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Intergenerational Communication Strategies for Generation X Supervisors

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Intergenerational Communication Strategies for Generation X Supervisors

by

La Toya Amese Johnson

MBA, Northcentral University, 2009

BBA, Grand Canyon University, 1999

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2019

Abstract

Millennials, who by 2024 will make up approximately 34% of the U.S. workforce, will play a critical role in organizational strategies and productivity, as will the supervisors who manage them. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the intergenerational communication strategies that Generation X supervisors used to motivate and engage high performing millennials in the workplace. The framework for this study was Mannheim's generation theory and the 2-factor theory of motivation by Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman. Data were collected from parks and recreation employees in the southeastern region of the United States, including 4 Generation X supervisors who completed semistructured interviews and 2 millennial cohort focus groups. Data were transcribed, coded, and validated through member checking and methodological triangulation. The 4 themes identified were culture and socialization, relationship building and intergenerational connectedness, employee growth and development, and rewards and recognition. The findings of this research may benefit millennials, frontline supervisors, parks and recreation agencies, and leaders in other organizations by providing an understanding of generational needs. The data presented in this study may support positive social change by showing that supervisors and millennial employees can build high quality relationships within their organizations, enabling those organizations to support the communities they serve.

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Dedication

The important thing in life is not triumph, but the struggle. – Pierre Corneille

I dedicate my doctoral study to all the people who have seen me through my struggles and influenced my steps as I have moved along this journey. Without your guidance and support that fed both my body and my soul, I could not have made it to this point. I specifically want to thank my family: my dad (Charlie), who instilled in me the value of hard work and taking care of family; my mom (Juanita), who encouraged me to not only dream big, but also go out and pursue my dreams, even when times are tough; my brother (De'Mon), who is truly my wonder twin—thank you for your positivity and being my champion; and my sister-in-law (Estefana), for the many times that you took my girls, so that I could have some quiet time to focus on my study. I also want to remember those members of the Greatest Generation who have gone home, like my Granny Frankie, a WWI veteran and UAW retiree. You were tough as nails but always handled your business; thank you for teaching me the value of looking at details and reading the fine print, may you rest in peace. Finally, to my girls (Brooklyn, Amiah, and Ameya); since the day you came in my life, you have been the driving force to make me want to do better and continue be a trailblazer for you. This was all for you; I love you.

Acknowledgments

I thank God for giving me strength, patience, perseverance, and endurance. I am a firm believer in God allowing things to happen at a particular time and place, for a reason. God has placed people along this dissertation journey, whether they know it or not, to be instrumental in helping me attain this doctoral degree. To my committee members, Dr. Edgar Jordan (Chair), Dr. Janet Booker (SCM) and Dr. Patsy Kasen (URR); I especially want to thank you for your commitment to guide me across this finish line. It was a long journey, and I am immensely grateful to each of you for the support you provided. To my prior chairs, Dr. Arthur Johnson and Dr. Patricia Fusch, although we did not finish this journey together, please know that it was your knowledge of process that helped to keep me inspired, informed, and moving forward. Long before a doctoral degree was a thought, there was Dr. Freda Turner, Dr. Carolyn Salerno, and Fred Walker. You each were there with me through my master's program and planted the seed to continue. To my Fountain of Life church family, thank you for the many prayers and well wishes, and for stepping in for me and my family whenever there was a need. To those who first introduced me to public service—the late Bishop Henry L. Barnwell, Janice Pitts, and Laura Kaino—your mentorship, encouragement, endless support, and belief in me did not go unnoticed. Finally, to my local city government professionals in Parks and Recreation: Thank you for your service and the work that you do every day. You rekindled the fire in me and inspired me to be true to myself and change the direction of this study. I am forever blessed for each of the contributions you all have made in my life.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

As generations have evolved in the workplace, past managerial practices have become obsolete, just as current practices will not work in the future (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Demographic changes have heightened the need for greater intergenerational understanding among organizational leaders and frontline supervisors, whose styles of communication can influence the attitudes and behaviors of their employees (Men, 2014). The supervisor–subordinate relationship is critical for employee motivation and engagement, and insufficient supervisory knowledge of generational issues may present numerous communication challenges, which can have a direct impact on organizational productivity (Cummings-White & Diala, 2013; Dixon, Mercado, & Knowles, 2013; Özçelik, 2015). The focus of this study was the intergenerational communication strategies used by Generation X park and recreation professionals that foster employee motivation and engagement, particularly within the millennial cohort.

Background of the Problem

The U.S. workforce is comprised of five generational cohorts, which were described by Berkup (2014) as (a) traditionalists (born before 1945), (b) baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), (c) Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979), (d) Generation Y (born between 1980 and 1999), and (e) Generation Z (born from 2000 to present). Generations Y and Z have been grouped together as the millennial cohort, as described by the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), which has characterized this group as America's largest and most diverse generation of youth when compared to prior generations. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the millennial cohort

encompassed individuals born between 1980 and 1999. To motivate and engage a multigenerational workforce, organizations must be able to manage employees individually and collectively. Supervisors need to understand and effectively communicate with employees from all generational cohorts, who bring varying values, behaviors, styles, motivations, and beliefs into the workplace (Yi, Ribbens, Fu, & Cheng, 2015). Supervisors can either create an environment for employee engagement or cause it to fail (Den Hartog, Boon, Verburg, & Croon, 2013; Gallup, 2013). Employees are on the front lines with constituents daily, and their supervisors must recognize and understand that each has unique abilities, skills, talents, and experiences. Researchers Yogamalar and Samuel (2016) made it evident that managers may or may not be aware of the expectations of their intergenerational workforce. This presents a significant challenge for organizational leaders and frontline supervisors, in that ineffective dealings with employees from different generations may lead to negative and undesirable employee and organizational outcomes (Yi et al., 2015). Therefore, intergenerational communication between employees within organizations (both public and private) must be a major part of a strategic plan.

Problem Statement

Supervisors who lack sufficient generational knowledge to communicate successfully with their employees or peers can cause misunderstandings in the workplace and drive down employee motivation, engagement, and productivity (Cummings-White & Diala, 2013; Özçelik, 2015). Millennials, who will make up approximately 34% of the workforce by 2024 (Toossi, 2015), expect close working

relationships with their supervisors and peers (Jerome, Scales, Whithem, & Quain, 2014). If millennials do not find this, they are likely to disengage from the workplace and find meaning elsewhere. The general business problem was that many public agencies face the growing challenge of adjusting from barrier causing policies and practices to more modern ones that meet the needs of a multigenerational workforce (Cummings-White & Diala, 2013; Mahon & Millar, 2014). The specific business problem was that some Generation X managers lack effective intergenerational communication strategies to motivate and engage high performing millennials in the workplace.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive multiple case study was to explore what intergenerational communication strategies Generation X supervisors used to motivate and engage high performing millennials in the workplace. Four Generation X supervisors participated in the study through one-on-one semistructured interviews. I also conducted two focus groups comprised of millennial cohort members (young professionals, college students, and staff in the parks and recreation field), for secondary source information. This study has implications for positive social change, in that the practices used by these supervisors may be useful to others managing employees across generational groups. Further, this study may provide business leaders across many fields with crucial insight into what supervisors are currently doing to engage and motivate this generation of employees, thereby informing efforts to boost productivity.

Nature of the Study

The selection of a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed method study depends on the research question(s) the study is meant to address. Quantitative research is confirmatory and involves theory verification, with researchers focusing on logic and numbers to determine the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables in a population (Punch, 2013; Rovai, Baker, & Ponton, 2013). Qualitative research is a method that moves beyond quantitative indicators into useful and holistic exploratory research that can involve theory generation using complex interactions of unstructured nonnumerical data (Ponelis, 2015). Mixed methods involve a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches; mixed method research is typically conducted in phases using an explanatory design, where the researcher conducts a follow up qualitative study after a quantitative study or vice versa (Denzin, 2012; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

In this study, I did not conduct statistical tests or test theory to compare data; therefore, I did not select the quantitative or the mixed method approach. Because I sought to develop a thick description of the intergenerational communication strategies that Generation X supervisors used to motivate and engage millennials, qualitative research methodology was the best fit to explore *how*, *what*, and *why* questions to answer the research question in a real world context (Yin, 2014).

After reviewing Yin's (2014) five common research designs and academic literature on generations in the workplace (Gilson, Maynard, Young, Vartiainen, & Hakonen, 2015; Rentz, 2015; Schullery, 2013, Winter & Jackson, 2014), I chose case

study for this inquiry. Grounded theory involves the observation of participant interactions, the use of field notes to collect data on a wide range of behaviors, and the generation of theory (Fram, 2013). Phenomenology emphasizes the participants' lived experiences, perceptions, perspectives, and awareness of a specific phenomenon (Gray, 2013; Stephens & Breheny, 2013). Ethnography calls for engaging social groups in their natural setting to understand members' shared perceptions (Lichterman & Reed, 2015). The narrative design involves the exploration of a participant's personal accounting of an event or experience (Stephens & Breheny, 2013). Case study, which involves an in depth look at the perceptions and experiences of participants in everyday terms pertaining to certain events (Vohra, 2014), was best suited for my study. The theoretical knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation was limited and not yet mature. The study focused on contemporary events, which were not studied outside of a natural setting, which for this study was local or state parks and recreation professionals in the southeastern region of the United States. I did not have the ability to manipulate the subjects (Generation X supervisors and millennial employees) or events in this study.

Case studies may have an exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory design, which allows data to be collected directly from participants through multiple data collection types, such as interviews and focus groups. I determined that a qualitative descriptive multiple case study design would allow me to develop a comprehensive summary of Generation X supervisors' perceptions and experiences. A descriptive multiple case study was best suited to my research exploring which intergenerational communication

strategies Generation X supervisors used to motivate and engage high performing millennials.

<div align="center">**Research Question**</div>

The overarching research question for this study was the following: What intergenerational communication strategies do Generation X supervisors use to motivate and engage high performing millennials in the workplace?

<div align="center">**Interview Questions—Generation X Supervisor Managing Millennials**</div>

1. What type of training and development have you attended to prepare for supervising multiple generations in the workplace?

2. How do you motivate your employees to perform at high levels?

3. How have you resolved conflict using communication strategies when a conflict was due to generational differences through bias?

4. How have you ensured through communicating with and engaging your employees that you are using your employees' greatest talents and everyday strength in their current position?

5. What specific ways do you communicate rewards (financial and nonfinancial) for staff performance?

6. How do you use rewards to communicate with, motivate, and engage millennials?

7. What are some of your communication strategies that you use for success to manage millennials?

8. What negative communication aspects have you encountered managing millennials?

9. What are the differences between your use of communication strategies with older millennials and younger millennials?

10. What are the similarities between your use of communication strategies with older millennials and younger millennials?

11. What communication strategies do you use to prepare millennials to become high performing employees?

12. What information can you provide that has not already been discussed?

Focus Group Questions for Millennials with Generation X Supervisor

1. What type of work relationship do you expect to have (or want) from your immediate supervisor?

2. How has the level of communication and/or interaction between you and your immediate supervisor influenced your motivation to work? Be specific.

3. How are the intergenerational differences between you and your coworkers addressed by your immediate supervisor?

4. What communication strategies has your immediate supervisor used with you to bring out your talents, strengths, or job skills in your position?

5. What specific financial and nonfinancial rewards are available to you for high performance?

6. Are there any other ways that have not already been discussed in which

communication with your Generation X supervisor has affected your

engagement and motivation at work?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the seminal work of Karl

Mannheim's (1952) generation theory. The premise of generation theory is that people

born in the same set of successive years who have shared experiences involving the

same historical events in their youth will share a common generational identity

(Mannheim, 1952). In 1965, Norman Ryder further developed Mannheim's theory,

giving it a demographic generational cohort perspective (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Based

on this perspective, researchers have noted observable historical patterns within

collective groups of people. These groups are influenced and bound together by the

same events, timeframe, attitudes, ideas, values, and beliefs (Bolton et al., 2013; Lyons

& Kuron, 2014).

There has been little consensus among generational researchers as to labels and

birth ranges for each generational cohort (Costanza, Badger, Fraser, & Severt, 2012);

however, the cohorts used for this study are constant with the publications of Berkup

(2014) and the U.S. Census Bureau (2015). The cohorts are defined as follows:

traditionalists born in 1945 and earlier, baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964,

Generation X born between 1965 and 1979 (Berkup, 2014; Mencl & Lester, 2014),

Generation Y born between 1980 and 1999, and Generation Z, born from 2000 to the

present (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Individuals within these generational cohorts are

part of an event (their birth cohort) that has already occurred within an already formed group, so there is no random group assignment.

A secondary theory that informed this study was Frederick Herzberg's (1959) two factor theory of motivation. The two factor theory of motivation was first published in 1959 by researchers Herzberg, Mausner, and Synderman, who identified *motivator factors* (intrinsic rewards) and *hygiene factors* (extrinsic rewards) as contributing to an employee's job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Dhanapal, Alwie, Subramaniam, & Vashu, 2013; Herzberg et al., 1959; Malik & Naeem, 2013; Ncube & Samuel, 2014; Stello, 2011; Yusoff, Kian, & Idris, 2013). Herzberg's team of researchers found that the motivator factors that lead to positive job attitudes are achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement. Hygiene factors, which are associated with the work environment and the completion of work, include supervision, interpersonal relations, physical working conditions, salary, company policy, administration benefits, and job security (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Extending the works of motivational theorists such as Herzberg in his seminal 1990 article on personal engagement, William Kahn created the foundation for current research on the construct of employee engagement (Shuck & Reio, 2014). Kahn theorized that employees who bring their whole selves into their work role performance engage more (Khan, 1990; Saks & Gruman, 2014). Over the last two decades, other researchers have called for a stronger focus on employee engagement within organizations (Schaufeli, 2015; Shuck & Reio, 2014) to provide important insights into the ways in which individuals engage in the workplace (Reissner & Pagan, 2013). For

this study, I used generation theory and the two factor theory of motivation to understand the intergenerational communication strategies that Generation X supervisors use to motivate and engage high performing millennials.

Operational Definitions

Referenced in this study are the following terms:

Active disengagement: Exhibited by negative employees who speak ill about a company or organization. These employees stay with the organization out of convenience but have no real loyalties or plans to remain (Sanborn & Oehler, 2013).

Active engagement: Exhibited by innovative employees who are fully engaged in moving the organization forward, who also have a strong desire to stay with the organization (Sanborn & Oehler, 2013).

Communication strategies: Formal and informal communication plans within an agency and how they operate throughout an organization based on communication behaviors that are more frequent open, and affirming, and trustworthy (Lolli, 2013; Winter & Jackson, 2014).

Generation: A group of people born in the same set of successive years who share a common generational identity due to their shared experiences with the same historical events of their youth (Costanza et al., 2012; Lyons & Kuron, 2014**)**.

Generational cohort: An identifiable group that shares a range of birth years/ages, location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

Intergenerational communication: Occurs when there is chronological distance between interactants in differing generational cohorts who lived through very different historical periods, who may be operating with different communication assumptions, skills, needs, and experiences (Williams & Nussbaum, 2012).

Interpersonal communication skills: A non structured or day-to-day form of oral communication taking place between two or more people, for building relationships and development of mutual influence (Lolli, 2013).

Motivation: A mental desire to attain a goal or specific objective, without force, and the intensity and effort taken by an individual to satisfy that need (Yusoff, Kian, & Idris, 2013).

Passive engagement: Occurs when employees show up at work but are neither fully engaged nor disengaged; they have the potential to shift to either side of engagement depending on the work culture and climate (Sanborn & Oehler, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are factors that are outside of the control of the researcher that may have the potential to influence the study (Simon & Goes, 2013). The first assumption was that the executive leadership of the identified professional organization would be supportive of this research endeavor and be willing to sign a letter of cooperation. The second assumption was that I would be able to find a number of willing participants for this study, for the individual interviews as well as for the focus group. The third assumption was that the participants would completely answer each

interview question honestly, truthfully, and with integrity. There was a possibility that participants would be concerned with confidentiality and therefore might not be willing to meet with me as I conducted the fieldwork.

Another assumption was that this study would affect professional and social change by further contributing to the field of generational studies and the profession of parks and recreation. The final assumption was that this study offered opportunities to other business leaders (both public and private) to better understand how Generation X supervisors can take strategic steps now to engage and motivate tomorrow's workforce using specific intergenerational communication strategies.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of a study that are out of a researcher's control (Simon & Goes, 2013). The limitations or potential weaknesses of this study included the specific group of supervisors. The one-on-one semistructured interviews were limited to diverse Generation X Parks and Recreation professionals (between the ages of 38 and 52) who worked for local municipalities, state and county parks, and private recreation agencies in the southeastern region of the United States. These professionals were supervisors who had managed all five generational groups and supervised millennials of working age ranging from 18-37 years old. The focus group was limited to millennials (young professionals, college students, volunteers, and staff), who had in the past worked for (or were currently working for) a Generation X supervisor (aged 38 to 52 years). Time and availability (for the participants as well as me) were also limitations for this study.

Delimitations

Delimitations are characteristics that narrow the scope and define the

boundaries of a study, which include location, population, and sample size (Simon &

Goes, 2013). The narrowed scope of this study encompassed Generation X supervisors

and millennial subordinates from cities and towns in a southeastern region of the United

States. To further segment and narrow this population, I focused specifically on parks

and recreation association members, which had the targeted generational and age cohort

demographics needed for this study. The results of this study were bound to the

proposed study population. However, organizational leaders who (a) are in both the

public and private sectors, (b) seek to understand intergenerational differences among

generations currently in the workforce, and (c) want to identify useful intergenerational

communication strategies that supervisors use to motivate and engage high performing

millennials in a multigenerational workforce will find this study useful regardless of

their industry or field.

<div align="center">

Significance of the Study

</div>

The significance of this study resides in its use of Mannheim's (1950)

generation theory and Herzberg' (1959) two factor theory to explore intergenerational

communication strategies that Generation X supervisors used to motivate and engage

high performing millennials in the workplace. This research may offer parks and

recreation professionals an enhanced understanding of the differences between

generational cohorts and subgroups as they relate to employee motivation and

engagement. The study may provide practitioners with a clearer picture and additional

insights into the complex views that each generation brings to the workplace environment. This study may also provide supervisors with strategies for focusing on creating transparent communication, shared values, and improved working relationships among cohorts and bringing out the best in millennial employees. I hope that this research will be a valuable resource that leads to more engaged cross generational communications and enables agencies to optimize their key resource, their employees, to leverage that into a competitive advantage while moving away from bureaucratic approaches to management.

Contribution to Business Practice

This study can enrich the concepts of employee motivation and employee engagement and contribute to the field by emphasizing the strengths of diverse employees. Any observed generational differences are not necessarily negative but offer a way to contribute to effective practice of business by providing organizational leaders an opportunity to learn about and help to formulate policies for the multigenerational workplace. There are essential generational differences that exist in terms of work values (Cogin, 2012) and unique work ethics (Gursoy, Chi, & Karadag, 2013; Lyons & Kuron, 2014) that employees bring to the workplace. Supervisors must learn to engage generations individually, as each brings values, behaviors, styles, motivations, and beliefs into the workplace. This may generate a need to understand how strategies targeting generational differences can help to increase employee engagement, particularly when misunderstanding of the unique values, perceptions, and preferences of any of these groups can cause workplace conflicts both internally and

externally, becoming a barrier to organizational change efforts. Despite demographic, economic, technological, and cultural changes affecting the workforce, some organizational leaders are failing to view the workforce from a multigenerational lens (Hernaus & Pološki Vokic, 2014), and employee motivation and engagement are becoming increasingly difficult to manage. Thus, from an organizational perspective, it is vital to understand the varying generational needs, attitudes, perspectives, expectations, and learning styles (Yogamalar & Samuel, 2016) brought into the workplace by different generational cohorts.

Implications for Social Change

The study's implications for positive social change include the potential to provide crucial insight for organizational leaders and supervisors, enabling them to prepare to respond effectively to the needs of millennial employees. By identifying preferred communication channels for employees to receive information from the organization and their leaders, the study can provide important insights for organizational management and park and recreation professionals into how to best reach and build quality relationships with future professionals and staff.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Although there have been many academic studies using generation theory and Herzberg's (1959) two factor theory, few researchers have explored the intergenerational communication strategies used to motivate and engage high performing millennials in the workplace, specifically those used by Generation X supervisors. Recognizing that each generation holds distinct attitudes toward work, in

this literature review I provide a framework for gaining an understanding of the differences between these cohorts and their motivation and engagement. In this review, I explore relevant research needed to establish a foundation for the study. I conducted a thorough review of the current literature concerning these topics. The databases that I searched for peer reviewed articles and books included Google Scholar, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Business Source Premier, Springer Link, Census Bureau, ABI/Inform Complete, Business Source Complete, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. I used key search words that included *age norms, Generation X (GenXers) supervisors, Generation Y (GenYers), cross generational workforce, employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction, employee and work engagement, generational differences, generation theory, Herzberg two factor theory, intergenerational communication*, and *millennials.* The timeframe or date range that I employed while searching for peer reviewed journal articles, organizational reports, and scholarly seminal books was 2013-2019. This review involves 206 references, of which 185 were peer reviewed.

This literature review begins with Mannheim's (1952) generation theory and an account of how generation theory has manifested over the years, as well as a detailed description of the characteristics of each generational cohort currently present in the workforce. In the next section, I present a historical and modern outline of Herzberg's two factor theory, as well as a contemporary review of Kahn's (1990) employee engagement theory. The final section of this literature review focuses on workforce dynamics that have developed as demographics in the U.S. workforce have changed

over the last 50 years. The topic of intergenerational communications between supervisors and followers is presented, along with drivers and threats to intergenerational motivation and engagement.

Generation Theory

Understanding generation theory and how it relates to the workforce is key to understanding employee motivation and engagement, especially because it provides insights into the ways in which individuals relate to work within an organization through their generational designation. First defined by Mannheim in the 1950s, generation theory has early origins in sociology (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Mannheim (1952) suggested in his generational essays that the study of generations provides an understanding of the structure of social and intellectual movements of various time. Mannheim defined a *generation* as people born in the same set of successive years who share a common generational identity due to their shared experiences with the same historical events of their youth (Mannheim, 1952). From this perspective, the period in which an individual grows up is understood to affect his or her later outlook, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. To be a member of a particular generation, an individual must share not only collective memories with generational peers, but also personal experience with important historical events or cultural phenomena.

In 1965, Ryder took Mannheim's generation theory one step further and presented it from a demographic generational cohort perspective, describing a generation as an observable collective group of people who are influenced and bound together by the same events and timeframe (Costanza et al., 2012; Costanza &

Finklestein, 2015; Lyon & Kuron, 2014; Ryder, 1965). Ryder (1965) offered that a generational cohort has a tangible set of birth years that offer discernible interconnections that are relatively fixed and measurable by mean scores on attitudinal or behavioral variables (Lyon & Kuron, 2014). Strauss and Howe (1991) later revitalized and extended the scope of generational cohort theory by adding an age component.

Strauss and Howe (1991) asserted that a generational cohort is composed of individuals who were born during the same timeframe spanning 20-25 years and who have lived through similar events. Major events (the Great Depression; World War II; the Vietnam War; the Iraq War; September 11, 2001; advent of social media) experienced in a cohort member's early teens and 20s shape core values that do not change and thus impact the individual's worldview (Bolton et al., 2013; Smola & Sutton, 2002) in relation to lifestyle, employment, diversity, and finances.

Parry and Urwin (2011) noted that researchers studying generational differences still generally use Mannheim's sociologically framed concept of generations. More recently, other researchers (Bolton et al., 2013; Smola & Sutton, 2002) have introduced a developmental element to defining a generation to distinguish one generation from the next. These same generational researchers posited that differences could be attributed not solely to age, but also to the developmental period in which shared events occurred (typically late childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood).

Mannheim (1952) suggested that the coming-of-age timeframe is generally between the ages of 17 and 23 years, when cohort members experience historical,

social, and cultural events that greatly influence not only their attitudes, values, and

personality characteristics as individuals, but also their shared experiences as a cohort

(Costanza et al., 2012; Debevec, Schewe, Madden, & Diamond, 2013). This means that

while members of different generational cohorts may have all experienced the same

historical event, such as the attacks of 9/11, each generational cohort will respond

differently based on members' stage in the life cycle at that time. These events

occurring at different life cycles within each generation can have differing effects,

creating generational shifts or gaps within organizations (Kuron et al., 2015).

Ultimately, generational cohort theory affords researchers the ability to describe

a segment of individuals sharing the same attitudes, ideas, values, and beliefs (Bolton et

al., 2013). Although everyone has individual values that are unique, each individual in

the workforce is also a part of a group or a generation of individuals who have similar

generational characteristics. It is important that organizational leaders understand and

be able to identify appropriately the unique characteristics of, and the differences

between, the cohorts present within the workforce.

Generational Cohort Characteristics

Generational characteristics can overlap, and those cohort members born in the

beginning and ending years of a generation may identify more heavily with one or more

generational worldview. In the U.S. workplace today, there are five generational

cohorts of employees, as identified in Table 1. Each generational cohort has been

distinguished from the others by members' similar developmental experiences that have

shaped their defining characteristics (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Table 1

Five Generational Cohorts in Chronological Order

Cohort group	Commonly referred to as	Birth year range
Traditionalists	The Greatest Generation, Matures, the GIs, the Veterans, the Silent Generation	1900–1945
Baby boomers	Baby boomers	1946–1964
Generation X	Gen X, Xers, baby bust(er), the MTV Generation, 13th Generation	1965–1979
Generation Y	Millennials, echo boom, Generation Next, Generation Me, Gen Y, trophy generation	1980–1999
Generation Z	Linksters, Generation Connected, the new Silent Generation, Generation V (for *virtual*), Generation C (for *community*, *content*, *connected*), Homeland Generation, Google Generation	2000–present

Note. Birth ranges adapted from Berkup (2014, p. 218). It should be noted for the purposes of this study, Generations Y and Z (those born between 1980 and 1999) were grouped together under millennial cohort that is described by the U.S. Census Bureau (2015).

Despite the frequent use of the cohort names presented in Table 1, it is important to understand that there is no consensus among academics and practitioners conducting generational research (Costanza et al., 2012; Costanza & Finklestein, 2015; Debevec et al., 2013) on the exact years of birth within most of the generational cohorts. Generational research has frequently obscured important demographic heterogeneity within generational cohorts, and it has been determined that there is a need for a better understanding of how generational changes unfold (Lyons, Ng, & Schweitzer, 2014). This has reinforced the need to understand the characteristics, values, behaviors, and nuances associated with each of the five generational cohorts (Debevec et al., 2013) currently represented in the U.S. workforce. I have adapted

Kupperschmidt's (2000) suggestion and divided the two main generations explored in this study by developmental stages into three groups (i.e., first wave, core group, and last wave; see Table 2) to understand and account for the reasons why there may be similarities amongst and between generational groups.

