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Leading a Multigenerational Workforce: Leveraging the Skill Sets of Each Cohort

Kevin Danley
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Kevin Danley

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Review Committee
Dr. Richard Schuttler, Committee Chairperson, Management Faculty
Dr. Raghu Korrapati, Committee Member, Management Faculty
Dr. Sheryl Kristensen, University Reviewer, Management Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

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2020

Abstract

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by

Kevin Danley

MPhil, Walden University, 2019

MBA, Strayer University, 2014

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management Leadership and Organizational Change

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Abstract

For the first time in American history, there are 5 generations in the workforce concurrently. This historical event has caused workplace challenges where leaders have inadequate knowledge regarding the unique skill sets of each generational cohort. Without an understanding of these unique skill sets, leaders cannot adapt their leadership style to create greater production in a multigenerational workplace. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory multiple-case study was to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how their leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce. Strauss and Howe's generational theory and Burns' transforming leadership theory were used as the conceptual frameworks. A purposeful sample of 13 participants from 2 fire departments consisting of each generational cohort and their leaders shared their experiences through semistructured in-person interviews. Data were collected, transcribed, and hand coded for analysis. The findings yielded 7 themes leading to 3 conclusions. First, each cohort exhibits specific behaviors and values and offer unique skill sets. Second, little is known of Generation Z's skill sets. Finally, while leaders should be aware of generational skill sets, their leadership strategies should focus on engaging individual followers based on their distinctive characteristics. Application of the findings of this study might affect social change by providing insights for leaders to better identify an adaptive leadership style to lead a multigenerational workforce more effectively. This might also lead to an increase in morale, retention rates, productivity, and general job satisfaction.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to God and my faith for sustaining me through this journey. To my family who have driven me to succeed personally and professionally. To my amazing wife Felicia for being my confidant, my calm, my best friend, my present, and my future. To my daughter Kailah for being my purpose to face and overcome challenges. To my stepdaughters Mikayla and Emma for your love, kindness, and cheerleading. To my mom for loving me unconditionally and, when I was growing up, sacrificing to ensure my basic needs were met. To my cousin Dr. Dionne Blue for being more inspirational to me than you could ever imagine. To my Aunt Edna for always having my back and serving as a second mother.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Demographic changes in the workforce pose unique challenges for workplace leaders (Mencl & Lester, 2014). There are an unprecedented five generations in the workforce (Eldridge & Stevens, 2017) which leads to the unique challenge because differences in generational values, desires, ambitions, and preferred workstyles can lead to job dissatisfaction, low morale, and reduced productivity (Bennett, Pitt, & Price, 2012). There has been extensive research conducted on generational differences and commonalities in the workplace (Clark, 2017; Wiedmer, 2015). However, there is a lack of empirical research focused on generational skill sets and the role of leadership in leveraging those skill sets.

Workforce diversity presents challenges and opportunities for leaders (Campbell, Campbell, Siedor, & Twenge, 2015). Leaders who are able to harness the innate benefits of a multigenerational workforce can create a competitive advantage for their organizations (Dust, Gerhardt, Hebbalalu, & Murray, 2019; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Leveraging the distinctive skill sets of each generational cohort fosters collaboration, positive organizational culture, and increased productivity (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Fishman, 2016). Conversely, failure to adapt leadership style in a multigenerational workforce can cause workplace conflict, retention issues, and decreased productivity (Allen, Allen, Karl, & White, 2015; Lester, Standifer, Schultz, & Windsor, 2012).

The results of this qualitative exploratory case study may add value to the current body of knowledge by providing an understanding of the skill sets of each generational

cohort and discovering how leaders can adapt their leadership style. This might facilitate the development of effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States. A multiple-case study was utilized to aid in this knowledge gain. Findings from this study might allow leaders to inspire workplace congruence, job satisfaction, higher morale, and increased productivity.

Background of the Study

A multigenerational workforce has been studied by numerous researchers. For example, Eldridge and Stevens (2017) evaluated the challenges of leading a multigenerational workforce. Their study was prompted by the uniqueness of having five generations in the workforce for the first time in history. Eldridge and Stevens detected the need for organizations to assess the distinctive education and training needs of each generation. Managers and leaders must strategize ways to tailor training and development to the specific needs of each generation (Eldridge & Stevens, 2017). Having knowledge and an understanding of each generation's skill sets might aid leaders in assessing their specific education and training needs.

Wiedmer (2015) appraised the values and differences of each generation. The study was designed to justify the need for leaders to consider generational values to increase job satisfaction, morale, and productivity within a multigenerational workforce. Each generational cohort is motivated differently. Leaders must be flexible in their communication style (Wiedmer, 2015). Al-Asfour and Lettau (2014) conducted a similar study with similar results. In contrast to Wiedmer, they assessed too much flexibility can

lead to the appearance of generational favoritism. Both studies determined organizational effectiveness is dictated by leaders' capacity to understand generational motivators and skills. Findings from each study emphasize the need for leaders to gain an understanding of the unique skill sets of each generational cohort.

Mencl and Lester (2014), using multiple workplace factors, hypothesized that similarities between generations would be greater than differences. Their results specified greater similarities using some factors while other aspects revealed greater differences. Each generation desired harmony with their colleagues. Conversely, each generation had a different perception regarding what harmony should look like in the workplace (Mencl & Lester, 2014). The disparity in generational definitions of harmony could result in discord. Mencl and Lester prescribed leaders should familiarize themselves with generational similarities and differences within the workplace. These findings highlight the need for leaders to adapt their leadership style and strategize ways to instill teamwork and create greater production amongst a multigenerational workforce.

Empirical evidence proves generational differences exist. Although it is crucial to understand generational differences in the workplace, stereotyping and focusing on differences can lead to job dissatisfaction, decreased productivity, low morale, and increased employee turnover (Salahuddin, 2010). Gaining an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and discovering how leaders can adapt their leadership style focuses on the positive aspects of a multigenerational workforce. These insights may allow leaders to develop effective strategies to create a more productive

multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States.

Problem Statement

While many Traditionalists (born 1925-1945) have retired from the workplace, the cohort remains represented in the workforce (Wiedmer, 2015). As a result of increased life expectancy and extended labor years, the workforce demographic now spans five generations (Eldridge & Stevens, 2017). Leaders are challenged with fostering respect and cohesion amongst an enlarged multigenerational workforce (Mencl & Lester, 2014). With multiple generations working together, leaders can stimulate harmony by embracing the diversity provided by having five generations in the workplace (Clark, 2017). By adapting their leadership style, leaders can create competitive advantage for their organizations (Schullery, 2013). The general problem is that there is an overall lack of awareness related to the unique skill sets of each generation, which is creating challenges for leaders in the workplace (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014).

The specific problem is that without an understanding of how to lead and manage each generation, leaders lack the capacity to develop the most effective strategies to create a productive multigenerational workforce. These strategies are critical to avoiding poor morale, low retention rates, reduced productivity, and general job dissatisfaction (Johnson, 2013). Researchers have found flexibility and adaptability are critical to leading a multigenerational workforce (Gursoy, Chi, & Karadag, 2013; Vasconcelos, 2015). When leaders understand and respect the values and skill sets of each generation, organizational culture evolves, and synergy occurs across generations (McNally, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory multiple-case study was to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style. This might lead to the development of effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States. This multiple-case study used a sample size of 13 consisting of participants from six groups. The six groups incorporated the Traditionalists/Silent Generation (born 1925-1945), Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1980), Millennial Generation/Generation Y (1981-2000), Generation Z/Post Millennials (born 2001-present), and organizational leaders. To maintain the integrity of a multiple-case study design, each group was an individual case study. I merged the data collected from open-ended questions in semistructured interviews and identified themes and patterns. Additional data were requested for triangulation purposes (Lewis, 2015). Documents such as operating procedures and bylaws were used to determine how leaders interact with a multigenerational workforce (Yin, 2009).

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

RQ1. What skill sets are associated with each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States?

RQ2. What strategies can leaders adapt to properly utilize the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public

sector in the United States?

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a researcher's guide to developing the context of a study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The conceptual frameworks significant to and supporting this study were based on Strauss and Howe's (1991) generational theory and Burns' (1978) transforming leadership theory. Strauss and Howe proposed their generational theory as a way to explain the behavioral patterns exhibited by generations throughout modern history (Murray & Chua, 2014). Burns viewed leaders as mediocre and selfish. The transforming leadership theory was created for that reason.

Strauss and Howe (1991) formulated that each generational cohort share commonalities based on historical events and social trends during the particular period of their lifetime. These events and trends are responsible, in large part, for the development of their values, traits, and beliefs (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Key characteristics attributed to each cohort often carry over to the workplace (Eldridge & Stevens, 2017). Strauss and Howe's generational theory provided a basis to explore the skill sets of each generational cohort.

