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THE IMPLICATIONS OF MULTIGENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE WORKFORCE

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THE IMPLICATIONS OF MULTIGENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES
WITHIN THE WORKFORCE

by

Benjamin Ryan Hayes

B.S., Southern Illinois University, 2009

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Public Administration

Department of Political Science
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

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Master

in the field of Public Administration

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MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. David NewMyer

This paper identifies and discusses generational effects on public administration, particularly in the field of public administration and public policy. Specifically, it is the conclusion here that identifying the different perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors exhibited by the five traditional generational groups (traditionalists/veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y/Millennials, and Generation Z) will assist managers in the public sector field to better communicate with their employees, thus resulting in a more effective working environment through enhancing organizational cohesion and cooperation. A phenomenological mixed method will be employed, utilizing peer-reviewed literature and governmentally issued statistics. Discussion of these aspects follows below and includes an argument for the potential implications of these communication issues for public administration and how understanding generational differences can strengthen work relationships and maximize employee performance. The study highlights the importance of addressing the generational gap in the workplace to ensure it is an asset as opposed to a liability.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Within the workplace, whether in relation to public policy or within the private sector, multigenerational human factors substantially affect the culture and working environment of organizations (Cannon and Broach, 2011; Babbitt, 2011). As leaders plan and prepare for the future, they must recognize just how important this research has become given the impact of this generational gap upon organizational performance. At the current time all workplaces in the United States, the federal government included, are experiencing substantial change, with the workforce ranging from soon-to-be-retiring Baby Boomers to recent entrants to the workforce such as Generation Y/Millennials. This transition in age demographics presents to these organizations both challenges and opportunities, depending on how the transition is managed, with three major shifts in the age demographic of the workforce influencing this. These opportunities are those of growth, development, and collaboration or cooperation. Through the utilization of this triple-pronged strategy considering growth, development, and collaboration, bridges may be built between generations in an effective manner (Hannam, 2011).

The modern workforce is characterized by a multi-generational character, a rapidly growing/fluctuating workforce, and rapid technological change and innovation (Hannam, 2011). When considering the issue of public policy, there is generational conflict over age-specific policies in addition to the fiscal troubles of the modern economic environment (Fullerton & Dixon, 2010). Age is a basic social category within human interactions in general, and is one of the primary factors within society related to the assignation of roles such as those on an organizational hierarchy, and the granting of power and prestige. As a result of this generational differences play a significant role in politics (Braungart & Braungart, 1986). Given the

significant impact of age and generations upon political perceptions and understandings, the way in which this impacts public policy is of significant influence upon society at large. To illustrate the influence of generational differences on modern American society, herein is a consideration of the way in which generational differences impact perceptions of public policy, and the way in which public policy-related organizations manage generational differences.

Due to extended working years and fiscal situations researchers such as Delcampo (2011), Gerdes (2010) and Hammill (2005) view this as the first time in American history that *four* generations are working side by side in the workplace. “At work, generational differences can affect everything, from recruiting, building teams, dealing with change, motivating, managing, and maintaining and increasing productivity” (Hammill, 2005, p. 2). People communicate based on their generational backgrounds and each generation has different attitudes, behaviors, expectations, habits, and means by which they are motivated. Generational differences, relative to how people communicate, might affect misunderstandings, high employee turnover, difficulty in attracting employees, and gaining employee commitment. Today, running a business involves dealing with many kinds of people and age groups. Learning how to communicate with the different generations can eliminate major confrontations and misunderstandings in the workplace and the world of business. Hammill (2011) suggests that recognizing and understanding the varying needs of people at different stages of their lives and career can improve workplace productivity. Managers must be aware of the characteristics of the four workplace generations and act accordingly.

There have always been multiple generations in the workplace, but today new managers will experience four generations working together and the drastic difference is the rapid influx of technology-savvy employees and the resultant cultural, social, and attitudinal changes they bring.

This generational diversity and new technological change is causing a transformation in the way employers must manage human resources (Hannam, 2011). For management, it can seem like each generation has its own world-views, priorities, career models and motives. Managers that effectively understand how to handle such differences may leverage the strengths of each generation and take full advantage of the multi-generational workforce. This understanding will enable employers, whether in the realm of public service or the private sector, to attract and retain employees, build collaborative teams, prepare for future challenges, and increase employee engagement.

The workforce today is experiencing a much different workplace than it was in the past. The state of the United States economy and recent recession has made it more economically important for older employees to remain active in the workforce longer than anticipated. There are more pronounced differences between the generations today than ever before simply because our world has changed so much in the last 50 years. As older employees defer retirement and new ranks of workers come of age, more generations are interacting in the workforce. Demonstrating the use of communication skills might mean formal writing and speaking abilities to an older worker, but may mean e-mail and instant messaging to a twenty-something. The new problem in the workplace has nothing to do with downsizing, global competition, or over-stressed bosses. It is the problem of distinct generations working together and often colliding when their paths cross (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Roles are being redefined and rules are being rewritten daily. The Kelly Global Workforce Index (Kelly Services, 2012) states that forty-two percent of employees admit they have experienced intergenerational conflicts in the workplace, while seventy-five percent said they adapt the way they communicate with colleagues from different generations in order to avoid problems (Kelly Services, Inc., 2012).

