The 21st Century workforce includes four generations for the first time in US history yielding unparalleled workplace diversity. With family and organizational theories as its conceptual foundation, a systems approach was used to assess University of Missouri Extension employees’ world view and space use characteristic preference perceptions between Baby Boomers and Millennials.

Study results suggest a preference for an OPEN organization system type with COMFORTABLE SPACES emerging as the dominant space use characteristic preference for Millennials and QUALITY SPACES and COMFORTABLE SPACES emerging as the dominant space use characteristic preferences for Baby Boomers. The OPEN system type prefers informal, consensus-based decision-making to the more formal hierarchical model of the University of Missouri System. These system pattern similarities are strongly shaped by Extension’s clan culture wherein employees are assimilated into the ‘Extension way’, thereby decreasing generational preference differences. The most recently hired employees (i.e., Millennials) are more likely to assume attitudes towards the organization that are more congruent with those found among longer-term employees than they are in retaining their individual generational differences. Assimilation, for now, may be a function of the small number of Millennials compared with Baby Boomers in the organization. As the proportion of Millennials to Baby Boomers increases over time, age generational differences are projected to become more pronounced.

The dominant preference for COMFORTABLE SPACES (i.e., access to light and fresh air, with acceptable temperatures and control of unwanted noise) reported by Millennials is also echoed by Baby Boomers who report COMFORTABLE SPACES as second to QUALITY SPACES (i.e., well maintained and purposeful workspaces). Workspace quality throughout University Extension should be investigated in detail to determine the underlying nature of this finding.