Burns (1978) described leadership as both necessary and misconstrued, and judged that transforming leaders are adept at satiating the needs and development of followers (Dugan, 2017). Burns assessed that because transforming leaders appeal to the values of followers, mutual goals are achieved. Burns' transforming leadership theory provided the foundation to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style to create

a more cohesive and productive multigenerational workforce.

Nature of the Study

For this study, I chose a qualitative research method. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative research is exploratory and strives to understand phenomena versus testing a developed theory. The researcher in qualitative research pursues comprehension of phenomena through the experiences of others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). For this study, semistructured interviews were conducted with participants from a group of leaders and each generational cohort. The qualitative method was appropriate for gaining an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and exploring how leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce.

The quantitative research method is better suited for a study that involves the relationship of variables that can be measured and tested (Baglin, Reece, & Baker, 2015). Additionally, the quantitative research method is fundamentally deductive and requires hypotheses to be tested (Patton, 2015). Mixed method research incorporates the data collecting and analysis methods of both qualitative and quantitative research (Morgan, 2014). I did not choose the mixed method approach based on inherent disparities between each type of data.

I employed an exploratory case study design for this study. An exploratory case study is conducted when there is insufficient data surrounding a situation (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). It was appropriate for this study as it aligned with the process

of exploring and understanding the views and workplace experiences of each generational cohort and their leaders. Multiple-case studies are applicable when the same case study includes more than one single case (Yin, 2018). A multiple-case study is applied when the researcher seeks to explore differences and similarities between cases (Stake, 1995). A multiple-case study was appropriate for this study as I was able to explore the skill sets of each individual cohort and strategies leaders can adapt to properly utilize the skill sets of each generational cohort.

A phenomenological study is designed to understand perceptions and perspectives related to a specific phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological design was not appropriate because the purpose of this study was not structured around understanding lived experiences. Grounded theory is used to systematically generate theory through the analysis of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). A grounded theory design was not appropriate because the purpose of this study was not to provide context of a phenomenon through theory generation and data analysis.

Definitions

Baby Boomers: The generation born 1946-1964 (Gursoy et al., 2013).

Cuspers: Individuals born either early in a generation sharing some of characteristics of the generation before, or late in a generation sharing some of the characteristics of the following generation (Van Der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010).

Generational cohort: A group of people similar in age who share common historical events and social trends (Becton, Walker, & Jones-Farmer, 2014; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Generation X: The generation born 1965-1980 (Gursoy et al., 2013).

Generation Z (Post Millennials): The generation born 2000-present (Johnson, 2013).

Millennials (Generation Y): The generation born 1981-2000 (Gursoy et al., 2013).

Traditionalists (Silent Generation): The generation born 1925-1945 (Johnson, 2013).

Assumptions

There were several assumptions regarding this study. An assumption is a factor outside of the researcher's control but crucial to the assessment of the research problem. Further, it is a factor the researcher can reasonably expect to be true (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2014). The first assumption was that the leaders in the sample group were managing multiple generations. This assumption could be deduced because the workforce demographic now spans five generations (Eldridge & Stevens, 2017). The second assumption was that the participants have worked with members from each of the generational cohorts. This assumption was based on the criteria that each participant must be employed in their current job for at least 1 year. The final assumption was that participants would be honest and forthcoming during their interviews. This assumption

was derived from the voluntary nature of the study and the rapport that was established to assist in gaining authentic responses.

Scope and Delimitations

With five generations in the workforce, leaders must find a way to leverage generational diversity and create an environment that cultivates unity and productivity. If leaders gain a greater understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and adapt their leadership style, it might create a more productive multigenerational workforce (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). The scope of this study was a multigenerational workforce and leadership in the public sector in the United States.

A case study allows the researcher to remain focused on the scope and may prevent it from increasing beyond the confines of the study (Yin, 2018). Semistructured interviews were employed for data collection. Semistructured interview questions did not restrict participant responses and generated the necessary reflection and insight to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort. Additionally, semistructured interview questions assisted in discovering how leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce.

Delimitations are study characteristics that determine the boundaries and restrict scope. They are characteristics controlled by the researcher (Patton, 2015). I focused on a multigenerational workforce in the public sector and excluded the private sector. The public sector was ideal for this study as the impact of the data generated from the experiences of employees and leaders reflected the intent of the study.

To meet the criteria for the study, participants had to be employed in their current jobs for at least 1 year at the time of their interview. The established criterion was to afford each participant an opportunity to work with cohorts from other generations. The results of this study may provide generalizable data that could cross into the private sector, as the lack of understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort is not limited to the public sector.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of a study (Aguinis & Edwards, 2014). There were three identified limitations of this study. First, Generation Z has much less experience working in a multigenerational workforce than older generations. Their ephemeral employment history limited the ability of the other cohorts to assess the skill sets of their generation. Establishing the criteria of having at least 1 year of experience aided in reducing the impact of this limitation. Second, the socioeconomic background of each participant could affect their worldview of other generations and what constitutes a skill set. Future studies might address this limitation. The third limitation was inadvertent bias caused by the researcher being the primary data collector. Bias can be attenuated through the use of an interview guide, open-ended questions (D. W. Turner, 2010), and critical reflexivity (Wadams & Park, 2018). Despite these limitations, the data analysis process of identifying themes and patterns assisted in ensuring transferability.

Significance of the Study

With the eldest of Generation Z reaching working age, the workforce is now

composed of five generations (Wiedmer, 2015). Findings from this study may provide information and knowledge about the challenges leaders face in a multigenerational environment and how they can adapt their leadership style to leverage the skill sets of each generation. The focus of this study was to research the skill sets of each generational cohort and identify how leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce. A more in-depth understanding of generational skill sets could allow leaders to engage employees more effectively, enhance communication, and create a more cohesive, innovative, adaptable, and productive workforce (Johnson, 2013).

Significance to Theory and Practice

The results of this multiple-case study may add value and have immediate application to the multigenerational workforce and their leaders. The workforce is the most diverse it has ever been (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). The importance of recognizing and understanding the phenomenon of leading a multigenerational workforce may contribute to current literature and scholarly works through a greater understanding of the skill sets of each generation and the adaptation of leadership style. Conducting a qualitative case study that explores the workplace experiences of employees and leaders may provide information that could lead to practical application related to utilizing the skill sets of each generation to create a more productive workplace.

Significance to Social Change

The time of this study came when the workplace was occupied by five

generations for the first time (Wiedmer, 2015). This research findings might illuminate the need for leaders to understand the skill sets of each generation and adapt their leadership style to create a more cohesive and productive workforce. The results of this study may contribute to social change by helping leaders better identify an adaptive leadership style to lead a multigenerational workforce more effectively. The new knowledge could allow leaders to increase morale, retention rates, productivity, and general job satisfaction.

Summary

The context of this study on leading a multigenerational workforce was outlined in this chapter. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory multiple-case study was to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style. This might aid in the development of effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States. Exploration of generational skill sets and how leaders can leverage them may provide insight that could allow leaders to engage employees more effectively, enhance communication, and create a more cohesive, innovative, adaptable, and productive workforce (Johnson, 2013). Although scholars have studied multiple generations in the workplace, and the role of leadership within a multigenerational workforce, there remains a gap in research regarding an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and how leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public

sector in the United States. Chapter 2 of this study will provide a review of current

literature on a multigenerational workforce and how leaders can leverage each

generation's unique skill sets, as well as how the conceptual frameworks provided

context for the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

For the first time, five generations coexist in the workplace (Eldridge & Stevens, 2017). The problem addressed in this literature review is the overall lack of awareness related to the unique skill sets of each generation, which is creating challenges for leaders in the workplace (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). Without an understanding of how to lead and manage each generation, leaders lack the capacity to develop the most effective strategies to create a productive multigenerational workforce. These strategies are critical to avoiding poor morale, low retention rates, reduced productivity, and general job dissatisfaction (Johnson, 2013).

Although numerous researchers have studied a multigenerational workforce and leadership within a multigenerational workplace, further understanding of generational skill sets is needed to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Wiedmer, 2015). The purpose of this qualitative exploratory multiple-case study was to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style. This might facilitate the development of effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States. Chapter 2 includes a literature search strategy, a description of the conceptual frameworks that guided this study, a literature review focused on a multigenerational workforce and the role of leadership in creating

greater productivity, and the gap in the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

To gain a greater understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce, I reviewed recent related literature and scholarly books. To gather relevant peer-reviewed literature for this review, I accessed databases through the Walden University Library and local libraries. These databases included ABI/INFORM Collection, Business Source Complete, Emerald Management, ScienceDirect, and others outlined in Table 1. The keywords and terms used to search these databases included *generations, generational strengths, productive multigenerational workforce, generational cohorts, leading a multigenerational workforce, adapting leadership style, generations in the workplace, Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z,* and *public sector leadership*. Scholarly books used in this study contributed to the justification for this research and the development of conceptual frameworks, research method and design.

