous generations) to constructivist (preferred by Millennials), this research addresses how it is that millennial aged employees at one Maine organization experienced concentrated organizational development, or specifically a reverse mentoring relationship, and how it is that they felt throughout undergoing such (Wisniewski, 2010). By understanding how it is that millennials experienced one of these relationships, the research found how this affected both engagement and attachment to the organization through interviews.

In researching these sub-problems in both previous studies and interviews with participants, this research discovered increased engagement for millennial employees due to participation within a reverse mentoring relationship as well as how to better meet the needs of this cohort with these programs by understanding how it is that they prefer to learn within these relationships. With this understanding, the research unveils a standard of practice, developed by

suggestions from the participants themselves, which can be followed across industry to implement these relationships. As many Maine businesses hope to recover post-recession, this research suggests what local human resource departments can do to attract younger talent, and retain existing young talent. Through this, the research answers the core questions of (a) what are the reasons that Maine millennials leave their organizations and what is it that they desire, (b) how do they respond while participating within directed organizational development programs such as reverse mentoring, and (c) how can this program be streamlined and implemented to different Maine organizations.

IV. Delimitations and Limitations

The study focused on identifying the needs of the targeted generation of current and future professionals--the millennials--defined in the research by the same standards as the Merriam-Webster's dictionary as having a birthdate in or after 1980 up through 1999. For the purpose of this research, the generation of professionals was further narrowed to those having received, or currently participating in, some variety of post-secondary education as well as having full-time, salaried employment within the organization. Research built upon existing studies pertaining to this generation. The focus of this study specifically was on those that had participated in some form of post-secondary education as well as those that were current career-track professionals, working full-time within the State of Maine. The study was further narrowed towards low tenured members of this generation, or those that have under five years of experience within the organization researched. By narrowing the focus as such, it is this researcher's hope to more easily identify the exact problems Maine and New England currently face moving forward, rather than account for those persons for which it has already lost.

V. Assumptions

This study assumed that research on this topic had not yet been completed and significant improvements had not been made since the last U.S. Census, while also assuming that cultural shifts had not happened since the most recent gathering of data. Additionally, this study also assumed that the deficiencies shown on the previous data set were not a direct result of recession-based changes that much of the United States suffered from. Further, this research assumed that these are changes that can be made in best practices by leaders and human resources departments alike in regards to how this generation is handled in the workplace. Finally this study assumed that the reason that Maine's millennial population scurries from its organizations in droves was not strictly a result of fundamental desire to be elsewhere in the planet, yet due in large part to factors by which the state and businesses alike can improve.

VI. Significance of the study

The aspiration behind this study was to narrow what has historically been broad research addressing millennials as a whole and focus more clearly on the needs of that exact generation in the work place, and even more specifically in the state of Maine and New England. In doing so, this research provided a process for which the oldest State in the United States could reasonably become younger while also seeing its businesses and organizations ready themselves for the future. Through the review of previous census data, one can definitively see that Maine faces serious challenges in regards to its aging populations. With its youth bolting for its borders at every turn, at this time, Vacationland can rely on nothing more than hope in regards to finding future leaders and entrepreneurs both within and beyond its borders when the time comes for the millennials to assume leadership roles. Through this research, the results have unearthed potential best practices for reverse mentoring that could help better entice young leaders to make their careers within Maine organizations.

It was this researcher's hope to learn what it is that engages millennial employees, as well as how non-traditional mentoring relationships may positively or negatively affect employee engagement in millennials. This study provided a useful base of preferences and potentials for Maine and New England organizations to develop and update their current practices to further engage the millennials that are both currently employed by these organization and potentially will employed in the years to come. Through these findings, Maine's focus organization and other New England companies can begin to explore these improvements to help lower the median age and give organizations a hope for the future beyond the Baby-Boomers.

Hunt and Marshall (1983) proposed that mentorship in the traditional sense can be massively helpful when done correctly, but that study only lays the theoretical ground work for which this study was built. Similarly, Murphy (2012) laid out the benefits of reverse mentoring by reviewing literature but doing little in the way of talking to the millennials themselves. Baily (2009) also laid out the benefits but focused mostly on the technological side. Finally, while Ellis (2013) was able to show some results regarding what reverse mentoring can provide both millennials and the organizations that employ them alike, it did little in the way of giving voice to the millennials as they were experiencing it.

VII. Organization of the Study

With this study, the researcher created a deeper understanding of the problems that current leadership in Maine is facing. In doing so, the State's organizations can now make efforts to circumvent these issues through understanding both what intrigues millennials to stay and the leadership styles that will keep them happy and willing to take charge when leadership succession is required. Through an ethnographical design and interviews with professional millennials themselves, this research focused on how millennials feel towards their respective

organizations, and whether or not non-traditional mentorship programs improved their engagement with their current organization as well as how to best implement these programs for this cohort.

Review of Literature

The literature review will be separated into four separate sections: (a) articles pertaining to the issues facing the State of Maine regarding its aging population, (b) the desires of the millennial generation in the work force, (c) the potential benefits of reverse mentoring and other millennial recruitment and retention techniques to help the State of Maine's businesses recapture the youth needed to replenish their aging workforce, and (d) ethnographic studies in mentoring relationships. The articles studied focus primarily on the broader needs of the millennial population rather than those specific to the State of Maine.

I. The Implications of an Aging Workforce

In 2011, the United States Census' data relayed that the State of Maine had found itself at the top of the list as it pertains to aging populations, ahead of the next closest state, Florida, by over two years with its median age of 42.7 (Christie, 2011). While the gap was closed by fellow New England states such as Vermont and New Hampshire in the following year, Maine's population continued to get older, ballooning to 43.5 years just a year later in 2012 (Miller, 2013). According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) 18,000 Maine residents turn 65 every year with early projections showing that, "by 2030, more than 25 percent of the state's residents will be older than 65" (Wilson, 2013). This continued growth in average age could spell disaster for Maine's future, with aging baby boomers continue to reach retirement, requiring tax nourished state funds as well as replacements within their organizations

(Miller, 2010; Wilson, 2013). One continued detriment to Maine's progression as a youth friendly state spurs from its recent and constant branding as one of Forbes magazine's worst states for business, placing last annually since 2010. In hopes of retaining its native youth, Maine and its fellow New England states have made attempts to circumvent the loss of its youth by instituting governmental incentives. While educational reimbursement and state sponsored job recruitment have all been championed as potential saviors, their results have yet to be seen (Wilson, 2013). As Maine and other struggling states continue to try to recapture this cohort, one key focus will continue to be on understanding the desires of this new generation as it rises into the workforce.

II. What do millennials want?

Oft noted for their foibles rather than their strengths, millennials are the product of a "heavily child-centric upbringing in America," resulting in high self-esteem and self-centeredness, with other strong millennial traits being a propensity for accepting diversity and a strong ability and desire to be collaborative (Holt, Marques, & Way, 2012; Perrucci, 2011). Additionally, being raised with and around technology their whole lives has given millennials the propensity to effortlessly use and adapt to technological changes in the work world, as well as shape the way that they complete tasks and communicate with one another (Balda & Mora, 2011; Dulin, 2008; Holt et al., 2012; Wisniewski, 2010). With information readily at their fingertips, millennials developed a strong ability to multitask and an aptitude and desire to find information quickly; but all of this has come with a lack of patience for feedback. Without constant, real time validation, Millennials have been known to feel disregarded, underappreciated, and unfulfilled (Clark, 2012). Millennials navigate the world in a different way than the generations before them; they email and text rather than craft letters, transact business globally at the touch of a

button, and can find the answer to nearly any question at a seconds notice (Wisniewski, 2010). This strength in communication and access to information at such a rapid pace is the driving force behind the desire within millennials for immediate feedback on results and the work that they have accomplished (Balda & Mora, 2011). The major forces behind nearly all universal traits of this cohort are the technological advances that arose during their youth.

