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Challenges of Human Resource Professionals Onboarding Generation Z Into the Federal Government

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Challenges of Human Resource Professionals Onboarding Generation Z Into the Federal

Government

by

Flora Lawson Murphy

MBA, Webster University, 2003

BS, Virginia Union University, 1999

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

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Abstract

The U.S. labor market expects 83 million of the youngest generational cohort, known as *Generation Z*, to join the workforce with different attitudes towards work than previous generations. The methods used by human resource (HR) professionals to onboard Generation Z into organizational cultures are not well understood. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the challenges that federal HR professionals experience during the onboarding process for Generation Z employees. The data gathering and analysis were framed by Mannheim and Strauss-Howe's theory on generational cohort and the conceptual framework developed by the Office of Personnel Management on Human Capital. An embedded case study was conducted using purposeful sampling to interview 12 participants with knowledge of onboarding and Generation Z. The study identified the challenges that hindered HR professionals from promoting organizational effectiveness and revealed where the agency might have been constrained. The use of inductive coding resulted in the emergence of 4 themes: (a) substandard organizational assimilation and preparedness, (b) budgetary constraints to workforce planning, (c) lack of technical infrastructure, and (d) perception of the federal government as a future employer. The implications for positive social change include possible improvements for leveraging technological advances that would enhance communication, training, and development throughout an organization during generation Z onboarding processes. The knowledge acquired in this study may also promote social change through a deeper understanding of Generation Z values, enabling managers to create meaningful work that increases their loyalty as federal employees, thus decreasing turnover and creating economic stability for the agency and future employees.

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Dedication

I dedicate my study to my parents, Joe and Lonnie Mae Lawson. Thank you for your love and support that dared me to dream. It is through your love and sacrifice that taught me to be my best self. Second, I would like to dedicate this study to my sisters Gwendolyn Lawson Winston and Allison Lawson. When I count my blessings, I count both of you twice, for I would not be the person I am today if it was not for your love, support, and constant encouragement. I also dedicate this study to my children Jamil and Abir and grandchildren Taylor, Logan, Racquelle, and Kyler, for their unwavering support, laughter, and prayers. I love you more than I can say. Finally, a special dedication to Diggy for the peace you bring to my life. I appreciate you being there through all the late nights and early mornings.

Acknowledgments

First, I want to thank my chairperson, Dr. Michael Neubert, for his guidance and countless hours of support. Next, I want to thank my second committee member, Dr. Bryan Forsyth, for the encouragement and critical insights to propel me forward during the difficult times. Third, thank you, Dr. Anton Camarota, who served as URR, and challenged me to expand my knowledge. I will always be grateful for my committee's support and kindness that guided my path.

I also want to thank a host of family, friends, and educators that supported my journey, and I am truly grateful for your support. May God bless you all!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Human resource (HR) professionals face the challenge of making sense of the emerging young generation, Generation Z, defined as individuals born between 1995 and 2015 (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018). Generation Z individuals were expected to onboard and change workplace dynamics with their attitudes toward work and professional life (Latkovikj, Popovska, & Popovska, 2015). As the oldest members of Generation Z began to enter the workforce, it was essential for organizations to understand how these young employees would fare in the workforce (Stuckey, 2016). Despite the vast speculations about Generation Z, HR professionals face a growing challenge dealing with five generations of employees that require different levels of engagement (Lanier, 2017; Puiu, 2017; Arar & Öneren, 2018).

Onboarding is an essential aspect of the hiring process that connects several HR processes and requires communication and collaboration across the organization (Karambelkar & Bhattacharya, 2017). HR professionals must understand the mindsets of Generation Z and how this generation's formative years shaped their perceptions because traditional HR practices relevant to dealing with a diverse generational cohort in the workforce have been limited (Lanier, 2017). Generation Z, the youngest cohort in the workforce, is foreseen as the future's technologically advanced generation (Latkovikj, et. al., 2015; Arrington & Dwyer, 2018). Researchers predicted that Generation Z would influence technology and dominate the 21st century (Abel-Lanier, 2016; Arar & Öneren, 2018; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018).

As more members of Generation Z enter the workforce, HR professionals have shown a lack of concern about the ways that Generation Z may influence not only the work environment but also the demand for technological advances (Puiu, 2017). The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO, 2016) reported that hiring freezes, sequestration, furloughs, and a freeze on salaries do not send a welcome message to entry-level employees who want meaningful work and high salaries. The federal government is confronted with an aging workforce that is retiring at alarming numbers, leaving a workforce of young individuals who lack planning and communication skills (Brauer, 2018). The American labor market is seeing unprecedented times with aging employees retiring. Government agencies offer employment incentives to baby boomers to remain on the job to help fill the skills gap or mentor younger workers (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Karambelkar & Bhattacharya, 2017).

The 2010 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS, 2014) reported that Millennials younger than 30 avoided working for the federal government, with only 6.6% of this generation becoming federal employees. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2017) reported that the most significant concerns of Generation Z were the fear of not finding jobs that matched their personalities (37%), followed by a lack of development opportunities (36%), underperformance (33%), and inability to fulfill career goals (28%). The arrival of Generation Z into the workforce is relevant to the HR onboarding process because many new hires decide to leave the hiring organizations within the first 6 months (Ford, 2017; Karambelkar & Bhattacharya, 2017). Generation Z employees are diverse, independent, technologically advanced collaborators

that absorb information quickly (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Bencsik, Gabriella, & Timea, 2016).

Generation Z are digital natives who have never known life without technology, which makes the members of this generation very familiar with technology and in possession of unique behaviors that disrupt the workplace because pop culture and historical events influenced their belief systems (Colbert, Yee, & George, 2018; Singh & Dangmei, 2016). Generation Z's distinct characteristics have caused these individuals to customize the rules that are challenging HR professionals, managers, and supervisors (Puiu 2017). Lanier (2017) questioned whether HR professionals are ready for the challenge of managing the expectations of Generation Z at the onset of employment. Generation Z suffer significantly as they onboard because of organizations' lack of preparedness to immerse this new generation into an organizational culture in which members of five generations are working side by side (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). Conducting this study was essential to understand the ways that the formative years of Generation Z shaped their characteristics as learners and future employees (Schroth, 2019).

In this qualitative single-case study, I focused on the challenges encountered by HR professionals to onboard Generation Z into the federal workforce. The purpose of the study was to explore and understand the challenges encountered by HR professionals from one federal agency to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture, enhance job creation, and increase employee retention rates (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). Limited research has been available on the challenges hindering or

contributing to the lack of onboarding strategies to engage Generation Z in the federal workplace. The insights gained from this study may be valuable in understanding the obstacles faced by HR professionals and other leaders from one federal agency. The study also could prove beneficial to subject-matter experts, managers, and businesses willing to examine their onboarding strategies to promote a stable workforce and effective workforce initiatives. The social aspect of onboarding a new generational cohort may change the perceptions of Generation Z and result in the development of a blueprint to conduct further research on the challenges of other federal agencies' onboarding strategies to enhance job creation and increase retention rates.

The goal of the study was to identify and close gaps in the research to broaden the knowledge base regarding ways to onboard Generation Z into the federal government's organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase retention rates. The literature review addressed the research gaps by synthesizing information about Generation Z characteristics and reviewed data related to the challenges encountered by HR professionals from one federal agency outlining how to engage a new generational cohort into the organizational culture. By unveiling the challenges impeding HR professionals, the results of this study may be used to understand how well the agency has identified, characterized, and reacted to constraints. Addressing the challenges will allow potential applicants and employees to view the agency as an employer of choice.

Background of the Study

The landscape of work has changed as older employees retire and young employees join the workforce for the first time as less experienced than previous

generations were (Schroth, 2019). As members of Generation Z enter the workforce, concern has mounted regarding the ways that HR professionals prepare and manage the perceptions of a new generational cohort joining the labor market (Iogulescu, 2016). Current academic literature has indicated what HR professionals need to know about Generation Z, the ways that a new generation of workers has transformed the workplace, and the influence of the youngest generational cohort as entry-level workers (Iogulescu, 2016; Lanier, 2017). Onboarding Generation Z has become an emerging issue that may have a significant impact on organizations with limited research on ways to onboard the generational cohort effectively (Froedge, Jordan, McNulty, Shuttz, & Weirich, 2018; Latkovikj et al., 2015).

The arrival of Generation Z has presented challenges in conflict, communication, and career development, leaving managers in the federal government workforce hopeless in meeting the demands of new employees (Bencsik, Gabriella, & Timea, 2016). HR managers have struggled to identify strategies to keep Generation Z loyal to the organization because the youngest generation of workers are ready to redefine policies and procedures to heighten technological advances and workplace environments (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). Applying the human capital framework, federal agencies have sought to address the need to mitigate cross-cutting challenges by integrating strategic planning to combat gaps in critical skills, retaining talent management, and creating results-oriented organizational cultures (U.S. Office of Personnel Management [OPM], 2015a).

The literature has indicated that Generation Z's perceptions of work have been a significant factor obliging HR professionals to understand how to recruit, develop, and retain new members of the labor force (Arar & Öneren, 2018). Generation Z has been identified as having higher economic well-being, education, and racial diversity than past generations (Schroth, 2019). In 2019, Generation Z comprised 20% of the workforce (Puiu, 2017), which accounted for a quarter of the U.S. population (60 million) of new workers joining the workforce (Lanier, 2017). According to Wilkie (2017), a lack of enthusiasm existed among workplace managers, with 36% of managers believing that Generation Z were more challenging to manage, 26% believing that their foreseen problems were communication, and 29% believing that they were related to training and development. Arar and Öneren (2018) recognized that Generation Z's lack of work experience would be problematic, so they called for an understanding of Generation Z's formative years that shaped their learning experiences to be future employees.

According to Straus and Howe (1991a), the formative years (ages 10-20) mold core values. Mannheim (1952) formulated the generational cohort theory to identify changes across generations based on historical events and the ways that these experiences predispose generational groups to similar values, attitudes, and beliefs. Strauss and Howe (1991b) expanded the generational cohort theory to develop four stages of distinct generational events occurring cyclically every 20 years. The conceptual framework of generational archetypes created by Stauss and Howe (1991a) was based on historical events that repeat in sequential order. For this reason, Arar and Öneren (2018) examined the characteristics of Generation Z and the perception of HR professionals onboarding a

new generational cohort. The mindset of Generation Z is dramatically different from that of past generations, so the traditional approach by HR professionals to onboard a new generational cohort cannot retain newly hired employees (Bencsik, Juhasz, & Machova, 2016).

Another outdated aspect of traditional recruitment efforts appeared as Generation Z brought new challenges to the forefront of talent management and the career development process. Generation Z uses online tools such as Google and YouTube to improve their skill sets (Arar & Öneren, 2018; Gurchiek, 2017). Researchers such as Stewart, Oliver, Cravens, and Oishi (2017) have explored challenges to onboard the millennial generation in the workplace, with technology serving as a significant component helping millennials to adjust and operate more efficiently, both of which are mutually beneficial to all employees.

As the millennial generation became known as job hoppers who were not hesitant to move from job to job, employee turnover suddenly became a challenge for many industries (Brown, Thomas, & Bosselman, 2015). The SHRM (2017) reported that the average cost of replacing an entry-level employee was $20,000. Statistics have shown that Fortune 500 companies that hired outside senior executives failed within 18 months of entry and that half of hourly workers left within the first 120 days of employment (Grillo & Kim, 2015). Ford (2017) captured veterans' experiences transitioning from the military to federal employment, with veterans calling the process of onboarding daunting because many left their positions within 12 months of hire.

Blankenship and Hart (2016) conducted a multiple-case study to analyze the best practices and actual practices across 30 government agencies' employee orientation programs, their curriculum content, and their evaluation methodologies. According to Blankenship and Hart, the OPM requirement for onboarding consisted of mandatory training that stressed compliance, which was an agency-centric focus, not an employee-centric one. Onboarding, which involves helping employees to develop skills to evolve in their current and future roles, has been and continues to be considered a strategic touchpoint and a defining moment for new employees (Froedge et al., 2018). Onboarding is an innovative way to set expectations for a successful start to the employee-employer partnership.

Organizations have defined onboarding in a variety of ways, with many referring to the process as organizational socialization, in which employees acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviors to become productive members of the organization (Froedge et al., 2018). Karambelkar and Bhattacharya (2017) adopted the SHRM's definition of onboarding as a change management process to ensure the engagement, commitment, and productivity of new employees. Onboarding has reduced employee anxiety and provided new employees with the opportunity to build team camaraderie and communication skills while discovering how their role fits into the overall organizational workforce (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Froedge et al., 2018). The health care industry recognized how often onboarding had been neglected, so it made onboarding an internal part of the employee life cycle and attrition process. By investigating health care reform

initiatives, the hospitals helped nurses transition from academia to practice using strategic planning and implementation (Hofler & Thomas, 2016).

The U.S. Senate Special Committee (as cited in Fishman, 2016) conducted a longitudinal study on aging to understand generational differences in the federal workforce, with the results indicating that current generational challenges made it more difficult for older workers to thrive in the workplace. The GAO (2015a) examined strategic human capital management challenges faced by the federal government as a wave of employee retirements led to a loss of leadership and institutional knowledge at all levels. HR professionals in the federal government must change to meet the demands of the new workforce and understand generational perceptions (Green, Roberts, & Rudebock, 2016). Goldenoff (2017) found that facilitating an employee life cycle included strategic planning, onboarding, and recruitment as cost-effective achievements related to the organizational mission of HR. Comparably, Franceski (2017) reported that HR professionals who did not conceptualize a return on investment of employee onboarding as a strategic tool were at higher risk of losing top talent among Generation Z employees.

The results of these studies provided a context to managers, leaders, and HR professionals about ways to onboard Generation Z into the workplace. The current study was necessary to understand the ways that HR professionals need to onboard Generation Z into the federal government. Conducting a more in-depth examination to identify the perceptions of HR professionals who oversee the onboarding process may help organizations learn how to onboard Generation Z into a multigenerational workforce. My

goal was to address gaps in the research and advance the knowledge of Generation Z to provide HR professionals with strategies for onboarding a new generation of workers into the federal government and managing a multigenerational workforce.

Problem Statement

The workforce has changed rapidly as older employees retire and a new generation enters the workplace for the first time, bringing different values and preferences about work that influence HR processes (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). The general management problem is that HR professionals in the federal government do not have a good understanding of how to manage five generations of employees simultaneously (Bencsik, Juhasz, & Machova, 2016; Lanier, 2017; Latkovikj et al., 2015). This lack of understanding called for research to understand the role of onboarding a new generational cohort entering the workforce (Lanier, 2017; Bencsik, Gabriella, & Tímea, 2016; Krasman, 2015). The specific management problem is that some HR professionals from one federal agency have lacked onboarding strategies to engage Generation Z into the organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase retention rates (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). HR professionals should anticipate changes with each generation and develop strategies to adapt because members of each generation exhibit different attitudes toward work and the workplace (Jonck, van der Walt, & Sobayeni, 2017). Research on the emerging generational cohort Generation Z has been scant (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). The social problem of onboarding a new generation in the workplace has added value to the ability of HR professionals and society to manage a multigenerational workforce by

providing tools to create cohesion and foster innovation (Gurchiek, 2017; Jonck et al., 2017; Lanier, 2017; Wiedmer, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the qualitative single-case study design was to explore and understand the challenges facing HR professionals regarding ways to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture that enhances job creation and increases retention rates (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). To address this gap and to remain consistent with the qualitative paradigm, I followed a single-case study design to investigate the challenges facing eight to 15 HR professionals from one federal agency in the District of Columbia. By unveiling the challenges impeding HR professionals, this study may broaden understanding of the ways that the agency identified, characterized, and reacted to constraints. Resolving constraints may allow potential applicants and employees to view the agency as an employer of choice.

Research Question

The study was guided by one research question (RQ): What are the challenges that HR professionals face in onboarding Generation Z into the federal workforce?

Theoretical Foundation

Mannheim (1952) formulated the generational cohort theory, which defines generational cohorts as individuals born in the same period who experienced similar significant life events in their formative years. The theory then posits that these experiences influence generational groups to similar values, attitudes, and beliefs. In other words, generational cohort theory explains that the era in which individuals were

born affects their views of the world (Baker Rosa & Hastings, 2016). Individuals' value systems are shaped during the first decade of their lives by families, friends, communities, and significant events, based on the general era in which they were born (Coetzee, Ferreira, & Shunmugum, 2017).

Mannheim's (1952) seminal works consisted of two elements that defined a generation, namely, a common location in historical time and an awareness of shared real-life experiences. The theory identifies the motivational needs and various work styles of individuals born into a similar time frame to develop a conscious awareness, which then frames generational differences in the workplace. Generational identity changes swiftly when significant events occur, according to Mannheim. Generations have similar characteristics and behaviors shaped by critical historical events and social changes that cultivated their values, attitudes, and beliefs (Strauss & Howe, 1991a).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this single case study consists of OPM's human capital framework. The OPM (2019a) developed the human capital framework to reduce and clarify reporting procedures across agencies through a more data-driven review process and foster a variety of workforce planning methods (see Figure 1). The design of the human capital framework strengthened human capital management, organizational development, and guidance to senior leaders, HR professionals, and employees during constant change. The conceptual framework helped narrow the knowledge gap, thus increasing an understanding as to how HR professionals in the federal government

onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase retention rates.
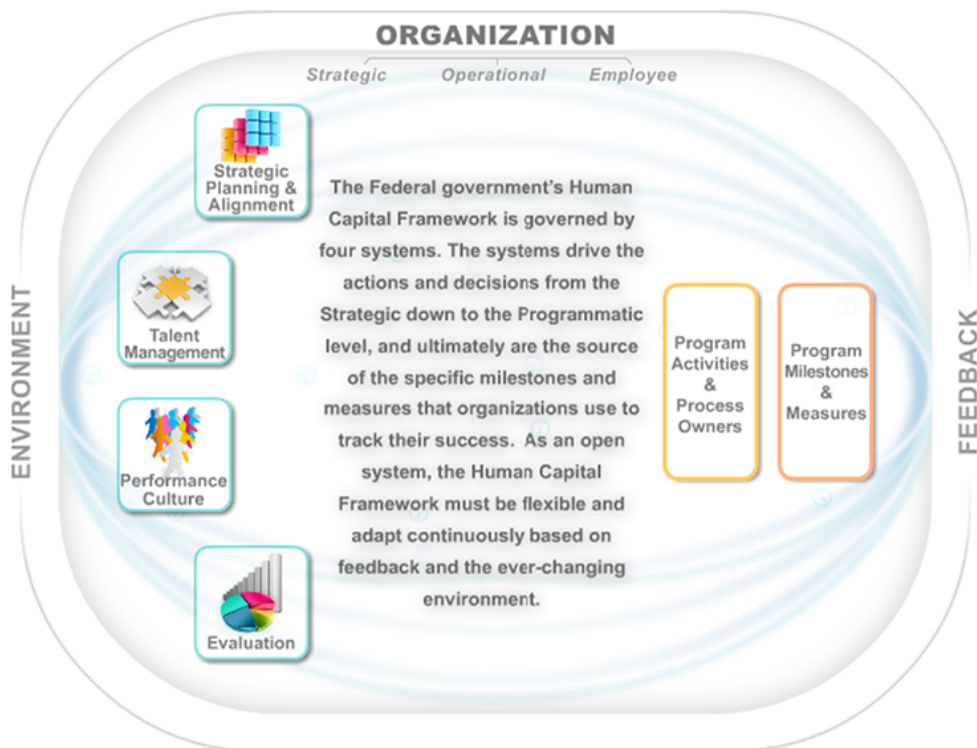
Figure 1. OPM's (2019a) human capital framework.

The human capital framework has four open systems: strategic planning and alignment, talent management, performance culture, and evaluation (OPM, 2019b). The open systems drive strategic, operational, and tactical efforts, and they capture milestones to track success through an adaptive system and feedback loops. I focused on the first open system of strategic planning and alignment. Senior leaders provide top-level direction to managers and employees, closing the gap through the development of the strategic workforce planning process (OPM, 2019b).

According to OPM (2019a), the structure of the human capital framework facilitated creation of a life cycle plan for federal agencies to plan, implement, and

evaluate their alignment of the organizational mission to individual program levels. The human capital framework is a flexible environment of organizational agility essential to onboard a new generation of employees and managing talent (Bierema & Callahan, 2014). HR practitioners need to embrace the unforeseen challenges of everyday work practices (Brinck & Tanggard, 2016). In sum, OPM and federal agencies now have the attention of the U.S. Congress to improve the government's human capital policies and procedures in recruiting and retaining talent to carry out the government's work (GAO, 2015b). An additional conceptual framework adapted by Strauss and Howe (1991a), namely, generational archetypes and generations, identified four stages of distinct generational events occurring every 20 years in cycles based on historical events (see Figure 2).
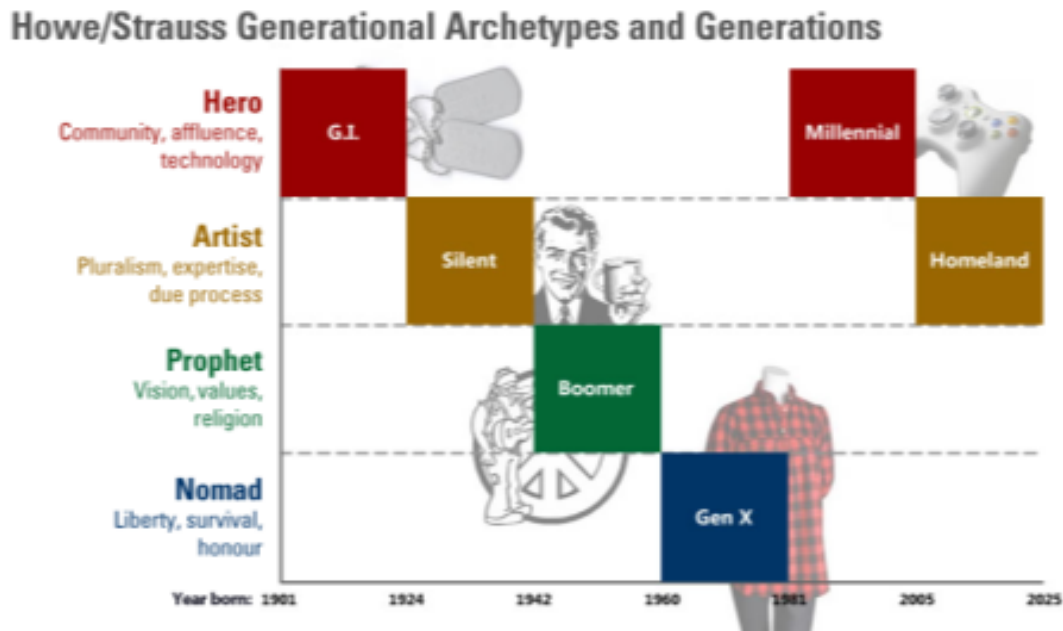
Figure 2. Artwork created by Joey DeVilla (2013). Based upon Strauss-Howe (2007) Generational Archetypes and Generations.

Strauss and Howe (1991a), who termed the historical events *turnings*, suggested that two different turnings associated with different generations build archetypes that repeat sequentially. The archetypes are generational commonalities that drive each cycle, which varies from previous cycles. The formative years (ages 10-20) mold core values (Strauss & Howe, 1991a). Puiu (2017) discussed the evolution of technology in and out of the workplace and asserted that Generation Z is now acting as the technological authority figure because of their significant power of influence on a multigenerational work environment.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a single-case study design with embedded units. A qualitative approach was best suited for the study because the goal was to obtain an in-

depth understanding of the challenges faced by HR professionals from one federal agency as they onboarded Generation Z into the organizational culture. According to Yin (2017), case study research is an exploration of the participants' real-life experiences and perspectives. The method allowed me to explore the agency and its employees. The federal government employs more than 2 million individuals worldwide (OPM, 2015a), so this phenomenon was not unique to this particular federal agency.

Qualitative design entails various designs: ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study. Ethnography refers to research based on the cultural characteristics of a group (Hunt, 2014). I did not study the cultural characteristics of the participants. Narrative inquiry design refers to understanding the lives of the participants and interpreting the meanings of the participants' stories based on their experiences (Maria, 2015). I did not interpret participants storytelling. Phenomenological design is the exploration of shared experiences and understanding the meanings of the participants' lived experiences based on a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I did not explore and understand the participants' shared experiences. Maz (2013) defined grounded theory as a qualitative design that advances the understanding of people's behavior in terms of meaning and change based on circumstances or over time. Grounded theory was not an appropriate choice for the study because the focus was not to create a theory or interpret qualitative data aimed at theory construction.

Purposeful sampling was used to select eight to 15 participants, from whom I collected rich and descriptive data until data saturation occurred (Saunders et al., 2018). I used purposive sampling as the primary way to recruit HR professionals and consultants.