This is further exacerbated by the reality that each thirty to forty years, the United States experiences a political cycle that parallels that of the generational cycle. These generational shifts each consist of an idealist, a reactive, a civic, and an adaptive generation (Harris, 2008). This divergence in political alignment with each generational cycle contributes to conflicts between them, whether in the workplace or in matters of public policy.

This variation in perception can make a difference in how individuals work together and understand each other. Being aware of generational differences can help managers and workers to anticipate miscommunications between employees and tailor their approaches to conflict for maximum effect, whether they are applying for a job, expressing a new idea to a boss, or leading a team (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Each generation brings a different mind-set and skills to the collaboration table. Divergent generational values, work ethics, and financial perspectives can make management in the workplace very difficult. Herein, it will be argued that knowledge and understanding in the area of communication has the potential to lift organizations out of mediocrity and to further grow their business, especially when it comes to public administration. Specifically, there are four ostensible objectives of this current research: 1) to identify the demographic characteristics and length of time that defines each generational group; 2) to determine the contributions and styles each generational group brings to the workforce and what expectations they have regarding the working environment; 3) to help managers learn strategies for interacting with multi-generational workforces and to determine how to foster increased job satisfaction and productivity among them; and 4) to establish how public policy is impacted by generational difference, and how public policy organizations might encourage different generations of people to work together. The question here is: What communication and

compatibility issues are the result of multigenerational workforces and what can be done to address this appropriately?

CHAPTER 2

Generational Definitions

The term 'generation gap' is not a new phenomenon; rebellious Baby Boomers coined the term in the late 1960s. But the disparities today are deeper and more complex, making it harder for workers of various ages to communicate (Kersten, 2002). It is necessary, thus, from the outset, to define each generation empirically: 1) The Traditionalists/Veterans (born between 1922 and 1945); 2) the Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964); 3) Generation Xers (born between 1965 and 1980); Generation Y/Millennials (born between 1981 and 1990); and Generation Z (born between 1991 and 2002). While there are many terms for the various generations, the most commonly used are Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennial Generation (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000).

The 2010 U.S. Census shows that the four generations examined in this study are not proportionate in terms of population. The Census Bureau outlines the makeup of each demographic as follows: 18 years and younger = 74,181,467 individuals; 18-44 years of age = 112,806,642 individuals, 45-65 years of age = 81,489,445; and, lastly, 65 and older = 40,267,984 (BLS, 2010). The National Association of Manufacturers estimated that the most significant impact on the workplace during the next decade will be the retirement of the Baby Boomers (Howe, 2000). As they retire and the economy grows, the United States will have seven million more jobs than the number of workers available to fill them. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that in the years to come, there may be a shortage of up to three million workers in executive, administrative, and managerial positions, and that this shortage will be caused, in part, by the retirement of the Baby Boomers (BLS, 2010). Given the substantial shifts that are to be experienced within the labor market, and related to the job market, public policy

and the perceptions thereof, as a result of generational shifts, it is necessary to explore each generation, and to, in turn, quantify its impact.

Traditionalists/Veterans (born 1922–1945)

The Traditionalists were also known as ‘Veterans’ or the ‘Silent Generation.’ The Great Depression and World War II were critical events that shaped the mindset of this generation (Houlihan, 2011). Having grown up in a “do-without” era, they respect authority and believe in duty, honor, and their country, dedication, sacrifice, and saving. Many of the Traditionalists’ values are influenced by the experiences that often included the hardships of their parents and grandparents immigrating to a new country and making their way in a new land. Their core values are impacted by the experiences they had during the Great Depression and World War II and include duty before pleasure, adherence to rules, and conformity (Murphy, 2007).

As workers today, traditionalists/veterans place a high premium on formality and the top-down chain of command. Traditionalists are the older Americans who hold three-quarters of the nation’s wealth. They are the executive leaders of some of the most established and influential companies in America. Traditionalists serve as the organization’s historians and keepers of the past of founding goals and beliefs, while their work style is “past-oriented” and they typically believe in “doing more with less.” This generation is also characterized by resistance or disinterest to new technology and work processes, and are slow to change their work habits (Tolbize, 2008).

Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964)

Baby Boomers are well established in their careers and hold positions of power and authority. Baby Boomers make up the largest percentage of the population (BLS, 2010). Many are war babies and may represent the children of World War II Veterans. They did not go

through the economically hard times as their parents did. They had a good life, and their parents wanted them to have the best. Some would describe them as the “me” group. Significant events that many members of this generation witnessed as they grew up were the first nuclear power plant, the Cuban missile crisis, the Kent State massacre, John Glenn orbiting the earth, the Civil Rights Act, President John Kennedy’s assassination, Watergate, and the Vietnam War (Murphy, 2007).

Baby Boomers as a generation constitute a large population of corporate executives and leaders. Growing up with 80 million peers has made this generation highly competitive and willing to sacrifice for success. Recognition is important, and they favor a personable style of communication that aims to build rapport (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). Baby Boomers are credited with reshaping corporate culture with casual dress codes and flexible schedules. Many people in this generation live healthy lifestyles but are not financially prepared for the long years of retirement ahead of them. Consequently, remaining in the workforce will be a necessity for these healthy, older people. They will live longer than their parents and grandparents did, and thus many will want or have a need to remain productive (AARP, 2010).

