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MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE STRATEGIES

FOR 21ST CENTURY MANAGERS

By

GAIL M. CUSHING

A doctoral dissertation submitted to the
College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
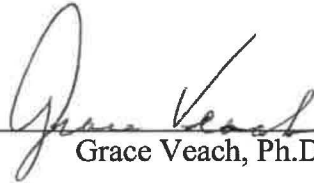for the degree Doctor of Education
in Organizational Leadership

Southeastern University
July, 2019

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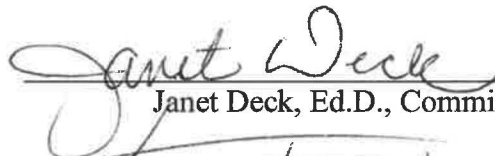
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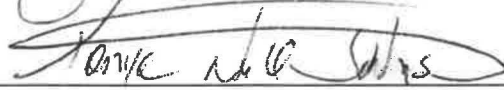
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DEDICATION

       This dissertation is dedicated to Norman, the best proofer ever. You are missed on so many levels. See you at the pearly gates.… And to Ruth; who has always been there for me through the good, the bad, and the ugly. This is for you. I am proud of us. To Karen… you are "one of a kind". Thank you for your friendship. And finally to Romona and Cassie, my unseen angels. What would I have done without you?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I stand tall and thank the three women who stood by me through this process, I appreciate all of you: Dr. Tonya White-Johnson, my third reader, whose words of wisdom so long ago brought me to this point; Dr. Janet Deck, my methodologist; you took my hand and brought me out of the wilderness on so many levels and Dr. Grace Veach, my chair, my rock and my doctoral mentor who stuck by me and offered good sound words of wisdom. Also a huge thank you to Juanita Folsom, for praying me through this process and allowing me to whine when I was tired. This degree is definitely a test of endurance.

ABSTRACT

At any given time, managers can employ up to five generations of individuals in the workplace. Each generational cohort enhances the workplace with their own belief system, habits, attitude, and work expectations. The manager's responsibility to both the organization and the workforce is to bring all the employees together to foster shared values and work towards the organization's common goal. The aim of this qualitative collective case study was to investigate the strategies managers use to direct a multigenerational workforce in today's marketplace. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews from managers in the banking, educational, grocery, medical, non-profit, restaurant, and retail industries. Participants shared their experiences and skills used in maintaining a multi-generational workforce. The data was analyzed and conclusions were drawn based on the participants' responses. The results of this study demonstrated that open communication and constant employee feedback were not only the managers' main objectives when interacting with their workforce but also their greatest area of opportunity for improvement.

Keywords: multi-generational workforce, open communication, employee feedback, transformational leadership theory, Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, GenX, GenY, GenZ

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I. INTRODUCTION

As more generations find their way into the 21st-century workforce, managers are striving to find commonalities to build functioning work teams. Each generation has unique characteristics and talents that can add diversity and value to the workforce. The responsibility of the manager is to understand each generation in order to create a work environment that inspires, motivates, and that is healthy and productive while also maintaining the core values of the organization (Cekada, 2012; Jenkins, 2008; Savino, 2017).

The 21st-century workplace may contain an unprecedented five generations of workers, and they each bring their own belief system, habits, attitudes, and work expectations to the organization. The Silent Generation (born 1922-1945) are portrayed as having qualities of discipline and loyalty. The Baby Boomers (born 1945-1964) are characterized as hardworking and optimistic. The Gen Xers (born 1965-1981) are thought to be self-reliant and task-oriented. Millennials (born 1982-2000), also referred to as Gen Yers, are considered to be the self-directed eager group. The Gen Zers, the most recent cohort, are seen as creative and flexible (Wiedmer, 2015). Considering the age span of almost eight decades, "managing a multi-generational workforce with different perceptions and goals is extremely challenging in today's organizations" (Shrivastava, Ikonen, & Savolainen, 2017, p. 258).

The quest to better understand the multi-generational workforce is a relatively new area of study challenging researchers and scholars. Common goals, such as innovation, production, and employee retention, have emerged as managers identify and strategize generational workplace diversity. The aim of this research was to explore

multi-generational workforce strategies for managers to use in the workplace. First, the researcher gained an understanding of how differences in each generation's work values influence the workforce. Second, the researcher probed for meaningful results on how managers operate in the workplace and direct multi-generational staff members toward a common goal.

Background of the Study

Today's workforce is facing a new paradigm as five generational cohorts work together to achieve organizational success. Generational cohorts are those individuals born in a "limited span of consecutive years whose boundaries are fixed by peer personality" (Glass, 2007, p. 98). One challenge facing managers today is adapting to the diverse values and expectations associated with each of the different cohorts in a multigenerational work environment. Supervisors exhibiting transformational leadership skills tap into "the motives of followers…who engage with others and create a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality" (Northhouse, 2016, p. 162). A cohesive workplace depends on how well managers embrace, develop, and support their multigenerational staff (Hahn, 2011). To avoid confusion and aid in defining the various cohorts, experts have categorized and named each generation (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014; Glass, 2007; Johnson, 2015; Locmele-Lunova & Cirjevskis, 2017; Mokoka, 2015).

The Silent Generation (born 1929–1945) is the oldest cohort in the workforce. The Silents are the generation that grew up with the notion to be seen and not heard. Therefore, this cohort tends to be "withdrawn and cautious, but imaginative" (Mokoka, 2015, p. 42). Silents are a very dedicated generation who are sacrificing, patient, and

respectful of authority. "Although they are technologically challenged and slow to change work habits, they are hard working and good team players" (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014, p. 47). Moreover, their dedication and loyalty to their employers often lead them to stay with the same employer their entire working life (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014; De Meuse & Mlodzik, 2010; Hahn, 2011; Mokoka, 2015).

The Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964) grew up during a time of economic prosperity, are loyal to their employers, and place their work life above their home life (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014; De Meuse & Mlodzik, 2010; Hahn, 2011). Many Boomers still prefer printed materials versus digital and enjoy face-to-face interactions. Since they are less tech-savvy than other generations, the ability to keep up with technological developments sometimes hinders their job performance (Johnson, 2015). The Boomers are enticed by personal development, promotions, and work/life challenges (Johnson, 2015). Furthermore, Boomers can be motivated by perks and prestige and "define themselves by their accomplishments" (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014, p. 47). Boomers are the most productive of the five cohorts (Mokoka, 2015). However, according to Johnson (2015), the generation is less inclined to welcome change. Since the Boomers need recognition in the workplace (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014), they are more competitive than other generations (Johnson, 2015).

Born between 1965 and 1979, Generation Xers are a self-sufficient cohort who tend to want "action rather than talk and promises" (Hahn, 2011, p. 121). They have a strong desire to learn and will not hesitate to change jobs in the quest for greater opportunities for growth and development (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014; De Meuse & Mlodzik, 2010; Hahn, 2011; Johnson, 2015). Mokoka (2015) has suggested that

managers who create a workplace conducive to continuous learning and growth will entice Generation Xers to remain with their employer According to Hahn (2011), Xers' greatest area of opportunity is their need to change jobs if the current job does not offer the flexibility they need for their lives. Xers also lack a strong presence in executive senior management positions (Johnson (2015).

Generation Yers, born between 1980 and 2000, encompass a 20-year span. Yers want to be listened to in the workplace. They want their perspectives taken into consideration along with "challenging work tasks, independent flexible work environments and the opportunity to customize their benefits to suit their divergent desires" (Johnson, 2015, p. 12). The Y cohort has a high sense of morality and strives to bring about the greater good. Yers are "warm, creative, confident, and upbeat" (Mokoka, 2015, p. 43). Growing up in an era of violence, Yers remain resilient and approach work with a positive, can-do attitude (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014; De Meuse & Mlodzik, 2010; Hahn, 2011; Johnson, 2015; Mokoka, 2015). However, according to Johnson (2015) the Y generation has a short attention span, does not perform well in a team environment, and are seen as hardworking as their previous cohorts.

The Generation Z cohort began in 2001. The first members of this cohort have recently started college and/or entered the workforce. Zers are a pragmatic cohort that "places heavy emphasis on being mature and in control" (Williams, 2015, p. 6). Lanier (2017) contended that the Zers are "the first truly digital native generation" (p. 289) and have been connected to technology from birth, consuming information faster than any previous generation. Many Zers do not know of a time without the internet, social media, or cell phones. Meehan (2016) noted that technology has allowed the cohort to be out in

the world, "exploring, learning, meeting, and forming communities all on their own, with no physical boundaries" (para. 13). Generation Z "brings the strength of tech fluency to the workplace" (Lanier, 2017, p. 289) with an ethos of social justice. The most interesting Generation Z paradigm is how they are driven by traditional opportunities for advancement, improved work security, and better benefits similar to the Silent Generation (Lanier, 2017; Williams, 2015). However, according to Jiří (2016), soft skills such as active listening, and working well in a team environment are Gen Zers greatest areas of opportunity in the workforce.

A review of the literature revealed the importance of cohering the multi-generational workplace. A number of scholarly articles have been written regarding the first four cohorts. In contrast, meaningful academic research on Generation Z in the workforce is very limited. *The New York Times* author Alex Williams (2015) provided a well-written article concerning the Zers who are now entering the workforce.

Jenkins (2008) suggested that, in order to shape and guide the success of the workplace, managers "must remain open to new ideas and encourage innovation from everyone and provide constant feedback" (p. 24). Successful 21st-century managers understand the need to create a work environment that mutually respects all the cohorts and uses the attributes of each generation to create a functioning and successful workplace (Hahn, 2011; Nichols, Horner, & Fyfe, 2015). Nichols et al. (2015) stressed the importance of a manager's ability to adhere to strict policies and guidelines when addressing the complexity of issues surrounding the multi-generational workforce. Jiří (2016) concluded that the Yers and Zers "move fast in order to make an impact on the corporation, most of the middle generations (Xers) struggle with the corporation's

mission, and the older generations (Boomers and Seniors) do not like changes" (p. 119).

The responsibility lies with the managers to build a successful multi-generational workplace and in doing so learn to understand each generation and their strengths and areas of opportunity.

This research was grounded in the transformational leadership theory. The importance of transformational leadership emerged through political sociologist James MacGregor Burns in 1978 (Bass & Riggio, 2014; Northhouse, 2016). Transformational leadership is "the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower" (Northhouse, 2016, p. 162). The effectiveness of a multi-generational workforce depends on the manager's willingness to engage in transformational leadership strategies in the workplace. Northhouse (2016) outlined four factors that researchers found present in transformational leaders.

- Idealized influence or charisma: Transformational leaders act as a role model through exemplary behavior that encourages trust and empowerment amongst their followers.
- Inspirational motivation: Transformational leaders use their vision to inspire others. Leaders challenge followers to achieve his or her best through recognition and authenticity.
- Intellectual stimulation: Transformational leaders inspire creativity and encourage followers to achieve higher levels of performance. Situations are seen as teachable moments.

- Individualized concern: Transformational leaders act as a mentor and assist followers in achieving his or her full potential in the workplace.

Qualities of the transformational leader are important to understand; however, the contribution of the transformational leadership to "the commitment and its concomitants of involvement, loyalty, and satisfaction" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 32) was the topic of this research. In addition, Bass and Riggio asserted that transformational leadership affects the performance of both manager and follower within organizations. Constituents have an extraordinary commitment under the direction of the transformational leadership strategies taken on by the leaders. Such strategies as defined by Bass and Riggio (2006), Burns (1979), and Northhouse (2016) are a style of leadership that identifies the change needed within an organization and implements the change by creating a vision to guide followers through the change.

Conceptual Framework

The research study examined the interaction managers have with their multi-generational workforce. Research in this area added to the growing literature regarding five specific cohorts of employees working together to achieve shared values and common goals. The results of this study provided effective techniques that can aid managers in supervising multiple generations in the workplace.

Understanding the interactions between supervisors and subordinates on a multi-generational level proved beneficial for managers to successfully strategize their business. Figure 1 shows a basic assumption profile regarding each generation that may be working together in an organization.

GENERATIONAL PROFILE:
MAJOR CONSUMER GROUPS IN U.S.

	MATURES	BOOMERS	GEN XERS	MILLENNIALS	GEN WE
Years Born	1945 and before	1946 - 1964	1965 - 1977	1978 - 1995	1996 - 2016
Age in 2016	71 + yrs. old	52 - 70 yrs. old	39 - 51 yrs. old	21 - 38 yrs. old	0 - 20 yrs. old
Cultural Ethos	Uncertainty; Conformity	Prosperity; Counterculture	Disillusionment; Information	Globalization; Social Responsibility	War on Terror; Social Justice
Population	31.7 million	79.2 million	63.4 million	87.2 million	82.1 million
Median Income	$36,895	$60,580	$66,693	$54,243	$21,000*
Outlook	Practical	Optimistic	Skeptical	Hopeful	Savvy

Population source: Census Population Estimates, December 2014
Income Source: Estimate based on Census Population Estimates, December 2014, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2ⁿᵈ Qtr 2016
*Ages 16-19

PANORAMIX global®

(Credit Source: Panoramix Global)

Figure 1. The overall profile of the generational cohorts working in the United States based on the 2014 population census. Adapted from "The Next Generation: What Matters to Gen We," by M. Meehan, 2016. Retrieved from Forbes website: https://www.forbes.com/sites/marymeehan/2016/08/11/the-next-generation-what-matters-to-gen-we/.

Significance of the Study

The workplace is no longer bound to one generation of workers. In today's marketplace, an organization may have up to five generations working side by side to achieve the company's goals. As generations bring their own perspectives and assumptions, the manager's responsibility is to lead all employees toward shared values and a common goal. Coulter et al. (2014) remarked that with varying cohorts working together, reaching the organization's goal may present workplace problems and challenges for the manager. Therefore, the results of this collective case study offered organizational managers valuable insights into the different generational cohorts' experiences, assumptions, values, and experience. Through this exploratory research model, managers validated approaches, methods, and strategies used to deliver optimal results within their organizations. Furthermore, the researcher identified commonalities

and themes faced by managers who have experienced a multi-generational workforce. Finally, the results of this research contributed to the conversation already being discussed by managers and researchers as a basis for consideration of additional strategic tools used in the workplace.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this collective case study was to gain a deeper understanding of the various strategies managers use to direct a multi-generational workforce. First, the researcher gained an understanding of how differences in each generation's work values influence the workforce. Second, the researcher probed for meaningful results on how managers supervise multi-generational staff members toward the organization's common goal.

Overview of Methodology

The intent of the proposed collective case study was to explore various strategies managers used to direct multi-generational employees. The holistic inquiry delved into the collection of in-depth and detailed data that was "rich in content and involve[d] multiple sources of information including interviews and audio-visual material" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 97). A case study approach provided valuable information that aided in developing new workplace strategies for managers of the multi-generational labor force.

Research Design

The research design was a qualitative study of a group of managers from the banking, educational, grocery, medical, non-profit, restaurant, and retail industries. The qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A).

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Managers representing age, race, and gender diversity were interviewed. Upon approval from Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the managers were contacted by phone and/or email and an appointment was arranged for the interviews.