I would have used snowball sampling to obtain more participants if purposive sampling had not resulted in obtaining the initial eight to 15 participants. According to Greene (2014), the use of snowball sampling encourages subject-matter experts to recruit other participants with knowledge of the topic under investigation.

A single-case study design was appropriate to conduct this study (Yin, 2017), which focused on the challenges faced by HR professionals as they onboarded a new generational cohort into the federal workforce. Data were collected from in-depth interviews, document analyses, and questionnaires. To complete the process of validating and conducting reliability checks in qualitative research, I used audit trails, triangulation of the data, and member checking. Transactional validity refers to the interactive process between researchers and their study participants when reviewing the data by validating facts, feelings, experiences, and values or beliefs to reach a level of certainty (Cho & Trent, 2018). In sum, the process of validity ensured that the participants' realities corresponded with the interpretation captured by the researcher.

To be eligible for the study, potential participants had to meet the following criteria: they had to have at least 5 years of experience being employed by the federal government, experience working in the HR field, and service as an onboarding subject-matter experts or consultants in the onboarding process at the time of the study. I conducted semistructured interviews to obtain a deeper understanding of the ways that HR professionals from one federal agency onboarded Generation Z into the organizational culture. In an effort to strengthen the trustworthiness of data in the study, I collected data through interviewing process and developed open-ended questions. I

transcribed and analyzed the data using Microsoft Excel while coding the participants'

responses to the interview questions to identify and categorize themes and patterns. I used

confirmability, reflexive journals, triangulation of the data, and member checking to

reduce the effect of researcher bias and the omission of beliefs and assumptions with

audit trails.

Definitions

Following are the key terms and definitions used in this study:

Attrition: Attrition is the reduction of employees resulting from voluntary and

involuntary turnover (Showry & Manasa, 2016).

Baby boomer: Baby boomers are individuals born between 1946 and 1964

(Shuler, Faulk, Hidleburg-Johnson, & Williams, 2016; Stark & Farner, 2015).

Generational cohort theory: Generational cohort theory refers to members of a

group who share similar birth years, ages, and noteworthy life events at critical

developmental stages (Jonck et al., 2016; Kupperschmidt, 2000; Mannheim, 1952).

Generation X: Generation X are individuals born between 1965 and 1979 (Stark

& Farner, 2015).

Generation Y (millennials): Generation Y, also known as millennials, are

individuals born between 1980 and 2000 (Fishman, 2016).

Generation Z: Generation Z are individuals born between 1995 and 2015

(Arrington & Dwyer, 2018).

Human capital: Human capital is an intangible asset or quality not listed on a

company's balance sheet. It can be classified as the economic value of workers'

experience and skills, along with assets such as education, training, intelligence, health, and other things employers value such as loyalty and punctuality (Goldenoff, 2017).

Human capital framework: The human capital framework provides comprehensive guidance on the principles of strategic human capital management in the federal government (U. S. Code of Federal Regulations, 2016).

Human Resource (HR) professionals: HR professionals serve as subject-matter experts and gatekeepers within the profession of HR in their responsibility to exercise influence and control over access to the organization, including potential employees (Mackaway & Winchester-Seeto, 2018).

Onboarding: Onboarding is the process of indoctrinating new employees into the organizational culture (Cable, Gino, & Staats, 2013).

Skill gap: Skill gap refers to the variance between the current and projected workforce size and skills to ensure federal agencies have the caliber of talent available to support the mission (U. S. Code of Federal Regulations, 2016).

Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM): SHRM (n.d.) is the largest association in the world dedicated to providing support and resources to HR professionals and students of HR.

Strategic HR management: Strategic HR management is a model that enables organizations to achieve goals through HR (Wright & McMahan, 1994).

Traditionalists: Traditionalists are individuals born between 1922 and 1945 (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018).

Assumptions

Before conducting qualitative research, I had several assumptions related to data collection and the explanation of the phenomenon by the participants. Assumptions are intentions relevant to research that are believed but not yet proven (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The first assumption in the study was that participants would share their human experiences during the interviews by providing open and in-depth accounts of their skills, thus revealing candid details of their organizational setting. The second assumption was that the participants were knowledgeable of the phenomenon under investigation, resulting in valuable information and thick description when answering the interview questions. The third assumption was that the participants would share and exchange information honorably and transparently, exhibiting substantial trustworthiness for a definitive and data-rich case study. The fourth assumption was that I would be able to accurately record, journal, and transcribe the information obtained from the participants during the interviews. The fifth assumption was that the data analysis would facilitate the emergence of themes from the qualitative data obtained from the interviews. The sixth assumption was that all HR professionals want to obtain knowledge of onboarding a new generational cohort into the workplace.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this qualitative study was limited to the perceptions of the sample of federal HR professionals from the District of Columbia. The research focus was limited to the demographic region and participants serving as subject matter experts in the federal government in which the participants worked. Delimitation of the study was the target

population and location. The use of purposive sampling allowed me to obtain a sample of

at least eight federal HR professionals from the District of Columbia as subject-matter

experts of onboarding. I interviewed only regular full-time HR career employees of the

federal government. I did not include temporary or contractor employees of the federal

government in the sample. The study participants were subject-matter experts of

onboarding who had decision-making power. Other internal stakeholders may have

lacked knowledge of the topic, so their participation would not have been beneficial in

solving the underlying problem. The study's delimitations included the boundaries within

one agency as HR professionals and their perception of onboarding Generation Z into the

organizational culture.

Transferability refers to the degree to which the research can be transferred or

replicated (Yin, 2017). The results of the study may be used in other studies in different

industries. Transferability refers to the adaptation of the findings to other contexts,

situations, times, and populations (Noble & Smith, 2015). The careful design of a single-

case study methodology may facilitate the transfer of the findings to other contexts and

situations within federal agencies through thick descriptions. The findings of this study

are potentially transferable to federal agencies onboarding Generation Z into the

organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase retention rates.

Limitations

I conducted this single-case study design to explore challenges encountered by

HR professionals to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture of one agency

of the federal government. Limitations consist of potential weaknesses or drawbacks to

the researcher's skill and expertise in case study (Yin, 2017). The study was limited

because the focus was on the federal workforce as well as the perceptions of HR

professionals from the selected region. Another limitation was that I was employed by the

federal government at the time of the study. The study methodology and design included

bias, given that the relationship with other federal employees had the potential to impinge

on my personal perceptions and interpretations. The use of triangulation of the data

helped to eliminate possible researcher bias.

Differences in the socioeconomic status (SES) of the participants may have

manifested in income levels, educational attainment, and occupations. The length of

service with the federal government played a significant role in determining the

participants' level of decision making and knowledge of processes and procedures. The

ethnic background and gender also presented limitations as many of the study participants

were African Americans and females. Another limitation was the pertinence of the study

to federal agencies only, meaning that it was not applicable to the private sector or other

organizations onboarding a new generational cohort. The final limitation was the use of

five generations within a specific geographical location because of the size and

population of the federal government. The District of Columbia has the largest number of

federal employees (OPM, 2019b).

Significance of the Study

The goal of the study was to add to the body of research addressing challenges

encountered by HR professionals to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture

of one agency of the federal government. The onboarding of Generation Z has had a

significant impact on organizations with limited research resources to identify ways to engage digital natives in the workplace (Froedge et al., 2018; Latkovikj et al., 2015). The study was conducted to assess the challenges encountered by HR professionals when attracting a new generation of workers. The results of the study may help to improve HR professionals' understanding of generational differences and serve as a knowledge-sharing tool among five generations in the workplace to support a collaborative workplace. By identifying the challenges faced by HR professionals, the results may increase the current understanding of the ways that the agency identified, characterized, and reacted to constraints. Addressing the challenges may allow potential applicants and employees to view the agency as an employer of choice.

Significance to Practice

Generation Z's characteristics and mindset are different from those of past generations, making it difficult for HR professionals to attract and retain employees (Wiedmer, 2016). Chillakuri and Mahanandia (2018) suggested that HR professionals lead the way in developing innovative strategies to maintain a forward-thinking and sustainable workforce; otherwise, HR professionals who are not willing to adapt risk having poorly trained personnel and low retention rates. The arrival of Generation Z is relevant to HR professionals' onboarding process because many new hires decide to leave the organization within their first 6 months of employment (Ford, 2017; Karambelkar & Bhattacharya, 2017). This study will be significant to the practice of HR professionals because it will help them to understand how job creation is a systematic strategy for onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture. The information

could help federal agencies develop flexible new policies and procedures to onboard

Generation Z employees while increasing retention rates and federal funding in

recruitment and training and development initiatives.

Significance to Theory

No studies were found explicitly documenting the perceptions of HR

professionals of Generation Z's perceptions of work (Arar & Öneren, 2018). The findings

gleaned from this study advance the knowledge of generational perceptions of work and

the implications related to onboarding a new cohort into the organizational culture

(Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Ascencio & Mujkic, 2016). It is through shared experiences

that individuals enter the workplace and develop attitudes and views toward the

organization (Singh & Dangmei, 2016). The generational cohort theory is significant to

HR professionals in preparing and sharing forward-thinking strategies to adjust their

approach to workplace practices for a new generational cohort (Stark & Poppler, 2017).

The study is significant because it used an innovative method to investigate the

challenges encountered by HR professionals regarding onboarding Generation Z in the

federal government. Understanding how to engage with a new generational cohort may

close the knowledge gap between Generation Z and the federal government, thus

increasing retention rates significantly.

Significance to Social Change

Meeting the purpose of the study and gaining a deeper understanding of the

challenges encountered by HR professionals about onboarding Generation Z will foster

the creation of educational opportunities for federal employees and increase cultural

awareness efforts in the workplace. The onboarding strategies relevant to Generation Z will allow HR professionals to be proactive in leveraging generational differences and developing policies and practices that will result in a harmonious work environment and increase employee engagement and retention rates (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). HR professionals need to develop sustainable and innovative strategies to retain a multigenerational workforce and transfer knowledge from one generation to the next (Woods, 2016). The significance of social change provided HR professionals with an opportunity to provide social progression to a new wave of employees joining the federal government and a better framework for onboarding Generation Z in a multigenerational workforce resulting in increased job creation, loyalty, and retention. Thus, the onboarding strategy may reduce employee stress and create economic stability for the next generation of employees after Generation Z as they join the federal government.

Summary and Transition

In Chapter 1, I sought to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of HR professionals from one agency of the federal government regarding ways to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase retention rates. OPM's (2019a) human capital framework as the conceptual framework, along with the concept of generational archetypes, grounded the study. The human capital framework's open system of strategic planning and alignment explains the strategic initiatives to plan, implement, and evaluate the federal government's organizational agility by developing practices to onboard a new generation into the workplace. The

concept of generational archetypes expands the notion of distinct generational events occurring every 20 years in cycles. In addition, the generation cohort theory (Strauss & Howe, 1991a) grounded the study. I explained how subjects' formative years define the existence of a generational cycle, which influenced the values and beliefs of Generation Z.

In Chapter 2, I explain my literature review search strategy, and I discuss literature specifically addressing the lack of onboarding strategies to engage a new generational cohort in the federal workplace. Researchers have acknowledged that the topic has been poorly understood (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Lanier, 2017). The goal of previous research has been to identify challenges, learn from them, and capitalize on ways to change the environment to make the onboarding process more appealing in the form of job creation and retention rates. The results will offer corrective measures for one federal agency to implement onboarding strategies that better align with policies and procedures to compete for talent among a new generation of employees. I also present additional literature in Chapter 2 on further challenges that members of Generation Z present to workforce dynamics and the implications for HR professionals in the field.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Some HR professionals from one federal agency have lacked onboarding strategies to engage Generation Z in the organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase retention rates (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). Researchers have indicated that systematic onboarding can help new employees become more comfortable and efficient in their positions 50% faster, leading them to contribute to desired organizational results by reducing failure rates and increasing employee engagement and retention rates (Bauer, 2010; Hofler & Thomas, 2016). HR professionals should anticipate changes with each generation and develop strategies to adapt because the members of each generation exhibit different attitudes toward work and the workplace (Jonck et al., 2017). The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to understand how HR professionals from one federal agency onboarded Generation Z into the organizational culture to enhance job creation and retention rates (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). The results may help HR professionals share forward-thinking strategies and adjust their approach to workplace practices for a new generational cohort (Stark & Poppler, 2017).

Included in Chapter 2 are details about the search strategy for relevant literature, a description of the conceptual framework, and a thorough review of extant qualitative and quantitative literature about the phenomenon of onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture. The purpose of the search strategy was to obtain peer-reviewed articles and relevant books on the subject of onboarding and generational differences, and

other scholarly works that provided specific evidence of practices and procedures related to onboarding a new generational cohort.

A review of the current literature identified factors that could interfere with the onboarding process. Healthy organizations depend on HR professionals working together to attract and retain employees (Jonck et al., 2017) by regularly reviewing policies, practices, and procedures to ensure that the workforce is prepared to meet the challenges of an aging workforce (Gordon, 2018). Chapter 2 presents a synopsis of literature related to the problem and establishes the problem relevancy. The leading search terms were utilized to compose the theoretical and conceptual framework that identifies and defines the phenomenon. In this chapter, I review research critical to providing context, insights, and knowledge related to the perceptions of HR professionals centered around onboarding and Generation Z.

Literature Search Strategy

To understand the perceptions of HR professionals and the thought process of onboarding a new generational cohort in the federal workplace, I reviewed current books, peer-reviewed articles, meta-analyses, case studies, conference papers, and government studies that used qualitative and quantitative methods relevant to onboarding and Generation Z. Reviewing the literature created the foundation of knowledge about HR management, Generation Z, onboarding, talent management, generational differences, and employee engagement necessary to conduct this study. Therefore, the results of this single-case study may contribute to the current literature about HR professionals,

onboarding, and Generation Z to bridge the gap regarding ways that onboarding a new generational cohort may influence workplace dynamics.

The literature reviewed in this chapter was relevant to the research problem and the phenomenon of onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture and a multigenerational work environment. The following concepts were used in the search criteria: *onboarding*, *strategic human resource management*, *employee engagement*, and *generational differences*. Search terms included *onboarding*, *orientation*, *socialization*, *human resource management*, *talent management*, *generational characteristics*, and *generational perceptions*. The terms that I searched when reviewing the conceptual framework were studies related to *onboarding*, *strategic human resource management*, *generational cohort theory*, *human capital framework*, and *generational archetypes*. I reviewed each article with specific criteria to meet applicability to the study.

I used several electronic resources to find the research relevant to this single-case study related to practices of onboarding Generation Z in the federal workplace. I conducted a comprehensive electronic search of the following keywords: *generations*, *traditionalist*, *baby boomers*, *Generation X*, *millennials*, *Generation Z*, *onboarding*, *employee engagement*, *strategic planning*, *federal government workforce reports*, *employee retention*, *the history of human resource management*, and *the case study method*. Online databases accessed through the Walden Library focused on the main ideas and the controversial areas of the study. These online databases included, but were not limited to, EBSCOhost, SAGE Journals Online, Ulrich, and ProQuest Online. Google

Scholar and the SHRM also were used to locate several articles on the topic. Table 1

highlights the documentation sources.

Table 1

Documentation of Sources

Type	No.	Databases
Peer-reviewed articles	138	Walden University Library, ProQuest, Sage Journals Online, EBSCOhost (Walden), Google Scholar, SHRM
Articles, white papers, books, and conference papers	41	
Dissertations	6	
Government studies	12	

The literature review supported the problem statement, the purpose of the study,

and the RQ. The theoretical foundation of the study was the generational cohort theory

first developed by Mannheim (1952). According to the theory, individuals born in the

same period who experienced similar significant life events in their formative years

created the notion of a generational cohort. According to the generational cohort theory,

the era in which individuals are born affects their worldview (Baker Rosa & Hastings,

2016). Value systems are shaped by families, friends, communities, and significant

events during the first decade of life (Coetzee et al., 2017).

The generational cohort theory was further researched by Strauss and Howe

(1991a) to develop the generational archetypes conceptual framework. Archetypes are

generational commonalities that drive each cycle, with the formative years molding core

values. Each cycle lasts for 20 years because historical events influence the repetitive

behavior of human nature. The human life cycle spans 80 to 100 years, so generational

archetypes show that human beings reproduce distinct generations based on historical

changes in society every 20 years (Strauss & Howe, 1991a). The generational life cycle

of Generation Z is significant because these individuals are coming of age, and their

formative years impacted their behaviors and attitudes towards work (Lanier, 2017).

Also discussed in the study is the conceptual framework, also known as the

human capital framework, which was established by OPM (2019a). The human capital

framework uses information technology (IT) to modernize the workplace and leverage

data analytics and research specific to the federal government (Scherger, Nazroo, & May,

2016). The framework is a systematic way to develop, track, report, and improve federal

workplace initiatives as an adaptive system that changes as its environment changes with

five generations working alongside each other (Goldenoff, 2017).

This chapter defines onboarding, discusses the ways that the perceptions of

federal HR professionals affect the ability to onboard a new generation of workers,

outlines barriers to workplace onboarding, and focuses on the way that federal HR

professionals might manage five generations in the workforce. Also presented is the

connection of onboarding to generational differences and HR management strategic

planning as they relate to the RQ presented in Chapter 1. The conceptual frameworks

explain in narrative and graphic techniques the process of generational archetypes and the

human capital framework related to onboarding a new generational cohort. Also

discussed in this chapter is the influential work of Mannheim (1952) on development of

the generational cohort theory.

Conceptual Framework

The human capital framework is an open systems design that is complex yet

adaptive. The framework allows systems to be flexible and adapt continuously based on

feedback loops in an evolving environment (OPM, 2019a). Four systems structure the

framework and drive the agency's actions and decisions from overall mission to

individual program level: strategic planning and alignment, talent management,

performance culture, and evaluation (OPM, 2019b). The alignment between mission and

workforce drives the specific milestones and measures that organizations use to track

their performance in HR management (GAO, 2015b). Agencies recognize that they have

permeable boundaries that are influenced daily by external factors affecting the ways that

the agencies achieve their missions; therefore, creating a flexible environment is essential

because organizational agility continues to be a requirement for federal agencies (Aryee,

Walumbwa, Seidu, & Otaye, 2016). Modern organizations require strategic planning and

alignment systems that are flexible and responsive when managing talent (Scherger et al.,

2016).

Of the four systems under the framework, I focused on the strategic planning and

alignment system. Strategic planning and alignment refers to the implementation and

monitoring of key initiatives through the workforce planning life cycle that links directly

to key operational processes to the organization's mission. The system ensures that

agency human capital programs align with agency missions, goals, and objectives

through analysis, planning, investment, and measurement. The strategic planning and

alignment system are essential to onboarding a new generational cohort into the

workforce as the members of Generation Z seek meaningful work that will challenge the

status quo (Kick, Contacos-Sawyer, & Thomas, 2015; SHRM, 2017). For the members of

Generation Z, it is not just about finding jobs to pay bills; rather, it is a matter of

designing work in ways that fulfill their purpose and give them the freedom to define their own destinies (Desai & Lele, 2017; Fry, 2018).

Generational Archetypes Conceptual Framework

Strauss and Howe (1991a) posited Mannheim's (1952) seminal work to adopt the conceptual framework of generational archetypes. Generations are categorized by the different values, motivations, and beliefs that are the result of social and political events that occurred during that particular period in history (Mannheim, 1952; Strauss & Howe, 1991b). Conversely, Ryder (1965) posited that generations are a social phenomenon of human births and deaths called metabolism, regardless of social influences.

According to Strauss and Howe (1991a), four stages of distinct generational events occur every 20 years in cycles: (a) high, (b) awakening, (c) unraveling, and (d) crisis. These cycles are based on historical events called turnings. Strauss and Howe theorized that two different turnings associated with generations build archetypes that repeat sequentially: idealist, reactive, civic, and adaptive. Generational archetypes are commonalities that drive each cycle and vary from previous periods. The formative years of 10 to 20 years of age mold core values. Mannheim's (1952) generational cohort theory defined how generations come into existence through turnings in the generational cycle.

Strauss and Howe (2000) described the four turnings in stages of distinct moods or generational events that have recurred in cyclic order in American history. Each turning extends for a period of 20 to 22 years (2000). A complete cycle of all four turnings defines a *saeculum*, which means a long life in Latin. High, the first turning, represents expansion and growth in society (2000). During this turning, the middle class

grew and prospered (Strauss & Howe, 1997). Children felt secure and were encouraged to explore social values. Society experienced a state of peace, and defense budgets were uncontroversial (1997).

The second turning, awakening, begins in an environment of spiritual disturbance in which fundamental values and institutions are challenged and children are left to themselves as adults seek self-discovery (Strauss & Howe, 2000). During this turning, society experienced riots and protest over the Vietnam War and Watergate (2000). The generation experienced the rise of the counterculture (2000). Society experienced an increase in divorce rates and feminist, environmental, and Black power movements (Strauss & Howe, 2000).

The third turning, unraveling, begins when children are raised during a time of strict codes and judgments from elders (Strauss & Howe, 1997). This turning experienced celebrity scandals and a rise in violence to include the "war on terror" (1997). People were enthusiastic about their personal lives and yet doubtful and suspicious about their country (Strauss & Howe, 2000). During this era, the silent generation entered elderhood, baby boomers entered midlife, while Generation X entered adulthood, and millennials entered childhood (2000).

The fourth turning, crisis, identifies a phase of secular disruption in which new values emerge (Strauss & Howe, 1997). The crisis turning consisted of a startling event such as the 2008 global financial crisis that led to a global economic downturn, which had not occurred since the Great Depression of the 1930s (1997). In addition, the presidential election of 2008 led to Barack Obama becoming the first African American

president as a catalyst for change. Under this turning, society came together as a community in response to the recession and redirected social purposes to resolution (Strauss & Howe, 2000).

Strauss and Howe (1997) further posited the framework with new terminology because of their assessment of the fourth turning, which established new archetypes with a different sequential order: hero, artist, prophet, and nomad. Strauss and Howe (1997) argued that historical events may influence human nature's repetitive behavior during the life cycle, which has a span of 80 to 100 years. Within the lifecycle, every 20 years, turnings known as archetypes occur in sequential order (Strauss & Howe, 1991a). The generational archetypes show that human beings reproduce distinct generations based on historical changes in society (1997).

Based on the research, members of the Hero generation emerge during a time of individual realism and self-reliance (Strauss & Howe, 2000). These individuals are considered overprotective parents and tend to be energetic and overly confident team players (2000). The individuals of this generation were born after an awakening and during an unraveling (Strauss & Howe, 1991a). They are civic-minded individuals who seek to be advocates of economic prosperity and public optimism because they grew up in an increasingly protective environment (1991a).

The living generations that represent the H generation are members of the silent generation and Millennials (Strauss & Howe, 2000). The silent generation were young adults fighting in World War II who can recall the death of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968 (Strauss & Howe, 1991a). Millennials were

energetic and overly confident as they entered the political sphere to aid in the election of Barack Obama as the first African American president (Stanton, 2017).

The Artist generation grew up being overprotected by parents preoccupied with a crisis or after an unraveling (Strauss & Howe, 2000). These individuals were born during a time of great danger, aggressive institutions, and an ethic of personal sacrifice. The Artist generation is known for its peaceful rise to adulthood and consensus-building relationships (2000). Traditionalists and Generation Z exemplify the traits of this archetype. The traditionalist generation is considered the silent generation because children of this era were expected to be seen, not heard (Fry, 2018). In addition, traditionalists respected authority and were considered dedicated as well as emotionally mature (Strauss & Howe, 2000). These individuals connected their actions for the good of the organization as they survived World War II and the Civil Rights Movement. Generation Z individuals are considered tech-savvy, having never known a time without digital globalization. This generation was significant in the rise of the Information Age and the dot-com bubble (Strauss & Howe, 2007). Generation Z superseded the millennial generation as the largest multicultural generation and was expected to become the best-educated generation (Fry, 2018). Researchers have reported the demographic trends of Generation Z between the ages of 6 and 21 years to represent 48%, compared to 39% of millennials in 2002 in the same age group (Fry, 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

The Prophet generation refers to idealists born after a great war or a crisis during childhood (Strauss & Howe, 1991a). This generation entered childhood with a consensus around a new social order (Strauss & Howe, 2000). These individuals came of age as

egotistical young crusaders of a spiritual awakening, which emerged as elders guiding

another crisis (Strauss & Howe, 1991a). The Baby Boomer generation exemplifies this

archetype today. Baby Boomers are considered an inspiring age with focused morals and

established principles in midlife because many members of this generation performed

missionary work (Strauss & Howe, 1991a). This generation experienced space

exploration and the first modern counterculture, whose values and norms of behaviors

were substantially different from those of mainstream society (Strauss & Howe, 2007).