The millennials enter the workforce with higher levels of education than the generations prior, but the way they developed this education is different than previous generations (Holt et al, 2012; Wisniewski, 2010). Unlike previous generations, millennials have seen an educational paradigm shift from behaviorist, or focusing on relaying facts that exist outside of the learner, to constructivist, wherein teachers develop learning environments for which the learner can interact and build meaning to their own lives. Through this, millennials are less comfortable with formal teaching regimens, and prefer to be active and interactive in their learning process (Wisniewski, 2010). This paradigm shift, in their desired education, is something millennials are also bringing forward into the workforce, as they seek information and training to shape their careers.

Despite their high levels of education, nearly forty percent of millennials believe that they are ill-prepared for the workforce (Lykins & Pace, 2013). Equally as important, only 36% of millennials that rose into leadership positions believe that they were prepared for the new position, with another 30% citing that they still did not feel ready for the position once in it (Bersin, 2013). Somewhat contradictory, this cohort also does not see it as necessary to come to the workplace with all of the skills necessary to accomplish their positions. Work is viewed as a constant learning experience for which they will grow into (Farrell & Hurt, 2013). Paired with less focus on corporate ladders and increased focus on corporate lattice, Millennials have been

found to search for knowledge and training opportunities within the organization as a means for making these skills (Balda & Mora, 2011; Bersin, 2013).

This cohort is looking for leaders to provide ample and varied professional-growth opportunities. They view learning as a lifetime commitment and seek professional growth opportunities that not only allow them to advance in the company and their careers, but will also keep them from getting bored in their jobs. (Dulin, 2008)

Through these desires, mentorship and organizational development have been identified as immensely important to this growing cohort in the workforce (Lykins & Pace, 2013). While little research has found towards which millennials prefer, mentoring, and particularly reverse mentoring, could be viewed as a potential sources of retention.

III. Reverse Mentoring

One key to attracting and retaining employees in general is through organizational or occupational commitment. (Hartmann, Rutherford, Hamwi, & Friend, 2012). As the aforementioned research regarding millennials and their desires indicates, this is especially true for this cohort. With longings for continual development and opportunities to climb the company lattice, mentoring relationships could be useful in attracting and retaining millennial employees. An interesting spin on mentoring has taken hold as a potential starting spot for attracting and retaining young talent organizationally (Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Murphy, 2012). While common mentorship tends still to be both useful and the norm, reverse mentoring has become an interesting way to capture the attention of the millennials and the knowledge of diversity and technology that resides within their day-to-day lives. “Traditionally, mentoring relationships

have consisted of an older, senior executive providing advice and counsel to a younger, junior colleague. Reverse mentoring turns this formula on its head” (Murphy, 2012).

Reverse mentoring is similar to traditional mentoring in that it pairs an elder colleague with a younger one, but in reverse mentoring relationships, the younger colleague is the one who leads the elder one, training them on a variety of different tasks and ideas. Speaking directly towards the millennials desire to have their voices heard and to make an immediate impact, this relationship could provide just that, in that it instantly gives the younger employee a voice and helps foster a less intimidating look at the hierarchy of the institution (Winter & Jackson, 2014). In traditional mentoring, information travels in only one direction - from the older, senior member downward - while in reverse mentoring, information typically will travel both ways. In recent examples of this phenomenon, millennials have easily bridged the gap in organizational knowledge by their typically superior knowledge of technology (Baily, 2007; Kulesza & Smith, 2013). Younger, millennial employees can help educate the older generation of employees on technical advances, trends, and diversity, while also giving the senior member a glimpse at their positional knowledge. In reverse, mentees, or the older colleagues, bestow real-time organizational knowledge, career planning hints, and advice. Essentially, reverse mentoring provides all the same benefits to the younger colleague while also adding technical and generational knowledge to the senior member (Murphy, 2012).

In some of the major organizations with formal reverse mentoring programs, such as Cisco, Johnson & Johnson, and General Electric, results have proven very useful to both the older colleague and the younger mentor. In research done at the organization The Hartford, a reverse mentoring program was instituted on a small scale to help some of its older employees gain insight on its newer technological offerings. Of the twelve mentors originally selected, 80%

found the project to be extremely effective for the business and 97% reported it to be extremely effective in their personal development. Additionally, eleven of the original twelve selected were promoted within one year of the programs inauguration (Ellis, 2013). Results like those at The Hartford speak toward the potential benefits of these programs in growing social capital, growing an informational base, and even in finding and retaining new, young talent.

IV. Ethnographic - Grounded Theory Research

As the research hopes to view “the shared behaviors, language, and actions of an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time,” as well as develop theory with the data as it is interpreted, an ethnographic research method was selected (Creswell, 2014, pg. 14). This method, marked by its proficiency in showing the cultural experiences of a selected group progressively throughout the predetermined period of time for the study, will assist in allowing the researcher to expand upon previous research while also giving rise to new ideas in the field (Marcus, 2007). As the study aspired to capture the similarities between a subsection of an organization, using the voice of those actually within said group, an ethnography will allow the researcher to build from the inside of the studied cohort outward. In the auto-ethnographic tradition, the researcher used the uninterrupted voices of those experiencing these relationships first hand throughout the experience, providing a wealth of information towards developing a guideline for future implementations of this program, and allowing all pertinent suggestions to rise to the researcher’s attention (Tomaselli, 2013).

Additionally, with the study aim to capture the theory from the voices of those actually experiencing the project, in the interpretive tradition, grounded theory will allow the researcher to build from the inside of the words of the studied cohort outward (Charmaz, 2006). This theory, marked by its proficiency in developing progressively with the data, assisted the

ethnography in allowing the researcher to expand upon previous research, while also giving rise to new ideas in the field. It was this researchers hope that by using a mixture of ethnography and the grounded theory qualitative method, the data received would provide richer, more useful results than a quantitative method could have provided.

Methods

This exploratory study intended to understand what attracts New England's future organizational leaders towards the companies for which they work, as well as display how non-traditional mentoring relationships affected millennial satisfaction and their willingness to stay with their organization while participating within one of these non-traditional mentoring relationships. With this information, the results contributed towards the developments of best practices in creating a program that could be used across the organization, and be shared across industry. In order to examine exactly what it is that millennials are seeking from their organizations and careers, as well as how they value non-traditional mentoring programs and how best to implement these programs on future iterations within organizations, an ethnographic and qualitative study was conducted.

I. Sample

For the purposes of this research, a minimum of six (6) New England based, career-track, millennial employees of one international organization, were selected by the organizations human resources and management teams. These employees covered a wide array of organizational roles and spanned three (3) separate sites within the State of Maine. A sample size of at least six with cross functional roles is highly recommended to fully develop a wider knowledge base and allow for information to be drawn from several different careers. An exact

split in regards to sex is suggested, as it offers equal voice to both and allows for a wider scope of results. Too small and similar a sample could have led to limited new information, while too large a sample could have run the research into problems with commitment to completing the task and a lack of mentees for the millennials selected.

The organization researched is a large, publically traded, international manufacturing organization whose North American salaried workforce exceeds 2,000 employees in many of the 50 US states. This organization, whose North American headquarters are in New England, has five separate New England locations, four of which are located within Maine's borders. Of the four Maine sites, only three agreed to participate in the study. Of the over 2,000+ salaried employees nationwide, only 17% of the workforce was female. Additionally, only 5.45% of the was under the age of 30 at the time of the study, versus 36.73% falling between the ages of 30-50 and 57.82% of the salaried workforce over the age of 50. During the 2014 year, the organization experienced 201 departures to 108 new hires for a 9.6% turnover rate. Of the 201 terminated employees, thirty-one fell between the ages 18-34.

