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Annelise Green  
*Pepperdine University*

Caroline McClelland  
*Pepperdine University*

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# Male Gender Expression Conflict Between Baby Boomers and Millennials

Annelise Green & Caroline McClelland

*Written for COM 515: Intercultural Communication: Case Studies (Dr. Charles Choi)*

Ellen Degeneres cheerfully identifies herself as a Baby Boomer to her TV show audience, explaining that her generation was so-named because after World War II their parents said “We lived through the war, let’s make whoopee!” (Degeneres, 2016). Ellen then quips that “For you Millennials, making whoopee is like Netflix and Chill... But they were married,” (Degeneres, 2016). Here, Ellen has identified one of the key differences between two generations. Inasmuch as a person can be influenced by their parents, friends, or education, generations (or cohorts) can be impacted through the societal context surrounding their time of birth. Differences within cohort effects can reflect varied societal priorities and can persist throughout a person’s lifetime.

Due to the unique characteristics of each cohort, occasionally cohorts can clash because of differences in values. In 2015, the U.S. Census reported 76.4 million Baby Boomers and 83.1 million Millennials. The sheer magnitude of these subpopulations results in the tension of this conflict affecting multitudes of people today. Sometimes known as the “hippie” generation, the Baby Boomers were born during the population boom after World War II, and they are currently between the ages of 54 and 72 (Hughes & O’Rand, 2004). The Millennial generation, on the other hand, are between the ages of 18 and 35; their generation is widely understood as the

cohort emerging before and during the late-20th century technological revolution (Kohut et. al., 2010). The conflict between Baby Boomer and Millennial cohorts has included difference in male gender expression. The differences these groups have are not only caused by their different ages but derive from the cultural climate that developed their perspectives.

Conflict has arisen between the Baby Boomer and Millennial cohorts over a multitude of topics, but this analysis will dive deep into the specific differences between generational male gender expression as it pertains to sexuality and the workplace. First, cohorts and gender will be defined before further detailing the generations of Baby Boomers and Millennials. These descriptions will be used to inform the different perspectives within the conflict regarding male gender expression before recommendations for conflict resolution are presented.

## **Cohort/Generational Differences**

It is important to delineate the difference between age effects and cohort effects. A cohort is a group of people of similar age, such as a generation (Hegelson, 2017). The context of what was happening socially, politically, and globally of the time results in effects that impact the ideologies of a generation. As stated previously, due to the unique characteristics of each cohort,

occasionally cohorts can clash because of differing values. Age does not determine gender role attitudes, nor is age accompanied with traditionalism (Lynott & McCandless, 2000). Rather, these differences between people are more associated with life experiences. In particular, the male gender role produces conflicts regardless of age concerning emotional expressiveness that have negative effects on psychological health and interpersonal relationships (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995). The social context that Boomers and Millennials developed in will, therefore, be discussed at length to help understand the differences in male gender expression.

### **Male Gender Expression**

Gender is the term used to refer to the social categories of male and female (Hegelson, 2017). Socially, men and women are expected to behave in accordance to their gender roles (Hegelson, 2017). As time has permitted, men can thus express their gender through traditional routes, or they can be more explorative and enact their gender in non-conforming ways.

### **Baby Boomers**

The Baby Boomer generation, born between the years of 1946 and 1964, were radically unique from prior generations because of the large societal transitions during this time. The Baby Boomers are so named because of the high surge of children born post World War II, making them the largest generation in size until the Millennial cohort. Living in post-war anxiety, the Boomers participated in anti-war movements, multiple revolutionary social movements, and, of course: “sex, drugs, and rock ‘n roll,” as lyricized and popularized by Ian Dury & The

Blockheads. The ages of Boomers in 2018 range from 54 to 72 (Hughes & O’Rand, 2004). The Boomers’ male gender expression will be examined by studying the characteristics of romance/family life and work life.