Generational researchers posit that differences within generations are attributable not just to age, but also to developmental time period (typically late childhood, adolescence, or early adulthood). Kupperschmidt (2000) described a generation as an identifiable group whose members share a range of birth years and ages, location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages. Members of generational groups, once identified, may be divided into 5- to 7-year segments that represent the first wave, a core group, and the last wave. These developmental stages have been further broken down in terms of members' coming-of-age years, as noted by Mannheim (1952). Mannheim suggested that the coming-of-age timeframe was generally between the ages of 17 and 23 years, when cohort members experience historical, social, and cultural events that greatly influence not only their attitudes, values, and personality characteristics as individuals, but also their shared experiences as a cohort (Costanza et al., 2012; Debevecet al., 2013; Parry & Urwin, 2017). Generational cohort members may respond differently to the same historical event (e.g., the attacks of 9/11) based on their stage in the life cycle at that time. It is important to be able to identify the unique characteristics of, and the differences among, the various generations currently present within the U.S. workforce (see Table 3).

Table 2

Developmental Stages and Coming-of-Age Timeframes for Generational Cohorts

Cohort group	Developmental stage	Coming-of-age range (ages 17–23)
Traditionalist—Born before 1945; current age range in 2019 is 73 + years		
First wave	Born from 1923 to 1930	1940–1953
Core group	Born from 1931 to 1937	1948–1960
Last wave	Born from 1938 to 1945	1955–1968
Baby boomers—Born between 1946 and 1964; current age range in 2019 is 55–72 years		
First wave	Born from 1946 to 1952	1963–1975
Core group	Born from 1953 to 1958	1970–1981
Last wave	Born from 1959 to 1964	1976–1987
Generation X—Born between 1965 and 1979; current age range in 2019 is 40–54 years		
First wave	Born from 1965 to 1969	1982–1992
Core group	Born from 1970 to 1974	1987–1997
Last wave	Born from 1975 to 1979	1992–2002
Generation Y—Born between 1980 and 1999; current age range in 2019 is 20–39 years		
First wave	Born from 1980 to 1986	1997–2009
Core group	Born from 1987 to 1992	2004–2015
Last wave	Born from 1993 to 1999	2010–2022
Generation Z—Born between 2000 and 2020; current age range in 2019 is 0–19 years		
First wave	Born from 2000 to 2006	2014–2029
Core group	Born from 2007 to 2013	2024–2036
Last wave	Born from 2014 to 2020	2031–2043

Note. Developmental stages adapted from Kupperschmidt (2000). The coming-of-age range was suggested by Mannheim (1952).

Table 3

Cohorts Population, Birth Years, and Age Ranges at Specific Time Intervals

			Age range at specific time intervals			
Cohorts	Approximate population as of 2019	Birth years	2020	2035	2050	2065
Traditionalist	16 million	1919–1945	75-101	90-116		
Baby boomers	74 million	1946–1964	56-74	71-89	86-101	
Generation X	66 million	1965–1979	41-55	56-70	71-85	86-100
Generation Y	72 million	1980–1999	21-40	36-55	51-70	66-85
Generation Z	57 million	2000–2020	0-20	15-35	30-50	45-65

Note. Population totals from U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2014a, 2014b, 2014c) and Colby and Ortman (2015). Birth years and age range at specific time intervals from Berkup (2014).

Traditionalists

Members of the traditionalist cohort group were born prior to 1946. They are known as the Matures, the Veterans, the Silent Generation, the Greatest Generation, and GI's (Wiedmer, 2015). Traditionalists are children of the World War I and the Great Depression, where they grew up in a time of worldwide economic crisis. They learned to do without since in the 30's and nearly one in every four adults (their parents) were unemployed (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2013).

Generational perspective. In 2019, this group encompasses approximately 66 million Americans, with 16 million still working (Hillman, 2014). The oldest members are of this cohort are heading into their mid-90's. Having lived through and been influenced by hard economic times, this generation tends to be very conservative and frugal with their money and have strong views about religion, family, and country (Johnson & Johnson, 2016). This generation came of age during World War II and the Korean War. The first wave of traditionalists came of age between 1940 and 1953. They listened and watched in horror as Hitler's tyrannical forces marched throughout

Europe. GI traditionalists were men and women who stood united behind President Roosevelt's declaration of war, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, supporting the war effort.

The youngest members of this cohort (the last wave) that came of age between 1955 and 1967 are those sandwiched between their older GI members and the baby boomer cohort. This group, called the Silent generation, are now in their early 70s represents the last wave of Traditionalist, which make up less than 10% of the workforce (Martin & Ottemann, 2015; Nwosu, Igwe, & Nnadozie, 2016). The characteristic of these younger traditionalists includes fair, impartial and skilled communicators and mediators who are uncomfortable with direct and aggressive advocacy (Wiedmer, 2015; Zemke et al., 2013). Examples of young traditionalist include several leaders of the civil rights and feminist movements including Dr. Martin Luther King, Maya Angelou, César Chavez, and Gloria Steinem.

Work characteristics. At work, they bring their traditional perspective into the workplace, preferring the hierarchical organizational structures, with top-down, and command and control leadership. This management style was prevalent in the workplace until the 1980's (Johnson & Johnson, 2016). Traditionalists are moral, risk takers, detail oriented, strongly committed toward teamwork and collaboration and they follow management decisions without question. They seek to do a good job for their customers, and help their organizations succeed. This group dislikes ambiguity and change, are uncomfortable with conflict, becoming quiet when they disagree (Zemke et al., 2013). They tend to be long-term employees who rally the work team and carry

their own weigh with maximum effort (Johnson & Johnson, 2016; Nwosu, et al., 2016; Wiedmer, 2015). They accept and provide information on a *need to know* basis. At their core, they are loyal, dedicated and believe in hard work and respect for authority (Debevec et al., 2013; Martin & Ottemann, 2015; Nwosu, et al., 2016; Zemke et al., 2013).

Baby Boomers

The generational cohort born between 1946 and 1964 is the baby boomer generation. Directly following the return of GI soldiers from World War II, there was a dramatic increase in births with the United States. The baby boomer generation were raised in a two-parent household, where the father was typically the sole income earner and the mother was the primary caregiver (Chi, Maier, & Gursoy, 2013). GI-Traditionalist parents indulged their baby boomer children and made great sacrifices to create a world where could thrive in the strong American economy (Johnson & Johnson, 2016). They were raised to respect authority figures; however, during their formative years, the baby boomers witnessed authoritative shortcomings, and learned to distrust government and big business (Johnson & Johnson, 2016). Baby boomers begin to place higher value on youth, health, personal gratification, and material wealth. This led to baby boomer spending trends versus that of the savings outlook of the prior generation (Debevec et al., 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 2016; Nwosu, et al., 2016).

Generational perspective. In 2019, the oldest members of the first wave of the generational cohort are heading into their late 60's, having come of age between 1963 and 1975. The youngest members or the last wave came of age between 1976 and 1987

and are in their early 50's. Due to their sheer size, this generation faced overcrowded conditions in schools and it was there that baby boomers first learned to compete with their peers for available resources (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Zemke et al., 2013). This competitiveness was a continuing trend at every stage of their life development (Nwosu, et al., 2016).

In their coming of age years (between age 17 and 23), many baby boomers grew up during a time of social upheaval and the defining moments for the baby boomers were played out on televisions across America. They saw the assassinations of John F. Kennedy (JFK), Martin Luther King, and Robert Kennedy, the impact of Cold War and Vietnam, and a man walk on the moon, Woodstock, Kent State student shootings, sexual revolution, and economic stagflation (Debevec et al., 2013; Martin & Ottemann, 2015; Nwosu, et al., 2016; Wiedmer, 2015). Baby boomers directly felt the impact of causes like civil rights and the end of segregation, the peace movement, equal rights, and the women's liberation movement. These formative year life experiences helped baby boomers, many of which are now in leadership positions in numerous organizations, become politically and socially aware, confident, and optimistic about life, where they believed that they could change the world (Johnson & Johnson, 2016; Nwosu, et al., 2016).

In 2019, baby boomers born from 1946 to 1964 have an age range spanning from 55 to 72 years old. The baby boomer's population number is between 76 million and 80 million and make up almost one third of the U.S. workforce (Chi et al., 2013; Nwosu, et al., 2016). The population in the baby boom ages has been decreasing in size

since 2012, as the baby boomers grow older, this cohort will experience a substantial decline in the coming decades. In a 2014 U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2014) report, researchers indicated that the baby boomer generation's participation in the workforce was expected to take up a greater share of the U.S. labor force than in the past, for an approximate 4.5% increase between 2012 and 2022. By 2030, when the baby boomers will be between 66 and 84 years old, this number is projected to drop to 60 million and further decrease by 2060 to only 2.4 million (Tishman, Van Looy, & Bruyère, 2012).

Work characteristics. Baby boomers at work followed the traditional career path where work became a central part of their life to achieve their own personal development (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Baby boomers are estimated have held four to six jobs over their working lives (Tishman et al., 2012), are known as workaholics, they believed in hard work -putting in the time, paying dues, and remaining loyal to companies, to achieve success, gain seniority and respect (Nwosu, et al., 2016; Zemke et al., 2013). They have a competitive spirit and enjoy teamwork, collaboration, and group decision-making. They are results-driven, ambitious, idealistic, optimistic, and people-oriented (Tishman et al., 2012). Boomers value face-to-face communication and have problems leaving their desk to walk over to a colleague in another location to a question (Strawderman, 2014).

At present, many baby boomers have chosen to continue working well past traditional retirement periods. Kojola and Moen (2016) noted changes to retirement, healthcare, personal and institutional savings plans, and job stability or retirement are

no longer things that that baby boomers can rely upon. Therefore, some baby boomers have been enticed away from the workforce with generous early retirement packages, while others desiring to maintain their standards of living and less likely to seek career advancement, have chosen to continue being active and engaged – often through paid work or volunteering (Kojola & Moen, 2016). Many are being encouraged to stay through the elimination of formal retirement ages due to the shortages of skilled and managerial workers (Mencl & Lester, 2014). By 2020, projections show baby boomers representing only 20%of the labor force (Tishman et al., 2012).

Generation X

In 2019, Generation X were between 40 years of age to 54 years of age, having been born between 1965 and 1979. Identified as the 13th generation of Americans by Strauss and Howe (1991), who provided a seminal foundation and comprehensive explanation of American generations; Generation X are also called Gen X, Gen Xers, and the MTV Generation. The current size of the Generation X cohort is approximately 46 and 51 million, which is much smaller than the generation proceeding it which may be one reason this generation is called baby bust(ers).

They are the children of the Silent Generation and first wave baby boomers (Nwosu, et al., 2016). The first wave of Generation X was born from 1965 to 1969 and they came of age between 1982 and 1992. The core group was born from 1970 to 1974, with a coming of age timeframe between 1987 and 1997. The last wave was born from 1975 to 1979 and they came of age between 1992 and 2002. They witnessed their parents struggle through corporate downsizing, job insecurity, and longer hours away

from home as their parents became more career focused (Chi et al., 2013; Cummings-White & Diala, 2013; Strauss & Howe, 1991; Wiedmer, 2015).

Generational perspective. In addition to growing up in a time of social and civil unrest, Generation X experienced declining parental involvement. Generation X was the first generation of *latchkey kids*, a term that referred to the keys that were visibly hung around the necks of children, who after school each day arrived home to an empty house (Anderson, Anderson, Buchko, Buchko, Buchko, & Buchko, 2016; Gilley, Waddell, Hall, Jackson, & Gilley, 2015). Subsequently, they were the first generation raised by the television. Generation X was exposed to TV broadcasts that highlighted messages of an unsafe world of missing children and stranger dangers, as well as dramatically rising violent crimes, suicides, drug addictions, and AIDS (Chi et al., 2013; Cummings-White & Diala, 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 2016).

Defining moments for Generation X included Watergate and Nixon's resignation, losing the Vietnam War, AIDS, Personal Computers, 1987 Black Monday, U.S. War on Drugs and the Spaceship Challenger disaster. Other coming of age events for Generation X were the advent of the personal computer and the Internet, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, the LA Riots, the OJ Simpson Trial, and the Gulf Wars, (Berkup, 2014; Nwosu, et al., 2016). Their early life experiences of being alone, playing video games, and using various electronic gadgets gave them strong technical skills and watching the failure of U.S. institutions to global markets taught them the value of being autonomous and entrepreneurial (Zemke et al., 2013). Generation X benefited from major advances in science and technology and became

technologically well informed as they ushered in the age of personal computers and the internet (Berkup, 2014; Chi et al., 2013; Nwosu, et al., 2016). Globalization brought this generation increased gender and racial/ethnic diversities that allowed Generation X to embrace change and seek after a balance between work and family life (Bristow, Amyx, Castleberry, & Cochran, 2011; Wiedmer, 2015).

Generation X tends to be distrustful of corporations, having witnessed the aftermath of job downsizing of their workaholic parents. In contrast to their parent's values and priorities, Generation X places quality of personal life ahead of work life (Debevec et al., 2013) and high value on fast-paced action and having fun (Johnson & Johnson, 2016). Generation X tends to be highly independent employees that are self-reliant, entrepreneurial, and comfortable with change and gender, racial and ethnic diversities.

Work characteristics. At work, Generation X prefers to work in an environment that is flexible, stimulating, challenging, and interesting (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Martin & Ottemann, 2015). The management approach that allows Generation X to excel is one of coaching, where competent leaders provide timely feedback. They prefer to learn, think, and communicate using technology as an integrated part of their problems solving approach, which makes Generation X very practical and realistic thinkers in the work place (Anantatmula & Shrivastav, 2012).

Although they are motivated to add value to their organizations (Anantatmula & Shrivastav, 2012), their independent and individualistic nature means that this generation does not respond well to micromanagement (Bristow et al., 2011). Their

experiences in their formative years have taught Generation X to avoid ties to any

organization for long periods, so they look for jobs that cater to their interests and are

personally rewarding. Therefore, they may change jobs and employers frequently. They

may see companies as a stepping-stone, necessary to keep their own skills current

(Bristow et al., 2011; Tang, et al., 2012). They are expected to hold approximately 10 to

12 jobs over their working life (Tishman et al., 2012).

Generation Y

Generation Y, or millennials, are the generation born between 1980 and 1999,

are also known as, *Echo boom*, *Generation Next*, *Generation Me*, *Gen Y*, *Trophy*

Generation, and *Boomerang Kids* (Cummings-White & Diala, 2013; Dimitriou &

Blum, 2015; Zemke et al., 2013). The first wave of Generation Y was born from 1980

to 1986 and came of age between 1997 and 2009. The core group was born from 1987

to 1992. They came of age between 2004 and 2015. The last wave of Generation Y was

born from 1993 to 1999, and the last group began coming of age in 2010 and all will

reach age 23 by 2022. This generation has an estimated population of 71 million, which

is the largest cohort since the Baby Boom. They are the children of baby boomers and

first wave Generation X parents.

The parents of Generation Y were involved in more social activities and sports

compared to Generation X (Chi & Gursoy, 2013). Although three of four Generation Y

mothers worked outside the home and is unlike the prior generation, Generation Y still

had overwhelming parental attention and support, having grown up when society had

turned its focus on children and families (Bolton et al., 2013). Generation Y grew up in

a fast-paced, technology-dominated society that provided this generation with much more exposure to civic virtues, community values, cooperation and optimism (Martin & Ottemann, 2015). It was a time when tolerance and diversity issues were openly discussed and where globalization continued to bring Generation Y greater exposure to gender and racial, ethnic, nationalities diversities than their predecessors (Mencl & Lester, 2014).

They have lived highly structured lifestyles are told that if they can dream it, they can achieve it. It should also be noted that Generation Y have been found to lack skills in proper etiquette of dining, face-to-face communication, and dress (Anantatmula & Shrivastav, 2012). Of those Generation Y graduating college, approximately 65% moved back home with their parents (Cummings-White & Diala, 2013), which has been noted to create a 'helicopter parent' effect (Berkup, 2014). This may have future implications on Generation Y's motivation and engagement perspectives at work.

Generational perspective. The defining moments for this generational group included the Oklahoma City Bombing, Columbine School Shootings, Enron and WorldCom scandals, 9/11 terrorist attack, and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the Great Recession, Election of President Obama, and Occupy Wall Street. Generation Y are idealistic and social cause-oriented and although they have seen many tragedies and institutional discord in their coming of age years, they remain enthusiastic about making their mark on the world (Bristow et al., 2011; Debevec et al., 2013).

Compared to any generation before, Generation Y is the most technically

literate, educated, affluent, racially and ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history

(Bristow et al., 2011). They are the first generation to grow up with 24/7 access to the

internet and cell phones that provide voice, texts, pictures, video, music, and

communication (Zemke et al., 2013). The first wave of Generation Y was born from

1980 to 1986 and have been working for about 16-years. In 2015, they made up about

25% of the U.S. workforce and numbered 40 million (US Bureau of Labor and

Statistics, 2014a). The last wave of this cohort, born from 1993-1999, will continue to

enter the workforce over the next few years.

Work characteristics. Members of Generation Y at work are highly active,

skilled at multitasking, excel at being team players, and enjoy collaboration. Generation

Y are seen are self-educated due to their early introduction to the Internet and the

ability to use search engines to find vast amounts of information and are willing to

work at any time and any place (Anantatmula & Shrivastav, 2012; Strawderman, 2014).

They thrive in a fasted paced, technology driven work environment, where differences

are respected and valued as they are comfortable with diversity issues (Berkup, 2014;

Mencl & Lester, 2014). Like their traditionalist predecessors, they have traditional

values and are very optimistic about the future; however, where Generation Y differ in

their characteristic is that they are fickle risk-takers who demand more from their

employers than great pay (Bolton et al., 2013). They want to be judged by their

contributions and their talents (Nwosu, et al., 2016). They are not blind followers and

do not hesitate to voice their concerns and opinions when they do not understand or agree with organization standards (Anantatmula & Shrivastav, 2012).

Generation Y are procedural, rather than outcome oriented (Bristow et al., 2011). This group expects continuous feedback and wants challenging projects with deadlines that build ownership (Anderson et al, 2016; Berkup, 2014; Cummings-White & Diala, 2013). It is no surprise that Generation Y is more comfortable with digital communications and favor instant messaging, text messaging, and emails when communicating in the workplace (Strawderman, 2014).

Generation Z

In addressing Generation Z, it should be noted that there has not been a lot has published in academic and practitioner literature is about cohort group born from 2000 to present (Berkup, 2014). Generation Z has not gained official or mainstream consensus on its cohort name. Using other distinguishing characteristics, this cohort can be connected to the following names in the literature including: Digital Natives, the Homeland Generation, Generation Connected, the New Silent Generation, Generation C (for community-orientated, communicating, and content-centered), Google Generation, (Berkup, 2014; Bolser & Gosciej, 2015; Maioli, 2016; Mencl & Lester, 2014; Strauss & Howe, 1991; Wiedmer, 2015). For the purpose of this study, I have used the name Generation Z, as presented by Berkup (2014); however, I have attached the German word, *Zeitgeist* to represent the letter *Z* for this cohort. Innate in Generation Z is the essence of the time, age, and generations that have come before it. Generation Z uses technology as basic extensions of themselves, almost effortlessly, so much so

that it has become an essential part of their everyday life and they will use it to empower them towards their social change.

Members of the Generation Z cohort are growing up in a rapidly changing world. They are the children of Generation X and the first wave of Generation Y. According to U.S. Census Bureau reports (Colby & Ortman, 2015) Generation Z have openly grown up in blended households. where parenting styles may have shifted from the traditional parental setting to the more nontraditional (multigenerational, multiracial, and/or multi-cultural) setting where more time was spent with family, particularly, retired traditionalist/ baby boomer grandparents who passed on the lessons they learned from their own experiences. As a result, many of Generation Z's behaviors are a mixture of prior generations' characteristics.

Generational perspective. Members of this cohort have always lived in a world where there was an ongoing war waged in the United States. There was always internet technology and were school safety issues (guns and bullying) were open topics (Wiedmer, 2015). Their personalities and life skills developed in a chaotic and complex socio- economic environment. As children, in lieu of riding bikes to the park, this newest generation obtained another type of freedom, technological freedom. Unlike prior generations, who had to learn to navigate technology, incorporate technology, and grow up with technology, Generation Z was born into the age of technology, where members are able to grasp it much more quickly. However, gaining and keeping the attention of this cohort will be an organizational test (Maioli, 2016; McCarthy, Finch, Harishanker, & Field, 2015).

In 2019, the oldest of Generation Z has an estimated population size of 57 million. In 2017, The first wave of Generation Z born from 2000 to 2006 began entering their developmental years. Some of its first members joined workforce part time as early as 2014 (De Meuse & Mlodzik, 2010). By the late-2030s, it is estimated that the core of the Generation Z will have come of age (see in Table 2). The last wave of this cohort should reach their coming of age stage around the early 2030's. Members of this cohort typically will stay at home longer than previous generations. Most recently, they have watched their parents recover and or rebuild from the 2007-2009 economic crisis, which has caused many to grow up fast and become fiscally aware. They have also watched their Generation Y siblings turn off prospective employers with their social media presence and have learn to be hyperaware of different social media personas both personal and professional and minimize conflict (McCarthy et al., 2015). These experiences not only resulted in a reality check but also caused some members of Generation Z to be less entitled then prior generations (Bolser & Gosciej, 2015; Wiedmer, 2015).

Work characteristics. Over the next 10 years, the first wave of Generation Z, who are the most technologically advanced generation yet, will take their place in the workforce. One of Generation Z's dominant traits is multitasking. At work, they have learned to filter though information fast and they want quick updates without all the details. As a cohort group, they are collaborative and creative because they use technology for work, play, and to form relationships (Maioli, 2016; Wiedmer, 2015). This generation prefers to communicate via text, email, or through social media

(Berkup, 2014; Maioli, 2016; Wiedmer, 2015) and like Generation Y, this generation knows how to get information and solve problems; and they expect results almost instantly.

In the workplace, they will be able to work through large amounts of information very quickly they will expect flexibly, instant feedback (Anderson et al, 2016; Berkup, 2014). They avoid direct conflict and disagreements, according to McCarthy et al. (2015), so Generation Z may have difficulty work together with others who have opposing opinions. They also may not be as eager to change or adjust to new concepts as other generations. Generation Z is expected to have at least five careers and more than 20 employers in their lifetime (Berkup, 2014; Wiedmer, 2015). As they gain in numbers they will begin to transform organizations (Bolser & Gosciej, 2015; Maioli, 2016) and many of its members will command careers that do not even exist today (Wiedmer, 2015).

Workforce Dynamics: One Size Does Not Fit All

The workforce dynamics influenced by age, diversity, and multiple generations working together side-by-side, means that an employee's motivation and engagement to their work is of critical importance to the bottom line outcomes for organizations (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011). Before supervisors can develop intergenerational communication strategies that motivate and engage, they must first understand what influences work preferences, especially since older and younger employees want different work opportunities (Jerome et al., 2014). In 2018, organizational leaders and frontline supervisors will be required to not only understand the importance of

employees' motivation and engagement and its impact on productivity and other basic workplace cultural and structural barriers (Dixon, Mercado, & Knowles, 2013), but the comprehension of variances and preferences towards motivational factors between generational groups (Yusoff et al., 2013).

The flattening organizational structures and the shifting to a more team-focused environment, coupled with information, technology, and information flowing around the world at lightning fast paces has contributed to rapid changes in individual's lifestyles, as well as, how employees are motivated and engaged at work (Das & Mishra, 2014, Hendricks & Cope, 2013). This has also manifested in dramatic changes within the organizations, presenting leaders with the constant challenge to adapt and change with employees that make up its workforce (Das & Mishra, 2014). Implementing this change cannot be successful without everyone's participation; therefore, it is essential to be inclusive of others' values, perspectives, and overall contribution, particularly in a multigenerational environment, where there cannot be a one *size fits all* workforce.

Employee Motivation and Employee Engagement

The topic of employee motivation and engagement at work involves basic employee and human needs (Mihrez & Thoyib, 2015). The failure to adjust organizational policies and practices for the consideration of the motivational and engagement needs (Mahon & Millar, 2014) of a multigenerational workforce may limit an organizations ability to predict with accuracy, an individual's attitude and behavior (Hernaus & Pološki Vokic, 2014). Age, gender, as well as the life and economic

experiences brought into the workplace by each member of a generational cohort are key to achieving the operational and strategic goals of an organization (Martin & Ottemann, 2016). The experiences of employees can have a direct impact on organizational costs, productivity, and business performance. Understanding these experiences is critical for determining what factors influence achieving motivated and engaged employees (Maioli, 2016; Martin & Ottemann, 2016). In the 1950s, behavioral scientists Herzberg, Mausner, and Synderman (1959) identified a need to understand the attitudes that people held in relation to their jobs. These researchers conducted studies to determine the maximum effort and productivity of employees, which resulted in Herzberg's two factor theory of motivation.

Two Factor Theory

In surveying 200 engineers and accountants in terms of their motivators, Herzberg et al developed Herzberg's two factor theory of motivation (also used interchangeably in the literature as Herzberg's theory, two factor theory, and motivation-hygiene theory), which was grounded in Maslow's theory of personal growth and self-actualization (Yusoff et al., 2013). Through their research, Herzberg et al. (1959) came to believe in the importance of designing jobs that allowed employees to bring meaning to and understand their role in creating a successful organization through job enrichment. In order to meet employee's needs, Herzberg (1976) identified two contributing factors as job satisfaction (motivator factors or intrinsic rewards) and job dissatisfaction (hygiene factors or extrinsic rewards). The motivator factors that lead to positive job attitudes were achievement, recognition, the work itself,

responsibility, and advancement because the employees need for self-actualization was satisfied (Herzberg et al., 1957). When an employee experiences any number of the motivator factors, it can lead to employee growth and motivation, which, in the can result in improved productivity long term. The hygiene factors associated with the work environment and the completion of work include supervision, interpersonal relations, physical working conditions, salary, company policy, administration benefits, and job security (Herzberg et al., 1959); for the characteristics of these factors (see Table 4).