Generation X (born 1965–1980)

Generation Xers are economically conservative because they remember their parents dealing with layoffs and unemployment, inflation and stress. They do not rely on corporations or institutions for their long-term security like the generations before them. They grew up in the time of women’s liberation protests, the Watergate scandal, the energy crisis beginning, the Iran hostage crisis, the Challenger disaster, and the mass suicide in Jonestown. Divorce rates reached an all-time high during this time and single parents became the norm. The higher divorce rate combined with an increase in working mothers meant many of the Generation X grew up as

“latch-key kids” frequently left to their own devices. They grew up during a time of financial instability in the early 80’s when large companies were forced to resort in layoffs which ended lifelong employment for their parents. This created a cynical perspective towards public policy that is tangible in their employment therein and without in the private sector. They are typically referred to as pessimistic and self-reliant, and are wary of commitment, both professional and personal (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

Generation Xers, of whom 90 percent are technically competent, can get impatient with others less knowledgeable than themselves. Brought up in uncertain times, frequently by single parents, Gen-Xers tend to be practical, independent, and successful, although are simultaneously less optimistic than most and see fewer opportunities for job promotions. Concerns related to public policy include the Social Security Administration and its capacity to provide a return on their investment. Having witnessed the practice of laying off committed employees as experienced by their predecessor generation the Baby Boomers, members of Generation X do not expect employer loyalty and see no problem changing jobs to advance professionally (Mann, 2006). Their preferred work environment is one that is casual and friendly, yet functional and efficient. Their workplace must be technologically up-to-date and offer ample opportunities to learn new things (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). This generation believes that their overall success will depend on continuing education and developing new skills that will keep them marketable throughout their life span (Mann, 2006).

Generation Y/Millennials (1981–1990)

Generation Y is also referred to as the Nexters, Millennials, and the Internet Generation. They grew up during the high-tech revolution of video games, ATMs, and high-speed Internet access. Significant events were September 11th, the Columbine High School shooting, OJ

Simpson's murder trial, the Oklahoma City bombing, the first cloned sheep called Dolly, and the Iraq War and peace-keeping mission (Gerdes, 2010). They grew up in mini-vans, protected by car seats and child protection laws. They have experienced social networking, online lives, and are technologically savvy. They can multi-task and have short attention spans and high expectations. Howe and Strauss describe this generation as confident, pressured, sheltered, team-oriented, and achieving (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Their core values include tolerance, environmental stewardship, global perspectives, personal freedom, and making a difference. They experienced the greatest financial boom in history and steady income growth through the 1990s. They saw their parents lose all their stocks and mutual funds (their college funds) during the early 2000s. Their parents are more educated and older than generations before them. Millennials are known as the "cyber generation," and value positive reinforcement at higher rates than members of the generations that have come before them.

Generation Y was raised by young Boomers and older Xers and their first members are just entering the workforce. Unlike the Xers, Millennials are highly collaborative and optimistic (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). They share the Xers' work/life balance motto and find comfort in technology because it is familiar to them. They've been taught to put their feelings on the table (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Generation Y has developed team instincts and tight peer bonds (Strauss, 2007). While some generations prefer to work alone, Generation Y will probably flourish within teams and thrive on teamwork, political action instead of apathy, and technology as a way to improve the workforce. Most will have a continuing close relationship with their parents, will be busy with extracurricular and community activities, and will continue to focus on performance, much as they did on grades in school (Strauss, 2007).

Generation Y/Millennial adults are conventionally-minded and respectful of societal norms and institutions. They spring from the most ethnically diverse backgrounds ever witnessed and yet think less of racial identity than their predecessors (Strauss, 2007). They are highly selective and sophisticated consumers, and as students they expect to be able to choose the kind of education they can buy, as well as what, where, and how they will be taught (Carlson, 2005). This selectivity will be carried over to the workplace. They view themselves as highly reliable and responsible members of society and believe that their generation will accomplish great things. Generation Y demonstrates that how they spend their time is more important than the amount of money they make. They do not find working for large corporations and a global economy very important, nor do they like a high-pressure work environment. They are tech-savvy, and digital technology is second nature to them. Studies show that they do not read as much as previous generations and are more likely to prefer video, audio, and interactive media. Work is performed in a virtual setting, using whatever relevant technology is available (Carlson, 2005).

Managing Millennials

Many managers from previous generations find Generation Y employees not ready for the real world of work for several reasons. First, Generation Y employees appear to be unable to delay gratification and think in the long term (Levine, 2005). Second, they have trouble starting at the bottom rung of the career ladder and hate grunt work. According to employers Levine interviewed, Millennials have short attention spans and, although whizzes on communication devices, lack many writing and personal communication skills. Colleges have been forced to accommodate Millennials with insufficient reading and writing skills through remedial

coursework. Workplaces may also need to provide training to this generation in the basic elements of business and professional correspondence (Levine, 2005).

Millennial Public Policy Perspectives.

The modern Millennial generation is now the most populous in American history, and will therefore have a lasting influence within the realm of public policy. As these individuals mature, they will not only be pervading the workforce, but also political culture, and the employment structure thereof. Due to this the political stance of the Millennial generation will be substantially impactful upon public policy into the future. This particular generation has already exhibited high levels of social consciousness through its volunteer efforts, voter turnout, and participation in the political process (Harris, 2008).