Research Questions

This case study explored these fundamental questions:

1. How do managers foster shared values in a multi-generational workforce?

2. How do managers direct their multi-generational workforce toward the organization's common goals?

Data Collection

The qualitative data was collected using a semi-structured interview (see Appendix A). The researcher conducted individual half-hour interviews with each manager. The managers represented a diverse age, race, and gender population across seven specific industries. The researcher obtained consent from each of the participants (see Appendix B) and scheduled an appointment to conduct the interview. The interviews were audio-recorded using a Sony Digital Voice Recorder and transcribed at a later date. Next, the researcher then "reduce[d] the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes" (Creswell, 2018, p. 183). The themes were compared and summarized using charts.

Procedures

This collective case study was based on managers who supervise multi-generational workforces. The researcher chose a diverse population of managers who, through interviews, illustrated how and why shared values and common goals are important in a multi-generational workforce. An email was sent to the selected managers

inviting them to participate in the case study. The semi-structured interview questions were designed to delve into the lived experiences of the participants. Each contributor was scheduled for the interview and given a copy of the research questions (see Appendix A). Each interviewee was required to read and sign the consent form (see Appendix B). The researcher audio-recorded each interview and transcribed the session. In order to ensure accuracy from the interviewee, each participant was presented with the transcription for validation.

Limitations

This study was based on the transformational leadership theory. Creswell (2018) suggested that consistencies with qualitative methods of research are not generalizable to a universal population. Therefore, limitations may include the following:

- The study was limited to the manager's perception of a multi-generational workforce.

- The study was conducted in diversified organizations in Florida; therefore, the results could not be generalized beyond the intended population.

- The study was bound by the limited questions each participant was asked.

- The potential for biases on the part of the interviewee due to high organizational loyalty existed.

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions provide a common understanding of terms that are used throughout the research study.

- Silent Generation: Born between 1922-1945, Silents display discipline and loyalty qualities (Wiedmer, 2015).

- Boomer Generation: Born between 1945-1964, Boomers are hardworking and optimistic (Wiedmer, 2015).

- Generation Xers: Born between 1965-1981, Xers are self-reliant and task-oriented (Wiedmer, 2015).

- Generation Yers*:* (also referred to as Millennials): Born between 1982-2000, Yers are the self-directed and eager cohort (Wiedmer, 2015).

- Generation Zers*:* (also referred to as Gen We): Born beginning in 2000, Zers are creative and flexible (Wiedmer, 2015).

- Case Study*:* A case study involves the study of an issue "explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 97).

- Transformational Leadership Theory*:*   Transformational leadership theory is based on the process leaders use that changes and transforms followers by tapping into his or her emotions and values. "Using a process that integrates charismatic and visionary leadership, followers are inspired to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them" (Northhouse, 2016, p. 162).

Summary

The results of this study contributed to the conversation regarding the multi-generational workforce and how managers foster shared values and lead team members toward the common goals of the organization. Through the shared experiences of the managers interviewed, the researcher gained a better understanding of how managers lead their teams.

This dissertation, rooted in transformational leadership theory, was a qualitative case study. The study was designed to ascertain corroborated information from managers regarding their multi-generational workforce. The researcher sought to determine (a) how managers foster shared values in a multi-generational workforce, and (b) how organizational managers lead multi-generational staff members toward a common goal (see Appendix A).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The intention of this qualitative collective case study was to explore strategies that managers use to direct a multi-generational workforce to foster shared values and achieve the common goals of the organization. For the first time in history, organizations are experiencing up to five generations working side by side in the workplace (Johnson, 2015; Soto & Lugo, 2013). Generational differences are becoming a commonality in the workplace, and organizations are seeking to meet the "altered capabilities and preferences of a generationally diverse workforce" (Hernaus & Vokic, 2014, p. 616). According to Soto and Lugo (2013), generational differences are real, can cause misunderstandings, impact the workplace, and, with a solid understanding, can be minimized. This study is erected on existing research and adds to the conversation of workplace values and shared goals within a multi-generational workforce and demonstrated the need for further research.

Transformational leadership theory was the framework for this research study. Northhouse (2016) expressed transformational leadership as a process. Within an organization, the manager engages with employees to create a connection that will increase and develop the level of motivation. Northhouse contends that transformational leaders are role models, offer encouraging words, stimulate creativity, provide opportunities to learn, and give empathy and support.

The purpose of this review was to analyze literature introducing topics directly involved with multi-generational workforces. The literature described the impact multi-generational employees have on the workforce and how managers can channel the differences to lay the foundation for shared values and common goals.

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Generational Cohorts

The Silent Generation

The Silent Generation (born 1929–1945) is the oldest cohort in the workforce. Al-Asfour and Lettau (2014) as well as Weeks and Schaffert (2017) referred to this group as Traditionalists (1922-1943), Glass (2007) named the cohort Veterans (1925-1940), and Mokoka (2015) included all three cohort titles in her work. The Silents are so named because they did not try to change the government; they worked within it and stayed silent

Growing up during the age of great patriotism and the Great Depression, Silents are a dedicated generation who are sacrificing, patient, and respectful of authority. The Silents are the generation that grew up with the notion to be seen and not heard. Therefore, this cohort tends to be "withdrawn and cautious, but imaginative" (Mokoka, 2015, p. 42). Silents are hardworking team players. However, they do not adapt well to change in the workplace and have difficulty keeping up with technological advancements (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014). Furthermore, Silents have a tendency to stay with the same company their entire work life due to dedication and loyalty to their employer (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014; Hahn, 2011; Meuse & Mlodzik, 2010; Mokoka, 2015). Silents want their jobs to have meaning and describe meaning as being personally challenging and growth-oriented (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Jenkins, 2008; Mokoka, 2015; Weeks & Schaffert, 2017). Interestingly, the Silents view the younger generations as not having as much energy as they do, not working as hard, and not interested in meaningful work.

Jenkins (2008) maintained that the values instilled in this cohort were shaped by the Great Depression, World War II, the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, and the

post-war years that created a conformist society that retained high respect for organizations and authority. Mokoka (2015) and Jenkins (2008) defined the cohort as hardworking conformists. The Silents lived and worked alongside the establishment (Lewis & Wescott, 2017). The Silents mainly consist of retired individuals who have returned to the workforce for financial needs or because they enjoy working. Other Silents have not left the employment arena and have maintained senior management positions in the workforce (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Jenkins, 2008; Mokoka, 2015).

The Baby Boomers

In contrast to the harsh realities of the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) have experienced economic prosperity, which has given them a sense of financial well-being (Johnson, 2015; Soto & Lugo, 2013). Boomers grew up seeking the American dream. However, the "political upheaval from Vietnam, Watergate, and Woodstock, spurred them to rebel against authority and carve lifestyles based on personal values and spiritual growth" (Soto & Lugo, 2013, p. 66). The cohort was shaped by "assassinations (John F. Kennedy, Robert F.Kennedy, Martin Luther King), social unrest, walk on the moon, civil rights movement, women's movement, experimentation with illicit drugs, and the cold war" (Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008, p. 509).

The size of the cohort varies depending on the view each author had. Radner (1998) cited 78 million, Harris (2005) named 76.5 million, Bennett, Pitt, and Price, (2012) quoted 74.1 million, and Weeks (2017) mentioned 71 million. Regardless of the actual total, the Boomers entered the job market at roughly the same time, making the cohort fiercely competitive. Cekada (2012) asserted that, due to the competitive nature of the Boomers, the "work week began to increase from 40 hours per week to an estimated

60 hours" (p. 41).

The Boomers value relationships (Lapoint & Liprie-Spence, 2017), even though historically, the cohort ranks highest with divorce and second marriages (Harris, 2005). Due to the fact that Boomers were educated via traditional learning methods, they learn slightly different than their younger cohorts. Landline telephone calls, letter writing, and driving a stick shift were the norm in the Boomer's life. However, as the cohort grew older and other cohorts emerged with technology, Boomers also became fluent in technology and began using cell phones and tablets (Lapoint & Liprie-Spence, 2017). Boomers respond to having information explained well with clear regular communication that involves adequate support and good rapport with friends, family, and work supervisors (Lewis & Wescott, 2017).

Generation X

One of the more technologically savvy generations in the workforce, Generation Xers (1965-1979) tend to focus on a balance between family, life, and work (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). The struggle for balance in the lives of the GenXers lays the foundation for workplace relationships. In order to achieve a greater balance in life, GenXers do not take job commitment seriously, are more interested in activities outside the workplace, and are willing to work at a lower paying job if offered fewer hours (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Bennett et al., 2012; Glass, 2007). Hahn (2011) documented the importance of quality of life for the Xers. After watching their parents "work long hours and experience downsizing and layoffs" (Hahn, 2011, p. 120), GenXers want to experience action, not idle talk.

GenXers are individuals who seek out work rewards, individual positive

feedback, and recognition as they gravitate towards an action-oriented manager. Shrivastava, Ikonen, and Savolainen (2017) argued that GenXers are a "revolutionary generation, who rise fearlessly against the oppressive work ethics of the Boomer parent generation" (p. 261). GenXers are the generation of latchkey children influenced by the AIDS crisis, oil embargos, and embassy hostages. Ronald Reagan, Nelson Mandela, and Bill Gates taught the generation determination and core values (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Bennett et al., 2012; Cekada, 2012; Glass, 2007; Hahn, 2011; Johnson, 2015). Since the highest divorce rates in history took place during the GenXers timeline, many were raised in households with only one parent (Johnson, 2015). The lives of the GenXers were shaped into adaptable, independent, and creative individuals who are not easily intimidated by authority. Therefore, when the GenXers are not being skeptical and doubtful, they are impatient and quick to find fault in others (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Bennett et al., 2012; Coulter & Faulkner, 2014; Johnson, 2015; Shrivastava et al., 2017).

Generation Y

GenYers (1980-2000) are the most "racially diverse generation in history" (Cekada, 2012, p. 41). The GenYers are also the most technologically learned and well educated of the cohorts. Unlike the GenXers who grew up as latchkey children, the GenYers "were showered with attention and were driven by high expectations from their parents in all facets of life" (Cekada, 2012, p. 41). Due to their upbringing during internet growth and global terrorism, GenYers are a resilient cohort. GenYers learned from their parents the willingness to work hard and set high standards for themselves in order to achieve a self-setting lifestyle (Jenkins, 2008). GenYers value tenacity, optimism, and technical expertise. GenYers need structure and supervision in the

workplace; however, they will not hesitate to move to a new job if their achievement

needs are not met (Bennett et al., 2012; Mokoka, 2015).

According to Gladwell, Dorwart, Stone, and Hammond (2010), GenYers place a

high level of importance on job creativity, and the impact they may have on the job, as

well as seeking organizations that are a "fun place to work" (p. 3). Having grown up in a

technological environment, GenYers are enticed by multimedia and thrive on emails,

Facebook, blogs, and other social media platforms. Johnson (2015) contended that the

cohort wants to be listened to and have their perspectives taken into consideration.

GenYers flourish at work when they receive positive feedback on a regular basis from

their managers.

Generation Z

People in cohort Z (2001-present) are just beginning to enter the workforce. Al-

Asfour and Lettau (2014) described the characteristics, lifestyles, and attitudes of this

generation as "new conservatives embracing traditional beliefs, valuing the family unit,

self-controlled, and more responsible" (p. 65). Therefore, researchers have described.

GenZers as realists who are globally unconventional, and because the cohort was raised

with technology, they seek opportunities beyond the internet in areas such as science and

art (Puiu, 2017).

The GenZers entering the workforce prefer a more flexible work schedule that

offers them the freedom to work where they want when they want; therefore, trying new

jobs seeking contentment and satisfaction is important to the cohort (Puiu, 2017). Hall

(2018) revealed that GenZers are "digital natives who are excellent multitaskers, have

short attention spans, and are highly capable of self-directed or non-traditional learning"
(p. 48).

GenZers prefer online-based learning over textbook reading and consider
YouTube a favored source for knowledge (Mondres, 2019; Puiu, 2017). GenZers have
not known a world without the internet and seek technology to solve their problems
(Mondres, 2019). Sadly, though, Gen Z individuals are "concerned that technology
negatively impacted their ability to develop and maintain strong interpersonal
relationships and people skills" (Hall, 2018, p. 48). Their lack of interpersonal
relationships and people skills equally impacts their development of cognitive skills.
Hall (2018) ascertained that the shortfall of cognitive skills impedes other skills such as
problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication. However, GenZers are a cohort
who want to feel valued in the workplace and be established in a job position with growth
opportunities.

Defining the Current Workplace

Generational Workforce Percentage

Understanding the uniqueness of each of the generational cohort in the workplace
is a positive step to ensure organizations not only thrive but give the best opportunities to
their multi-generational workforce. Based on research by De Meuse and Mlodzik (2010),
each cohort is motivated by a different set of values and common goals. De Meuse and
Mlodzik asserted that, due to significant life experiences, the generations have
characteristically different mannerisms in the workplace.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2018), approximately 156 million
people are employed in the United States. The largest group are Millenials with

approximately 49 million workers or 42% of the labor pool. As Table 1 indicates,

estimates showed that in 2018 roughly 6% of the total labor force were Traditionalists,

17% Boomers, 31 % GenXers, 42% Millennials, and 3% GenZers.

Table 1

Current Workforce Statistics

2018 Labor Force Statistics						
	TOTAL, 16 years and over	16 to 19 years	20 to 39 years	40 to 54 years	55 to 73 years	74 years and over
		Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Boomers	Traditionalists
Total Employed	**155,761**	5,126	47,375	32,373	26,565	9,705
Percent of Total	**100%**	3.29%	42.17%	31.26%	17.05%	6.23%

Note. As shown in Table 1, the labor force statistics span the workforce from ages 16 to 74 years and older. The total of employed persons is broken down into age groups and the percentage of each group in relation to the total employed. Adapted from United States Department of Labor. (2018). Demographic Characteristics (CPS). Retrieved March 6, 2019, from Bureau of Labor Statistics website: https://www.bls.gov/cps/demographics.htm.

Generational Workforce Positions

The top industries shaping the 21st-century workforce are manufacturing (12.8

million employees), retail trade (15.8 million employees), professional and business

services (21 million employees), education and health services (23.9 million employees),

leisure and hospitality (16.6 million employees), government (22.5 million employees),

and local government (14.5 million employees) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018).

Table 2 is a visual tool published in 2019 by the U.S. Department of Labor

depicting the top seven employment levels by industry.

Table 2

Top Employment By Industry (in Thousands)

Employment Levels by Industry: September 2018-February 2019 (in thousands)							
	Manufacturing	Retail Trade	Professional and Business Services	Education and Health Services	Leisure and Hospitality	Government	Local Government
Sept 2018	12,733	15,804	21,128	23,779	16,371	22,494	14,493
Oct 2018	12,762	15,794	21,183	23,816	16,450	22,486	14,491
Nov 2018	12,789	15,826	21,217	23,845	16,489	22,482	14,498
Dec 2018	12,809	15,821	21,254	23,912	16,554	22,485	14,504
Jan 2019	12,830	15,834	21,269	23,976	16,643	22,488	14,512
Feb 2019	12,834	15,828	21,311	23,980	16,643	22,483	14,508

Note. As shown in Table 2, there are seven top industry titles depicting the amount of employees (in thousands) working in each sector spanning a course of six months. Adapted from United States Department of Labor. (2018). Demographic Characteristics (CPS). Retrieved March 6, 2019, from Bureau of Labor Statistics website: https://www.bls.gov/cps/demographics.htm.