Table 4

Herzberg Two Factor Theory Intrinsic and Extrinsic Rewards

Factor code	Factor	Characteristic	Intrinsic/Extrinsic
1	Ability Utilization	Using your strengths, personal abilities and skill sets to complete a task	Intrinsic (Motivator)
2	Achievement	The sense of relief felt when a work goal and or objective has been met	Intrinsic (Motivator)
3	Activity	Remaining active and engaged while at work	Intrinsic (Motivator)
4	Advancement	Personal and career development fostering movement into higher levels within the organization	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
5	Authority	Managing other people	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
6	Company Policies	Satisfaction with policies of the organization	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
7	Compensation	Pay equality	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
8	Co-workers	Relationships with peers and supervisors	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
9	Creativity	Trying new approaches and methods	Intrinsic (Motivator)
10	Independence	Self-directed at work	Intrinsic (Motivator)
11	Moral Values	Making good ethical choices	Intrinsic (Motivator)
12	Recognition	Receiving praise for a job well done	Intrinsic (Motivator)
13	Responsibility	Ability to make my own decisions and choices	Intrinsic (Motivator)
14	Security	Feeling safe and secure in a job	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
15	Social Service	Helping others	Intrinsic (Motivator)
16	Social Status	Well known or held in high regard in the community	Intrinsic (Motivator)
17	Supervision -Human Relations	The way the supervisor interacts with employees	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
18	Supervision-Technical	Supervisor competence and decision making	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
19	Variety	Freedom to make changes and do things different	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
20	Working Conditions	Combined aspects of the work environment	Extrinsic (Hygiene)

Note. Factors and characteristics adapted from *Manual for the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire* (pp. 1-2), by D. Weiss, R. V. Dawis, G. W. England, and L. H. Lofquist, 1967 (http://vpr.psych.umn.edu/). Copyright 1977 by Vocational Psychology Research, University of Minnesota. Reproduced with permission.

Herzberg, in 1968, reemphasized two factor theory and coined the term KITA (Kick in the Ass) to refer to the negative approach or method many supervisors were using to improve employees' performance (Herzberg, 1987). Herzberg cautioned against relying on fixing hygiene factors as a method of motivation, noting that hygiene factors alone did not result in satisfaction of an already dissatisfied employee, just less dissatisfaction. Hygiene factors were determined to provide short-term results, when left unchecked, could result in further dissatisfaction. Instead, managing through motivation could improve employee potential, which could in turn increase work satisfaction through job enrichment, building motivation in the long term (Herzberg, 1987).

At its inception, the two factor theory was quite controversial. Herzberg refuted the traditional perspective that saw satisfaction as the opposite of dissatisfaction and operating on the same scale. Researchers noted how Herzberg's theory found instead that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction operated on two individual parallels and could not be measured together (Dhanapal et al., 2013; Malik & Naeem, 2013). Through two factor theory, the opposite of satisfaction was no satisfaction, and similarly, the opposite of dissatisfaction was no dissatisfaction (Malik & Naeem, 2013). This challenge to traditional views of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction drew both academic acclaim and criticism, which has lasted over the last 60-years. Due to methodological inconsistencies, a number of researchers have sought to assess the validity of the two factor theory in relation to job satisfaction (Malik & Naeem, 2013; Ncube & Samuel, 2014; Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967; Yusoff et al., 2013).

Herzberg's two factor theory has served as a foundation that has been applied in numerous research settings, and recent studies indicating that it still has validity in the modern workplace (Malik & Naeem, 2013; Mihrez & Thoyib, 2015). Herzberg's two factor has stood the test of time despite mixed empirical evidence, continuing to provide an important reference point for researchers examining factors that contribute to engagement, motivation, retention, satisfaction, and turnover (Ncube & Samuel, 2014).

Employee Engagement Theory

Credited with the scholarly approaches to employee engagement, theorist William Kahn, in 1990 further extended the work of Herzberg in his seminal article, with his research on personal engagement (Kahn, 1990). Kahn, who first coined the terms personal engagement and personal disengagement, argued that engagement related to the physical, cognitive, and emotional connections that employee had in relation to their work roles (Hawkins & Chermack, 2014; Saks & Gruman, 2014). Kahn (1990) theorized that employees, who brought their whole selves into their work role performance, engaged more. After conducting empirical research on employee engagement, Kahn determined that three psychological engagement conditions (meaningfulness, safety, and availability) were necessary for engagement to occur, with numerous aspects of the work environment influencing all three psychological engagement conditions. Kahn defined meaningfulness as an employee's positive return on self-investments and achieving a sense of accomplishment within oneself. This fulfillment comes about through work and by feeling valued by the employer. Safety

contributed to organizational trust and further defined an employee's ability to express him or herself without fear or adverse consequences to their self-image, status, or career. Availability, the final psychological engagement condition, was the assurance that employees had the appropriate tools and resources (physical, emotional, and psychological) that were essential for the employees at work (Kahn, 1990).

Although Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of personal engagement and personal disengagement was rooted in academic empirical research, it did not draw much academic attention and for 10-years, the practitioner perspective flourished through the late 1990s. Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonza´lez- Roma´, and Bakker (2002) later redefined engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor - high energy levels, dedication - challenging, inspired and enthusiastic feelings toward work, and absorption. It was not until business outcomes such as employee turnover, customer satisfaction-loyalty, and safety were linked to employee engagement and found to be generalizable across organizations (Hawkins & Chermack, 2014), the engagement construct regained the attention of scholars across various disciplines including business and management, psychology, and organizational behavior (Hawkins & Chermack, 2014; Das & Mishra, 2014; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Schaufeli, 2015). Since the late 1990s, researchers and practitioners alike have noted that employee engagement is a key indicator of organizational health (Sanborn & Oehler, 2013), effectiveness, innovation, and competitiveness (Saks & Gruman, 2014). There are higher levels of engagement amongst employees in professional jobs, where there is high job control versus jobs that are less skillful and self-directed (Schaufeli,

2015). Business leaders must understand both the drivers that increase engagement and threats for disengagement (Schullery, 2013) especially since the process for engagement is not straightforward.

Engaged employees outperform satisfied employees (Schaufeli, 2015); however, due to the variance of meaning, many organizational leaders are continuously mistaking elements of engagement, like job satisfaction and commitment, for engagement (Baron, 2013). There is limited understanding as to how individual employees experience and respond to engagement activities as delivered by an organization, as these two may not necessary match since engagement cannot be forced (Reissner & Pagan, 2013). Despite the evidence generated regarding engagement, there is still disagreement in various academic and practitioner settings on how to conceptualize the definition of engagement (Bakker et al., 2011; Hulkko-Nyman, Sarti, Hakonen & Sweins, 2012; Saks & Gruman, 2014). Although often used interchangeably within the literature, the term work engagement refers to an employee's relationship with his or her work, whereas employee engagement can include the employee's relationship with their organization (Saks & Gruman, 2014). For this study, employee engagement is used, specifically the definition provided by Witemeyer et al. (2013) as a person's view of his or her own worth at work, which enables feelings of vigor, absorption, and dedication; and allows one to both meet and engage in additional roles to achieve organization's goals.

Multigenerational International Workforce

Organizational attempts to motivate and engage multigenerational employees on a global scale at multinational companies (MNC) most look at much broader communication strategies. From a national context, a generation is not necessarily the same due to varied cross-cultural experiences, boundaries, and values of multinational and multigenerational employees (Debevec et al., 2013). One must also consider the national makeup of each cohort, as this, too, can vary from country to country (Amayah & Gedro, 2014). Many organizations are failing to view the workforce from a multigenerational lens despite the changing workforce culturally (Gilson et al., 2015; Hernaus & Pološki Vokic, 2014). When considering a nation's economic, historical, political, social or technological events, some researchers argued that generational experiences may be drastically different from country to country (Debevec et al., 2013; Hernaus & Pološki Vokic, 2014; Parry & Urwin, 2011). They indicated results from one western country to another were not transferable, even though these countries may be culturally similar. If generational researchers begin to move beyond any national or cultural contexts to a wider perspective global perspective, then future research could explore how employee motivation and engagement differs amongst men, women, and their generational cohorts from an international perspective.

Multigenerational U.S. Workforce

Birthrate patterns have attributed to the significant demographic changes affecting the U.S. workforce (Dhanapal, et al., 2013; Toossi, 2012a, 2012b). During the late 1920s and early 1930s, there was a notable reduction in birthrates— called birth

dearth. From 1946 to 1964 the surge in birthrates —was termed the baby boom.

Birthrates from 1965 to 1975 experienced a slight reduction called the baby bust and

from the early 1980s through the early 1990s, there were increased birthrates —called

the baby boom echo (Toossi, 2012b). These birthrate patterns may have lent to the

commonly used labels and birth ranges of the generational cohort groups. U.S. Bureau

of Labor Statistics (BLS) Economist Toossi (2012b), predicted long-term impact on

labor markets due to the structural and demographic changes in the birthrates

throughout the past decades. By 2020, projections indicate the workforce will reach

164.4 million, which is an increase of 10.5 million in the next decade (Toossi, 2012a).

These expected demographic shifts have long-lasting effects on both the present and

future workforce (Toossi, 2012b). During the 2012–2022 period, Toossi (2013)

predicted that nearly 27.0 million baby boomers would leave the workforce and 35.4

million new entrances (i.e. millennial workers), would enter the workforce.

To ensure a sustainable and prosperous future, organizational leaders are called

to take responsibility for making the most of their talent pools, allowing for the right

balance of responsibilities while ensuring that both men and women have an equal

chance to contribute both at home and in the workplace (OECD, 2012). Organizational

leaders in the workplace are already are being called upon to address differences

brought by a multigenerational workforce that is older, more racially and ethnically

diverse, and composed of more women (Toossi, 2012a, 2012b). The presence of

women in the workforce in 1945 was less than one-third (U.S. Bureau of Labor

Statistics, 2014b); however, amongst women who have attained higher levels of

education, there has been a steady increase in the workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014b; OECD, 2012). From 1970 to 2013, the number of women with college degrees has more than tripled (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014c). At their peak participation point, women accounted for nearly 60 % of the U.S. workforce in 1999. As new men and women enter the workforce, one thing to watch are the fields of study chosen by youth, as this has a lasting long-lasting effect on the gender gaps in the labor markets according (OECD, 2012). Often resulting in women underrepresented in the business sector, and in some fields like STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), women's rate of participation is so low that has created a strong gender imbalance that favors men (Lippa, Preston, & Penner, 2014). Women are heavily concentrated in health, welfare, educational and administrative areas of work (OECD, 2012).

As these men and women transition from acquiring an education to earning a living by entering the workforce, this experience is a pivotal event in their coming of age years and lays the foundation for many of the equalities and/or inequalities that will be encountered throughout their working lives (OECD, 2012). Since workplaces are more likely to be multigenerational in the future, organizational leaders have a significant opportunity to adjust organizational policies and practices for the consideration of the motivational and engagement needs of employees. These leaders would thus gain the ability to understand and guide their workforce through issues related to these differences (Yi et al., 2015).

Public Sector: Parks and Recreation

Agencies within the public sector represent local, state, or federal levels of government, which are tax supported (Hurd & McLean, 2004). The focus of this study is on employees in municipal agencies funded at the local level providing parks and recreation services for communities within specified boundaries. One of the professional responsibilities of a park and recreation leader has is to serve the community by continually examining and communicating the value of the parks system (the lands, facilities, and services) that support the local economy (NRPA, 2013). Although, no two park and recreation agencies are exactly alike (NRPA, 2013), almost all park and recreation departments receive direct revenue through programming and class fees, entry fees, rentals, permits which generate full, part time and volunteer jobs at all levels (NRPA, 2013). In the public sector, employee longevity is commonplace; however, the literature pertaining to public parks and recreation professionals is limited (Hurd & McLean, 2004) and specific park and recreation employees' demographic trends are not available. The expectation is that that these agencies have also felt the impact of the national age shifts (Huang, McDowell, & Vargas, 2015).

In 2019, Millennials of working age range from 18-39 years old, represent the largest and most diverse generation of U.S. youth. They number 83.1 million and represent more than one quarter of the nation's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Many other business sectors have only just now started to get used to Generation Y in the workplace and in most cases will not fully employ both millennial groups (Generation Y and Generation Z) until approximately 2020. However, park and

recreation professionals have been working with all five generational groups for several years through their community outreach (NRPA, 2013). Park and recreation employees are on the front lines with constituents daily and their supervisors must recognize and understand that their employees all have different abilities, skills, talents, and experiences. Since the relationship between supervisors and employees are essential to ensuring the achievement of strategic goals, the primary focus of this study was the intergenerational communication utilized by Generation X park and recreation professionals that foster employee motivation and engagement, particularly within the millennial cohort.

Intergenerational Communication

Communication is key to organizational engagement, productivity, innovation, decision-making, performance and profitability; yet it remain undervalued (Findlay & Kowbel, 2013). Intergenerational communication is the chronological distance between interactants in differing generational cohorts who lived through very different historical periods, who may be operating on different communication assumptions, skills, needs, and experiences (Williams & Nussbaum, 2012). Strategic management of culture, communication, and productivity is critical in effectively manage and unite talent across each generation (Gratton, 2011; Reinsch & Gardner 2014; Tews, Michel, & Stafford, 2013).

According to Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič, and Sriramesh (2007) strategic communication is about informational, persuasive, discursive, as well as relational communication used in achieving an organization's mission, focusing its

interactions with stakeholders (i.e. customers, employees, government officials, etc.). It

has been reported that to leverage knowledge across generations, organizations will

need to begin to think strategically about communications in terms of style, setting,

attitude, procedures, delivery and frequency, and ensure all employees understand its

importance and their role in effective two-way communications (Findlay & Kowbel,

2013). However, a requirement for this two-way communication to be effective is for

both the employees and supervisors to listen to one another through formal and

informal interactions as well as integrated internal communications channels taking

place at all levels in the organization (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). Insights

gained from research involving one group can inform understanding about how

organizations interact with other groups.

Drivers and Threats to Intergenerational Communication

Organizations benefit from employee engagement when its supervisors

understand both the drivers (increased engagement) and threats (disengagement). An

individual's generation accounts for communication strengths and weaknesses.

Managers should consider this important factor in their interactions with employees.

Studies have found when it comes to importance of communication, members of the

younger generations placed less emphasis on interpersonal interaction, conventional

written documents, and oral presentations while the older generations place higher

values on these skills (Reinsch & Gardner, 2014). Millennials may see this as a waste

of time or even an unnecessary barrier to flexibility and mobility and may instead

prefer instead to access information through technology, where they often expect

instantaneous access (Gibson & Sodeman, 2014; Gilson et al., 2015). When a message

has been misconstrued, ignored, rejected, or simply forgotten this is communication

failure. Communication challenges contribute to miscommunications conflicting goals

power struggles perceived risk delays and lack of trust (Noffsingser, 2013).

Intergenerational differences are often to blame for ineffective communication

(Noffsingser, 2013).

      Intergenerational differences. There is a continued debate over the existence

of intergenerational differences (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Parry & Urwin, 2017).

A majority of the information known about differences in the workplace is not based on

empirical research studies, but on popular literature. However, there are a growing

number of empirical research studies on generational differences, and employee

motivation and engagement, which support need for a shift from the existing one size

fits all paradigms. The shift should be more reflective of the values, behaviors, styles,

motivations and beliefs of the generational cohorts (Glavas, 2012; Gratton, 2011; Lyon

& Kuron, 2014; Nwosu, et al., 2016; Sanborn et al., 2011), with each having differing

sets of leadership and communication style, values and core experiences.

      Intergenerational differences present the importance and impact of defining

moments that shaped a cohort group's long-term core values, including those brought in

to the workplace (Debevec, Schewe, Madden, & Diamond, 2013, Kupperschmidt,

2000; Mannheim, 1952; Smola & Sutton 2002). Generational cohorts held similar

values that differed from other cohorts; they concluded that significant differences in

job values exist across the generations (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, (2010).

There were important generational differences that exist in terms of work values (Cogin, 2012). Glavas (2012) agreed and further warned against attempts to use a cookie-cutter approach because what motivates one employee to engage may disengage another. Kilber, Barclay, & Ohme (2014) suggesting that managers should not ignore intergenerational differences but embrace them in order to get the most out of their work force, particularly millennials. Other researchers (Bolton et al, 2013) cautioned against the overgeneralization of intergenerational values, preferences and behaviors, yet they contended that it was useful to explore these differences.

Lyon and Kuron (2014) suggested that leaders who understand generational differences are better at seeing that past management practices that may not work in terms of a modern workplace, just as practices today may not work in the future. Still U.S. organizational leaders, public and private, large and small, have been slow to recognize the importance of generational differences in the workplace; many have not planned effectively (Cummings-White & Diala, 2013; Mahon & Millar, 2014). Lyons and Kuron (2014) highlighted the critical need for qualitative research in the area of generations. Given the complexity and perceptions of generational differences in the limitations of existing research, Rentz (2015) agreed. When it comes to work values and attitudes there is sufficient evidence to suggest that differences between generations do exist and further exploration of this area is needed (Parry& Urwin, 2017; Rentz, 2015) particularly on the front-line supervisor subordinate level (Campione, 2014).

Supervisor–subordinate relationship. The quality of relationships between a supervisor and employee (supervisor - subordinate) is the most critical to motivation

engagement and productivity. Employees prefer to receive information directly from their supervisors and they trust them to the extent that their supervisors show honesty, transparency, caring, support, and a willingness to listen (Mishra et al., 2014). Men (2014) noted that supervisors thus have more credibility when disseminating information than senior executives do; therefore, a supervisor's communication competence, quality, styles, and channels can influence the attitudes and behaviors of employees. Hendricks and Cope (2013) report that if supervisors effect a positive work environment that promotes and retains its employees, the focus should be on the positive attributes and strengths of each generational cohort. Millennials now constitute the largest percentage of U.S. workforce- more than one-third and have the greatest expected number of workers in its cohort in U.S. history (O.E.A Council, 2014); and researchers like VanMeter, Grisaffe, Chonko, and Roberts, (2013) have espoused the need for more insights into the ways the millennial perspective would display itself in the workplace. Equally as important will be research on those supervising millennials entering the workforce. The immediate supervisor or management team is the most visible company representative and often one of the most noted reasons for employees to leave an organization (Campione, 2014).

There are reports that due to diminished job security and increased competition that millennials aged 20 to 24 are likely to change jobs up to three times in one year (Jerome et al., 2014); however, according to the 2014 report by the Council on Economic Advisors, millennials face of different labor market than prior Generations. When compared to Generation X at the same point in time in their career, millennials

stay with their employers longer; however, they expect more from their employers than a paycheck. Millennials place a high value on their relationships with their supervisors (Jerome et al., 2014) who established the immediate work environment and affect productivity (Campione, 2014; Mihrez & Thoyib, 2015). Millennials want to have consistent positive feedback in the evaluation of their individual progress and relate better to supervisors who take time to understand them as individuals (Anderson et al, 2016; Jerome et al., 2014). Researchers emphasize that supervisors should establish organizational ground rules (Mihrez & Thoyib, 2015) that reinforce the importance of respect and tolerance for all generations to promote an atmosphere where all viewpoints are considered legitimate (Hendricks & Cope, 2013).

Generational tensions. The American Hospital Association (2014) noted that the influence of different historical experiences and attitudes could result in generational tensions as each generation experienced these factors differently. Events like the recession of 2008 can affect perceptions. These groups may also differ in communication styles their attitude towards management and organizational hierarchy time management (AHA, 2014). In one study, there was a general fear to ask for guidance by millennials if they did not have an explicit invitation from their manager to address questions views and concerns (Rentz, 2015). In this instance, if a Generation X manager, shaped by a different experience (i.e. latchkey up independent upbringing) was not aware of intergenerational differences he/she may automatically expect the millennial to seek them out through open door policy, creating a generational tension. The result is a conflicting communication styles and unnecessary usage of resources,

wasted time and energy (Noffsingser, 2013). The 20th-century leadership practices were more autonomous, or *hands off*, where supervisors would allow their employees to *figure things out* (Haeger & Lingham, 2013). Studies showed that some leaders routinely ignored conflicts created intergenerational tensions with direct reports if they did not impact and organizational outcome. Haeger and Lingham (2013) further suggested a shifting paradigm towards the intergenerational workplace, which has resulted in a more task-centered, productivity centered, and multitask-centered style of leadership, where meaningful and deep relationships are valued. This has important implications for millennials, if they encounter old leadership approaches, it may lead to demotivation and disengagement from unmet expectations.

Effective managers will be those who can use these attributes and create intergenerational strategies that motivate and engage all generations under his or her supervision (Jerome et al., 2014). Managers with who can acknowledge and understand their own generational assumptions and belief systems as well as those of other groups are then able to tailor their messaging when communicating to individuals from within these groups. Millennials want to be involved in the decisions and efforts to change. Managers that provide detailed continual feedback allow employees to improve on their performance (Anderson et al, 2016) and creates well-informed highly motivated employees (Ferri-Reed, 2014). This support has been shown to build trust and positively influence job satisfaction (Campione, 2014), which in turn increases engagement and motivation. Supervisors will also need to establish consistent methods to capture, transfer, and retain institutional knowledge through coaching and mentoring,

supporting employee growth and development, succession planning, and ways that positively impact organizational culture and rewards (Cummings-White & Diala, 2013; Gilley et al., 2015).

Coaching and mentoring. The role of the supervisor in the contemporary work force work must evolve into that of coach mentor and facilitator (Jerome et al., 2014). Since researchers have found that management practices are an antecedent of perceived organizational support (Du Plessis, Barkhuizen, Stanz, & Schutte, 2015), this has implications for the Generation X manager. Jurkiewicz (2000) found a key element of an effective management is the ability to motivate people to perform at high levels. Supervisors who are able assess accurately what motivates their employees are able to maximize productivity and enhance performance, whereas failure could result in misunderstandings and miscommunications and lower productivity and decrease engagement (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Twijnstra & De Graaf, 2014). To actively engage employees, supervisors need to be able to communicate to employees their roles responsibilities and expectations as well and provide consistent feedback on their performance (Lavigna, 2015). Millennials prefer delegation leadership styles and dislike micromanagement (Dannar, 2013). Research has shown that although millennials tend to demonstrate high levels of self-esteem assertiveness and confidence in their abilities, the tough leadership approach of old will not work with this group especially when they make mistakes. Negative feedback and open or public criticism will only serve to demotivate and disengage millennials who are not accustomed to this type of treatment due to their upbringing my parents and teachers

(Anderson et al, 2016; Ferri-Reed, 2014). Researchers have suggest establishing virtual and reverse mentorship programs as ways to engage and motivate all cohort groups, and retain organization knowledge (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012; Gibson & Sodeman, 2014). Gibson and Sodeman (2014) suggested millennials, who view mentoring as learning rather than career advancement, would benefit from this virtual setting because it would create a safe place to exchange ideas, ask for specific advice, and build a knowledge base available 24/7 to all employees. Reverse mentoring encourages intergenerational communication and builds reciprocal mentoring relationships between older and younger workers (Gibson & Sodeman, 2014); allowing each the ability to gain new knowledge while teaching another the skills they possess.

Training, development, and succession planning. The growing challenge for organizations would be how to prevent organizational brain drain left by retiring baby boomers while at the same time, allowing the technological acumen of millennials to flourish (Gratton, 2011). If the economy is to prosper and grow then some have suggested that education, training, and employment providers need to work, together to embrace and take advantage of the benefits that this cross-generational workforce brings (Martin & Ottemann, 2015). As baby boomers retire, younger individuals may be promoted due to their technical expertise or in other cases because they have attained experience through the required number of years on-the-job but lack managerial skills, training, and experience in dealing with employee issues. Currently the Generation X manager could serve as a bridge to connect millennials to their workplace; however, the Generation X manager/supervisor, may also be at the height of

his or her career and may not be view tasks such as mentoring and coaching millennial employees, as an important part of their own career advancement (Campione, 2014). Millennials dominate entry-level, early career and customer focus positions, so those managing this cohort need strategies and policies (Bolton, et al., 2013; Jerome et al., 2014) to ensure that this group is motivated and engaged. A supervisors' communication competence is found to be a predictor of an employee's job satisfaction (Hall, 2016), therefore, Campione (2015) recommended mandated managerial training for all immediate supervisor, where supervisor support is linked to individualized plan of success and development of employees. When training at all levels on generational differences takes place, intergenerational communications between employees become more fluid (Jerome et al., 2014).

While it is expected that members of both traditionalist and baby boomer cohorts may hold more senior positions, with greater years of public service than the younger cohorts; it is likely that work roles will begin to reverse as Generation X and millennials take leadership position within these organizations (Nwosu, et al., 2016). Therefore, succession planning becomes increasingly critical (Cummings-White & Diala, 2013) in terms of providing a wider range of perspectives as well as being representative of the customer base (Martin & Ottemann, 2015), as baby boomers begin stepping down from positions of leadership (Das & Mishra, 2014). Millennials, even early in their careers seek leadership roles; while older employees seek meaning and engaged in work to satisfy several needs including self-esteem, self-worth, and sense of pride. The needs to interact with others through *generativity striving*, which refers

setting the goal toward teaching, training, and sharing knowledge and skills with younger generations (Munir et al., 2015; Zhan, Wang, & Shi, 2015). This suggests the need to pair older employees up with younger employees so both groups can develop new insights in technologies, learning, and increased groups' levels of engagement at work (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012). The utilization of the older employees for in-house training and the ongoing development of existing and new skills, focusing on transferability and flexibility is needed this according to Martin and Ottemann (2015) because it serves as a point for collaboration across generations (Bjursell, 2015).

Organizational culture. Organizational culture plays a significant role in an organization regarding how people feel about their work, levels of motivation, commitment, and in turn job satisfaction. There is shared interdependence between an organization and its employees, in which the potential success of both influenced each other (Sokro, 2012). Mishra et al., (2014) reported that an employee engagement started high with an employee's initial entry into the organization but could drop the first year and up to 5 years after entry. This decrease could depend on how employees were oriented into the organization, their skill development, if employees were encouraged to ask for feedback, and whether they perceived their managers as taking time to listen to their concerns (Mishra et al., 2014). Organizations typically have tools that address engagement without any differentiation for the generations of employees; however, with millennials entering the workforce and baby boomers retiring, leaders should focus on development of more encompassing engagement model's representative of today's employee mix need to address this deficiency (Das & Mishra, 2014). Tews et

al. (2013) studied fun in the workplace and its strategic importance in retaining and increasing employee productivity. Fun, when aligned appropriately with business goals and matched to the characteristics of an organization's employees can be used to motivate and engage employees even when faced with in less favorable working conditions like long hours, less pay, and inadequate supervision (Tews et al., 2013). Ferri-Reed (2014) noted that millennials prefer transparent organizations where the mission, values, operations, and direction for the future are clear. Managers should encourage open communications with employees and have candid frequent conversations about the organizational policies and procedures, needs challenges, opportunities and successes. Failure to engage this group early on could lead to high turnover in this group that has identified as having a high willingness to quit if not engaged (Schullery, 2013; Twenge et al., 2010).