The participation of the Millennial generation and its perceptions related to public policy helped shape the outcome of the 2008 presidential campaign. Many individuals from this generation volunteered on campaigns. Their use of technology and social media enabled the Obama campaign to more effectively target them, providing him an advantage over Senator Clinton during the democratic race. The generational cycle is thought to be influencing a realignment that is influencing the Millennial generation to be more democratic in expression than republican, holding long-term implications for the future of the nation (Winograd & Hais, 2008).

Generation Z (1991-Present)

This generation is not taken into account for the purposes of this paper due to the lack of collected knowledge of this generation's true performance and impacts to the workplace.

Generational Conclusions

Examining what each generation brings to the workforce and how managers should respond to these traits can divide the field of generations into common classifications (Howe, 1991). Hammill (2011) points out that understanding the generational differences and traits can go a long way toward improving interaction between them. These four groups share some traditional work values but differ on the role of the manager, issues of loyalty, technical competence, and how much time must be spent on the job to define a good day's work. They also differ in terms of personal lifestyles and social values, as well as their perceptions in relation to public policy and political alignment. Generational "values" each individual carries depends on which generation they were raised in. These fundamental differences constitute the 'generation gap.' Members of each generation have a tendency to exhibit similar characteristics, however managers should be careful not to stereotype their employees based on these tendencies (Hammill, 2005).

Table 1

Generational Groups and Their Concomitant Characteristics & Values

Group	Characteristics & Values
Veteran	Privacy Hard Work Trust Formality Authority Social Order Material Things
Baby Boomer	Competition Change Hard Work Success

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teamwork Anti-rules and Regulations Inclusion Fight for a Cause
Generation X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrepreneurship Loyalty Independence Information Feedback Quality of Work-Life Communication Wary of Commitment Cynical Pessimistic Self-reliant
Generation Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrepreneurship Loyalty Independence Information Feedback Quality of Work-Life Communication Positive Reinforcement Autonomy Positive Attitudes Conventionally Minded Respectful of Norms Tech-savvy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity Money Technology Action

CHAPTER 3

Generational Basics

Generational Character

To a great extent, the personality of a generation is formed by the seminal events that take place in the early years of the lives of its members (Sago, 2000). Not every member of a particular generation shares everything in common, yet vast majorities possess many of their generation's traits, characteristics, and values. Members of all generations are likely to experience significant events during their developmental adolescent years that strongly impact and form lifelong impressions affecting their outlook on life and work. The individuals in each group seem to develop similar attitudes, ambitions, and a synergy that provides them strength in society.

Political character. Each generation, while exhibiting a unique set of personality traits, also exhibits a unique political perspective. According to Harris (2008) each generational cycle, which spans thirty to forty years, boasts members with a number of political perspectives. Throughout the duration of each of these cycles there are a number of realignments of the various members of differing generations, impacting their perception of public policy, and behavior within organizations. Each generational cycle, thereby, also coincides with a political cycle as well.

Each generational cycle is characterized by a variety of political perspectives as well. Within each generation there is an idealist, reactive, civic, and adaptive generation. At the current time the idealist generation is that of the Baby Boomers. The reactive generation is that of Generation X, while the civic generation is that of the Millennials. Those born after 2003 make up the most adaptive generation of the four discussed here (Harris, 2008). This divergence

between the political perspectives of generations mingling today in turn exerts a substantial influence upon both political activity and organizational performance. These demographic shifts will be discussed in depth in a discussion below, which will further illustrate the impact of perception upon performance.

Generations and Organizations

As with other diversity issues such as age, gender, ethnicity, and race, examining and understanding generational effects has become increasingly important for maximizing organizational effectiveness (Sago, 2000). Today's workforce represents the greatest diversity of generations working together at any time in history. The examination of generational differences among workers is a critical and underdeveloped area of investigation. However some individuals are starting to research this such as Niemczyk and Ulrich (2009). They have conducted a study which found the preferences of the Millennial generation. Their research involving examining the work environment preferences of the Millennial Generation determined that this generation had a complex combination of relationship issues, personal growth ideas, and preferred organizational structures regarding their ideal workplace. These findings help determine that each generation had its own unique attitudes, work ethics, and preferred ways of managing and being managed (Niemczyk & Ulrich, 2009).

The generational cohorts in today's age-diverse workplace view the world and the workplace from various standpoints that seem to be related to their life experiences. According to Throckmorton (2007) these differences may impact the way people act in teams, and often miscommunication can lead to team members working concurrently but not collaboratively. Organizational success is dependent upon understanding the perspectives and desires of each generation and being respectful of their differences. All organizations are influenced by the

values and preferences of their employees, and management needs to understand and adjust to these generational differences in order to avoid misunderstandings and miscommunications when considering employee productivity, performance, and retention (Throckmorton, 2007).