Generational Diversity

Diversity in the 21st-century workplace may create challenges for both management and employees. Kowske, Rasch, and Wiley (2010) argued that workplace viewpoints differ amongst the various generations; however, tailoring the workplace to fit the needs of one cohort over another is not an exact antecedent for organizational success towards another. Kowske et al. (2010) cited "popular press" (p. 265) as describing the workplace as a "psychological battlefield, wherein buttoned-down, self-centered Millennials clash with their stodgy, rule-abiding Baby Boomer bosses" (p. 265). Bartley, Ladd, and Morris (2007) suggested that the challenges employees encounter due to the emergence of generational misunderstandings cause employers to educate employees

about intergenerational cohorts to bridge the gaps within the organization. The responsibility of the manager is to both understand there is a generational phenomenon and learn to recognize the talents each cohort brings to the workplace (Bartley et al., 2007).

The stability of an organization depends on managers leading the diverse workforce of cohorts to achieve peak performance. Even though there is no official year that marks the beginning or ending time period of a specific cohort, Clark (2017) was still able to describe a cohort as a group of individuals "who grew up in the same era and experienced social and historical events that shaped similar characteristics and core values" (p. 379). Consequently, the cohort members who are in the same age group and grew up during the same time span are better able to relate with each other through work values, and ethics (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Bartley et al., 2007; Clark, 2017; Glass, 2007; Johnson, 2015; Soto & Lugo, 2013). Organizational performance and employees' productivity will increase as managers come to appreciate what each generation has to offer the workplace and use those differences to motivate, inspire, and build new strategies to increase productivity in the workplace.

Generational Education Levels

A key strategy managers utilize is the learning preference each cohort relates to. Clark (2017) maintained that generational differences dictate how each person can and will learn. Therefore, in today's society student learners show no age boundaries when it comes to the education levels (Sánchez & Kaplan, 2014). Sánchez and Kaplan (2014) suggested that generational positions are "meaningful in terms of learning and education for they are somehow linked to facets of the identity of individuals and collectives" (p.

475). Sánchez and Kaplan (2014) argued that the educational background of each cohort does not differ by age alone but by the experiences each cohort shared with the preceding generation.

Wiedmer (2015) postulated the loyal and disciplined Silent Generation viewed education as a dream and were the least educated of all the generations due to global conflicts and economic depression. Boomers, on the other hand, had numerous educational opportunities during the economic upswing (Clark, 2017). Due to the educational opportunities offered by the Silent Generation, Boomers were educated in university lecture halls and were the first generation to earn college degrees (Wiedmer, 2015). Boomers lived to work and sacrificed personal interests until the job was completed (Johnson, 2015). Consequently, the Boomers are out of step with the less-educated Silents yet not as technically advanced as the GenXers.

Clark (2017) concluded that due to the rapid technological advancements that shaped educational advancements, GenXers, GenYers, and GenZers all have advantages Boomers and Silents never had. Wiedmer (2015) stated that 29% of the GenXers obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. Even though GenXers had access to computers at a young age, they were still educated in the classroom (Clark, 2017).

Similar to the GenX cohort, GenYers are also a tech-savvy educated cohort. Wiedmer (2015) reported that GenYers are the most educated generation, with 60% of the 80 million individuals having a college education. Clark (2017) added to the conversation by confirming that GenYers are entrepreneurial and differ from the Boomers in areas such as their pursuit of workplace and home life happiness. GenYers do not commit to one career but move around the marketplace seeking new and better

opportunities. GenYers strive for "independent learning that implements thorough and comprehensive online research" (Wiedmer, 2015, p. 55). GenYers solicit hands-on learning platforms, expecting instant gratification when an assignment is completed (Clark, 2017).

The least studied of all the cohorts is GenZers. The generation is now beginning to enter the educational arena, so many of the cohort's traits have yet to emerge (Clark, 2017). Wiedmer (2015) summarized GenZers as the most home-schooled generation on record, stating that "many are highly connected to having the lifelong use of communication and technology such as the World Wide Web, instant messaging, text messaging, MP3 players, moblie phones and tablets" (p. 55). GenZers are highly intelligent and "need to be challenged by their teachers with project-based, active-learning opportunities" (Wiedmer, 2015, p. 56). Similar to the GenXers and GenYers, Zers have short attention spans which cause them difficulty with traditional learning situations (Clark, 2017; Wiedmer, 2015).

Generational Workplace Ethics

Generational cohorts hold "different perceptions of each other, which can result in conflict and misunderstandings in the workplace" (Meriac, Woehr, & Banister, 2010, p. 315). Meriac et al. (2010) defined workplace ethics as a "set of beliefs and attitudes reflecting the fundamental value of work" (p. 316). Since organizations have globalized, many companies have experienced behavioral issues due to the vast variety of cohorts working side by side. Issues involving values and beliefs have come to the forefront. The workforce can now entertain up to five generations and there is bound to be ethical behavior concerns. Van der Walt, Jonck, and Sobayeni (2016) posited that "ethical

behavior may be influenced by historical events and diversity variables in the workplace" (p. 52) and concluded that "appropriate prevention or management of conflict…including the reduction in the number of misunderstandings" (p. 53) may be the overall framework for the success of the organization.

Workplace Expectations

Presently organizations have up to five generational cohorts working together in the workplace. Murray, Toulson, and Legg (2011) contended that "managing diversity is becoming an organizational imperative" (p. 477) and suggested that generational cohort diversity is a valid form of diversity. Clark (2017 explained that a cohort or generation is all the people in the same age group that have experienced the same events in life such as war, economic conditions, and historical, cultural, and social movements.

Moore, Grunberg, and Krause (2015) defined workplace expectations as "the beliefs one holds regarding what he or she thinks the company will provide in terms of pay, benefits, career development training, and job security" (p. 348). In their study, Moore et al. found some evidence that employee experiences within an organization are linked to higher or lower expectations. For example, GenYers and GenXers "report a significantly greater expectation of support by the company in the areas of career development, rapid advancement, and job training as compared to Baby Boomers" (p. 359). Moore et al. assumed the possibility that Baby Boomers, reaching the end of their careers, "simply expected less support in their career development, including less ongoing or job training" (p. 359).

Handling Conflict

Workplace expectations and ethics vary between generational cohorts. Gaining

an understanding of the cohort's diverse approaches to work ethics can be challenging. However, "embracing and valuing each generation for its strengths and recognizing generational diversities in the workplace will help create a dynamic, rich, engaging, and fulfilling work environment in which all team members feel valued and supported" (André, 2018, p. 13).

Organizational conflict may erupt between workers if there are incompatible goals or differences in beliefs and values. Often times, human feelings play a large part in workplace conflict. André (2018) maintained that "conflict behaviors are exhibited most often when individuals misunderstand another persons' perspective, intent, or perception of the situation" (p. 16). Andre (2018) contended that conflict left unresolved can become suppressed and may lead to greater conflict and found that in order to resolve conflict, all individuals involved need to reach a "mutually agreed-upon solution and commit themselves to execute the agreement" (p. 16).

Conflict is a natural occurrence in all organizations. However, learning to confront and manage the conflict will result in abundant positive outcomes. André (2018) established that "conflict resolution is achieved when all individuals reach a mutually agreed-upon solution and commit themselves to executing the agreement" (p. 16). Resolving conflict may be time-consuming, but teaching soft skills such as mutual respect, active listening, communication skills, recognizing differences, and emotional intelligence will increase the acceptable change in the workplace (André, 2018).

Another conflict resolution technique in the workplace is mentoring. André (2018) established that mentoring inspires generational cohorts to "share their expertise with colleagues, provide positive feedback, and encourage an atmosphere of team

building" (p. 22). Embracing the diversity in the workplace through mentorship and team building can reduce, prevent, and resolve workplace conflict. Mentorship enables one generation to promote ideas and expertise with another generation, engaging all cohorts in lifelong learning.

Issues Between Cohorts

Shared Values and Goals

Bennett et al. (2012) argued that the values each cohort brings to the workplace may impact or influence the organizational performance. Aligning generational cohorts with shared values enables employees to work together for the common goal of the company. Furthermore, Clark (2017) promoted the importance of "understanding each cohort and accommodating differences in attitudes, values, and behaviors" (p. 392).

As multi-generational cohorts gain employment in organizations, job duties and productivity (Hernaus & Vokic, 2014); attitudes, ethics, and performance (Soto & Lugo, 2013); employee engagement (Lapoint & Liprie-Spence, 2017); and shared values (Yogamalar & Samuel, 2016) are all factors that influence employee behavior in the workplace. The shared values each cohort brings to the workplace "influence positive outcomes to employees and organizations, workplace adjustment and career success" (Yogamalar & Samuel, 2016, p. 250).

Cennamo and Gardner (2008) classified work values as "extrinsic (job security and benefits), intrinsic (stimulating and challenging), altruistic (contribution to society), and freedom-related (work-life balance and working hours)" (p. 892). Each generational cohort stands under a defined and classified work value umbrella.

Silents and Baby Boomers are extrinsic and seek job security, and offer

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commitment, loyalty, dedication, and hard work in exchange for longevity with the company (Johnson, 2015). GenXers and GenYers are both intrinsic and have freedom-related values. The two cohorts seek to balance their work-home life, independence, and autonomy and may be viewed as selfish (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Johnson, 2015). Many of the traits GenZers have are yet to emerge. However, the cohort is showing signs of contributing to the altruistic classification. Wiedmer (2015) concluded that "although young, it appears that Gen Z will mobilize around causes and be more socially and environmentally aware than previous generations" (p. 55).

Shared Workspace

In the 21st century workplace, organizations are operating in a highly competitive market with a multi-generational workforce. Companies are seeking to recruit individuals on a global level to meet the needs of the organization and, in turn, must also meet the needs of their employees (Dul, Ceylan, & Jaspers, 2011). In many instances, in order to accommodate the needs of the changing workforce, a 21st-century office may include "open plan offices, cubicles, and ergonomic furniture…plants, non-crowded workspace, and direct window views" (Dul et al., 2011, p. 716). Earle (2003) maintained that "many companies find that providing a productive, flexible and dynamic work environment can be a critical asset in attracting and retaining valuable employees" (p. 245). Organizations found that sifting through the generational talent pool in order to meet the needs of long-term recruitment, employee development, and retention strategies grew to become an interesting challenge (Dul et al., 2011; Earle, 2003; Hirst, Van Knippenberg, & Zhou, 2009).

The Silent Generation believes in the sanctity of work. The cohort rarely

questions authority and tends to be very loyal to their employer (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011). Similar to the Boomers, Silents thrive on face-to-face meetings. The cohort embraces new technology and can conform easily to the look and feel of the updated workplace (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011).

Earle (2003) explained that the Baby Boomers entered the workforce during the days of corporate conformity. Boomers found there was "comforting certainty that the harder they worked, the further ahead they got" (Earle, 2003, p. 246). Boomers have always been proud of their expertise and knowledge in their field and thrive on status, respect, and recognition in a stable, quiet, calm work environment (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Bennett et al., 2012; Cekada, 2012; Coulter & Faulkner, 2014; Glass, 2007; Johnson, 2015). Boomers are more productive in an enclosed office, contrary to the tech-savvy environment of the younger generations. Earle (2003) remarked that Boomers "are much more willing to work in a less traditional, more hectic environment if they are given greater flexibility and autonomy" (p. 246) in the workplace.

GenXers grew up watching corporate downsizing, so the cohort does not place much worth on providing employee loyalty. Kapoor and Solomon (2011) stated that Xers are "distrustful of hierarchy and are attracted to flattened organizational structures and empowered teams" (p. 247). The cohort thrives in a work environment that provides the needed flexibility for them to balance the efforts of work and home life. Earle (2003) maintained that GenXers are "willing to work very hard, but only as long as they feel their work is appreciated and valued" (p. 247).

Similar to the GenXers, GenYers seek to be engaged and valued. This cohort is "averse to rules and hierarchy and longs for mentoring, community, recognition, and

structure" (Earle, 2003, p. 248). GenYers thrive on the open floor plans of the 21st-century workplace and enjoy being part of the work family. Earle (2003) concluded that the cohort is characterized by the acceptance they have of technology, diversity, and change. GenYers are "looking for active, alive, open, and informal workplaces that offer the latest technology" (p. 248).

Kapoor and Solomon (2011) noted that each generational cohort brings diversity and experience to the workplace. Through the shared workplace, strength is gained because "everyone desires a workplace and culture that not only allows but encourages people to be a productive and influential contributor" (p. 315).

Cohesive Teams

The 21st-century workforce is comprised of multi-generational cohorts working together and recognizing the inherent diversity within the team (Moore, Everly, & Bauer, 2016). As the various cohorts interact, so do the characteristics, strengths, and needs of each individual emerge. The challenge of multigenerational teams is to "capitalize on the knowledge of each generation and understand what motivates and challenges the team members" (Douglas, Howell, Nelson, Pilkington, & Salinas, 2015, p. 11). Developing communication, trust, and cooperation amongst the cohorts is a key element in building a cohesive workforce.

Well-rounded, highly functioning teams have developed a camaraderie amongst the cohorts. Douglas et al. (2015) discussed how communication, commitment, accountability, trust, and conflict resolution can help create mutual team respect. Communication can be enhanced through training exercises, which can include role-playing, presentations, and breakout sessions integrating the cohorts. A team that lacks

commitment also lacks accountability. Douglas et al. reported that establishing a signed team agreement including points on mutual respect for each generation and understanding that each cohort has a different perspective on what respect means can hold each team member accountable for reaching the goals and attaining the results set forth by the organization. Trust is a key ingredient for team members to willingly admit to mistakes, share their weaknesses, and work together to build a strong team. The work teams who trust each other, are able to communicate, are committed to the goals of the organization, and agree to the terms of the agreement the manager drafted are more likely to overcome the fear of conflict and are more apt to express opinions and discuss new ideas and theories (Douglas et al., 2015).

In their study, Valeau, Willems, and Parak, (2016) concluded that involving the entire team with the implementation of daily activities will effectively bond employees of all generations. The efficiency of the cohesive workforce is based on employee attitudes (Valeau et al., 2016), commitments (Valéau, Vandenberghe, Mignonac, & Turnau, 2013), values (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008), shared ideas (Dul et al., 2011), positive work environments (Earle, 2003), employee creativity (Hirst et al., 2009), and organizational common goals (Yogamalar & Samuel, 2016). The values and attitudes each cohort brings to the workplace influences the cohesiveness of the team members and the overall citizenship of the organizational (Moore et al., 2015).