Table 1

Literature Search Strategy

Types of Literature Searched			
Databases	Key words	Scholarly journals	Books
ABI/Inform Complete	Leading a multigenerational workforce	Management	Research Design
SAGE Journal	Public sector leadership	Leadership, Accountability, and Ethics	Leadership
Emerald Management	Multigenerational workforce	Organizational Behavior	Generations
Business Source Complete	Adapting leadership style	Values-Based Leadership	
Emerald Management	Productive multigenerational workforce	Business	
ScienceDirect	Generational stereotypes	Values-Based Leadership	
ProQuest	Generational strengths	Human Resource Management	

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is used as a guide for a researcher to explore the problem within a study and evaluate the data collected (Imenda, 2014). In qualitative research, the use of conceptual frameworks helps the researcher to organize thoughts and data (Green, 2014). The conceptual frameworks significant to this study were based on Strauss and Howe's (1991) generational theory and Burns' (1978) transforming leadership theory. Evaluating findings from this study using conceptual frameworks composed of these theories might allow leaders to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce.

Generational Theory

A fundamental premise of generational theory is that each generational cohort shares unique experiences that contribute to collective perspectives (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). Strauss and Howe (1991) created their generational theory in an effort to provide context for how world events and social trends affect the thought processes, behaviors, and lifecycles of those within each generational cohort. Behaviors and values attributed to each cohort often carry over to the workplace (Eldridge & Stevens, 2017). Murray and Chua (2014) conducting a literature review on the effect of Strauss and Howe's generational theory on gender roles in leadership, determined that gender-based leadership style is influenced by generational differences. More specifically, Generation X were children during the women's movement. As a result, women within the cohort are less accepting of gender roles and lead in a similar fashion to men (Murray & Chua, 2014).

Campbell, Campbell, Siedor, and Twenge (2015) appraised that, although every member of a generation has unique perspectives and personalities, generational differences are real and useful in helping explain phenomena. The unique experiences and perspectives of each generational cohort impact how they interact with each other and how managers and leaders interact with them on a daily basis (Campbell et al., 2015). Knowing and understanding the events that led to each generation's values, work ethic, and distinctive perspective might lead to the discovery of the inherent skill sets of each cohort. This knowledge might allow leaders to adapt their leadership style and create a

more cohesive and productive multigenerational workforce. Strauss and Howe's (1991) generational theory was relevant to this study, as it focused the research on the exploration of the unique skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States.

Transforming Leadership Theory

Burns (1978) observed leaders and considered them self-centered and their skills unexceptional. That served as impetus for the creation of the transforming leadership theory. Burns recommended that leadership should not be about having or wielding power for the sake of power, instead, leadership power should be used to create positive change for the organization and the people within it. For Burns, that is the difference between a power holder and a transforming leader.

Burns (1978) assessed that transforming leaders display characteristics of energy, enthusiasm, and passion regarding their beliefs and the mission and vision they intend to achieve. Transforming leaders are authentic and charismatic, instill pride, and inspire followers to act in ways that lead to team success (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978). At the same time, transforming leaders are focused on accentuating the concurrent significance of the organizational mission and vision, development and goals of followers, and the processes to address each. Transforming leaders are skilled at enhancing the creativity and productivity of followers (Burns, 1978; Dugan, 2017). The characteristics of transforming leaders are necessary for leadership to adapt their style in a multigenerational workforce (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014).

The unique skill sets of each generational cohort represents a strength for an organization. Transforming leaders have the ability to engage each cohort effectively and leverage generational diversity and create an environment that cultivates unity and productivity (Boyle et al., 2018; Burns, 2003). Chiaburu, Smith, Wang, and Zimmerman (2014) conducting a meta-analysis of leader influence on subordinate behavior, generalized that transforming leaders are the key to ensuring positive follower behavior and, in turn, organizational success. Burns' (1978) transforming leadership theory was relevant to this study, as it focused the research on discovering strategies leaders can adapt to properly utilize the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States. Figure 1 illustrates the multiple concepts included in this literature review as they applied to this study.
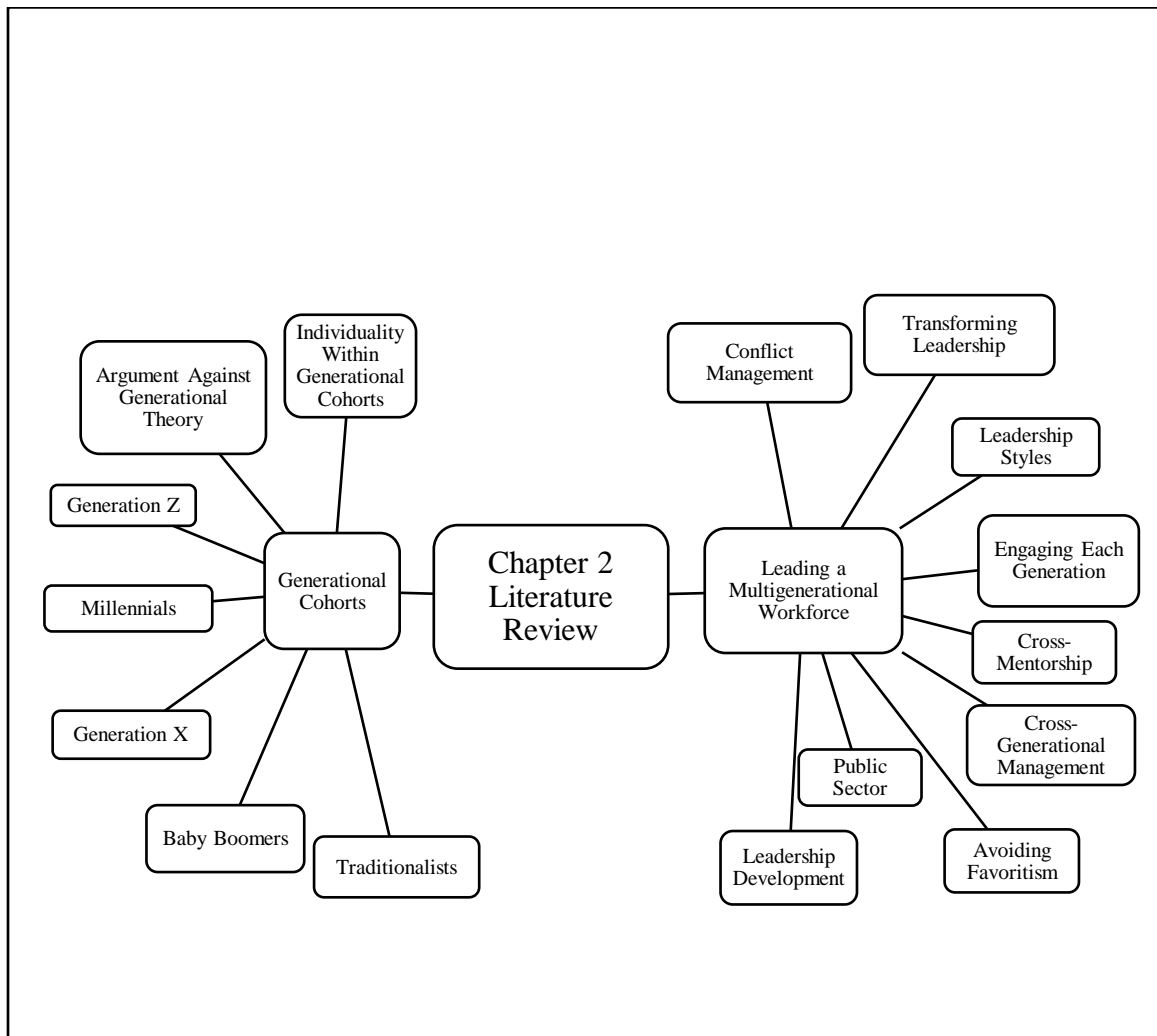
Figure 1. Concept map of multiple concepts included in this literature review.

Generational Cohorts

The idea of generational cohorts dates to Mannheim's 1928 theory of generations essay, which was republished and translated from German into English in 1952. Mannheim (1928/1952) judged people are influenced by the sociohistorical environment of their upbringing, create change based on the environment's effect on them, and in the process, generate events that shape future generations. The focus of this theory was how

events and environment affected the formative childhood years (Benson & Brown, 2011).

Mannheim's theory has been referred to as a seminal work that fails to define generations

with great clarity (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2014).

Strauss and Howe (1991) expanded generational theory and defined a

generational cohort as a group of people born during a confined time period of successive

years. Each generational cohort shares common historical events and social trends

(Becton et al., 2014; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Strauss and Howe formulated a repeating

cycle of four generational types that repeat throughout each era of American history.

Generational types appear in a fixed order from idealist to reactive to civic to adaptive.