### **Overall Boomer Male Gender Expression**

**Traditional masculinity.** Traditional gender ideology dictates that a man’s sphere is work and, on the contrary, a woman’s sphere is the home (Hegelson, 2017). These gender role expectations for men involve being strong, dominant, and autonomous in order to properly support the family (Hegelson, 2017). Traditional or hegemonic masculinity is further defined through courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, mastery, technological skill, adventure, and considerable amounts of toughness in mind and body (Donaldson, 1993). Traditional masculinity encompasses how men have largely been expected to behave throughout history. These expectations range from the aggressive demands on boys and men that society perpetuates daily such as “Don’t cry,” “Bros before hoes,” and “Grow some balls,” (The Mask You Live In, 2013). Men fight to meet these standards in an effort to be accepted and finally “Be a man.” These strict expectation barriers can be harmful by making people feel like they have to be aggressive or insensitive to be masculine; this limits people’s ability to be explorative emotionally (Planned Parenthood, 2019). However, many believe that these tenets of traditional masculinity are still valuable, such as independence and supporting families, and should be maintained for future generations.

Boomers express gender mostly through traditional masculinity. Boomer men tend to

hold onto traditional male roles out of lack of familiarity with where they belong in a transformed society. In the midst of an era of high change, Boomer men, as they entered the workplace and began families of their own, were afraid of adapting their masculinity and losing their place of privilege in society. Burnett (2018) commented that Luke Skywalker, the legendary hero of the Star Wars films, represents the soul of Baby Boomer men: Skywalker has complex father issues and has trouble listening to women. While a dramatic critique of Boomers, Burnett's arguments highlight the tension that Boomer men feel in appeasing the traditional expectations of the past and supporting the progressive future.

### **Romance/Family Life**

The sexual revolution during Boomers' young adulthoods changed how men were expected to behave in romantic and family settings. Access to birth control reduced the pressure of getting married and enhanced the ability to have sex with multiple partners (Hughes & O'Rand, 2004). A Gallup poll in 1970 found that three-quarters of college students no longer believed it was important to marry a virgin (Kutulas, 2010). The term 'relationship' was beginning to be applied to more sexual situations rather than exclusively in regards to marriage (Kutulas, 2010). These presented dramatic shifts in the expectations within dating life compared to the Boomers' parents, who were less promiscuous and more traditional in courtship. Men thereby began to have less power within relationships as society put less emphasis on pure abstinence in pursuit of a family.

The wave of feminism changed the man's role in heterosexual relationships. Fresh out of

World War II, women increased in the workforce dramatically, which started to shift the traditional male breadwinner family structure (Hughes & O'Rand, 2004). Women's empowerment led to a reorganization in the expectations within the model of masculinity. Women were traditionally in charge of the relationship domain, but with sexual and economic independence, women started expecting further effort from men. For instance, men were encouraged to be more active in housework; however, men found these new demands unexpected and challenging, resulting in men remaining only modestly involved in these duties (Hughes & O'Rand, 2004). These changes put high strains on the family structure, as society encouraged women to stay within their expected gender roles; yet, women were growing more empowered and independent from these norms. Amidst all of this social change, men were unable to keep up with how to cater to these women.

It was difficult for men to get conflicting information about what was attractive to women. Men admired rock stars like Mick Jagger, who was deemed as the epitome of masculinity; women, on the other hand, flocked to concerts of the more sensitive and woman-sympathizing, such as James Taylor. In the height of the seventies, women outnumbered men two to one at James Taylor concerts; the musician was called "intelligent and liberal and good," but men attacked him for his retreat from masculinity (Kutulas, 2010). By the time the bestseller *Real Men Don't Eat Quiche* was released in 1982, Taylor was criticized for being wimpy, weepy, and unattractive (Kutulas, 2010). Clearly, these confusing messages about what women wanted impacted men's abilities to maintain their masculinity and their relationship status.

Relationships were more transient due to these conflicting expectations and the emphasis on individualism (Kutulas, 2010). The difficulty with romance and family life has been reflected in the success of their relationships; in general, Baby Boomers got married later in life and have had higher divorce rates than previous cohorts (Hughes & O'Rand, 2004). As described by D'Emilio (1998), "Intimate relationships became arenas of struggle, [within] the bedroom and the kitchen battlegrounds." Through analysis of this research, it is clear that the role of men in romantic and family life was expressed with uncertainty, hesitancy, and not much success, as Baby Boomers began to enter their young adult years.