Rewards. Each generation carries life experiences that define and influence employee's feelings toward authority and organizations, work rewards, and work satisfaction (Smola & Sutton, 2002). In their Global Employee Engagement trends report, Sanborn, Malhotra, and Atchison (2011) noted that economic cycles are fundamentally different from previous cycles and researchers have cautioned employers against attempting to return to the old ways to recruit, retain, and reward talent (Sanborn et al., 2011). To meet employee needs, the rewards focus must not only be on the extrinsic or hygiene factors (see Table 4), as this has been shown by researchers Yusoff et al. (2013), to be only a preventative measure keeping employees from becoming actively dissatisfied. Recent literature highlights the importance of having

job resources that are an intrinsic motivational component as this leads to higher engagement (Kordbacheh, Shultz, & Olson, 2014) and motivation (Mihrez & Thoyib, 2015). Supervisors that put in additional efforts to identifying the intrinsic, or motivational, factors that engage employees are better able to cultivate growth and development, which can lead to higher performing employees (Yusoff et al., 2013).

Rewards policies can also be a source of dissatisfaction and cause disengagement if policies are perceived as poorly designed, not inclusive, unfairly distributed (Bari, Arif & Shoaib, 2013). Bari, Arif and Shoaib (2013) found that motivational factors changed over time and employee preferences depended on demography and background. There are important generational differences that exist in terms of work values (Cogin, 2012); numerous recommendations to HRM practitioners include anticipating and responding to these differences in developing work and rewards programs. Researcher Obicci (2015) concluded in his quantitative study on the influence of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards on employee engagement in the public sector of Uganda, that to fulfill its mission, public organizations needed actively engaged employees. Rewards have the capacity to deliver maximum benefits that attract, motivate and retain employee within an organization. Focusing back on this current study, where I explored how those Generation X managers in public agencies were taking strategic steps to engage and motivate their employees and what specific intergenerational communication strategies they were taking to develop high performing millennial employees.

Transition

In Section 1, I reviewed historical, modern, and contemporary studies on Generation theory and Herzberg's two factor theory, as well as empirical research conducted regarding multigenerational perspectives on employee motivation and engagement. To sustain competitive advantage, organizational leaders, no matter the size or location, need to adopt a strategic approach to managing generational differences in the workplace. As demographics in the U.S. workforce continue to shift, supervisors in both public and private organizations will require the need to understanding how to communicate effectively each generational cohort and shift away from the existing *one size fits all* paradigm to improve on employee motivation and employee engagement. Park and recreation agencies and staff bring a unique perspective to the current discussion on intergenerational communication strategies for local government agencies. Its Generation X supervisors and millennial staff may be able to inform the field on how it has effectively motivated and engaged this newest worker in the U.S. workplace and maximized business performance.

In Section 2, I discussed project in depth. I focused on my role as the researcher and provided description of the study participants. I also discussed the selected research method and design and my ethical responsibilities as the researcher as study instrument. I closed Section 2, with a comprehensive discussion on the data collection process, addressing the study's validity and reliability. In Section 3, I presented my study and research findings. I also discussed how the findings apply to professional practice and social change. The study is concluded with final recommendations and reflections.

Section 2: The Project

This section contains detailed information related to my study on managing high performing millennials in the workplace, specifically concerning how Generation X supervisors use intergenerational communication strategies to motivate and engage them. This section provides details on my role as the researcher in the data collection effort and a description of the participants. Also discussed are the selected research method and design and my ethical responsibilities as the researcher and study instrument. Finally, an in-depth discussion on the data collection process is presented, and this study's validity and reliability are addressed.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive multiple case study was to explore the intergenerational communication strategies that Generation X supervisors used to motivate and engage high performing millennials in the workplace. Four Generation X supervisors participated in the study through one-on-one semistructured interviews. I also conducted two focus groups comprised of millennial cohort members (young professionals, college students, and staff in the parks and recreation field), for secondary source information. The findings have implications for positive social change, in that the practices used by these supervisors may offer understanding and additional guidance on managing employees through generational differences. The findings may also provide business leaders across many fields with crucial insight into what supervisors are currently doing to engage and motivate the newest generation of employees, boosting productivity.

Role of the Researcher

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) scrutinizes every doctoral research proposal for ethical consideration; however, it is ultimately the researcher's role and responsibility to protect the research subjects or participants. One of my responsibilities was to complete a web-based training conducted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) on the protection of human research participants. To avoid potential ethical problems and understand the role of research, I paid close attention to the following areas: consent, disclosure, confidentiality and anonymity, and mitigating biases (including personal, professional, and participant conflicts). These areas were described in the basic ethical principles and guidelines outlined in the 1979 *Belmont Report* (Office for Human Research Protections, 2016) and general considerations adopted from Bell and Bryman's (2007) *Ethics of Management Research*.

Consent, Disclosure, Confidentiality, and Anonymity

My role as a researcher was to gain informed consent from all willing volunteers for my study; this meant that I needed to be transparent and disclose to participants any risks associated with their involvement in this study. According to Bell and Bryman (2007), confidentiality and anonymity are overlapping concepts. Confidentiality pertains to the protection of research participants' information, while anonymity relates to the protection of an organization's or individual's identity. As the qualitative researcher conducting the study, I actively engaged with respondents to participate in one-on-one semistructured interviews or focus groups conducted in person; therefore, I was responsible for protecting their *confidentiality* but not their

anonymity. I also maintained the organization's anonymity as requested. I protected the participants' confidentiality to safeguard against actual or perceived employer retribution for their study participation.

Mitigating Bias

Removing personal and professional bias to avoid real or implied conflicts of interest and affiliations requires objectivity. In a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument, as noted by Marshall and Rossman (2016), and has an obligation to mitigate the possibility of biases (Cope, 2014). Berger (2015) noted that a researcher can become aware of personal, professional, and participant bias through the *reflexivity process, or* continual internal talks and critical self-evaluation concerning these biases as they may affect the research. This process also helped me to mitigate my bias and ensure that this study reflects the participants' voices and not my own.

Personal and professional. As the doctoral student researcher, I was the sole investigator for this study. My interest in parks and recreation as a profession grew out of my first work experience during my senior year of college. I was hired in the main office of a local municipality as a part time personnel clerk to work on a number of small projects. I ended up with a baby boomer supervisor and mentor, who was the department director at the time. She gave me the opportunity to see how my role fit into the big picture within the entire organization. She clearly communicated my job duties but left the role open for me to develop and allowed me to be creative within my role. Once I learned the job tasks, she expanded my opportunities to work on tasks beyond

the scope of my position's responsibilities, further growing my potential. She gave me the opportunity to sit on citywide task force initiatives and network with other departments on their hiring campaigns. She also encouraged me to apply for other positions. After 6 months of working with her, I was promoted to full time status; I was later promoted into another department, where I worked for another 3 years. Although I am no longer employed with a municipality, I maintain a membership with a parks and recreation professional association. My first professional work experience gave me an appreciation for the supervisor/employee experience and is the benchmark against which I have measured my satisfaction when judging managerial relationships.

Participant conflicts. My experience as a former public employee at a municipality drew my interest to this area and may have influenced my interpretation of the data. In order to mitigate bias, I coded the data collected from the six Generation X supervisors and two millennial focus groups to identify thematic elements, which further ensured participant confidentiality and the privacy of participants' agency affiliation (Yin, 2014). There was no risk of misaligned data based on relationships of power or supervisor-employee conflicts of interest for the current study. I worked in a local city government from 1999 to 2003, and even though I served in a position in which I had access to potential participants and was involved in human resource activities that impacted citywide recruiting and retention efforts, I was in a nonsupervisory role. The working relationships and trust that city employees had with me were such that they generally felt comfortable sharing their personal and work-related issues.

Participants

To gain access to participants, I worked with a professional association. Prior to collecting any data for the study, I obtained written permission from the professional association to contact its members for research. After I had a signed letter of cooperation and I received final Walden IRB approval, I began recruiting participants for this qualitative multiple case study. I used the most common method for choosing participants, purposeful sampling. A researcher who used purposeful sampling stated that it was the most appropriate sampling strategy to understand participants' perspectives (Robinson, 2014).

Prospective participants were members of a nonprofit parks and recreation professional association representing individuals, schools, local municipalities, state and county parks, and private recreation agencies in the southeastern region of the United States. The association is broken up into five local regions (North Region, South Region, Central Region, East Region, and West Region). To participate in this study, members/agencies needed to be located within the Central or South Regions. Members/agencies received an email invitation to participate in the study by taking part in an interview or focus group. In case study research, interviews are a key factor (Stewart, 2012). I segmented eligible participants by their self-reported demographics into two groups: (a) Generation X, born between 1965 and 1979, and (b) millennials, born between 1980 and 1999. Participants also met criteria for semistructured interviews or focus groups, as detailed in the following subsections.

Semistructured interviews. Potential participants in semistructured interviews had to be members of the Generation X cohort, who at the time the study was conducted were between the ages of 38-52 years old. They had to have managerial experience in parks and recreation that included supervising multiple generational groups at one time. They also had to be supervising high performing millennials of working age.

Focus group interviews. Potential participants in focus groups were limited to young professionals, college students, volunteers, and staff within the millennial cohort, who at the time the study was conducted were between the ages of 18-37. The millennial participants had to be working for, or had in the past worked for, a Generation X manager in parks and recreation.

Respondents to an initial email received a follow-up phone call to confirm the interview schedules. Prior to the start of the interviews (see Appendix B), participants signed an informed consent form indicating their willingness to participate. All documents have been stored on a secured, password-protected drive, where they will be held for a period of 5 years. Following this 5-year period, the documents will be destroyed to ensure confidentiality.

Research Method and Design

I used a qualitative descriptive multiple case study approach to explore the communication strategies that Generation X supervisors use to motivate and engage high performing millennials in the workplace. Within this section, I extend the

conversation from Section 1 as to why I selected qualitative research over other methods. I also provide additional justification for the selected research design.

Research Method

The research method selected for a study depends on the study's research question. Depending on the type of information to be collected in the study, one of the three existing research methods—qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods—may be best suited to the research. This study could have been qualitative, quantitative, and/or both (i.e., a mixed methods approach). The mixed method uses a combination of both single methodologies, either independent of each other or dependently in phases. It provides a more robust opportunity for divergent and/or complementary views into a phenomenon of interest and makes for richer scholarship (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Parry, Mumford, Bower, & Watts, 2014; Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013).

Researchers using this approach must understand each method and become competent with the tools designed for each method. The mixed-method researcher must also be proficient in the design components to conduct both qualitative and quantitative studies in order to provide in-depth discussions for these methods (Venkatesh et al., 2013). Despite its benefits, I discarded the mixed method as a viable design option due to the small number of participants I planned to interview, as well as the extra time demands and dual design expertise requirements that a mixed-method study would place on me as a novice researcher.

In looking at the overarching research question, the literature, and the study objectives, I selected the qualitative research methodology. I strongly considered using

the quantitative research method; however, I determined that quantitative research was not a good fit for my study's direction. With the quantitative method, researchers ask questions of *what* or *how many* and often use surveys, random sampling, and statistics to test theories and hypotheses (Punch, 2013; Rovai, Baker, & Ponton, 2013). I did not want to collect quantitative data through impersonal closed-ended surveys distributed to large numbers of participants who might or might not respond. Instead, I wanted to be able to conduct this study from the point of view of the informants, the Generation X supervisors, through in-person, face-to-face interviews, as well as through focus groups with millennial subordinates, to answer *how* and *why* questions.

The qualitative research method allows researchers to develop descriptions, illustrations, and explanations of complex phenomena through the observation of accessible participants interacting with others to answer *how*, *what*, and *why* research question in a real-world context (Parry et al., 2014; Vohra, 2014; Yin, 2014). Documenting these viewpoints allowed me to discover multiple realities, develop a more holistic understanding of participants' communication strategies, and allow common themes to develop concerning how participants motivated and engaged high performing millennial employees. The qualitative research methodology remained the best fit for this study, as field observation and document analysis allowed for a deeper understanding of the relationships of individuals experiencing the problem than I could have achieved simply by analyzing large-scale data (Hilal & Alabri, 2013; Vohra, 2014; Yin, 2014).

Research Design

Five of the most common types of qualitative research designs are (a) grounded theory, (b) phenomenology, (c) ethnography, (d) narrative designs, and (e) case study (Yin, 2014). After reviewing the literature and identifying my research question, instead of selecting one of the first four designs, I chose case study. Grounded theory was not selected, as I did not intend to conduct in-depth interviews that called for extensive observation into employees' experiences and patterns in order to develop a theory to understand a social issue (Fram, 2013; Parry et al., 2014).

The phenomenological design was set aside because this study's research question did not call for the exploration of events or lived experiences that participants had in their personal and social worlds (Gray, 2013; Stephens & Breheny, 2013; Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). For this same reason, I chose neither ethnography, which would have involved interviewing social groups in their natural setting (Lichterman & Reed, 2015), nor narrative design, which would have involved examining participants' experiences through stories (Stephens & Breheny, 2013). Case study is one of the most frequently used qualitative research methodologies. Taking an in-depth look at the experience, perceptions, and experiences of participants in terms of an event (Vohra, 2014) was best suited to my study.

Case studies are aimed at understanding human beings in a social context by interpreting their actions in an empirical inquiry within a real-life setting (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2014). Qualitative case studies across multiple disciplines have captured information about individuals, groups,

processes, and relationships to address *how* and *why* research questions (Stake, 2005;

Vohra, 2014; Yazan, 2015).

A case study design may be exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. The

selected research design for this study was a qualitative descriptive multiple case study

design. This allowed for the exploration of intergenerational communication strategies

that Generation X supervisors use to motivate and engage high performing millennials,

in the context in which it occurred. The theoretical knowledge of the phenomenon

under investigation was limited and not yet mature. The focus was on contemporary

events, which were not studied outside of a natural setting, which for this study was

within parks and recreation agencies. I did not have the ability to manipulate study

subjects (Generation X supervisors and millennial employees) and events. With the

case study design, I was able to collect data directly from participants and develop

themes using multiple data collection methods such as interviews, focus groups, field

notes, and peer journals.

Population and Sampling

The population for this qualitative descriptive multiple case study consisted of

Generation X supervisors and high performing millennial employees. I planned one-on-

one semistructured interviews and focus groups to answer the overarching research

question in this study. I selected participants based on their purported experience with

intergenerational communication strategies for the purpose of engagement and

motivation for their team. I used the most common method for choosing participants,

purposeful sampling. In purposeful sampling, researchers select participants based on

their knowledge and expertise concerning the subject under investigation, enabling data-rich experiences (Doody, Slevin, & Taggart, 2013a, 2013c; Then, Rankin, & Ali, 2014). Researchers using purposeful sampling have noted that it is the most appropriate sampling strategy to use when seeking to understand participants' perspectives (Robinson, 2014).

The criteria for participation in the semistructured interviews indicated that potential participants needed to be members of the Generation X cohort (age 38 to 52) with managerial experience that included supervising multiple generational groups at one time. They also had to be supervising high performing millennials of working age from 18-37 years at the time of the study. Potential participants in the focus group interviews were limited to individuals within the millennial cohort (age 18-37). These cohort members consisted of young professionals, college students, and staff in a nonsupervisory role who served as full-time employees and who, at the time of the study, were working for, or had in the past worked for, a Generation X manager (age 38 to 52) in parks and recreation.

All participants (either individually or through their agencies) were affiliated with a local nonprofit professional association whose members are parks and recreation professionals, young professionals, staff, volunteers, and college students) representing local municipalities, state and county parks, and private recreation agencies in the southeastern region of the United States. The association is broken up into five local regions (North Region, South Region, Central Region, East Region, and West Region). To participate in this study, members must be located or affiliated with agencies located

within the Central or South Region of the state. I invited four Generation X supervisors to participate in the one-on-one semistructured interviews as a purposeful sample size and continue with interviews until data saturation, no new data, information, or themes, and the ability to replicate the study as noted by Fusch and Ness (2015). For focus groups, researchers suggest focus groups sizes of six to eight participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Ritchie & Lewis, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Conversely, Ritchie and Lewis (2013) indicated and Doody et al. (2013a) agreed that a smaller group size is appropriate if the focus group are likely to be highly engaged in discussing their field, like my potential participants. If a case agency is involved, then the agency director may provide additional potential participants based on staffing knowledge. Regarding sample sizes, several scholars advised to consider last minute cancellations, and recommended over-recruitment of participants (Doody et al., 2013a) by approximately 20% (Then et al., 2014). I planned my focus group for 4-6 millennial cohort participants, using approximately 6 questions, and I allotted a maximum of 90 minutes. I then selected those who would be actual participants. I planned to conduct interview/focus groups sessions with respondents using a private onsite conference/meeting room located at the professional organization/agency. Being open to location and time allows the participants more control and may increase their willingness to participate (Then et al., 2014). If the onsite location was not convenient for the interview participants, we arranged for an offsite private conference/meeting room at a local library to ensure confidentiality and privacy.

Ethical Research

Ethical concerns have the potential to arise in any form of research and it is then up to the researcher to ensure the protection of participants and organizations by upholding ethical conduct and integrity. Researchers bear the responsibility for determining study participants' competence, comprehension, and appropriateness (Pisani et al., 2016). Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that Walden University research complies with prescribed requirements as well as U.S. federal regulations (Walden IRB, 2017). The IRB for Walden University has approved the research approach and issued IRB Approval # 08-30-17-0370473. Throughout this study, I adhered to the standards for conducting research as noted in the Belmont Report (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979, Office for Human Research Protections, 2016) and certified that I completed the National Institute of Health's web-based training course on protecting human participants. According to Osborne (2013), structural, procedural, cultural, psychological, and situational factors can influence individual's decisions to provide informed consent for a research study. From an ethical point of view, it is necessary to pre plan and safeguard respondents from harm, while being mindful about maximizing participation rates and securing the data once collected (Harrell & Bradley, 2009; Osborne, 2013; Walden IRB, 2017).

As part of the pre- planning effort, I kept with ethical standards and maintained respondent's confidentiality by gaining pre-approval from the interview site director. When I received permission from Walden's IRB department to begin data collection, I had the director of the site email a pre-designed message to the members to enlist

participants. When respondents contacted me, I was able to verify their criteria, I e-mailed each potential participant the informed consent form to review. I also followed up with a phone call to discuss and schedule suitable times to meet, I discussed informed consent and reviewed the purpose of the study.

I notified participants of recorded interviews and indicated that the study would become a published document upon completion. As part of my ethical responsibilities for maintaining confidentiality guidelines, I provided respondents appropriate information, so that they could make an informed decision about choosing to participate in this research study. Participation in the study was strictly voluntary and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me via email or phone.

During the interview I reminded participants of this and advise them that while I did not anticipate asking any questions that would cause any undue stress, they did have the option of declining to answer a question or withdraw at any time if they were uncomfortable. Prior to analyzing the data, I scrubbed participant's names, agency affiliation and any other identifiable information from the study data to protect participant's privacy rights. As outlined, I provided the letter of consent at first contact to the participants. This included the details of the study, the purpose, risks, benefits, data storage, confidentiality, and compensation plans (Pisani et al., 2016). I assigned the participant and their agency an unidentifiable marker such as an alphanumeric identifier to ensure the confidentiality and privacy. Incentives (free tickets, movie passes or money) have been used in research projects to demonstrate to participants that their time spent sharing their opinion is valued; however, incentives should not be used

to coerce, criticize or penalize less enthusiastic participants (Then et al., 2014). For participating in the two types of interviews, I offered to compensate study participants with a $25 gift card, which I explained to the participants in the informed consent.

Prior to conducting the first interviews, I reviewed this information again. I then collected the signed consent forms from each participant, as this signified their written permission to conduct the interview. Following the interviews, I scanned all notes, journal entries, or written information making them electronic files. These files were then stored, along with all voice recordings, on an encrypted, password-protected external hard drive. The hard copies were destroyed; however, I will maintain the electronic versions of these documents for 5 years. Once the study has concluded, and the 5-year period has passed, I will permanently delete these electronic data files and physically destroy the external hard drive.

Data Collection Instruments

As a qualitative researcher, I am the primary data collection instrument for this study. Based on the specific business problem and research question, I selected a qualitative descriptive multiple case research study, where interviews were a key factor of data collection (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Draper & Swift, 2011; Stewart, 2012). An interview protocol should be followed to ensure reliability and validity (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). As part of my protocol, prior to the interviews I emailed the informed consent forms to participants for their review and signature. I used this form to notify participants in advance that I planned to record the interviews for researcher only purposes.

To explore what intergenerational communication strategies Generation X supervisors use to motivate and engage high performing millennials in the workplace, I used semistructured interviews as primary source information and focus groups as secondary source information as suggested by a few researchers (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Using an interview protocol allowed me to use the same set of predetermined open-ended questions with all participants. The semistructured nature of the interviews also allowed for flexibility of follow-up questions, when I needed to obtain additional clarifications from participants (Draper & Swift, 2011). The primary interviews of supervisory professionals consisted of 12 open-ended semistructured interview questions that related to the participant's experiences as a supervisor (see Appendix A). The secondary focus group interviews were a more flexible, unstructured dialogue (Fusch & Ness, 2015) that included 6 specific interview questions that related to the participant's experiences with having been the recipients of intergenerational communication strategies implemented by a Generation X supervisor (see Appendix A).

Data Collection Technique

The data collection techniques that I used to gather information from Parks and Recreation professionals about their own practices, beliefs, or opinions related to intergenerational communication strategies used to motivate and engage employees were interviews and focus groups. Interviews were the primary data collection technique and the focus group was the secondary data collection technique. I did not conduct a pilot study.

There are advantages and disadvantages for each of these data collection techniques. Researchers using semistructured interviews have the following advantages; they are able to (a) develop interview protocols that provides format control and order, (b) be flexible and conversational, (c) use open-end questions for added depth and foster new emerging concepts, and (d) ask probing questions for clarity that allow for expansion and exploration of idea's and issues beyond the original question (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Doody et al., 2013b; Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Doody and Noonan (2013) noted one disadvantage of this technique involves new researchers missing queues during the interviews to asking for expounding responses or probe for deeper meanings. To combat this, Harrell and Bradley (2009) suggested including neutral probes in the interview protocol as way to prepare researchers to be ready to elicit further information without biasing the participant's answer.

The focus group collection techniques had the following advantages, (a) provides more anonymity, allowing participants the freedom to spontaneously reveal more information, (b) allows for richer and thicker data, and (c) relaxed and safe group setting where participant behaviors and beliefs and peer influences can be observed and documented (Doody et al., 2013c; Then et al., 2014). The disadvantages of the focus group included (a) nonparticipation within the group if there is a lack of trust amount members, (b) dominate influences group (c) difficult organizing schedules (d) accounting for the social and environmental context of comments, and (e) findings not generalizable to the larger population (Doody et al., 2013c). Doody et al., added that focus group help to reveal additional untapped understanding levels on a specific set of

topics that one might not find with other data collection techniques. It also decreases

the bias of individual interviews and includes a range of opinions and perceptions that

may either strengthen, challenge, or form new principles or beliefs (Then et al., 2014).

Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested that when already conducting individual interviews

the choice of adding a focus group for data collection is appropriate to attain a group

perspective about the phenomenon. In both instances, protocols are key for ensure

interviewer consistency so that important information is not missed (Harrell & Bradley,

2009).

In my protocol (see Appendix B), I indicated that I intend to work in

conjunction with a local professional organization on recruitment efforts, to gain a list

of possible participants. Potential participants included interviews with Generation X

cohort supervisory professionals managing multiple generations, specifically those

managing millennials, and who had experience implementing or executing

intergenerational communication strategies that motivate and engage employees. The

other potential participants were for the focus groups. With the focus groups, there

needs to be dynamic, free flowing conversation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Harrell &

Bradley, 2009), so the criteria for this group was that members were of the millennial

cohort group, not currently in a supervisory role of full-time staff and had a Generation

X supervisor.

Once respondents began to reply to the pre-designed email message, I verified

that each person had met the criteria using a purposeful, nonrandom sampling

technique. I obtained permission from the professional organization/agency directors to

use an onsite private conference/meeting room to conduct interview/focus group

sessions with respondents. I emailed the respondents/ potential participants the

informed consent form. Respondents received a follow up phone call to discuss and

review the purpose of the study and go over the informed consent form. As indicated in

the informed consent form, participants answered questions in a confidential interview

environment. Once I had a final list of participants who met the criteria for the study, I

confirmed the schedule and location of interviews. If the onsite location was not

convenient for the interview participants, we arranged for an offsite private

conference/meeting room at a local library to ensure confidentiality and privacy.

Prior to the start of both sessions, semistructured interviews and focus groups, I

noted interview surroundings, date and time, and participant interactions. I re-introduce

myself, the purpose of the research, and the reason for the study. Next, I provided the

ground rules for the interview. I discussed that in participating in these interviews and

focus groups, which were expected to last from 45 to 90 minutes, how I would protect

their confidentiality. I recorded all sessions using my smartphone and a Livescribe

Echo Smartpen to take and digitally transcribe my handwritten notes. Further, to ensure

the reliability of the data, I employed a backup recording device during each session. I

handed each participant a printed copy of their electronically signed Participant

Consent Form to review and when there were no further questions, began the interview,

utilizing the protocol to keep track of the questions yet to be addressed (Harrell&

Bradley, 2009). Throughout the focus group session, I used the nominal group

technique suggested by Doody et al. (2013a), which was a way to reach group

consensus on the structured questions posed by the researcher. I asked participants to respond to questions individually, allowing all group members to participate; preventing any dominating personalities to overtake the group. Then I asked them to prioritize the ideas or suggestions of all group members into a set of prioritized solutions or recommendations that represented the group's preferences.

To conclude each semistructured interview, I reminded participants that I would follow up for a short member-checking interview. Member checking is used to ensure that my review and interpretation of the primary interview responses were what the participants meant, as described by Marshall and Rossman (2016) and Yin (2014), providing further reliability and validity. All data including the secondary data from the focus group, was methodologically triangulated. I uploaded information from multiple data collection methods into NVivo [11]®, for coding and where themes were developed as demonstrated by Doody et al. (2013c). Data saturation was reached, once I could no longer obtain any new information, themes, or coding and study replication was possible, as noted by Fusch and Ness (2015).

Data Organization Technique

Data organization is about giving order, structure and meaning to data collected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and management of data should be conducted in a manner that is controlled and retrievable (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I entered data collected during and after the interview into the Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) computer software package, NVivo[11]®, by QSR International. Chowdhury (2015) suggested that QDA's like NVivo®, assists researchers in moving beyond recording, storing, indexing,

sorting, and coding transforming qualitative analysis, obtained through participant interviews, research journals, field notes/logs, public websites, pictures and themes (AlYahmady & Alabri, 2013), into findings. I generated rich raw data after facilitating the interviews and focus group discussions. The Livescribe Echo Smartpen allowed me to quickly digitize my handwritten notes and upload my interviews to a secure password protected drive. As suggested by Doody et al. (2013c) to enhance the quality of the data, immediately following each session I reviewed the data along with all observational notes. With the Livescribe software, I was able to achieve this, since recordings could be slowed down or sped up during transcription.