During the 1960s and 1970s, baby boomers were considered the hippie generation that

demanded more rights for women and racial desegregation (Strauss & Howe, 1991a).

The Nomad generation was born during a spiritual awakening when youth

resisted established institutional order to recapture a sense of personal authenticity

(Strauss & Howe, 1991a). Members of this reactive generation were known for their

pragmatic leadership because many were considered risk takers who were distrustful of

authority (Strauss & Howe, 2000). Generation X represents this archetype because this

generation strives for self-sufficiency, resourcefulness, and independence (Strauss &

Howe, 2007). A generation that came of age during an era of two-income families

because of a faltering economy and a rise in divorce rates, which led to latch-key children

(Strauss & Howe, 1991a). This generation experienced cultural wars with the rise of mass

media, the end of the Cold War, and the Vietnam War (Strauss & Howe, 2007).

Generational cohort theory, in conjunction with the human capital framework,

determined whether a relationship exists between the theory and context. Mannheim's

(1952) generational cohort theory defined how each generation came into existence

through turnings in a saeculum, which consists of a span of 80 to 100 years, or a generational cycle (Strauss & Howe, 1991a). The five generations still in the contemporary workforce as the result of the last four turnings are traditionalists, baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z (Stanton, 2017).

Theoretical Foundation

Mannheim (1952) formulated the generational cohort theory, which defined generational cohorts as individuals born in the same period who experienced similar significant life events in their formative years. The theory then posited that these experiences influenced generational groups to similar values, attitudes, and beliefs (Strauss & Howe, 1991a). In other words, according to the generational cohort theory, the era in which individuals are born affects their worldviews (Baker Rosa & Hastings, 2016). Individuals' value systems are shaped in the first decade of life by families, friends, communities, and significant events based on the general era in which they were born (Coetzee et al., 2017).

Mannheim's (1952) seminal works consisted of two elements that develop a generation: a common location in historical time and an awareness of the historical position shared by experiences and events. The theory explained the changes across generations by identifying the motivational needs and various work styles of individuals born of a similar time frame to develop a conscious awareness, which framed generational differences in the workplace (Strauss & Howe, 1991a). Generational identity changes swiftly when significant events occur, according to Mannheim (1952). Generations have similar characteristics and behaviors shaped by critical historical events

and social changes in society that cultivated their values, attitudes, and beliefs (Strauss & Howe, 1991a).

Literature Review

The purpose of this single case study was to explore and understand the challenges faced by HR professionals onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture. Understanding these challenges revealed areas where the organization may have been constrained. In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature regarding generational differences and HR as a strategic stakeholder of the federal government. I analyzed the generational cohort theory, along with the generational archetypes and the human capital framework. The generational cohort theory served as an examination of the historical and theoretical contexts how age and location of historical events shape the mindset of a generation. The conceptual framework implies to onboarding a new generation of workers as an integral part of strategic planning for these employees enters as they enter the workplace for the first time.

The Role of Human Resource Management

HR management is the practice of managing organizations (Aslam, Aslam, Ali, & Habib, 2013). During the 1920s, the Industrial Revolution coined the term *personnel management*, which focused on managing labor relations and resolving employee disputes resulting from labor riots and government regulations mandating employee protection and fundamental rights for workers (Stone & Deadrick, 2015). According to Sheth (2018), the traditional role of HR professionals was to keep employees happy and satisfied with pay and benefits. In the early years, personnel management was not

considered a critical organizational role because the role of understanding job responsibilities and training was left to managers (Aslam et al., 2013).

The 20th century was an era of change as globalization emerged and well-educated Baby Boomers influenced human rights and transformed the need for employee rights (Stone & Deadrick, 2015). The functionality of HR increased with such legislation as the Equal Pay Act (1963), the Civil Rights Act (1964), and the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (1974), causing personnel management to become HR management (Stone & Deadrick, 2015). The role of HR professionals changed again as the 21st century workforce complexities and technology transitioned from traditional HR management to a more strategic partner that integrated planning as a means of forecasting and being proactive in workforce initiatives (Duke & Udono, 2012). HR roles and functions have evolved from processing paperwork to focusing on talent acquisition and development.

Amarakoon, Weerawardena, and Verreynne (2016) contended that HR professionals create value within organizations. Ghalamkari et al. (2015) described HR management as the source of organizations' competitive advantage by managing the most intangible resource: the workforce. The role of HR professionals is to focus on creating a workforce that fits with the organizations' demands and performance (Showry & Manasa, 2016). Leong (2018) noted that HR professionals streamline business functions, including recruitment, onboarding, performance management, career development, and compensation. Within their respective organizations, HR professionals use strategic

planning to produce quality products and services to minimize organizational problems by creating a competitive advantage (Ghalamkari et al., 2015).

Leong (2018) emphasized that many HR professionals consider recruitment, including reviewing résumés and scheduling interviews to determine applicants' suitability for positions, the most tedious part of the employee life cycle. Technological advances can aid HR professionals in bringing the right candidates to the organizations rather than the organizations searching for the right employees (Sheth, 2018). According to Leong, an employee's first day on the job consists of completing copious paperwork during new employee orientation. Leong and Sheth (2018) both highlighted the use of recruitment tools and technology such as artificial intelligence chat bots to create interactive ways to address concerns and prepare new employees for their first day on the job and allow HR professionals to be accessible to employees.

Ulrich, Hollensbe, Masteron, and Lyons (2016) developed a model of HR service delivery based on three elements: strategic partners, centers of expertise, and shared services. Singh and Dangmei (2016) stated that the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) agreed with Ulrich et al. for HR to add value. Conversely, CIPD emphasized the need for HR management to move beyond a service delivery model to one that was more business and organizational knowledgeable (Singh & Dangmei, 2016). According to Ulrich et al., a business-savvy model means having a deeper understanding of the business and a keen understanding of the ways that the industry operates; and understanding the internal factors that influence the industry, such as culture, leadership, and staff. Strategic planning is a practical approach to assessing HR professionals'

service delivery abilities (OPM, 2015b). The primary role of HR professionals is to manage employees as human capital, which is critical to possessing the skills of attracting, hiring, and retaining top talent effectively.

State of the 21st Century Federal Workforce

The 2008 economic downturn and the tendency for people to live longer and healthier lives contributed to employees choosing to stay in the workplace longer and delaying retirement, resulting in five generations in the workplace (SHRM, 2017). Although Generation Z individuals were in elementary school during the economic downturn, the event had a significant influence on their views about money, diversity, and politics (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). The lasting impact of the financial crisis has been felt more by Generation Z because many of them witnessed their parents dealing with high unemployment, increases in poverty, and the bankruptcies of small businesses (Colbert et al., 2018). In addition, federal workers dealt with frozen pay structures and reduced staff across the federal workforce, which resulted in high turnover rates (Abel-Lanier, 2016).

Diversity provides benefits in terms of the unique backgrounds and perspectives that the members of each generation bring to the workplace (Jung & Lee, 2016). The federal government workforce comprises five generations working side by side, a situation that can give rise to misunderstandings and conflict (Ascencio & Mujkic, 2016; Thunnissen, 2016; Tsai, 2017). Recognizing the potential for conflict and taking proactive steps to minimize that potential helps to ensure a positive environment for all workers, one in which multiple perspectives and generations can thrive (Stewart et al.,

2017). Although some clear differences exist between among generations, keeping these differences in mind will help HR professionals to prepare to welcome a new generation to the labor force (Stone & Deadrick, 2015).

The federal government has struggled to recruit a new wave of employees because pay and hiring freezes, sequestration, and furloughs have made the government appear dysfunctional (GAO, 2016). Green et al., (2016) stated that younger employees have negative perceptions of the quality of work of government workers, with only 5.7% of recent graduates opting to work for the federal government. In addition, President Trump called on the U.S. Congress to reduce the federal workforce and consider ways to terminate federal workers with low performance, actions that have added to the negative perceptions that Millennials have of the federal government as a potential employer (Lim, Wang, & Lee, 2017). The federal government has lost its appeal among the Millennial generation as a potential employer because only a low percentage of Millennials have joined the federal workforce.

In addition to Traditionalists and Baby Boomers retiring from the workforce, federal agencies have struggled to retain talent. To combat the need to close the critical-skills gap in the federal government, OPM and the GAO developed two major initiatives: reshaping the workforce and maximizing employee performance. OPM (2015a) mandated several workforce priorities because of environmental forces facing the human capital crisis, which included replacing the labor force cohorts with images of public service workers appealing to younger generations (Green et al., 2016). The federal government developed hiring flexibilities such as telework, interagency agreements,

virtual teams, and authorities to manage the federal workforce of nearly 2 million

employees worldwide (OPM, 2015a; GAO, 2016). The goal was to make the federal

government more attractive as an employer of choice to avoid the brain drain and close

the gap in mission-critical skills (GAO, 2016).

The federal civilian workforce grew by 10.3% from 2005 to 2014; however, by

September 2019, OPM estimated that yet another problem facing the federal government

was the eligibility of nearly 600,000 (31%) employees to retire (GAO, 2016). With

globalization, immigration, technological advances, and shifts in demographics, the U.S.

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2012) projected that the U.S. economy would increase

by 9.8 million jobs between 2014 and 2024, with nearly 75 million Millennials seeking

midlevel management positions and a new generation of workers considering entry-level

work. There were significant concerns among government officials regarding ways to

recruit and retain young employees. In addition to recruiting young workers, the length of

time to hire individuals who were eager to start work immediately was another significant

concern, which led to increased turnover (GAO, 2016; OPM, 2015a).

Many older workers have delayed retirement and have chosen, instead, to remain

in the labor force longer (Gordon, 2018). Meanwhile, young workers have faced barriers

because of the paucity of entry-level positions and fewer young employees seeking

traditional careers (BLS, 2012). In fact, a growing trend within the U.S. labor market is

that high school graduates are experiencing higher unemployment rates than ever because

they are overqualified, with young workers with less than a bachelor's degree facing

more competition for middle- and low-skill jobs (GAO, 2016). Goldenoff (2017) testified

that by the end of 2015, 34% of new hires that onboarded into the federal government were Baby Boomers who were eligible to retire in 2020, leaving a significant challenge for OPM to address an aging workforce and the demands of a new generation of employees.

A vital goal of the federal government was to create sustainable ways for the agency to improve practices that would lead to improved performance. OPM (2015b) indicated that only 7.1% of the federal labor force is under the age of 30 years, but by 2024, Millennials will constitute 45% of the labor force and have little interest in joining the federal workforce. By contrast, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2016), the average annual growth rate of 16 to 24 years old in the labor force is projected to decline by 1.4%, with prime workers being 25 to 54 years of age. The Great Recession of 2008, along with globalization and an aging population, led OPM to develop a strategic partnership initiative with colleges and universities, trade schools, and apprenticeship programs across the country that lacked significant returns on investment (Woods, 2016).

Kim and Fernandez (2017) asserted that bureaucratic control created a disconnection between government employees and federal agencies. The organizational culture across federal agencies is unique and has increasingly failed to foster a culture that is attractive to America's future talent (Green et al., 2016). Hoole and Bonnema (2015) suggested that federal agencies are more stifling given the strict bureaucratic hierarchy that requires large amounts of paperwork to make the smallest change. Government officials must rethink strategies to address a multigenerational workforce that must include changes to operations, habits, leadership, policies, and procedures

(Green et al., 2016). Ultimately, the federal government needs to retool its value system to keep up with cultural changes that may not apply to outdated government policies for new generations (Hoole & Bonnema, 2015).

OPM developed a strategic plan based on extensive interviews with stakeholders about future trends and opportunities in the federal HR environment (GAO, 2015a). The purpose of OPM's human capital framework was to modernize the federal workforce as a center of excellence by leveraging data analytics and research to advance evidence-based human capital management (Aryee et al., 2016). OPM's human capital framework was designed to address the modernization of HR IT and leverage human capital analytics and research (Moon, 2017; Scherger et al., 2016). The human capital framework utilized an assessment tool in determining the agency's strengths and weaknesses in areas such as strategic planning, best practices, and organizational development.

Previous congressional reports indicated that federal HR functions such as hiring, payroll, time and attendance, training and development, and performance management were rarely integrated with other HR systems, which resulted in incomplete data or inefficient reporting and led to manual processing (Blackman, Buick, O'Donnell, O'Flynn, & West, 2017; Goldenoff, 2017; Green et al., 2016). The future of federal HR is to create digital records in a secure cloud-based environment to access data related to recruitment, training and development, performance management, pay and benefits, and retirement (OPM, 2018). Government-wide digital records of employees would mean that agencies would spend less time processing HR transactions manually and would improve the quality of data submitted to OPM as reporting requirements. While government

leaders look to improve performance, HR needs to support the effort and identify ways to add value.

Strategic Human Resource Management

Ghalamkari et al. (2017) defined strategic HR management as a process of motivation that sustains and develops HR professionals in achieving organizational strategic objectives. An early definition of strategic HR management was that it consists of the outcome of a process or a combination of procedures designed to achieve goals through HR professionals that link to business strategies and HR practices (Amarakoon et al., 2016; Belhaj & Tkiouat, 2017; Jackson, 2017). The OPM considered strategic HR management is essential for executing the objectives related to the mission of cultivating and managing the federal workforce (U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, 2016). For example, the GAO used strategic HR management to maximize government performance and ensure accountability to the U.S. Congress while managing the federal workforce; hence, the title of the first open system was strategic planning and alignment (Ascencio & Mujkic, 2016). In 2015, the chief human capital officer at OPM recognized and identified the wave of retirements within the federal government as a loss of knowledge management, which resulted in a critical skills gap (Dodaro, 2015). Since 2001, strategic HR management has been a concern of the federal government and Congress, which is why hiring flexibilities such as Veterans Preference and People with Disabilities Initiatives were developed to combat the challenges of an aging workforce (Ford, 2017).

Green et al. (2016) stated that the federal government was facing an optimal challenge as retirements increased and new employees entered the government workplace

with negative perceptions of work. According to OPM (2015b), only 5.7% of recent graduates considered opportunities with the federal government as their ideal careers. The federal labor force comprised individuals under the age of 30 years, which was and remains part of the human capital challenge (OPM, 2015a). The time is now for federal HR professionals to move beyond compliance to change agents as trusted workforce advisors or suffer the consequences (GAO, 2015b).

The GAO (2015b) placed human capital as a high priority strategic initiative in 2001 as one of the government's most significant management challenges as the young generation are not seeking traditional career fields. Critics have disagreed that the alarm is premature, given that Baby Boomers failed to save for retirement and saw their careers as part of their identity (Dorado, 2015). Dorado (2015) stated that many companies offered substantial retention incentives for seasoned personnel to remain with the organizations. Because of recent workforce trends, some organization may have become complacent and have failed to grasp the necessity of planning for the impending shift, placing their organizations' future succession planning at risk (GAO, 2015b). The need for strategic planning is essential to ensure that federal agencies have the talent and skills needed to execute the mission of the federal government to close the skills gap and maintain a diverse work environment (Dorado, 2015).

Iorgulescu (2016) surveyed a group of Romanian university students, as a call for action of HR professionals due to the growing concerns of an aging workforce. The study resulted in understanding Generation Z perceptions of the ideal workplace, working conditions, and priorities for job placement and career aspirations. The characteristics of

Generation Z have had several implications for HR professionals based upon the young

generation's work values, career aspirations, and professional abilities. Iorgulescu's

results identified the need for HR professionals to constant develop Generation Z

employees and how job creation is critical to this generation.

Bencsik, Juhasz, and Machova (2016) posited that as members of Generation Z

enter the workforce, little is known about their characteristics, needs, attributes, and work

styles. These individuals were born into the technology age and raised to know

technology as part of their common identity. Members of Generation Z have attitudes

toward work that are different from those of previous generations, so without having a

proper understanding of this generation, organizations will find it difficult to hire and

retain them to sustain the growth of the organizations. The need for HR professionals to

understand Generation Z is essential to organizations for job creation and retention.

The strategic planning and alignment system means that knowing and

understanding the theories affecting generational differences can be beneficial to HR

professionals in terms of directing employees (Moon, 2017). According to Garavan,

Shanahan, Carberry, and Watson (2016), one of the main goals of HR professionals

should be to guide and motivate employees to meet organizational objectives. Each

generation has different ways of learning and advancing, acquiring knowledge about

generational differences can help HR professionals to maintain or even increase

employee retention rates, productivity, and employee engagement (SHRM, 2017). All of

which ultimately result in achieving organizational missions and objectives. The strategic

planning and alignment system helps to establish long-term and overarching goals to

move organizations from where they are in the marketplace to where stakeholders want the organizations to be. Choosing the employees with the right skills can get them there.

Employee Onboarding

Cable et al. (2013) referenced the first day on the job as indoctrination into the organizational culture. Onboarding new employees extends beyond completing paperwork, particularly as technologically advanced employees join the workforce (Froedge et al., 2018). Most importantly, onboarding should be customized to meet individual needs (Karambelkar & Bhattacharya, 2017). According to Franceski (2017), onboarding could be overwhelming and make employees feel frustrated causing them to their minds about their employer. Ford (2017) stated that nearly half of newly hired veterans working in the federal government left their jobs within the first year because they were dissatisfied work assignments. New employees in general are susceptible to turnover within the first 3 to 6 months of employment (Franceski, 2017). Moon (2018) noted that organizations need to consider developing orientation programs that are more employee centered and less organization centered. Schroth (2019) stressed the importance of onboarding to reduce the uncertainty and anxiety of newcomers. Essentially, onboarding needs to be less about paperwork and more about meeting employees' needs.

The Work Institute (2017) defined onboarding as the process by which new employees acquire the knowledge, skill, and behaviors that they need to become effective and engaged members of their teams, departments, and organizations. Likewise, Karambelkar and Bhattacharya (2017) and the SHRM (2017) defined onboarding as a

process that gives new employees the opportunity to become acclimated to all aspects of the organizations and their jobs. Research has indicated that 25% of employees who wanted to quit their jobs within the first 6 months cited the organizations' lack of a clear informative onboarding process as the reason (Schroth, 2019). The opportunity to highlight career advancement encourages new employees to reach their full potential and perform at their highest level (Karambelkar & Bhattacharya, 2017; Froedge et al., 2018).

Employees transition throughout organizations as a movement, a development, or an evolution from one form, stage, or style to another (Ford, 2017). Onboarding consists of communication and collaboration that connect HR functions to include recruitment, training, coaching, and mentoring (Karambelkar & Bhattacharya, 2017). Through onboarding, employees gain an understanding of expectations, knowledge, skills, and access to resources required to help them to thrive (Franceski, 2017). When starting a new job, a checklist with specific timelines, goals, and responsibilities is critical to employees during the first day, first week, and first month to a year (Schroth, 2019). This information guides new employees as they learn their way to be successful in their new roles in the organizations.

The benefits of onboarding are that it increases retention rates and employee engagement while reducing the learning curve (Work Institute, 2017). Froedge et al. (2018) conducted a case study describing how the health care industry revitalized onboarding for new nurses to transform knowledge sharing across leaders. As an example, the health care industry created an online platform to aid the onboarding of first-time leaders by using mobile devices. The strategy to use mobile devices provided

information and tools at the click of a mouse and minimized the need to travel and schedule conference calls. The real-time devices provided quick answers to questions and provide instant support.

In a similar vein, the Work Institute (2017) revealed studies indicating that effective onboarding reduced the time new employees effectively contribute to the organization. The studies linked effective onboarding to improved employee perceptions of work (Bauer, 2010; Blankenship & Hart, 2016; Work Institute, 2017). Consequently, traditional methods of onboarding consist of filling out paperwork present weaknesses to employees and downplay their identities (Cable et al., 2013). Franceski (2017) portrayed the onboarding experience as a way to attract and empower new employees in the workplace by setting the tone of the relationship as the first official interaction between the employee and employer. Onboarding is a key element in reducing turnover rates and ensuring that new employees understand their roles in the organizations.

Froedge et al. (2018) stated that managers need new employees to understand the organizational culture and values of the organization quickly. HR professionals have discussed reinventing onboarding to get new employees to understand and commit to the organizational values from the first day on the job to instill a sense of pride in their new affiliation (Cable et al., 2013). Likewise, Green et al. (2016) noted that senior leaders need to support cross-cultural awareness in the federal government by not leaving employees to wonder about an agency's value system. The more quickly that new employees feel welcomed and prepared in the modern workplace, the sooner they can contribute to achieving the organizational goals (Franceski, 2017). As younger

generations enter the workplace, they seek meaningful work opportunities that offer flexibility in terms of work schedules and job assignments. Generation Z employees consider themselves as contributors, not just employees (Moon, 2018). Of a recent study by Schroth (2019), only 12% of employees stated that the onboarding process was helpful, with the other 88% indicating that onboarding did not provide them with enough knowledge of their jobs. Without effective strategies for onboarding, new graduates have found it extremely difficult to transition to the workplace successfully (Hofler & Thomas, 2016). The result of investing in employee onboarding has been positive for the organizations and employees in way of reducing turnover rates and administrative cost (Ford, 2017; Franceski, 2017).

The Work Institute (2017) and Blankenship and Hart (2016) linked effective onboarding to reduced employee turnover and increased retention rates. Harder, Zelaya, and Roberts (2016) described onboarding as a comprehensive, high-quality approach to blending learning using online training and face-to-face sessions. Onboarding is a proven retention tool inciting employee engagement and commitment while resulting in higher productivity and lower turnover (Karambelkar & Bhattacharya, 2017). Franceski (2017) found that employees who participated in a structured onboarding program were 69% more likely to stay with their organizations for at least three years. When onboarding was successful, Ford (2017) stated that it becomes phase of the organizational to new hires adjust to the social and performance aspects of their jobs so they can quickly become productive members of the organization. The resources a company put into their onboarding will always yield a positive return (Schroth, 2019).

Federal agencies' onboarding programs have lagged behind private industry

(Blankenship & Hart, 2016). Cable et al. (2013) as well as Moon (2018) noted that

companies such as Zappos and Southwest Airlines used personal identity socialization as

a best practice to retain employees of unique values, perspectives, and strengths. Personal

identity socialization refers to ways to encourage new employees to express their views

and abilities at the onset of employment (Cable et al., 2013). The process allowed

employees to contribute to the organization and leads to greater job satisfaction and

meaningful work, which ultimately benefits the employer (Cable et al., 2013). As cited

by Moon (2018), OPM mandated that onboarding consisted of focused HR activities such

as payroll, benefits, records management, security, ethics, and an understanding of equal

employee opportunities. Onboarding programs need to change, given the high level of

dissatisfaction and lack of employee engagement among new employees and supervisors

(Harder et al., 2016).

The use of a strategic approach to onboarding includes an assimilation period of

new employees' first 12 to 18 months in the company, highlighting the organizational

norms and organizational success (Keisling & Laning, 2016). HR analytics correlates

financial performance with organizational performance by delivering higher revenue and

employee satisfaction. Kremer (2018) used HR analytics in a case study of Lowe's, a

retail home improvement chain, to capture employee engagement, HR processes, and

store performance. When employee engagement increased business performance also

increased (Jung & Lee, 2016). The use of strategic HR management and data analytics

helped to build sustainable strategies that improve organizational performance, while allocating resources (Farrell, 2017; Keisling & Laning, 2016; Kremer, 2018).

Onboarding is the process of individuals starting their careers. According to Arar and Öneren (2018), career was derived from the French word carrier, the action path in life that is defined by experiences, activities, and professional attitudes and behaviors. The goal of career development required that individuals conduct a strength, weakness, opportunities, and threat (SWOT) assessment to determine career planning and career management in order to choose the most appropriate career path (Farrell, 2017). The concepts of career planning as the foundation of critical thinking and lifelong learner journey that is deeply rooted in career development (Arar & Öneren, 2018). Career development is the process in which an employee understands the level of education, training programs, and work experiences to develop sustainability in the organization and industry (Farrell, 2017). Career development has the potential to cost organizations in the short term; however, long-term career development increases employees' satisfaction and decreases turnover rates by creating a competitive environment with positive effects for employees (Krasman, 2015). The more effective job creation and career development by HR, the organization has a positive impact on retaining employees given Generation Z seek multiple career opportunities (Arar & Öneren, 2018).

Employee Engagement

Organizations use employee engagement as a marketing initiative by HR consulting firms that offer advice about ways that organizations can create and leverage engagement (Naim & Lenka, 2018). Murphy and Clark (2016) posited that employee

engagement captured the attention of corporate leaders because it drove profits. Researchers suggested employee engagement focused on work attitudes and serve as an interpretive tool for how well an organization will perform financially (Chicioreanu & Amza, 2018). Employee engagement has been linked to enhance productivity, health and safety initiatives, and the organization's bottom line (Jacobson & Lambright, 2018). In addition, employee engagement was known to be directly linked to organizational commitment (Chicioreanu & Amza, 2018).