CHAPTER 4

The Modern Employment Scenario

The workforce of today is a much different environment than it ever has in previous years. With the state of the U.S. economy and recent recession, older employees are staying on the job longer in order to recoup some of their lost retirement income, and younger employees are struggling to find employment. Some human resource personnel worry that there is an approaching shortage of educated workers. Their fear is due to the fact that the Baby Boomer generation is comprised of 76 million individuals, whereas Generation X consists of a relatively smaller group of 51 million individuals (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). In Generation Y, there are more newly-educated students attempting to enter the workforce. The four separate generations in the workplace perceive their professional and personal life in very different manners. This simple variation of perception can make a difference of how individuals work together and understand one another, both within the professional environment, and also societally in relation their perception and exercise within the realm of public policy.

The lack of understanding of this generational diversity can be disastrous for companies. The various communication styles listed in Table 2 and workplace experiences combined can create tension and dissension. “It is important for managers to be aware of the applicable strengths and weaknesses of each generational group. Managers who have a strong understanding for these characteristics will find keys to obtaining the maximum amount of benefit from each employee” (DelCampo, et. al. 2010).

Table 2

Communication in the Multi-Generational Workplace

Generation	Preferred Methods of Communication	Suggested Ways to Communicate
Traditionalists	Memos Letters Personal Notes Individual Interactions	Words and tone of voice should be respectful, with good grammar, clear direction, no slang or profanity. Language should be formal and professional, and the message should relate to organizational history and long-term goals.
Boomers	Face-to-Face Phone Calls Personal Interaction Structured Networking	Conversation should be more informal. Boomers tend to see relationships and business results as intertwined. Get the person's input and link the message to the team or individual vision, mission, and values.
Gen Xers	Voice Mail E-Mail Casual Direct & Immediate	Don't waste this person's time. Be direct and straightforward. Avoid corporate-speak. Send an email or leave a voice mail that states clearly what you want and when you want it.
Millennials/Gen Yers	Digital (Instant Messages, Blogs, Text Messages) Collaborative Interaction)	Be positive. Tie the message to personal goals or to the team's goals. Don't be condescending. Avoid sarcasm, cynicism.

Note: From Hannam, 2011.

The Public and Political Workplace Today

Currently, those employed in the American workplace at large, including those within the Federal Government, are experiencing a period of significant change and substantial challenge, but also opportunity (Hannam, 2011). The first step to making the generational diversity work is to understand what motivates members of different generations. The second step is to institute management techniques that are flexible enough to meet the needs of each generation (Mask, 2007). Whether public or private an organization must maintain the requisite flexibility to capitalize upon generational differences, as a lack thereof may result in an inability to adapt to such differences, thereby damaging productivity.

Top business leaders recognize the changing demographics of the workplace and how it can affect morale and productivity. Many companies such as Google, Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, and Boeing have incorporated inter-generational trainings as key components to their leadership development and management training programs. In these trainings, participants experience how different generations interact with each other. The training focuses on communication, working environments to address needs of incoming employees, and matching people and job responsibilities that challenge and motivate people appropriately. “We believe it is important to focus not only on what work needs to get done, but also on the values and work styles of the various generations who are doing the work” (Mask, 2007, p. 11). Clearly, a one-size-fits-all management style does not exist. Managing and motivating a generationally diverse workforce can certainly be challenging when different values and views of the world guide employees’ daily actions.

Applying Generational Understanding

Developing an understanding of generational effects can uncover what motivates members of each generation. Though people act and react differently to various situations and stimuli, it is generally accepted that those with similar backgrounds (gender, race, education, income, etc.) tend to share similar viewpoints, outlooks, communication styles, work habits, and expectations (Sago, 2000). Dealing with generational issues has become commonplace, and has a profound impact on career issues. Extensive research within a wide variety of organizations has revealed that varying levels of employee disenchantment, miscommunication, and bitterness result from these differences present in all organizations (Sago, 2000).

Given the variations in generations, no two situations can be dealt with in the same manner; organizations need to craft approaches for maximizing productivity and the quality of the workplace environment as it relates to multiple generations of workers. (Mask, 2007). During the next decade, managers will need to utilize strategies and tools to ease the Baby Boomers' transition out of the workforce, and to welcome succeeding generations in their place (Barth, 2000). Considering the generational attributes at work may provide the insight to successfully manage the changing situation faced by political and private institutions within today's shifting demographic composition (Houlihan, 2011). By focusing upon the strengths laid out in table two of each group while encouraging communication, generational differences may become assets as opposed to liabilities, as "Once you get the dialogue started, the learning naturally follows" (Mask, 2007).

Implications

The generational gap explored herein related to the changing generations of the workforce are directly related to the subject of public administration. The workforce at large is shifting, not in any one particular industry. Thus, the individuals available to be capitalized upon by all organizations and agencies, the government included, will be shifting through this generational change. Through the following consideration of the generational shift upon public administration the implications of the literature review conducted above will be clearly highlighted.

Government Workforce

Federal. The aging of the workforce has impacted the human resources available to the federal government of the United States. The aging Baby Boom generation is credited as the first and most influential reason behind this. In addition to this, new methods of public management have been adopted within the confines of the federal government. As a result of the success of the new public management in the federal government, its workforce has been downsized further (Lewis & Cho, 2011). This is particularly worrisome, as the next generation of public administrators are expected to face a more difficult economic and social environment (Milakovich & Gordon, 2012).