Prior to analyzing the data, I scrubbed or de-identified the data as suggested by Pisani et al. (2016) to remove any names, agency affiliation, and any other identifiable information. I coded the data by their association groups as noted by Yin (2014) to ensure participant confidentiality and privacy of their agency affiliation, while maintaining data accuracy and richness (Pisani et al.,2016). Each park and recreation participant were assigned an alphanumeric identifier a unique code consisting of a letter, followed by a three-digit number beginning with 001. I based the number assignment on the order in which the interviews occurred. Participants of the one-on-one interviews received an *X*, in front of their number as their GenX Supervisor designation (i.e. X-001). The focus group participants received an *M* in front of their number as their millennial designation. Since there were multiple focus groups conducted, the first number identified the particular focus group. For example, Participant #4 in the second millennial focus group would have a designation of *M-204*.

I entered this information into NVivo® and in keeping with IRB protocols, I stored all data away on a secured password-protected drive for 5 years. Once the 5-year period has passed, I will permanently delete these electronic data files and physically destroy the external hard drive. Any hard copies that I have not shredded, will also be kept in a secure file cabinet and shredded after 5 years.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process is complex and time consuming, involving more than recording, storing, indexing, sorting, and coding qualitative data (Chowdhury, 2015). I used methodological triangulation as part of the data analysis process in this study to explore varying levels and perspectives. Using the methodological triangulation provided detailed, multi -layered, rich data that improves data analysis and data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015, Gray 2013).

In social research, Denzin (2009) identified four different data analysis processes, called data triangulation, that researcher's use depending on their selected qualitative research design. The four triangulation types were: (a) methodological triangulation, commonly used in case studies since is allow for the correlating data from multiple data collection methods, (b) data triangulation useful for ethnographers who may need to correlate people, time, and space, (c) investigator triangulation for correlating the findings from multiple researchers in a study, suitable in mixed methods research, and (d) theory triangulation, used frequently in grounded theory studies correlating multiple theoretical strategies.

Researchers' gain greater depth and understanding of the phenomenon through each data analysis phase (Doody et al., 2013c). I followed Yin's 5-step analysis approach, which included compiling data; disassembling data; reassembling data; interpreting data and concluding data. The *compiling data phase* is the organizing of the data, to create a database. I continued to methodologically triangulate data and upload information from multiple data collection methods into the Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) computer software package, NVivo[11]®. NVivo[11]® allowed for querying on codes, the ability to create standard/ custom reports, three-dimensional charts, illustrations, tables, spreadsheets and models, and I easily exported results to text files. The use of NVivo[11]® makes data analysis easier on researchers. In the d*isassembling data phase,* there is the breaking down of the complied data in to fragments and labels. This was an ongoing process. Coding as noted by DeMassis and Kotlar (2014) connects data to interpretation. I used data originating from multiple data sources obtained through participant interviews, focus groups, and research journals. The *reassembling data phase* involved clustering and categorizing the labels into group sequences. The *interpreting data phase,* the meaning of the data, is the process of drawing conclusions as words, phrases and broad clusters emerge and then reducing, simplifying the data in to themes (AlYahmady & Alabri, 2013). I reviewed themes to ensure alignment relevance to conceptual framework, my literature, and any recently published research. The *concluding data phase.* I knew that the data had reached saturation once I could no longer obtain any new information, themes, or coding and saw that the study can be replicated as discussed by Fusch and Ness (2015).

Reliability and Validity

In qualitative research, validity and reliability demonstrates a level of rigor. The main concern researchers must be mindful of, regarding reliability, is demonstrating that results are repeatable using the data collection procedures (Baškarada, 2014, Yin, 2014). The ability to validate research serves to strengthen the quality of qualitative research.

Reliability

The reliability (or dependability) refers to the stability of the data (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). To ensure trustworthiness of the research process, I followed the interview protocols for both the group and individual interviews. According to Fusch and Ness (2015) the use of multiple sources of data, help assure the dependability of the findings. My data originated from interviews, focus groups, and audio recordings, and peer reviewed journals. To increase my study reliability, I used both member checking in my semistructured interviews and the nominal group technique with my focus groups to achieve consensus, as noted by Doody et al. (2013c) and Taggart (2013). This ensured that my review and interpretation of the primary and secondary responses are what the participants meant.

Validity

In case study research, Yazan (2015) noted to assure validity, researchers needed to refer to credibility, transferability, and confirmability. To have a creditable study, means conducting the research in a manner that demonstrates it is believable and has value (Houghton et al., 2013). Confirmability in a study indicates that the data is

supported by results and can be authenticated. To determine transferability, a researcher

must be able to adequately describe the original context of the research, so that

conclusions can be made about the study (Houghton et al., 2013). As the qualitative

researcher and the primary data collection instrument as noted by Marshall and

Rossman (2016), I followed specific plans for assuring validity:

Credibility. To demonstrate qualitative credibility, my plan was to

methodologically triangulate the data from the interviews, focus groups, and other

documents. In addition, I used both member checking in my semistructured interviews

and the nominal group technique with my focus groups to achieve consensus, as noted

by Doody et al. (2013c) and Taggart (2013). This ensured that my review and

interpretation of the primary and secondary responses are what the participants meant.

Confirmability. To support and authenticate the data, I kept a reflective diary

with my rationales for decisions made, and journaled personal challenges experienced

during this process. I used NVivo[11®] to keep track of my decisions made during data

collection and analysis, as suggested by Houghton et al. (2013) as another way to

mitigate bias.

Transferability. To describe the original context of the research, I provided

rich and thick data descriptions of the intergenerational communication strategies from

the interview and focus group protocols, which included neutral probes as a way to

prepare and elicit further information without biasing the participant's answer as

discussed by Harrell and Bradley (2009). This information was combined with other

sources of data obtained through relevant data collection methods to answer the

research question and document the elements used in my study, so that others could replicate it in the future.

Transition and Summary

The goal of this qualitative, descriptive multiple case study was to explore what intergenerational communication strategies Generation X supervisors use to motivate and engage high performing millennials. The information resulting from this study may benefit other researchers regarding intergeneration communications between supervisors and subordinates and assist local government agencies, leaders and managers with understanding varying generational needs, attitude perspectives, expectations, and learning styles (Yogamalar & Samuel, 2016) brought into the workplace by the different generational cohorts. The results of this study may contribute to the existing literature by providing insights to organizational management and parks and recreation professionals on how to best reach and build quality intergenerational relationships with future professionals and staff through communication.

In Section 2, I provided an in-depth discussion on planning and conducting the project. I focused on my role as the researcher in the data collection and provided a description of the participants. I also discussed my selected research method and design in detail as well as the ethical responsibilities of the researcher and study instrument. Finally, I provided an in-depth discussion on the data collection process and addressed my study's validity and reliability. In Section 3, I reintroduced my study, presented my research findings and discuss their application to professional practice and social

change. After reporting the results and research conclusions, I provided

recommendations and reflections for the completed study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive multiple case study was to explore the intergenerational communication strategies that Generation X supervisors used to motivate and engage high performing millennials in the workplace. Data were collected through one-on-one semistructured interviews with Generation X supervisors and focus groups comprised of millennial staff employed in the parks and recreation field. The strategies used by frontline supervisors, who may have lived through very different historical periods than their subordinates, played key roles in motivating and engaging staff within other generational cohorts. The overarching research question for this study was the following: What intergenerational communication strategies do Generation X supervisors use to motivate and engage high performing millennials in the workplace?"

Presentation of the Findings

Provided within Section 3 is the presentation of how data were collected and the findings addressing the research question. The research findings were obtained through the purposeful, nonrandom sampling of a population at a certain time in history. While the methodology can be replicated, this snapshot in time capturing people at this stage of their lives cannot. The findings relate to the population, participants' backgrounds, current social and economic circumstances, and life experiences. The findings provide an understanding of patterns and themes across organizational boundaries and are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to the population (Stake, 2005; Yin 2014). The data were coded in several stages using Yin's 5-step analysis approach,

which includes (a) compiling data, (b) disassembling data, (c) reassembling data, (d) interpreting data, and (e) concluding data.

Compiling Data

The data that were compiled during this phase of the study originated from multiple sources. Specifically, the perceptions and experiences of participants were collected directly through semistructured interviews and focus groups. Additionally, I consulted peer reviewed scholarly research articles from the literature review, as well as updated sources relating to generational theory, Generation X supervisors and millennials, employee motivation and engagement, Herzberg's two factor theory, and intergenerational communication, which informed the data analysis. Excluded from the analysis were non peer reviewed sources such as dissertations, opinion pieces, book reviews, and letters to the editor.

Study participant recruitment. During the recruitment phase, between September 2017 and January 2018, 18 individuals responded to recruitment emails and flyers. I engaged with respondents over the phone to discuss details about this voluntary study and the informed consent process. I provided 18 respondents with both the demographic questionnaire and the consent form. After a phone call with my first millennial respondent, who had to be excluded from the study, I quickly identified that there was in issue with my inclusion/exclusion demographic criteria. My focus group's inclusion/exclusion criteria and millennial consent form included "You are in a nonsupervisory position within the parks and recreation field," which unintentionally excluded some of the very staff I was seeking for my focus groups. I also had a

conversation with a parks and recreation director with over 25-years of experience in the field and was able to identify a job classification exclusion that caused otherwise qualified respondents to be disqualified from participating in the study. Many of the potential millennial respondents had job duties that required them to supervise seasonal, part time, temporary, and volunteer staff. It became necessary to request an IRB change in procedures to clarify the wording of one of my criteria statements for focus group participant eligibility (see Appendix C). I requested that the criteria wording be changed to read, "You are not currently in a supervisory role over full time permanent Parks and Recreation employees." Failing to make the change would have severely limited my access to focus group participants. It would have added time constraints to the recruitment process to find other suitable participants. Once this correction was approved by IRB and updated, I was able to move forward with recruitment of members for my secondary population.

Inclusion/exclusion. Using the returned demographic information completed by each respondent, I was able to determine eligibility and place respondents into their corresponding cohort groups; see Figure 1.
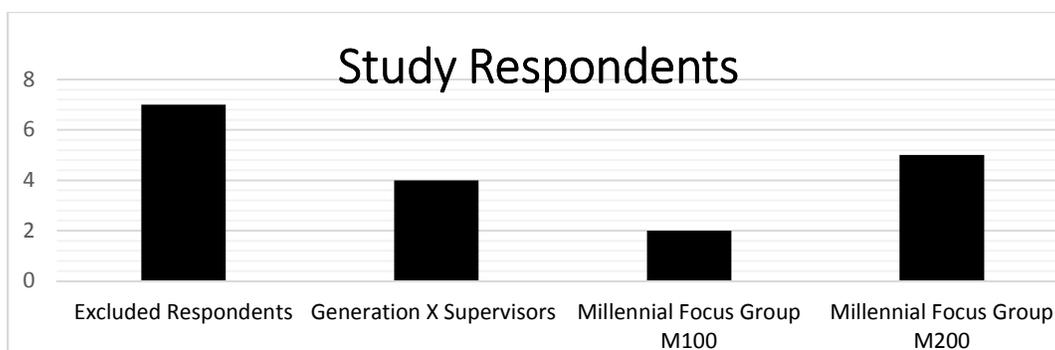
Figure 1. Study respondents.

Three respondents did not return a completed demographic questionnaire, and one respondent did not meet the inclusion criteria; these respondents were excluded. The 14 remaining respondents meeting the inclusion/exclusion criteria (see Appendix D) were invited to participate in the study. However, three participants chose not to attend prior to the millennial focus group session and were voluntarily disqualified. In total, 11 participants consented to participate: four Generation X supervisors for the semistructured interviews, and seven millennials in two focus groups. Five of these participants, two males ($n = 2$, 18%) and three females ($n = 3$, 27%), reported their race as White ($n = 5$, 46%). Of the remaining participants, one male ($n = 1$, 9%) and three females ($n = 3$, 28%) reported their race as Black/African American ($n = 4$, 36%). The final two participants, one male ($n = 1$, 9%) and one female ($n = 1$, 9%), reported their race as Hispanic or Latino ($n = 2$, 18%), as identified in Figure 2. This diverse group of study participants represented six parks and recreation agencies within the southeastern region of the United States, including four local municipalities, one county department, and one state organization.
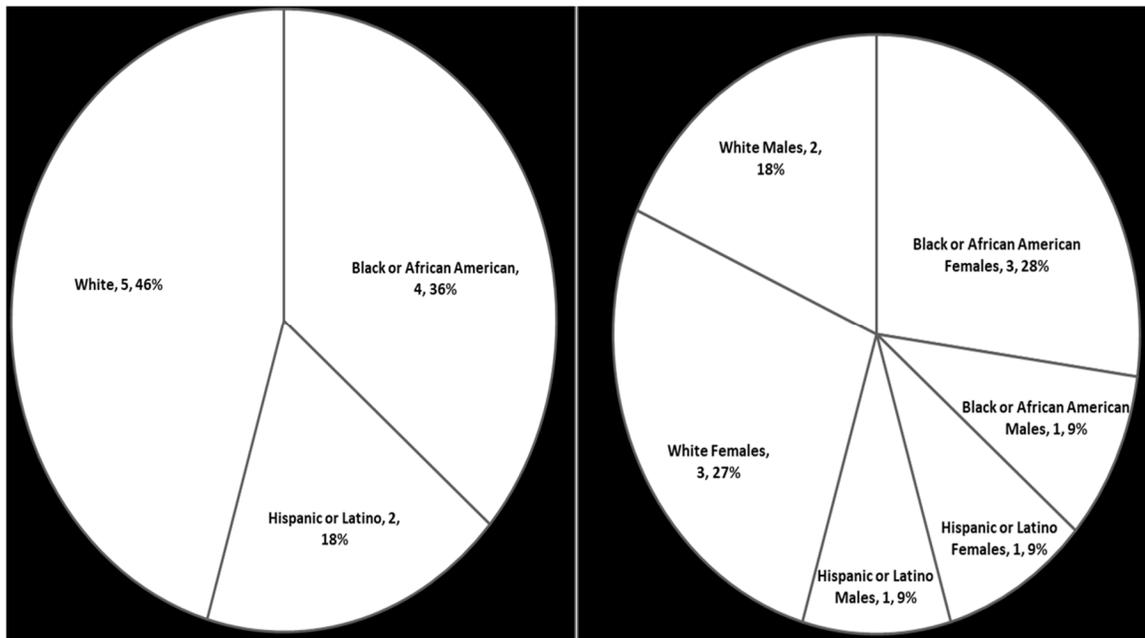
Figure 2. Study participants by race and gender.

      Individual codes were assigned to all study participants and organizations to

protect and provide confidentiality, as described in the interview protocol guide (found

in Appendix B). As described in the consent form, all study participants were offered a

$25 gift card as a thank you for participating in this research study; however, three of

the four Generation X supervisor participants declined this incentive, advising that they

were happy to give back to their profession through their participation in the study.

      Cohorts and subgroups. Once the cohort groups were identified, I was able to

use the information gathered from the demographic questionnaire to further divide

participants into cohorts and subgroups according to their birth years. To analyze

whether there were differences within the generations, I followed Kupperschmidt's

(2000) suggestion to divide participants into 5- to 7-year segments representing the first

wave, core group, and last wave of each generation (as noted in Table 2), and then,

based on participants' birth years, I identified the developmental timeframes in which participants reached age 17-23 years, as noted by Mannheim (1952); see Table 5. Grouping participants into age related categories was important because cohort members may have different developmental needs and behaviors based on when they came of age as noted by several researchers (Bolton et al., 2013; Costanza et al., 2012, Debevec et al., 2013; Kupperschmidt, 2000; Mannheim, 1952; Parry & Urwin, 2017; Smola & Sutton, 2002). This was done to understand any shared cohort experiences and intergenerational differences that may have shaped the cohort's long term core values that participants brought into the workplace.

Table 5

Intragenerational Developmental Stages and Coming of Age Timeframes

Study participants	Cohort subgroup	Developmental stages	Coming of age range (17–23 years old)
X-001, X-002, X-004	Gen X core	Born from 1970 to 1974	1987–1997
X-003	Gen X last wave	Born from 1975 to 1979	1992–2002
M-101, M-102	Millennial first wave	Born from 1980 to 1986	1997–2009
M-202, M-204	Millennial core	Born from 1987 to 1992	2004–2015
M-201, M-203, M-203	Millennial last wave	Born from 1993 to 1999	2010–2022

Note. Developmental stages and coming of age ranges are based the study participants' birth years. Generation X participants were born between 1970 and 1979, and their age range as of 2017 was 38–42 years. Millennial participants were born between 1980 and 1999, and their age range as of 2017 was 18–37 years. Developmental stages adapted from Kupperschmidt (2000). The coming-of-age range was suggested by Mannheim (1952).

Interview process. All interviews from this study took place between November 2017 and January 2018. The primary semistructured interviews with supervisors all occurred first. Study participants were reminded that they could request to be voluntarily removed from this study, even during member checking, which was conducted several months later, from late July 2018 to early August 2018. At the end of the study, no other participants withdrew. Then, to broaden and deepen the understanding of the topic, the secondary focus groups were conducted between December 2017 and January 2018. There was an approximate 10 to 20 year age gap between the two cohort groups in this study (see Table 6), all participants answered each interview question based on their knowledge and expertise until data saturation occurred.

Table 6

Participant Interview Information

Cohort group	Participants' mean age (as of 2018)	No. of participants	Interview type	No. of interviews	Audio recording mean
Generation X supervisor	45	4	Semistructured	4	36 minutes
Older M-100 millennials	34	2	Focus group	1	69 minutes
Younger M-200 millennials	24	5	Focus group	1	72 minutes

Note. There were four individual semistructured interviews conducted with Generation X supervisors (whose average age was 45 years old), and each audio recording lasted approximately 36 minutes. Two separate millennial focus groups (older and younger) were conducted. The audio recording for these two groups lasted just under 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Contained within almost 5 hours of interview audio recordings were a wealth of data rich experiences and thick data descriptions of participant perceptions on how to motivate and engage millennials through intergenerational communication. During the interview process, participants addressed the same 12 interview questions (or, in the case of the focus group, the same six questions). Because the aim of the research was to explore the intergenerational communication strategies used by Generation X supervisors to motivate and engage high performing millennials, questions were focused on (a) intergenerational differences between supervisors and employees, (b) the kind of communication used, and (c) what and how rewards were used to engage and motivative within these interactions. Depending on the participant's response to questions, varied informal unstructured probes were applied as noted in the study interview protocols. Each interview type (semistructured and focus group) started out with the same informal unstructured interview question: "How did you get started in Parks and Recreation?" This open ended question was used as an icebreaker to ease the participants into the interview conversation and to understand participants' perceptions of the parks and recreation career field.

Semistructured interviews. The Generation X supervisors represented four different parks and recreation agencies in the southeastern region of the United States. The supervisors had between 10 and 20 years of full time experience in the parks and recreation field. Three of the Generation X supervisors, Participants X-001, X-002, and X-004, were identified as members of the cohort subgroup Generation X core, having come of age between 1987 and 1997. These Generation X core participants each had

earned bachelor's degrees. X-003 was the youngest supervisor, born 2 years into the

last wave of the Generation X cohort that came of age from 1992 to 2002, and had

earned a master's degree (see Table 7).

Table 7

Supervisor Interview Demographics

Participant code	Birth year	Education	Agency	Job title	Years of service
X-001	1971	Bachelor's	MSC1	P&R manager	15-20
X-002	1974	Bachelor's	MSC3	P&R deputy director	10-15
X-003	1977	Master's	MSC2	Special projects administrator	10-15
X-004	1972	Bachelor's	MSC4	Wildlife Specialist III	10-15

Within each of their workplaces, the Generation X supervisors were all in the

middle phase of their career, were more feedback oriented, and were active information

senders within their organizations. Supervisors reported that their preparation for

supervising multiple generations in the workplace was developed through participation

in advanced organizational trainings and certifications, networking opportunities,

college coursework, and continuing education opportunities through various

governmental agencies, via inhouse self-paced and online training courses, books, and

videos. All of them discussed their experiences and perceptions relating to the field and

how they had used communication to effectively motivate and engage high performing

millennial staff within their respective local government agencies.

Focus groups. The first millennial focus group (M100) was held in a meeting room at a local public library. A total of five participants were expected when this group was originally set up. However, due to the three participants being voluntarily disqualified, I anticipated a low turnout for this scheduled session. Hoping to recruit additional walk in respondents, I posted additional flyers at various recreation centers. On the day of the focus group session, I had prepared additional demographic questionnaires and consent forms for any possible walk ins; however, there were none. The two remaining confirmed participants attended this session. This focus group, given the name M100, had a mean age of 33 years (see Table 8 for the M100 millennials focus group demographics). The members of the M100 group had birth years between 1980 and 1986, identifying them as first wave millennials. This group would have experienced their coming of age developmental years (ages 17-23) between 1997 and 2009, as noted in Table 5. Participant M-101 and Participant M-102 each earned a bachelor's degree and were full time permanent employees within their respective agencies.

Table 8

M100 Millennial Focus Group Demographics

Participant code	Birth year	Education	Agency	Job title	Years of service
M-101	1985	Bachelor's	MSC5	Recreation Coordinator II	5-10
M-102	1984	Bachelor's	MSC6	Parks and open space planner	1-3

Due to the low turnout rate among the first group of millennial participants, I continued to recruit through various parks agencies. The second focus group, named M200, was comprised of part time permanent millennial participants. This group's birth years ranged between 1988 and 1996. The members of this group represented a mixture of core and last wave millennials (see Table 5). All the members of this group had some college experience, and their mean age was 24 years (see Table 9 for additional M200 demographic information).

Table 9

M200 Millennial Focus Group Demographics

Participant code	Birth year	Education	Agency	Job title	Years of service
M-201	1995	Some college	MSC5	Recreation leader	Less than 1 year
M-202	1992	Bachelor's	MSC5	Recreation leader	1-3
M-203	1993	Some college	MSC5	Recreation leader	1-3
M-204	1988	Bachelor's	MSC5	Recreation leader	3-5
M-205	1996	Some college	MSC5	Recreation leader	Less than 1 year

This was a semi self-managed millennial working unit of part time recreation leaders. At the time of this interview, they had been working together for approximately a year and half; bringing activities and sports programming to youth within community parks. This work group had experienced a supervisor change within the year prior to

this interview, but they continued to be managed by a Generation X manager. Since the M200 members worked out of the same main location, they all agreed, with their supervisor's consent, to arrive two hours ahead of their scheduled afternoon shift to participate in the focus group. At the time of the session, the agency facility was closed, which allowed this group to speak freely in a confidential and nonintimidating environment. In total, six participants were expected to attend this Focus Group. However, on the day of the session only four of the five participants, who had previously sent in their consent forms, showed up. Focus Group Participant M-205, completed the demographic survey and signed the consent form on the day of the focus group. When this interview occurred, the two oldest members, Participant M-202 and Participant M-204, of this focus group session, had each earned their bachelor's degrees. These two millennials were a part of the Core Wave subgroup, between 1987 to 1992, who had as of 2015 reached the end of their developmental stage, early adulthood (at age 23). The remaining three M200 group members (Participant M-201, Participant M-203 and Participant M-205) were the youngest, still attending college, and in transition from their adolescence stage to early adulthood. As such, these participants were classified as millennial—last wave. The developmental years for millennial—last wave, began in 2010 and will end by 2022.

During each focus groups sessions, participants engaged in both an individual and group activity related to 20 of Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene factors and their associated characteristics (see Table 4). This activity was broken into two segments and was conducted to understand if members (individually and as groups) where

intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. Focus group members were each provided with a worksheet that listed the factor and the factor characteristic. At the end of each focus group the worksheets were collected.

The Individual Activity was part one and occurred at the beginning of the interview session. Members were asked to review the list and think about the work that they did within Parks and Recreation. Individually, members were asked to write their top five factors that were most importance to them (1 to 5) with 1 being the most important) on the work sheet under the *ME* column. Once this task was completed, focus group members were asked to turn over their worksheets and I began asking the focus group interview questions. The Group Activity was Part Two of the exercise. After the last interview question and response was completed, I asked the focus group members to turn their worksheet back over and tasked each participant to identify their top five picks, while I kept a tally of all responses. Next members were asked to work as a group to take their top five and come up with a top five list for the group listed under the 'Others' column. This activity required each Focus Group member to talk about why they selected the factor that they did and find a group consensus to their top five choices, also in order of group importance. The M100 Focus group members first identified the factors that were most important individually (see Table 10).

Table 10

Individually Selected Motivation Hygiene Factors for M100

Code	Factor	Characteristic	Intrinsic/extrinsic
1	Ability Utilization	Using your strengths, personal abilities and skill sets to complete a task	Intrinsic (Motivator)
3	Activity	Remaining active and engaged while at work	Intrinsic (Motivator)
8	Coworkers	Relationships with peers and supervisors	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
9	Creativity	Trying new approaches and methods	Intrinsic (Motivator)
11	Moral Values	Making good ethical choices	Intrinsic (Motivator)
13	Responsibility	Ability to make my own decisions and choices	Intrinsic (Motivator)
14	Security	Feeling safe and secure in a job	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
19	Variety	Freedom to make changes and do things different	Extrinsic (Hygiene)

The members were then asked to select the five most important factors to the group. The M100 members were easily able to reach a consensus of their group selected factors; however, they did not initially agree on the exact order. After discussing their individual perceptions of each factor's characteristics, the members were able to agree upon their top five selected factors in order of importance as a M100 group, as identified in Table 11.

Table 11

Group Selected Motivation Hygiene Factors for Focus Group M100

Code	M100 selected factors	Factor	Characteristic	Intrinsic/extrinsic
13	1	Responsibility	Ability to make my own decisions and choices	Intrinsic (Motivator)
8	2	Coworkers	Relationships with peers and supervisors	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
3	3	Activity	Remaining active and engaged while at work	Intrinsic (Motivator)
1	4	Ability Utilization	Using your strengths, personal abilities, and skill sets to complete a task	Intrinsic (Motivator)
9	5	Creativity	Trying new approaches and methods	Intrinsic (Motivator)

Note. Focus Group M100 participants discussed and collaborated to identify the five factors that were most important to them as a group.