Each type has an average duration of approximately 23 years. Figure 2 includes notable

individuals associated with each generation.
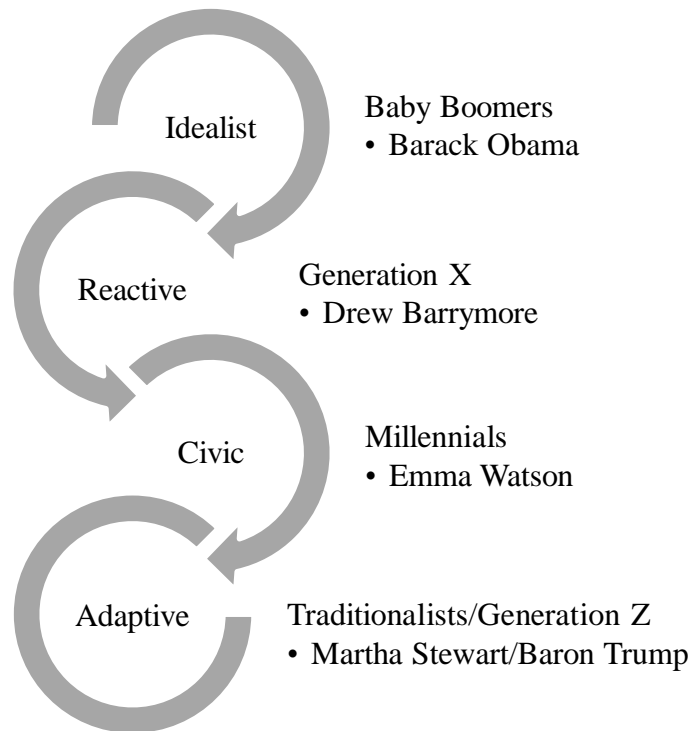
Figure 2. The four-type cycle.

     An era begins with an idealist generation. This generation's youth follows a societal crisis. They are inner driven and focused on social issues. Strauss and Howe (1991) associated Baby Boomers with the idealist generation. The reactive generation is under protected by society, resulting in rebellion and cynicism. Strauss and Howe classified Generation X as the reactive generation. The civic generation is outer-driven and much more protected than the reactive generation. They seek to make a positive difference in a divisive culture. Strauss and Howe labeled Millennials as the civic generation. The adaptive generation experience a societal crisis. They are generally hypocritical and naïve. Traditionalists and Generation Z are categorized as members of the adaptive generation (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

In a study that appraises group behavior, deviations and outliers will undoubtedly present (Meghani, Byun, & Chittams, 2014). Despite the divergence of some individuals, generational cohort behaviors and values remained critical to this study. As reflected in Table 2, generational cohorts have distinctive skills, values, and workplace expectations. An understanding of the shared unique experiences that contribute to collective perspectives might provide insight for leaders into the skill sets of each generational cohort (Campbell et al., 2015).

Researchers have ascribed different timeframes to each generational cohort. According to Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, and Lance (2010), Traditionalists were born 1925-1945. Berk (2013) inferred Traditionalists were born 1922-1945. Gursoy, Chi, and Karadag (2013) determined Baby Boomers were born 1946-1964. Demps II, Thornton, and Baker (2011) debated Baby Boomer births as 1946-1965. Twenge et al. (2010) identified Generation X as those born 1964-1980, while Cekada (2012) categorized Generation X birth years as 1965-1980. According to Strauss and Howe (1991), Millennials were born in 1982. Hoskins (2010) specified birth years 1980-2000. As the youngest cohort, Generation Z produces the greatest debate. Johnson (2013) composed their birth years as 2000-present. Ferri-Reed (2016) gave a range between the 1990's and the 2010's. Determining generational cohort years is not an exact science (Pew Research Center, 2019). The spans are also not arbitrary. Researchers, to include Strauss and Howe and Twenge et al., have used historically and socially significant events to analyze and determine cohort years. It is important to note, with the exception of Generation Z,

researchers have established generational cohort timeframes within three years of others in the field. The dates most accepted were utilized in this study.

Despite variance in cohort years, there is agreement on generational cohort characteristics and the historical events and social trends that shaped them (Berk, 2013). Van Der Walt and Du Plessis (2010) created the term *cuspers* to describe people born close to generational cohort dividing lines. Cuspers also serve to neutralize the disparities in generational cohort birth years. Cuspers were found to share characteristics of both identified cohorts (Shaw, 2013).

Traditionalists

Traditionalists, born 1925-1945, are the smallest and oldest generational cohort currently in the workforce. They are sometimes referred to as the silent generation (Lyons, Schweitzer, Ng, & Kuron, 2012). Traditionalists were reared and came of age during the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, Pearl Harbor, World War II, the New Deal, and the Korean War. They are deeply patriotic. Traditionalists did not generally experience luxury in their youth. They saved and paid cash for purchases. Traditionalists tend to be frugal because of financial adversities their families endured during the uncertainty of war and economic hardships (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Race and cultural diversity were not commonplace during the upbringing of Traditionalists (Duchscher & Cowin, 2004).

They have a robust sense of pride and morality, are loyal to their organization, and they expect the same in return. Traditionalists seek direction and formal feedback

from leadership, and they value job security. They are uncomfortable with ambiguity, conflict, and change (Hernaus & Vokic, 2014). Traditionalists can have challenges with technology. They are consistent, practical, conform to workplace rules, respect authority, and will put the needs of the organization above their own ambitions. They anticipate the respect of leadership and younger employees (Martin & Ottemann, 2016). Traditionalists will disengage if they perceive a lack of respect for their knowledge and experience (Luscombe, Lewis, & Biggs, 2013). They enjoy mentoring and sharing the knowledge and wisdom they have gained during the course of their lives, personally and professionally. In many cases, Traditionalists have returned to the workforce due to financial concerns. In other cases, they yearn for certain aspects of being employed. Although Traditionalists are accepting of delayed recognition, they expect to be acknowledged and rewarded for their expertise and loyalty (Bal, DeJong, Jansen, & Bakker, 2011).

Baby Boomers

There was a massive increase in birth rates at the end of the Great Depression and World War II. That surge led to the term baby boom. Those babies, born 1946-1964, would become known as the Baby Boomer Generation (Gursoy et al., 2013). Baby Boomers grew up during thriving economic times. Financial prosperity for the country led to personal and professional opportunities not afforded to their parents. Their home life generally consisted of a father that worked and a mother that stayed home (Chi, Maier, & Gursoy, 2013). Baby Boomers were largely influenced by the Civil Rights

Movement, the moon landing, Woodstock, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the

assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the rise of television as the prevailing media

source, and women's liberation (Badley, Canizares, Perruccio, Hogg-Johnson, & Gignac,

2015).

Benson and Brown (2011) testing an explanatory model on the impact of

generational differences on job satisfaction, commitment, and willingness to quit,

determined Baby Boomers generally have higher job satisfaction and commitment, and

less willingness to quit than younger cohorts. Baby Boomers are considerably more

defined by their work than other cohorts. It has been said Baby Boomers live to work

(Gursoy et al., 2013). As a result, they have been called career-minded workaholics who

are confident, optimistic, self-motivated, and driven to climb the corporate ladder

(Brown, 2012).

Baby Boomers require meaningful and challenging work. They thrive in

situations requiring teamwork, relationship building, and process improvement. Baby

Boomers have an affinity for self-development, advancement, and achievement. They

have made significant sacrifices to attain their goals and prefer visible rewards, such as

titles and plaques. Contrary to Traditionalists, who seek out feedback, the Baby Boomer

cohort can be exceedingly sensitive to feedback (Hernaus & Vokic, 2014).

Generation X

Generation X (Gen X'ers), born 1965-1980, came of age during a time of

increased divorce rates, blending of families, and a proliferation of mothers joining the

workforce. As a result, Gen X'ers spent the majority of after school time unsupervised (Becton et al., 2014). This generation is sometimes referred to as the baby bust generation. That label stems from the significant decrease in Baby Boomer pregnancies (Dwyer, 2009). Gen X'ers were impacted by such events as the HIV and AIDS epidemic, the Gulf War, Exxon Valdez oil spill, the energy crisis, the Rodney King beating, the rise of personal computers, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster, and the rise of Music Television (MTV). Their generation is known for working hard and playing hard. Having grown up self-governing and resourceful, they tend to be entrepreneurial and masterful networkers (Schoch, 2012).

Gen X'ers prefer to have a work-life balance. Because they value time off, older generations have misinterpreted this and consider them lazy (Ledimo, 2015). They prefer rewards that entail time off. Gen X'ers will often refuse a promotion if it infringes upon work-life balance. They have portable careers and will not hesitate to move on from an organization if they differ philosophically on matters such as pay, promotion, or work-life balance. Change is expected and welcomed by this cohort. Gen X'ers might not be loyal to an organization. However, they are loyal to co-workers and those they lead (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014). Although they are team players, they prefer independent assignments. Gen X'ers can be cynical, are generally much less trusting of authority than previous cohorts, will challenge rules, and detest micromanagement. They crave new skill sets, desire to remain marketable, and are technologically adept. Gen X'ers tend be less

idealistic and desire higher salaries than other generational cohorts. They desire direct
feedback (Schoch, 2012).