### **Work**

As Baby Boomer men entered the workforce, they struggled economically. Boomers experienced the stress of shifting expectations from blue-collar work toward high-end white-collar work, requiring postsecondary credentials (Hughes & O'Rand, 2004). At the time, Boomer men lacked economic security, which harmed their ability to support a family and put further strain on their relationships. This is reflected in the Boomers reporting the most family-work conflicts of any other generation, including ranking highest in family centrality (Bennett, Beehr, & Ivanistkaya, 2017). Clearly, this indicates that while family was a high priority, Boomer men felt enough pressure from work that it affected and still affects their family life. Middle-aged men reported feeling more conflicted between work and family responsibilities than college-aged men (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995).

Today, Boomer men value high organization, timeliness, and work integrity.

Research has shown that, at work, Boomers value extrinsic and status values in addition to person-organization (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). They also have high expectations for reaching goals and are less likely to switch employers throughout the years (Gordon, 2016). Overall, this culminates to Boomers being largely independent, goal-oriented, and competitive within the workforce (Kane, 2017). It is important to keep all of these characteristics in mind to fully grasp Boomers in juxtaposition to Millennials.

### **Millennials**

Millennials are a cohort that consist of many children of Baby Boomers. Millennials are not clearly defined in their birth years. However, many of them were born anywhere between the early 1980s to the early 2000s, and they currently range approximately from 18 to 35 (Hegelson, 2017 & Kohut et. al., 2010).

Millennials are tied to the 20th-century transformations of society associated with their large addition to the population. The main characteristic that defines this cohort is the fact that this generation directly experienced the international surge in mass media. Media channels began to emerge in the 1980s, and this technology boom has increased dramatically and drastically since its early beginnings. Moreover, many individuals who belong to this cohort tend to be more liberal in their approach to economic affairs as well as politics (Kohut et. al., 2010). This is due to the increase in and acceptance of social issues, such as the rise in LGBTQ relationships and vast changes in gender expression. Additionally, these views are also influenced by the Great Recession (2007-2012), or the great economical decline that impacted many countries in the

world (Blair, Miller, Ong, & Zastavker, 2017; Hegelson, 2017). The Recession, in particular, has caused many Millennial young individuals to struggle financially, as this period introduced record high levels of unemployment. Though it is still be determined, this event may have lasting, long-term economic and social implications (Hegelson, 2017). The rapidly changing environment greatly influenced how millennials approach male gender expression.

### **Male Gender Expression Amongst Millennials Transforming the gender climate.**

Society has started to identify the harm of maintaining the traditional male gender role. The American Psychological Association (APA) has now acknowledged the unique trials men can experience out of a desire to not appear unmasculine. In 2018, the APA published guidelines for best psychological practice with male patients who statistically suffer more often from negative quality-of-life outcomes like suicide and cardiovascular disease (American Psychological Association, 2018). The APA has already published guidelines as far back as 2007 for females, ethnicity, and sexuality--making male gender challenges a recent development as a topic of interest. Millennial spokespeople for gender equality directly connect the feminist movements of the 1970s/1980s to the way men are similarly oppressed by gender roles. Emma Watson in a United Nations speech in 2014, argued that “men do not have the benefits of equality,” and that everyone should feel free to be both sensitive and strong. Millennials have consistently used their voices now that they are adults to challenge the traditional male role.

There was a great need for nontraditional male gender expression in media when millennials

were still growing. Initially millennials were exposed to media in the 1990s that reaffirmed traditional male gender roles by showing men in a positive light if they were averse to anything feminine or treated women chauvinistically (*Friends*, *Cheers*, or *That 70's Show*). While the decade contained some triumphs for females (such as switching Disney princess narratives from *Snow White* or *Sleeping Beauty* to *Mulan* and *Pocahontas*), the 1990s still showed a need for progression of demonstrating the male gender role untraditionally.