Employee engagement has been studied widely because the benefits to the organization and the value that it can add to the well-being of employees. Researchers have had different opinions about the concept of employee engagement (SHRM, 2017). When trying to understand the factors leading to job satisfaction, Crumpacker and Crumpacker (2007) developed a theory known as organizational commitment, meaning that organizational commitment occurs when employees align with the organizational goals and values. Researchers have identified organizational commitment as the psychological attachment of employees to the organizations (Chicioreanu & Amza, 2018). These employees performed beyond management's expectations (Krasman, 2015). In recent years, the term employee engagement has replaced the term organizational commitment (SHRM, 2017). Organizations that do not have engaged employees or are replete with too many disengaged employees can harm the organization (Jacobson & Lambright, 2018). Despite the increasing awareness of how valuable employee engagement was to organizations, the results of several organizational surveys have shown that the number of engaged employees has been low (Naim & Lenka, 2018). In a

study by Jacobson and Lambright (2018) of 40 HR directors, 21% of the 90,000 employees surveyed worldwide were engaged while at work, and 38% were partly to fully engaged. The study revealed that the directors lack of engagement resulted in low engagement of employees.

The attitudes of the contemporary workforce are different from those of previous workforces because employees now want meaningful outcomes (Krasman, 2015). Employees wanted jobs that provided them with a feeling of accomplishment and compensate them for their skills (SHRM, 2017). Engagement, according to Bridger (2014), both the employer and employee are willing participants of the culture and are committed to the organization's objectives. When organizations hired an individual, who has the right skill sets and understand the organizations' missions and goals, the benefits to the organizations are tangible.

Arrington and Dwyer (2018) asserted that employees have a strong desire to engage in meaningful work. According to Asencio and Mujkic (2016), meaningful jobs yielded higher levels of employee engagement, increased production, and reduced turnover rates. SHRM (2017) found that the organizations had failed to provide employees with meaningful work experiences. Of the 40,000 respondents, SHRM (2017) identified 17% of participants as being highly engaged. SHRM also found a correlation among employee engagement, employee performance, and reduced turnover rates. It is more likely for highly engaged employees to remain passionate about and aligned with the overall organizational goals and mission (Jacobson & Lambright, 2018).

Another level of difference among generation has been occurring in academia. An empirical research of the teaching-learning process of Millennials and Generation Z university students (Chicioreanu & Amza, 2018). The researchers investigated the scientific approach of mobile learners. The response resulted in 80% were currently attending courses and students making their expectations known to change the dynamics of technology in ways that people learn and teach. Technological advances to YouTube, TED, and Google have provided innovative strategies that have enhanced the classroom training and experiences for all learners. Organizations are seeking innovative ways to engage with employees to maximize employee engagement.

Employee Retention

Employee retention is a benefit of engaging employees (Kremer, 2018). As employee turnover rates decrease, the need to recruit and train new employees also decreases, and the organizations experience more organizational success and financial stability (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Kim & Fernandez, 2017). Organizations develop more positive reputations as potential workplaces when their employees have long employment records (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007). Organizations perceived as having good employee reputation are more likely to attract and maintain strong talent. Frank, Finnegan, and Taylor (2004) defined employee retention as the efforts made by employers to keep desired employees so that organizations can achieve their strategic objectives. Employers want to keep employees whose skills can satisfy organizational needs (Chi, Maier, & Gursoy, 2013). To advance organizational growth and

effectiveness, organizations must meet the needs of employees by promoting employee

learning and development (Jacobson & Lambright, 2018).

Many HR professionals have begun to use new methods to recruit and hire

employees (Kremer, 2018). The framework of human capital management is that

employees have the skills, abilities, and organizational experiences that translate into

economic values (OPM, 2015a). Organizations that invested heavily in the development

of employees have a more skilled workforce as a competitive advantage making it easy

for top, talented employees to change jobs (Cilluffo & Cohn, 2019). These valued

employees leave with expert knowledge and partnered relationships with clients (SHRM,

2017). Therefore, being able to keep highly skilled individuals becomes a significant

challenge for organizations. These same employees exhibited such behaviors as

organizational involvement and a high degree of dedication to attaining organizational

goals, which is why retention is so important (Kim & Fernandez, 2017).

The cost of recruiting new employees is an expensive and time-consuming

process (Choi, 2017; Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). In the United States, when an employee

quits, the organization spends 50% to 60% of the employee's annual salary to replace

them (Ford, 2017). Furthermore, SHRM (2017) reported this cost could easily double

depending on the length of time it takes to replace the employee. The critical aspect of a

new hire consisted of their first 45 days of employment is often viewed at the

"honeymoon" phase (Franceski, 2017), but the essential element of managing

expectations and experience of new hires is consistency and long-term engagement

(Froedge et al., 2018). Although organizations utilized data analytics and metrics to

create an effort of transparency, businesses still do not have adequate tracking

mechanisms in place for such HR related areas as recruiting, onboarding, and training

(Farrell, 2017; Franceski, 2017). Without proper systems in place, the real cost of

employee turnover, attrition, and employee retention was unknown.

HR professionals should have a strong knowledge of HR processes (Kremer,

2018). A lack of knowledge exists within HR that limits the ability to provide a

comprehensive business performance (Cilluffo & Cohn, 2019). Understanding the

strategic HR management and data analytics will help to close the gaps in onboarding,

hiring, promotion, and retaining employees by asking essential questions that the

organization needs to address (Lee, 2015). Federal agencies need an enterprise approach

that has a culture open to workforce analytics throughout the organization for measuring,

testing and evaluating quantitative data (Kim & Fernandez, 2017; Kremer, 2018; Lee,

2015).

Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

The FEVS has been used to measure leadership, performance management, job

satisfaction, employee turnover, and employee engagement (Fernandez, Resh,

Moldogaziev, & Oberfield, 2015). The FEVS was used to determine data over time.

Asencio and Mujkic (2016) called for federal programs to cease conducting business the

same way, year after year. Asencio and Mujkic called for the federal government to

change its practice; however, the federal government responded by adding a layer of new

management to HR. Arrington and Dwyer (2016) agreed with Ascencio and Mujkic

about the need to reinvent federal agencies and streamline and refashion these

organizations dramatically. Although the federal government has made many strides towards process improvement, an in-depth barrier analysis of the human capital framework entailing an analytical examination of root causes and remedies of problems, whether intentional or unintentional, is much needed (Mackaway & Winchester-Seeto, 2018).

As the members of a new generation enter adulthood, concern has arisen about their attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyle choices (Fry, 2018). The Pew Research Center (2015) noted that Baby Boomers used to comprise the largest generational cohort in American history and that their impact was felt politically and economically; however, the U.S. Census (2015) reported that Millennials recently surpassed Baby Boomers as the largest generational cohort in American history, with 83.1 million members. Generation Z will surpass the Millennial generation as 83 million join the workforce in 2020 (GAO, 2016). Although Millennials were the topic of conversation among generational studies for the past decade, a new generation emerges, taking the spotlight as the generation of influence.

Workforce diversity is one of the most significant challenges facing HR profession in the federal sector (Goldenoff, 2017). The U.S. federal government has become a diversified and heterogeneous organization that has placed considerable attention on inclusion, focusing on race, gender, and age (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). As five generations continue to work alongside each other, HR professionals have been struggling to manage human capital, including hiring, leadership development, and team building (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Green et al., 2016). Millennials and

Generation Z are more diverse and highly educated, and they are confident in their abilities (Bencsik, Gabriella, & Tímea, 2016).

A goal of the Trump administration was to modernize the federal workforce by re-skilling and re-deploying human capital resources across the government (OPM, 2018). To address issues related to government reform, an analysis of the FEVS addressed employee perceptions and agency performance (OPM, 2019a). There is still little understanding of how to manage five generations in the workplace (Lanier, 2017). HR management practices should aim at helping employees to keep optimal satisfaction levels and a sense of belongingness and inclusion (Baker Rosa & Hastings, 2016). The FEVS data aided in providing a snapshot of federal programs and employee perceptions of policies and procedures (OPM, 2015a).

The FEVS has been used annually since 2002 and offers personnel data for more than 2 million employees of the U.S. government (Paruchuri, Perry-Smith, Chattopadhyay, & Shaw, 2018). The questions ranged from senior leadership and job satisfaction, with younger employees' responses indicating more favorable perceptions than those of other generations of direct supervisors and senior leadership (OPM, 2015a). The FEVS recognized that employees' expectations change as individuals modify their perceptions of the environment, communication, and leadership styles (Blackman et al., 2017). For example, survey results have shown that the federal government must invest in diversity workshops, education, and training to promote inclusion efforts (Paruchuri et al., 2018). The 2014 FEVS held 84 questions answered by six age cohorts to capture generational perception of employees (OPM, 2015b).

The federal government has struggled to address the recruitment of young talent and understand generational issues essential to strategic human capital and succession planning (Green et al., 2016). Within strategic planning and alignment, federal agencies have outlined six types of job movement for most employees: in (entry), out (termination), up (promotion), down (demotion), across (lateral transfer), or purpose in place (development in position; Blackman et al., 2017). As such, federal agencies have been required to be strategic as the government has continued to reimage itself to young employees entering the workplace (Goldenoff, 2015). To aid in combating generational differences, researchers have suggested that HR professionals offer generational diversity training and identify actual versus perceived generational differences (Paruchuri et al., 2018; Goldenoff, 2015). Bourne (2015) and Green et al. (2016) stated that another essential element is ongoing research on generational differences and similarities in managing organizational change process identifying five areas: communication, employee involvement, understanding how change impacts employees, perceptions of change, and generational perceptions.

Managing Multigenerational Workforce

Because organizations manage multigenerational workforces, HR professionals continue to face challenges, including demographics, economic careers, and political pressures (Jacobson & Lambright, 2018). Managing multigenerational workforces means understanding how to manage them while maintaining business continuity amid employees' different beliefs, values, ideas, and cultural origins (Perryer & Plowman, 2011). Managing effectively also means recognizing differences among individuals and

giving them opportunities to contribute their talents to the organizations (Latkovikj et al., 2016). Older generations are different from younger generations simply because of their level of maturity (Parry & Urwin, 2017). Many organizations view older workers as high contributors to the workforce because they are steadfast and loyal (Baker Rosa & Hastings, 2016). According to Asencio and Mujkic (2016), older workers generally are viewed as dependable, loyal, and dedicated and that some characteristics of older workers include their strong work ethic, reliable performance records, and years of work-related experience. In managing multigenerational workforces, HR personnel must oversee older and younger employees (Parry & Urwin, 2017; Tsai, 2017). Issues about medical benefits, job security, and retirement must be addressed to ensure that future workforces includes both older and younger workers (Parry & Urwin, 2017).

Baker Rosa and Hastings (2016) asserted with different generations in the workplace, conflict is inevitable. Arrington and Dwyer (2018) discussed proactive tips to maintain positive employee relations in the workplace, including understanding people, perceptions, and communication strategies. Often, many federal agencies utilized diversity and inclusion efforts to narrow the generation knowledge gap(s) (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018). Generation gaps can negatively impact organizations by lowering morale and reducing productivity (Latkovikj et al., 2016). Arrington and Dwyer (2018) outlined whose job it is to foster, facilitate, and maintain positive employee relations while having a shared responsibility to encourage employees to settle disputes. An investigation of federal employees and building trust in leaders reported using the Johari Window. A cognitive psychological tool developed to help people better understand their

communication styles, develop skills in mutual understandings, and build confidence in relationships between group members (Asencio & Mujkic, 2016). The future workforce will require generations working together and employees working on the same path with having mutual respect to get things done (Colbert et al., 2016).

Having knowledge of and understanding the theories affecting generational differences can be extremely beneficial to HR professionals in terms of directing employees (Wronka-Pospiech, 2016). Arrington and Dwyer (2018) asserted that the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board main goal of HR professionals within organizations entails guiding and motivating employees to meet an organization's objectives. Acquiring knowledge in generational theories can help HR professionals to maintain and increase employee retention, productivity, and employee engagement to achieve organizational missions and objectives (SHRM, n.d.). In addition to knowing the traits of each generation, HR professionals need to help generations understand how they can work together in a cohesive multigenerational work environment.

Different generations require different leadership strategies (Anderson, Baur, Griffith, & Buckley, 2017). For example, researchers have stated that because Millennials are different from previous generations, organizational leaders need to lead these employees differently (Anderson et al., 2017; Rudolph, Rauvola, & Zacher, 2018). Organizational leaders have perceived Millennials as having a lack of work ethics, being narcissistic, and expecting a sense of entitlement (Anderson et al., 2017; Parry & Urwin, 2017). Conversely, members of the Millennial generation also have brought new ideas, creativity, technical abilities, and social concerns about wanting a work-life balance to

the workplace (Tsai, 2017). Generational differences continued to be a topic of discussion among HR professionals and managers across industries and countries (Campbell, Twenge, & Campbell, 2017; Constanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt, & Gade, 2012; Parry & Urwin, 2017).

Stewart et al. (2017) suggested that embracing generational differences offers opportunities and challenges. The study focused on the traits of Millennials and how onboarding new employees helped to adjust the workplace for the organization to operate more efficiently and offered benefits to all employees in the workplace (Stewart et al., 2017). According to Fishman (2016), generational differences have influenced the American workforce. Age differences have played a significant role in the workplace among three distinct generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials (Wronka-Pospiech, 2016). As HR professionals think about the futures of their organizations, they also must think about the employees who will lead the organizations in the future (Puiu, 2017).

According to Fishman (2016), organizational culture is defined as bringing out the best in all employees. The organizational culture of federal agencies are unique to individual agencies as trust in government is near an all-time low at 67% (Fernandez et al., 2015). A series of generational studies with theoretical and conceptual frameworks on work-related attitudes and behaviors remain unclear as the federal government works to reshape its image (Green et al., 2016). The federal sector expected significant changes to the future of work, including an increase in the number of women in the workplace by 47.2% by 2024 and continued growth in the hiring of minorities (Parry & Urwin, 2017).

Agency leaders must overcome the deeply entrenched cultural shifts of emerging trends such as a shift in consciousness, disenchantment, and changes in authority and power, which decreases the government's ability to evolve (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016; Gordon, 2018).

Generations Defined

Demographers have disagreed about the range of birth years used to identify a generation (Parry & Urwin, 2017). Strauss and Howe (2000) argued that historical significance has been a contributing factor in defining a generation. The pioneer behind the idea of generations was Karl Mannheim (Campbell et al., 2017; Parry & Urwin, 2017). Mannheim (1952) defined generations as individuals of the same age group within a common location during a social or historical time, predisposing them for particular characteristic thoughts and experiences. In essence, the birth year and the historical influence of experiences define a generation.

Historical researcher such as Kupperschmidt (2000) defined generations as individuals sharing birth years and experiences while moving through critical societal and economic times together. Events on a macrolevel form a generational identity throughout life (Strauss & Howe, 1991a). Choi (2017) and Parry and Urwin (2017) defined a generation as individuals born during the same era and influenced by the same historical events. Subsequently, Abel-Lanier (2016) as well as Brink, Zondag, and Crenshaw (2015) agreed on the concept of aging causing changes in the psychological, cultural, and social realms. Conversely, members of a generation are shaped by events or circumstances based on their phase of life, according to Strauss and Howe (1991a).

Constanza et al. (2012) indicated that generations comprise individuals of the same age who were influenced by similar significant historical events during their formative years (i.e., childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood).

In developing the concept of a generation, Strauss and Howe (2000) described three primary characteristics: perceived membership, common beliefs and behaviors, and a common location in history. Generational self-perceptions begin during adolescence and continue to develop during collegiate and initial work experiences (Strauss & Howe, 2000; Stark & Farner, 2015). Other researchers have argued that birth years are not the only aspects that define a generation (Abel-Lanier, 2016; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 1999). The Pew Research Center (2018) identified five generational cohorts as defined by age (see Figure 3).

The generations defined

GENERATION AGE IN 2019

Born 1997-2012 — **Generation Z** ages 7-22*

Born 1981-96 — **Millennials** ages 23-38

Born 1965-80 — **Generation X** ages 39-54

Born 1946-64 — **Boomers** ages 55-73

Born 1928-45 — **Silent** ages 74-91

1920   1940   1960   1980   2000   2020
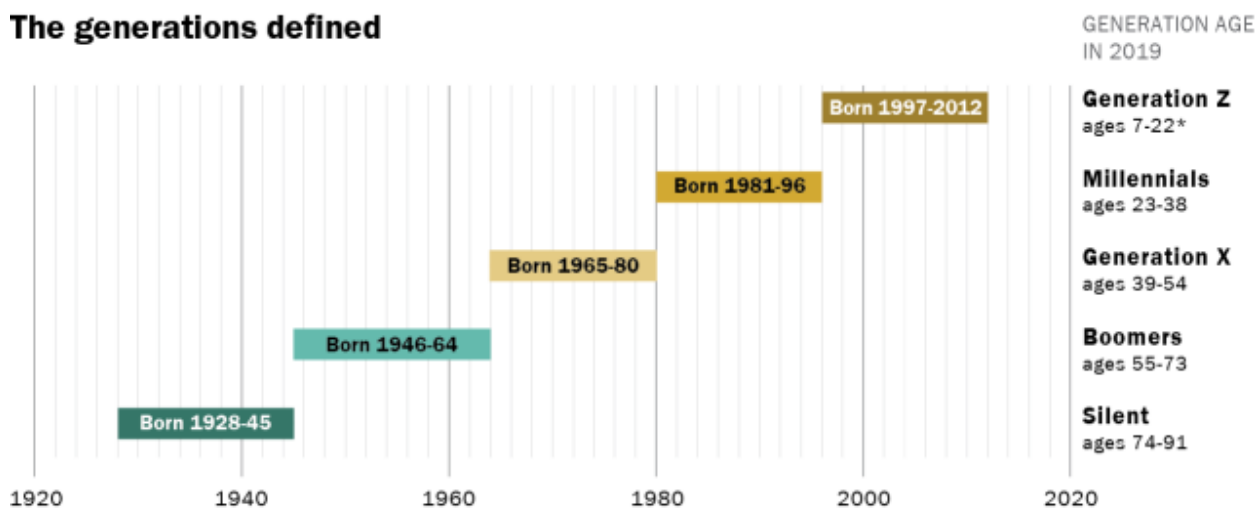
*No chronological endpoint has been set for this group. For this analysis, Generation Z is defined as those ages 7 to 22 in 2019.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 3. Definition of generations by Pew Research Center.

The Pew Research Center (2017) stated the concept of generations is problematic, given the various ways researchers differentiate generational characteristics using qualitative and quantitative methods. Rudolph et al. (2018) analyzed ages using a quasi-experimental presenting the shortcomings of empirical research that generational differences do not exist. Desai and Lele (2017) criticized the study of generations because of the lack of differentiation among the effects of age, birth time, and experience. In addition, there was no explanation of emerging intergenerational distinctions. In an effort to understand the values of generations and inter-generational communication a comparative method of individuals of different ages for a specific period in time were studied. The comparative study analyzed individuals of the same age, yet different times resulting in influences of particular periods and experiences, which is why the researchers suggest paying close attention to the factors that shape the formative years (Sivricova & Moiseeva, 2018).

Individuals enter the workplace with different values, beliefs, and experiences, all of which impact workplace initiatives such as training, communication, and teamwork (Jonck et al., 2017; Lanier, 2017). According to Campbell et al. (2017), the unique characteristics of each generation suggest differences not only in values, attitudes, and behaviors but also in career aspirations. Generational differences exist across industries and countries (Campbell et al., 2017; Hansen & Leuty, 2012; Lyons, Ulrick, Kuron, & Schweitzer, 2015). Some researchers have studied generations and have found no evidence of generational differences in the workplace (Constanza et al., 2012; Parry & Urwin, 2011). The differences that exist between and among generations are challenging

to understand, give that there is no exact age range for each cohort (Zabel, Biermeier-Hanson, Baltes, Early, & Shepard, 2017). Additional researchers have studied generational differences in the workplace and have found few differences among generations (Thunnissen, 2016).

Work values are substantial as it is what individuals perceive as well as their generational cohort recognize important in the similarities and differences that exist among generational groups located in South Africa (Jonck et al., 2017). Work values provide a sense of purpose, and they can be predictors of employees' commitment and personal involvement in the workplace. Choi (2017) stated that it is through work values that employees develop their career choice. Generational cohort theory has aided in forming generational and public attitudes (Sivricova & Moiseeva, 2018; Strauss & Howe, 1991a).

Generations at Work

Arrington and Dwyer (2018) concluded that there were no significant differences in the views of four generational cohorts regarding managerial effectiveness. After surveying 107 university students using semistructured interviews, Arrington and Dwyer concluded that there were no significant differences in behavioral attitudes among generational cohorts and that differences existed within generational groups. Mencl and Lester (2014) stated that generational cohorts in the workplace led to challenges for managers because of significant perceived generational differences. Froedge et al. (2018) identified differences among multigenerational cohorts in views and perspectives that fostered a climate of conflict and created barriers between employees and managers.

Understanding workplace challenges and the relationship between generational cohorts is essential to a new generational cohort joining the federal workforce (Lanier, 2017). Organizational leaders, managers, and supervisors who maximize their understanding of generational differences are more likely to increase the success of organizational and manage employees effectively given their increased knowledge and cultural awareness (Hofler & Thomas, 2016).

Managing young employees can be a difficult challenge for managers (Lanier, 2017). Younger generations have learned primarily through technology-based strategies (Jonck et al., 2017). Other generational differences have been their perceptions and attitudes, both of which have influenced their levels of motivation (Singh & Dangmei, 2016). The motivation to encourage the younger generations is to focus on duty, drive, and reward with full access to social media (Stewart et al., 2017). Young employees desire to work for organizations that espouse values that align to their own.

Academia and educational systems also have come to understand generational differences and similarities as a way to leverage the different learning styles of each generation to maximize students' academic performance (Jonck et al., 2017). Thus, organizations should consider complimenting workforce practices based on following generational preferences and similarities of workers and learners (Lanier, 2017). Generation Z transformed higher education as this generation is accustomed to living in both the real and virtual worlds (Leong, 2018). With particular interest, Generation Z is an emerging topic as this generation has yet to define its traits making it more difficult to understand the challenges they bring to the workplace (Puiu, 2017). Researchers have

indicated that communicating via technology and social media will be essential to this generation for a lifetime as they have yet to know life without technology (Lanier, 2017; Hofler & Thomas, 2016; Leong, 2018). The purpose of generations at work is to understand the unique characteristics of each generational cohort as five generations are working side-by-side in the workplace.

Traditionalists. Members of the Traditionalist generation are the oldest and smallest cohort in the workplace (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018). The Pew Research Center (2017) conducted a current population survey and reported that 2% of the labor force comprise members of this generation who aspire to retire within the next one to five years. Born between 1922 and 1945, traditionalists have been referred to as the veteran cohort or the silent generation (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Lieber, 2010). Historical events such as the Great Depression, the Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights Movement shaped this generation (Hoole & Bonnema, 2015; Mencl & Lester, 2014).

Traditionalists are loyal to their employers, families, and nation because they were taught to respect authority (Grow & Yang, 2018). They value safety and security, and they appreciate being recognized for their hard work (Stanton, 2017). Traditionalists are the least likely to initiate conflict in the workplace; however, they also resist rapid technological changes in the workplace, although the discovery of television started here (Stark & Farner, 2015). According to the Pew Research Center (2017), traditionalists are the great-grandparents of millennials.

Baby boomers. Baby boomers have been the greatest generation studied and analyzed consistently over the years (Lieber, 2010). Baby boomers represent the majority

of senior and midlevel positions in the workplace, with more than 25% of members of the

generation in the labor force (Pew Research Center, 2017). According to Shuler et al.

(2016), baby boomers were born between 1946 and 1964, and they expected to work until

their late 60s and early 70s (Brink et al., 2015; Costanza et al., 2012). Baby boomers are

independent, competitive, disciplined, and resourceful (Abel-Lanier, 2016). They grew

up during a time of success in society and were motivated by money and recognition

(Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016; Wiedmer, 2015). Baby boomers lived through the Civil Rights

movement, women's liberation, the Cuban missile crisis, and the rise of color television

(Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016).

Baby boomers are known for challenging the rules, valuing personal satisfaction,

pursuing high achievement, wanting recognition, and valuing self-respect (Dwyer &

Azevedo, 2016; Stark & Farner, 2015). Baby boomers are the generation that lives to

work and display a high degree of work ethics (Abel-Lanier, 2016; Costanza et al., 2012).

This generation often work long hours and are considered workaholics. Baby boomers

prefer face-to-face interactions and conventional mail methods (Stark & Farner, 2015).

Similarly, Baby boomers consider technology a valuable learning tool, and they have

embraced technological advances such as Facebook as their social media means of

communication (Shuler et al., 2016).