The aging of the federal workforce in conjunction with downsizing of the overall federal government has created a staff shortage for the primary agency that provides for public administration. The federal service is not only aging, it is slow to take in new human resources from younger generations. The aging issues of the federal government are expected to produce “a ‘tsunami’ of retirements” (Lewis & Cho, 2011). Public administration and its related agencies

will soon be encountering a human resource shortage that will have substantial implications for the capacity of the government to effectively function.

The federal government will experience multiple symptoms of the staff shortage that is to come. As the workforce ages and fails to take on sufficient new human capital, turnover is the first and most impactful issue. Institutional memory will also suffer, with the potential of knowledge loss inherent therein. Diversity will shift downward as well through the loss of older generations (Lewis & Cho, 2011). Public administration and federal civil service will be tangibly impacted by the generational shift in the workforce, with a solution being essential to mitigate the negative impact this may cause.

The downsizing activity of the United States Federal government that is now being felt substantially in fact began during the Clinton Administration. During this administration in the 1990s a strategy was taken in which substantial government downsizing was pursued while private sector contracting was increased significantly. This practice was aptly named by the Clinton administration as “new public management” (Schooner & Swan, 2010). This practice of New Public Management initiated by the Clinton Administration has left a tangible impact upon the modern environment of the governmental workplace (Lewis & Cho, 2010).

The federal government’s workforce is comprised largely of individuals from the Baby Boomer generation. This generation has reached retirement age, and thus its members are largely in their early- to mid-sixties. The rapid ageing of the federal government was largely influenced by the practice of New Public Management, and the impactful and sizeable downsizing experienced during the Clinton Administration. This has resulted in an older federal workforce, with the high percentage of workers from the Baby Boomer generation meaning that

a high percentage of workers are soon to retire, thereby illustrating the “tsunami of retirements” mentioned below (Lewis & Cho, 2010).

State government workers in a study of American Community Surveys from 2001-2007 were found to be older than federal workforce employees, indicating that the threat of a wave of retirements is all the more real to state governments (Lewis & Cho, 2010). This substantial oncoming shortage of workers in the state governments has been targeted by various initiatives within states, recognizing the threat thereof. In Mississippi for example, the state government has proposed making state employees at-will employees. The goal is to reduce turnover and improve upon motivation, performance, efficiency, and value of employees. However, the efficacy of such measures is not clear (Goodman & French, 2011).

State. While the federal government is facing a potentially negative situation related to the aging workforce and generation gaps, state governments may be even more threatened. Through an assessment of the 1980, 1990, and 2000 Census as well as the 2001-2007 American Community Surveys, it was found that state governments have older workers than any other sector. The median age of state government employees has risen at a rate similar to that of the federal civil service. As a result of this state governments may be more impacted by shifts in the generations of the workforce than the federal government (Lewis & Cho, 2011). Addressing the issues related to generational shifts is essential for public administration agencies to effectively continue operating.

Jail Administration

To illustrate the implications of the literature explored upon public administration, the administration of the criminal justice system in light of the generational differences is of value. The jails of the United States have been experiencing substantial shortages in human resources

due to the aging of the workforce, despite a slower rate of turnover due to the economic recession. To address the challenges related to this, jail administrators have been encouraged to focus their recruitment methods upon younger generations. It has been found that the former means of recruitment may require differentiation to effectively target younger worker demographics (Stinchcomb & Leip, 2012). Prison administration and public administration agencies alike may benefit from this particular strategy. Given the importance of attracting younger workers to fill the gap left by retiring individuals, targeted recruitment may present a viable means of aligning new workers of younger generations.

To exhibit the issues facing jail administrators and the American criminal justice system related to staffing, Stinchcomb and McCampbell (2008) assembled a population of two national work-groups composed of 45 sheriffs and jail administrators from 44 jurisdictions throughout the United States. The top ten issues facing America's jails were the subject of conversation. It was found that the most substantial issue facing America's jails and correctional facilities was that of the workforce. This was broken down into the segments of recruitment, hiring, retention, training, and also succession planning.

Staff is an essential element within the prisons, and a lack thereof contributes to a decline in the quality of service delivered to the inmates. This exacerbates mental health problems amongst prisoners, and increases recidivism rates. Within the study, the participating jail administrators voiced concerns that training and recruitment efforts currently in place are insufficient to address the forthcoming issues to be faced by the "anticipated substantial number of upcoming retirements" (Stinchcomb & McCampbell, 2008). America's prisons like its other agencies will soon be facing significant issues related to staff numbers, with stakeholders finding the system to be largely unprepared to deal with these human resource issues.

Social Security Administration

Public service employment experienced substantial growth over the duration of the 1970s and early 1980s (McKinnon, 2010). The federal government and its many public service administrations are comprised of many elements and employees, with the social security administration being one that is impacted in many ways through the aging of the workforce and retiring of older generations. The increasing rate and population of retiring individuals has created budgetary issues related to social security (Milakovich & Gordon, 2012). The social security administration, the agency responsible for addressing this, is facing issues of its own related to the aging of its workforce (McKinnon, 2010).

Many of the public service employees hired during the period of growth in the late 1970s and early 1980s have or are in the process of retiring. This has occurred in the social security administration as well. The increasing demands placed upon the social security administration in response to the retiring workforce, in conjunction with its loss of human resources due to retirement, has strained the administration significantly. The systematic implementation of policy responses to address the reducing workforce are called for to address the issue as it develops (McKinnon, 2010).