Millennials have now utilized their positions as adults in media production to challenge the male gender role. Millennials have created shows like *Glee* (2009-2015) that feature multiple non-gender-conforming characters like Kurt or Sue Sylvester. Even more revolutionarily, *Glee* frequently positioned the football quarterback, Finn, in scenarios that exposed his challenges with gender. Originally Finn is attacked by the football team for his friendship with Kurt, a gay boy, and Finn struggles with putting aside his homophobic biases. Over time, Finn is able to triumph over damaging male expectations by first taking Kurt's advice and dancing to Beyonce's "Single Ladies" on the football field, then later openly singing Bruno Mars' song "Just the Way You Are," to Kurt while they dance at their parents' wedding. Finn also breaks male gender expectations on screen by struggling with negative body image, auditioning to be a cheerleader, and applying makeup for a tribute to the rock band Kiss. This character was so impactful because Finn was always portrayed as masculine despite these nontraditional behaviors. By redefining what it means to be masculine, *Glee* was able to show that men can be leaders without having to sacrifice sensitivity. Millennials have

supported many other popular shows that also demonstrate nontraditional male representation within the 2000s/2010s, such as *Scrubs*, RuPaul's *Drag Race*, and *This is Us*. Millennials create a high demand for media material that demonstrates non-traditional masculinity. Nonconforming gender ideology poses in direct opposition to traditional masculinity. Nonconformity is simply the expression or behavioral demonstration of gender that steers from traditionally-accepted masculine and feminine gender norms (Hegelson, 2017). Evidently, those that value traditionalism can be at odds with those promoting progression in the category of the male gender, particularly within the arenas of sexuality and the workplace.

With the rise and progression of liberal tendencies and thoughts, the way in which males express their gender within the Millennial cohort dimension is vastly different than the Baby Boomers. In a article by the *Washington Post*, many young males have affirmed that, "They don't completely identify with the brand of masculinity their fathers or grandfathers might have projected," (Paquette, 2016). One aspect that has emerged and given rise to this change in male gender expression amongst the Millennial generation is the introduction of gender fluidity (Hegelson, 2017). Gender fluidity is characterized by the fact that one can be both masculine and feminine; there is a spectrum on which an individual can find him or herself. Men who demonstrate more effeminate qualities may be more partial to feminine expression, even though they position themselves as heterosexual males (Hegelson, 2017). This notion of gender fluidity has led to an increase in individualism amongst the Millennial cohort as well as the rise in

metrosexual and gay expression amongst males (Hegelson, 2017). Moreover, the notion of the "tough-guy" persona is slowly dying (Weinberg, Tronick, Cohn, & Olson, 1999). Part of this is due to the increase of acceptance for men to openly express their emotions. Millennial men are being nudged to look beyond the previous stereotypes that have been assigned to them, thus forming new identities previously not socially and societally accepted. The male psyche is not necessarily changing, but is being more widely accepted by society at large.

Research supports that young boys demonstrate behaviors contrary to the traditional male role, indicating that this is based more on social construct rather than actual difference. A Harvard study even suggests that perhaps men are born with more emotive qualities than women. In the study, the researchers observed six-month-old baby girls and boys. They observed that six-month-old boys were more likely to show "facial expression of anger, to fuss, to gesture to be picked up" than the little girls (Weinberg, Tronick, Cohn, & Olson, 1999). Moreover, it was shown that these young baby boys were more likely to cry than their female counterparts. Thus, through these young children, it is determined that men do have emotion. As children grow older, gender expression constructs begin to form; little boys are encouraged to refrain from showing emotion, while girls are encouraged to express their feelings (Hegelson, 2017). Nonetheless, boys are capable of showing emotion, but they have not been given the liberty in society to express this emotion fully until recently (Weinberg, Tronick, Cohn, & Olson, 1999). Millennials challenge the strict male gender role in reaction to the knowledge that men share the same emotional

range as women and can even strive to benefit from emotional expression.

Thus, the way that Millennial men express gender expression is vastly different from Baby Boomers. Male gender expression for a Millennial man is more often not rigid or succinct. The diminishing walls and societal expectations of what a “man” should be and act like is being largely redefined, as this cohort is resisting traditional gender roles (Hegelson, 2017).

### **Romance/Family Life**

The advance of technology has caused Millennial men to approach romantic life much differently than Baby Boomers. An aspect that has come to define this generation’s approach to dating is the increase in the “hook up” culture (Kohut et. al., 2010). Millennial dating has become less concerned with the prolonged effects of such a romantic relationship, and rather the immediate effects of relationships (Kohut et. al., 2010). For example, though the rise in online dating and dating applications has created a platform through which individuals can easily meet one another, many individuals are more apt to simply meet and hang out with another individual for a short period of time. Additionally, the Millennial generation is more inclined to date multiple people at once, rather than simply devoting time to one individual. The “swipe right” culture is very pervasive, or the term most associated with the popular dating application known as “Tinder” (Levine, 2015). This has created a false reality of intimacy amongst Millennials, and, instead, has created a culture of immediacy and instant romantic rewards without the long-term commitment or work; men, in particular, do not feel the need to have a long-term serious relationship (Levine, 2015).