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leaders

Transformational leaders engage the followers' involvement and true commitment by addressing their sense of self-worth (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Bass and Riggio did not

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coin the phrase *transformational leadership*; Downton (1973) originally used the term in his book titled *Rebel Leadership: Commitment and Charisma in the Revolutionary Process* and defined a process for changing people to act at a higher level for the betterment of others by moving them to do more than what was normally accepted. Blanchard and Peale (1988) defined their transformational leader as having the five principles of ethical leadership, known as the five P's. The leader has a purpose, pride in having balanced self-esteem, patience in believing the processes will work out, persistence to follow the process of betterment, and perspective to stay focused when ideas become cloudy. Burns (1979) wrote about a kind of leadership process that "occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20). Burns described a transformational leader as one who "raises the level of human contact and ethical aspiration of both leader and led" (p. 20), producing a transformational effect on both contributors. Maxwell (2007) established that transformational leaders build up their followers by providing the resources, authority, and empowerment to achieve success within the organization. Maxwell quoted President Theodore Roosevelt: "The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and the self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it" (p. 145).

By motivating others to do more than they originally planned, and by setting higher expectations, transformational leaders usually achieve higher employee performance (Burns, 1979; Gillespie & Mann, 2004). Furthermore, Bass and Riggio (2006) concluded that the transformational leader "motivated others to do more than they originally intended and often even more than they thought possible" (p. 4). Gillespie and

Mann (2004) suggested that "transformational leaders have a strong sense of purpose and play the primary role in establishing and developing trust in teams and organizations" (p. 588). Bass and Riggio (2006) defined the transformational leader as having "more committed and satisfied followers" (p. 4) who empower followers and respect their individual needs and encourage them to asses their own attributes. Transformational leaders inspire followers to "demonstrate commitment to goals and the shared vision" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 6), motivate followers to perform beyond expectations (Gillespie & Mann, 2004), help followers to maintain leadership acceptance, identify with the leader and "view work as an expression of themselves" (Northhouse, 2016, p. 165), and have the "ability to maintain positive interpersonal relationships" (Foulkes-Bert, Volk, Garzon, & Pride, 2019, p. 21). The transformational leader is one who can "inspire their followers, increment their maturity and motivation to go beyond their personal interest, having a direct impact on their colleague's wellbeing and effectiveness" (Sánchez-Cardona, Soria, & Llorens-Gumbau, 2018, p. 2).

Historical Framework of the Transformational Leader

As previously stated, Downton (1973) first coined the term transformational leadership. However, Northhouse (2016) elucidated on the framework and cited James MacGregor Burns as the emergent force who brought the classic work into the 21st century. Burns (1979) contended that "leaders with motive and power bases tap followers' motives in order to realize the purposes of both leaders and followers" (p. 18). Burns defined the transformational leader as one who engages and connects with others to raise the level of motivation, and "leadership, unlike naked power-wielding, is thus inseparable from follower' needs and goals" (p. 19). A transformational leader is

attentive to the followers and works to help each person reach their highest goals and, in the process, is also changed as a leader (Northhouse, 2016). Burns summed his thoughts well when he stated that, without "theoretical and empirical cumulation" (p. 2) and without any practical knowledge or substantial conversations about leadership, knowing what leadership is or how to develop leaders may be a difficult process Burns pointed to Mohandas Gandhi as an example of transformational leadership. Gandhi worked to raise the hopes of millions and in the process was also changed. Burn's notion of transformational leadership laid a foundation to understand the transformational leadership theory in the 21st century. Figure 2 depicts the transformational leadership theory which examines the following four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.
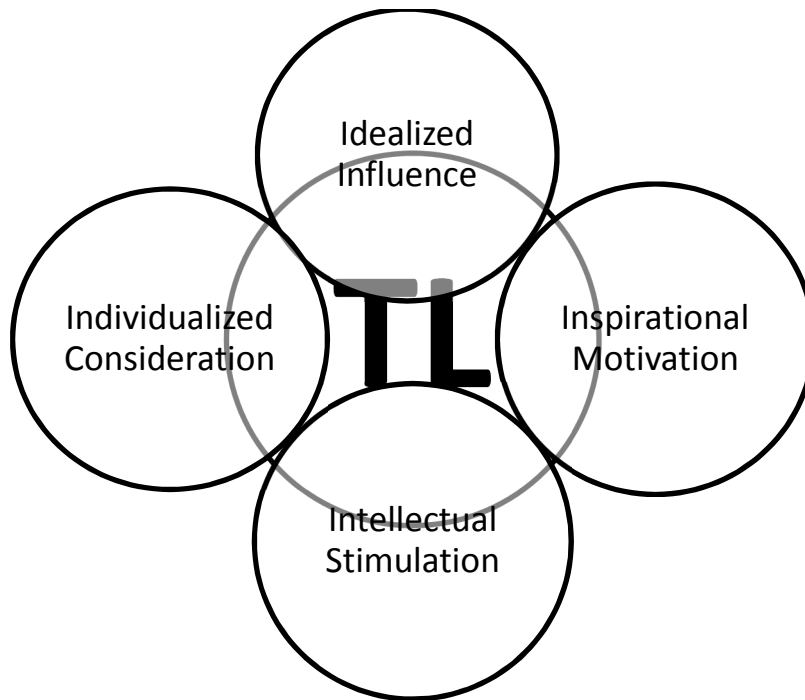
Figure 2. The four dimensions of Transformational Leadership (TL) as explained by Bass and Riggio (2006) Each circle represents an aspect of Transformational Leadership (TL). The four dimensions interconnect to create a whole leader.

Components of Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory has been explored by behavioral sciences for over five decades. Transformational leadership theory is intriguing because it takes a philosophical approach to leadership and aims for change. The four components surrounding transformational leadership offer a better understanding of the breakdown and thought behind the theory.

Idealized Influence. The transformational leaders serve as role models for their followers. Bass and Riggio (2006) explained that the leaders are "admired, respected, and trusted" (p. 6). Followers want to be like the leader, emulating the qualities seen in the leader such as persistence and determination. Zdaniuk and Bobocel (2015) found in their study that idealized influence is directly linked to the collective identity of followers. Employees feel better about their work, and there is a healthier attitude

amongst followers when managers facilitate relationship repair. Therefore, Zdaniuk and

Bobocel maintained that "leaders who raise the accessibility of followers collective

identity (idealized influence) should facilitate forgiveness among employees" (p. 865).

Bass and Riggio concurred by stating that "the leader reassures others that obstacles will

be overcome" (p. 6).

     Inspirational Motivation. According to Bass and Riggio (2006),

transformational leaders motivate and inspire the arousal of team spirit within their

followers. The leaders rally the followers to envision the goal and then "clearly

communicate expectations that followers want to meet and also demonstrate a

commitment to goals and the shared vision" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 6). Inspirational

motivation has a direct correlation with happiness in the workplace (Salas-Vallina &

Fernandez, 2017). The transformational leadership traits include emotional support (Bass

& Riggio, 2006), positive attitudes (Foulkes-Bert et al., 2019), and purpose (Northhouse,

2016). George and Jones (1997) revealed in their study how the positive effect of

transformational leadership influenced followers through inspirational motivation. Salas-

Vallina and Fernandez (2017) confirmed the emotional support the transformational

leader offers by affirming that both "charisma and inspirational motivation are present

when a leader predicts the future, plans how it can be achieved, suggests an example to

follow, sets high levels of performance, and displays conviction" (p. 628).

     Intellectual Stimulation. Intellectual stimulation occurs when the

transformational leader "challenges followers to think of new ways to solve problems"

(Robinson & Boies, 2016, p. 336). Followers are motivated by the transformational

leaders to think critically enabling them to become critical thinking problem solvers who

create solutions that will work (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Sánchez-Cardona et al. (2018) based their report on the leader's ability to continuously encourage team members "to think and perform in new ways by challenging their own beliefs and supporting a new and innovative way of actions" (p. 2). Bass and Riggio (2006) established that intellectual stimulation helped followers feel a stronger connection to the organization and more competent in their career. Furthermore, Bass and Riggio reported that "members start behaving as a team when they display individually considerate and intellectually stimulating transformational leadership behavior toward each other" (p. 165). Thus the high- performing team begins to engage in continuous improvement as they coach, teach, and show empathy towards each other's needs (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2018). As a result, an avenue opens for the leader to express value to each team member's contribution. Such an emotionally encouraging climate stimulates "organization dynamics such as idea-generation, creativity, adaptability to change, and facilitation of the learning processes" (Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2018, p. 5).

  Individualized Consideration. Bass and Riggio (2006) described individualized consideration (IC) as a reflection on an organization's policies that promote the health and well-being of its members and consider team building when members display transformational leadership behaviors towards each other. Rafferty and Griffin (2006) characterized individualized consideration as a way leaders could help followers succeed in the organization's environment. Snell, Yi, and Chak (2013) labeled individualized consideration as an "aspect of leadership style that is characterized by effective listening, mentoring and coaching" (p. 1649), and Zacher, Pearce, Rooney, and McKenna (2014) defined IC as "the leader being caring and nurturing as well as supporting each followers'

personal development" (p. 173). Foulkes-Bert et al. (2019) added to the conversation when they reported that IC occurs when the transformational leader "enables the followers to grow and achieve their full potential based upon the skill set unique to each individual" (p. 33). As transformational leaders take notice of the individual team members, allowing each person the opportunity to develop their own unique skill set, new challenges and opportunities become available (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Rafferty & Griffin, 2006).

Summary

The 21st-century workforce contains an unprecedented five generations of workers at any given time. The manager's responsibility within the multi-generational organization is to be flexible and have the knowledge to recognize that various generational employees are different in their very nature (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Cekada, 2012; Coulter & Faulkner, 2014; Glass, 2007; Johnson, 2015; Mokoka, 2015). Workforce strategies are instrumental for achieving goals, working unanimously towards the organization's vision, and maintaining harmony amongst the generational employees. Glass (2007) surmised that the areas where the generations differ the most are in work ethics, the hierarchy of the organization, and the protocol management uses to communicate information with the team.

Johnson (2015) hypothesized that the most successful multi-generational organizations engage who can distinquish the differences between the cohorts and determine who's ideas are worth exploring and create value for the organization. There is no longer a "one style suits all" (Johnson, 2015, p. 11) workforce. Organizational managers find there is a plethora of talent, personality, experience, knowledge, and

wisdom found within each cohort. Furthermore, managers also found there is a need to explore and better understand the intergenerational diversity found in the workplace. The responsibility of the manager is to channel the differences and lay a solid foundation for shared values and common goals. The purpose of this qualitative study was to add to the conversation regarding strategies in the 21st-century workforce.

III. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The methodology chapter describes the processes and procedures along with the reasoning surrounding this qualitative collective case study. This chapter explains in-depth the information needed to conduct the research, seek out the sample population, and analyze the collected data.

The purpose of the research was to gain a deeper understanding of strategies the 21st-century manager uses to direct a multi-generational workforce. The study investigated how managers cope with the generational differences found in the workplace. The study included the five generations present in today's workforce: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, GenXers, GenYers, and GenZers. Specifically, the research examined how the generational differences in the workplace affect the organization's values. Secondly, the study was designed to probe how managers direct their staff towards the common goals of the company. Understanding the differences found in the workplace may help managers improve the manner in which employees view company values and goals.

The collective case study method was used to seek out plausible answers to each of the research questions. Yin (2018) defined a case study as an empirical method that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth (p. 15) and asks the "how and why" (p. 9) questions the researcher would ask to determine the rationale behind a contemporary set of events where there is little or no control and the boundaries between the context and the phenomenon are not always clearly defined. Furthermore, because "phenomenon and context are not always sharply distinguishable in real-world situations"

(p. 15), the case study enables the researcher to rely on multiple sources of evidence to triangulate a variable of interest to cover an all-encompassing mode of inquiry. Yin concluded that the case study is a "distinctive mode of social science inquiry" (p. 18) that seeks to explain, describe, illustrate, and enlighten, with relevant data, both the researcher and the respondents.

Description of Research Design

The current study utilized a qualitative design. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), authors of *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, "qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world" (p. 7). By using representations of a phenomenon such as interviews, recordings, notes, and conversations, the researcher can draw an interpretive conclusion to a social or human problem. Samul (2017) described qualitative research as a rich description offering strategic comparisons that allow for the generalization of theories. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that "the final written report or presentation includes the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature" (p. 8).

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of managers in organizations that employ a multi-generational workforce in Central Florida. Central Florida was a fitting market for this study because of the diverse population of workers, the experience managers had with multiple generations, and the accessibility of the location. The purposeful sampling used in this study to choose the intended managers represented a diverse age, race, and

gender population from various industries. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that the researcher's own judgment in choosing participants is the primary sampling strategy and that individuals and sites chosen for the study "can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (p. 326).

The criteria for selecting participants included being over the age of 21, having over eight years of supervisory experience, being a multi-generational manager, and being willing to participate in the study. The researcher emailed a letter of invitation to the prospective participants (see Appendix D). Those prospects who responded to the email were contacted by phone and/or email to schedule interview times and dates that were mutually convenient.

Role of the Researcher

 Arnaboldi (2013) explained that the role of the researcher is to contribute to the solution of a problem and also foster a learning environment for both the researcher and the participants. Creswell and Poth (2018) added that the researcher narrows the focus of the study to a specific problem. In the qualitative case study, the researcher describes the relevant aspects of the study including the assumptions, biases, and experiences shared by the participants. Yin (2018) described the researcher as the designer who collects, analyzes, plans, and shares ideas and theories from an eclectic selection of sources. The researcher for this case study has over 20 years of retail management experience with multi-generational employees.

Measure of Ethical Protection

Yin (2018) described a good case study researcher as one who will "strive for the highest ethical standards while doing research" (p. 87).   After gaining approval from the

Southeastern Institutional Review Board (see Appendix C), the researcher contacted

Central Florida area managers and invited them to participate in a half-hour semi-

structured interview (see Appendix A). Once seven managers were confirmed, each was

asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix B) before the interview was conducted. The

participants were given the list of questions (see Appendix A) prior to the interview for

preparedness and avoidance of deception of any kind. The participants knew in advance

the interviews would be documented using a voice recording device and later transcribed

for analysis. In order to protect each individual's identities, the participant received a

pseudonym during the data analysis process. Actual names, dates, raw data, and any

other identifying information were stored in a locked file cabinet and/or password-

protected computer only accessible to the researcher.

Research Questions

This case study explores the fundamental questions:

1. How do managers foster shared values in a multi-generational workforce?

2. How do managers direct their multi-generational workforce toward the organization's

common goals?

Data Collection

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), data collection is an in-depth procedure

used for gathering data. Anticipating the ethical issues involved in gaining permission

from sources to conduct good qualitative interviews is also involved in the procedures.

Creswell and Poth stress the importance of upholding ethical guidelines when working

with human subjects. Three main principles guiding ethical research are "respect for

persons, concern for welfare, and equitable treatment" (p. 151).

Yin (2018) reminds the researcher to have an open and inquiring mind during the data collection process. Yin stressed the need for the researcher to stay flexible and have the ability to make changes in case minor unanticipated events may occur. Marginal changes may include seeking an alternative interviewee in the event the planned person canceled or a different venue if the researcher is unable to gain access to the original venue. Yin maintained that an adaptive researcher may find the new results lead to discovering an unexpected "line of thinking that ultimately helps to make a major contribution to literature" (p. 85).