Policy Implications

The aging of the workforce will impact public administration not only through the human resources available to its agencies, but also how it will deliver public policy. The aging of the nation itself, particularly the Baby Boomer generation, has risen concerns in the federal government. President Obama in his 2012 budget plan established long-term adjustments and changes to the social security administration. This is in direct response to the aging of the Baby Boomer Generation (Milakovich & Gordon, 2012).

The aging of the American population has influenced substantial actions on behalf of America's public administration. Over the course of the summer of 2011 the President and Congress contested over the most efficient means of raising the national debt limit. This was to address the ongoing recession in addition to concerns pertaining to social security and the aging of America. Public administration has experienced substantial demands due to this, with public policy being influenced to address these issues (Milakovich & Gordon, 2012).

Two of the primary worries related to the aging of the workforce that attends to public administration are those of educational memory and institutional qualifications (Lewish & Cho, 2011). The importance of maintaining information and knowledge while keeping education and skills up to the demands of the current environment will be increasing as a result of the generational issues facing American society, and the federal workforce. For public administrators to effectively address the issues of today and the future, they must gain and demonstrate the technical skills necessary to effectively guide elected officials and citizens towards the most effective solutions to the ongoing issues facing public policy (Milakovich & Gordon, 2012). The development of such skills by the forthcoming generations of workers is essential, as the Millennial generation is the fastest-growing segment of the American workforce (Gallicano, Curtin, & Matthews, 2012). For public administration agencies to continue effectively contributing to American society, it is necessary that policies be established that attract young workers into public administration at a rate sufficient to replace the loss of workers that is occurring, thereby appropriately addressing the generational gap.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Recognizing and understanding generational differences can help everyone learn to work together more effectively and transform the workplace from a generational war zone to an age-diverse and productive workzone. Generational characteristics influence lifelong decision making, from career choice, products to buy, and lifestyles. Generational cycles also largely determine the political composition of society and the various components therein (Harris, 2008). Although not every individual possesses all of the characteristics of their generation, understanding the context in which each generation was formed provides essential information for understanding how to recruit, train, and retain employees.

Being aware of the applicable strengths and weaknesses is key to obtaining the maximum benefits. Three decades ago, the term *generation gap* was used to describe conflicts between parents and children. Today, these differences find people unable to work side by side because their goals and expectations differ. Management must build bridges across divides that span the generations. Most managers today find generational diversity to be an asset. Managers need to publicize the positive aspects of intergenerational relationships in the workplace and eliminate the negative perceptions before they create resentment (DiRomualdo, 2006).

These generations that are within the workplace are diverse in relation to both their age, in addition to the style of labor and contribution they bring to the workplace. The oldest generation still in the workplace, although it has largely retired, is that of the traditionalists/veterans, born between 1922 and 1945. Following this are the Baby Boomers, born during 1965 and 1980, the generation that is largely approaching retirement as explored extensively herein. Generation Y/Millennials were born between 1981 and 1990, and Generation

Z between 1991 and 2002. (Zemke, Raines, & Filipeczak, 2000). Within the workplace it is necessary to note that these generational differences also bring with them differences related to the manner in which workers perform and interact with one another.

Each generation is characterized by the seminal events that occur during the lifetime of its members, and thus each generation is quite different (Sago, 2000). Each generational cycle holds members of diverse viewpoints and perspectives (Harris, 2008). Generation X is considered reactive, while the Millennials are considered a civic generation. Generation Z is characterized as being the most adaptive generation. The Baby Boomers are often described as the “me” group, while traditionalists are characterized by their adherence to rules, conformity, and prioritization of business over pleasure (Murphy, 2007).

When interacting with multigenerational workforces, education and understanding are essential. Within the presence of the multigenerational workforce, it is important to examine the workplace preferences and perspectives of the generation. Motivation and other factors essential for success in the workplace are mitigated by the perception applied to the workplace and its structures. Thus, to effectively manage a multigenerational workforce, managers must be educated as to the unique attitudes, work ethics, and preferred managerial styles of workers of different generations. Upon having gained such knowledge, it may in turn be applied to management techniques to maximize the efficacy of management with each generational demographic within the workplace.

Public policy will also be impacted by the differences in generations within the workforce. From an internal level, the exercise of public policy is likely to change as the demographic comprising its workforce shifts towards the younger generations (Harari, 2008). The generational differences in public agencies has also produced a change, with the Millennial

generation's trait of being more democratic than republican having long-term implications for the United States and its exercise and development of public policy (Winograd & Hais, 2008). Generational diversity is anticipated to impact the government and local government workforce substantially, and is expected to influence personnel practices and policies that are applied within the public arena (MRSC, 2013). Public policy will be influenced by the presence of the multigenerational workforce, and must also adapt its recruitment and retention practices and policies to best address this shift.

Leveraging generational diversity and creating an environment conducive to constructive employee relations and interactions will improve employee morale. Within the political realm, the generational differences in the United States are significantly impacting perceptions towards public policy. At the moment the Millennial generation, the largest in American history, has begun impacting society through increased political involvement, voter turnout, and even volunteer efforts, although members of this generation have yet to rise to positions of power and influence within organizations (Harris, 2008). To effectively address the inherent shifts in perceptions of public policy and organizational performance, whether public or private, it is necessary to recognize the substantial influence of generational differences.