This is further supported by dating apps that put the responsibility of initial courtship in the hands of the woman, like the application Bumble. As a whole, Millennial men in dating life have less expectations than previous generations, and that they “have much more egalitarian attitudes about family, career and gender roles inside marriage than generations before them,” (Miller, 2015). Technology has reflected these changes in cultural attitudes toward Dating.

The way in which Millennial men approach what is expected of them within romance and family life is quite different from the Baby Boomer cohort. Millennials are more accepting towards gay and lesbian relationships, interracial relationships, and they are in support of equal roles for all within society; this establishes more male support than any other generational cohort before, especially Baby Boomers (Blair, Miller, Ong, & Zastavker, 2017). As previously mentioned, Millennials are becoming more individualistic, as they do not feel the need to necessarily be in a romantic relationship or develop a family dynamic (Kohut et. al., 2010). Millennials, as a whole, are feeling less pressure to have successful marriages, as only 30% believe that it should be a priority (Kohut et. al., 2010). Because of this, they feel less inclined to marry young or even at all (McGuire, 2015). Moreover, men feel less pressure to be an involved parent (Parker, Horowitz, & Stepler, 2017). It is worth noting that stay-at-home fathers has largely increased, as it is becoming more acceptable for women to be the breadwinners of the family. Therefore, the lifting of societal pressures on what it means to be a man within the scope of relationships and family has allowed Millennials to more freely explore these dynamics.

## Work

Millennials have experienced a wide array of social movements, as free sexual expression has become more widely accepted and encouraged than in any other generation before, and this is especially true for males. When it comes to the workforce, men are less likely to feel a financial pressure to support themselves and their families (Kohut et. al., 2010). Because of this, men are increasingly choosing professions that are more suited towards their own individual needs, having a more “loving what I do” attitude towards their profession (Schawbel, 2012). More men today do not feel the pressure to pursue prestigious jobs such as medical doctors, lawyers, etc., and rather choose a profession that befits their skills and talents. Within college, men do not feel as pressured to obtain a degree in STEM topics, and rather are inclined to choose a major that befits their skills and talents (Blair, Miller, Ong, & Zastavker, 2017; Hegelson, 2017). Within the actual workplace, many Millennials “have little interest in hierarchy and are not particularly impressed by the titles and positions within the traditional pyramid structure” (Schawbel, 2012). Additionally, within the workforce, men have felt “increased confidence and esteem, social acceptance, and reduced anxiety about manhood” (Trauth et al., 2010, p. 1). Thus, they do not feel the need to maintain rigid conformity or have workplace structure that denotes hierarchical differences; men do not feel the need to assert their dominance in this sphere, like in previous generations. Additionally, Millennials view work as a team effort, rather than an uneven playing field; men are increasingly viewing women within work as counterparts, rather than employees are lesser status (Blair, Miller, Ong, & Zastavker,

2017 & Hegelson, 2017). Another factor that has largely impacted the way in which Millennials approach the workforce has been the direct result of the economic collapse in 2007. Many Millennials enter society post- graduation, and they find themselves facing a dire situation: unemployment. Many Millennial men have resulted to living with their parents post college, as unemployment rates are incredibly high amongst this group (Hegelson, 2017). Therefore, males have been positioned both socially and economically where their worth as a man relies less on their occupation.

Additionally, when it comes to work, more Millennials prefer the ability to have more flexible schedules and increased personal time. Millennials have been predisposed to a culture of instantaneous gratification, as a result of the technological revolution (Kohut et. al., 2010). Thus, they are more apt to want instantaneous feedback from their boss and succinct career advice. Furthermore, because Millennials appreciate transparency in their relationships, they also are more apt to desire transparency in their work relationships (Schawbel, 2012). Millennial men do not feel the pressure to get married and thus support a family, which has allowed the Millennial cohort to pursue careers within many fields, opening up the door for creative expression and the diminishing of traditional gender roles and gender expression within the workplace (Hegelson, 2017 & Schawbel, 2012).