Four of the five factors selected were intrinsic motivators. The members were able remove *security, variety* and *moral values,* since they felt these factors closely tied together with *responsibility* and having freedom of choice. They stated that having responsibility provided them with the ability to be creative, using their available the skill sets to actively engage work and accomplish tasks. The only extrinsic motivator for this group was the *Coworker* relationships that they had with peers and supervisors. The participants were torn about where this hygiene factor belonged in the final order of importance. However, after talking together and working as a group, they decided that *Coworker* relationships should follow *responsibility,* since having strong positive relationships with people at work would help to keep them engaged in their job and work environment.

The M200 focus group was a much larger group than the M100 group, therefore it was expected that they would initially have more intrinsic and extrinsic factors listed. The M200 focus group identified 14 individual factors (see Table 12).

Table 12

Individually Selected Motivation Hygiene Factors for M200

Code	Factor	Characteristic	Intrinsic/extrinsic
1	Ability Utilization	Using your strengths, personal abilities, and skill sets to complete a task	Intrinsic (Motivator)
2	Achievement	The sense of relief felt when a work goal and or objective has been met	Intrinsic (Motivator)
4	Advancement	Personal and career development fostering movement into higher levels within the organization	Intrinsic (Motivator)
6	Company Policies	Satisfaction with policies of the organization	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
7	Coworkers	Relationships with peers and supervisors	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
8	Creativity	Trying new approaches and methods	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
9	Independence	Self-directed at work	Intrinsic (Motivator)
10	Moral Values	Making good ethical choices	Intrinsic (Motivator)
12	Responsibility	Ability to make my own decisions and choices	Intrinsic (Motivator)
13	Security	Feeling safe and secure in a job	Intrinsic (Motivator)
14	Social Service	Helping others	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
16	Supervision— Human Relations	The way the supervisor interacts with employees	Intrinsic (Motivator)
18	Variety	Freedom to make changes and do things different	Extrinsic (Hygiene)
19	Working Conditions	Combined aspects of the work environment	Extrinsic (Hygiene)

Note. Focus Group M200 participants discussed and collaborated to identify the five factors that were most important to them as a group.

The discussion this group had in narrowing down these factors to five, was a lively and animated process. At one point during the process some members did not

think that gaining group consensus would be possible. However, as they talked through
their reasons and thought about the group, members were able to eventually reach the
five factors that made the most sense for their group. They decided on their combined
top five factors in the order of importance, from 1 to 5; (see Table 13).

Table 13

Group Selected Motivation Hygiene Factors for Focus Group M200

Code	M200 selected factors	Factor	Characteristic	Intrinsic/extrinsic
13	1	Responsibility	Ability to make my own decisions and choices	Intrinsic (Motivator)
16	2	Supervision—Human Relations	The way the supervisor interacts with employees	Intrinsic (Motivator)
3	3	Ability Utilization	Using your strengths, personal abilities, and skill sets to complete a task	Intrinsic (Motivator)
4	4	Advancement	Personal and career development fostering movement into higher levels within the organization	Intrinsic (Motivator)
19	5	Working Conditions	Combined aspects of the work environment	Extrinsic (Hygiene)

Note. Focus Group M100 participants discussed and collaborated to identify the five factors that were most important to them as a group.

The group selected *Responsibility* as their top factor. They removed *company
policies, social service, variety* and *independence* as options, citing that working for a
public agency doing things differently takes a while to get approvals to make changes.
They also noted that as public servants it was already their responsibility to help people,
s*ocial service,* and having the ability to make their own decisions and choices are m*oral
values,* so the group decided to eliminate these factors from the list, noting these factors

fell under *responsibility*. The M200 group identified s*upervision-human relations* as

their second factor. While they acknowledged that *coworkers* did make a difference in

the work environment, they decided to remove this factor from the list. Their overall

perception was that the way a supervisor interacted with their employees was more

important. M200 members noted that a person's strengths are typically something they

like to do and found that having the freedom to use and focus on their own skills

extremely satisfying. Therefore, *Ability Utilization* became the groups third factor.

Advancement was noted as being important to the group because members hoped that

the skills they learned in their past, present and future positions would allow them to

move up somewhere in their current agency or on to another organization that made

them happy. The group also determined that *working conditions* encompassed *security*,

so the latter was removed from the list. *Working condition*, became the groups number

five, because the group perceived having safe working conditions as a standard

employment expectation.

Disassembling Data

The thick data from the interviews and other data sources allowed me to

progress to the second phase of the Yin's 5-step analysis approach (Yin, 2014),

disassembling data and understand the richness of the evidence obtained from the data.

This was an ongoing process of breaking down the complied data in to smaller

fragments and labels. Immediately following each interview and focus group

discussion, I reviewed the data collected along with my observational notes as Doody et

al. (2013c) suggested. During this step, I digitized my handwritten notes taken with my Smartpen using the Livescribe Echo software.

Prior to transcribing the interview data, I created a template in Word, so that all the interviews transcripts were formatted the same way. Where each interview question, researcher probing questions, and participant's responses were given a heading style level, APA Level 1 and APA Level 2 respectively. This would later make it easier to individually code, sort and organize participant responses and interview questions once the data were imported into NVivo [11®]. To develop the verbatim transcripts, I spent many weeks listening to and playing back the audio recordings, ensuring and accurate accounting of each interview; resulting in a total 95-pages of transcripts. The four individual interviews and two focus groups were allowed the data reassembly data phase to being, where this data was clustered, categorized and labeled into sequence of groups.

Reassembling Data

Once the transcribed interviews had been read multiple times, to become familiar with the content, I begin by using within case analysis as described by Duxbury and Ormsbee, (2017), where the disassembled information was assigned initial codes based on the interview question being addressed. I chose to conduct this first analysis by hand and later transferred into NVivo [11®], where the use of features like thematic auto coding helped verify that I had not missed coding any of the data captured through the first coding. Once all the cases had been coded and I was able to identify patterns, similarities, and differences among the responses. They were

regrouped based on the conceptual framework and then compared between cases and

the responses from. Millennial groups/subgroups. As suggested researchers, this

process was repeated during several coding sessions, and the initial codes where

modified and changed as new thoughts and themes emerged to ensure the coding was

empirically grounded (Duxbury & Ormsbee, 2017; Gordon, 2017 and Yin,2014).

Member checking occurred during this phase. Several months after our semistructured

interview had conducted (late July 2018 through early August 2018), supervisor

participants were presented with a member checking document (see Appendix F) that

contained summarized themes developed through interim analysis of all the interviews

results and study participants anonymized illustrative quotes (providing theme context).

These participants either in our face-to-face conversation or through and email provided

response indicated that the synthesized theme results reflected their true experience and

did not have any new or clarifying information to provide. This led into the interpreting

data phase, the process of drawing conclusions as words, phrases and broad clusters

emerge and then reducing, simplifying the data in to themes (AlYahmady & Alabri,

2013).

Interpreting Data

During the interpreting data phase, clusters of words and phrases that were

added, which enabled me to identify emerging findings & themes. In total there were

four main themes within this study: (a) culture and socialization, (b) relationship

building and intergenerational connectedness, (c) employee growth and development,

and (d) rewards and recognition. These four themes identified the way frontline

Generation X supervisors and millennial employees perceived intergenerational communication strategies were used to prepare for and respond effectively to the motivational needs of a multi-generational workforce. Table 14 is the overall summary of the data collected (through four supervisor interviews and two focus group sessions) and contains the number of sources, and the number of references identified for each theme.

Table 14

Identified Themes Referenced in the Data Triangulation Process

Theme	Theme descriptions	No. of sources	No. of references
Theme 1	Culture and socialization	6	142
Theme 2	Relationship building and intergenerational connectedness	6	128
Theme 3	Employee growth and development	6	100
Theme 4	Rewards and recognition	6	68

These emerging themes were compared and checked against the conceptual framework, literature review, member checking, and recently published research for alignment. Tables 15 - 18 include each specific theme and identify its related subthemes, number of sources, and the number of references. The methodological triangulation of this data allowed me to further explore varying perspectives, assure data saturation by the topic and create thematic narratives.

Theme 1: Culture and Socialization

This theme culture and socialization emerged from the data provided by Generation X supervisors and millennial focus group participants on what communication strategies they perceived to lead to the engagement and motivation of millennials performing at high levels. The subthemes found in Table 15, describe participant's views of, (a) their youth developmental experience leading up to careers/jobs within parks and recreation and (b) how employee-organization fit, and onboarding was used to set early expectations.

Table 15

Theme 1: Culture and Socialization Subthemes

Subthemes	Subtheme descriptions	No. of sources	No. of references
Subtheme 1	Developmental years	6	36
Subtheme 2	Employee–organization fit and onboarding	6	106

Developmental years. The developmental years of study participants' show that each agency should consider how it communicates its culture and socialization process to its mix of employee's. Nearly 100% of all participants stated that they had interacted with the structured work culture of parks and recreation during their developmental years, either through youth employment or practicing in programing. Participant X-001 noted he was introduced as youth to parks programing and employment. During college is where this participant gained interest in parks and recreation as a profession. He described his entry is as a "kind of a natural attraction to

recreation activities, special events, those types of things…I became interested and just really enjoyed serving the community."

Likewise, Participant X-002 also was involved in Parks and Rec from youth through college; however, he commented that this was not his intended field leaving college and that it was "…by accident, I had no clue that Parks and Rec was even and option." After earning a business degree, he went to work in the corporate world and found that it was not the field for him and took a "Rec Coordinator position" that had come open. He noted it felt "like a match and "about 6 or 7 years into working in Parks and Rec" he decided to get serious and make it a career. Similarly, Participant X-004 admitted to completing an internship while in college with a local municipality/public agency. Then after college, she worked, "… for a couple years…in the private sector looking for the right job" until she, "…fell backwards into the field…[when] there was a job opening"

Participant X-003, due to her age was placed in the Generation X Last Wave cohort group, meaning her developmental years (age 17-23) occurred between 1992-2002. This participant has 10 years of recreation experience and holds a master's degree. She started out in her youth working as a Summer Lifeguard in high school and then through college. In college, Participant X-003 studied medicine; however, she recalled "a bad experience in the NICU [Neonatal Intensive Care Unit], that made me realize that maybe I did not have the heart to be in medicine" It was here that she thought about her youth experiences in recreation [that] she realize she could "make

Parks and Recreation a career and it wasn't just something to pay the bills during

college."

Participant M-101 noted that she, "I grew up in Parks and Rec, so I participated

in programs in played sports, my mom worked for the department…" She has been

supervised by a Generation X Managers for the last 15 years since she continued

working part time in after school and aquatics programs throughout college where she

continued with her passion for "helping teens get to their fullest potential…". This

participant discovered in college that, "Recreation Management called my name, so I

majored in it; and graduated in 2009, just kept moving up the chain." She is currently a

Recreation Coordinator II, supervising five other millennial staff members. She further

stated that, "Park and Recreations has been my heart…I started when I was about 3

[laughs], and it continues to be... and I hope to further my career and everything in Park

and Recreation."

Like other participants, Participant M-102 identified with growing and being

involved in various outdoor activities and afterschool programs as a youth. In college

she continued working on community projects and studies involving the environment

and Parks and Recreation. She found that while she "liked Parks and Recreation" and

had "professors in the Parks and Recreation department" she asserted that she did not

"really come to that, until much later." She described how she went "down a different

[career] path than I had originally intended… [but after] 5 years and both in private

sector [as an Environmental Scientist] "I didn't feel happy about it. I didn't feel like it

was calling me, and I was bored, and I just wanted out…I just wanted to get back to

government. I hated private sector." So, the participant fell back on her strength, and pursued a position that she describes as "…like a dream job...how did I not know I wanted to do this all the time" Participant M-102 was almost giddy as she explained, "…This is supposed to be my life! So, it was a longer journey for me, for sure, to come to that conclusion that Parks, and Recreation was how I wanted to spend the rest of my career life."

Much like the experiences and stories told by the supervisors and older M100 focus group, many of the M200 focus group participants shared that their start in Parks and Recreation begin through, (a) youth work experience, as described Participant M-204 who stated, "When I was younger, I was in the after school program and I really liked it and thought it would be a cool job to do." and Participant M-205, who "…went to a lot of Rec Centers as a kid". (b) exposure in college as noted by Participant M-201's statement, "I went to college at ASU graduated and decide I wanted to design parks about my junior year. So, I started trying to get a job with the [current municipality/public agency]. This was essentially the first one that was available, so I took it and I'm enjoying," and (c) dissatisfaction with prior employment as indicated by Participant M-202, who said, "…I didn't like my last job, and I got this one. I been here for almost 2 years. I really like it". One main difference between this groups and the two others, was 4 of 5 M200 members of mentioned familial/friend influences and or connections that had a direct impact on their seeking a position with a municipality; which confirms Gerhardt (2016) assertion that age based generational identity is exemplified by strong formative influences like parental styles and youth work

experiences These consequential formative experiences have been shown to affect

millennials' outlook on life events that later unfold (Latkovikj & Popovska, 2016)

For instance, Participant M-202, specified, "… well most of my family worked

for the [current municipality/public agency], they didn't work for the Parks and Rec

department. But my mom just told me to apply." Participant M-203 also stated, "I heard

about a 'get hired event' through a family friend. I decided to go for an interview for

that. that was about a year and a half ago, the interview was successful, and I was hired

to do [current work unit]". Participant M-204] explained, "… a friend of mine worked

with the park department and told me to apply for it; and I did it. I got the job 4 years

ago" and Participant M-205 concurred that their journey was similar, noting, "…my

friend he works for the [current municipality/public agency] and he helped me fill out

the application and that's how I started working in [current work unit]". These findings

align with Mannheim's generation theory (1952) which suggested that the coming of

age timeframe (generally between the years 17 to 23) greatly influenced not only the

attitudes, values, and personality characteristics of the individual, but also the shared

experiences of the cohort (Costanza et al., 2012, Debevec, Schewe, Madden, &

Diamond, 2013) and later affected their life's outlook, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors

(Mannheim, 1952). This also holds with modern researcher's views that the

developmental years (moving from parental control into early adulthood) is where

culture maybe at its most influential (Campbell, Twenge, & Campbell, 2017). Within

various sections of organizations, there are subcultures and norms that develop,

therefore, supervisors need to engage with millennials as they continue to enter

the workforce and support relationship building through continuous communication and socialization.

Employee–organization fit and onboarding. Supervisors within this study suggested, employee -organization fit, the matching of an individual's characteristics to a job and its culture (Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, & Pemberton-Jones, 2015), begins with the initial onboarding process. Participant X-004 reported that "getting to know your employees…starts with the interview process, and … the standard question, 'what your strengths and weaknesses are?' Participant X-001 agreed and recommended that organizations and supervisors "set the stage for high expectations" for all employees and providing high support for employees to perform their jobs. Since millennials may not be aware of the job characteristics that they find most appealing, this Generation X Supervisor also noted that it is up supervisors to guide these new employees to understand that and help shape millennials' preferences, by exposing staff to a variety of jobs aspects that millennials may not have considered. Likewise, Participant X-002 acknowledged when working with new employees for the first time that he always tries to meet them one-on-one, to understand what to expect from each other. He understands "that there are going to be aspects of the job that the employee is not going always relate too, or just not going to come easy for the employee." He noted through these conversations and getting to know them better, "you kind of get a feel for what their good at…then you can start working with them in the areas where they could use a little more improvement."

Engaging in initial supervisor -employee communications were important socialization strategy's these supervisors used to understand and develop millennials by providing a connection to the work being conducted and utilizing employee's best talents. This strategy aligns with earlier research conducted by Ferri-Reed (2012) regarding the need to assist millennials in learning organizational norms, acceptable workplace behaviors, as well as social expectations. This strategy has also been shown to improve organizational attachments (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018). A few participants from M200 also group confirmed that this type of strategy was a reason for their current success. Participant M-202 maintaining "The reason I was chosen for the position that I was hired to do for [current work unit] was because my manager gave me a lot of tasks to do, and she made sure that she talked to me and knew what I was good at. Participant M204 felt because of her supervisor -employee communications, her supervisor what able to push her boundaries where "Everything that I told her I was afraid to do, she made me do" which she affirmed "made me better…." And helped her complete tasks assigned tasks

Effective supervisors who can accurately communicate the values, qualities and culture of their agencies to employees can help reinforce wanted behaviors and support person-organization fit. This strategy of learning what employees like and dislike about work assignments, then exposing employees to difficult challenges and tasks that are outside of their comfort zone is supported by managing through motivation (Herzberg, 1987) and could improve employee potential, contributing to employee growth. Drawing from Mannheim's (1952) generation theory and the experiences and

perception of both Focus Groups, it was found that the older millennial focus group (M100) had more of an implicit understanding of the organization culture because they were more closely connected to their Generation X supervisors and had more of a common background to draw on resulting increased perception of employee fit. As the younger group of millennials (M200) gain experience and grow within their organizational environment, it would be expected that there familiarly with the culture and way things are done, would result in improved fit and engagement.

Theme 2: Relationship Building and Intergenerational Connectedness

The second theme that emerged from the analysis of the interpreted interview summaries was the need for formal and informal interactions that allowed Generation X Supervisor/millennial Employees to building good relationships and foster supportive intergenerational connections. Research supports this theme and has shown that employees tend to perform better when they perceive their supervisors to work closely with them (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018). The three subthemes that evolved are found in Table 16.

Table 16

Theme 2: Relationship Building and Intergenerational Connectedness Subthemes

Subthemes	Subtheme descriptions	No. of sources	No. of references
Subtheme 1	Generational awareness	6	47
Subtheme 2	Supervisor support and productivity	5	31
Subtheme 3	Preferred communication styles	6	50

Generational awareness. Differences in work values and attitudes between generations do exits (Chen & Lian, 2015; Parry& Urwin, 2017; Rentz, 2015) and within each organizational structure, supervisors and employees must be aware of how their communication styles impact working relationships. It has been reported that Generation X cohort members are comfortable working in unstructured autonomous environments with very little guidance (Eastland & Clark, 2015); whereas millennial cohort members respond to more structured work environments, frequent supervision contact and constant feedback (Clark, 2017, Johnson & Johnson, 2016; Naim & Lenka, 2018). Researchers Zapalska, McCarty, Young-McLear, and Kelley (2017) noted leaders must be able to communicate clear direction, vision, and drive. Therefore, building good relationships with millennial employees begins with a supervisor's own awareness and understanding of the complex and intersectional generational identities within their work units. Regarding conflicts, Participant X-001 commented that supervisor's communication needed to be "impartial, objective, consistent, fair, and firm...for those in conflict to understand what's acceptable and what's not." He further noted that supervisors should be aware of the different needs of each generational cohort and being able to understand and "customize management" will get the best responses from workers.

Participant X-002 added that he thinks about what excites and motivates him, then he tries to replicate that "same energy" he seeks in his supervisor, specifically things like "freedom to work and direct supervisor trust." Both Participants X-003 and

X-004 concluded that millennials want to know what their impact is on their agencies

and how the they are making a difference.

Supervisor support and productivity. When supervisors work together with

employees, employees know exactly what to expect and what they must do for

professional growth within an organization. This enables supervisors to impact

employee's ability to reach high work engagement (Borst, Kruyen & Lako, 2017).

Consistent with this message about supervising millennials, Participant X-004 asserted

that supervisors needed to be their support system, providing the tools and treating

them well, showing appreciation, showing kindness, and giving feedback. She noted

only then, "could supervisors provide what [millennial employees] need to be

successful, they're going to grow. They're going to do their best, absolutely."

To help employees keep an open eye for opportunities supportive of their goals,

the supervisors in this study specified that they provided their employees with constant

and consistent feedback. Most noted that these messages were communicated

throughout the employee's career within their agencies beyond their mid-point

evaluations, annual evaluation. Participant X-001 discussed employee fits as being an

important part of his agencies culture and note that his agency did not "do status quo."

Meaning when his agency recruits for a position, applicants know exactly what core

competencies' the agency is looking for. Then they set clear 12 month objectives and

have regular 3 month, 6 month and 1 year discussions on how employees they are

doing. "If someone is excelling, we look to challenge them and maximize the utilization

of their talents; and if somebody isn't doing their part, then we will have that

conversation, as well". Processes like employee appraisals, provides employees the opportunity to discuss their expectations by giving and receiving feedback and creating plan for personal development (Weinzweig, 2017).

To promote performance and efficiency noted by Hofstetter and Harpaz (2015), the supervisors participating in this study also found that getting to know staff individually, setting expectations and establishing ground rules was an effective way to engage and motivate employees. Participants X-003 and X-004, used the strategy that focused on developing by "mostly just getting to know the employees" which is in alignment with other research that says satisfied employees are more productive when the workplace is humanized (Patil & Joshi, 2018). X-003 acknowledged that having staff be part of the conversations/ solutions was encouraging to millennials. She suggested that it showed them that their thoughts and opinions were valued and provided them with a sense of ownership in decision-making. This she noted helps to create buy-in, encouraged team work, and group camaraderie where the "they want to work with you, they want to work for you, and they'll want to do a good job".

Preferred communication styles. According to Ferri-Reed (2014) the use of multiple communication channels should be used to communicate with employees including meetings, emails, and teleconferencing. Supervisors and millennial focus group study participants were asked about specific communication strategies they used or preferred. Supervisors noted that it was first important to be self-aware their own communication style and preferences. They identified the communication styles that they perceived as more closely aligns to how millennials prefer to communicate as text

and email over, actual phone calls. (i.e. learning and incorporating multiple methods to reach out to staff (i.e. text and various social media platforms) due to their user familiarity and ease of access.

Participants also advised that the type of communication used and how the information is being presented will be dependent upon who is being engaged (younger vs older millennials). Participant X-004 cautioned against, "talking down to [millennials] like they are still little kids, they're not, they're full grown adults want to be treated well and talked like they are human beings." However, supervisors recommended being open to adjusting their style to fit the language and methods used by millennials. Participant X-002 noted he attempts to "exhaust all way of communicating; understanding that everyone communicates a bit differently". He noted texting has become a professional way of keeping in contact with people. Participant X-002 also mentioned the use of various social media mediums, like Snap Chats and Instagram, a being very effective ways of trying to get in contact with millennials and suggested that the response time was much quicker, when trying to reach them outside of work. Participant X-003 further advised that she found it helpful to have "group meetings and team meetings to bring individual strengths to the table through free-flowing ideas." While "working together to bring forth ideas as a group" was found to be beneficial, this participant noted that "you have to be able to guide these conversations" as part of setting appropriate expectations and ground rules. This point is supported in the research that suggested frequent supervisor communication about specific work expectations related to rules, tasks completion and meeting deadlines

should be provided to millennial employees, to help them connect and understand for their contributions to the organization (Clark, 2017; Johnson & Johnson, 2016). In instances where the final decisions needed to be ultimately left up to the supervisor, X-003 acknowledged that supervisors should make "sure that you appreciate [the groups] contribution and point of view" but be direct and open enough to help millennial staff members, "understand that, you're making this decision as the [supervisor]."

Study supervisors also commented on communication similarities and differences when working with older and younger millennials. They recommend being aware of who the intended target of the message (the receiver) and adjusts the message to reduce miscommunications. This was achieved by being specific with the information that was communicated, not lengthy, but providing as much information as needed. Most of these differences were attributed to life stage and work experience maturity. Supervisor participants noted that both older and younger millennials are similar in that they were raise in a technological environment and expect shorter messaging. Therefore, supervisors of millennials, should be clear and honest with communications and utilizing simple language that is direct and give just enough information to understand what needs to be done with causing communication overload and losing the entire message. When discussing both younger and older millennials, Participant X-004 used texting as the best way to communicate, since it allows for rapid responses. She further noted that if more information needs to be communicated, then her next fall back would be email. She stated phone calls were rare. For written communications, supervisors needed to review messaging/ information presented to

millennials to minimize generational misinterpretations and ensure sender intent is clear when communicating through digital media platforms. Avoid in your face, aggressive, communications in both written and face to face formats, use softer approach.

Supervisors advised that younger millennials may require more patience while they develop their skills and stressed the importance of helping younger staff identify and set appropriate expectations for what is needed for career advancement. It was observed that older millennials appeared to be more motivated than younger millennials, so there was more focus on kudos and game like activities for younger staff. Communication for younger millennials could be more simplistic, yet specific (i.e. direct instructions). The older millennials within this study wanted to feel a sense of inclusion and understand how their role fit within their organizations. The younger M200 focus group members also indicated a need for inclusion but they also showed a greater need for more frequent face to face in the field interactions with their immediate supervisor. Also, supervisors noted that they should be more involved in helping their younger staff identify and set appropriate expectations for what is needed for career advancement.

Theme 3: Employee Growth and Development

Inadequate growth and development opportunities has been identified as the second most important reason for employee to quit their jobs (Pereira, Malik, & Sharma, 2016). In this study supervisors and focus group participants alike acknowledged the need to relate meaningful experiences to personal growth and professional development. Research suggested that behavior and performance are

driven by intrinsic or extrinsic motivation (Herzberg et al., 1959; Rani, Mee, & Heang, 2018) and it has been noted that agencies that facilitate employees these opportunities flourish (Glazer, Mahoney, & Randall, 2019). Table 17 identifies the two subthemes that arose from growth and development.

Table 17

Theme 3: Employee Growth and Development Subthemes

Subthemes	Subtheme descriptions	No. of sources	No. of references
Subtheme 1	Communication opportunities—Engagement	6	62
Subtheme 2	Mitigating communication threats—Disengagement	5	38

Communication opportunities—Engagement. Researchers Martin and Ottemann (2015) suggested that managers need to work to tailor their relationships and interactions to the specific needs of their individual employees across generations. Supervisors in the study offered similar statements and identified several communication strategies they used to engage and motivate their intergenerational staff to higher levels of growth and development. All four supervisors in the study specifically acknowledged the need to take on the coach/ mentor role and take an active role in employee's future goals. X-002 stated that he models his experiences and things he has learned from his mentors and uses that in how he supervises and train his staff. X-002 noted that when he was coming up, being tough and aggressive was an acceptable old school mentality and practice used by his coaches or mentors. However, he noted that in communicating with "younger employees and young people…they

don't respond well to the old school way of being forward and maybe direct." He also

mentioned that due to his "physical being… and strong presence," referencing his race

and gender, that he did not feel the need to express himself as "aggressive" or "tough".

He suggested that millennials receive information better, when they are praised...and

can take criticism better when it comes with praise first. This highlights how

demographic shifts and different coming of age experiences have led to differences in

how communication, interactions, and management occurs between generational

cohorts.

Participant X-003 noted when some of younger staff were a little bit less

motivated, she would implement things like the kudos and recognizing them for a job

well done and encouraging them to see the big picture and the long-range goals. She

discusses career goals and how if they are interested the benefits of being not only in

Parks and Recreation but in local government, city government. Participant X-003 also

reported that she provides millennial staff with opportunities to take on various types of

leadership tasks within their current roles. She also advised that she challenges her staff

to complete tasks that maybe out of their comfort zone and stating she gives them

"opportunities to shine" by presenting in front of the Mayor and Council, or to work on

a project that is out of their expertise. She thought it was "important to provide those

opportunities, that encourage and help their growth".