Instruments used in Data Collection

The same semi-structured interview was administered to each participant using open-ended questions. Seidman (2013) maintained that open-ended questions allow the participants that were utilized in the research freedom to tell their story. Through storytelling, the researcher gains "access to the most complicated social and education issues" (p. 7) based on the experience of the interviewee. Seidman concluded that such experiences lead to the richly descriptive narrative essential for a qualitative study.

The semi-structured interview questions were vetted by a panel of three university professors and deemed satisfactory for this study. Each participant in the study received the questions prior to the interview as an opportunity to be prepared for the taped conversation. Furthermore, each participant was asked to sign a consent form allowing them to be interviewed for the sole purpose of research. The participants knew in advance the interview was to be taped using a small recording device and later transcribed for the purpose of analyzing, coding, and determining possible answers to the two main research questions.

Validity

 Creswell and Poth (2018) concluded that, in order for the whole picture to be presented, the researcher needed bits and pieces of evidence from various sources (interviewees). Yin (2018) suggested that, when seeking validity in qualitative research, constructs such as operational measures should be identified so that the study can be replicated with the same or similar results.

Yin (2018) discussed the criteria for judging the quality of the research. The first tactic, determining construct validity, used multiple sources of evidence. One source of evidence was the seven different and distinct managers who all answered the same series of questions, the basis for the study. Another source was the published experts who added to the conversation on the multi-generational workforce that was being discussed in the literature.

The second tactic, determining internal validity, used pattern matching and explanation building to give evidence of effect over time. The researcher audiotaped, transcribed, and coded each interview to determine patterns and build effective explanations based on the evidence found in the transcription notes and also from the available literature published by experts.

The third tactic Yin (2018) discussed, external validity, referred to the researcher's ability to make vital generalizations regarding the data. Through the coding process, the researcher was able to mark specific parameters that were also discussed in peer-reviewed literature regarding that manager's ability to corral various cohorts together to understand and work toward company's common goals.

The validity, or appropriateness, of the research is compelling for the desired

outcome. The tools, processes, and data used were designed with existential awareness and social interaction in mind. The data extraction and analysis is well-documented with audio recordings and accurately transcribed and coded notes.

Reliability

Creswell and Poth (2018) concluded that a good quality recording device and accurate transcription are the most accurate means to the reliability of the data. Yin (2018) determined that if a "later researcher follows the same procedures as described by an earlier researcher and conducts the same study over again, the later investigator will arrive at the same findings and conclusion" (p. 46). The policies and procedure used in this study are accurately documented. The participants interviewed came from various organizations and were not known to each other at the time of the study. Each manager was vetted for the qualifying attributes needed for this study and all had voiced the single reality of managing a multi-generational workforce in some capacity.

The reliability of the research lies in the replication of each manager's interview. The consistency between interviews with a very small margin of variability (due to human error) is well documented. The richness of the results shines through in the final analysis and data comparison.

Procedures

Participant responses were obtained through a one-on-one audiotaped interview. Each participant was verified as being a manager with 8 or more years of experience who had a multi-generational workforce. The manager was contacted either by phone, direct contact by the researcher, or through email. After contact was made, a date and time was scheduled for a one half-hour interview. The interview was recorded on a Sony digital

voice recorder and later transcribed. Each participant was required to read and sign the consent to be interviewed form.   The forms, taped conversations, names, and identities of the managers are secured in the researcher's office.

Data Analysis

In order to obtain a distinct assessment of the case, a diverse group of managers spanning multiple industries were contacted and interviewed. The aim of the study was to explore and understand the experiences, perceptions, and strategies managers utilize in order to successfully lead their multi-generational workforce in achieving shared values and common goals. The collective case study approach was the ideal avenue to explore the why, what, and how questions of the research. According to Baxter and Jack (2010) the case study design should be explored when "(a) the focal questions are what, how and why; (b) the behaviors of the interviewees cannot be manipulated; (c) contextual conditions are relevant to the study, or (d) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly marked (p. 545)." Creswell and Poth (2018) define collective case research as studies similar in nature and description and the "inquirer purposefully selects multiple cases to show different perspectives on the issue" (p. 99).

The data collection instruments used were seven semi-structured interview questions given to seven managers from various industries. Yin (2018) stressed the importance of developing a robust case study to ensure academic rigor and credibility within the research report.   The researcher transcribed the seven interviews. Yin made a practical statement when he noted that the available qualitative data analysis software "will not do the finished analysis on its own, but may serve as an able assistant and reliable tool" (p. 166). After studying the various CAQDAS platforms, both free and

for a price, the researcher concluded that using the Microsoft Word program was an able assistant and reliable tool, and therefore the best option to code each interview.

The researcher read the transcripts several times in their entirety while also listening to the recorded conversation to fully immerse into the details and gain a sense of the whole before breaking the specifics into parts. Each of the seven interviews was transcribed so the data could be visually seen. The analytic strategy was to search for "patterns, insights, or concepts that seemed promising" (Yin, 2018, p. 167). Each sentence was scrutinized for information relating to the original research questions. The information was formatted and color-coded in a thematic order and arranged in a pattern matching logic. The overall objective was to extract themes and quotes from the interviews that showed empirically-based patterns from the emerging themes. The researcher looked for the expected information based on the research questions, surprising information that an interviewee divulged, and unusual information shared that was conceptually interesting to the researcher and potential audiences. After the themes emerged, the researcher began the art of assessing and developing interpretations of the data. Main categories were created and the themes and quotes were organized. Finally, a narrative was written based on the themes that emerged from the original seven interviews.

Summary

Creswell and Poth (2018) described a collective case study as a means to show different perspectives of the same issue. The research was designed to gain insight into the strategies managers use to foster shared values and achieve common goals when directing a multi-generational workforce. Each participant was interviewed using the

same open-ended questions in a face-to-face environment. Chapter Three disclosed the

detailed account of how the study was carried out detailing the data collection processes

through the use of interviewing seven managers. The validity and reliability of the study

were outlined to ensure the comprehensiveness of the outcome results. Ethical concerns

and the processes to protect the rights of the participants followed Southeastern's (SEU)

institutional review board (IRB) and also federal regulations. Data from the participants'

interviews were analyzed and interpreted to discover key themes and patterns that would

possibly answer the two main research questions. The study also discussed possible key

strategies for managerial practice and also summarized recommendations for future

research.

IV. RESULTS

Introduction/Statement of Problem

The purpose of this collective case study was to explore strategies managers use to engage their multi-generational workforce. At the present time workplaces within the United States employ up to five distinct generations. Each generation—the Silent Generation, the Baby Boomers, GenXers, GenYers, and GenZers—brings a unique perspective to the workplace, including their behaviors, expectations, values, personal styles, communication tactics, and motivational factors that can create challenges for both the managers and the organization. Managers who learn how to overcome multi-generational workplace challenges, and work towards shared values and common goals will assist organizations in creating connectivity among the various generational cohorts.

The study included semistructured face-to-face interviews with managers from seven different industries within Central Florida. The intention of the inquiry was to obtain data and answer the two central research questions:

1. How do managers foster shared values in a multi-generational workforce?

2. How do managers direct their multi-generational workforce toward the organization's common goals?

The criteria used to select qualified managers were the length of managerial experience, experience leading a multi-generational workforce, and willingness to participate in the study. Each interview took place at the manager's office in a comfortable workplace setting. The interview appointments were scheduled ahead of time, and the locations were private. The participants responded to seven semi-structured interview questions

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(see Appendix A). Each interview was recorded, transcribed, summarized, and organized

according to the emerging themes. Methodological triangulation strategies were used for

validation and corroboration of the evidence from the sources to find themes and

perspectives. This chapter includes the methods used for data collection, in-depth

analysis of the two research questions, and the seven themes that emerged. Table 3

shows the basic demographic imformation of each manager interviewed.

Table 3

Demographic Information of Interview Participants

ID	Interview Type	Gender	Cohort	Title	Business	Workforce Size
I-1	In person	M	Gen Y	Store Manager	Retail	300
I-2	In person	M	Gen X	Site Manager	Non Profit	30
I-3	In person	M	Baby Boomer	Branch Manager	Banking	20
I-4	In person	M	Baby Boomer	Director	Education	50
I-5	In person	F	Gen X	HR Director	Medical	150
I-6	In person	M	Baby Boomer	Store Manager	Restaurant	15
I-7	In person	M	Gen X	Store Manager	Grocery	100

Methods of Data Collection

The two central research questions used for this qualitative collective case study

involved how managers foster shared values in a multi-generational workforce and how

managers direct their multi-generational workforce toward the organization's common

goals. To help answer the main research questions, semistructured interviews were

conducted with seven business managers purposefully selected based on their

occupations and their experience working with a multi-generational workforce.

Semistructured interview questions were used to help guide the research inquiry, granting

each manager the freedom and opportunity to voice his or her own opinions and expand

on that knowledge and experience yet stay within the confines of the study.

Face-to-face interviews functioned as the data collection technique. Participants were

either contacted by phone, in person, or via email to discuss the study and their potential

involvement in the research. Prior to the interview, every participant received a copy of

the consent form (see Appendix B) and the list of interview questions (see Appendix A)

either by email or phone text. At the beginning of each interview, the participant was

again given a copy of the consent form, asked if there were any questions, and asked to

sign and date the document. All participants agreed to the terms and signed the form.

The interviews were conducted at each interviewee's place of business in a private

setting. The audio-recorded interviews were then transcribed and coded for analysis.

The audio recordings, transcribed interviews, and coded interviews were all stored on an

external flash drive and stored at the researcher's office in a locked file box. Each

interviewee was assigned a simple code (Manager I-1, I-2, I-3, etc.). Each participant

was shown a copy of his or her transcribed interview to check for validity and accuracy,

which aided in the strength of the research. All participants were content with the

accuracy of the transcription.

      Microsoft Word was used for the coding process and to aid in the development of

themes.   Tables were used to sort the data by highlighting, numbering, and coding the

interviews. The comment tool was used to highlight and color code comments and

potential quotes of pertinent transcribed information.

The research was based on the experiences of managers of a multi-generational workforce. The coding process revealed four main themes throughout the seven interviews. The first theme dealt with how each manager described and perceived his or her workforce. The second theme revolved around how the managers learned to effectively communicate information and offer constructive feedback to their workforce. The third theme outlined the training the managers received to accommodate a multi-generational workforce, or if no training was offered, the new competencies they had to develop in order to foster shared values and the common goals of the organization. The fourth theme detailed the values managers expected from their workforce and which cohort they personally felt was most effective in the workplace.

The themes that emerged from the data during the process addressed the initial two research questions, and a correlation between the themes and the transformational leadership theory became apparent. The results showed seven managers from seven different industries all facing the same workplace issues. All the managers used their training, experience, and competencies to effectively guide their multi-generational workforce forward into the 21st century.

Research Questions

The purpose of this collective case study was to provide insight into the strategies managers use to foster shared values in the workplace. Secondly, the study was used to examine how managers supervised their multi-generational workforce towards the common goals of the company. The conceptual framework for this study consisted of the transformational leadership theory. The theory was the basis for answering the two

central research questions and aligned with the literature reviewed and the themes uncovered while conducting this qualitative research collective case study.

Research Question 1: How do managers foster shared values in a multi-generational workforce?

The baseline of the first research question was to try to understand how managers encourage and develop their team members. DelCampo, Haggerty, Knippel, and Haney (2010) discussed in their book *Managing the Multi-Generational Workforce: From the GI Generation to the Millennials* that managers must strive to connect with each generation. Techniques such as mentoring, asserting effective communication, offering feedback, and clearly stating expectations are some of the methods suggested by the authors and used in this research. George and Jones (1997) began the conversation two decades ago by suggesting that the shared values in the workplace are a cumulative structure of learned experiences that the workforce shares while engaging in work activities.

 Findings. The results of this collective case study show that managerial training, work-life experience, and communication skills are the greatests assets that managers have to foster shared values in their organizations. The decisive point managers have learned is that experience, training, and an abundance of communication at the level of each particular cohort arethe essence of fostering shared values within their organization.

Managers were asked what training they received regarding directing a multi-generational workforce. The findings were split between extensive training and little-to-no training. Managers I-1, I-2, I-4. and I-5 all received extensive training through their company. Manager I-1 summed up the training by stating "the company has invested a

lot of money, time, and people in developing their managers." Manager I-2 elaborated

more by stating the company trained their managers to "take your staff and help them

achieve the common goal and the mission and the values statement." Managers I-4 and I-

5 were taught by their company to "find someone that was following company

procedures and walk in their footsteps and roleplay. Use them as a mentor." When asked

the same question, Managers I-3, I-6, and I-7 answered with one word: "none."

Nevertheless, all the managers agreed (no matter what level of training they received)

that their experience working alongside the various cohorts was their greatest asset.

Managers learned that the use of technology such as computer training and text

messages was a huge advantage when working with the middle to younger generations.

Manager I-1 commented that they try to "follow a very organized approach" by using

emails, text messages and store apps to convey information to the team members.

Manager I-6 expressed an opinion on training the various cohorts by saying "the eighteen

to thirty-five-year-olds seem to be more into the technology part of the company

training." Manager I-5 remarked that "I have definitely learned to text" adding that:

> I was amazed at how hard it was to get a hold of the younger generation. They
>
> don't pick up a phone, but if I send them a text and ask if they can be here they
>
> will text me back. I would call people multiple times, leave messages, some of
>
> them didn't have voicemail. I was amazed by sending a text, the difference it
>
> made.

More dated processes such as written communications and verbal conversations

worked best for the older generations. Manager I-6 relies on hands-on communication

and training for the older generations, briefly stating that "some of them are not computer

friendly so they are trained a little bit different rather than sitting them down in front of a computer that they don't know who to navigate." Manager I-7 added to the conversation by stating that "older associates really struggle with the technology needing help navigating and adapting to the technology." Furthermore, the managers have acquired their own skills (either through experience or organizational training) geared toward what motivates each generation and adapted those skills to achieve success and shared values throughout the organization.

Each manager was able to articulate the use of communication skills necessary to foster shared values in the workplace. Manager I-2 defined communication as talking, "one on one, eye to eye and trying to get your understanding to match their understanding to achieve a common understanding." Manager I-4 learned through experience that documenting conversations lead to understanding shared values:

> I like to do things behind closed doors and again even when we have misunderstandings or things that we have to correct, I document so that if we continue to have the same problems over and over again I either know that I'm not communicating well or they are not listening well, or they are just going in a different direction.

Through conversations, managers were able to gain support amongst the cohorts which led to all generational levels embracing the shared values of the organization. Manager I-1 commented that "I try to find a way to utilize their skills and let them know that I realize that I recognize the value that they add so that they are more willing to contribute to the teams shared values." The conversations managers held with their multi-

generational workforce were conducted through meetings, face-to-face, and various modes of technology, such as texting and emails.

Research Question 2: How do managers direct their multi-generational workforce toward the organization's common goals?

The second research question revolved around how the multi-generational manager rallied the employees toward the common goal of the organization. Establishing a common understanding of how managers direct their multi-generational workforce was critical for the researcher. Hahn (2011) maintained that embracing and respecting the diversity of the cohorts can resolve conflict and add to the overall commitment to the organization. Commitment to the organization leads to achieving the common goals, and Hahn concluded that understanding the uniqueness of the cohorts and addressing the commonality of each cohort presents an opportunity to achieve organizational commitment. In order for managers to effectuate cohesiveness amongst the cohorts, many times new competencies and training occur.