In order to achieve the minimum participant requirement for this study, mentees, or the elder employees, may have had two millennial mentors. This flexibility was important due to the time restraints and commitment of elder, management in the organization. The employees selected by the organization were required to fit within five (5) criterion at the beginning of the study, but were not limited to them throughout the life of the research. (1) The subjects must have been born within the aforementioned dates for which millennials are classified. (2) The subject must have currently been a full-time, salaried employee of their organization. (3) The subject must have had no more than five years of experience within their current organization. (4) The subject must have been an employee within the current calendar year by which the

research was being conducted. (5) The subject must have completed, or is currently enrolled in some form of post-secondary education. These limitations created a more accurate picture of the millennial cohort for which the researcher is concerned with. Where this study spanned three separate sites within the State, interviews and interactions were conducted by both face-to-face and in digital interviews with the researcher. The participants selected were matched with a cross-functional tenured employee for whom they participated with for between four and eight structured meetings for 15-60 minutes apiece throughout the duration of the program.

Participant 1 - five of spades: A male in his late twenties serving in a technical role at Site #1.

Participant 2 – seven of diamonds: A male in his late twenties serving in a customer support role at Site #2.

Participant 3 – seven of spades: A male in his mid-twenties serving in a technical role at Site #1.

Participant 4 – jack of spades: A female in her late twenties serving in a customer support role at Site #2.

Participant 5 – queen of spades: A female in her early thirties serving in a technical role at Site #1.

Participant 6 – ace of spades: A female in her mid-twenties serving in a technical role at Site #3.

II. Instrumentation

Four semi-structured interviews with each individual mentor were used to generate the data (Appendix B). These interviews were conducted in both a face-to-face and a digital format depending on the availability and location of the participants. Each of the interviews with the mentor took place following a prompted interaction with their mentee and happened intermittently as the relationship followed an abbreviated and adjusted framework of Hunt & Michael's (1983) Stages and Duration of the Mentor-Protégé Relationship model. Each of these four stages was broken into two formal interaction prompts sent at the completion of the previous interaction (Appendix C). Each interview was structured around gaining insights on how the relationship had and was progressing, as well as what the participants enjoyed and would change about the program.

Stage one: initiation. During stage one, the researcher gathered information from the mentors both on what attracted them to their current organization and what their current level of satisfaction was with their organization. The questions focused primarily on what the experience felt like being selected for the program, and if they saw value in interacting with the elder employee.

Interaction one. Please reach out to your mentee introducing yourself and set up a time for your first interaction. The first focus will be on developing a means of communication. Where these interactions will be primarily digital, it is asked that for at least the first interaction you communicate via Facetime or Skype. Your mentee will not be aware that this will be the first means of communication and they may or may not need you to explain how to communicate via these means. If you are uncomfortable using this software or do not have the means (phone or computer with this capability) than please contact me immediately as I can assist in explaining the software and/or provide your with the necessary materials. Once connected the goal to get to

know each other a bit. Tell your mentee what your title and how it is that you landed at (organization). Include any personal information that you would like and ask them for the same. Please also make sure to ask your mentee what it is that they expect from these interactions and what they think the purpose of this is as well as establish a schedule and means of communication that works for both parties.

interaction two. For this interaction, we will be focusing on addressing how it is that you both interact with technology. Ask your mentee (do this for yourself as well) to write for themselves the three ways that they personally use technology in each of the following categories; professionally (which programs or products do they use?), to interact with family and friends (again programs or products) and for their hobbies (apps, games, community outreach). Ask them to also write down three pro's to the technological use in their lives, and three consequences or problems that they have with their use. Ask what programs they are curious about and have questions on, and ask how it is that you can help them become more proficient technologically. Make sure to offer your own answers to these questions and use this as an opportunity to discuss and differing and similar feelings about the technologies you use on a daily basis.

Stage two: Protégé stage. In stage two, the millennial mentor should have felt like they had begun to shape the interaction in a way that was positive for both parties. These interactions saw the mentor teach the mentee about the technical parts of their job. These interviews focused mostly on the relationship that was forming between the two, while also touching upon whether the millennial has found any value in such interactions.

interaction three. For this interaction, I would like you to focus on your mentees position. Ask them what it is that they do on a daily basis while at work, and ask what it is that

they most enjoy and dislike about their position. Ask them what to explain what one of their more recent technological challenges has been and ask that they explain how it is that they wished they had solved it and how they actually solved it. Offer any observations or words of advice from your personal life that you see fit. Ask the same thing about their everyday position regarding challenges and how they wished they solved it and how they actually did solve it.

interaction four. For this interaction, we will be focusing on addressing your current position within the company. First you will start off by explaining what it is that you do during a normal day while at work. Explain in some detail some of the more prominent things that you are asked to do. Make sure to note any surprises that may arise during your normal day that throw off your schedule. What do you do for when these things happen? Please also bring to light some challenges that you have face or continue to face with your everyday position, ask the mentee how they would have addressed these things. Then detail how it is that you came to solve this problem, if it did have a resolution, if it did not, how is it that you would solve it. Arrange your next interaction as it fits into you and your mentors schedules and communication preferences.

Stage three: The Breakup. As the pairings geared up for their final interactions, this interview aimed mostly at how it is that the relationship progressed over this period of time, and what value the participants found in interacting with their mentees. Here, the participants were asked also to weigh in on changes they would like to see in the programs structure.

interaction five. For this interaction, we will again shift our focus back to technology and how it interacts with your mentees lives professionally. As now both parties are aware about what it is that their counterpart does professionally on a day to day basis, we will have a better understanding of how technology both helps and hurts them in this way. Ask your mentee what challenges technology causes them in their day to day activities and technologies that they may

need to solve some of their work related issues. Use this as an opportunity to offer your opinion if you are seeing something that they are doing that is incorrect or too time consuming or something that may fill their technological void.

interaction six. For this interaction, I would like you to use it almost as a free talk period but back to using Skype or FaceTime (if you aren't already using it). At this point you and your mentee may have a rapport already going so use this as a time to talk about any questions you have professionally or personally. Try to keep the conversation somewhat focused around technology and how it affects the things you are talking about.

Stage four: Lasting Friendship. Following their final interaction with their mentees, the participants were asked to reflect on the experience and how it has since shaped the way they view both their organization and future with the organization. The participants also weighed in on whether or not they would have participated in this study again, and were also asked again for any changes that they would have made to the program if asked to participate again.

interaction seven. Leading into your final interaction with your mentee, it is important that you both take roles in leading the interactions. Talk to the mentee about any technological or professional issues that you are facing and ask how it is that they would solve them. Ask them what advice they may offer to a younger generation of workers within the company and industry, and how they feel they got to where they got to. Ask them what they feel like the younger generation adds to the workforce and what they see as growth opportunities for them and how they interact with the organization. This will be the interaction where the mentee and you take down the walls of the mentee and mentor relationship.

interaction eight. In your final interaction, I would like you both to revisit what it is that you both wanted out of this relationship and whether or not these things were achieved. Ask the mentee what it is the mentee most enjoyed about the experience and the things that they would change about the process. Ask the mentee what it is that they wish that they could have learned and what it is that they wish that you could have learned from the process. Answer the same for yourself to them. Ask you mentee if there is anything that you can do to help them moving forward, and explain how it is that this relationship has affected you. If this is something that you both choose to continue, this is the opportunity for you to establish a schedule and means of further interaction.