Participant X-001 also spoke about being aware of the different generational

needs of all employees. He identified public speaking, getting up inform of people and

delivering instructions, clear, constant, honest messages, as an opportunity for those

millennial staff growing up in the *digital age.* He further stated when he identified that

his millennial staff were not having these face-to face conversations needed to move up

into leadership positions. He wanted to make sure that his millennial staff was ready

when they were presented with an opportunity to speak in public. He tries to get staff

out in front of others to practice being confidence in their presentation by making "sure

that they [got] up, introduce themselves, [felt] comfortable, and [could] lead from that

in-person perspective." Participant X-002 also communicated that connecting staff to

other employees, training, and networking opportunities was an important part of

engagement, stating that the best way to an employee's greatest talents "is to

understand what those talents are, what they get excited about and give them the

freedom to operate in that capacity". These statements support the notion that

supervisors can guide millennials towards specific role behaviors and provide them

with opportunities to make corrective adjustments to tasks by engaging in mutually

agree upon training and development needs (Hofstetter & Harpaz, 2015).

The two millennial focus groups added to this discussion by providing their

positive and negative perceptions of how Generation X supervisors communicated

opportunities for personal growth and professional development. These members

indicated that they wanted to be respected and encouraged to grow and have their

talents and skills celebrated/recognized both collectively and individually. Both focus

groups advised that they needed to have a clear concept of how their performance

impacted their organization and preferred very specific feedback. However, these two

groups differed on the level of autonomy they expected to receive from their supervisors.

The older M100 millennial group valued being provided with additional responsibilities to make their own decisions and choices at work. Having a good working relationship with co-workers, remaining active and engaged while at work, being able to use their creativity, strengths, personal abilities and skill sets to complete tasks. They still wanted their Generation X supervisor to have an open -door policy and be open, honest, and respectful, not arrogant but a mentor/ coach who demonstrates good communication. They also want to be allowed the freedom to make mistakes, not micromanaged but provided with frequent feedback that helps foster staff relations with upper management. One M-100 focus group member perceived her supervisors as being "incredibly open" and very interested in educating her, which she stated made her feel like her supervisor has her back and really wanted her to do well. She expressed how she appreciated that he did not use her work as a "stepping stool, to keep climbing up his own career ladder." She felt like he provided her with a positive encouragement, positive feedback, options, and opportunities that she may have never asked for or been aware that it was an avenue she could peruse. She stated that this showed her that her supervisor cared about her success, which had a "positive effect on [her]mentality" toward future work. This older millennial group, who had time to grow into their knowledge proficiency and develop into their positions, indicated that they were more open to receiving greater amounts of information a greater autonomy and less managerial input on how to achieve the task.

There was however, the perception within the younger M200 group that their Generation X supervisor provided too much autonomy. Not providing enough specific information was noted to "create gray areas" in their knowledge base. The younger millennials expectation was that they needed, "really clear, concise, and very specific feedback," that would allow them to help prioritize and manage their behaviors, tasks and actions across their work unit. Like their older counterparts, the younger millennial group, M200, valued being provided with additional responsibilities to make their own decisions and choices at work and being able to use their strengths, personal abilities and skill sets to complete tasks. However, they noted for self-development and self-regulation, that it was important to them to work in an environment where their supervisors created a culture that allowed them to have a reciprocal feedback. One participant stated that "Generation Xers… definitely give you a lot more leash to work with." Other members of this group agreed with this statement and many perceived this ambiguous style of communication, as a demotivator, stating "…it [made] harder for me to decide how to use my strengths, and talents, to do well in my position…Which can kind of be hard, and you can end up tying yourself with that leash."

Both groups acknowledged that they specifically appreciated positive communication, whether it was with their coworkers or supervisors. They wanted good working conditions where they were engaged in personal manner and allowed to participate in developmental activities that provided additional career skills or advancement into higher levels within their agencies. The focus group activity provided an understanding of what workplace factors made participants feel good (motivated)

about their jobs versus and those that made them feel demotivated, from an individual and group perspective. These insights lead an understanding of the factors that motivated or demotivated this millennial group.

   Mitigating communication threats: Disengagement. Researchers have found that intergenerational conflict can arise when there a varying generational and or perceived differences across generations (Glazer et al., 2019). Supervisors and millennial focus group study participants were asked about threats to communication. The interviewees suggested listening to staff concerns and having an appreciation for the staff point of view. When supervisors were asked about resolving intergeneration conflict, they indicated to serve as a generational bridge they needed to provide timely communications that were fair, consistent, firm and clear. It was also suggested by supervisors that they needed to be self-aware of their own biases. This generational bridge could mitigate conflict by verbally engaging and gathering facts from all parties and tackle conflict head on. They suggested not allowing intergeneration conflict to fester. The use of this strategy was noted to assist with the creation of harmony; and helped to quickly shut down any misconceptions that had the potential to divide a team. It also set expectations that would assist conflicted parties in resolving their own differences/ or at least take the time to understand each other's point of view and come to a compromise.

   The older M100 group identified the following was supervisors' actions as demotivators, stereotypes of staff, ignoring intergenerational differences, as well as taking credit for staff achievements. This group identified failure to connect and guide

employees on decisions for advancement or take staff concern/ideas into account before making final decisions were other demotivators. The M200 focus group also signified disengagement could occur when there were varied communication levels based on the generation differences, but equal treatment was not provided. These participants noted that the use of generational stereotypes created tensions within their prior work groups. For example, group members relayed personal experiences where supervisors addressed coworkers from different generations differently than they would millennial staff in the same work group. Several M200 members agreed that because that work group was supposed to all be doing the same job, it was "…upsetting to be talked to a different way just because your younger than someone else; it puts you in different places and make you feel not a part of a team."

The Generation X supervisors' strategy to discourage disengagement within this younger millennial group was to be as transparent as possible in their communication. Connecting with staff by being understanding and relatable, allowing staff to make decisions and pushes members to do better and be better. For example, focus group member M-202, shared that. "the supervisor just knowing what I want to do in my life and taking the time to sit there and talk to me; giving me good tips in life… put me on the right path…or giving me the connections…that motivates me to do more while I'm here" Sharing experiences with staff, understanding staff's personalities and showing genuine interest in helps them gain recognition and develop skills for life goals. This type of supervisor support serves to reduce role conflict and ambiguity.

Theme 4: Rewards and Recognition

The relationship between communication and motivating employees is a cyclical process (Motoi, 2017), where there is supervisor -employee collaboration, the employee then dedicates time and energy in return for encouragements, rewards, and recognition. Researchers have found that transparency, guidance, and feedback, as well as clear performance expectations, and rewards were needed by supervisors to promote higher performance (Glazer et al., 2019). When supervisors and millennial focus group study participants were asked about how rewards were used to communicate, motivate, and engage millennials; two subthemes emerged from the final theme, (a) Extrinsic Rewards and, (b) Intrinsic Rewards (see Table 18). As supervisors and millennial focus group study participants commented on rewards and recognition they quickly separated the tangible extrinsic rewards associated with income, benefits, status, and advancement opportunities from the intangible intrinsic rewards, which are often associated personal decision making, work interests, potential for learning and trying new approaches.

Table 18

Theme 4: Rewards and Recognition Subthemes

Subthemes	Subtheme descriptions	No. of sources	No. of references
Subtheme 1	Extrinsic rewards	6	24
Subtheme 2	Intrinsic rewards	6	28

Extrinsic rewards. Nearly all the study participant comments related to financial rewards focused on the limitations of working within government agencies. Participants agreed that financial rewards as a government employee were mainly provided through formal performance reviews, salary and benefits, and official celebrations. Participant X-004 noted "when it comes to the financial rewards the only avenue available to me is to submit them and whatever they've accomplished into a formal forum." Participant X-003 commented that her agency offered employee appreciation days and Participant X-001 spoke about the "Shout-out Awards at our Annual Employee Recognition Luncheon, where employees are nominated by their peers… [to]receive a couple days paid time off, or $500 dollars." He also stated at his agencies they held Quarterly staff meeting to recognize "an Employee of the Quarter, [where] staff recognized their peers [by submitting] a form and then the leadership group that reviewed [nominations]…selected one [person to be taken] out to lunch, or [given] a $25 gift card." Participant X-002 remarked that when it came to financial rewards he was "always cautious of policy" but acknowledged that "there are areas that we can bend a little." He specifically indicated that as a supervisor he could "very strongly" advocate that high employees, those receiving high marks on performance measures or evaluations, were paid well. Participant X-002 further advised that while his agency did not currently "have an Employee Recognition Program in place," he admitted "having something in place was important...recognized an area of opportunity for his agency. These participant comments confirmed Herzberg et al. (1957) findings on rewarding employees through extrinsic means, which can take place in the form of

compensation (merit pay) social rewards (Employee Recognition awards) or fringe

benefits (paid sick time), is an important aspect of any employment experience.

Focus Group members addressed financial rewards within their agencies and all

noted that these were solely based on policy and/or performance. Members of the M100

focus group agreed that they "don't go into the public sector to become wealthy." They

further noted that policies were different than the private sector, where some gifts are

acceptable. Most policies in place to prevent public misinterpretations and temptations

of bribes. Participant M-102 further commented "Being in the public sector, is very

rewarding, and the gain is positive self-fulfillment". Members of the M200 focus group

concurred with their elder counterparts expressing that there was not much that could

be done financially, "other than paying me to do the job, because of [current

municipality/public agency] polices". This focus group also mentioned being rewarded

by the good they provided to the community through the successful completion of their

work task and its positive impact on others. The M200 focus group also noted their part

time status and identified merit increases they received as financial rewards. Other

members of this focus group described recent benefits that were added for part time

employee like receiving time and half and paid sick time off as financial rewards,

although, the sentiment was that this extrinsic reward was a long time coming, which

hold with Herzberg' (1975) suggestion that this type of extrinsic improvement in

condition would not increase motivation.

Intrinsic rewards. The Generation X and millennials cohorts in this study

identified because they work for public agencies, they were more likely to provide and

receive intrinsic rewards. Although primarily nonfinancial, these rewards have been found to promote feelings of achievement and a since of appreciation from supervisors, increase participation in team successes, provide public recognition for good performance. Clark (2017) noted that members of the millennial cohort expect mentorship and praise for their accomplishments and suggest that managers who employ this strategy can motivate a multigenerational workforce. The supervisor participant's in this study agreed, identifying specific nonfinancial rewards that they used most frequently to recognize employees and provide praise for a job well done (written and verbal). These activities included the use of fun activities like friendly competitive competitions, games, peer to peer recognition, small giveaways, and food. They advised that these rewards were usually communicated through regularly scheduled face-to-face meetings, via email, or special events.

For younger millennials just coming into the field, Participant X-001 suggested the need to "reinforce that they have worth, that they are valued and that their work is appreciated". X-002 agreed and emphasized that he gives "Atta boys" rewards in one-on- ones meeting and in front of everyone at event debriefs and department wide meetings, or via email. When communicating rewards, X-002 further identified the need to be very specific about the things that staff did well and recognizing staff for at least three key things that went extremely well. He also indicates that he "makes sure...to push [recognitions] up to my higher-ups, like the Manager, the Assistant Managers especially when the community provides feedback that they were pleased with customer service received from a staff member. This is in line with statements

made by both M100 and M200 Focus group participants, who suggested that motivation to continue their already rewarding work was increased with they were recognized by "higher up" within the department and or community.

Both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that have been shown to increase employee engagement and motivation through the formal and informal communication strategies (Latkovikj & Popovska, 2016); however, supervisors must be able to communicate to their employee its existence to have buy-in to meet performance expectations. When communicated effectively, rewards and recognition can create a shared experience for all employees and can further stimulate high performers and inspire lower performer toward improvement. Studies have also shown that if employees perceive their efforts have been sufficiently rewarded and recognized they are more likely to find greater organizational connection and provide better service to customers (Hee, Yan, Rizal, Kowang, & Fei, 2018; Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018).

Concluding Data

The concluding stage is the final phase of Yin's 5-step analysis approach (2014) where conclusions for whole study are put together. Over the past 40 or 50 years, significant demographic changes have taken place within the United States (Griffin, Frey, & Teixeira, 2017). Frey (2018) reported that millennial generation, is the most racially diverse generation in American history accounting for 44 percent of the minority young adult population. As noted in this study, the millennials cohort was also the most diverse generation when compared to older generations; however, there were also a greater number of statements, particularly within the M200 group, that could lead

to both passive engagement and active disengagement of this group, without direct supervisor intervention. Campione (2014) noted that demographic diversities like race, gender, age, and cohort play significant roles in the workplace with respect to supervisor's employee relationships. Therefore, the changing employee compositions and workplace dynamics calls for stronger supervisor–employee relationships and highlight the importance of building relationships to understand intergenerational motivations and using employees' strengths and abilities to increase engagement (Campione, 2014; Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). Other studies have shown that supervisors who understand the characteristics and expectations of their multi-generational employees are able to shift their management style to communicate and manage more effectively. They also have a better understand the wants and demands of their employees (Nelson & Braekkan, 2017). With more knowledge regarding the different generations, management can evaluate which techniques to use with each generation to promote higher employee retention and overall workplace satisfaction.

In this study of intergenerational communication strategies were gathered through semistructured interviews and focus groups. I found that the Generation X supervisors, reported the use intergenerational communication strategies, represented within the four themes, that emerged from the data to motivate and engage their millennial employees. Generation X supervisors who create environments for employee motivation and engagement that focus on culture, relationships & connectedness, growth & development, and rewards & recognition, can build bridges (see Figure 3) that meet the motivational needs of a multigenerational workforce. These strategies

were also present in existing literature relevant to providing a clearer picture and insight

into the complex views each of the generations and their subgroups.
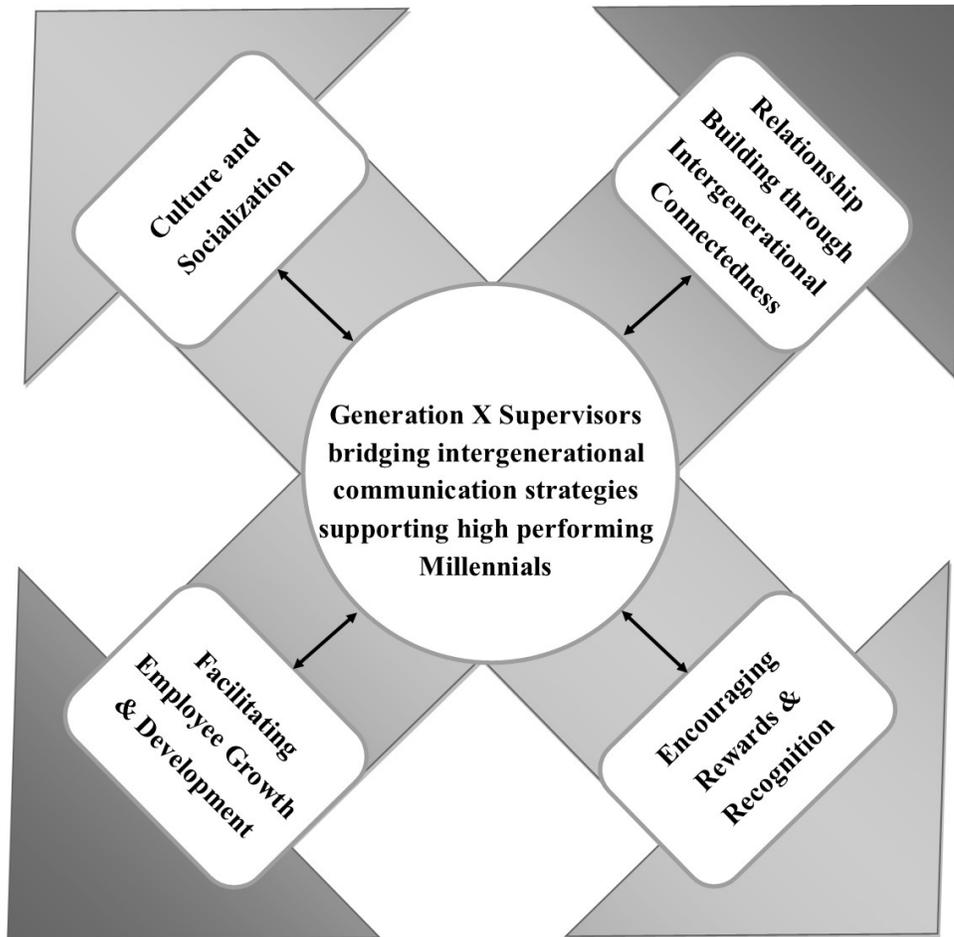
Figure 3. Intergenerational communication strategies.

Across generational groups participating within this study it was noted that the

personal expectations of employee's developed early and proceed to change over time

based on the perceived relationship within an organization. This showed that the

intergenerational experiences of employees can have a direct impact on organizational

costs, productivity, and business performance. Generation X supervisors using

intergenerational communication strategies that focus on culture, connectedness,

growth and development, and rewards and recognition can help create environments that begin to bridge intergenerational gaps in the workplace and close the divide between millennials and their supervisors to meet the motivational and engagement needs of the both the current and future workplace.

Applications to Professional Practice

The purpose of this descriptive multiple case study was to explore the intergenerational communication strategies Generation X supervisors used to motivate and engage high performing millennials. The applications to professional practice provided in this study focused on understanding the varying generational needs, attitudes, perspectives, and expectations, brought in to the workplace by some parks and recreation employees. Demographics in the park and recreation professional reflect that of the multigenerational workforce who are in organizations today. The supervisors in this study provided strategies for focusing on creating transparent communications, shared values, and improving working relationships with millennials employees within various Park and Recreation agencies.

Generational cohorts uniquely share common formative experiences that can be understood from both a generational cohort and sub-cohort view (Campbell, Twenge, & Campbell, 2017). The motivational needs of US employees, including their desired types of work and workplace interactions, have changed from what it was 20 years ago and even 10 years ago (Stewart, Oliver, Cravens, & Oishi, 2017). Due to the nature of their cohort, Generation X supervisors have developed the ability to identify with their own generation's values and attitudes, while appreciating the community, team

importance, collaborative spirit of the younger millennial cohort (Bevan-Dye, 2017, Subramanian, 2017). Many Generation X cohort members occupy leadership roles throughout various organizations, therefore they can serve as a professional and technical link between the two prevalent generational groups. As bridge builders, Generation X supervisors adaptable and understand that – what affects one, affects all. The strategies noted by both the supervisors and millennials focus groups help to support the maturation process of staff. As mentors and coaches, supervisors were able to influence the performance of staff and nurture the talents that the millennial staff already had. They also gave staff members opportunities to mistakes, learn and grow, which helped to build confidence in the work or tasks performed. The supervisors in the study used their knowledge's generational cohorts as a way of demanding more from staff that helped staff believe that they could achieve the tasks at hand.

The results of this research also showed how millennials prioritized intrinsic motivation over the bottom line, valued making a difference over recognition of their contributions and appreciated a positive workplace over pay (Calk & Patrick, 2017). Researchers have reported that lack of intrinsic motivators such as challenging work, career development opportunities, bonus and incentive pay, management trust, recognition and appreciation, feedback, freedom to work independently, and immediate relationship with the supervisor were factors that impacted work productivity (Pereira et al., 2016).This study was consistent with literature describing millennial employee's preference for supportive supervisors who can guide and act as facilitators in their personal growth and professional development (Naim & Lenka, 2018), and provided a

richer picture and insight into the complex views brought by generation members and their subgroups.

Research has shown that creating a culture environment where employees are motivated and engaged begins with front line supervisors who can understand mix of individuals, defined jobs, duties, and acknowledged procedures and are able effectively communicate this to employees, assisting them through the socialization process (Latkovikj & Popovska, 2016). The formal relationships, traditionally found between a manager and their employee, is no longer the standard expectation amongst millennials. This view has been attributed to their coming of age experiences during their developmental years (Ferri-Reed, 2014, Nelson et al., 2017). It will also be essential that supervisors and organizational leaders alike, to seek understand the factors that influence millennial motivation and engagement and make changes that prevent intergeneration conflict. Supervisors without basic generational understanding may misinterpret millennial informalities as stereotypical, challenging and or disrespectful of authority, instead of a change in workforce dynamics. Supervisors that understand these experiences and can identify the factors that influence younger employees can promote both positive employee outcomes and achieve desirable organizational goals. Further knowledge of intergenerational communication strategies can provide frontline all supervisors of millennial employees and other organizational leaders with helpful communication tools that serve to motivate and engage younger high performing.

Implications for Social Change

Supporting the improvement of human and social conditions, the results of this multiple case study may have several implications for social change for millennials, who will make up approximately 34% of workforce by 2024 (Toossi, 2015). Amidst shifts in demographics, the generational mix, and employee values, public service agencies must be able to compete with private and nonprofit employers for millennial employee (Ng, Gossett, & Winter, 2016). The participants of this study highlighted that supervisors and millennials employees' communications are critical to organizational productivity, employee motivation and engagement. This study showed the strategic steps some Generation X supervisors are taking to engage and motivate their employees, moving away from the existing *one size fits all* paradigm that is prevalent in many organizations. It has provided insight into the influence developmental stages (between the years 17 to 23) on individuals and the shared experiences of within and amongst cohort groups (Costanza et al., 2012, Debevecet al., 2013; Parry & Urwin, 2017; Mannheim, 1952). Further it has shown that having a generational understanding of millennial behaviors, preferences, and relational needs, may also be used to increase their motivation and improve their engagement within the organizations and agencies experiencing generational shifts or gaps.

Recommendations for Action

High performing millennials bring their best efforts to work when they are provided with organizational support and resources (Kahn,1990). Millennials also want organizational leaders who strive to get to know and understand them at the level of

their core beliefs and values (Glazer et al., 2019; Latkovikj, et al.2016). This study may

benefit other researchers regarding intergeneration communications between

supervisors and subordinates. It may also assist government agencies, leaders and

managers with understanding varying generational needs, attitude perspectives,

expectations, and learning styles (Yogamalar & Samuel, 2016) brought into the

workplace by the different generational cohorts.

     Applying intergenerational communication strategies learned from study

participants can help public and private sector supervisors, organizational leaders,

academic scholars and practitioners gain knowledge of and appropriately identify any

unique characteristics and differences present in the generational cohort/ and cohort

subgroups within their places of work. Communication and participation are essential

part of this collaborative process since ignoring generational issues at work have been

reported to lead to organizational inefficiencies (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018). Due to the

changing composition of the workforce, demographic shifts, and organizational image–

leaders should take steps to acknowledge the generational difference impacting their

workplaces and address increase opportunities for engagement and decrease threats that

bring about disengagement. Leaders should also begin to review their current and future

employee mix and identify which intrinsic and extrinsic factors may impact employee

productivity, motivation and engagement.

     The results of this study imply that frontline supervisor must have generational

awareness and be able to consider alternative points of view adapting their management

style to each generational cohort (Mencl & Lester, 2014). Supervisors should be

comfortable and effective at giving honest and clear feedback that also provides specific steps for improvements. They should be willing to attending leadership trainings, conferences and workshops with a generational focus, to help bolster supervisor confidence in managing a multigenerational workforce. I plan to disseminate the results of this published research through scholarly journals and at professional conferences, in the hopes to provide scholars and practitioners additional exposure to empirical related to generational issues in the workplace.

Recommendations for Further Research

Intergenerational issues in the workplace are complex, therefore, for future research, I recommend researchers continue to press for additional insights and empirical research of generational issues, particularly those related intergenerational communication and Generation X supervisory – millennial subordinate relationships. I would encourage the study of specific intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate and engage these various cohort groups and include each of the five generational cohorts from geographically different locations to compare results. Public agencies, like Parks and Recreation engages with and employs staff from a very young age, and already have the next generation working alongside other generations. Researchers may want to further explore Generation Z perception, attitudes and expectations of the public sector and what supervisor adaptations and changes are needed to meet their needs within the workplace. Additionally, I also recommend more case studies be conducted within other state and local level public agencies, as well as within private organizations to further understand the preferences held by intragenerational subgroups (first wave,

core, and last wave). These recommendations present future researchers with an opportunity to continue to add fill in gaps in generational studies.

This research provided an understanding of patterns and themes across organizational boundaries and was generalizable to theoretical propositions; however, not to the population (Stake, 2005; Yin 2014), therefore, this study was not without limitations. I encountered issues with time and availability focus group and selection criteria. Time and availability were also another study limitation for both the semistructured interviews and the focus groups, since all the participants in this study were working adults. Initially, I planned on recruitment time being 4 to 6 weeks; however, scheduling issues and cancelations, resulted in extending this time to approximately four months. Challenges with focus group selection criteria arose during my first full week of recruitment following IRB approval. Once IRB approved the requested change, I was able to begin recruitment once more. This limitation could be reconciled in future studies, by planning a pilot study. If an expert panel review panel had reviewed my study criteria (inclusions and exclusions and related questions) this extra step with IRB may have been avoided.

Reflections

As I have been reflecting on this dissertation journey and I started think about the first time I learned to Ski. I had gone to Durango, Colorado with some friends who were avid skiers, while I had never skied before. I remember shaking and crying so badly that it took me nearly thirty minutes just to get out of the parking lot down to the bunny hill. But by the end of the day, I had mastered the bunny hill, and later a lot of

help and sheer determination I was able to ski down that mountain and over the course of a few more experience, I became a skier. This was my experience with the DBA Doctoral Study process. I had somewhat of an idea of what I was getting into when I started this program but once reality set in; and I was terrified. Unlike the bunny hill, this process would not be conquered in a day. But what I found was if I kept working at it, asking questions, utilizing my resources and experiences (my coursework, residencies and dissertation intensives) and that of others (faculty and classmates), and I slowly began to build more confidence, questioning everything, and diving deeper into topics seeking answers. Looking back over the last few years of my working on this doctoral study, I am sure I could have done things to make this process a bit easier; however, I am going to simply count these minor missteps as character building moments that push me to persist and think of myself as a not only a researcher, but a scholar practitioner.