Generation X. Members of Generation X represent 33% of the workforce,

according to the Pew Research Center (2017). They were born between 1965 and 1979

(Stark & Farner, 2015) and grew up under the influence of economic wars such as the

post-Vietnam - Watergate Era (Brink et al., 2015). Generation X children grew up as

latch-key kids experiencing high divorce rates or the need for both parents to work

outside the home (Zopiatis, Krambia-Kapardis, & Varnavas, 2012). Members of

Generation X have been categorized as the lost generation because they grew up in the

shadows of the Baby Boomers (Lyons et al., 2015). During the maturation of Generation

x into adulthood, Baby Boomers dominated the political, educational, and social arenas

of society, which why researchers perceived Generation X as cynical, skeptical

individuals (Stark & Farner, 2015). Generation X workers prefer an informal work

climate, and they have been called slackers for having fewer work ethics than previous

generations (Zemke et al., 1999). This generation has experienced challenges to balance

work obligations and family life, as many members spent a considered amount of time at

home alone and referred to a latch-key kids (Lieber, 2010). Although, this generation is

powerful in money, resources, and influence, they never experienced a mainstream

conversation.

The characteristics of Generation X include diversity, technological awareness,

and preferences for informal communication (Zemke et al., 1999). Members of

Generation X lacked organizational commitment due to their parent's workplace

experiences, which shaped their notion of stress-causing them to be compulsive workers

and living by the standard of work hard and play hard (Lieber, 2010). They experienced

historical events such as the AIDS epidemic, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the end of

apartheid in South Africa. Researchers have described members of Generation X as

having higher levels of self-preoccupation and no desire for social approval, and often

being skeptical of others (Lyons et al., 2015).

Millennials. Millennials represent the largest working generation, with 35% in the labor force (Pew Research Center, 2017). According to Fishman (2016), millennials were born between 1980 and 2000. They often have been referred to as Generation Y because Generation X parents wanted to raise their children to be hard working and independent and have a sense of righteousness to avoid the mistakes of their parents. Millennials are technologically aware, are family-centric, crave attention, and are job hoppers (Stark & Poppler, 2017). Millennials believe that work experience is irrelevant because they can learn skills required to do the job, which makes the generation disloyal to employers and known as job hoppers (Bencsik, Gabriella, & Tímea, 2016).

As millennials entered the workforce, HR professionals identified a problem engaging and retaining them because of their lack of skills (Wiedmer, 2015). According to Bencsik, Gabriella, and Tímea (2016), millennials have poor writing skills, expect more guidance, and want a work-life balance. Among this generation, there were increases in depression and suicide rates (Fishman, 2016). In addition, society felt that members of a new generation needed to pay their dues, which led to friction and conflict in the workplace (Rudolph et al., 2017). In the workplace, millennials want or expect a work-life balance, instant and continuous feedback, appreciation, mutual respect, fairness, justice, modern technology, and social equity (Constanza & Finkelstein, 2015).

Millennials are different from previous generations in that they are environmentally friendly individuals with the need to advance their technological skills (Anderson et al., 2017; Deloitte Insights, 2017). Millennials are a technologically adept generation that produced fast learners seeking to work in a team environment, which

increases their diversity, equality, and social and civic engagements (Rudolph et al., 2017). Their thirst for knowledge has left organizations perplexed at developing ways to engage millennial employees with such advanced creative skills and promotion potential to management (Bourne, 2015). Millennials question authority. They are impatient with slow processes and are unwilling to work with outdated technology or spend long hours at work (Constanza & Finkelstein, 2015).

Generation Z. Generation Z is an emerging entity. According to the Pew Research Center (2017), members of this generation represent 5% of the labor force, a percentage that is expected to increase significantly over the next 5 years. Generation Z is considered the first global and socially empowered generation because new ideas and technologies have created a new wave of young professionals who are more racially and ethnically diverse individuals and highly educated than previous generations (Desai & Lele, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2018; SHRM, 2017). Members of Generation Z are believed to be the most achievement oriented of all previous generations (Schroth, 2019). They seek instant gratification while welcoming diversity as they are racial or ethnic minorities (Desai & Lele, 2017; Kapil & Roy, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2018; SHRM, 2017).

Members of Generation Z are individuals born between 1995 and 2015 (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018). Considering Generation Z's age group, many researchers have identified members of this generation as digital natives who have never experienced the world without technology (Pew Research Center, 2016; Lanier, 2017; Kick et al., 2015). The U.S. Census Bureau (2016) claimed that by 2020, Generation Z would comprise 30%

of the global population, with 80 million job seekers joining the workforce for the first

time. According to Schroth (2019), in 1979, 60% of adolescents held jobs but only 34%

held jobs in 2015. This percentage is expected to drop to 25% in 2024, when members of

Generation Z will enter the workforce having less work experience than other generations

at the same age. Furthermore, members of Generation Z will comprise 40% of consumer

spending, which equates to $600 billion in family spending (Pew Research Center, 2016).

Ultimately, members of Generation Z expect to influence the world with its unique

characteristics to technological advances. Generation Z creates an emerging ecosystem

that is changing the landscape of work and future economies (Lanier, 2017; Puiu, 2017;

Rickes, 2016).

Members of Generation Z spent an average of five hours online daily, with 92%

using smartphones and has an eight-second attention span (Kick et al., 2015). As cited in

Fry (2018) and Kick et al. (2015) a leading international staffing agency, Robert Half

International, Inc. found that 36% of Generation Z's arrival to the workforce means

having clear career goals as their top priorities. This includes multiple levels of

professional development and high pay salaries (Fry, 2018; Kick et al., 2015). Members

of Generation Z are accustomed to change and expect change in the workplace with their

desire to utilize technology-centric vehicles while at work (Lanier, 2017).

The evolution of technology caused a significant change among the youngest

generation. The characteristics of Generation Z are vastly different to those of previous

generations to include being open-minded, financially conscious, global-minded, and

tech-savvy (Lanier, 2017; Puiu, 2017). This generation's first language is technology

with the ability to multitask and absorb information from multiple sources as individuals

that grew up on the internet and are now coming of age (Desai & Lele, 2017; Rickes,

2016). Technology has advanced the ability of Generation Z to gain access to information

quickly via the Internet, thus removing the need to ask teachers or parents for help

(Lanier, 2017). As the members of Generation Z enter the workforce and mature into

adulthood, they stand to be the most highly technologically advanced generation.

Technology has been instrumental in the way that members of Generation Z are

growing up and beginning to join the workplace (Rickes, 2016). These digital natives

have never known a time without technology, and they are accustomed to having

technological tools to speed up their learning (Colbert et al., 2016). Many members of

Generation Z own several devices, including smartphones, iPads, laptops, and computers,

to access information from multiple media rapidly (Ford, 2017). This is another reason

researchers expect Generation Z to be the most educated generation yet (Harder et al.,

2016).

Members of Generation Z brought several changes to the workplace and

industries with their unique communication skills as businesses need to be concerned

with how to convey messages and engage with potential consumers (Goh & Lee, 2017;

Puiu, 2017; Singh, 2014). In particular, the advertising industry used social media and

word of mouth, not online advertising, to appeal to young consumers (Desai & Lele,

2017; Grow & Yang, 2018). Members of Generation Z want to change the world for the

betterment of everyone using a we-centered mentality (Seemiller & Grace, 2017).

Researchers have explained the mentality as believing that if people want something

done, they have to do it themselves. Equally, members of Generation Z want to engage in

hands-on learning opportunities that they can apply immediately to real-life work

experiences. Desai and Lele (2017) surveyed a sample of Generation Z students to obtain

their perceptions of the workplace related to educating and training. Based on the

findings, Desai and Lele found that the participants exhibited a learning style of

intrapersonal which appreciates collaboration, learning at their own pace and in their

fashion. Understanding their preferences and beliefs promotes making improvements for

all employees (Chicioreanu & Amaz, 2018; Desai & Lele, 2017; Goh & Lee, 2017;

Rickes, 2016).

Researchers provided a critical evaluation of the influence Generation Z will have

in the workplace (Kapil & Roy, 2014). As members of Generation Z entered the

workforce, Koulopoulos and Keldsen (2014) coined the term *Generation Z Effect*, which

is the transition from generations implies the six forces shaping the future of the business,

which is: internet access, influence, IP/patents, failure, gaming, uncertainty, retirement,

and connectivity. The Generation Z Effect consisted of Generation Z demands placed on

the workplace, which are luxury items to previous generations and now considered an

entitlement by members of the Generation Z cohort. The demand for these rights or

privileges has given HR professional and business leaders concern (Goh & Lee, 2017;

Rickes, 2016). The mind-set of Generation Z revolves around pure media as they are

digital natives never knowing a time without the internet and require instant access to Wi-

Fi regardless of location (Koulopoulos & Keldsen, 2014; Puiu, 2017). Understanding the

formative years that shaped their learning experiences of Generation Z will help

managers and HR professionals to prepare the generation to be future employees (Arar &

Öneren, 2018; Grow & Yang, 2018). Overprotective parents took away Generation Z's

opportunity to learn life skills, with the result in the need for Generation Z to receive

constant feedback and communication (Schroth, 2019).

Members of Generation Z are more socially conscious and environmentally aware

than previous generations were (Campbell et al., 2017; Stewart et al., 2017). Many

members of Generation Z were home schooled and now prefer customized learning

(Ford, 2017). Equally, members of Generation Z required less direction, given their

propensity to use technology to find answers online or through digital tools (Iorgulescu,

2016). Members of Generation Z are different types of professionals. Instead of being

satisfied working for 40 hours each week, they sought meaningful work as freelance

workers who have great flexibility and selected work based on their interest and time

(Iorgulescu, 2016; Singh, 2014).

Gaps in the Literature

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study design was to understand the

perceptions of HR professionals from one federal agency regarding ways to onboard

Generation Z into the organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase

retention rates (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). The study

participants had at least five years of experience as federal government employees,

currently working or have worked in the HR office, and served as onboarding subject-

matter experts or consultants in the onboarding process. Most of the studies in this

literature review consisted of data and resulted which concentrate on the evolution of HR

profession, how generational differences may or may not change the workplace, and the contributing role of onboarding to new young employees. There has been scant data on the ways that federal agencies will onboard Generation Z and the impact of Generation Z in the work environment.

A review of supplementary literature revealed a gap in the literature that led to the use OPM's human capital framework and Strass and Howe generational archetypes where the benefits of strategically onboarding Generation Z and the influence Generation Z may have on workplace performance. The generational archetypes and human capital framework have been investigated and tested by researchers and professionals using qualitative and quantitative methods. For example, Strauss and Howe (1997) research on the four turnings influence a person's behavior starting with their formative years and changes every 20 years. As members of Generation Z transitioned from childhood to young adulthood, they take their perceptions, values, beliefs, and experiences that were shaped by their formative years into the workplace. The intent of this proposed study was to continue the literature about challenges encountered by HR professionals while onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture to enhance job creation and retention rates with a qualitative method.

Summary and Conclusions

I conducted a review of extant literature on the process of onboarding, the challenges encountered by HR professionals when dealing with multigenerational workforces, and the influence of generational differences on organizational change. The literature discussed the evolution of HR professionals and how organizations is critical to

new employees joining the organization. The process of onboarding allowed the researcher to explore how HR professionals could examine constraints and resolve complex issues across the organization and within various subunits. The human capital framework used strategic planning and alignment to establish organizational objectives to achieve goals and understand what challenges prevent HR professionals in meeting the demands of onboarding a new generational cohort.

Federal agencies continued to struggle to understand the constraints of retaining employees from a younger generation. HR professionals are responsible for onboarding new employees and making an impression that creates a sense of meaningful work for young individuals. The literature review indicated that knowing about and understanding generational differences can be beneficial to HR professionals in their efforts to direct employees. Qualitative and quantitative studies offered a variety of ways to attract and retain Generation Z employees. The literature offered suggestions on effective ways to onboard a new generation of workers in the federal government.

HR professionals must partner with policymakers to create policies and practices to improve workplace efficiencies. As members of Generation Z onboard the federal government, HR professionals must be prepared for their arrival. Preparing for Generation Z means connecting this generation to the mission of federal agencies for sustainability and longevity. Federal agencies benefited from attracting members of all ages through job creation and creating a culturally diverse environment. Presented in Chapter 3 are details about the proposed methodology, the data collection and analysis

protocols, selection of the participants, my role as the researcher, and the research design

and rationale.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of the qualitative single-case study was to explore and understand the challenges encountered by HR professionals regarding ways to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase retention (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). The focus of the study was to identify obstacles in the onboarding process to determine where the process may be constrained. To address this gap, I used a single-case study design to investigate the perceptions of eight to 15 HR professionals within one federal agency located in the District of Columbia. Exposing the challenges hindering HR professionals could help to understand how well the agency recognized, described, and responded to constraints of generational differences, particularly those of Generation Z employees. Resolving these constraints could provide HR professionals leverage in developing forward-thinking strategies to adjust their approach to attracting, onboarding, and retaining Generation Z employees, thereby becoming an employer of choice to the young generation.

Given that members of Generation Z have never experienced life without technology, they may behave in ways that may disrupt the workplace (Colbert et al., 2016; Singh, 2014). The research calls for a deeper understanding of the role onboarding plays in a new generational cohort entering the workforce (Lanier, 2017; Bencsik, Gabriella, & Tímea, 2016; Krasman, 2015). I followed a qualitative single-case study research design to understand how the formative years of Generation Z shaped them as learners and future employees (Schroth, 2019). The distinct features of the members of Generation Z have resulted in these individuals customizing the rules and may challenge

HR professionals, managers, and supervisors (Puiu, 2017). The findings of this study may aid HR professionals in preparing and sharing forward-thinking strategies to adjust their approach to workplace practices for a new generational cohort (Stark & Poppler, 2017).

Included in Chapter 3 are details about the research method and the rationale for conducting a single-case study design. One RQ guided the study: What are the challenges that HR professionals face in onboarding Generation Z in the federal workforce? The chapter also included information about the participant selection strategy, data collection and data analysis, my role as the researcher, and ethical considerations. The chapter ends with a summary of the main points.

Research Design and Rationale

The goal of the proposed single-case study design was to explore and understand the challenges facing HR professionals regarding ways to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). I followed a qualitative approach to conduct the study. According to Yin (2017), case study researchers explore their participants' experiences and perspectives within real-life settings. Patton (2002) suggested using three ways to collect qualitative data: in-depth, open-ended interviews; direct observation; and written documentation. The identified problem led me to favor a single-case study design with an embedded approach. According to Yin (2017), a single case study with embedded units was ideal for an organization directly connected to the phenomenon with various units and subunits of the organization (See Figure 4). Yin (2017) indicated case study design is appropriate: (a) how and why questions are asked of study participants, (b) the study focuses on the

challenges encountered by subject matter experts, and (c) the researcher with limited control over the participants' responses. By incorporating employees to the study enabled the researcher to use an embedded case study approach (Yin, 2017).
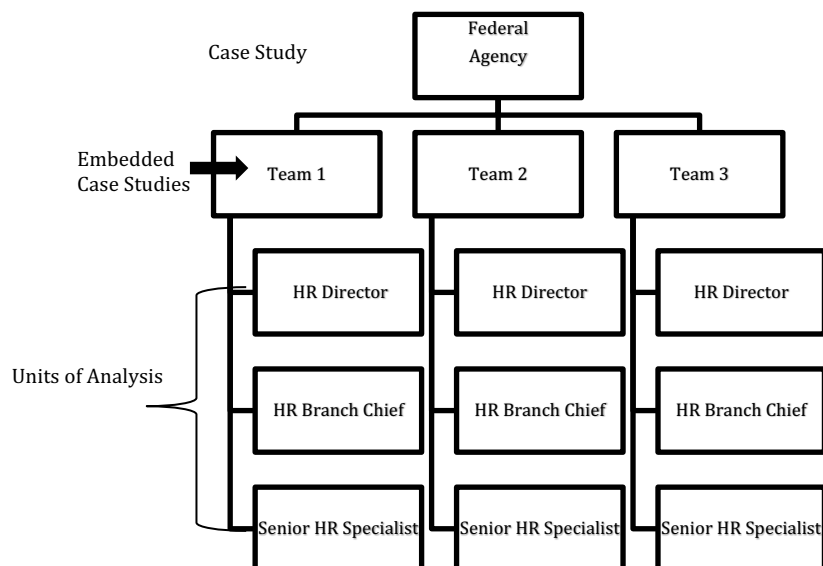
Figure 4. Single-case study design graphic with embedded units.

I followed a single-case study design with several embedded units to examine one federal agency with several sublayers in charge of onboarding new employees into the organizational mix. A single case study provided more evidence as to the complexities across units and increase findings and applicability (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2017). I conducted the study at one federal agency with legal authority over departmental units that are geographically dispersed to analyze the agency as a whole. Potential participants needed to meet specific criteria to join the study. Participants must have had at least five years of experience being employed by the federal government, they must have had experience working in the HR field, and they must have been serving an onboarding subject-matter expert or consultants in the onboarding process at the time of

the study. An embedded case study allowed data to be collected from all units and subunits of the organization to understand organizational constraints and the viewpoints of study participants (Rowley, 2014; Yin, 2017). A single case study with embedded units explored the issue from senior leaders to the employee working in HR at the lowest levels to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture. Subunits allowed for a deeper understanding of the issue and how the organization should handle and manage the phenomenon. Selecting a single case study design with embedded units enhanced and developed a broad examination to my study.

Case study design provided a platform to explore the influence specific occurrences had on the participants' lives (Yin, 2017). According to Yin (2017), a case study is comprised of six activities: (a) have a strategy, (b) develop an outline, (c) be prepared, (d) gather the data, (e) examine the data, and (f) report the findings. Yin provided a rationale for using case study design: the case must be critical for research, the study may discover unknown or unusual circumstances, the researcher can understand and grasp daily operations of the organizations, and the researcher provided a chance to examine and consider earlier issues to the phenomenon. The rationale for conducting a qualitative case study was to help me understand that onboarding Generation Z in the federal workforce was critical.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was to advance the knowledge base by closing gaps in the literature and conducting meaningful research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I was to comprehend an understanding of the phenomenon and the ways to construct discovery

while gathering data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the role of researchers is to emphasize the need for research and disclose bias and assumptions to enhance the dependability of the body of knowledge. Saldana (2016) indicated that a qualitative researcher should be organized and exercise effective listening skills.

My views of generations served as an identifier similar to that of race or ethnicity in that it provides insight into a demographic's beliefs, values, and attitudes towards work. My knowledge gained through workforce initiatives was fundamental to my role within the phenomenon, setting, and context. As an HR professional working for the federal government, I am exposed to the daily challenges of managing a multigenerational workforce. Conversely, I have experienced first-hand knowledge of onboarding processes that lacked preparedness for new employees that resulted in employees leaving the organization within the first six months of employment. My education, position, and professional qualification as a certified diversity professional provided the necessary skill set to conduct a case study effectively. Although these biases have the potential to impact data collection and analysis, I maintained my objectivity as a priority. Ravitch and Carl (2016) asserted that qualitative researchers must disclose prejudices and use strategies to avoid bias during data collection and analysis; therefore, I adopted procedures to mitigate any personal influences to ensure the findings are that of study participants.

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to understand the challenges encountered by HR professionals regarding ways to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase retention rates (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). I used a single-case study design to investigate the challenges encountered by eight to 15 HR professionals within one federal agency located in the District of Columbia. A single-case study design was the most universal qualitative approach and was conducted across a particular agency with several embedded units (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2017). The use of a single case study design with several embedded units provided an understanding of the phenomenon and the relationship dynamics to answer the existence of the "why" and "how" (Yin, 2017). According to Hancock and Algozzine (2017) and Vernon-Dotson (2019), case study research is an introduction into teaching and facilitating qualitative research by providing a step-by-step process guide from literature review to the report of findings.

Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) noted that an appropriate sample comprises four to 10 cases and that any more than that would make it difficult to manage the amount of data generated. Rowley (2014) suggested a sample size of six to 10 units of analysis as a viable option; however, Boddy (2016) recommended a sample of eight to 12 participants, depending on their knowledge of the phenomenon. Miles and Huberman (1994) claimed that selecting more than 15 cases for the sample may make a study cumbersome and unmanageable. Thus, data saturation is the key criterion to define the sample size.

I selected the target population of HR professionals from one federal agency that was responsible for onboarding all employees into the organizational culture. I recruited HR professionals from one particular agency who had an understanding and specific knowledge of the topic being investigated. Purposive sampling was a common strategy in qualitative research to obtain participants and was beneficial in case studies because the process allowed me to concentrate on a set of elimination and inclusion standards (Rossman & Marshall, 2010). I selected HR professionals as study participants from one federal agency who were directly involved in the daily operational onboarding process of the organization. The participants were selected based on their skills, experience, and knowledge of the phenomenon. the use of snowball sampling encourages subject matter experts to recruit other participants with knowledge related to the subject (Greene, 2014). I used snowball sampling to identify HR professionals and consultants to participate, and I asked participants to refer additional subject-matter experts.

Participant Selection Logic

According to Patton (2002), the operational construct was a theory-based sampling where the researcher samples incidents, slices of life, periods, or people by their potential manifestation or representation of critical theoretical constructs. Saturation determined the sample size in qualitative research, but there are additional elements to consider, such as code saturation and meaning saturation (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018). Code saturation indicated that researchers have heard and understand all information as the meaning of saturation (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2016). Either of these approaches should lead to data saturation. The case study design allowed me to obtain a

more in-depth understanding of the ways that HR professionals onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase retention rates.

The participants were leading HR professionals from one federal agency geographically located in the District of Columbia ranging in experience and position (Green, 2014). According to Rubin and Rubin (2016), interviewing is a way to exchange knowledge and information between individuals. Interviewing requires personal sensitivity and adaptability, as well as the ability to stay within the bounds of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I conducted semistructured interviews to understand the ways that HR professionals from one federal agency onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture. A single-case study design with embedded units was chosen given the lack of transferability to all federal agencies. The ability to understand the complexities of one federal agency with legal authority over several embedded units provided advance practices of a geographically dispersed organization.

Instrumentation

The following instruments to guide the interview protocol (Patton, 2002): letter of introduction and recruitment tool, informed consent, demographics protocol, personal interviews, and a review of standard operating procedures. The instruments used to collect data were triangulated to gain a more detail description of the phenomenon (Yin, 2017). Below is a description of each instrument in more details.

Invitational letter and recruitment flyer. I forwarded the recruitment flyer to a partner organization to solicit potential study participants. The recruitment flyer was used as a tool to seek study participants within the field of HR. Once, individuals indicated

their desire to participate, I emailed the invitational letter and Informed Consent Form for individuals to volunteer. The research purpose was embedded in the invitational letter and the recruitment flyer (see Appendices A & B) for those who met the inclusion criteria. The invitational letter and Informed Consent Form aided in orienting participants to the research purpose and design. Those who desired to participate in the study after reading the invitational letter and Informed Consent Form self-selected to volunteer by responding according to the Informed Consent Form (See Appendix C). Informed Consent was a voluntary agreement for participants to participate in the research and fully disclosed the research process for participants to make an informed decision whether to participate or not and any risks associated with participation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Informed Consent was vital to the research process and was following Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards for research.

Demographic protocol questionnaire. The demographics protocol questionnaire gathered information on the characteristics of a population (See Appendix D) for example, race, gender, ethnicity, profession, and occupation (Connelly, 2013). Prospective candidates were asked a series of questions to glean more information about their position and experience before the actual interview was scheduled. The demographic questionnaire conducted prior to the start of the study protocol. The demographic data aided in analyzing trends and comparison among study participants and masked the identity of study participants. Demographic data collected described the sample of people within the organization that may affect the study. Hughes, Camden, and Yangchen (2016) argued that demographic questions should be continuously evaluated to

ensure they fit with the identities of the research participants. Two experts will test the demographic protocol questionnaire.

Personal interview protocol. I used the interview guide designed based on cognitive interviewing protocol to gather and analyze objective, reliable information about specific events under a set of flexible principles (Willis, 2005). (See Appendix E). The purpose of the interview protocol allowed the researcher an opportunity to ask questions, and any follow-up questions based on the participant's statements and gain clarity of the participant's responses. Also, the interview guide aided in providing information about how to conduct effective qualitative research interviews while gaining insight into participants interactions, their experience, skills, knowledge, and behaviors. The interviews were scheduled according to the availability of study participants.