III. Data Collection

Participants were reached during normal working hours, where their managers agreed to allocate time for these mentoring interactions and their subsequent interviews to take place. Once selected, the participants were told by the researcher that they had been selected to better acquaint the organizations leaders on their own generation and technology (Appendix A). To avoid diluting the response set with the social desirability bias, participants were not informed about the specific focus of the study (discovering if reverse mentoring is a potential retention tool for millennial employees) during the recruitment period. A statement was emailed to the participants upon agreement of participation that informed the participants of their right to refuse to participate without any negative consequences, as well as the possibility of being requested to participate in follow-up research (Appendix D). For each of the interactions scheduled and completed, each mentor and mentee earned one hour of training time, totaling 8 total hours upon completion, used towards meeting their organizational goal of seventy-five hours per fiscal year.

Participants were required to select a playing card at the commencement of the study that could not be traced back to them by others. This playing card became the participants' pseudo-identification and was necessary for them to remain anonymous throughout the study, while also allowing the researcher to organize, gather, and display participant's feelings over time.

Participants were cautioned about divulging their pseudo-identifications. Due to the personal nature of the instrumentation of the research as well as the subject matter, individual's identifications were known by the researcher only. Interviews were only transcribed by the researcher himself, and the data edited for anonymity concerns and reviewed by the researcher and the researcher alone.

Ethical issues did not arise as a result of the researcher also being a member of neither the millennial generation nor the aforementioned organization that was being studied. In an effort to circumvent any potentially unethical behavior, the researcher signed confidentiality agreements with each of the participants and had a verbal agreement with the organization as a whole to only release their responses under the pseudo-identifications mentioned above. This provided the participants a truly open forum for which to honestly discuss their feelings about the organization while also creating a contractual obligation between both the researcher and the subjects that participated in the program.

IV. Data Analysis

The interview transcriptions were done entirely by the researcher, who also self coded the material based on like responses from participants. This allowed the researcher to explore the richness in responses, and account for discrepancies in vernacular. Where each participant entered the study with different expectations and different desired takeaways, an open coding method was used to develop theory while the data was being collected, and to account for

variances amongst organizational positions and personalities of each of the participants. This also allowed the information received to evolve over time, as the participants became more comfortable with their roles in these relationships. Through this, several themes emerged confirming previous research on how it is that Millennials respond to reverse mentoring relationships, while building upon this data and providing key information regarding the successes and constraints that these programs provide, allowing the researcher to propose a theory of a more effective method that can be used across industry.

Results

I. Overview

The overarching themes of the research confirmed previous literature on the subject; that indeed, millennial aged employees do enjoy and are engaged by participation within reverse mentoring relationships. With this confirmation of the original hypothesis, the research then focused primarily on finding themes in regards to how to improve the existing framework designed by the researcher for this study to better function for future iterations of this program within the researched organization and other organizations across the State and New England. With this renewed focus, the themes began to froth to the top of each of the participant's comments, and broke down broadly into two categories; Positives and Negatives. Within these two categories, each had a few clear sub-categories that further led into adjustments to the program suggested in the discussion section to follow. These themes are detailed below and will each have a sub-heading to follow.

- Positives
 - Structured Looseness

- Length of Time
- Cross-functional Knowledge
- Negatives
 - Scheduling Issues
 - Lack of face-to-face connection

In displaying both how millennials enjoyed participating within the study and how this program worked in a real setting, two of the participants are used as examples that spoke to the themes discussed above.

II. Participant 3 – Seven of Spades

While the study design was to have the participants interact with their mentees through digital means, this pairing had by chance previously had an existing professional relationship and were actually assigned on a hands on task force dealing with issues at the mentees location. Because of this, Participant 3's pairing was the only one that both regularly met face-to-face rather than by digital means as well as had a previous or existing relationship prior to the start of this study. With the existing relationship, much of the design pertaining to meeting each other was already complete; instead, this pairing used the time to deepen their relationship into more personal topics. In interactions one and two, Participant 3 and their mentee made their expectations clear for this relationship.

I am expecting to learn more of the ins and outs of all the aspects of everyday life at the (Site 3). Such as, they have a bunch of computer programs here that are specific to the (Site 3) and I am not really sure how the finances and stuff works so through interactions

with (my mentee) I will learn more about that type of inside stuff, because (my mentee) has (their) hands in everything and on the flip side of that coin (my mentee) wants to learn more of the outside technology and everyday use that I go through growing up in the technological generation so I know a lot of computer programs for everyday life such as communication rather than that data collection that he is unfamiliar (with).

Nearly one month later, the researcher finally caught up to Participant 3 to find significant delays in the progress of this team due to work schedules pulling their time in separate directions. While the interactions were still a positive experience for both, having less formality due to having an existing relationship outside of the mentorship created difficulty in adjusting from work related projects to the mentoring tasks.

For a mentoring relationship, its almost beneficial to have a more formal set up where you're not as comfortable with each other, because then you would almost value each other's time more because you had set aside that time for that reason, which would make the most sense to me... (my mentee) and I will pass each other in the hall and say 'oh yeah we got to get that done' where if I didn't know (my mentee) at all I would not even mention it if I passed (my mentee) in the halls and write (my mentee) an email saying 'this is the time we should probably do this.' Since we have that work relationship, we will be in the middle of another conversation about a random topic pertaining to the project that we are both on and then kind of off the cuff mention the mentoring. So, it's almost difficult to have a mentoring relationship if you see each other kind of as peers rather than one over the other, hierarchy type of thing.

Participant 3's observations above speak volumes towards a design needing to be cross functional. The existing professional relationship often superseded that of the mentoring relationship, making it more difficult to keep up with. This could in some circumstances lead to the program not being completed as designed. While there continued to be considerable scheduling difficulties, this pairing did continue to complete the interactions as designed, often exceedingly well. Participant 3 was able to learn much about the hierarchy of Site 3, something that continued to interest this participant, while also using this knowledge to contribute to the wellbeing of the organization by using technology to improve the professional effectiveness of their mentee.

(My mentee) was showing me existing computer systems that (Site 3) uses, and the technology (Site 3) uses.... where I bring in other ideas, like I was writing new macros for excel and there are different add-ons that you can do that he didn't necessarily know about. So for instance, I made a spreadsheet for when (Site 3 work task) that imports all of the pertinent data and graphs it automatically, where before it would take someone a couple of hours to compile all of that.

Through learning about a different position entirely, Participant 3 was able to take existing technological knowledge and teach their mentee efficiencies that they may have never known existed. In return, Participant 3 gained valuable knowledge about a different part of the organization that interested them, while also getting an opportunity to show their strengths in real time to a decision maker within the organization.

After the stretch of time it took to complete tasks 3, 4, and 5, Participant 3 and their mentee completed the final three tasks in the following two weeks. With this, the pairing

effectively caught back up to the rest of the participants after falling behind severely after Stage

1. Upon completion, when reflecting upon the time spent participating within the program, Participant 3 talked at length about how the experience shed light on career opportunities at Site 3 and better guided the participant on career options in the future.

It's a good networking opportunity and like I said, I personally got a better perspective about the career path that I would like to choose and it wasn't necessarily because it was (my mentee) in particular but I mean, talking to different people around the company would always be beneficial.

The same scheduling concerns that every pairing experienced in fitting this project on top of their work duties were the only major concerns at the completion of the project. One suggestion that Participant 3 brought to light in circumventing this issue on future iterations of the program was setting a mutually desirable, fixed time for both parties at the outset of the program. This makes both parties accountable for this time, yet still allows for reschedules if necessary. In terms of positives, Participant 3 was one of many that enjoyed the malleability of the interactions sent out, as it allowed the participant and mentee alike to craft this program to fit their personal needs, rather than the agenda of those setting up the mentorship.