## Conflict of Male Gender Expression Boomer Perspective

Boomers have many qualms with the younger cohort of Millennials because of undesirous characteristics of the younger cohort. In a study with data from 1.4 million people

collected between the 1930s and the present, Millennials (or, as frequently titled by Boomers, “Generation Me”) have demonstrated higher self-esteem, narcissism, anxiety, and depression than Boomers (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). “Generation Me” are further described as having inflated egos, self-esteem, and higher future expectations (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). Millennials are also more sheltered, having been smothered with safety rules and devices (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Clearly, Boomers do not appreciate these traits of Millennials, especially coming from a standpoint of tumultuous social and economic change that required hard work and personal action. Boomer men who reflect traditional masculinity would take particular fault with Millennials not having the strength to be autonomous and productive as is traditionally expected of them.

Boomers take particular issue with Millennial characteristics in the workplace, and this is evident in the way that Baby Boomer men view Millennial men. Boomer men believe that Millennial men are lazy at their jobs; these beliefs are actually largely supported by extensive research. Millennials value work less, leisure more, express a weaker work ethic and a higher extrinsic work values (e.g. salary) than older generations (Twenge, 2010). Another study warns employers about millennials, saying they, “Should expect to see more employees with unrealistically high expectations, a high need for praise, difficulty with criticism, an increase in creativity demands, job-hopping, ethics scandals, [and] casual dress” (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). These suggestions are supported in a study with a sample of over 115,000 people collected over 18 years which determined that Millennials have a higher need for social approval than Boomers and that Millennials

expect inordinate amounts of praise at work (Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010). As all of these studies controlled for age, the differences cannot be attributed to different life stages, but are rather emphasized in cohort differences. For people like the Boomers, Millennial entitlement in the workplace highlights the youths’ privilege in expecting general economic security. Nonetheless, Millennials have higher job satisfaction, job security, recognition, and career development than the Boomers, and this is especially true for males (Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010). Obviously, this inequity in job security would be a sore subject for men who struggled to find higher-paying jobs in a time when their salaries reflected their masculinity.

Boomers also believe that Millennials place too much importance in areas of life that lack substance. Stein (2013) argues that Millennials are entitled, self-centered, and purely driven by money. While bragging that Boomers have more money, experience, and drive than Millennials, Miller (2017) critiques Millennial obsession with the entertainment industry. As mentioned above, Boomers are highest in family centrality while Millennials are highest in work centrality (Bennett, Beehr, & Ivanistkaya, 2017). Growing up in an era defined by fighting for equality, Boomers could view the superficiality of Millennials to be meaningless and trivial. Traditional masculinity would also judge these Millennial values because truly masculine men are not expected to be up-to-date on entertainment trends or be motivated beyond providing for a family.

### **Millennial Perspective**

On the other hand, Millennial male experiences place their opinions in opposition to Boomers. In viewing Baby Boomers, many Millennials view this cohort as “beset with egotism, impulsivity and a shocking lack of empathy” (Gregoire, 2017). Millennial men pose the notion that if they are defined as egoistic and narcissistic by Boomers, they learned these qualities and traits from Baby Boomers. Thus, Millennials wonder if Baby Boomers are actually the generation to blame, instead of being deemed the problem themselves. Moreover, many Millennials see the Baby Boomer cohort as being the one that incurred the economic debt, leading to depression that lasted from 2007-2012, and from which society is still recovering (Gregoire, 2017; Schawbel, 2012; Stein, 2013). This, as many Millennials have determined, has contributed to their lack of resources and the higher levels of unemployment amongst this cohort that Boomers frequently find fault with. On the flip side, Baby Boomers experienced a surge of prosperity post World War II, and they did not have struggle in the same manner that Millennials are now facing as they enter the workplace and begin to start families (Schawbel, 2012). This is especially true for men, given that many of Boomers did not have to struggle to obtain high-end jobs; however, men today have not struggled in finding a job, but they also are dealing with the ramifications of positioning themselves in jobs that were once not entirely traditionally suited for men due to more women dominating male roles. Nonetheless, Millennial men in the workplace often report feeling as though Baby Boomer men unfairly frown upon their cohort, deeming them to be lazy, self-centered, and a plethora of other characteristics. Millennial men rather note their

dedication to personal goals instead of the traditional goals Boomers expect them to have.