Millennials

Millennials, also called Generation Y, were born 1981-2000 (Gursoy et al., 2013).
They were raised with, and shaped by, the internet, school violence, the Oklahoma City
bombing, social media, and 9/11. The perceived dangers of the world, to include the
internet, led to Millennials being sheltered by their parents (Hahn, 2011). Millennials are
the first generation to spend their entire lives in the digital age and as such, they are
technologically savvy. Though born in the digital age, Millennials bore witness to the
smart phone revolution, the rise of social media, and instant messaging (Bolton et al.,
2013).

Millennials are ambitious, confident, socially conscious, eco-aware, pragmatic,
and eager to make a difference in the world, personally and professionally (Coulter &
Faulkner, 2014). Like Gen X'ers, Millennials are entrepreneurial. They are not generally
motivated to seek formal leadership positions (Aker, 2009). Millennials accept and
embrace diversity (Debevec, Schewe, Madden, & Diamond, 2013). The Millennial cohort
expect employers to aid in their development through the use of mentoring and coaching
(Martin & Ottemann, 2016). They desire real-time communication and feedback through
technological means. Millennials seek immediate gratification, and prefer hands-on,
interactive projects. They pride themselves on learning alternative perspectives and ideas
(Aker, 2009).

Millennials prefer an uninterrupted flow between work and play. They do not constrain themselves by working one job or having one career (Clark, 2017). Their proclivity for working multiple jobs has led to a proliferation in temporary work referred to as odd jobs and the gig economy. Working multiple temporary jobs where they are loosely affiliated with the organizations provide the flexibility and freedom they seek (Petriglieri, Ashford, & Wrzesniewski, 2019). Companies like Uber, Lyft, Airbnb, and TaskRabbit fit the specified category.

Generation Z

Generation Z, born 2000-present, are also referred to as Post Millennials (Johnson, 2013). This generational cohort was born and raised during the presidency of Barack Obama, the first black president, social media, touchscreen technology, cloud storage, laws making it illegal to text and drive, and the global war on terrorism (Debevec et al., 2013). Generation Z have observed their parents' financial difficulties due to the great recession, the rising prices of home purchasing, and student loan debt. They have also witnessed a dwindling middle class. This has caused an acute and pragmatic financial awareness on the part of Generation Z (A. Turner, 2015). Unlike Millennials, Generation Z did not witness the rise of the digital age. They were born into omnipresent global news and pervasive connectivity. Generation Z have grown up with YouTube, Google, and Netflix (Wiedmer, 2015).

Generation Z recently entered the workforce. As a result, there is limited information regarding their workplace habits and preferences. What is known is they

prefer independent projects that limit team efforts (A. Turner, 2015). Generation Z are not averse to switching employers. They will terminate employment if an organization does not appear to value diversity and inclusion (Grow & Yang, 2018).

The historical events and social trends shared by each cohort might provide insight for leaders to develop engagement strategies. Engaging each cohort according to their proclivities might lead to increased productivity in a multigenerational workforce (Hernaus & Vokic, 2014). These factors will be assessed later in this chapter.

Table 2

Generational Cohorts

	Traditionalists	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials	Generation Z
Birth Years	1925-1945	1946-1964	1965-1980	1981-2000	2000-present
Historical Events	Great Depression, Dust Bowl, Pearl Harbor, World War II, New Deal, Korean War	Civil Rights Movement, moon landing, Vietnam War, Woodstock, Cold War, JFK assassination, women's liberation	HIV/AIDS epidemic, Gulf War, Exxon Valdez oil spill, energy crisis, Rodney King beating, rise of the personal computer, fall of the Berlin Wall, Space Shuttle Challenger disaster, rise of MTV	Internet, school violence, Oklahoma City bombing, social media, 9/11	First black president, social media, touch screen technology, cloud storage, global war on terrorism
Work values	Respect for authority and experience, loyalty	Workaholics, will question authority	Work/life balance, independence	Multitasking, structure, diversity	Multitasking, diversity, creativity
Preferred feedback	Face-to-face and formal via memo	In person, but seldom	Direct, immediate	Real-time, through the use of technology	Frequent, through the use of technology
Work motivation	Respect, job security	Being valued, achievement, advancement	Autonomy, time off, remaining marketable	Working with others, development, impact corporate social responsibility	Monetary, enhance technological skills, impact corporate social responsibility
Preferred leadership	Chain of command, hierarchy	Change of command, consensus	Self-governing	Collaboration	Flexible

Argument Against Generational Theory

Although empirical evidence proves the shared unique experiences of each

generational cohort contributes to collective perspectives and behaviors, some researchers

have rejected the evidence and referred to it as conjecture (Lester et al., 2012; Mencl &

Lester, 2014). Stanton (2017) conducting a survey and literature review on generational

cohorts in the workplace, judged that generational differences constitute stereotypes. It

was further assessed generational cohorts have more similarities than differences.

Mencl and Lester (2014) analyzing a data collecting survey on generational

values in the workplace, determined there are intergenerational commonalities in the

work values of a multigenerational workforce. Costanza and Finkelstein (2015) are

perhaps the greatest antagonist of generational theory (Beier & Kanfer, 2015).

Conducting a literature review, they rejected many tenets of generational theory.

Costanza and Finkelstein assessed that generational stereotyping can lead to followers

feeling isolated and unsupported. They further critiqued, such feelings might have

damaging effects on an organization.

The strengths in each study lies in the empirical revelation of intergenerational

similarities and the specific workplace characteristics that unveil parallel values. Some of

the values shared across generational cohorts include being appreciated and rewarded,

having work that matters, continuous learning, and leadership support (Stanton, 2017).

The weaknesses in each study occur in the undervaluing of generational skill sets and the

need for leaders to adapt their leadership style to accommodate a multigenerational

workforce.

Stanton (2017) and Mencl and Lester (2014) acknowledged there are generational

differences. However, they recommended leaders focus on the individuality of each

follower, while seemingly disregarding the benefit of maintaining an awareness of the

unique world events and social trends that affect the thought processes, behaviors, and work values of each generational cohort. Costanza and Finkelstein's (2015) assessment of the drawbacks of generational stereotyping was valid. However, they focused solely on the negative aspects of differences and failed to give credence to the multitude of empirical evidence that proves generational theory concepts are beneficial for leaders, followers, and their organizations (Beier & Kanfer, 2015).

Salahuddin (2010) conducting a literature review and structured interviews, determined generational stereotyping and focusing on differences can lead to job dissatisfaction, decreased productivity, low morale, and increased employee turnover. Generational stereotyping can also lead to age discrimination (Cox & Coulton, 2015). Although generational stereotyping and focusing on differences can have a negative impact on an organization, having an awareness of them might allow leaders to address and overcome any associated pejoratives (Lyons, Urick, Kuron, & Schweitzer, 2015).

Transforming leaders view generational differences as an asset. They recognize the benefit of the vast knowledge, creativity, and diversity associated with a multigenerational workplace (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). However, the concentration of this study was not generational differences. The focus of this study was to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort which may allow leaders to adapt their leadership style and develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce (Johnson, 2013; Wiedmer, 2015).

Individuality Within Generational Cohorts

Hayes, Parks, McNeilly, and Johnson (2018) conducting an exploratory case study on generational stereotypes at work, determined there is truth in certain generational stereotypes. They also inferred stereotypes should not be held as facts and generational membership does not preclude the distinctive value of individuality. Leaders should take the time to raise their awareness of the unique values and attributes of each generational cohort (Lawson, 2017). This knowledge should be used to increase productivity, job satisfaction, and morale. It should not be used to stereotype or lessen the importance of individuality (Ferri-Reed, 2014).

Emphasis was placed on generational cohorts in this study. However, it is imperative for leaders to understand the importance of the individual aspect of relationship building. Acknowledging individuality is critical to this process and can lead to greater trust between leader and follower (Dugan, 2017; Johnson & Johnson, 2010). Within the construct of generational theory and generational cohorts lie individuals with unique personalities, temperaments, abilities, backgrounds, and experiences (Dugan, 2017; Stanton, 2017). Taking the time to engage individual followers with the knowledge of their distinctive characteristics, in addition to those of collective cohorts, might foster greater trust and increased productivity (Johnson & Johnson, 2010).

Leading a Multigenerational Workforce

It is impractical to attempt leading a multigenerational workforce using a conventional approach. Flexibility and adaptability are critical characteristics for any

leader desiring to create a cohesive and productive multigenerational workforce (Burns, 2003; McNally, 2017). The existence of a multigenerational workforce presents unique challenges and opportunities for leaders. Research suggests leaders and organizations that value generational diversity and take the time to raise their awareness of the distinguishing values and attributes of each generational cohort can create a harmonious and productive workforce (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Lawson, 2017; Young, Sturts, Ross, & Kim, 2013).