Pilot Study

To test the data collection instruments and reduce any potential researcher bias, I conducted a pilot test of the demographic protocol questionnaire and the interview protocol with two senior HR professionals. The reason for conducting a pilot study was to cultivate a dry run and ensure that the interview questions align with the purpose of the study and to correct any inaccuracies during the pilot testing. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2017), a pilot test is essential for qualitative research novices who are using a case study approach. The pilot test followed the same procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection as identified next.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I followed a single-case study approach with embedded units as the research

design to understand the challenges encountered by HR professionals from one federal

agency regarding ways to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture. I

obtained my data from in-depth, semistructured interviews with a sample of HR

professionals from one federal agency. The data collected are of the participants'

perceptions of the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2017). In addition, I analyzed

the participants' nonverbal communication styles by producing an audit trail and

reflective notes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The procedures provided insight into the

phenomenon and strengthen the validity and reliability of the study. The use of multiple

instruments of data sources ensured consistency across the research and aided in

triangulation of the data (Stavros & Westberg, 2009). These instruments aided in the

validity of data collection and data processing and analysis (Yin, 2017).

I used purposive sampling to obtain my sample of HR professionals from one

federal agency serving as onboarding subject-matter experts or consultants in the

onboarding process (Greene, 2014). I developed the interview questions based on the

findings of the literature review and principles of workforce training. I asked open-ended

interview questions based on my review of several best practice studies conducted by

studies presented in the literature review and other relevant document sources (Yin,

2017). I also kept a reflexive journal to capture any personal biases, make notes during

the interviews, and record the participants' nonverbal communication styles during the

interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I reviewed the transcriptions of the participants'

recorded responses to the interview questions as a source of validity.

Before initiating any data collection protocols, I obtained approval from Walden

University's IRB to do so. Potential participants received the recruitment flyer via OPM's

Community of Practice (CoP) to volunteer as a potential study. Also, the recruitment

flyer was posted on the researcher's LinkedIn account to solicit potential study

participants. LinkedIn and OPM's CoP are appropriate venues to solicit participants

because both organizations are associated with the federal government and are considered

subject-matter experts in the field, which also yields to network sampling (Yin, 2017).

The research purpose of the study was embedded in the invitational letter and

recruitment flyer (see Appendix A and Appendix B) for those who met the inclusion

criteria. The invitational letter and Informed Consent Form oriented potential participants

to the research purpose and design. The Informed Consent Form apprised study

participants of any risks associated with being in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Study participants responded by indicating "I consent" as a requirement of Walden

University's IRB standards for research.

After completing each interview, I transcribed and analyzed the recorded

responses until data saturation using Microsoft Excel. I stored the collected data in a

secure location with passwords known only to me. Participants received transcribed

copies of their own interview transcriptions, along with the audio recording, to validate

the accuracy of or change any of their responses. I sought validity through triangulation

by comparing the researcher's notes along with the transcription member checking, and other data collected (Yin, 2017).

Data Analysis Plan

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), data analysis is a means of defining data by finding a relationship to words and phrases. Coding referred to identifying the participants' experiences, feelings, perceptions, or descriptions (Saldana, 2016). Saldana (2016) explained that coding entails combining or grouping words or categories to facilitate the emergence of themes. The process of holistic and pattern data analysis was a way to gain a common understanding and develop themes, which reflect essential concepts in data called families (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Themes features participants perceptions or experiences related to the phenomenon. Rubin and Rubin (2012) indicated that themes derive from coding and labeling conclusions, explanations, or summary statements.

The data analysis process consists of triangulation of interview data which sought similar and common themes grounded in defining words and established opinions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2017). During the analysis of the data, general themes emerged. I formulated the themes by linking the concepts (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) and used the hierarchy coding process to create relationships between codes, which developed into to subcategories. I also used multiple coding to show how codes diverge from each other (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

I collected my data from multiple sources to address the RQ (Yin, 2017) adequately. The use of Microsoft Excel to analyze data, capture the word frequency to

describe the phenomenon, run queries, and assign meanings to participant responses. I examined the thoughts and feelings of study participants as a deeper dive in the analysis to become immersed in the data and provide rigor to the research. According to Saldana (2016), elemental methods such as descriptive coding allowed for field notes, documents, and detailed inventory of content to analyze data and process coding allowed interview transcript to connect with participants to understand the phenomenon. The first round of coding consisted of abstracting descriptive and process coding. Descriptive and process coding included perceptions, and the types of characteristics among generations.

After conducting the individual interviews, I reflected on the participants' responses. According to Saldana (2016), coding is a systematic process of labeling passages in the transcribed interview text. During the interview process, there are moments of reflections, which occurred after each interview with participants. I captured thoughts and feelings to improve before my next interview. When analyzing data, I searched for the number of times words were used throughout the interviews and then decipher the meaning in which the word was used. Hand coding required several rounds of coding before I could determine themes or patterns; therefore, the use of Microsoft Excel was the preferred software used to analyze the data.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Researchers, including myself, must maintain a high level of credibility and objectivity. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness describes credibility as the concept of internal validity, and confirmability explains how well the research findings support the actual data collected when examined by others. Triangulation was a

commonly used method to verify the accuracy of the data collection, which involved

crosschecking the data from multiple perspectives. As the researcher, it was my

responsibility to maintain all instruments and interpret the data. I safeguarded the privacy

of the participants and maintained the confidentiality of their interview responses and

ensured that all elements related to the study are held to the highest ethical standards.

Credibility

Credibility referred to the extent to which researchers are confident in their

findings and revealed the true experience of study participants (Merriam & Tisdell,

2015). Credibility involved the use of several approaches and was not limited to

triangulation and transcription reviews only. As the researcher, I maintained a quality

control process to ensure accuracy of study participants responses and the protection of

all data collected. To establish credibility, I provided the participants transcribed copies

of their own interview responses along with audio recordings of their own interviews.

Member checking was used to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the

transcription process. As data saturation was another form of credibility. In addition, I

kept audit trails of my thoughts, bias, and participants reactions during the data collection

phase.

Transferability

Transferability explains the degree to which the research can be transferred or

replicated (Yin, 2017). The reader determined the transferability of the study as the

results of the study are used in other studies as well as in different industries. The primary

research question directly influenced the strategy of ensuring transferability and allowed

for best practices across the organization. Describing all pertinent details of the study can improve transferability (Yin, 2017). I ensured that the participants had experience onboarding Generation Z in the federal workplace and met the inclusion criteria.

Dependability

Dependability determined if the study can be duplicated. According to Yin (2017) dependability in qualitative research ensured that the findings are consistent and can be repeated and measured by the standards that governed the study. I used a recording device to capture the participants' knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon to ensure dependability. The use of an audit trail outlined the process used to conduct the study. In addition, I documented the steps used to conduct the study as well as conducted two pilot tests to document resources and equipment that were critical to the process. I maintained a reflexive journal to document my personal reflections and thoughts during the interviews.

Confirmability

Confirmability referred to the ability of researchers to remain neutral and question the relationship between the data and the findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To strengthen my awareness of confirmability, I acknowledged and minimized any biases that could influence the participants' responses when I asked them the interview questions. I also did not direct the participants to any particular points of view. I stored all documents, policies, and data findings electronically using password protection to safeguard the files to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the study.

Ethical Procedures

Ensuring ethics in research involving human subjects continued to be a significant concern. Since it was published in 1979, the Belmont Report governed scientific research and has guide the IRB process (as cited in Largent, 2016). The report required that researchers provide autonomy and respect for the individuals involved in human research (Yin, 2017). Beneficence referred to the responsibility of researchers to ensure that no undue harm befalls study participants and to minimize any risk to the participants. Yin (2017) also mentioned that participants cannot be coerced. All study participants volunteered to participant in the research process.

Walden University's IRB approval process was rigorous to ensure that study participants are protected from harm and that they received full disclosure of the intent and purpose of any study that they joined. The IRB process encouraged and empowered the participants in my research to express themselves freely and without fear of any undue influence or repercussions (Yin, 2017). In following the University's ethical standards, study participants were voluntary. The study included a detailed description of participants' thoughts and perceptions related to onboarding Generation Z in the federal workplace. The data collected remained confidential, and no other individuals had access to the data. Study participants had an opportunity for transcription review for alignment and clarity purposes; however, all transcriptions will be destroyed following the acceptance of my dissertation.

Summary

Presented in Chapter 3 were explanations of my role as the researcher and the rationale for the research method and design that I chose. The chosen qualitative single-case study design with embedded units facilitated the collection of data from the study participants. The participant selection criteria, instrumentation, and recruitment procedures were consistent with the research design. The internal and external validity of the study revealed credibility and transferability. The use of dependability allowed other researchers to duplicate the study in other settings. The requirements of the IRB ensured that the study was rooted in the ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, and justice, all of which protected the study participants. The IRB process minimized any risk or undue harm and also allowed the participants to withdraw early from the study without any negative consequences.

In Chapter 4, I analyze data collection, data analysis, and presented the research findings. Chapter 4 provide details about the procedures of coding as well as justify answers to research questions. Chapter 5 include an explanation of the results and implementation of the research plan, along with recommendations for further research. Finally, I present the impact of the study to research and the field of management.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the challenges faced by HR professionals onboarding Generation Z into the federal government workforce to enhance job creation and increase retention rates. Gaining insight into what HR professionals at one particular federal agency experienced when onboarding Generation Z into the federal workforce was the focus of this study. The specific problem was that some HR professionals from one federal agency lacked onboarding strategies to engage Generation Z into the organizational culture. In alignment with a qualitative single-case study design with embedded units, data were collected from 12 semistructured interviews and a critical review of onboarding documentation, which consisted of onboarding training materials provided to all new hires joining the organization. The documentation was pertinent to the study because the training materials provided the context of the onboarding process and required paperwork that all newly hired and transferring federal employees had to complete and submit to HR.

I investigated the experiences and perceptions of the 12 participants regarding onboarding Generation Z in the federal government. I used Microsoft Excel to assist with coding interview responses and analyzing the data. Microsoft Excel facilitated a more systematic and rigorous formulation of the emergent themes. One RQ guided this study: What are the challenges that HR professionals face in onboarding Generation Z in the federal workforce? Chapter 4 presents the research setting, participants' demographic information, data collection and analysis, evidence of trustworthiness of qualitative data, and a conclusion.

Pilot Study

To prepare to conduct the interviews and test the equipment, I completed a pilot study. Two HR professionals served as subject-matter experts by providing insight into the process of collecting data and analyzing the interview questions. The pilot testers were separate from the study sample. The two pilot testers recommended that one interview question be removed because it was already addressed in a previous question. Also, the pilot testers assisted in validating the clarity of the audio-recording device.

Research Setting

I selected the participants from one federal agency according to the inclusion criteria and then interviewed them telephonically because of social distancing and federally-imposed stay-at-home orders relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic. I solicited participants for the study by using a partner organization and by posting a recruitment flyer on LinkedIn. As potential participants reached out to me for additional information regarding the study, I responded to them via e-mail with an invitational letter and the requisite informed consent. I asked the participants to provide me with the best phone numbers, dates, times, and locations to conduct the interviews. I extended this courtesy to the participants to ensure their privacy and to protect the audio-recorded interviews. I conducted and audio-recorded all the interviews from my home office.

Demographics

The 12 HR professionals who participated in this study resided in the United States and worked for the U.S. federal government. All the participants met the inclusion criteria by having at least 5 years of experience working for the federal government,

having experience working in the HR field, and having served as onboarding subject-

matter experts or consultants in the onboarding process at the time of the study.

Purposive sampling was the most suitable sampling approach, given the need for the

participants to share their HR perspective. Although collecting demographic information

from the participants was not the focus of the study, I collected data on the following

categories: gender, age, years of federal service, years of related HR experience, and job

title (see Table 2). Each participant was coded using an alphanumeric identifier (e.g., P1,

P2, etc.).

Table 2

Participants' Demographics and Characteristics

Participant	Gender	Age	Job title	Federal government experience (yrs.)	HR-related experience (yrs.)
P1	Female	57	Director	19	29
P2	Female	51	Senior HR specialist	15	23
P3	Female	39	Senior HR specialist	11	20
P4	Male	60	Senior HR director	8	7
P5	Female	54	HR specialist	13	8
P6	Female	42	HR specialist	15	15
P7	Female	34	HR specialist	11	5
P8	Female	38	Training specialist	5	15
P9	Female	58	Senior HR benefits specialist	33	20
P10	Female	47	Senior HR specialist	18	17
P11	Male	48	HR manager	11	20
P12	Female	48	Onboarding program manager	15	5

Note. $N = 12$

Data Collection

I began to collect data for the study after receiving IRB approval (IRB approval #

04-01-20-0080750) from Walden University. After receiving expressions of interest from

potential participants about joining the study, I e-mailed the invitational letter and

informed consent form to them. Study participants self-selected to join the study by

responding, "I consent." The interviews were scheduled based on the participants' availability.

Before conducting the interview sessions, I used the demographic protocol to validate the participants' qualifications to be in the study based on the inclusion criteria. I also told the participants that if they felt uncomfortable or wanted to stop the interviews at any time, I would stop recording. Only if the participants felt comfortable to continue would I start the interview sessions again. I audio recorded the interviews and took notes while observing the participants' voice inflection and tone. I closed the interview sessions by expressing my appreciation with a $5.00 gift card to Starbucks or Dunkin' Donuts. All study participants preferred receiving a Starbucks gift card over Dunkin' Donuts. One participant even chose to donate the gift card to first responders working on the front lines of COVID-19.

After collecting data over 6 weeks with the 12 participants, I reached data saturation after interviewing eight participants; however, I continued to collect data to ensure that no new information would be found. Each interview ranged from between 18 and 52 minutes. I asked all participants the same questions in the same order, with no deviation from the prepared list of interview questions (see Appendix E). Throughout the data collection process, I reassured the participants of their right to privacy, and I explained to them that the collected data would be maintained for 5 years, with the electronic files being encrypted and locked in a secured location.

After conducting the individual interviews, I transcribed the audio recordings verbatim to Microsoft Word documents. Member checking is a method ensuring the

accuracy of the transcriptions by allowing the participants to review them (Yin, 2017).

Once I completed the transcriptions, I provided copies of them to the respective

participants, along with the audio recordings to review for accuracy. Member checking

consisted of masking the participant's folder with unique identifiers to maintain

confidentiality of all study participants and my notes. The use of member checking aided

in managing my bias and ensuring that the collected data were relevant to the study and

interpretive of the participants' experiences as conveyed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). All

folders are locked securely, including all paper materials and the encrypted drives of files

(i.e., recorded interviews, Microsoft Word, and Excel) from the study. After the

transcription reviews were completed, I entered the data into Microsoft Excel for

analysis.

During the interview sessions, the participants provided the required

documentation of new hire paperwork for employees and training materials used during

the onboarding process to explain the mission of the organization. This material provided

a glimpse of what new employees experienced during the onboarding process and

corroborated the participants' responses about their experiences with onboarding. To

conclude the data collection process, I returned the training materials to the onboarding

program manager and did not store them digitally. I captured information related to my

thoughts, interpretations, bias, and reflections on the data in field notes. I used reflective

journaling and recorded all pertinent information, observations, and situations to validate

the information obtained from the participants while ensuring trustworthiness and

reducing potential bias (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I then organized the data according to

the interview questions to search for emerging themes, word frequency, and commonly known understandings.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this single case study included inductive coding by developing an explanation from data to identify patterns. Saldana (2016) described inductive coding as a technique used when little is known about the phenomenon. I organized the data into concepts and then connected similar responses from the participants to gain a common understanding. According to Saldana (2016), the holistic analytical process involves gathering the data, seeking a common understanding through immersion of the data, and coding themes to reach conclusions. The use of thematic coding also consisted of analyzing text to identify common themes, ideas, and meanings that arose repeatedly (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I transcribed the interviews, hand-coded my initial impressions, and captured my thoughts and feelings in my reflective journal. I used the journal to capture my review of the training materials presented during the onboarding processing to new employees. I highlighted words and phrases that I believed were interesting or important perspectives.

As the primary data collection instrument, I immersed myself in the data. I classified the participants' interview transcriptions and training materials by holistic theme. I developed patterns by searching for commonalities among the study participants responses. This process of analyzing the data helped me to identify patterns and themes. I labeled and searched for patterns in second-level constructs to conduct thematic analysis among the 12 study participants. I completed this process by identifying the themes as

well as patterns of words and word phrases. To maintain consistency, I labeled words with the same or similar meaning in the same category. For example, one participant referred to "assimilation," but another referred to "integration." These words were categorized together under one name. I also reviewed the transcriptions for word frequency and created a Word cloud (see Appendix I) to highlight the frequency of words related to Generation Z.

Themes and Patterns

Case study analysis requires identifying emerging themes as the data relate to the RQ. As researchers explore the validity of their data, the emerging themes give them a systematic way to synthesize and culminate their study results (Yin, 2017). For this case study, alignment between the RQ and the data was clear from the participants' responses and the supporting documents. I used data familiarization to review field notes and journal entities to identify potential codes and determine who would benefit from the results of this study.

During the data analysis phase, I used Microsoft Excel to record participants' responses and my thoughts and observations. After transcribing participant's reactions, I hand-coded as the process of open coding, which involved reviewing the transcriptions to identify initial themes. Codes that emerged were annotated in my field notes and journal entities. I refined broader themes into more concise themes by taking a deeper dive into participants' responses and searching for commonalities within the context of data. I grouped similar codes and consolidated, which allowed me to group patterns into overarching themes: (a) substandard organizational assimilation and preparedness, (b)

budgetary constraints to workforce planning, (c) lack of technical infrastructure, and (d)

perception of the federal government as a future employer. The themes allowed for a

clear, shared understanding from the research questions and a narrative that could be

synthesized in Chapter 5.

Data Analysis Summary

The collected data related to the RQ and the interview questions and applied to

the conceptual framework. I interviewed 12 participants and transcribed their responses. I

followed the interview protocol (see Appendix E) to ensure the execution of a worthy

qualitative study. The process of inductive coding was used to gain a common

understanding amongst HR professionals within a particular agency. I conducted data

analysis and developed themes through an interpretation of the data. I used Microsoft

Excel to transcribe and hand code the participants responses. During my reflection of the

data collected in the interviews and review of documents provided, I removed any

outlying responses that did not pertain to the study.

<div align="center">

Evidence of Trustworthiness

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A single-case study with embedded units provided evidence and data related to a

real-world phenomenon within its natural environment. A study of this nature required

that I manifest a high level of competence as the primary instrument of data collection to

ensure that the data analysis and findings were met with rigor (Yin, 2017). The section

addresses personal bias, unconscious bias, and other risks that were associated with the

study. The evidence of trustworthiness in qualitative research includes credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability, characteristics that define

trustworthiness (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Trustworthiness was a matter of following the guidelines provided by Walden University's IRB to conduct the study, as described in Chapter 3. The following text explains the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Credibility

Credibility served as the internal validity of the study. Using two HR professionals as pilot testers served appropriate to aid a novice researcher in conducting qualitative analysis. Also, the use of purposive sampling of HR professionals was suitable for subject-matter experts as HR professionals are the primary individuals responsible for the onboarding of new employees into the organization. I incorporated measures in the study to ensure that the participants were open and honest in their responses to the interview questions. The HR professionals provided adequate knowledge about the topic, which increased credibility. As a means of ensuring credibility, I used transcription review, member checking, and triangulation of data to provide an interpretation of responses and accurately captured the reality of their experiences and perceptions. In addition, the participants provided rich and in-depth responses to the interview questions.

Data credibility refers to the extent to which researchers are confident in their findings and reveal the true experiences of their study participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). As the primary data collection instrument, I was eager to build rapport with the participants and I provided credibility of our mutual passion for the HR career field and helped me to understand many of the challenges and constraints imposed on HR professionals. At the same time, I documented my bias, thoughts, and feelings as a

member of the HR profession. I also reviewed additional documents provided to me as a resource to understand the onboarding process. The training materials included Optional Form-306, Federal Appointment Affidavit, organizational policies and procedures, established best practices, and a video about the organizations mission. These documents provided relevant information about the participants' experiences and why some of their responses centered around the essential paperwork of the onboarding process. Furthermore, a recommendation in Chapter 5 is related to ways that new initiatives can be added to extant resources to onboard a new generation of workers in the federal government.

Transferability

Transferability signifies external validity and tests the research findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The descriptive data in the current study were thick descriptions of the participants' experiences onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture. The study participants' perceptions about the onboarding process provided a detailed description of the methodology and grounded the interpretation of the results and emergent theories. In this study, I examined the responses of HR professionals at various level involved in onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture within one federal agency. Patton (2002) identified triangulation as the ability to use multiple research methods or data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. I used three sources of data to test the validity through the convergence of information from different sources to include: interviews, onboarding training materials, and FEVS.

The use of the research design, along with purposive and snowball sampling, increased transferability. In the study, transferability was dependent on the analysis and the ability to synthesize data of the results. The conceptual framework illustrated how strategic planning and alignment are requirements of the human capital framework to engage employees in the federal workforce. To ensure the highest level of transferability of the study, I provided a comprehensive and thorough description of the phenomenon and methods for future researchers to replicate the study (Yin, 2017). In addition, the findings include all developed themes, patterns, and common understandings (Saldana, 2016). I ensured that data collected fit the strict guidelines of this case study to prevent any threats to transferability.

Dependability

The dependability of research endeavors relies on providing detailed accounts for other researchers to replicate the studies and their findings (Yin, 2017). The process of documenting the current study was designed to ensure that future researchers would have a detailed plan of the ways to consistently and accurately execute repetition to increase dependability. The use of audit trails and reflexive journals captured the researcher's personal thoughts, feelings, and bias related to the study. After each interview, I reviewed the notes documenting my thoughts, feelings, and initial reactions in a reflective journal. The reflexive journal was used capture what I experienced, heard, and thought about and initial reactions to the answers to the interview questions. The data collection process included the use of semistructured interview questions, field notes, and reflexive journals to triangulate the themes. Also, I provided a comprehensive review and carefully

documented process and procedures to ensure dependability. In addition, two senior HR

professionals participated in a pilot test to ensure proper alignment of the interview

questions and the purpose of the study. Another means of increasing dependability was

the use of Dr. Bryan Forsyth to serve as my study methodologist expert alongside a

detailed research design plan by my committee chair, Dr. Michael Neubert.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the process by which the researcher brings a unique

perspective and the degree that the results can be confirmed and corroborated by others

(Ravitch & Carl, 2017). The use of purposive sampling and the triangulation of data

validated the study's concept and strengthened its confirmability. My background and

knowledge of the phenomenon were captured through the use of audit trials and offered a

unique perspective. In addition, I established a positive rapport with the participants to

create a level of honesty and transparency to ensure a valuable exchange of information.

Each study participant received a $5.00 gift card as thanks for participating in the study.

To heighten confirmability and to minimize bias, I followed the interview

protocol by asking the interview questions with no elaboration or personal influence on

my part. During the data analysis, I used reflective field notes to record my observations

and interpretations to eliminate researcher bias. All 12 participants verified their

interpretation of the data collected, and member checking was used to further ground the

findings. Two study participants requested that I repeat an interview question because of

poor network connectivity. During one interview, I stopped the recording because of a

brief interpretation not related to the study; however, this temporary break did not distract the participant from responding to the interview questions.

Study Results

This case study with embedded units involved interviews of 12 HR professionals working for one particular federal agency. In this section, I present a shared understanding among 12 participants, all of whom were working in the federal government agency's HR division, that emerged from in-depth interviews and a document review. All the interviews were transcribed for accuracy and served as the foundation for the construction of the themes regarding their perceptions.

The interview questions were derived from the literature review. One RQ guided the study: What are the challenges that HR professionals face in onboarding Generation Z into the federal workforce? Significant statements from the interviews were divided into themes and categories. The categories for each participant were merged to understand the challenges faced by HR professionals onboarding Generation Z into the federal workforce.

The results revolved around the four major themes that emerged (See Table 3). The representation of the participant's findings resulted in four major themes. The triangulation method represented the use of multiple data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of onboarding Generation Z into the federal government. I present the shared perceptions of HR professionals that emerged from the review of all documents and in-depth interviews and aligned with the conceptual and theoretical framework (see Table 3).

Table 3

Major Themes

Theme	Total # of occurrences	% of occurrences
Substandard organizational assimilation & preparedness	10	83%
Budgetary constraints to workforce planning	11	92%
Lack of technical infrastructure	12	100%
Perception of the federal government as a future employer	11	92%

Note. N = 12

Theme 1: Substandard Organizational Assimilation and Preparedness

The federal government onboarding process is outdated and inadequate for a new generation of workers joining the workforce. Ten of 12 participants identified this outdated onboarding process into the organizational culture as a major challenge to attract and hire Generation Z. Overall, the participants gave similar responses.

P2 described onboarding in this way:

As an outdated process of assembling the paperwork for new employees; going over the organization's mission and expectations, signing documents and providing benefits information, and addressing any questions they have about the organization as a whole. Onboarding is limited to just completing paperwork because the managers want the employees to report to work immediately.