Furthermore, Millennial men view Baby Boomer men as being rigid and unable to accept new gender expression orientations (Stein, 2013). This is largely, in part, due to the fact that Baby Boomers have remained largely homogeneous, even though the cohort experienced similar sexual revolutions and shifts in social societal expectations during their youth. However, these revolutions looked starkly different from one another. Millennials have witnessed a plethora of shifts, primarily in regards to the rights of women within society. The further casualization of dating applications relieves men from taking responsibility for all of the courtship duties, leaving men more free to sexually express themselves while still maintaining the kind of relationships they want. These circumstances have had major impacts on the way that Millennials thus form their gender expressions within relationships. For example, Millennials are encouraging more open sexual expression. More people are in support of gay marriage—74% of Millennials condone gay marriage, in opposition to the mere 56% of Baby Boomers who agree (Pew Research Center, 2017). Additionally, in the same research trends, many Millennials support a less rigid expression of gender, allowing men the freedom to express themselves in previously untoward ways, like not always paying for the entire first date. Men are also able to be more effeminate with less judgement, while still positioning themselves as a heterosexual male (Stein, 2013). Additionally, because of the increased drive for and shift in gender expression, more Millennial males feel more comfortable expressing their emotions, thus adopting more

liberal social tendencies. However, Millennials view Baby Boomers, especially Baby Boomer men, as being more rigid, strictly adhering to their traditional gender constructs (Stein, 2013). Millennials advance male gender expression toward a more liberal philosophy. Nonetheless, these apparent differences in approach do not have to determine eternal conflict between the cohorts.

### **Conclusion/Suggestions/Recommendations**

If one looks at each cohort—Baby Boomer and Millennial men—one can acknowledge that these two groups are actually very similar to one another. Both cohorts were the largest generation of their time and developed in tumultuous sexual and economic scenarios. Both had to renegotiate what it meant to be a man in response to these new circumstances. Despite these similarities, Baby Boomer and Millennial male gender expression has caused plenty of tension within these already tense groups. However, in order to bridge this gap, it is important for both to highlight affinities between the two, as this will not only help bridge the gaps between them, but also shed some light on the fact that these two cohorts emerged from very similar economical and societal circumstances.

Both Boomer and Millennial men grew up during a time of very progressive social movements that changed the trajectory of human rights in the United States. The feminist movement parallels with the Women's March of modern day, as well as the Civil Rights Movement paralleling with Black Lives Matter. Advancing technology in addition to these new progressive expectations within dating (for Boomers, the birth control pill; for Millennials, online dating)

completely transformed the expectations of a man within a relationship.

Moreover, many of them have experienced major shifts in the workplace. The Boomers experienced major workplace shifts with the introduction of women and people of color and the Millennials experienced the Internet and technological advancements that drastically changed how people work. These workplace shifts also largely compromised male job security because suddenly new expectations and skill-sets were placed due to the increase of competition (by either actual people or advancing computer ability).

Using the accumulated research knowledge, the researchers recommend both increasing familiarity and finding areas of commonality between Boomer and Millennial men in order to alleviate the conflict. Research has shown that increasing empathy toward stigmatized groups can improve attitudes toward the group as a whole (Batson et al., 1997). Further, perspective taking can decrease stereotypic biases and reduce ingroup bias by increasing evaluations of outgroups (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Therefore, increasing familiarity of an outgroup can help limit negative impressions and hopefully foster better relationships between the two antagonistic groups.

Ultimately, Baby Boomers and Millennials have a very tense relationship, and this is especially true of the males within these cohorts and how they utilize gender expression. These differences will not easily evaporate, especially because Millennials are now an even larger generation than the Baby Boomers and conflict will persist. As Ellen mentions, she knows recent

Census results now demonstrate these populations “because a 20-year old staffer read it to me from the Internet,” (Degeneres, 2016). However, by examining the different perspectives of each cohort, it is evident that there are more areas of similarity rather than differences. Perhaps if Ellen used her segment on Baby Boomers and Millennials to see what the groups have in

common instead of highlighting their different cultural knowledge, the cohorts could be closer to harmony. We believe that conflict resolution will be accomplished if each cohort chooses to promote similarity and increase the level of productive dialogue.

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