I really enjoyed the kind of the open discussion type of forums and not going into it with any set expectations, because I believe that caused both of us to steer the conversation in a way that we would both get out what we wanted to get out versus just going through the motions of answering whatever you wanted us to and then leaving, so I would miss that. If it became so structured that it was just answering questions between the two of us, it probably would have just switched to email, (my mentee) answering the question, me

answering the question and then getting ahold of you. Where since it was an open discussion, I looked forward to the face-to-face meeting.

Overall, while Participant 3 was the only participant that both had an existing and/or previous relationship with their mentee and had the entirety of their interactions take place in face-to-face exchanges, results meshed with the other participants in nearly every way with the exception of the difficulties due to their existing work relationship. Participant 3's struggles to separate this relationship from their day to day work showed the researcher that the importance of cross functional positions between mentor and mentee cannot be dismissed. This factor is imperative in reverse mentoring relationships as it allows the mentors and mentees alike to separate from their normal functions, and function in separate capacity, while also allowing the millennial the opportunity to more easily assume the leadership role in this relationship. Additionally, this pairing was representative of nearly all of the relationships researched, in that one of the discoveries that Participant 3 noted was the duality of their differences versus similarities in terms of views on technology and "life."

It's kind of strange, we both have differing views on life but ultimately they are the same view, which we kind of found out because (my mentee) has kids that are my age and/or older so (my mentee is) looking at it from a (parental) perspective where I am looking at it from the view point of what (my mentees) kids would be so we both kind of got mutually beneficially looks at career moves and types of things from (my mentees) point of view vs mine.

III. Participant 5 – Queen of Spades

Unlike the irregularity of Participant 3, Participant 5's relationship followed the program by design, having never had a previous relationship with their mentee as well as experiencing these interactions in a strictly digital format throughout. While it may have been expected that these major differences would have caused severe variance in how this program was experienced, the results indicated that aside from Participant 3's difficulties regarding separating their actual workload with this project, general results were static between both face-to-face participants and digital participants. From the outset, this pairing was one of the highest performing in regards to completing the tasks in a timely fashion. This pairing was also one of the more unique due to the fact that Participant 5 was the only participant with children at home. This provided a richness to the dialogues that transcended the lessons learned by some that were limited to the workplace, and gave both insight into how to navigate the duality of work/life balance. While this certainly played a huge part in their interactions throughout, Participant 5 did not limit their desires to just work/life balance. This participant also wanted to learn more about the company as a whole from a more tenured member, and get general career advice.

I would like to (know) where my fit is in the future of the company and where it's going. I know we've got all this fun market uncertainty and I know we have probably all been there for years and years but, in my mind, it's really valuable to understand the history of the ups and downs. The where we've gone, and the where we started from, and my mentee has a lot of really good background in that aspect. (My mentee) spent a couple years away from (the organization) doing other things and is back and wears multiple hats and does all those kinds of things so that is what I am hoping to learn

By the time that the second interview took place, Participant 5 had already begun reaching a level of comfort with their mentee that resulted in insight and advice helping

Participant 5 better navigate both career and family decisions. This insight was enhanced in the mind of the participant due to the viewpoint of the mentee having a different, or outside, perspective than those immediately around the participant.

It is interesting, in talking to (my mentee), I find that I am more receptive to the different opportunities, because you take somebody like (my mentee), (my mentee has) gone back and played in the academic realm for a while, then came back in the industry and had to work (their) way back through. It is interesting for me as a parent as well to kind of hear (their) perspective on how some of that stuff (affects) going through the phase of having young children and those kinds of things. So, I guess in some respect, I am starting to feel more confident in where I think I might want to go.

When faced with the intersection of both organizational and personal crossroads, Participant 5 found inspiration and insight just in understanding their mentees history better. Even as their relationship progressed, the theme of work life balance continued to rise to the forefront of the discussion, marking a continued and open dialogue as well as the Participants desire to learn more in this regard. When compared to the desires of the other participants, Participant 5's commentary was particularly rich in that they seemed to desire the same results from their involvement as their colleagues did, in addition to information regarding a work/life balance. Similar to Participant 3 and all other participants, Participant 5 experienced some minor scheduling conflicts, but not nearly to the same extent.

Our biggest challenge is scheduling because (my mentee) is a pretty busy person (at Site 3) and a pretty high demand person and then I've had some travelling scheduled in here ... so it's been interesting trying to fit things in but we've done a decent job of just putting something on the calendar and saying here we're going to carve out this time.

To juxtapose the experiences of Participant 3 in this regard, Participant 5 found value in putting things onto a schedule and changing them when necessary. In addition to this, Participant 5 confirmed the experiences of Participant 3, by finding value in having these relationships separate from their day-to-day work, but for completely different reasons, confirming the need for these relationships to be cross-functional.

I think (having a cross functional relationship) it is absolutely critical. Because while (it takes) a little bit longer for people to truly get to know each other out of that, I think you need somebody who is not directly in charge or directly affecting your day to day projects or your day-to-day cycles because otherwise I feel like you might hold back in some of the questions you ask or some of the feedback you get, and if you are thinking about how to do things different or how to interact with people differently, sometimes your immediate boss isn't the right person and having somebody who is not at the site but understands the (organization's) culture in general I think it's really, really valuable

For Participant 5, having a relationship with someone outside of their day to day work provided them not only with a different insight on various happenings, but also an opportunity to be more open and inquisitive with their mentee. This finding, paired with the difficulties experienced by Participant 3, stresses the importance of cross functionality. Again comparing the experiences of Participant 3 to those of Participant 5 (and subsequently the rest of the participants), Participant 5 expressed continued interest in meeting their mentee throughout the wrap-up interview. The desire to meet face-to-face was overwhelming with the other participants, with some scheduling to meet face-to-face during the duration of, or directly following the completion of this project.

(My mentee) and I both talked about if we could have put a face-to-face (interaction) at some time either early on or something like that, that would have been really nice. We are actually going to try and do a face-to-face here at the end of the month. (My mentee) is going to be (in the area) doing some other things, so we are going to try to schedule something in at that point.

For this pairing, the idea of face-to-face meeting was an opportunity to speed up the process of getting to know each other, and more quickly advance through the early stages in the relationship. Overall, Participant 5 found the experience valuable in that they were able to gain insight outside of their normal avenues as well as learn something new about a position that was foreign to them previously.

IV. Themes

Overview.

In addition to what arose in seeing how two of the participants experienced these relationships over time, several themes arose that spoke to the positive and negative aspects of the study, and how to best create one of these programs moving forward. One of the major recurring themes was the overall positive experience that each participant shared throughout the relationship as well as how much the information exchanged created a deeper understanding of the company as a whole.

I think it definitely has helped my connection, I definitely feel like I know a little bit more about (the organization) after learning about the different sides of it and the different parts of where work actually happens. Something we discussed at the end was what we've both liked about the interaction and (we) both said it was great to meet

somebody from the different departments that we would never really had a chance to cross paths with. I mean it was great to learn about (my mentee's job), I guess it gives me more of an appreciation for what actually has to happen for stuff to be sold, and for (the organization) to actually make money.

For this participant, and several others, the connections made from different ends of the organization created an atmosphere for both synergy and advanced learning. Not only did the mentors get to learn more about the organization, but their more tenured mentees learned more about the same.

Positives.