Conflict Management

Regardless of congruence within organizational culture, conflict is an inevitable aspect of the workplace. With five generations inhabiting the workplace, the likelihood of conflict increases (Hillman, 2014). Leaders must adapt their leadership style to avoid communication barriers and to ensure effective and timely conflict resolution within a multigenerational workforce (Maier, Tavanti, Bombard, Gentile, & Bradford, 2015). Failure to adapt leadership style to address conflict management in a generationally diverse workforce can lead to job dissatisfaction, decreased productivity, low morale, and increased employee turnover (Salahuddin, 2010).

Kammerhoff, Lauenstein, and Schutz (2019) testing hypotheses regarding transforming leadership's effect on conflict management, determined transforming leaders increase the willingness of followers to cooperate and resolve task conflict and relationship conflict. Transforming leaders are adept at understanding the benefits of generational diversity and using that knowledge to resolve conflict, foster

communication, enhance productivity, and create a culture of growth, development, teamwork, and respect for the organization and each generational cohort (McNally, 2017; Yang, 2014).

Transforming Leadership

Burns (1978) contrasted transactional leadership and transforming leadership. Transactional leaders were described as those who use reward and punishment to achieve compliance. Transactional leaders seek to obtain results through existing organizational structure and lack the vision to make the necessary changes to prevailing circumstances that might improve the organization (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). They seek to attain what they desire in exchange for something employees desire. Contingent rewards serve to enhance performance and bolster positive behavior (Jensen et al., 2019). Bass (1990) critiqued transactional leadership is often counterproductive and can lead to a lack of inspiration and decreased productivity.

Conversely, transforming leaders listen to and connect with their followers. They convey the mission and vision as a desirable future for both the organization and the followers (Jensen et al., 2019). Transforming leaders then inspire followers to achieve common objectives and goals associated with the shared mission and vision (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). They emphasize follower contributions and the impact their efforts are having on the shared mission and vision. By using authenticity and establishing a shared sense of pride and purpose, transforming leaders can also create or improve

organizational culture in a multigenerational workplace (Jensen et al., 2019; Wright, Moynihan, & Pandey, 2012).

Leaders should not confuse adapting their style with being inauthentic. Remaining true to beliefs and values is critical to inspiring followers toward mission and vision accomplishment. Disingenuous leaders are eventually exposed, which can lead to the estrangement of followers (Pinelli et al., 2018). Authentic leaders are able to engage each generation successfully without alienating other cohorts (Fusco, O'Riordan, & Palmer, 2015).

Transforming leaders realize a command and control style of leadership is at their disposal if a situation necessitates such action. They further understand the true power in leadership lies in building mutually respectful relationships (Burns, 1978). Building such relationships within a multigenerational workforce might increase productivity and create a competitive advantage. Burns (1978) inferred transforming leaders address Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs by satisfying followers lower-level needs of safety and security and elevating them to the higher-level needs of self-esteem and self-actualization.

Inspiring shared and sustained vision, goals, and objectives builds mutual trust between leader and follower, as well as intergenerationally (Solaja & Ogunola, 2016). Transforming leaders take the time to understand the uniqueness of each generation. They then adapt rewards and communication styles to match each cohort's preference. This can lead to increased employee engagement. Tse and Chiu (2014) conducting a cross-sectional study on transforming leadership and its effect on job performance,

assessed transforming leadership amplifies intrinsic motivation and enhances creativity in followers. Their results further determined employee engagement by transforming leaders can lead to the growth and development of each person within each cohort, increased productivity, and accomplished business goals.

Leadership Styles

Transforming leadership and transactional leadership are two of the nine common leadership styles. The others include:

- Autocratic leadership: The leader exhibits total control over all decisions without any meaningful input from followers.

- Bureaucratic leadership: Requires strict adherence to hierarchy lines of leadership and limits creativity.

- Charismatic leadership: The leader is a personable and persuasive visionary that can be perceived as egotistical.

- Democratic leadership: Shared leadership with a participative decision-making process that can lead to accountability issues.

- Laissez-faire leadership: The leader offers little guidance, makes few decisions, and can appear apathetic.

- Servant leadership: The leader's main goal is to serve and care for followers which can lead to the appearance of weakness.

- Situational leadership: Leadership style is adjusted to fit a situation but does not always take into account the people in the situation.

Each of these leadership styles has advantages and disadvantages. Transforming

leadership is a combination of the positive aspects of the respective styles (Bass & Bass,

2008). Identified aspects of leadership styles that make up transformational leadership

include a display of conviction, taking a stand on challenging issues, and placing

emphasis on purpose, commitment, and an engaging vision of the future for the

organization and its followers (Stedman & Adams-Pope, 2019). Research proves

followers of transforming leaders have higher rates of job satisfaction and morale and are

decidedly productive (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Kammerhoff, Lauenstein, &

Schutz, 2019; Yang, 2014).

Engaging Each Generation

The presence of five generations in the workforce requires leaders to engage each

cohort according to their preferences and workplace values if they expect high

productivity (Hernaus & Vokic, 2014). Communication, advancement opportunities,

rewards, and work-life balance are some of the workplace values that differ across

generational cohorts (Gursoy et al., 2013). Leaders with an understanding of generational

differences in workplace values might have significant success engaging each

generational cohort and creating a more productive workforce (Twenge et al., 2010).

Leadership engagement is a critical component of not only workplace production, but

also organizational culture and organizational success (Kataria, Garg, & Rastogi, 2013).

Leaders of Traditionalists should be directive and provide clearly defined goals

and objectives. Face-to-face communication is preferred by Traditionalists. However,

when formal communique is required, it should be delivered to them in writing by means of memorandum (Hernaus & Vokic, 2014). Traditionalists generally have a lower aptitude for technology. Leaders should be cautious not to overwhelm them with technological advances (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014).

      As a leader, it is important to ensure Baby Boomers are empowered to lead teams in efforts to solve organizational challenges. They value teamwork, processes, and opportunities to aid in organizational change initiatives. Baby Boomers might be motivated to further increase their productivity when they are involved in decision making processes. Traditionalists and Baby Boomers are much less likely to desire remote working than younger cohorts (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014).

      Becton et al. (2014) conducting a study on generational differences and workplace behaviors, determined Generation X is the least likely cohort to desire overtime. They further discovered although Millennials and Generation Z covet work-life balance, Generation X is the cohort who attaches the most value to the concept. They place high value on continuous learning. Leaders should provide opportunities for them to enhance their skill sets regularly (Bova & Kroth, 2001). Offering Generation X compressed work weeks and opportunities to telecommute might increase job satisfaction (Park & Gursoy, 2012). Generation X and Millennials yearn for a variety of projects that offer them the opportunity to acquire new skills and build upon their resumes. A wide range of skills allows them to progress using the nonlinear approach they seek (Duchscher & Cowin, 2004).

Millennials should be allowed to work on team projects that provide the flexibility to differentiate themselves. They are team players and will not attempt to distinguish themselves at the expense of others (Shaw, 2013). As a leader, it is imperative to express to them the value in the projects they are assigned. Millennials are more likely than their older cohorts to remain with an organization that engages them frequently and positively. Involving Millennials in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities might appease their sense of purpose and possibly aid in retaining their employment (Park & Gursoy, 2012). Failure to develop, recognize, or provide advancement opportunities for Millennials and Generation Z will likely result in higher turnover rates (Pietersen & Oni, 2014).

Generation Z, as a result of having several technological devices, are multitaskers. Upon acquiring proficient job knowledge, leaders should afford them opportunities to balance multiple projects (Fratricova & Kirchmayer, 2018). Generation Z put less value on attaining a formal education than older cohorts. However, they are self-confident in their knowledge, skills, and abilities due to their affinity for learning from YouTube and other technological means. Leaders must be prepared to contend with a possible lack of certain proficiencies on the part of Generation Z. Organizational and communication skills not gained through a formal education or engaging in social activities can be enhanced in the workplace (Wiedmer, 2015).

Cross-Mentorship

Leaders must be intentional and deliberate about understanding each generational cohort and adapting their leadership style to accommodate each (McNally, 2017). In addition, leaders should promote intergenerational understanding. Cross-mentoring can be an instrumental tool in achieving intergenerational understanding (Short, 2014). Age difference is not the emphasis of cross-mentoring. Leaders should utilize cross-mentoring to focus on the sharing of experiential knowledge between generational cohorts.

The technology gap between Traditionalist and the other generational cohorts is an area of opportunity for leaders in a multigenerational workforce. Millennials and Generation Z have the technological capability to mentor Traditionalists and possibly reduce the gap (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). Millennials and Generation Z lack workplace experience. Pairing Traditionalists with Millennials and Generation Z in a cross-mentoring role might afford the two younger cohorts an opportunity to learn invaluable workplace lessons. Traditionalists generally relish the prospect of sharing their years of knowledge with younger cohorts (Clark, 2017).