Recommendations

Throughout the literature review there have been underlying key points to use as recommendations for what organizations and managers can do in order to promote and ease multigenerational mixing for work groups.

Recommended communication points for varying generations from table three; When addressing Traditionalists, words and tone of voice should be respectful, with good grammar,

clear direction, no slang or profanity. Language should be formal and professional, avoid speaking ill about the company or supervisors. For Boomers, conversation should be more informal. Boomers tend to see relationships and business results as intertwined. Get the person's input and link the message to the team or individual vision, mission, and values. When it comes to Gen Xers, don't waste this person's time. Be direct and straightforward. Avoid corporate-speak. Send an email or leave a voice mail that states clearly what you want and when you want it. When confronting Millennials, be positive. Tie the message to personal goals or to the team's goals. Don't be condescending. Avoid sarcasm, cynicism.

Another point of observation is to keep the playing field of communication even in the respect of everyone should use the same demeanor when addressing others. All age groups should come to a standard practice or work group collective. It may be in the organizations best interest to persuade younger generations to take note from their elder cohorts on effective professional communication. This is one point the younger generations should make an honest effort to raise the bar.

Recommendations for mixing workforce knowledge; As prior discussed by Hannam (2011), McKinnon (2010), Lewish & Cho (2011), & others, many organizations are worried about losing their outgoing knowledgeable staff to be replaced by younger less experienced individuals. This is not a new worry among workforces but apparently has been looked over by many. Lewish & Cho state job shadowing is of the foremost importance when there is a desire to pass on knowledge to the next generation. The term, no need to reinvent the wheel came from a sound place. Why should organizations force younger and new generations to spend time learning and figuring out what does and doesn't work when there is likely someone within every

organization that has years of practice and information readily available now. This bonding time also provides a generational gap for employees.

Recommendations for public entities in recruiting new personnel; As discussed, most government agencies face a heavily weighed workforce that leans toward retirement age. These agencies are worried about the availability of younger personnel and how to recruit them. Milakovich & Gordon believe the key may be to start prior to high school, youth interest is typically widely taken up by the time they reach high school with other programs and extracurricular activities (Milakovich & Gordon, 2012). Programs such as the website “Kids in the House” have been developed to broaden awareness of middle school children on how local and federal government work. Kids in the House is supported and maintained by the Office of the Clerk, in DC. With sites such as this coupled with teachers creating groups for middle school students to lobby bills of their choice for class projects. These activities engage young adults and give them a hands on approach to how our government works and operates as opposed to reading about in text books. Such activities have gained positive reviews from students yet remain to show positive impact on the workforce at this time.

The overall best practice gathered from the collective sources is integrating multiple generations together whenever possible. While there may be initial issues or restraint, each generation has much to gain from working with other age groups. This practice can and typically does prove to be beneficial for many future generations to come.

Table 1 (Pg: 14-15)

Generational Groups and Their Concomitant Characteristics & Values

Group	Characteristics & Values
Veteran	Privacy Hard Work Trust Formality Authority Social Order Material Things
Baby Boomer	Competition Change Hard Work Success Teamwork Anti-rules and Regulations Inclusion Fight for a Cause
Generation X	Entrepreneurship Loyalty Independence Information Feedback Quality of Work-Life Communication Wary of Commitment Cynical Pessimistic Self-reliant
Generation Y	Entrepreneurship Loyalty Independence Information Feedback Quality of Work-Life Communication Positive Reinforcement Autonomy Positive Attitudes

Conventionally Minded
 Respectful of Norms
 Tech-savvy

Diversity
 Money
 Technology
 Action

Note: Slippery Rock University, 2010.

Table 2 (Pg: 20)

Communication in the Multi-Generational Workplace

Generation	Preferred Methods of Communication	Suggested Ways to Communicate
Traditionalists	Memos Letters Personal Notes Individual Interactions	Words and tone of voice should be respectful, with good grammar, clear direction, no slang or profanity. Language should be formal and professional, and the message should relate to organizational history and long-term goals.
Boomers	Face-to-Face Phone Calls Personal Interaction Structured Networking	Conversation should be more informal. Boomers tend to see relationships and business results as intertwined. Get the person's input and link the message to the team or individual vision, mission, and values.
Gen Xers	Voice Mail E-Mail Casual Direct & Immediate	Don't waste this person's time. Be direct and straightforward. Avoid corporate-speak. Send an email or leave a voice mail that states clearly what you want and when you want it.

Millennials/Gen Yers	Digital (Instant Messages, Blogs, Text Messages) Collaborative Interaction)	Be positive. Tie the message to personal goals or to the team's goals. Don't be condescending. Avoid sarcasm, cynicism.
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Note: From Hannam, 2011.

Table 3

Generational Reward Preferences

Generation	Reward Preferences
Traditionalist	Tangible symbols of loyalty, commitment, and service, including plaques & certificates
Boomers	Personal attention, promotions, and recognition
Gen Xers	Free time, upgraded resources, opportunities for development, certifications to add to their resumes
Gen Y/Millennials	Awards, certificates, and monetary rewards

Note: (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000)

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