According to P3,

Onboarding can be challenging at times because the federal government system is a little bit dated and we don't have a fluid electronic system where from the time people apply to the job that certain things in the system can kind of mesh and meld, so we are not constantly having employees fill out the luminous paperwork

and documents that really take up the bulk of the onboarding process, which is

just sitting there waiting for people to fill it out.

P9 responded:

Onboarding is the in-processing of a new hire. This means completing their

paperwork and getting them in a ready to start work position, so making sure on

the first day they have signed their appointment affidavit, obtained their IDs and

ready to work by the next day. The problem is that the managers are not prepared

for the new employees' arrival. New employees do not have computers, access to

systems, nor a phone line ready when they go to the unit. So, new employees sit

there waiting to be told what to do, and sometimes, this goes on for weeks.

P4 discussed onboarding from a leadership perspective:

This bringing on of the employee for federal service, and specifically from my

understanding is pretty detailed. I thought it was you just have to sign papers.

You're welcomed to the unit, and, hey, you start tomorrow with the task. But

there is a whole set of specific task and preliminary requirements for the

onboarding process, which is part of my definition. For me, it involves a whole

host of tasks, if you will. For us, it is a swearing in with an American flag;

question-and-answer session on benefits; a legal brief on legal requirements,

depending on the job. If your position requires a certain clearance. If the position

requires an OGE 450 (financial disclosure and potential conflicts of interest);

administration of rights, paperwork, clearances. In the federal government, a lot

of our positions have a clearance requirement, whether it is a secret or top secret

or compartmentalized clearance, so there are paperwork on that and dependent

upon the job grade core document security level, etc. The other piece that I was

not familiar with that was part of onboarding and part of my definition is that we

fingerprint folks and we also send them for a urinalysis depending on [what] their

core documents require. So that is kind of my big picture overall onboarding –

coming onboard, coming to the unit, welcoming folks to the culture and to the

organization.

P11 commented: "Successfully assimilating a new employee in an environment in

a way that they feel that their skill sets are being utilized; they understand exactly

what the mission is of the organization and how they fit into that organization."

Theme 2: Budgetary Constraints to Workforce Planning

A significant issue faced by eleven of the 12 participants (92%) referenced

budgetary constraints to workforce planning relates to onboard Generation Z employees

into the organizational culture. Budgetary constraints to workforce planning focus on an

organization's ability to manage position management. The process of workforce

planning is analyzing and forecasting the supply and demand for talent management. The

notion of having a highly technical generation of employees with completely different

priorities, values, and needs challenges HR professionals in addressing workforce gaps

and the ability to target talent management.

P1 stated:

So, I think having people at various stages will teach more seasoned people that

are different ways to produce things because Gen Zers are very technology

driven, and they [are] quick to come onboard and say, "Oh, well, you can use this program to do this." Unfortunately, the government does not have the funding to purchase the software or equipment or the length of time to purchase it takes so long that the Gen Zer has moved on to the next best thing. Technology moves so fast that the government can't keep up.

Similarly, P2 commented:

The federal government lacks funding for HR to conduct studies about generational differences to understand Gen Z value system or how to remodel the federal government to engage and reengage individuals from all five generations. I think that [it] is a huge risk and we are not taking enough time to do the research to understand this cohort and how it will be the largest cohort in the next few years. How we need to figure out, how we again motivate and retain them because we can recruit them, but what we can't do is keep them. They are not even staying, I read recently, that they are not staying through their probationary period, which is bananas.

P3 noted:

Because a lot of government agencies when budgets are developed, and money is disbursed human resources gets the short end of the stick. I feel that HR is the heart of any organization, but we lack funding to be effective and efficient.

P4 responded:

You have to know your audience. Gen Z have high expectations; however, the government does not have the funding to meet their demands. Gen Zers are

looking to get promoted once they enter the door because they know that they are

highly technical and highly sought after; therefore, we lose them to the private

sector, or Gen Zers are so quick and smart that they start their own businesses.

There are no plans in place to develop them or map them into career fields to keep

them engaged.

P5 said:

Onboarding is a huge process, and a lot of people don't understand that. HR

professionals need to be very detailed on what they are doing because it affects

your permanent record. There is a lack of consistency and training provided to HR

on the front end that impacts an employee's record or the agency's delegation to

hire."

Theme 3: Lack of Technical Infrastructure

A challenge for HR professionals in the federal government is the lack of

technical infrastructure to support online platforms to engage the workforce. Theme 3

emerged from all participants reporting the need for better technological advances to

move the organization forward. A lack of technical infrastructure hinders growth and is

inadequate to meet present-day demands and future business requirements. Federal

agencies need to recognize the importance of flexible technology to aid in creating more

agile practices and the ability to respond quickly to market demands.

P1 indicated:

I mean it boils [down] to getting with the times and understanding we have to do

things differently if you want to attract people to the federal government. They

can go and work for [the] private sector and will have a laptop, apps, and different

things, and we don't have that.

P4 agreed with P1's statement:

Gen Zers are faster; they can get data really quickly; they are used to having

information at their fingertips - looking up information or having it at their

fingertips on their phones, tablets, computers, watches, and earbuds…they have

all sorts to technical devices and gadgets. They are agile as far as [the] IT

[information technology] world is concerned, so the government has to be on their

A game for this generation because they can find the answer really quickly.

P5 stated, "We have to be able to onboard and set up an infrastructure that makes

people within this age group happy to work for the federal government, easier and

quicker."

P6 commented:

Young employees are not trying to be doing stuff with outdated technology and

gadgets or a lack of high-speed internet or their systems not being set up or their

worksite not ready when they arrive. These things need to be considered and up to

par for them to function properly.

P8 said:

We need better technology. It's like the government enjoys sticking with the

status quo instead of progressing, so if you wanted to offer a virtual option or

different options to onboard, but you don't have the technological capabilities to

do so. Having a solid technological team or IT department that can create or find these technologies is critical to attracting and retaining this generation.

Theme 4: Perception of the Federal Government as a Future Employer

With the federal government facing budget cuts, sequestration, and furloughs, removing the negative perception that Generation Z has of the federal government is a significant challenge for HR professionals. Theme 4 emerged from responses where 11 out of 12 participants (92%) stated that Generation Z's negative perception of the federal government means that they do not consider the federal government an employer of choice. Federal agencies must recognize their greatest asset and value its employees as the most significant asset in the organization; thus, the reimagine the government initiative to expand the view of work as an experience.

P7 explained:

There is so much negative press about the federal government that if they see chaos when they first come onboard with the agency, then they may think this is what they are going to experience as they continue to work for the agency. I do feel they are least likely to stay in the agency for a long period of time because they want to move around, and the federal government has rules that govern time in grade and employees competing for positions.

P5 noted, "My perception is that Gen Z desires to be part of cutting-edge tech companies, not the big bad government. We can't offer them the wonderful perks that they get with the private sector. We just can't compete."

P1 responded:

"The federal government has a perception of outdated systems and ways of thinking with Baby Boomers leading the helm. I think if you don't have the technology like the electronic signatures and various things like that, HR people will have a hard time selling the organization to these individuals. Because Gen Z will feel like the government is working in the Dark Ages. Until the federal government onboarding with technology, with more recognition, and openly talking about performance, the federal government will lead Gen Z to the private sector, and we are not going to move forward, with the average age of the workforce being 45 years old.

P2 concurred:

Attrition, voluntary attrition, is what is plaguing the federal government. We can onboard all day. We can recruit all day, but we can't keep them. Because the experience hasn't been effective. It hasn't been efficient. It hasn't been rewarding. We haven't made the connection to the work, so its attrition. No organization can be sustainable if you don't have a workforce."

P3 commented:

The federal government was formally viewed as a stable place to work because of retirement accounts and annual raises. Now, the federal government faces hiring freezes and how the bureaucracy impedes getting things done quickly and efficiently. There is so much red tape. Things like civil service reform and the federal viewpoint surveys do not present a positive environment, image, or perception of the federal government and its leadership.

P4 asserted:

Yes, the government is big, and we have our challenges, but it is also changing.
How we treat one another is key to retention and employee engagement. We have
to treat one another with dignity and respect because it comes back. So,
essentially, we want employees, especially Gen Zers, to know they made the right
choice from the very beginning and hopefully throughout their career. The
government is slowly making strides.

P10 stated:

Because Generation Z doesn't really believe in – I am not going to say believe in,
but my experience has been that the federal government is seen as a big
bureaucracy. One of the things with Generation Z is that they are resistant to those
types of machines and organizations. So, I think that a big thing is that we are
going to have to remove some of those stigmas of the federal government being a
slow-moving machine with a bunch of red tape and infuse the idea that yes, we
can't operate without regulations. But there are regulations within the private
sector business too. We are going to have encourage Generation Z employees
believe that the same opportunities can exist in the private industry can exist in
the federal government and that the federal government are working to make
things easier.

P12 said, "It is important to reference how their parents view the government and
whether working for the government is a viable option after spending so much money on
their education."

Summary

In Chapter 4, an analysis of the data provided in the interview responses of 12 participants from one federal agency was presented to answer the RQ: What are the challenges that HR professionals face in onboarding Generation Z into the federal workforce? Interviews were conducted telephonically and were electronically audio recorded. After the interviews were conducted and transcribed, I used inductive coding to develop themes for the qualitative embedded case study. I read the transcribed interview responses and made notes of the repeated codes and themes that emerged. Codes that appeared fewer than three times were not considered a pattern that would be considered a theme. From the analysis of the data, four themes emerged: substandard organizational assimilation and preparedness, budgetary constraints to workforce planning, lack of technical infrastructure and perception of the federal government as a future employer.

Included in Chapter 5 are an interpretation of the findings, a discussion of the limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research. Also presented in Chapter 5 are implications for positive social change, theory, and practice. I also explain how the results of this study extend the body of knowledge on HR professionals' efforts to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture of the federal government. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ways that future scholars and researchers may be able to extend the findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the challenges faced by HR professionals onboarding Generation Z into the federal government to enhance job creation and increase retention rates. To address this purpose and remain consistent with the qualitative paradigm, I conducted a qualitative single-case study with embedded units. The specific problem was that some HR professionals from one federal agency lacked onboarding strategies to engage Generation Z into the organizational culture. The study design facilitated the collection of data to explore the challenges facing HR professionals with onboarding Generation Z into the federal workforce at one particular agency. Data were collected from the 12 semistructured interviews, reflective field notes, and documents received from the participants related to the onboarding process.

The qualitative research method and single-case study design allowed the 12 HR professionals to share their perceptions of the challenges that they experienced onboarding Generation Z into the federal workforce. The study was framed by Mannheim's (1952) generational cohort theory and OPM's (2019b) human capital framework first open system Strategic Planning and Alignment (OPM, 2019b). The method allowed me to investigate the challenges encountered by HR professionals onboarding Generation Z. An in-depth analysis of the interview responses led to the emergence of four themes: substandard organizational assimilation and preparedness, budgetary constraints to workforce planning, lack of technical infrastructure, and perception of the federal government as a future employer.

The data collection process involved telephonic interviews guided by 12 open-ended, semistructured interview questions. The analysis of the data also involved a review of the training materials, policies, and other aspects of documents that employees received during onboarding. I used the inductive approach for themes to emerge from dominant interpretations of data from participant's perspective to achieve methodological triangulation. The data analysis involved hand coding to include labeling, developing patterns, and creating themes from participant's responses and a review of the onboarding training documents. Chapter 5 includes details about the findings, limitations, implications, and recommendations, along with the implications for positive social change, theory, and practice.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings will extend current knowledge of the onboarding process and Generation Z. Four themes emerged from the analysis of the responses to the interview questions provided by 12 federal HR professionals working at one particular government agency. The interview questions were developed to answer the RQ. The participants reported challenges onboarding Generation Z in the areas of assimilation, budgets, infrastructure, and perceptions. In this section, I present the findings and review them in the context of the themes that emerged from the data analysis. I compare the patterns with relevant themes and the conceptual framework model presented in Chapter 2. I also substantiated the findings with evidence from the 12 semistructured interviews. The evidence of results indicated affirmation, disaffirmation, or extended existing knowledge of HR professionals onboarding Generation Z into the federal government.

Research Question

What are the challenges that HR professionals face in onboarding Generation Z into the federal workforce?

Theme 1: Substandard Organizational Assimilation and Preparedness

Theme 1 reflected the substandard organizational assimilation and preparedness as a challenge to onboard new employees into the federal government. Participants identified challenges to the onboarding process such as the need to complete copious paperwork (Froedge et al, 2018; Leong, 2018; Stewart et al., 2017). Researchers have confirmed that the traditional methods of onboarding consist of filling out large amounts of paperwork, which downplays employees' identities, and is considered tedious by HR professionals (Cable et al., 2013; Fransceski, 2017; Harder et al., 2016; Leong, 2018).

The responses from the participants confirmed that the challenges identified by scholars related to onboarding new employees extended beyond completing paperwork. New employees needed a level of engagement to be indoctrinated into the organization and its culture (Blankenship & Hart, 2016; Froedge et al, 2018). The federal government viewed onboarding as necessary compliance to complete all legally required documents. Newly hired employees view the legal requirement of onboarding as dull and daunting, which causes employees to disengage within their first year of employment (Ford, 2017; Harder et al., 2016; Moon, 2018).

The second implication of Theme 1 was that the outdated onboarding process lacked clear information by HR professionals leaving employees overwhelmed and frustrated, and causing 25% of newly hired employees to quit or change their minds

about their employer within their first 6 months (Franceski, 2017; Ford, 2017; Harder et al., 2016; Schroth, 2016). Participants also reported the quality of onboarding should mirror the same for level of engagement from the business unit once the employee arrives for their first day of work. Management needs to provide clear guidance and an understanding of how individuals fit into the organization (Green et al., 2016; Franceski, 2017). Researchers also have found that 88% of newly hired employees stated that onboarding did not provide them with enough information about their jobs and ways to advance in their careers (Hofler & Thomas, 2016). Participants confirmed the need to share viable information related to career growth, pay for performance, and training opportunities for new employees.

The third implication of Theme 1 agreed with researchers stating the need for a strategic approach to onboarding that would extend the assimilation period for the employees' first 12 to 18 months and would include coaching and mentoring (see Farrell, 2017; Keisling & Laning, 2016; Kremer, 2018). Several participants confirmed these findings by emphasizing that being organizationally prepared for the arrival of new hires would lead to an increase in employee engagement and retention rates. Participants further elaborated that onboarding was a lengthy process that included fingerprinting, drug testing, and clearance processes, protocols that resulted in newly hired employees becoming frustrated and disengaged.

Theme 2: Budgetary Constraints to Workforce Planning

The concept of the human capital framework presented the Strategic Planning and Alignment open system, whereas human capital programs are measured and aligned to

the organization's mission, goals, and objectives (OPM, 2019b). Under this model, senior

leaders direct the managers to integrate strategic plans for budgetary, finance, and

acquisition plans to close the gap in workforce planning and job creation (OPM, 2019b).

The findings of the current study confirmed that OPM's (2019b) open system of strategic

planning and alignment is pivotal to onboarding a new generational cohort and that

budgetary constraints can result in limited options to hire and retain employees. Analysis

of the data resulted in a 92% agreement (i.e., 11 of 12 participants) that a lack of funding

for HR-sponsored programs such as onboarding, training and development, and

workforce planning were insufficient and contributed to the challenges faced by HR

professionals.

Significant challenges identified by the participants were the lack of budgetary

funds to HR to onboard Generation Z and ways that the practice of onboarding did not

measure up to Generation Z's expectations (Ascencio & Mujkic, 2016; Thunnissen,

2016; Tsai, 2017). Theme 2 reflected how valuable funding is required for a business unit

to motivate and engage workforce initiatives to retain, inspire, and reward employees.

Researchers have espoused the need for funding for HR professionals to develop policies,

procedures, and practices that align with the organizational mission and values while

streamlining processes (Kick et al., 2015; SHRM, 2017). Federal funding has been

lacking as federal workers have had to deal with frozen pay structures, high turnover, and

the mentality of senior officials that employees need to do more with less (Abel-Lanier,

2016; GAO, 2016).

The results also supported previous findings that Baby Boomers are living longer, and delaying retirement, meaning that five generations are working simultaneously in the workplace (Keisling & Laning, 2016; Moon, 2018; Lanier, 2017; SHRM, 2017). There was consensus among the participants that more research is required to understand the characteristics, needs, attributes, and workstyles of Generation Z (Bencsik, Juhasz, & Machova, 2016; Froedge et al., 2018; GAO 2015b). With federal budget cuts on the rise, government agencies lack the funding for training and development and have become complacent, with little to no effort in closing gaps in critical skills (GAO, 2015b; OPM, 2015a). Past research has highlighted that high turnover rates can lead to a loss of knowledge management as well as a lack of succession planning and career planning and placement for employees to remain long term (Cable et al., 2013; Froedge et al., 2018). Several participants emphasized that Generation Z employees want meaningful work and sustainable professional growth once onboard.

This study also elaborated on the ways that workforce planning and emotional connections have to be made with Generation Z employees. For example, effective onboarding strategies help new employees have positive experiences that may result in increased engagement and organizational commitment (Bencsik, Juhasz, & Machova, 2016; Hofler & Thomas, 2016). The participants in the current study identified the need for HR to fully understand onboarding and its connection to organizational success by knowledge sharing and changing the culture to achieve a competitive advantage. The participants also confirmed the notion of streamlining processes and the use of metrics to build sustainable strategies to remove the manual onboarding process and properly

allocate resources (Farrell, 2017; Jung & Lee, 2016; Keisling & Laning, 2016; Kremer, 2018; OPM, 2018).

Theme 3: Lack of Technical Infrastructure

A significant challenge for the agency to onboarding employees is not knowing how to use technology and not having access to technology to conduct a virtual onboarding process. All the participants agreed that a lack of technical infrastructure was a significant concern as HR professionals were virtually onboarding a new generational cohort into the federal government workforce. The participants also agreed that documents needed to be signed in-person to comply with federal regulations. Participants requested to use technology to more easily sign documents electronically. The participants noted that a sporadic or unavailable Internet connection was a significant issue as Generation Z onboarded because they had never experienced a time without technology. Similarly, Blackman et al. (2017) and Puiu (2017) both found that a technical infrastructure was required to attract Generation Z, who expect technology to be a major part of their daily lives.

Theme 3 supported the fact that that many colleges and universities have been using digital platforms such as YouTube, Zoom, TED Talks, Google, DocuSign, and WebEx as innovative strategies to enhance classroom training and experiences (Aryee et al., 2016; Blackman et al., 2017). The use of technology has posed a problem for federal agencies, which have a limited infrastructure to download and access technology that has not been approved or supported by the IT office. Many federal agencies must justify wanting access to unauthorized systems, and the result has been bureaucratic barriers to

the efficiency and effectiveness of resources readily available to HR professionals

(Moon, 2017; Scherger et al., 2016).

Theme 3 also highlighted the struggle that many members of older generations

face when using technology to virtually onboard employees. Baby Boomers represent the

majority of individuals in leadership positions who continue to struggle to understand the

use of social media and accessibility of digital platforms in the workplace (Dodaro, 2015;

Green et al., 2016; Work Institute, 2017). The ubiquity of COVID-19 has increased the

digital footprint of online platform usage because many federal agencies rushed to find

ways to virtually onboard new employees. This rush has led to system failures and has

caused slow connectivity issues resulting from the overcrowding use of the federal

government's technical infrastructure. One participant recalled scheduling virtual

meetings after hours with new hires to discuss issues related to pay and benefits. COVID-

19 created a new normal, with many organizations forced to use digital technology to

maintain business practices.

Theme 4: Perception of the Federal Government as Employer of Choice

The response from 92% of the participants was that the values and beliefs

espoused by Generation Z had an impact on their perception of the federal government as

a potential employer. This theme was consistent with the literature discussed in Chapter 2

asserting that the negative perception of Generation Z toward the federal government was

impeded efforts to onboard this cohort. Although the federal government employs

individuals worldwide and has more than 2 million employees (OPM, 2015b), the

government lags behind the private industry in attracting Generation Z to its workforce

(Lim et al., 2017; SHRM, 2017). OPM (2015b) confirmed that 7.1% of the federal labor force was under the age of 30 and that by 2024, Millennials, who would constitute 45% of the labor force, would have no interest in joining the federal workforce. This external problem has led the agency to collaborate with colleges and universities, trade schools, and associations to dispel their negative perceptions about federal workers, with only 5.7% of recent graduates considering the federal government an ideal employer (Lim et al., 2017). During the economic downturn of 2008, the oldest members of Generation Z were in elementary school. They saw the impact on their parents, which influenced their views about money and the federal government (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Hoole & Bonnema, 2015).

Researchers have asserted that when making small changes, bureaucratic controls and hierarchy have created high levels of disengagement among the labor force (Green et al., 2016; Hoole & Bonnema, 2015). Researchers have identified the need for HR professionals to understand Generation Z's perception of workplace values and beliefs in order to create sustainable job placements and career aspirations (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Iorgulescu, 2016). The common understanding among the participants in the current study was that negative reports in the media of not being able to compete with the private sector, the lack of promotional opportunities, and the old regime believing that young employees needed to "pay their dues" before being promoted had impacted the ability of the federal government to recruit and retain a new generational cohort.

The researcher's interpretation of the findings indicated that federal agencies must improve areas organizational transformation, reduce budgetary constraints, expand their technological infrastructures, and eliminate the negative perceptions of the federal government as the employer of choice. Onboarding is the first impression that new employees have of organizations, so HR must modify their substandard processes to enhance employee engagement. Preparation, which is key to the onboarding process, must long before new employees assume their jobs. Creating a streamlined approach to strategic workforce planning and alignment will help HR personnel to determine the skills necessary for available positions so that they can recruit and onboard a robust federal workforce that has a long-term commitment to the employer that builds a healthily employee-employer relationship and encourages career development.

Advancements in technology have been considered the impetus for federal agencies to consider cultivating innovation (Green et al., 2016; Hoole & Bonnema, 2015; Lim et al., 2017). The purchase of digital platforms has been necessary as more workers have been required to work from home. In addition, the adoption of more policies regarding teleworking and flexible workforce strategies such as staggering work hours may be more appealing to Generation Z employees who have selected to join the federal workforce.

Limitations of the Study

The scope of this single-case study was an exploration of the challenges encountered by HR professionals onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture of the federal government to enhance job creation and increase retention rates. One

limitation of this single-case study was the sample size. Case studies typically focus on individuals or phenomena as the cases (Yin, 2017). The results of this study were based on the data obtained from 12 employees within one federal agency in Washington, DC. Because of the nature of HR, I used embedded units of analysis to ensure data saturation. The intent of using embedded units was to achieve a common understanding across the agency about ways to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase retention rates. The number of participants was adequate to obtain sufficient data to gain a common understanding across one federal agency and compute the results in Chapter 4.

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 lead to another limitation: The participants were restricted to working from home with family members present. As a result, the participants' availability was compromised and conflicted with other important priorities such as caring for family members or completing work assignments. In addition, the agency used a number of federal contractors who supported onboarding efforts but were not eligible to participate in the study. Excluding the federal contractors may have limited the generalizability of the findings. The use of purposeful inclusion criteria was mitigated as a limitation to the study. The study required participants to validate their years of experience and participant's knowledge of the phenomenon. The participants confirmed their ages, years of experience in the federal government and HR, and knowledge of the topic of onboarding Generation Z.

The participants' responses to the interview questions indicated that the agency partnered with several consulting firms and other associations to hire talent. Expanding

the participant pool to other organizations that help to attract and onboard employees might serve valuable to my research as these organizations may have provided additional challenges that hinder in onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture. The dependability of the results of the study were limited to the participants' willingness to recall the experiences with onboarding as well as their knowledge of Generation Z. To ensure that the participants were willing to share explicit details, I reassured them of the anonymity of the interviews and used objective interview questions.

The timing of the data collection protocol was a limitation because as the world addressed a global pandemic, many HR professionals had to use digital platforms to communicate with and onboard new employees. This fact limited the amount of time that the participants could address real-life concerns and implement strategies to address immediate implementation of a virtual onboarding workplace initiative. Although data saturation was reached after eight interviews, four more participants were interviewed to ensure that no new information would be discovered. Some participants also were not available to participate because they were dealing with COVID-19-related health issues. If a global pandemic had not been a factor, more participants might have been available to provide different perspectives of the challenges faced by HR professionals to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture.

Recommendations

Future qualitative and quantitative researchers might consider the following recommendations about onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase retention rates. For this study, I exhausted every

resource and opportunity available to obtain a common understanding within one particular federal agency as a single-case study with embedded units. The results were based on data collected from 12 semistructured interview questions and a review of agency documentation. The 12 participants offered various ideas, concepts, and recommendations to enhance their level of engagement for onboarding a new generational cohort. The following recommendations are based on the emergent themes that reflected the participants' perspectives, the literature review, and the conceptual framework.