Due to social media and other technological advances, Generation Z is highly adroit at connecting by way of those means. However, technology has minimized face-to-face communication and caused a severe deficiency in the social skills of the cohort (Becker, Fleming, & Keijsers, 2012; A. Turner, 2015). Leaders can take advantage of this opportunity by pairing Baby Boomers and Gen X'ers with Generation Z in an attempt to

expand their social skills. Such a pairing might lead to increased camaraderie and greater productivity (Becker et al., 2012).

Ferri-Reed (2013) conducting scenario-based research on intergenerational quality, conflict, and communication, formulated an example of cross-mentoring within a candle factory. A Traditionalist was paired with a Millennial in an attempt to improve inspection procedures. Using the knowledge of the Traditionalists and the ingenuity and technical skills of the Millennial, the process was improved. The pair formed a bond and the company profited.

The unique characteristics of each generation might inhibit the willingness of some generational cohorts to engage in cross-mentoring and the cross-sharing of knowledge. Leadership must be the catalyst by creating formal and informal opportunities that will motivate followers to embrace these concepts (Brcic & Mihelic, 2015). Cross-mentoring can close skill gaps, increase innovation and morale, produce intergenerational synergy, and create a competitive advantage for the organization (Crosley, 2018).

Cross-Generational Management

In many organizations, hierarchal command structures have morphed into flat structures reducing or eliminating middle managers. Flat structures have led to the emergence of technologically savvy younger generations elevating rapidly to management positions. The combination of these occurrences has led to instances of

younger cohorts managing members of older cohorts. Leaders have the added challenge of creating harmony in cross-generational management (Carrison, 2014).

Tension can occur when Millennials, who are collaborative, manage Traditionalists and Baby Boomers, who prefer a hierarchal style of management. Millennials are multitaskers and might desire to delegate multiple projects simultaneously. Traditionalists and Baby Boomers might feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of simultaneous projects. Workplace communication and feedback tendencies of younger cohorts might also cause challenges for older generations in a cross-generational management environment. It is incumbent upon leaders to ensure managers maintain self-awareness and an understanding of the preferences of other generational cohorts (Murray, 2011). Organizations can mitigate turmoil in cross-generational management by ensuring followers receive generational diversity training (Branscum & Sciaraffa, 2013).

Amayah and Gedro (2014) conducting a literature review to gain a greater understanding of generational diversity, determined leaders can mitigate tension in cross-generational management by developing training tailored for cohorts to communicate more effectively cross-generationally. Leaders can create further harmony in cross-generational management by gaining an understanding of generational strengths which may allow them to adapt their leadership style and increase productivity in such an environment (Gaul, 2018; McDonald, 2014).

Avoiding Favoritism

Favoritism in the workplace is defined as special or preferential treatment given by leadership to one or multiple followers (Chang & Cheng, 2018). Leader flexibility can sometimes lead to the perception of favoritism. This perception can be polarizing and result in low morale and decreased productivity (Peglar, 2015). Leaders can minimize this perception through a regular review of organizational policies and procedures and ascertaining follower buy-in (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). The perception of favoritism can be further minimized by authentic leaders who have the ability to maintain an awareness of their personal biases and remain impartial (Fusco et al., 2015). Leaders can also reward each individual appropriately based upon their preferences, and maintain transparency in communication (Peglar, 2015). Leaders should foster an environment of open communication, ensure all followers are given a path to success, and allocate rewards impartially (Hsiung & Bolino, 2018).

Leaders must overcome the challenge of ensuring each cohort understands their workplace preferences will not always correlate to those of others. A difference in workplace preferences does not translate to lack of ability or lack of task completion. A difference in workplace accommodations should not be construed as favoritism. Each person, irrespective of generational cohort, must adhere to organizational policies and procedures (Benson & Brown, 2011). However, mission and vision accomplishment are achieved when leaders provide opportunities for each individual in each cohort to succeed by accommodating their workplace preferences. Predilection indulgences might

present in such areas as coaching, rewards, communication, and conflict resolution
(Sherman, 2006). Leaders who successfully communicate this message might improve
organizational culture and increase productivity in the workplace (Coulter & Faulkner,
2014).

Public Sector Leadership

The focus of this study was a multigenerational workforce in the public sector in
the United States. The public sector is the portion of the economy provided by the
government. It is comprised of public enterprises and public services. The public sector is
generally financed by taxpayers. Services provided by the public sector include health
services, law enforcement, public education, and public transportation. Organizations that
are not part of the public sector are considered private sector (Villadsen & Wulff, 2018).

The public sector has evolved demographically. In the past, generations were
disassociated by job description and hierarchy. Older generations served in upper
management; middle-aged employees operated in middle management; younger
generations functioned at lower levels of the public sector (Gursoy et al., 2013). For the
first time, multiple generations are working together as peers (Burch & Strawderman,
2014).

Arunchand and Ramanathan (2013) conducting a quantitative study, measured
organizational culture in the public sector. Analyzing their research, they determined the
amount of bureaucracy that still exists in the public sector is greater than the private
sector. Their findings further detected public sector leaders have the challenge of

navigating the varying workplace values and perceptions of each generation while maintaining objectivity, managing organizational culture, and guiding the organization toward mission and vision accomplishment (Dixon, Mercado, & Knowles, 2013).

Orazi, Turrini, and Valotti (2013) conducting a literature review and cross-reference analysis on public service leadership, determined transforming leadership has the greatest positive impact on public sector followers. A greater understanding of generational skill sets is needed for leadership to adapt their style in a multigenerational workforce in the public sector (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). The public sector was appropriate for this study as the effects of the data generated from the experiences of employees and leaders reflected the intent of the study.

Leadership Development

Transforming leaders develop many of their skills through experience. Frequent communication with followers and other leaders provides the ultimate learning environment (Burns, 1978). Kelloway and Barling (2000) inferred transforming leadership behaviors can be heightened by workshops and seminars specifically designed for that purpose. MacKie (2014) determined leadership can be enhanced with executive coaching and mentoring. Bartlett II, Boylan, and Hale (2014) supported the notion of executive coaching and mentoring for the development of leaders. Experience, coaching, and mentoring are a few aspects of leadership development (Bartlett II, Boylan, & Hale, 2014; MacKie, 2014).

Miscenko, Guenter, and Day (2017) using extant theoretical and empirical evidence, mapped leader identity development trajectory over the progression of a seven-week leader development course. They assessed, when leaders compared their personal views regarding leadership to a reflection of their actions in a leadership capacity, there was often incongruity. The realization of inconsistency provoked leaders to contemplate their leadership identity and seek meaningful growth.

Clapp-Smith, Hammond, Lester, and Palanski (2019) conducting a literature review on identity development and a multidomain approach to developing leaders, prescribed leaders identify personal beliefs and values and apply them to workplace situations mirroring personal life application. Clapp-Smith et al. (2019) formulated leadership development exercises in an attempt to aid leaders in the discovery of their authenticity. On-going leadership development is critical to growing competent, authentic, transforming leaders (Clapp-Smith, Hammond, Lester, & Palanski, 2019; Miscenko, Guenter, & Day, 2017).

Gap in the Literature

Despite the abundance of research conducted on generational cohorts and leadership in a multigenerational workforce, a gap remains in the current body of knowledge. Little data exists combining macro-level explanations of the unique skill sets of each generational cohort and how leaders can develop the most effective strategies to adapt their leadership style to properly utilize the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce. A greater understanding of

generational skill sets is needed for leadership to adapt their style in a multigenerational workforce (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014).

The majority of the literature in this review consisted of providing insight into the behaviors and values of each generational cohort and how leaders can engage them effectively and increase workplace morale and production. Few researchers have addressed generational skill sets and the need for leaders to adapt their leadership style to leverage the skill sets of a multigenerational workforce (Wiedmer, 2015). This study might add value to the current body of knowledge by providing an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and discovering how leaders can adapt their leadership style. This might assist in the development of effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States.

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style. This might aid in the development of effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States. In this chapter, I reviewed literature related to a multigenerational workforce. More specifically, historical events and social trends that influence the workplace values and behaviors of generational cohorts. I also evaluated literature regarding leadership and their role in developing and utilizing generational cohort strengths to create a more productive multigenerational workforce.

Generational cohorts, generational differences, and leading a multigenerational workforce have been studied extensively. Al-Asfour and Lettau (2014) appraised the unique experiences of each generational cohort and leaders' capacity to understand these factors and use them to increase workplace productivity. Their research provided an understanding of the importance for leaders to increase their awareness of the distinctiveness of each generational cohort. Wiedmer (2015) assessed the challenges associated with five generations in the workforce. This research elevated cognizance of leaders' need to adapt their leadership style to increase workplace productivity. However, further understanding of the unique skill sets of each generational cohort is critical to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). A qualitative exploratory multiple-case study was used to research this gap in literature. Chapter 3 contains the methodological aspects of the study and rationale for a qualitative exploratory multiple-case study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory multiple-case study was to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style. This might facilitate the development of effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States. The findings of this study might fill the research gap associated with the unique skill sets of each generational cohort, and what leaders can do to adapt their leadership styles to create greater production amongst a multigenerational workforce. Chapter 3 includes the rationale for the method and design chosen for this study, information on the role of the researcher, the data collection plan, and the data analysis plan. This chapter also contains details regarding procedures to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

Research Questions

Research questions are essential for researchers to explore and offer insight into phenomena (Ratan, Anand, & Ratan, 2019). The two research questions central to this qualitative exploratory multiple-case study were: (a) What skill sets are associated with each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States? and (b) What strategies can leaders adapt to properly utilize the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States? Addressing these

two central research questions might offer related information to contribute to the current gap in the literature identified in Chapter 2.