Findings. The results of this collective case study indicated that the greatest asset managers have in directing their multi-generational workforce toward the organization's common goal is their perception of the cohorts and the feedback offered to the employees. Feedback from the manager enables all the cohorts to achieve the organization's goals through teachable moments.

Managers were asked what their perceptions were of the various generations working in the organizations. The managers agreed that the different cohorts exhibit different levels of work ethic and value of time. The older generations were willing to aid the younger generations to conceptualize and work towards achieving the

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organization's goals. Older cohorts are more willing to stay at work until the work is completed and the goal achieved. The younger generations established new methods to attain the goals and, in turn, authenticated a different perspective. They value personal time, so finding new and (in their opinion) more efficient avenues to gain the same results is important. The managers agreed that, in many instances, the older generations, who were the teachers of the past are learning new work procedures from the younger generations, thus becoming the students of today. Manager I-2 expressed that "the different generations offer a variety of understanding and the outcome is all the same, just a different way of getting there." Manager I-1 also understood the diversity between the generations recognizing the "different levels of work ethics and different levels of value of time and sees the generations coming together to help each other get the job done."

To maintain solidarity throughout the organization, managers offered feedback on a continuous basis. All the cohorts were equally challenged to complete work tasks that were both known and unknown. Managers took the time to stop and show associates the standards the organization set forth to achieve the common goals. Managers learned how to approach each generation, so the message was clear and the moment was teachable. Managers agreed the older generations were more inclined to accept feedback whereas the younger generations were a bit insulted when offered feedback.

Themes

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to explore how managers foster shared values and direct their multi-generational workforce toward the organization's common goal. Managers from seven different industries were interviewed using a voice recorder. The interviews were transcribed and coded for themes. Each

manager was given the opportunity to validate his or her own transcribed interview. Three of the seven managers took advantage of the validation process to approve their coded interview. Harvey (2015) explained that using the member checking process enriches the validity and credibility of research data. Each manager's name was also coded, using the letter I (for interviewee) and the number of their interview. The researcher and the particular manager are aware of the corresponding number to each interview to protect identities.

The researcher identified four themes that emerged from the interviews. The first theme was how each manager described and perceived his or her own workforce. The second theme encompassed communication and feedback. The third theme entailed manager training and newly learned competencies. The fourth theme involved the values and expectations of the various cohorts, and finally, the managers were asked to share their thoughts on which cohort was the most effective in the workplace.

Theme 1: Description and Perception

The first theme discussed is the description and perception of the workplace. Managers were asked to describe their workforce. By asking for a description, the researcher sought to identify the various generational cohorts that worked for each manager interviewed. According to Hackman and Wageman (2007), managers who accurately described their workforce are more apt to gain success in the organization. The researcher also wanted to gain an understanding of how the managers perceived their organization. Simoneaux and Stroud (2010) argued that each generational cohort has a different perspective toward the job and organization. The 21st-century manager's

perception of his or her workforce is instrumental in moving the organization forward in today's economy.

Description. Managers were asked to describe their workforce. Interestingly, each manager began by saying his or her workforce was very diverse, containing different ages, educational levels, nationalities, and religious affiliations. Manager I-1 described the workforce as "people of all nationalities, people of all ages, and a very talented workforce." Managers I-2 and I-7 described a workforce containing all five of the cohorts. Every manager interviewed was able to describe and assert knowledge regarding their workforce. Managers I-2, I-3, and I-5 described an age-diverse workforce. Manager I-6 described the workforce as "all different age groups from eighteen to fifty, sixty, seventy years old." Manager I-4 took the question a step further and described not only the employee but also each employee's job description. The manager shared information regarding the executive-level positions all the way down to the custodial employee and the "fifty-plus volunteers that we manage on a weekly basis to get the job done." Manager I-7 stated that "I've got great associates at each age class, and I've got below-average associates in each age class. It's pretty varied." Manager I-2 described a workforce diverse enough to contain "youngsters who never finished high school and a number of employees who have Masters degrees." All the managers exhibited an understanding of their particular workforce. No manager hesitated or had to think about the question when asked to describe who was employed.

Perception. In today's diverse business environments, managers' perceptions of their workforce parallel the success of their organization. Bartley, Ladd, and Morris (2007) suggested that managers who successfully perceive the diversity and recognize the

uniqueness of the workforce are better equipped to develop strategies that will foster shared values, communication, and understanding between all cohorts in the workplace. Bennett, Pitt, and Price (2012) added to the conversation by asserting that work perceptions change due to shifting values and changing cultural and social norms in the workplace.

Managers were asked to discuss the perceptions they had of the various generations within their workplace. Most managers agreed that older generations take greater pride in their work. Manager I-1 stated that the older generations "take more pride in the work that they do." Managers felt there are different levels of work ethics between the various generations. The older generations teach the younger generations about work ethics, such as coming to work on time, taking pride in how the assigned job is completed, and communicating values and opinions to colleagues. Manager I-4 verbalized that "if we hire very young we can train them in the methods that we want." Manager I-2 agreed by insisting that the younger crew "are more willing to adapt and overcome the adversities"; however, the older generations may take more time finding an avenue that will achieve the outcome the organization is looking for. Managers I-1, I-2, I-3, and I-4 agreed with Manager I-2 by saying that, in many instances, the younger generations find an easier route to do a job and achieve the same outcome. Manager I-2 stated that "the different generations offer a different variety of understanding. The outcome is the same, just a different way of getting there." Manager I-5 concluded that each generation is unique and has to be approached in a way that they will understand and stated: "there is definitely a different way of dealing with the different generations."

Most of the managers used general terms when discussing the various generations and grouped the five cohorts into either the older or younger generations. Manager I-1 was specific and named GenZ as being the cohort that "seems to be more…," citing that "they value their personal time more and care less about the amount of money that they make." Manager I-6 was also specific and named GenZers as the "entitled generation" by stating "the youngest ones feel like they are entitled to something." Manager I-4 added to the conversation of GenZ's feelings of entitlement by stating:

> We've seen a great shift in the last couple of generations of workforce, a little bit more entitlement mentality, a little bit more concerned about what they're making and what the benefits are and not as much about what job can they bring to the table.

Manager I-3 agreed by stating "the younger version is a kind of a 'me now' society, the older version is 'get your job done, do it right, put your heart into the company, and move on to the next deal'." The managers had a clear perception of their workforce and also the means to work with each cohort to achieve the goals of the organization.

Theme 2: Communication and Feedback

Communication is instrumental in developing an effective organization. Simoneaux and Stroud (2010) argued that workplace relationships that are built based upon effective communication are the heart of an organization. The organization has the ability to bridge generational gaps using clear and concise lines of communication. With up to five cohorts in today's workplace, "clear, cross-generational lines of communication are key in dealing with these demographics" (p. 72).

Bridging generation gaps is a "top-down" issue and the underlying theme is

communication. The strategic business plan should be a living, breathing

document that is communicated to employees and frequently referenced so that

employees from all generations will accept the business culture and understand

the important roles they play in achieving company goals. (Simoneaux & Stroud,

2010, p. 73)

Managers who foster a workplace with well-defined communication open up clear

channels to all employees and set the stage for shared values and common goals.

Feedback is an important tool for managers to use in order to raise the morale rate

in an organization. Hahn (2011) suggested that offering positive feedback enhances the

employees work performance. Glass (2007) added that there are different concerns and

expectations between the various cohorts. A well-versed manager will understand the

need to meet the expectations of his or her employees regarding proper and timely

constructive feedback.

Communication. The managers were asked to discuss their most effective

communication method. Manager I-1 stated that "the most effective communication

method that I have used to foster the shared values would be technology," and Manager

1-4 agreed. The technology referred to was emails, texting, and workplace-supported

apps. Manager I-5 said, "I have definitely learned to text." However, even with

technologically enhanced tools, the general consensus regarding the best means of

communication was face-to-face. Manager I-2 contended that talking through any

situation led to a common understanding and conducted a full staff meeting on a monthly

basis. Manager I-6 communicates through job aids such as using a whiteboard for daily

job assignments and sharing messages, and posting a bi-monthly newsletter to keep the employees current with the organizational changes. Managers I-4 and I-7 use all the aforementioned tools and added that, to enhance communication, documenting the communicated messages was used to assuage both the manager and employees that the correct message was delivered and received. Manager I-2 liked talking one-on-one "eyes-to-eyes to get your understanding to match my understanding of a common understanding" and continued on to say:

> I want to know what you think. I want to know what's in your heart, how you feel so we can fix it. How we can work with it, how we can make it better or how we can change it. I can go and Google anything. I can figure out there's another way of doing it. I want to know what you think because you were taught by a grandmother, an uncle, a brother, a sister. Maybe they gave you some insight that I can't get somewhere else. So bringing the group together, getting those common interests together, putting all their thoughts into one bucket and then taking the one's bucket to the top of the group and let them figure out which one works best for the entire group would be my way of communicating with a lot of people.

Manager I-5 agreed with the other managers that face-to-face meetings "ensure the same information is given out and also gives the employees a chance to ask questions and clarify."

Feedback. Feedback is an essential element for managers to integrate into the workplace if they want to foster shared values and achieve common goals. Each generation requires feedback in a different and personal way.   Glass (2007) explained

that different cohorts necessitate different levels of feedback. GenYers require little

feedback whereas Baby Boomers "like–-and expect-– constant feedback" (p. 101). Since

the levels of feedback and expectations have such a wide variance, Glass suggested

"asking the employee what his or her expectations are regarding feedback and

instruction" (p. 101). It is then the manager's responsibility to adapt to the employee's

answer.

According to Bartley, Ladd, and Morris (2007), "when a generation prefers high

levels of independence in the workplace, those employees desire a hands-off working

environment and low levels of feedback and evaluation" (p. 31). As depicted in Figure 3,

the more feedback required by a specific generation, the less independence was needed.
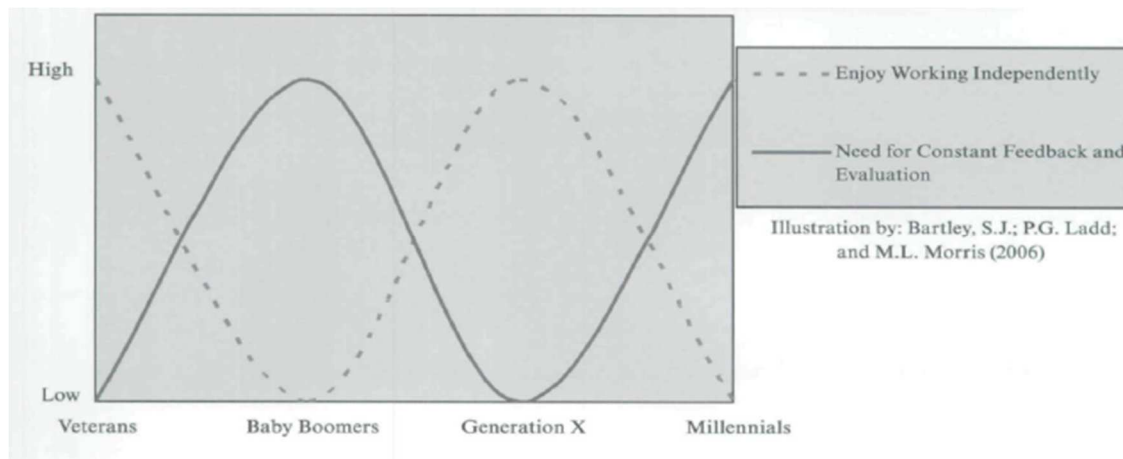
Figure 3. Visual illustration depicting the relationship between working independently
and needing constant feedback. Adapted from "Managing the Multigenerational
Workplace: Answers for Managers and Trainers," By S. J. Bartley, P. G. Ladd, and M. L.
Morris, 2007, CUPA-HR Journal, 58(1), 28–34. Copyright 2010 by the American
Psychological Association.

Managers found feedback to be essential when working with the various cohorts.

Manager I-1 referred to feedback as "a teachable moment" and looked for opportunities

to help employees accomplish a task better. Manager I-4 agreed with I-1 regarding the

teachable moments; however, Manager I-4 conducted teachable moments behind closed

doors and the conversations were documented. Manager I-7 used a three-step process to offer feedback by first telling how a job is performed, showing how to perform the job, and finally having the employee do the job alone. I-7 felt that after "a couple of times they understand, and the key is to understand what is going on in the situation and understand that every puzzle piece fits somewhere." Manager I-6 offered feedback by telling employees they are doing a good job and thanking them. Manager I-5 turned feedback and follow-up into fun teachable moments and added an element of common sense asking the employees to give an example of a time when they had a teachable moment happen to them. I-5 felt that through a reverse experience the employee will learn and understand the feedback. I-5 added that "praise is free. Why wouldn't you give praise? Give praise when it's due, correct when it's due, and be consistent." Manager I-2 stated that "feedback is just another word for follow-up," and if the feedback was not accepted or understood then "we need to go back and do it again and help you understand it better." Manager I-3 took the initiative to break down the cohorts explaining that the "older generation understands constructive feedback and you can hit them pretty much in the head with it and they understand" and felt that constructive feedback has to be shared more gently with the younger generation "because they tend to get a little insulted." Manager I-3 felt that with "the younger generation, it is like holding their hand and kind of pedaling around a little bit to get to the side because they are very defensive and they don't like criticism. I don't think they have ever been told no."

Theme 3: New Competencies and Training

Managers who consistently learn new competencies in the workplace are better able to adjust to the changing workforce. According to Winterton and Winterton (2002),

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"competences can be described in terms of specific behaviors which can be observed in the job" (p. 25). Naqvi (2009) added to the description by stating that competency is a " cluster of related knowledge, skills, and attitudes that affect a major part of one's job that correlates with performance in the job, that can be measured against well-accepted standards, that can be improved with training and development" (p. 86). The attributes of the manager's multi-generational cohort competency skill set can be measured by employee retention and effective operations within the organization. As managers learn new competencies, meeting the needs of all the cohorts equally increases.

Organizations may or may not offer extended training for the 21st-century manager. As stated by Simoneaux and Stroud (2010), many times companies cut back on training dollars due to economic trends. However, training, on all levels, especially for managers, enhances the communication and relationships within the organization. Glass (2007) established that internal training programs for managers improved communication skills, decision making, and diversity conflicts that may occur between cohorts.

New Competencies. The managers were asked what new competencies they had to develop as a result of their multi-generational workforce. All the managers unanimously agreed that keeping up and staying current with the latest technology is a competency they had to develop. As Manager I-5 so eloquently stated: "I have definitely learned to text." Manager I-6 had to stay current with the new training technology so certain cohorts could have the help they needed to learn all aspects of their jobs. Manager I-7 agreed with Manager I-6 and added that some of the older generations have had struggles with the new technology and store apps. Manager I-1 considered flexibility and learning from the various generations a new competency. I-1 stated that "I try to find

a way to utilize their skills." Managers I-2 and I-3 found they had to learn to be more patient and more understanding of the needs and skillsets of the cohorts. I-2 stated the newly learned competency "was finding common ground amongst the cohorts and understand how to use a computer." Managers I-3 and I-4 considered patience and understanding toward the multi-generations a new competency. I-3 commented that "there's not a lot of that kind of value that's taught either in the home or in the school system anymore." I-4 expounded on the thought by stating "I have learned over the years of dealing with a multi-generational workforce to leave a paper trail everywhere you go. That way we know that what was said and what was heard were the same things."