Generally speaking, the results were positive regarding the program as a whole, with all six participants (including one who dropped out of the study) agreeing that they would definitely participate in the program if it was offered again and their scheduling allowed. Nearly all participants reported feeling more connected with the company, and reported learning a great deal about parts of the business that they previously didn't understand. Another finding that seemed to permeate throughout each participant's comments was how similar the millennials felt about technology and any number of items discussed. For each participant, this seemed to create an environment for more effective communication, and provided a bridge towards understanding that generational differences may not be as vast as they are portrayed.

I think it's always good to get a different perspective especially to make them feel more comfortable with their co-workers. If somebody who is a millennial doesn't feel connected to their co-workers, maybe they are just not having the right conversations with them. Really allowing them to just sit down and have a chat with somebody who is

older, you might realize that you have more in common than you thought and that can really foster kind of an increase in morale. Especially the ability to teach each other something is important, because they say millennials like having mentors, people to look up to, and that's really important.

structured looseness.

One of the things that several participants made note of enjoying about the project, was that they liked how it seemed that there was a loose structure to the interactions that allowed them the flexibility in scheduling things when time allowed. Most importantly, however, was that this freedom allowed the participants the malleability to make the program meet their needs, not the prescribed needs of the organization or more tenured colleague.

If it was too structured I think I would have gotten less out of it... the topics are fairly broad to be honest, which is nice, because it allows you to go (off on) tangents. It gets the conversation going but at the same time allows you to talk about different things, talk about things that you both find interesting, and talk about essentially whatever you want to talk about.

This coincides with previous research regarding the paradigm shift educationally from behaviorist to collectivist, in that having the vagueness in interactions and the looseness in date allowed the participants to learn what it is that they wanted, when they wanted to, but also gave them a jumping off point with the structure of the prompts.

length of time.

In regards to time, nearly all participants agreed that while eight interactions may not be the perfect amount, it is certainly very close to the minimum and maximum interactions needed

to both find a balance between actually developing a relationship, and it being a detriment to their abilities at their job.

I don't think a study like this... can come from only a few conversations. It needs to be more ongoing like it was, so I am not sure if eight is the perfect number or if less or more is perfect, but I know it's at least enough. Having [only] a couple wouldn't have been enough to cover things.

Additionally, several participants noted that having tasks weekly could get overwhelming often if one interaction was missed, so bi-weekly interactions were preferred. While this suggestion did arise several times, it was also tempered with concerns that two weeks could also be too large a gap between conversations, making them difficult to jump into after a 14 day hiatus.

cross-functional knowledge.

Even for participants that noted a desire to have a mentee that was more closely associated with their day-to-day job functions, having a cross-functional mentee allowed some to get a non-judgmental opinion from someone that understands the organization as well as having a different perspective. Furthermore, this simple variance also allowed for some of the participants to feel more comfortable in fully expressing themselves with their mentees, and also provided others an excellent chance to learn and teach a different aspect of the organization.

It was great getting to know somebody in a different department, somebody that I wouldn't have typically talked to or had any reason to talk to. I mean (my mentee) is (job description) and I am (job description). So, you know, I found that it was really refreshing and it was good, just like (my mentee's) career path versus my ambitions and

(my mentee) gave me some advice and [that] was really good, it was nice to hear an outside perspective

Negatives.

Of the six participants that began the study, only one of the participants - Participant 6 - left the program. In a follow up interview, Participant 6 did claim that they would participate again. On the flip side, this participant's departure did bring to light some discrepancies in the study regarding recruitment. Due to Internal Review Board concerns through the sponsor University, the researcher was unable to advise the participants contacted initially that they were selected by their supervisors and human resources departments, nor was the researcher allowed to explain company approval. This resulted in difficulty gaining participants who were willing to contribute to the project, and made the researcher take a risk with participants who acknowledged scheduling issues before hand. Participant 6's departure did, however, provide an extreme result to an obvious issue.

scheduling issues.

Due to the nature of this project, and to gain the amount of participant's necessary, it was imperative that the participants be able to complete these interactions during work hours. Because of this, there were naturally several scheduling conflicts that caused delays in the project's completion. Of the six participants, all six reported that the biggest detriment to their success in completing the program was due to scheduling difficulties. While much of this cannot be avoided due to the nature of having people interact across function, some were able to find ways to circumvent these issues, at least momentarily.

A lot of cancellations here-and-there, last week we had a big problem (at one job site), so we had a lot of last minute impromptu meetings that I couldn't skip out on, so I had to reschedule... It was just a bunch of rescheduling just because last week we had a lot of problems (at one job site) so a lot of that stuff took higher priority. I just felt bad, it was essentially I would have (my mentee) set for a time and then I would reschedule for a different time and then I would just have to flat out cancel.

lack of face-to-face.

Lack of face-to-face was also something that nearly every participant made note of during the course of the study. While some communicated by Skype, all expressed a desire for meeting the person they were getting to know face-to-face. Many spoke of the fact that although they had been talking to their mentee for hours now, they did not really feel like they knew them without the connection that true face-to-face would provide.

I would add the in-person component to it. I am an extrovert, I can fall into this very quickly, but I know for (my mentee) being an introvert it took (my mentee) just a little bit longer to kind of feel comfortable, and I think sometimes having that in-person interaction helps break that ice a little bit.

No matter the tendency towards introversion or extraversion, all participants expressed this desire to meet in person, marking a striking contradiction to the expectations of the researcher. The expectation during the design phase was that any actual face-to-face meetings would be met by technological means. Additionally, in the absence of any scheduled face-to-face interactions, several of the pairings took it upon themselves to either schedule one of their

interactions to meet face-to-face, or to congregate sometime in the future, outside of the programs tenure.

Discussion

The data found in this study confirmed previous research indicating that millennials do indeed enjoy the experience of participating within these programs. Furthermore, this generational cohort also felt more connected to the organization as they experienced learning more about different parts of the company. Because the data did not focus on, and the researcher did not interview the more tenured colleagues, some of the previous research indicating cross-generational learning in depth could not be fully-confirmed, but was discussed by several of the participants. This research built upon the ideas that the previous research presented, and both confirmed and added to it by providing a model for which future organizations and researchers alike can follow.

While it was one of the strengths in the design, some of the openness in regards to time also contributed to its major pitfall, complications in scheduling. To address this in further iterations, only slightly more structure in regards to set completion dates would be added. To begin to create this, duplications of this study may set a predetermined week-by-week layout, requesting that each of the interactions be completed by x date. This would allow the looseness in week-to-week scheduling that the participants enjoyed, while also having them buy into the timeline ahead of time.

In regards to length of time, while no participants expressed that eight was the perfect number of interactions, most expressed that it was a sufficient enough amount of time to get the relationship started. With half of the millennial participant pool expressing that they would

continue contact with their mentee after the study, it is the belief of the researcher that this indicates that the study did a sufficient job in creating the relationship between the two, leaving the door open for more advanced relationships outside of the studies scope. It is the belief of this researcher that with any less than six required interactions, the participants would run the risk of not creating a relationship that existed beyond the research, and any more than eight that they may lose interest in the formality of the relationship and let it naturally wither due to their actual job duties. Additionally, some participants mentioned that having interactions every week made it difficult to catch up if something was to arise that delayed one week's interaction. With this said, an interaction every two-weeks appears to be the desired timeframe between interactions for millennials, or a sixteen-week program. For a more accelerated program, it is the suggestion of the researcher to add more structure to prevent participants from falling behind.