Recommendation 1: Build a Robust Ready Workforce

The first recommendation is for the agency to address the need to develop its current and future workforce for success and actively reducing barriers within the organization. As the federal government collectively addresses recruiting and retaining talent, consider the policies and procedures that limit the organization to function in the 21st century. The agency needs to streamline processes and create a robust, ready workforce development program. My data were obtained from 12 participants from one federal agency in Washington, DC. Researchers might consider reproducing this single-case study in other regions in the United States across multiple federal agencies. HR professionals' experiences in other federal agencies could result in different perceptions of the challenges of onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture. Generation Z's formative years shaped their characteristics as future employees, resulting in the need for further research into HR professionals' preparedness for their arrival into the workforce and HR's ability to manage Generation Z's expectations at the onset of

employment (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Iorgulescu, 2016; Lanier, 2017). This recommendation was supported by the participants' comments about specific instances that they experienced as they onboarded a new generational cohort into the organizational culture. The development of a robust, ready workforce program is beneficial not just to new employees but also to all employees to reach their highest potential.

As this study shares information related to Generation Z, the notion of generational studies is vital for future research exploring generational differences and their impact on the organizational culture. It is essential to understand how generations form and understanding generational differences can lead to better recruitment, retention, and employee engagement, while utilizing different types of virtual platforms (Colbert et al., 2018; Puiu, 2017). As the members of Generation Z join the workforce, these individuals will serve as the primary influencers of their knowledge of technology at the same time these individuals enter another lifecycle, which may alter a multigenerational work environment (Puiu, 2017; Strauss & Howe, 1991a). Applying real-life experiences of Generation Z and using Strauss and Howe archetypes provide a theoretical understanding of how individuals of different generations experience similar significant life events shape their views of the world (Baker Rosa & Hastings, 2016; Coetzee et al., 2017). The older members of Generation Z are entering adulthood, and it is critical to understand how historical event such as COVID-19 will shape their mindset, values, attitudes, and beliefs as young adults. Also, the changes that a global pandemic will have on an already outdated government system. There is a need for HR professionals and federal agencies to be prepared for the arrival of Generation Z.

Recommendation 2: Develop an Agile Workforce

The second recommendation is to consider ways to develop an agile workforce. One way would be to incorporate strategies, policies, and best practices into the onboarding process. According to the results, all 12 participants explained that the approach to communicating with five generations in the workplace is needed to open the discussion of generational differences, provide ongoing support, and eliminate conflict. The training of new employees could include aspects of this study to access, train, and track individuals. Also, benchmark data used from other research to construct individuals need to stay engaged in their roles within the organization and maximize their performance. Generation Z is the most highly educated and self-taught generation to enter the workforce. E-learning is essential to members of this generation because they are quick to research and retrieve data from the Internet. Federal agencies need to develop information about traditional careers in the government and find ways to offer promotional opportunities via training and development, coaching, and mentoring to mitigate conflict and address communication challenges across generations.

Another aspect to consider is reserve mentoring. One of Generation Z's primary leadership styles is teaching others what they have learned (Puiu, 2017). Generation Z's ability to teach and train others allows Generation Z to share insight into ways to improve processes and procedures that would expand a level of employee engagement to increase retention.

Recommendation 3: Cultivate Innovation

The third recommendation is for the agency leadership to reduce technological barriers and expand the technological footprint through collaborative partnerships with companies such as Zoom, Any Meeting, WebEx, and YouTube. The ability to use technology to conduct onboarding would be a way to enhance digital transformation and a federal presence through technology. This recommendation was supported by Theme 3, as Scherger et al. (2016) noted artificial intelligence and chatbots create more interactive ways to address concerns and prepare employees for their first day. Also, creating cloud-based environments to access data would improve the quality of the data and modernize IT to advance evidence-based human capital management, resulting in fewer errors in processing new employees (Aryee et al., 2016). For federal agencies to have a more robust and more in-depth understanding of Generation Z, they must understand that technology is part of Generation Z's identity (Blackman et al., 2017; Goldenoff, 2017). Technology is a vital tool that many marketers and researchers use, such as social media platforms as Uber Eats and Grub hub, to reach Generation Z.

While dealing with COVID-19 and issuing stay-at-home orders, many federal agencies have purchased online media software such as Zoom, Any Meeting, and WebEx to conduct virtual onboarding. The use of these technologies could enhance training, development, and communication throughout the organizations. This opportunity also could allow agencies to leverage technological advances. For example, the onboarding of new employees during COVID-19 has led HR professionals to use DocuSign to sign required documents electronically, link them to employees' official personnel files, and

return them to HR electronically within minutes. The use of automated software

programs would eliminate copious amounts of paper documents and create cloud-based

technology to enhance accessibility by employees, managers, and HR.

Recommendation 4: Restore Trust

Future researchers should consider exploring efforts to change the perception of

the federal government and that of federal workers. The federal government is regarded

as a highly diverse employer with employees serving as subject-matter experts. The

District of Columbia is the primary location for many federal agencies in the Washington

Metropolitan area. Federal agencies must highlight those Generation Z employees and

their unique experiences by making them ambassadors to tell their story to restore trust.

FEVS can identify areas of improvement and leverage data analytics to make changes

and modernize the federal workforce through reinforced communication regarding new

policies, procedures, workforce initiatives, and best practices across government agencies

(Kim & Fernandez, 2017). Another recommendation for restoring trust is to analyze data

from exit surveys to access the overall experience of employees leaving and make

modifications where needed in the areas of engagement and retention.

Future Research

Future research should be conducted to examine Theme 1, further using a

quantitative correlational study to test organizational preparedness in the federal

government. Such research could determine if relationships exist between the federal

government's ability to streamline the onboarding process effectively to bring Generation

Z into the organizational culture. Quantitative researchers could collect large amounts of

numerical data for statistical analysis to determine if onboarding meets the new generational cohort's expectations. The research study may help HR leaders in the federal government to examine how to streamline the onboarding process and meet the demands of Generation Z employees. The ability to measure onboarding can be used by increasing the role of technology in shaping employee experiences. Statistical data may provide a greater understanding and show a more significant impact as to what Generation Z employees desire to receive from HR during the onboarding process and how well the HR professionals are doing to meet those needs.

Researchers might consider conducting ethnographic studies to observe Generation Z employees' use of technology. Such studies could involve analyzing observations of Generation Z employees' behaviors in natural environments to align better workforce planning, technology, perceptions, and other factors. Finally, a mixed-methods approach could be taken further to examine workforce planning among five generations in the workplace. Researchers could attempt to explore the phenomenon of generational differences in the workplace resulting from five generations working side by side to develop a comprehensive understanding of ways to manage multiple generations in the workplace.

Implications

The results of the current study have important implications for improving the onboarding process as members of Generation Z enter the workplace. The impact of position social change related to Theme 1 is that organizational assimilations and preparedness have the potential to influence workforce relations. Research showed that

36% of federal agencies do not have a structured onboarding process in place and lacked

being prepared for new employees the first day on the job. Of the 12 study participants,

100% agreed that onboarding practices are highly underutilized, leaving new employees

asking more questions and feeling disconnected to the organization, which increases

turnover. If additional funding were available to HR personnel, the federal agency would

be able to provide a quality onboarding process that would include technological

advances that would appeal to Generation Z's need for training and development. Also,

HR professionals would have the opportunity to develop innovative strategies to enhance

how employees adapt to a new culture and form relationships that align with the

organization's expectations.

Another implication relevant to social change and organizational preparedness is

that with more funding, federal agencies would be better prepared to provide technology

for new employees before they arrive, such as laptops, computers, and cellular phones.

Federal agencies need to leverage technological advances to establish better processes

and improvements for HR, not just business units with core occupations. The use of

technology with interactive learning can create innovative learning opportunities for

employees to grow and develop. Also, allowing engagement to occur before their first

day on the job requires constant communication with new employees regarding vital

information to know regarding their first day. From the point of a job offer to the first day

should be a seamless transition and assimilation into the organization's culture with ease.

Another element of engagement is to highlight Generation Z in various workforce

initiatives across the organization and serve on federal government taskforce across other

federal agencies. Another strategy includes allowing for flexible work hours to reduce the overcrowding of technical infrastructure. The plan would reduce the congestion of systems and the HR professional to employee ratio. Building a robust workforce means creating positive social change through increased engagement by creating a pipeline of talent with various career growth opportunities with an increase in a virtual presence for sustainable workforce growth.

Implications specific to technical infrastructure and positive social change are discussed in Theme 3. Technology has profoundly impacted business processes that require organizations to have the proper technological foundation to reach employees and customers and create positive social change in an information age. A catalyst for change, technology has a way of creating or enhancing existing business processes, culture, or customers in a demanding global market. Outdated technology such as old computers that did not mesh with new software such as Microsoft 365 and DocuSign cause problems during a digital transformation. Federal agencies must improve the quality of onboarding through a digital footprint such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and chatbots. It would be ideal and serve to be more productive and efficient. The agency has to use digital platforms such as Uber Eats and Ride Share to market to Generation Z.

The federal government seeks a new generational cohort of employees by addressing the challenge of winning public opinion as an employer is an implication of positive social change. Job creation stimulates economic growth, which leads to higher living standards and financial stability among citizens. Job creation allows employees to reinvest back into the organization through promotions and career development and boost

job quality and quantity through the use of reskilling and upskilling. The ability to enhance job creation increase elements of meaningful work and an employee's ability to give back to society.

Another implication for positive social change is the opportunity for diversity and inclusion in the workplace, mainly because five generations are working side by side. Also, Generation Z is more racially and culturally diverse than previous generations. Learning about and experiencing generational differences in the workforce may result in less conflict and miscommunication. Engaging in discussions about generational differences may help organizations to develop reverse mentoring programs for Generation Z to share their technical skills with employees who have less familiarity with technology. Many HR professionals referenced coaching, mentoring, and training employees to enhance Generation Z's career potential by upskilling and reskilling. The term upskilling refers to teaching an employee a new skill to be successful in their current job. Reskilling is when an employee learns a new skill to be successful in a different position. The initiative of upskilling and reskilling employees allows HR to prepare for challenges they will face long term.

HR professionals are a catalyst for social change. The practice of HR is caring for its employees. HR can bridge the gap in workplace initiatives to allow the organization to promote and collaborate on enhancing job creation, improving employee engagement through career development, and increasing retention rates within the federal workforce. HR professionals must require the federal agencies to invest in employees from all generations in the workforce so that change can occur, and the agency achieves a

competitive advantage. HR professionals face the challenge of onboarding Generation Z as cognitive skills, social skills, and technological skills become more valuable in the future. Thus, understanding the skills employees have and the skills needed to move the organization forward will require strategic and critical thinking.

The findings contribute to the generational cohort theory by understanding how historical events shaped the formative years of a new generational cohort joining the workforce. The conceptual framework focused on Strategic Alignment and Planning as HR professionals onboard Generation Z into a multigenerational workforce. The initiative helps retention and enhance job creation by ensuring employees can maximize growth potential at the highest level. Agency leadership must understand the need to improve the onboarding process as the first step to the employee-employer relationship by increasing their level of preparedness for desired results of enhanced job creation and increased retention rates. HR professionals must work with business units across the agency to prepare for the arrival of Generation Z employees by incorporating strategies of career mapping, coaching, and mentoring.

Conclusions

Organizations are seeking innovative ways to recruit and retain a new generational cohort in the workforce. To ensure organizational growth, HR personnel must become aware of the challenges that interfere with career growth and advancement. As mentioned previously, HR personnel have the primary responsibility of attracting and maintaining employees. To achieve this goal, HR must develop partnerships and promote teamwork across the agency. The challenges hindering HR professionals from

onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture are substandard organizational assimilation and preparedness, budgetary constraints to workforce planning, a lack of technical infrastructure, and the negative perception of the federal government as the employer of choice.

All 12 participants in this qualitative single-case study played a significant role in exploring the challenges facing HR professionals in onboarding a new generational cohort into the organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase retention rates. The participants provided in-depth insight into the experiences with onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture. The practice of onboarding Generation Z into the federal government led to the emergence of themes in response to the RQ. The findings called for improved strategic planning efforts as a means of preparing for the arrival of Generation Z into the federal government to enhance job creation and increase retention rates. The research highlighted onboarding Generation Z as the process of assimilating and integrating new employees into the organizational culture while providing career mapping, mentoring, and coaching to maximize employee talent.

The study results confirmed the need to generate more strategies to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture of a particular federal agency. Future researchers may wish to investigate the challenges that HR professionals face in onboarding Generation Z in the federal workforce to increase social change. The findings have potential implications for additional research and positive social change for onboarding Generation Z. The study offered implications for future research that may seek knowledge of Generation Z's experiences and the use of onboarding metrics that

could conclude areas for HR to establish policies, strategies, and best practices in the federal government. Also, researching the enhanced availability of resources to meet the demands and changing priorities of future generations requires employees with top talent to be agile and cultivate innovation in the federal government workforce. Prospective researchers are encouraged to promote alternative views by replicating the findings of this study using qualitative and quantitative methods to validate these findings from similar or different contexts, enhance the generalization of the results, and allow for greater objectivity and accuracy. The opportunity to extend the findings of this study by future research can also foster pathways for theory, innovation, and policymaking in onboarding Generation Z into the federal organizational culture.

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Appendix A: Letter of Introduction

Good day,

I am a doctoral student at Walden University, inviting your voluntary participation in my research on exploring the challenges of human resource professionals onboarding Generation Z in the federal government. Generation Z consists of individuals born between 1995 to 2015.

The purpose of the study is to explore and understand the challenges encountered by human resource professionals in the federal government as to how to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture to enhance job creation and increase retention.

Participant's eligibility for this study includes the following criteria:

(a) have at least five years of service as a federal civilian employee

(b) have experience working in the human resources office

(c) served as an onboarding subject matter expert or consultant at the time of the study.

I am positive that your experience grounded in the study phenomenon would contribute significantly to the study. Hence, I am extending this invitation to receive your interest in participating in the research. Please know the interview may take up to 60-minutes and will be audio recorded. Your identity will be masked to safeguard you from any potential harm. All data collected will be confidential.

The importance of this study to the field of management may facilitate human resource professionals in understanding generational differences and knowledge sharing

tools among five generations in the workplace to support a collaborative workplace for a multigenerational workforce. The knowledge gained from this research may aid human resource professionals to share forward-thinking strategies and adjust their approach to workplace practices, thereby filling the gap in the literature and contributing to the body of knowledge on Generation Z. The study may offer a positive social change in leveraging generational differences and developing policies and practices that create a harmonious work environment to enhance job creation and increase retention rates.

If you would be interested in participating in this study, kindly read the attached Informed Consent Form and reply to this email with the words, "I consent." Should you require additional information or have questions regarding this study or your intended interest, you may reply to this email, and I will contact you within 24 hours.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Flora Lawson Murphy

Flora Lawson Murphy
Ph.D. Candidate-Walden University

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

Research Study Call for Participants: Challenges of Human Resource Professionals Onboarding Generation Z in the Federal Government

As a Walden University student, I am conducting this study as my dissertation. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the challenges encountered by human resource professionals as to how to onboard Generation Z into the organizational culture and enhance job creation and increase retention.

Generations – how are we different...

Mature   Boomer   Gen X   Gen Y   Gen Z
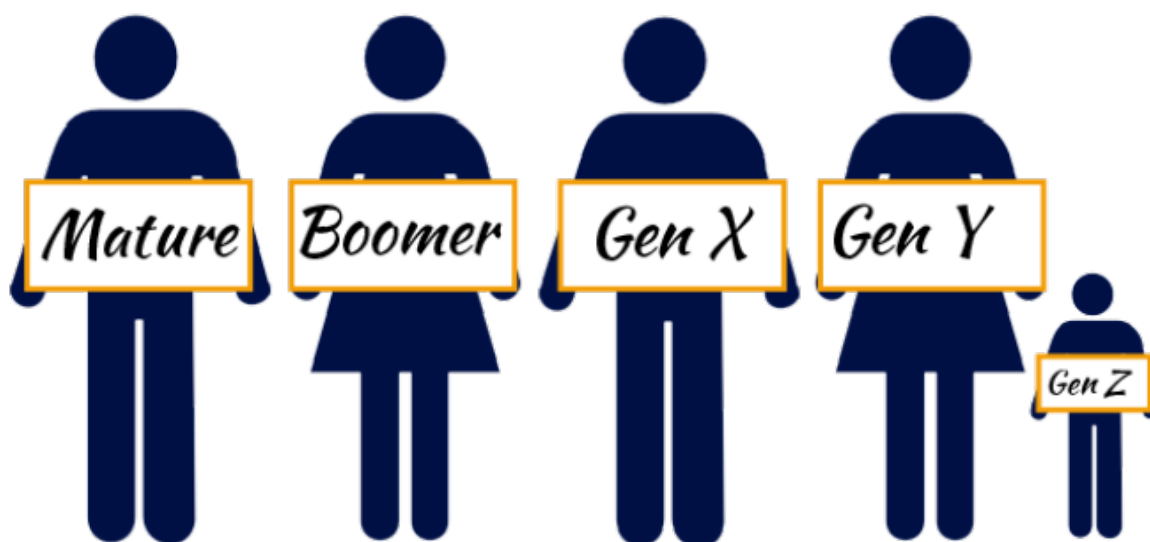
This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA-NC

To participate in this research, you must meet the (3) eligibility requirements:
- have at least five years of service as a federal civilian employee
- have experience working in the human resources office
- served as an onboarding subject matter expert or consultant at the time of the study

Participation in this study involves the following:
- A time commitment of 60 minutes for a personal audio recorded interview.
- Have knowledge of onboarding and Generation Z.
- You will receive a $5.00 Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts gift card for your participation in the study.

For More Information Please Contact:

Flora Murphy at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ **or** ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Appendix C: Demographic Protocol Questionnaire

Participant Code: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Start Time: _____

Finish Time: _____

Total Time: _____

Gender: _____

Age: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Years Working in the Federal Government: _____

Years Working in Human Resource Office: _____

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Hello,

Thank you for agreeing to be part of my study. This interview will take about 60 minutes.

I will be asking you questions related to exploring the challenges encountered by human

resource professionals onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture. The

purpose of the study is to explore and understand the challenges encountered by human

resource professionals in the federal government as to how to onboard Generation Z to

enhance job creation and increase retention. Do I have your permission to audio record

the interview for me to get an inclusive record of your responses? The interview will

involve taking notes as you respond to the questions. Are there any questions or

clarifications you would like me to make before we begin? Please know that you may

feel free to stop the interview at any time based on the informed consent agreement you

signed. Are you ready to begin?

Interview questions:

1. What is your definition of onboarding?

2. What are your experience with onboarding employees into the organizational
   culture?

3. How is the onboarding process different with Generation Z than employees of
   other generations?

4. What impression do you want Generation Z employees to walk away with at the
   end of their first day?

5. What are your perceptions as to the potential benefits of onboarding Generation Z into the organizational culture?

6. What are your perceptions as to the potential risk of not properly onboarding Generation Z employees?

7. What are your perceptions as to the challenges HR professionals face with onboarding Generation Z?

8. What are your perceptions as to where these obstacles arise from?

9. How do you measure the impact of effective onboarding practices of Generation Z?

10. What are your perceptions as to what the onboarding strategies for engaging Generation Z in the federal government should be?

11. What are your perceptions as to how these onboarding strategies for engaging Generation Z in the federal government can be implemented?

12. What are your perceptions as to why these onboarding strategies for engaging Generation Z in the federal government should be used?

Again, thank you for your participation in the study. After the transcription of this interview is complete, I will email you a copy of the transcription along with a copy of the audio recording for your review. If there are any edits or clarifications to the transcriptions, within 72 hours of receiving, please reply to my e-mail with comments in the document. If I do not receive any edits back within 72 hours after receipt, I will consider our interview complete.

Thank you again for your time and comments during the interview. Should you need to contact me, here is my contact information: by phone ████████, e-mail ███████████████. In support of participating in the study, you receive a $5.00 gift card to Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts. Which do you prefer? After gift card selection is made, again thank you for participating in the study and this concludes our interview session.

Appendix E: Copyright Approval – Joey deVilla

Joey deVilla < ███████████████ >

Sat 11/2/2019 9:49 AM

Hello again!

I've only ever published the Strauss-Howe graphic on my blog, so the caption you came

up with is perfect.

— Joey

_____

Joey deVilla • ███████████████

███████████

Editor at Global Nerdy, Organizer of Coders, Creatives, and Craft Beer and Tampa iOS

Meetup,

Author/Editor/Video tutor at ███████████████ and Tampa technology evangelist.

Social Media: ███████████████

Flora Murphy

Mon 10/28/2019 2:05 PM

Hello Sir,

Thank you so much! I am happy to credit you for the artwork. My apologies for all the

questions but Walden University is very particular when it comes to copyright materials.

Based on this graphic, how should I credit you for the artwork? Walden University

requires the title, book, volume, exact page number, ISBN/ISSN number, magazine, or

website where the artwork was originally published. Or was the graphic published online only? If the graphic is published online, I will reference DeVilla, J. (2013). *Strauss-Howe Archetypes and Generations*. Retrieved online with the link below.

Revised caption of the artwork:

Figure 1. Artwork created by Joey DeVilla (2013) based upon Strauss-Howe Archetypes and Generations

Please feel free to correct the reference or caption to ensure proper credit/citation.

Thank you! Thank you!

Flora

From: Joey deVilla <█████████████████>

Sent: Monday, October 28, 2019 1:36 PM

To: Flora Murphy

Subject: Re: Fw: Copyright Permission

Hello there!

I made the graphic in question based on Howe's and Strauss' generational categories, and I'm more than happy to grant you permission to use it in any of your academic work. If possible, just credit me with the artwork

— Joey

_____

Joey deVilla • ████████████████

████████████

Editor at <u>Global Nerdy</u>, Organizer of <u>Coders, Creatives, and Craft Beer</u> and <u>Tampa iOS</u>

<u>Meetup</u>,

Author/Editor/Video tutor at ████████████████, and Tampa technology evangelist.

Social Media: ████████████████████

On Mon, Oct 28, 2019 at 1:18 PM Flora Murphy wrote:

Hello Mr. Devilla,

I am writing because I am not certain if the graphic on generational archetypes and

generations belongs to you or Neil Howe. Please see the email below requesting

permission to use the graphic in my dissertation with Walden University.

Any assistance you could provide would be most appreciative.

Thank you and I look forward to your feedback.

Regards,

Flora Lawson Murphy

Appendix F: Copyright Approval – Pew Research Center

Pew Research Center < ███████████████ >

Wed 9/4/2019 11:53 AM

Hi Flora,

 Thanks for reaching out. You do not need express permission to re-print our graphics, so feel free to use with proper attribution to Pew Research Center. You can review our use policy here: www.pewresearch.org/usepolicy.

 Best,

 Vicky Semaski

Pew Research Center

Appendix G: Copyright Approval – Society for Human Resource Management

Permissions < ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ >
Wed 1/29/2020 6:36 PM
Good day:

Thank you very much for your inquiry.

Much depends on the amount of content you wish to use. For example, you would not need SHRM's permission to quote one or two sentences or cite a statistic that appears in an article. However, SHRM's permission is required if you want to quote/cite repeatedly from the same work to such an extent that significant portions of that item appears in your dissertation or if you want to reproduce any charts, tables, images, graphics, etc.

Also, please note that SHRM sometimes republishes articles from other sources so you would need to contact that article's copyright holder(s) regarding permission.

Does this help? Please feel free to contact me again with additional questions or if you would like to discuss the matter in greater detail and thanks again for your question.

Kind regards,
Montrese Hamilton

Montrese Hamilton, MSLS | Senior Specialist, Publications & Archives
Society for Human Resource Management
1800 Duke Street | Alexandria, VA 22314 USA
▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ | ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

SHRM, the Society for Human Resource Management, creates better workplaces where employers and employees thrive together. As the voice of all things work, workers and the workplace, SHRM is the foremost expert, convener and thought leader on issues impacting today's evolving workplaces. With 300,000+ HR and business executive members in 165 countries, SHRM impacts the lives of more than 115 million workers and families globally. Learn more at SHRM.org and on Twitter @SHRM.
From: Flora Murphy < ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ >
Sent: Tuesday, January 28, 2020 2:41 PM
To: Permissions < ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ >
Subject: Question

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a doctoral student and a SHRM member. I am requesting permission to use several SHRM articles in my dissertation on Exploring Challenges of Human Resource Professionals Onboarding Generation Z in the Federal Government. Do I need copyright

permission to use each article or are the articles considered fair use for educational purposes?

Thank you for the clarification and approval in advance.

Regards,
Flora Lawson Murphy
SHRM Membership # █████████████████████

Appendix H: Word Frequency Cloud