Training. The managers were asked what training (if any) they received from their organization regarding directing a multi-generational workforce. Managers I-3, I-4, I-6, and, I-7 all commented that they did not receive any formal multi-generational workforce training from their organizations. However, after the four managers admitted their organization did not provide training for a multi-generational work-setting, they all stated their training came from experience. Manager I-3 learned by "knowing the business from the bottom up" and "not promoting someone above their abilities." Manager I-4 asserted that "they told you to find someone that was doing what you liked and walk in their footsteps till you learn." However, now I-4 insists the staff attends at least one seminar or workshop a year and attends as a team "so that we can learn together and we talk about it and follow up and try to implement things." Manager I-6 stated the organization offers a formal computerized management training course which teaches the competencies needed to run store operations, but not skills needed to lead a multi-

generational workforce. Manager I-7 was brief in sharing "you know I haven't really received any formalized training specifically related to a multi-generational workforce."

Manager I-1 articulated the extensive training received from the organization by stating "the company has invested a lot of money and time and people in developing their managers and associates." I-1 continued on and declared "the generations are changing and we are finding and learning what motivates the future generations, so we are constantly working on and having training on how to lead generations of the future." Manager I-2 specified working for an organization that "did nothing but train you to manage people if you are a manager," and described:

> Training, training, training, we were required so much training monthly. We were required so much training annually and then we had management training which we got the same training every year. I can tell you I took two or three courses every year, same instructor, same questions, same everything. So you have got to be mundane very mundane. But I think you have to step outside of that realm and every organization at least all the ones that I have been a part of have a computer online training that's offered to you. You need to go on there and find courses that you see to be beneficial to help you, and I did that every year. I was required kind of like in the education world, they're electives. You need to take so many CEU's and pick whatever you want. Well, I would go on and find things that interest me. Some were kind of frilly dilly just something I knew I could get through real quick; others were classes that I think I could learn from and you get something from. Those seem to be very beneficial, very beneficial, but training, training, training, training, and training.

Manager I-5 commented on the yearly continuing education courses the organization mandates for the managers. Nevertheless, I-5 insisted that hands-on experience "taught me to think and prepare best for the unexpected."

Theme 4: Values and Most Effective Cohort

Al-Asfour and Lettau (2014) explained that values and views are unique to each generation and are based off events that occurred within the era that they were raised. Effective managers are keen to observe the distinct values each generation may uphold which can aid in developing a positive outlook in the workplace (Lapoint & Liprie-Spence, 2017).

The shifting values and cultural norms are impacting the workforce in many different ways. Bennett, Pitt, and Price (2012) established that, due to the cultural changes occurring in the workplace, there is an increased emphasis on "understanding and managing the values and expectations of different generational groups" (p. 279). Managers expect certain attributes from the employees. However, managers who create a work environment conducive for all employees have learned the value of what each generation brings to the workplace (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014).

Values. The managers were asked to discuss the observed values the cohorts exhibited. The managers unanimously agreed that the younger generation's work values did not always meet the standards of the organizations. Manager I-1 established that the younger generation values their personal time more than their work time and "may call out more often." Manager I-6 concurred with I-1 by concluding that the younger generation " just sometimes seems like they don't care or that they have to be at work because they need a paycheck." Manager I-2 was more colorful with the response on

values and posited that "our young people have a very short attention span, so I have to find a way to squish together a lot of different things and package it and give it to them quickly, so I could get the outcome I was looking for." Manager I-7 added to I-2's conversation by stating "the younger kids, their attention spans are shorter. You've got to get in and get out and make it interesting." Manager I-3 felt that the younger cohorts would "rather talk more than get things done." Manager I-4 was in concurrence with I-3 and ascertained that "our younger generations sometimes don't realize that their mouth gets them in trouble, and they alienate people, but they think that they have done well." Manager I-7 maintained that the younger generations want instant gratification and feel that "you have to give that to them and say 'hey, you're doing great, thank you for that, and thank you for that, and thank you for that'." I-7 determined that a good manager pops in on the younger generation's work station to show gratitude, therefore, validating their value in the organization. Manager I-5 seemed to be the sum of all the comments and proclaimed that the younger generations are "definitely more challenging."

Most Effective Cohort. The managers agree that the older generation has higher standards, stronger values and are the most effective of all the cohorts. Manager I-5 commented that "I love the more mature workers, they are dependable." Managers I-5 and I-6 concluded that the older cohorts have "strong work ethics and better work values." Manager I-1 also referred to the older generations as the "more mature" and are more willing to put in the hours to get the job done per company standards. I-1 continued on and summarized that the older generations are more focused on the task at hand and more recognized as being reliable for scheduled shifts. Managers I-3 and I-4 considered the older generations more tenured in their work, holding higher standards and stronger

values. All the managers agreed that the more mature cohorts do their job to the best of their abilities and rate their accomplishments by the duties as assigned in the job description. Manager I-7 determined that the older generations "want to complete the task 100% all the way before you come in and inspect." Manager I-2 stated that "our older folks are better, much much better."

Conclusion

The managers spent quite a bit of time discussing the values and accolades the older generations brought to the workplace. The managers spent an equal amount of time denigrating the values of the younger generations. In the end, the managers concluded that all the generations equally brought an important aspect to the workplace. Manager I-1 noted that:

> I believe the younger generation and the older generation can help us achieve our goals if we are managing them correctly because I have had success with both generations. Each generation requires a different management approach, a different management style.

Manager I-1 expressed the fact that the organization wants to help all the employees achieve the goal that they had when they applied for the job and feels there has been success with all generations. Manager I-2 concluded:

> You have to look at your audience, figure out how to deliver the message, and them make sure that they got it in the end and as the different generations go through, it's done in a different way because the different generations offer a different mentality and different learning skills.

Manager I-6 agreed with Manager I-2's conclusion and added that work values all depend on the individual employee, and "I try to instill core values and our company goals into them while they are working for us." Manager I-4 deduced that:

I think we naturally gravitate towards those that are walking the same walk we are, but I don't think its unattainable for even folks that would be older or even younger to be great employees and great workers if they buy into the vision of the organization. If we're working towards a common goal, then we can walk side by side. I think we've seen that as a culture because even where we were probably before the modern workforce, I mean we used to have a lot of the discrimination you know between dialects and skin color and all that, and we've learned that that doesn't matter if they have the same vision, and I think that we have to do the same thing with age. We don't need to put everybody in a box because there are really lazy young people, but there are really good working young people. There are really lazy old people and there are really hard-working old people. So I think if they catch the vision of the organization and can buy into that, I think it's important for the organization to be clear on that. I also think it's important for the organization to encourage growth in that for other people. Clear as mud huh.

Manager I-7 summed up the opinions and conversation and established that "overall, I've got people in every generational cohort that work well."

Evidence of Quality

The valuable knowledge qualitative research has been contributing to the academic community is increasing in the 21st century. Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) described qualitative research as "an artistic endeavor and requires a

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soulful and imaginative approach to assessing its quality" (p. 12). According to Yin

(2018), validity and reliability and validity are the two most important constants in

qualitative research. Dependability is an element associated with reliability. Credibility,

confirmability, and transferability are terms related to validity (Houghton et al., 2013;

Thomas & Magilvy, 2011; Yin, 2018). The researcher applied the ideologies explained

by Yin to uphold the highest standards of academic excellence possible using the

principles of reliability and validity during this study**.**

Reliability

Yin (2018) described reliability as a procedure that allows future researchers the

opportunity to follow the same described procedure of the later researcher and arrive at

the same conclusion. Even though the possibility of repeating a case study is slim, Yin

(2018) suggested making "as many procedures as explicit as possible and to conduct

research as if someone were looking over your shoulder (p. 46)." Price, Jhangiani, and

Chiang (2015) added to the conversation by discussing internal consistency as a type of

reliability. Internal consistency is "people's responses across the items on a multiple-

item measure that reflect the same underlying construct, so people's scores on those items

should be correlated with each other" (Price et al., 2015, p. 88).

The reliability of this research was backed by member checking. According to

Harper and Cole (2012), a distinct understanding of participants' responses to interview

questions is obtained through the member checking process. Each participant in this

study had the opportunity to review his or her transcribed and coded interview for

accuracy during the member checking process.

Simundic (2013) described research bias as "any trend or deviation from the truth in data collection, data analysis, interpretation and publication which can cause false conclusions" (p. 12). In order to reduce unwanted bias and ensure reliability, participants used in this study only held a management position and were willing subjects mostly unknown to the researcher. Moustakas (1994) edified the practice of epoche (a Greek word meaning to stay away or abstain). In following the practice Moustakas promoted, the researcher was able to set aside any bias regarding preconceptions, prejudgments, personal beliefs, or theories and remain open to the information presented by the respondents.

Validity

Creswell and Poth (2018) described validity as "the researcher compiling bits and pieces of evidence to formulate a complete whole and then looking for recurring behaviors or actions and considers disconfirming evidence and contrary interpretations" (p. 256). Leung (2015) referred to qualitative research as "appropriateness" (p. 325). To ensure validity, the weight of the evidence should be compelling, persuasive, and contain the appropriate methodology. Validity necessitates authenticating (a) whether the chosen methodology is applicable for answering the research questions, (b) whether the sampling and data analysis is suitable, (c) whether the research question is well-founded for the desired conclusions, (d) whether the findings are credible, and (e) whether the design validates the research method (Leung, 2015).

Multi-generational workforce strategies were the topic chosen to investigate. The research was based on a collective case study. The sample size of seven managers was designed to use the logic of replication to achieve probable results. The research

questions were intended to gain the maximum information from an open-ended format. Each interview was transcribed and coded for themed information. The element of member checking was used to authenticate and validate the manager's own individual interview. The information gathered from the coded interviews was interpreted and posted in paragraph form. The lessons learned were summarized for future study.

Summary

The purpose of this collective case study was to explore the thoughts and actions of managers from various industries and offer a basis for assessing strategies regarding the multi-generational workforce. In this chapter, the results of the study were presented in a thematic format while providing answers to each of the research questions. The research questions were the foundation of the study, and the interview questions were the building blocks to activate the lived experiences each manager faced directing a multi-generational workforce. The semi-structured interview gave the participants the ability to share the experiences they used to maintain a multi-generational workforce in today's marketplace. Open communication and constant feedback with the employees seemed to be the main objective for the managers when interacting with their multi-generational workforce. The majority of the managers agreed that there was a learning curve on their part to establish an open communication protocol with each generation to avoid conflict amongst the cohorts.

Each participant's interview was recorded, transcribed, coded, and interpreted. Reliability was ensured using member checking details and experienced managers. The results were transparent enough, allowing for future research to mirror the study with the same potential outcome. According to Lapoint and Liprie-Spence (2017), managers who

have a better understanding of their multi-generational workforce will help to facilitate communication, foster shared values, and work toward common goals. Managers who are cognizant of varying cohort behaviors are more successful in achieving organizational success. Details of the participants' responses were mapped out along with definitions regarding the titled themes. Validity was ensured by gathering information prudent to the study and interpreting the manager's message in paragraph form.

V. DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study was assembled to seek out and understand how managers cope with a multi-generational workforce. At any given time, there may be up to five distinct generations working together within an organization (Bartley et al., 2007; Benson & Brown, 2011; Cekada, 2012; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Clark, 2017; Coulter & Faulkner, 2014; DelCampo et al., 2010; Glass, 2007; Johnson, 2015; Savino, 2017). While the manager's main intent is to achieve the organization's objectives, they must also work with the generational cohorts to foster a shared work environment and achieve the common goal per operational standards of the company so the organization's objectives are met.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to explore strategies managers use to engage a multi-generational workforce. As more people enter, and continue to stay, in the workplace, managers find themselves with a workforce consisting of up to five generations. Each generational cohort brings their own version of beliefs, behaviors, values, communication skills, personal styles, and varying motivational tactics and work habits. Many industries equip their managers, through training, with the skills needed to embrace and unify the various generations. However, an equal amount of managers have had to train themselves using gained knowledge and past experiences.

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Shrivastava, Ikonen, and Savolainen (2017) noted the challenges managers face when directing a workforce that can span almost eight decades.

Methods of Data Collection

The research was a qualitative collective case study that explored the processes and procedures managers used in the workplace to direct their multi-generational workforce. The qualitative method was used to gain an up-close perspective using a semi-structured interview in an attempt to experience a "real-life, contemporary setting" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96). The case study participants were seven managers from various industries who had eight or more years of managerial experience. The purposeful sampling used in this study displayed managers representing a diverse age, race, and gender population from the chosen organizations. The managers agreed to a 30-minute semi-structured interview. All the managers were given a copy of the interview guide prior to the interview, and all signed a consent form agreeing to be interviewed. The interview protocol consisted of seven open-ended questions with several sub-questions to add clarity.

Summary of Results

The multi-generational workforce is no longer an exception in the workplace. The Silent Generation is staying in, or returning to, the workforce. GenZers are age-appropriate for entering the workplace, and the remaining generations are still contributing. According to Al-Asfour and Lettau (2014), the workforce is more diverse in age than ever before, and leading the distinct cohorts is the responsibility of the managers. As managers begin to understand the differences among the generations, trends such as job dissatisfaction, low productivity, and resignations are decreasing, while understanding and unanimously striving toward common

goals and shared values are increasing (Bennett et al., 2012; Glass, 2007; Lapoint & Liprie-Spence, 2017). The managers who participated in the study were asked seven semi-structured interview questions. Each manager answered relative to his or her organizational structure. No matter what industry was identified, all the managers spoke highly of their team members, the need to focus on the bottom line and the importance of customers. The managers (either knowingly or unknowingly) followed the teachings of the transformational leadership theory. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), followers of the transformational leader are able to trust, are loyal, and are more willing to work harder at their job. Each manager discussed how the individual cohorts supported each other and the manager with a respectful, helpful attitude.

The managers were initially invited to describe their workforce and how they perceived the workforce. The managers were asked to consider their communication efforts and how employee feedback is offered. Since there is a learning curve with any new effort, managers were questioned as to what training they received to accomplish the task of directing a multi-generational workforce and if they had to develop any new competencies to aid in the success of their endeavors. Finally, the managers were encouraged to discuss what they saw in the various generations regarding the cohorts' workplace values and efficiency. The managers unanimously chose the older generations as the most efficient, but quickly added that all the generations had something positive to bring to the workplace.