Upon reflection in regards to cross-functionality, it would appear that the benefits of having a mentee that has a different job function within the organization, and quite possibly even one at a different geographical location, was preferred by most of the participants. This was first displayed in the difficulties of Participant 3, who was the studies' only face-to-face and only partially cross-functional participant mentor. Participant 3 attributed this to difficulty separating the mentorship from their day-to-day responsibilities, which created a backlog of interactions that had to be caught up on. Having the relationship be cross-functional also appeared to be beneficial to some, as in Participants 2 and 5 expressing that having someone outside of their day-to-day activities created the sense that they could fully express themselves without repercussions in their questions and responses to the elder employee. It is the belief of the researcher, that any apprehension in asking honest questions and giving honest answers would prevent the study from being useful, at least in the span of time that is proposed by the study.

With this in mind, although Participants 2 & 3 both expressed interest in having a mentor that either worked in their location or one that was more useful in their day-to-day operations, they both also expressed apprehension towards the same. For any future attempts at this program, cross-functional and cross-location is both recommended and ideal.

While almost all other virtual participants expressed that a face-to-face meeting was one thing they would have really enjoyed, it seemed to be split on whether or not it should be at the beginning to this relationship or at the end. Participant 5 thought that making it the first might accelerate the relationship beyond any discomfort, especially for introverts, however, it is the belief of the researcher that having a face-to-face meeting at the outset might allow the more tenured employee to take charge of the relationship and take the form of a more formal mentorship, as opposed to the desired reverse mentorship. Having the digital buffer while the relationship develops, as well as being the only one with instructions on how to move forward allows the participants (no matter their inclinations towards introversion or extraversion) to feel more comfortable taking a leadership role with the more tenured employee, and prevents any potential role reversals from occurring before a cooperative relationship is realized.

With this in mind, the research would indicate that including a face-to-face interaction beyond that of digital means (i.e. Skype, FaceTime, etc.) is necessary in future attempts at this program due to overwhelming desire for it in its absence. It is the suggestion of this researcher to introduce this face-to-face meeting not before interaction six, and preferably at interaction seven or eight. By introducing the pairings late, it would both give incentive to continue on with the program, as well as prevent the millennial from losing their mentor role too early in the relationship. Ideally, this would be during the final interaction, as it would allow the participants

to get the most from their face-to-face meeting, as all of discomfort of the relationship should have dissipated at this point.

Further Research

Through researching the relationships between millennials and their more tenured colleagues while participating in reverse mentoring relationships, several of the themes that arose also unearthed questions for further research regarding a number of topics. One area where there are huge opportunities for further study is regarding how the more tenured employees experience these same relationships. While the millennial participants often touched upon how it is that they felt their mentees might have felt, or intimated inquiries or learning experiences they felt they shared with their mentees, learning how it is that the more tenured employees experience this relationship may shed light upon key points. One that would be particularly useful would be whether information is really flowing in both directions. Additionally, this could provide key information regarding millennials and how they lead in these situations.

Another opportunity for further research would be to launch this study within one single work site, and have all of the interactions be face-to-face. While the size of the organization certainly helped this research, it would be interesting to see if and how the results from this case would compare against pairings that share workspaces and pass each other in the halls. The current study explored this only topically with the story of Participant 3, but having this spread out over more relationships could confirm the findings above or give way to newer, more relevant data to those types of organizations.

Finally, due to the reverse mentorship program refinement from the current research, further research could focus more in-depth on the processes within the actual study, and learn

more information about how it is that this generation communicates with colleagues. This information could give way to a wealth of information regarding what it is that attracts millennials to their current field, as well as reasons that they would consider leaving their organization.

Conclusion

Throughout every interview, it was clear to the researcher that the participating millennials seemed to enjoy interacting with a more tenured colleague, and were gaining valuable knowledge about the organization and their futures throughout. With this, the research would indicate that offering these types of programs would prove valuable for not only the organizations of the State of Maine, but beyond that to other shores to any organization hoping to connect, engage, and hold onto its growing, younger workforce. When these findings began to arise, the researcher refocused towards honing the program created through the suggestions of all of the participants. Those suggestions were then offered as potential solutions for any complications of further iterations of the research, as well as to provide opportunities for change and growth to the existing program. With these findings, the researcher hopes that Maine and other states and organizations alike can finally find a potential solution towards retaining its future leaders.

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Appendix A

Participant Invite Email

Header: Would you like to participate in a study?

Hello Everyone!

I hope this email finds you well!

For those of you that I have not had the pleasure of meeting, I am Tyler McPherson and I am an inside sales representative in the South Portland office. Outside of the office, I am pursuing my Masters in Leadership and Organizational Studies and am currently in the planning stages of my thesis. That is where you come in...

It has come to my attention that you may be interested in volunteering to be a subject in my research about millennial reverse mentoring. With your agreement to participate, I would pair you with a tenured employee from a different department with whom you would lead structured discussions for 45 minutes every two weeks over the next four months. In addition to these interactions, you also agree to four brief interviews to discuss the relationships formed, with me, that will be completely confidential and coded to mask your identity. Your comments will be used to explore the benefits and detriments that mentoring programs can have to an organization.

For your participation, you will be awarded with 10 training hours towards your yearly PMP goals. If you would like to participate, please let me know as soon as you can as space is limited and the hope is for the research to begin immediately. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by whatever means you prefer.

Thanks for your considerations!

Have a great day!

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. How did being selected to participate in this program make you feel?
2. What do you hope for yourself within this company?
3. What is your motivation for participating in this program?
4. How did the first few interactions go?
5. What do you think you can teach your mentee?
6. What can you mentee do for you?
7. What do you want to achieve from participating in this relationship?
8. What has gone well?
9. What are some of the challenges?
10. How have you navigated these challenges?
11. How has technology affected your relationship?
12. What has been the most positive aspect of this relationship?
13. What has been the biggest challenge in this relationship?
14. What is the biggest thing you hope your mentor took away from this experience?
15. What is the biggest thing you took away from this experience?
16. How did you first handle the challenge of becoming a leader in this mentoring role?
17. How did the mentor handle not being in the leadership role during this relationship?
18. How did this dynamic change over time?
19. How has your relationship changed over time with your mentee?
20. How has your feelings about you position changed overtime?
21. What do you think the biggest challenge that employers have in retaining millennial employees?
22. How would you address this issue?
23. How has your connection to the organization changed since the beginning of this relationship?
24. In what capacity do you think you will stay in contact with your mentee?
25. What do you think was the strongest part of the relationship that you had with your mentee?
26. What do you think was the weakest part of the relationship that you had with your mentee?
27. What would you change about your relationship with your mentee, if anything?
28. How did your mentee react when talking in a strictly digital format? (Skype/FaceTime)?
29. How did you overcome the challenges/frustration that technology may have caused?
30. Why would/wouldn't you participate in a program like this in the future?

Appendix C

Interaction Layout

Task One

Please reach out to your mentee introducing yourself and set up a time for your first interaction. The first focus will be on developing a means of communication. Where these interactions will be primarily digital, it is asked that for at least the first interaction you communicate via FaceTime or Skype. Your mentee will not be aware that this will be the first means of communication and they may or may not need you to explain how to communicate via these means. If you are uncomfortable using this software or do not have the means (phone or computer with this capability) than please contact me immediately as I can assist in explaining the software and/or provide you with the necessary materials. Once connected the goal is to get to know each other a bit. Tell your mentee what your title and how it is that you landed at (organization). Include any personal information that you would like and ask them for the same. Please also make sure to ask your mentee what they expect from these interactions and what they think the purpose of this is as well as establish a schedule and means of communication that works for both parties.