Conclusion

Members of different generational cohorts have significantly different work expectations with respect to how supervision should occur and how they would supervise others. This qualitative, descriptive multiple case study explored intergenerational communication strategies from the perspectives of Generation X supervisor and millennials to understand high performer motivation and engagement. This study showed that failure for organizational leaders, particularly supervisors, to make concerted efforts to foster environments that bridge across the multigenerational workforce in terms of cultural fit, relationships & connectedness, growth &

development, and rewards & recognition, could create intergenerational conflicts with direct reports. These conflicts, if left unchecked can result in direct and negative impact on organizational costs, productivity, and business performance outcomes. Alternatively, 21st century Generation X supervisors that have a generational understanding of cohort behaviors and preferences have a unique opportunity to be organizational bridge builders using intergenerational communication strategies to welcome, motivate and engage, talent from one of the largest generational cohort group into the workplace.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Interview Questions - Generation X Supervisor Managing Millennials

1. What type of training and development have you attended to prepare for supervising multiple generations in the workplace?
2. How do you motivate your employees to perform at high levels?
3. How have you resolved conflict using communication strategies when a conflict was due to generation differences through bias?
4. How have you ensured through communicating and engaging your employees that you are using your employee's greatest talents and everyday strength in their current position?
5. What specific ways do you communicate rewards (financial and nonfinancial) for staff performance?
6. How do you use rewards to communicate, motivate, and engage Millennials?
7. What are some of your communication strategies that you use for success to manage Millennials?
8. What negative communication aspects have you encountered managing Millennials?
9. What are the differences between your use of communication strategies with older Millennials and younger Millennials?
10. What are the similarities between your use of communication strategies with older Millennials and younger Millennials?
11. What communication strategies do you use to prepare Millennials to become high performing employees?
12. What information can you provide that has not already been discussed?

Focus Group Questions for Millennials with Generation X Supervisor

1. What type of work relationship do you expect to have (or want) from your immediate supervisor?
2. How has the level of communication and/or interaction between you and your immediate supervisor influenced your motivation to work? Be Specific.
3. How are the intergenerational differences between you and your coworkers addressed by your immediate supervisor?
4. What communication strategies has your immediate supervisor use with you to bring out your talents, strengths, or your job skills in your position?
5. What specific financial and nonfinancial rewards are available to you for high performance?
6. What other ways has communication with your Generation X supervisor affected your engagement and motivation at work not already been discussed?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol Guide

Date _____   Time_____

Location _____   Participant Identifier _____

Interviewer: <u>La Toya A. Johnson</u>

I. **Recruitment: After IRB Approval work with Community Partner**
    a. Work with Community Partner on recruitment (establishing a list of members who meet specific study criteria: parks and recreation professionals, young professionals, and college students representing parks recreation within local municipalities, state and county, and private agencies.
    b. The Community Partner will only forward my introduction emails and post/distribute my flyer to association members in the indicated regions.
    c. The Community Partner may notify me of local professional and student meetings that I can attend in person and provide direct information about my study. I would be able to distribute my introduction email/my flyer, which will allow interested individuals to contact me at a later date.
    d. I will need to confirm with Community Partner meeting room schedule: If the Community Partner's office space is a convenient location for the participants, then the Interviews/Focus group can be held in one of the private meeting rooms, which must be booked in advance.

II. **Recruitment: Respondent Follow up Recruitment**
    a. I will reach out directly to any respondents to the introduction email and/ or flyer. The Community Partner will not know who has responded to the invitation nor will final study participants be identified to the Community Partner.
    b. All Respondents will be emailed the informed consent document to review and I will follow up with a phone call to all respondents to assess their eligibility and discuss informed consent, the acceptability of electronic email signature on the informed consent
    c. During this phone call, I will ask all potential participants a set of demographic questions to determine if participants meet the eligibility requirements to participate in the study (see Appendix D).

Telephone Script.

(Verify that the correct person is on the telephone line).

My name is La Toya A. Johnson and I am a doctoral candidate in Walden University's Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program. I am following up with you regarding your interest in possibly participating in my Doctoral Study research on *Intergenerational Communication Strategies for Generation X Supervisors: Motivating and Engaging High Performing Millennials.* Is this a good time to talk? So how did you hear about my study?

As described in my flyer/email the purpose of this study is to explore how Generation X manager in public agencies are taking strategic steps to engage and motivate their employees and what specific intergenerational communication strategies they are using to develop high performing millennial employees. Today I am calling to ask if you were you still interested in being interviewed for this study? In order move forward I do need to ask you some demographic information and professional experience information to determine your eligibility to participate in the study. This would take less than 10 minutes; would you have time *to talk?*

The information gathered here and is we move forward is only for the purpose of this study and final information will not be used in any way that will disclose and/or reveal your identity. You are free not to answer any questions you do not wish to address. Do I have your permission to move forward?

Intergenerational Communication Strategies for Generation X Supervisors:
Motivating and Engaging High Performing Millennials

Demographic and Professional Experience Questionnaire		

Your Name: (Enter your name.) | *Contact Phone Number:* (Enter your Phone No.)

Availability: (Availability through October 8th) | *Email Address:* (Click here)

1. Are you between the ages of 18 and 52? (Y/N). | What year where you born? (Year)

2. Indicate your Gender (Male/Female) (Choose an item.)

3. What is your race? (Choose an item.) (if multiracial please indicate)

4. What is your highest level of education completed? (Select from list)

Parks and Recreation Affiliation

5. Which local or state Parks and Recreation agency are you affiliated with? (indicate below)

   (Enter your agency name here)

6. Currently within park and recreation, are you (Choose an item.) (Indicate other)

7. How long have you served in this capacity within Parks and Recreation?
   (Choose an item.) (Indicate other)

8. What is your present job title? (Click or tap here to enter text.)

9. Are you currently in a Generation X (age 38 to 52) in Supervisory position? (Y/N).

10. Please answer questions **10a-10d, if you answered "*yes*" to # 9**; if no, skip to question 11.

	Yes	No
a. Approximately how many employees do you currently supervise? (Employee No.)		
b. Do you have experience managing multiple generations of employees?	☐	☐
c. Do you currently supervise any high performing millennial employees (between the ages of 18-37)?	☐	☐
d. During the interview, are you be able to describe how you have implemented or administered strategies to improved employee engagement and motivation with Millennials?	☐	☐

11. Only answer questions **11a-11d, if you responded "no" to # 9**, you are in a non-supervisory role within Parks and Recreation.	Yes	No
a. Do you currently supervise full time permanent park and recreation employees?	☐	☐
b. Do you have experiences working for a Parks and Recreation Generation X manager (age 38 to 52)?	☐	☐
c. Approximately how long have you been (or were you) managed by a Generation X supervisor?	Click to enter	
d. During the interview, would you be able to work effectively with others to discuss and develop intergenerational strategies to improved employee engagement and motivation?	☐	☐

Verify *Inclusion /Exclusion Demographic Information Key* (See Appendix D)

Criteria Met:
Thank you very much for taking time to speak with me. Based on your responses you meet the requirements to participate in this study. If you wish to continue, I would like to send you the informed consent form and make tentative arrangements for an interview appointment how does that sound to you?

Criteria Not Met:
At this time, I am unable to enroll you in this study; however, I would like to thank you so much for your interest.

d. If eligible, I will discuss scheduling/ availability. Interviews will take place at a pre scheduled, private onsite conference/meeting room located at Community Partners office. Note: If the onsite location is not convenient, then I am flexible in terms of accommodating participants schedule and can either conduct the interview at a place of participants choosing that is free from distractions and allows for the audio recording the session(s).

e. Once final schedules are confirmed participants will be sent a confirmation email with the date and time for either the Individual Interview Times and locations or the Focus Group Interview Time and Date.

Day of Interview(s)
III.   **Self Introduction to participant(s).**
The researcher introduces herself, programs affiliation, the purpose of the research, and the reason that the respondents have been asked to participate in the interview

Hello, first I would like to thank you for participating in this interview. My name is La Toya A. Johnson and I am a doctoral student at Walden University in the School of Management. The intent of this interview today is to gather data that will inform an academic study on intergenerational communication strategies, you as Generation X Supervisors, use to motivate and engaging millennials to high performance.

IV.   **Give participant copy of consent form.**
Prior to scheduled interviews, informed consent forms are emailed to participants to review sign and email back to researcher. Researcher will have blank forms for participants just in case the electronic version was not received. *(Participants who provided their consent electronically should not be asked to sign a consent form at the time of the interview or focus group. Participants only have to document their consent once.)*

As we discussed over the phone before we can begin the interview, part of the *informed consent* process is collecting the Informed Consent form. This form ensures you understand the details about this study and allows you to decide whether you wish to take part. My work is being supervised by a Doctoral Study Committee and while I have requested permission from ███████████ ███████████████████████ to seek your participation, this study is not being done for ███████████████████ or any other government agency. Rather I seek to broadly inform both public and private organizations on this subject. If you have any further questions about the study, I can address them now. If you should think of something after the study is complete, you may contact me directly or my doctoral study chair, Dr. Patricia Fusch. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Please refer to your copy of the consent form.

V.   **Present consent form go over contents, answer questions and concerns of participant(s).**
The researcher lays the ground rules (includes the length of time of the interview, researcher assurances about information safeguard information, and the types of reporting that will come from the data. If participant agree, they are asked to please sign and date the form.

Interview Directions

This will be the first of two interviews and is scheduled to last 45 to 60 minutes. The second face-to-face interview is scheduled for thirty minutes and is called a member check interview. Here we will ensure that your opinions about the initial findings and interpretation are accurate. As a one-on-one interview participant, at the end of the initial interview you will receive a $25 Amazon gift card, as a thank you for your valuable time contributions. Your participation is voluntary; you can decide at any point in time that you do not want to participate, without any explanation. For your confidentiality, any personal information collected is masked and is coded using a unique participant identifier. All materials, including audio the tape and notes, will locked and secured and again will not be provided to any other agencies.

If you have any questions about this consent or the study in general, please ask now. OR if you no longer wish to participate in the study, or please let me know.

If you agree, please sign the consent form now

Focus Group Directions

This focus group is scheduled to last for 90 minutes. At the end of this Focus Group session, you will receive a $25 Amazon gift card as a thank you for your valuable time and contributions to this group and the study. Your participation is voluntary; you can decide at any point in time that you do not want to participate, without any explanation. For your confidentiality, any personal information collected is masked and is coded using a unique participant identifier. All materials, including audio the tape and notes, will locked and secured and again will not be provided to any other agencies.

If you have any questions about this consent or the study in general, please ask now. OR if you no longer wish to participate in the study, or please let me know.

If you agree, please sign the consent form now

Participant reviews signs consent form

The researcher provides participants with a printed copy of their electronic form for their records.

V.   Turn on recording device(s).

Conduct a test run of the audio equipment before starting the interview to ensure it is running properly. Advise the participants you will ask a few general questions as an icebreaker and to test the equipment. If audio equipment is okay, begin the interview.

VI. **Follow procedure to introduce participant(s) with pseudonym/coded identification; note the date and time.**

Each park and recreation participant will be assigned an alphanumeric identifier a unique code consisting of a letter, followed by a three digit number beginning with 001. The number assignments are based on the order of interviews. Participants of the one-on-one interviews will receive an X front of their number, for their GenX Supervisor designation (i.e. X-001).

The focus group participants will receive a M in front of their number, for their millennial nonsupervisory designation. If multiple focus groups are conducted, the first number will identify the particular focus group. For example, Participant #4 in the second millennial focus group will be designated as M-204.

VII. **Begin interview with question #1; follow through to final question.**
    Interview Questions
 1. **What type of training and development have you attended to prepare for supervising multiple generations in the workplace?**
 2. How do you motivate your employees to perform at high levels?
 3. How have you resolved conflict using communication strategies when a conflict was due to generation differences through bias?
 4. How have you ensured through communicating and engaging your employees that you are using your employee's greatest talents and everyday strength in their current position?
 5. What specific ways do you communicate rewards (financial and nonfinancial) for staff performance?
 6. How do you use rewards to communicate, motivate, and engage Millennials?
 7. What are some of your communication strategies that you use for success to manage Millennials?
 8. What negative communication aspects have you encountered managing Millennials?
 9. What are the differences between your use of communication strategies with older Millennials and younger Millennials?
 10. What are the similarities between your use of communication strategies with older Millennials and younger Millennials?
 11. **What communication strategies do you use to prepare Millennials to become high performing employees?**
 12. **What information can you provide that has not already been discussed?**

VIII.   <u>Focus Group Questions</u>: **Begin interview with question #1; follow through to final question.**

       Follow up/Probing questions may asked. If clarity is needed the researcher could say "Can you be more specific?" or "What did you think about that?" Whereas, if more information was needed other probes could be, "Can you tell me more about that? And "Why do you feel that way?"

1. What type of work relationship do you expect to have (or want) from your immediate supervisor?

   Probe: Why do you feel that way?

2. How has the level of communication and/or interaction between you and your immediate supervisor influenced your motivation to work? Be Specific.

   Probe: Can you tell me more about that? What, if any, are the factors that contribute to your active engagement, disengagement at work?

3. How are the intergenerational differences between you and your coworkers addressed by your immediate supervisor?

   Probe: Do you approve or disapprove of these strategies? What are the most ideal ways to handle these situations?

4. What communication strategies has your immediate supervisor use with you to bring out your talents, strengths, or your job skills in your position?

   Probe: What did you think about that? Why do you feel this way?

5. What specific financial and nonfinancial rewards are available to you for high performance?

   Probe: Can you be more specific? If you could make improvements, what would you change?

6. What other ways has communication with your Generation X supervisor affected your engagement and motivation at work not already been discussed?

During the focus group session, I will use the nominal group technique suggested Doody, Slevin, & Taggart, (2013a), which is a way to reach group consensus on the structured questions posed by the researcher. Participants respond to questions individually, which allows all group members to participate and prevents someone from dominating the group.

Researcher:
- Be sure to document the group dynamics.
- If group consensus cannot be found within the group, then ask the group to priorities the ideas or suggestions of all group members into in a set of prioritized solutions or recommendations that represent the group's preferences.

IX.   End interview sequence; discuss member checking with participant(s).
Only Generation X Interviewees will have a second interview for member checking. The researcher provides a schedule

X.   Thank the participant(s) for their part in the study. Reiterate contact numbers for follow up questions and concerns from participants.

I again would like to thank you for participating in this study. You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, after the study is complete, you may contact me via email at ██████████████ or my doctoral study chair, Dr. Patricia Fusch, by email at ██████████████ and/ or phone at ██████████████. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott and provide my Walden University's approval number for this study, which is 08-30-17-0370473 and expires on August 29th, 2018. Dr. Endicott is the Walden University representative at the Institutional Review Board (IRB) who can discuss any questions or concerns regarding this study. Her phone number is ██████████████.

End protocol.

Appendix C: Recruitment Emails

Introduction Email – Generation X Interview Participants

Hello (**Potential Generation X Participant**),

My name is La Toya A. Johnson and I am a doctoral student in Walden University's School of Management Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program. My dissertation topic is *Intergenerational Communication Strategies for Generation X Supervisors: Motivating and Engaging High Performing Millennials.* As a member or affiliate of ████████████ ████████████████ Central or South Region, you have been invited to take part in this Walden Doctoral research study's *one-on-one interview* of parks and recreations supervisors.

The purpose of this study is to explore how Generation X manager in public agencies are taking strategic steps to engage and motivate their employees and what specific intergenerational communication strategies they are using to develop high performing millennial employees. The benefits of the study include assisting local government agencies, leaders and managers with understanding varying generational needs, attitude, perspectives, and expectations, and providing insights to organizational management and park and recreation professionals into how to best reach and build quality intergenerational relationships with future professionals and staff through communication.

I will first contact respondents by phone and email to discuss initial eligibility requirements; collecting demographic information and work experience, during call. This information will be kept confidential. If you are selected to contribute to this study, you will be participating in two separate interview sessions; an initial interview which will last forty-five to sixty minutes and a second "member checking" interview (on a different day). The second "member checking" interview, may last approximately 30-minutes and provides you with the opportunity to ensure that the transcribed data accurately reflects your views.

As a thank you, at the end of the initial interview you will be provided with a $25 Amazon Gift Card for your time and contributions. All interviews will be tape recorded, with notes taken throughout the sessions. Data collected (the audio recording and notes) will be kept in a secure place for 5-years.

If you are interested in participating in this valuable research for *one-one interviews*, please email me your reply. I may be reached by email at ████████. Please include your name, year of birth, agency affiliation, status (supervisory or nonsupervisory) and contact phone number, along with any questions you may have about the study, in the message.

Sincerely,
La Toya A. Johnson
IRB Approval # 08-30-17-0370473

Introduction Email – Millennial Focus Group Participant

Hello (**Potential Millennial Participant**),

My name is La Toya A. Johnson and I am a doctoral candidate in Walden University's Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program. The reason I am writing you is to invite you to participate in a Walden Doctoral research study Focus Group which may be comprised of Millennial (young professionals, college students, volunteers, full-time, part-time and seasonal) who do not staff not currently supervise full-time permanent park and recreation employees.

My dissertation topic is *Intergenerational Communication Strategies for Generation X Supervisors: Motivating and Engaging High Performing Millennials*. The purpose of this study is to explore how Generation X manager in public agencies are taking strategic steps to engage and motivate their employees and what specific intergenerational communication strategies they are using to develop high performing millennial employees.

Through the ███████████, you were identified as a potential interviewee for this focus group. If you are a millennial (between the ages of 18-37 years), have had direct work experiences with a Generation X manager (age 38 to 52) and are willing to collaborate with other individuals during a small, 90-minute *confidential* group discussion, please consider volunteering.

I have attached an informed consent form, which contains specific details about this process for you to review. If you are interested in participating in this *Focus Group*, please email me your reply. I may be reached by email at ███████████ I will contact all respondents by both email and phone to discuss initial eligibility requirements. Data collected, including demographic information collected during screening will be kept confidential. If selected all interviews will be tape recorded, with notes taken throughout the sessions. Data collected (the audio recording and notes) will be kept in a secure place for 5-years.

Your participation in this Focus Group for this Walden Doctoral research study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether you choose to be in the study. You may stop at any time. There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study, nor are there any costs of participating in this study. As a thank you, you will be provided with a $25 Amazon Gift Card for your time and contributions to the focus group.

I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

La Toya A. Johnson

IRB Approval # 08-30-17-0370473

Appendix D: Demographic Information and Inclusion/Exclusion Key

Intergenerational Communication Strategies for Generation X Supervisors:
Motivating and Engaging High Performing Millennials

Demographic and Professional Experience Questionnaire	
Your Name: [Enter your name.]	*Contact Phone Number:* [Enter your Phone No.]
Availability: [Availability through October 8th]	*Email Address:* [Click here]

1. Are you between the ages of 18 and 52? [(Y/N).] | What year where you born? [Year]

2. Indicate your Gender (Male/Female) [Choose an item.]

3. What is your race? [Choose an item.] [if multiracial please indicate]

4. What is your highest level of education completed? [Select from list]

Parks and Recreation Affiliation

5. Which local or state Parks and Recreation agency are you affiliated with? (indicate below)

[Enter your agency name here]

6. Currently within park and recreation, are you [Choose an item.] [Indicate other]

7. How long have you served in this capacity within Parks and Recreation?
[Choose an item.] [Indicate other]

8. What is your present job title? [Click or tap here to enter text.]

9. Are you currently in a Generation X (age 38 to 52) in Supervisory position? [(Y/N).]

10. Please answer questions **10a-10d, if you answered** *"yes" to # 9*; if no, skip to question 11.

a. Approximately how many employees do you currently supervise? [Employee No.]

	Yes	No
b. Do you have experience managing multiple generations of employees?	☐	☐
c. Do you currently supervise any high performing millennial employees (between the ages of 18-37)?	☐	☐
d. During the interview, are you be able to describe how you have implemented or administered strategies to improved employee engagement and motivation with Millennials?	☐	☐

Intergenerational Communication Strategies for Generation X Supervisors:
Motivating and Engaging High Performing Millennials

Demographic and Professional Experience Questionnaire

Your Name: (Enter your name.)	*Contact Phone Number:* (Enter your Phone No.)
Availability: (Availability through October 8th)	*Email Address:* (Click here)

1. Are you between the ages of 18 and 52? (Y/N). | What year where you born? (Year)

2. Indicate your Gender (Male/Female) (Choose an item.)

3. What is your race? (Choose an item.) (if multiracial please indicate)

4. What is your highest level of education completed? (Select from list)

Parks and Recreation Affiliation

5. Which local or state Parks and Recreation agency are you affiliated with? (indicate below)

(Enter your agency name here)

6. Currently within park and recreation, are you (Choose an item.) (Indicate other)

7. How long have you served in this capacity within Parks and Recreation? (Choose an item.) (Indicate other)

8. What is your present job title? (Click or tap here to enter text.)

9. Are you currently in a Generation X (age 38 to 52) in Supervisory position? (Y/N).

10. Please answer questions **10a-10d, if you answered "*yes*" to # 9**; if no, skip to question 11.

	Yes	No
a. Approximately how many employees do you currently supervise? (Employee No.)		
b. Do you have experience managing multiple generations of employees?	☐	☐
c. Do you currently supervise any high performing millennial employees (between the ages of 18-37)?	☐	☐
d. During the interview, are you be able to describe how you have implemented or administered strategies to improved employee engagement and motivation with Millennials?	☐	☐

11. Only answer questions **11a-11d, if you responded "no" to # 9**, you are in a non-supervisory role within Parks and Recreation.

	Yes	No
a. Do you currently supervise full time permanent park and recreation employees?	☐	☐
b. Do you have experiences working for a Parks and Recreation Generation X manager (age 38 to 52)?	☐	☐
c. Approximately how long have you been (or were you) managed by a Generation X supervisor?	Click to enter	
d. During the interview, would you be able to work effectively with others to discuss and develop intergenerational strategies to improved employee engagement and motivation?	☐	☐

Inclusion /Exclusion Demographic Information Key

Demographic Questions	Questions	Response Types	Interview	Focus Group	Exclusion Criteria Not eligible for the study
1	Are you between the ages of 18 and 52? What year where you born?	Cohort	1965-1979	1980-1999	If age ranges not between 1965-1999 meaning anyone under 18; and over 52
2	Indicate your Gender	Gender			
3	What is your race?	Nationality			
4	What is your highest level of education completed?	Educational status			
5	Which local or state Parks and Recreation agency are you affiliated with?	Agency affiliation			If agencies are outside Central or South Region per community partner list not eligible
6	Currently you are a_____ park and recreation employee.	Employment status			
7	How long have you served in this capacity within Parks and Recreation?	Employment status			
8	What is your present job title?	Employment status			
9	Are you a Generation X (age 38 to 52) currently in Supervisory position? Yes or No	Employment status	If yes, Interview	If no, Focus group	If no, for Gen X (1965-1979) – not in a Supervisory role. If no for Millennial (1980-1999) skip to question 11.
10a	Approximately how many employees do you currently supervise? _____	Professional experience			
10b	Do you have experience managing multiple generations of employees? Yes or No	Professional experience			If response is "no"
10c	Do you currently supervise any high performing millennial	Professional experience			If response is "no"

Demographic Questions	Questions	Response Types	Interview	Focus Group	Exclusion Criteria Not eligible for the study
	employees (between the ages of 18-37)? *Yes* or *No*				
10d	During the interview, are you be able to describe how you have implemented or administered strategies to improved employee engagement and motivation with Millennials? Yes or No	Professional experience			If response is "no"
11a	Do you currently supervise full time permanent park and recreation employees? *Yes* or *No*	Professional experience			If response is "yes"
11b	Do you have experiences working for a Parks and Recreation Generation X manager (age 38 to 52)? *Yes* or *No*	Work experience			If response is "no"
11c	Approximately how long have you been (or were you) managed by a Generation X supervisor?	Work experience			
11d	During the interview, would you be able to work effectively with others to discuss and develop intergenerational strategies to improved employee engagement and motivation? Yes or No	Work experience			If response is "no"

This parks and recreation demographic information (agency affiliation, employment status, and professional experience) was used to determine respondent *Inclusion /Exclusion* criteria, interview type (Interview or Focus Group) eligibility, as well as, identifying generational cohort groupings and coming of age ranges.

Appendix E: MSQ Long Form Reproduction Permissions

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus   *Department of Psychology*   N218 Elliott Hall
                                        College of Liberal Arts   75 East River Road
                                                                          Minneapolis, MN 55455

                                                                          Office: 612-625-2818
                                                                          Fax: 612-626-2079
                                                                          www.psych.umn.edu

January 21, 2016

Dear LaToya Johnson,

We are pleased to grant you permission to use the **Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire 1977 long form** on a secure web site as you requested for your research. We acknowledge receipt of your **157.50** payment for Royalty fees for **350 MSQ long form surveys.**

Please note that each copy that you make must include the following copyright statement:

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We would appreciate receiving a copy of any publications that result from your use of the **MSQ long form surveys**. We attempt to maintain an archive and bibliography of research related to Vocational Psychology Research instruments, and we would value your contribution to our collection.

If you have any questions, or if we can be of any additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Vocational Psychology Research

Appendix F: Member Checking Document

July 20, 2018

Hello Doctoral Study Research Participant,

This email is to request your participation in Member Checking, the final portion of the interview process, begun in 2017 for the Walden University supervised Doctoral Research study entitled, *"Intergenerational Communication Strategies for Generation X Supervisors: Motivating and Engaging High Performing Millennials.*

Member checking is an opportunity for you to review the interview and engage with transcript several months after our semi-structured interview was conducted. Enclosed you will find

      1) a Member Checking Document and
      2) a copy of your interview transcript

The Member Checking Document contains summarized themes developed through interim analysis of all the interviews results and study participants anonymized illustrative quotes (providing theme context). While the transcript itself will not be edited, please read and review both documents. You are encouraged to write on the Member Checking Document if you would like to provide any points of clarification and address the following:

      1) Whether or not you feel that the synthesized theme results are true to your experience
      2) If you have any additional comments that you would like to provide

If you are attending the annual ████ Conference July 23-25, I hope we are able to meet briefly in person to review your member checking document on Wednesday, July 25 during the lunch break; or please email your **completed Member Checking Document to me at** ████████████████ **by August 10, 2018.**

Thank you again for you time and assistance with this process, as it provides further reliability & validity to the study. You are most appreciated.

Sincerely,
La Toya A. Johnson
DBA Doctoral Candidate

2017.08.30
12:13:31
-05'00'

This e-mail may contain confidential or privileged information and is intended solely for the individuals to whom it is addressed. If you believe you have received this message in error, please notify the sender and delete the message without copying or disclosing it.

Intergenerational Communication Strategies Interview Study Member Checking Document

Participant Code: ¤   Click or tap here to enter text.¤   Date/Time: Click or tap here to enter   ¤

Please review your transcript and this Member Checking Document, containing all study participants anonymized interview responses and the summarized themes. In the *Member Check Review* column, please check if you would like to provide any additional points of clarification; and indicate:

    1) Whether or not you feel that the synthesized interviewees responses are true to your experience

    2) If you would like to provide any additional comments, updates or thoughts o provide

IQ	Interviewees Anonymized Responses to Interview Questions	Theme(s) Identified	Member Check Review	
Q1a.		→	☐ No additional comments ☐ See comments my below Click or tap here to enter text.	