Constant communication with employees and generous amounts of both positive and negative feedback was the top consensus from the managers. Each manager agreed that communicating with their workforce was the key to a successful operation. Through communication, each manager was able to foster shared values and achieve common goals. The managers agreed that all aspects of the job were important such as (a) proper perception of the

employees; (b) company training, learning new competencies; and (c) understanding what each cohort valued in the workplace. However, communicating and offering feedback were the most important tools they used to integrate all the cohorts and achieve commonality. Communication is a two-way street, and the managers all agreed that the employees liked to not only discuss their job duties but also hear feedback from the managers regarding their job performance. Manager I-6 stated that, if someone is doing a good job, they are thanked and told that the job performance is well done. Manager I-6 also takes the time to ask the employee how they feel about their job and listen to their feedback. Interestingly though, the managers all agreed that communication is also their greatest area of opportunity. The managers said having certain conversations with an employee can be very difficult. Manager I-3 explained how patience and understanding were a key factor in communicating with the employees. Furthermore, each manager said that, no matter how difficult, they have conversations and offer feedback.

Discussion by Research Question

The purpose of this study was to determine the strategies managers used to direct a multi-generational workforce. Seven Central Florida managers from various industries were invited to participate in this collective case study.

Research Question 1: How do managers foster shared values in a multi-generational workforce?

Not only do managers want to succeed in their positions, but they also want employees to succeed in theirs. DelCampo, Haggerty, Knippel, and Haney (2010) inferred that managers illustrated the need to connect with each generation. Integrating the transformational leadership theory, managers use techniques such as mentoring, effective communication, feedback, and clear expectations to foster a respectful and loyal workplace that shared the same values no

matter what generation the employee identified with in the organization. All seven managers concluded that clear communication and constant feedback aided in fostering shared values with a multi-generational workforce in the workplace. Emphasizing the need to help the cohorts achieve the shared values within the organization, Manager I-1 stated that understanding what "actually motivates the different generations allows me to focus on managing the company's values based on their values as well." Manager I-3 explained how the older generations seem to have "deep-rooted values" that extend to the workplace whereas the younger generations needed to be taught values and where they fit in within the organization. Manager I-6 tries to "instill the core values" into the employees during their tenure. Manager I-4 portrayed the transformational leadership theory by stating that in order to foster shared values the employees need to "catch the vision of the leader."

Each manager articulated in their own way the manner in which they fostered shared values. The managers understood the necessity to bring together the cohorts and engage each person as an individual. The managers were able to identify the differences between the generations and work to bring out the best in their employees (through praise, recognitions, commendations, and verbal feedback) to foster the values of their organization. The managers exhibited the qualities of the transformational leader by (a) learning what motivates each generation, (b) gaining their buy-in to the values, (c) creating a successful workplace, and (d) leading by example.

Research Question 2: How do managers direct their multi-generational workforce toward the organization's common goals?

The study conducted by Sypher and Sypher (1992) and supported by Gagne (2018) concluded that "shared organizational goals have an impact on important organizational

outcomes" (p. 175). Sypher and Sypher (1992) maintained that employees who work toward the organization's goals are more committed to their jobs and the company. Furthermore, employees who are satisfied with their jobs are more prone to feel knowledgeable and are able to articulate the common goals with other team members and managers. The responsibility of the manager is to achieve the common goal while maintaining a productive workforce. Through experience (and some company training), the managers learned to draw upon the uniqueness of the cohorts and find commonality amongst them to achieve the organization's goals.

The managers described how they developed new competencies and crafted their own skills in directing people toward the organization's common goals. Manager I-1 finds ways to utilize the employee's individual skills, recognizing the efforts given, and commends their achievements. In doing so, the employees maintain their team spirit and motivation towards achieveing the goals. Manager I-3 learned to reinforce the employees knowledge that they are needed and depended on for a job well done. Manager I-5 and I-6 have developed a simple style of directing people. Manager I-5 stated "give praise when it's due, praise is free," and Manager I-6 commented "if someone does a good job I thank them and tell them they did a good job." The managers learned that communicating, discussing, offering feedback, and challenging each employee to perform their job to the best of their abilities aided in reaching the common goals.

Study Limitations

This research study provided valuable data contributing to the recent conversation regarding multi-generational workforce strategies for 21st-century managers. However, as with any study, there are limitations due to the design or methodology provided in this report. The first limitation concerns the sample size which was limited to Central Florida. Managers from other demographics may have had different ideas or opinions of their multi-generational

workforce.

Yin (2018) maintained that the qualitative researcher does not have total control over the environment due to participant bias, poor recall, and imprecise verbalization. Therefore, this study may lack substance due to the inability to accurately verify the contributors' interviews. Even though the interviewees reviewed and verified their own interview, there still may be bias in the part of the respondent. Furthermore, the researcher did not interview assistant managers or shift leaders with equal experience. The data received only came from the managers. Finally, as a manager with over 25 years of experience, the researcher had to conduct the study with an unbiased opinion to allow the interviewees' freedom to express their opinions and use the data presented.

Implications for Future Practice

Today's workforce represents the largest diversity of generational cohorts in history. If managed properly, the multi-generational workforce, with its many differences, can become substantial assets and opportunities to the organization (Glass, 2007; Shrivastava et al., 2017). Documented research indicated that each generational cohort possesses their own abilities, work values, perceptions, and characteristics, and it is the manager's responsibility to adapt the management style according to the needs of the subordinate cohorts to gain maximum efforts in the workplace (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bennett et al., 2012; Coulter & Faulkner, 2014; Glass, 2007; Hahn, 2011; Shrivastava et al., 2017). When managers bring their actions, values, dispositions, and characteristics into the workplace, they invoke similar behaviors from their workforce.

The purpose of this study was to investigate workforce strategies for 21st-century managers. Even though one collective case study cannot fully examine the influence managers

have on incorporating a multi-generational workforce as one, the participants of this research were change agents. The managers expounded on their duties as multi-generational managers and shared their thoughts and actions on how they fostered shared values and achieved common goals in their organization.

This research from this study suggested that managers who offer constructive feedback and communicate often with their subordinates have the greatest success in achieving organizational goals. As the workforce grows and becomes more diverse with generational cohorts, organizations may want to consider offering managers in-house training to enhance their communication and constructive feedback skill set that meets the needs of each cohort. Manager I-1 stated, "You can't manage everyone the same way because they respond to different management styles." Training and coaching on the part of the organization can equip managers with the additional proficiencies needed to be successful in their position. The 21st-century manager has the opportunity to create a workforce culture where every employee feels accepted and valued.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this study, the researcher examined the workplace experiences of seven managers. Additional research is needed to augment the readily available studies. Peer-reviewed authors commented that research concerning the topic of multi-generational workforce strategies is sparse (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Cekada, 2012; Coulter & Faulkner, 2014; DelCampo et al., 2010). Information pertaining to GenZers is practically non-existent because research conducted on the cohort is sparse. Further research may include a mixed-methods approach involving a large number of participants which could yield a wealth of new information regarding strategies managers can utilize in the workplace.

A qualitative case study including the accounts of other levels of management such as assistants and shift leads may prove beneficial since they are closer in rank to the general workforce. Further research could include how the workforce perceives management. The data from that study could be used to develop new training programs for managers. Further research could include a large scale study investigating how, and to what extent, the differences between cohorts correlate with on-the-job experience. All further research, no matter the dynamic, will provide useful information for managers to draw upon when directing a multi-generational workforce.

Conclusion

This study explored strategies managers used to direct a multi-generational workforce. While multiple factors contributed to the success of a manager, the results of this study indicated that the most robust strategies that led to the achievements were strong communication skills and constructive feedback. Furthermore, managers also indicated that in many instances those strategies were the most difficult to accomplish. Evidence presented in this study suggested that professional experience and organizational training were influential for managers as they directed a multi-generational workforce towards shared values and common goals. This study added to the existing body of research regarding multi-generational strategies for 21st-century managers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Guide*

Interview Protocol: Responses of an organizational manager's experiences related to the multi-generational workforce in their organization.

Interviewer: Gail M. Cushing

Date:

Time:

Location/Manager:

Interview Questions:

1	Describe your organization's workforce.
2	What are your perceptions of the various generations of employees within your current workplace?
3	Discuss the most effective communication method you have used to foster shared values and work toward the organization's common goal.
4	What new competencies (if any) have you had to develop as a result of your multi-generational workforce?
5	Discuss how you offer constructive feedback to your multigenerational employees.
6	What training have you received to manage a multi-generational workforce? (Follow-up: How does your organization offer extended training in management?)
7	Discuss the different values and expectations you observe from the distinct generations you have working in your organization. (Follow-up: In your opinion, which generation cohort works more toward the company goals? Follow up: Please give examples of this answer/response.

* The questions in this guide are representative of the information being sought by the researcher.
The guide may be modified based on survey results.

Adult Consent to be Interviewed

PROJECT TITLE
MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE STRATEGIES FOR 21ST CENTURY
LEADERS

INVESTIGATORS
Primary: Dr. Gxxxx Xxxxh, Southeastern University, Student: Gxxx X Xxxxxxxg

PURPOSE:
The purpose of this study is to (a) develop strategies that will support the relationship
between managers and employees in a multi-generational workforce and (b) use the
strategies to build cohesive work teams.

PROCEDURES
The researcher will contact you to schedule an interview by phone or in person. The
interview will be recorded, transcribed, and returned to you for validation. The interview
will consist of approximately seven questions, with possible follow-up questions, and
will not take more than one hour of your time.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION
There are no known risks to participation in this study. You will not be personally
identified in any reporting of the results.

BENEFITS TO PARTICIPATION
Your participation will add to an understanding of how multi-generations work together
and possible strategies managers can use to foster shared values and work towards a
common goal.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The recordings and notes of this interview will be made available only to the student
researcher, primary investigator, and the dissertation committee's methodologist. Written
results will not include information that could identify you. Raw recordings and
transcriptions will be stored on a password-protected computer and backed up on a USB
drive stored in a locked filing cabinet. Only researchers and individuals responsible for
research oversight will have access to the records. Recordings and transcriptions will be
destroyed three years after the study has been completed.

CONTACTS
You may contact any of the researchers should you desire to discuss your participation in
the study. Dr. G**** ****: gxxxx@seu.edu or Gxxxx x xxxxxg: 863-214-XXXX,
gxxxxxxg@seu.edu

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate,
and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time, without
penalty.

CONSENT DOCUMENTATION

I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked
to do and of the benefits of my participation. I affirm that I am 18 years old or older.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this
form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Printed Name of Participant

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant
sign it.

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher   Date

Appendix C

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>Protocol #:2019 ED 12</td></tr>
</table>

Southeastern University
IRB Reviewer's Review Sheet

Protocol #:2019 ED 12

Exempt: Yes ✓   No ☐

Principal Investigator's Name: Grace Veach   **Today's Date:** 3-08-19

Co-Investigators: Janet Deck, Gail Cushing

Project Title: Multi-Generational Workforce Strategies fro 21st Century Managers

1. Does the research place subjects at more than minimal risk?   Yes ☐   No ✓
Minimal risk is defined as the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort is no greater than that ordinarily encountered in daily life or during routine physical or psychological examination or tests)

Notes: _____

2. If more than minimal risk, does the merit of the project outweigh the risks and are the benefits maximized and risks minimized?   N/A ✓   Yes ☐   No ☐

Notes: _____

3. Are there any ethical issues regarding the study's design and conduct?   Yes ☐   No ✓

Ethical issues may include but are not limited to the Belmont Report principles: respect for persons (voluntary, fully informed consent); beneficence (obligation to protect subjects from harm and secure their well-being); and, justice (benefits and burdens of research are fairly distributed)

Notes: _____

4. Is subject selection equitable?   Yes ✓   No ☐

If special populations are included the IRB should ensure that subjects can understand the research, give full consent, and voluntarily agree to participate, and they should consider any other possible special problems. Are vulnerable or special populations included in the research?
- ☐ Pregnant women
- ☐ Fetus/fetal tissue
- ☐ Prisoners
- ☐ Minors Under Age 18
- ☐ Elderly subjects
- ☐ Minority groups and non-English speakers
- ☐ Patients
- ☐ Mentally/Emotionally/Developmentally Disabled persons
- ☐ Behavioral Abnormalities, psychological or disease condition
- ☐ None of the above, Normal Healthy Volunteers

Notes: _____

5. Is the recruitment and consent process (including telephone scripts, ads, brochures, letters, compensation) fully described, appropriate, and non-coercive?   Yes ✓   No ☐
Notes: _____

6. Are risks (physical, emotional, financial, legal) to subjects minimized? Yes ✓ No ☐

Notes: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

7. Confidentiality of Data:

Are there procedures for protecting privacy and confidentiality? Yes ✓ No ☐

Notes:

8. Is Informed Consent Included in the Application? Yes ✓ No ✓

Stipulate Missing Elements:

		Yes	No
Is affiliation with SEU clearly noted?		☐	☐
Is the Faculty PI identified?	N/A ☐	☐	☐
Is the study faculty sponsor identified (if appropriate)?		☐	☐
Does the consent state the study purpose accurately?		☐	☐
Is it clear what the subject(s) will be asked to do?		☐	☐
Are risks or discomforts clearly and fully stated?		☐	☐
Are benefits clearly and fully stated?		☐	☐
Are alternatives listed (if appropriate)?	N/A ☐	☐	☐
Are confidentiality or anonymity issues addressed?		☐	☐
Is the PI's contact information included?		☐	☐
Is the IRB's contact information included?		☐	☐
Is it stated that the subject can withdraw at anytime?		☐	☐
Is the consent understandable at an 8th grade reading level?		☐	☐

Assent Form   Not Required ☐

	Yes	No
Is one needed (can the child really refuse to participate)?	☐	☐
Is it one page or less?	☐	☐
Is the language simple and sentences short?	☐	☐

Notes: _____

Additional Comments/Requirements by IRB:

Please add the IRB's email address to your consent form irb@seu.edu. Right now you just have XXXXXX

Also, please add the IRB's email address to the consent form.

RECOMMENDATION:

✓ Approved as submitted   ☐ Approval Deferred; add'l information required

                                              (additional IRB review required)

☐ Approved with stipulations as noted   ☐ Not Approved

Signature: IRB OFFICE   Date: 3-08-2019

Appendix D
Email Invitation

Subject: Requesting your participation in Doctoral Research.

Dear (actual name),

My name is Gail Cushing and I am a Doctoral student in the education department at Southeastern University. I am working on my dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Grace Veach.

I am writing to you today to invite you to participate in a study entitled "Multi-Generational Workforce Strategies for 21st Century Managers". The aim of this research is to explore multi-generational workforce strategies for managers to use in the workplace.

This study involves one 30-minute interview that will take place in a mutually convenient location. Interviews will be audio-recorded. All research data, including audio-recordings and any notes will be encrypted. Research data will only be accessible by the researcher and the research supervisor.

There are no known risks involved as a participant, and great care will be taken to protect your identity. This will be done by keeping all responses anonymous and allowing you to approve your transcribed interview before it is used in the study.

You will have the right to end your participation in the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw, all the information you have provided will be destroyed.

The ethics protocol for this project was reviewed by the Southeastern University Institutional Review Board, which provided clearance to carry out the research. (insert name) Chair, Southeastern University Intuitional Review Board (by phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx ext. xxxx or via email at (place email here).

I will contact you by phone on (date) to secure an appointment time or you can call me sooner 863.214.XXXX or gxxxxxxxg@seu.edu

Sincerely,

Gail M. Cushing

Note: If you do not wish to receive future emails related to this study, please reply to this email message and type 'unsubscribe' in the subject line. Your email address will be removed from the mailing list.