Task Two

For this interaction, we will be focusing on addressing how it is that you both interact with technology. Ask your mentee (do this for yourself as well) to write for themselves the three ways that they personally use technology in each of the following categories; professionally (which programs or products do they use?), to interact with family and friends (again programs or products) and for their hobbies (apps, games, community outreach). Ask them to also write down three pros to the technological use in their lives, and three consequences or problems that they have with their use. Ask what programs they are curious about and have questions on, and ask how it is that you can help them become more proficient technologically. Make sure to offer your own answers to these questions and use this as an opportunity to discuss and differing and similar feelings about the technologies you use on a daily basis.

Task Three

For this interaction, I would like you to focus on your mentee's position. Ask them what it is that they do on a daily basis while at work, and ask what it is that they most enjoy and dislike about their position. Ask them to explain what one of their more recent technological challenges has been and ask that they explain how it is that they wished they had solved it and how they actually solved it. Offer any observations or words of advice from your personal life that you see fit. Ask the same thing about their everyday position regarding challenges and how they wished they solved it and how they actually did solve it.

Task Four

For this interaction, we will be focusing on addressing your current position within the company. First you will start off by explaining what it is that you do during a normal day while at work. Explain in some detail some of the more prominent things that you are asked to do. Make sure to note any surprises that may arise during your normal day that throw off your schedule. What do you do for when these things happen? Please also bring to light some challenges that you have

face or continue to face with your everyday position, ask the mentee how they would have addressed these things. Then detail how it is that you came to solve this problem, if it did have a resolution, if it did not, how is it that you would solve it. Arrange your next interaction as it fits into you and your mentors schedules and communication preferences.

Task Five

For this interaction, we will again shift our focus back to technology and how it interacts with your mentees lives professionally. As now both parties are aware about what it is that their counterpart does professionally on a day to day basis, we will have a better understanding of how technology both helps and hurts them in this way. Ask your mentee what challenges technology causes them in their day to day activities and technologies that they may need to solve some of their work related issues. Use this as an opportunity to offer your opinion if you are seeing something that they are doing that is incorrect or too time consuming or something that may fill their technological void.

Task Six

For this interaction, I would like you to use it almost as a free talk period but back to using skype or FaceTime (if you aren't already using it). At this point you and your mentee may have a rapport already going so use this as a time to talk about any questions you have professionally or personally. Try to keep the conversation somewhat focused around technology and how it affects the things you are talking about.

Task Seven

Leading into your final interaction with your mentee, it is important that you both take roles in leading the interactions. Talk to the mentee about any technological or professional issues that you are facing and ask how it is that they would solve them. Ask them what advice they may offer to a younger generation of workers within the company and industry, and how they feel they got to where they got to. Ask them what they feel like the younger generation adds to the workforce and what they see as growth opportunities for them and how they interact with the organization. This will be the interaction where the mentee and you take down the walls of the mentee and mentor relationship.

Task Eight

In your final interaction, I would like you both to revisit what it is that you both wanted out of this relationship and whether or not these things were achieved. Ask the mentee what it is the mentee most enjoyed about the experience and the things that they would change about the process. Ask the mentee what it is that they wish that they could have learned and what it is that they wish that you could have learned from the process. Answer the same for yourself to them. Ask you mentee if there is anything that you can do to help them moving forward, and explain how it is that this relationship has affected you. If this is something that you both choose to continue, this is the opportunity for you to establish a schedule and means of further interaction.

Appendix D
Informed Consent Agreement

***University of Southern Maine-Lewiston-Auburn College, Leadership and
Organizational Studies Program***

**Informed Consent for Participation in Study:
“Millennial and Reverse Mentorship”**

Introduction:

- You are being asked to take part in a research study exploring potential benefits in millennial participation in reverse mentoring relationships.
- In this study you will be interviewed about your thoughts, feelings and experiences about your role within these relationships.
- You were selected as a possible participant due to nomination through your supervisors as well as meeting the following criterion: you are a salaried millennial employee who has worked within the organization for less than five (5) years and at a minimum, begun some form of post-secondary education.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be interviewed. **Your participation is voluntary and you may choose to discontinue participation, or ask questions, at any time.**

Purpose of Study:

- The purpose of this study is to learn more about millennial employees in the workplace here in New England, and the ways that they interact with both technology and organizational hierarchy.
- People who take part in this study will include salaried members of your organization who are both born between 1980 and 1995 as well as having less than five (5) years of experience within the organization. You, and the other participants, will be paired with a more tenured employee who holds a position of leadership across the different ends of the company.

Description of Study Procedures:

- If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following:
 1. Participate in eight (8) loosely structured interactions with the partner that you are assigned. These interactions should last between 30-45 minutes in time and may be completed using several varied forms of communications over the span of four (4) months.
 2. Answer questions about your thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to participating in this process. Interviews will be face-to-face in a location that is convenient for you. It is expected that interviews will take about 15-30 minutes to complete, however there is no set time frame should you wish to discuss your experiences for longer than that.

3. Allow us to audiotape and record the interview. If you do not want to be audio recorded, please inform the researcher of this.
4. Allow us to use your information provided in the publication of this research. We will not publish any identifying information, or any information that will cause you embarrassment, or that you do not wish us to use.
 - You may skip questions at any time. You may also stop participating at any time. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Risks of Being in the Study:

- There are no expected risks. However, depending on the information you choose to share, you may experience some personal discomfort related to reflecting on your experiences and values, and/or to having those discussed in the paper.

Benefits of Being in Study:

- There are no expected benefits to you as a participant beyond credit towards your required annual training hours. However, depending on the information you choose to share, you may experience personal insights or satisfaction based on your reflections upon the questions asked, and having the opportunity to share those publicly. Businesses may benefit from the new knowledge gained regarding your perspectives in how reverse mentoring relationships affected you in the workplace.

Keeping things private:

- Interviewees will be given the chance to review the summary of the interview with them at their request only.
- Access to the records and audiotapes will be maintained and securely kept by the researcher at all times. Those who might have access to these records include: the researcher alone, the University of Southern Maine Institutional Review Board, and the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP).
- In any sort of publication that will be presented, only identifying information that you give us permission to use will be used. Possible presentations include committees for student researcher's capstone thesis, conference presentations, professional articles and/or a book.
- Audio recordings will be retained by the researcher and may be used for publication or presentation. If you do not wish the researcher to use this information for publication or presentation, please inform the researcher of this wish.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:

- Taking part in the study is voluntary.
- You are free to leave the study at any time, for whatever reason.
- You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

Contacts and Questions:

- The researcher conducting this study is Tyler Norman McPherson, in conjunction with USM-Lewiston-Auburn College. For questions or more information about this

research you may contact Tyler Norman McPherson at 207-242-1563 or Tyler.McPherson@maine.edu.

- If you believe you may have suffered harm from this research, please contact Tyler Norman McPherson at 207-242-1563 or Tyler.McPherson@maine.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact: Ross Hickey, Associate Director of the Office of Research Integrity, USM at (207) 780-4340 or usmirb@usm.maine.edu, or TTY (207) 780-5646.

Copy of Consent Form:

- You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.

Statement of Consent:

- I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to take part in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

Signature/Date:

- Study Participant (Print Name): _____
- Participant Signature: _____ Date _____

FINAL APPROVAL FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE
MASTER IN LEADERSHIP STUDIES

June 4th, 2015

We hereby recommend that the thesis of Tyler Norman McPherson entitled *Where Did All the Young People Go? Can the organizations of the State of Maine re-enlist its native youth?* be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in Leadership Studies.


Thesis Advisor (Elizabeth Fisher Turesky)


Reader (Katherine Bozeman)


Director (Tara Coste)

Accepted


Joyce Taylor Gibson, Ph.D.
Dean, Lewiston-Auburn College