Research Method and Rationale

A qualitative research method was selected for this study. A qualitative inquiry is used to explore a situation and identify patterns through the experiences of others (Patton, 2015). Researchers using a qualitative research method seek to provide context of situations by emphasizing the experiences of those impacted (Jamali, 2018). A qualitative method was applicable for the process of analyzing the findings of this study.

Qualitative research is used to gain an understanding of situations and those experiencing the effects (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). The use of a qualitative research method was applicable for gaining an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and exploring how leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce. A qualitative research method was appropriate for this study as it aligned with the process of conducting interviews to highlight the experiences of each generational cohort and their leaders. The information gained from this process addressed the two research questions and might contribute to the current gap in literature regarding the present study.

A quantitative research method is appropriate for a study that involves the relationship of variables that can be measured and tested (Baglin, Reece, & Baker, 2015). This study did not require the measurement and evaluation of variables required for a quantitative method to provide information to fill the gap in the literature. Mixed method

research integrates the data collecting and analysis methods of both qualitative and

quantitative research (Morgan, 2014). I did not choose the mixed method approach based

on inherent variances between each type of data that would not answer the two central

research questions.

Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative exploratory multiple-case study was utilized for this study. A

research design is an objective and progressive plan that links verifiable evidence to a

study's research questions (Saldana, 2016). Researchers employ a case study design to

investigate situations through a comprehensive contextual examination (Torronen, 2014).

Marshall and Rossman (2016) assessed that an exploratory case study can explain the

"what" questions of a study.

An exploratory multiple-case study was appropriate for this study because there

was a need to explore and better understand the workplace experiences of each

generational cohort and their leaders that might fill the current gap in the literature.

Multiple-case studies are applicable when the same case study includes more than one

single case (Yin, 2018). Each participant group in this study was considered an individual

case.

A case study is one of numerous qualitative research designs. Other qualitative

research designs include grounded theory, narrative research, and phenomenology that

were considered but not applied to this study. Grounded theory is used to generate a

theory regarding the underlying behavior of people (Maz, 2013). Grounded theory was

not appropriate for this study because the focus was not to create a theory. Narrative

research involves telling the story of participants and attempts to create meaning around

events they have experienced (Grysman & Lodi-Smith, 2019). This approach was not

appropriate for the study as the purpose was not intended to be autobiographical.

Phenomenological research is the process of understanding the intrinsic nature of

individuals' life experiences and their meanings (Morrell-Scott, 2018). A

phenomenological design was not appropriate because the purpose of this study was not

structured around understanding lived experiences.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the primary data collecting instrument

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As the researcher of this study, my role was the observer. A

case study design requires a witness of participants involved in the events being studied

(Crowe et al., 2011). As the observer, I listened to participant experiences as told during

the interview process. I conducted 13 semistructured interviews with members of each

generational cohort and their leaders to ascertain information that addressed the two

central research questions that guided this study.

The 13 interviews consisted of participants from six groups. The six groups

incorporated each of the five generational cohorts and their organizational leaders. Yin

(2014) assessed that multiple-case study's provide greater details for analysis, and as a

result, increase the credibility of the study. Each group constituted an individual case

study. I documented interviews through the use of audio recording and taking field notes, which will be further explained later in the chapter.

Triangulation is the process of using multiple data sources in qualitative research to increase the validity and credibility of a study (Marrelli, 2007). In addition to audio recorded interviews and field notes, I used the transcribed interview documents and secondary data. I requested documents such as operating procedures and policies for use as secondary data. These documents were used to further substantiate themes and findings related to the two central research questions.

Bias in research can be mitigated through the use of objective open-ended questions (D. W. Turner, 2010). Bracketing and critical reflexivity can further alleviate researcher bias (Wadams & Park, 2018). Both techniques are used throughout the research process. Bracketing entails the researcher using a journal, field notes, or a diary to document personal feelings regarding the study and possible findings (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Researchers who employ bracketing maintain an awareness of potential biases and the possible influence of those biases on the study (Richards & Morse, 2013). Critical reflexivity will be further explained later in the chapter.

As a member of the Generation X cohort, I might have biases related to a multigenerational workforce. I used bracketing and critical reflexivity to reduce the impact on data collection and data analysis. In addition to bracketing and critical reflexivity, I chose participants with whom I have no relationship to further lessen the influence of researcher bias.

Data Collection Plan

This section outlines the plan that was followed during the study. It contains information on the sampling strategy, chosen instrumentation, field test procedures, data collection, and data analysis procedures. This section will also explain how an exploratory multiple-case study design was implemented to fulfill the purpose of the study and address the research questions.

Participant Selection Logic

My sampling strategy intent was to ensure participants came from a multigenerational workforce and had the sufficient time working with other generational cohorts to provide quality answers to the research questions. The population for the current study consisted of participants from fire departments in Pennsylvania. Fire departments in Pennsylvania are composed of public sector employees from each of the five generational cohorts and leaders required for this study. Volunteers were requested after obtaining approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Research participants had to be employed with their respective fire departments for at least 1 year at the time of their interview. The established criterion was to afford each participant an opportunity to work with cohorts from other generations. The generationally diverse fire department employees shared their experiences and provided critical information on the skill sets of each generational cohort and what leaders are doing to ensure a productive multigenerational workforce.

In qualitative inquiry, a small sample size is sufficient to acquire the necessary data for a valid and reliable study (Boddy, 2016; Patton, 2015; Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014). I requested 24 participants, anticipating the possibility that fewer would respond. Research supports that a sample size of 6-10 participants with quality responses is sufficient to reach data saturation in qualitative inquiry (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Participant Recruitment

I used purposeful sampling with participants being recruited from a pool of current Pennsylvania fire department employees. I contacted two Pennsylvania fire chiefs who verbally agreed to participate and allow their employees to participate. Upon receiving IRB approval, the Pennsylvania fire chiefs requested volunteers. A consent agreement outlining the intent of the study and requesting permission to use the fire department was sent to each fire chief. Additionally, an informed consent form was sent to each volunteer. This process aligned with IRB requirements and ethical standards.

Instrumentation

In case study research, multiple sources of evidence are required to ensure validity, credibility, and reliability (Renz, Carrington, & Badger, 2018). Additionally, the use of multiple sources allows for a greater understanding of the situation (Baxter & Jack, 2008). I served as the primary instrumentation for the study by asking open-ended interview questions. Using open-ended questions allows participants to elaborate and the

researcher to identify emergent themes through the use of follow-up questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The use of open-ended interview questions also gave research participants an opportunity to share their experiences regarding the skill sets of each generational cohort and how leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce.

Interview protocol. The interview protocol (see Appendix A) also served as a data collection instrument for the study. Interviews were audio recorded, and each participant had an opportunity to review their transcribed interview for accuracy as part of member checking. I received informed consent from each participant prior to recording their interview. Additionally, I took notes during and after each interview.

Field notes. Ravitch and Carl (2016) assessed that researchers should use field notes to reflect on observations made during the interview. They further appraised that the use of field notes can enhance the credibility of research. Field notes were used to describe the nonverbal actions of participants.

Supporting documentation. Supporting company documentation was used to meet the requirements of triangulation. I requested copies of company policies and bylaws to further substantiate emergent themes generated from participant interviews. I also reviewed publicly accessible data related to each fire department and a multigenerational workforce. Supporting documentation can serve as secondary data sources and provide credibility for the study (Yin, 2014).

Procedures for Field Test

The interview questions were field tested to ensure they align with the present

study's purpose and design. A draft of the interview questions was developed and

emailed (see Appendix B) to a panel of eight experts to review and recommend revisions

that would elicit necessary responses to the two central research questions guiding the

current study. The panel was composed of Walden University faculty members approved

to teach qualitative research courses. I received five responses. Their feedback (see

Appendix C) was used to alter interview questions as necessary to align with the purpose

of the study and the two research questions guiding the study. The revised interview

questions are included in the interview protocol (see Appendix A).

Procedures for Data Collection

The data collection process began after receiving IRB approval. I contacted the

two Pennsylvania fire chiefs and requested they forward the participation invitation letter

(see Appendix D) to their respective departments. The two central research questions of

the study were explored using open-ended questions in semistructured, one-on-one

interviews. I was an active listener and allowed participants to answer interview

questions without interruption so potential themes could emerge. I used the interview

protocol (see Appendix A) to guide each interview. The interviews were audio recorded

to increase the chances of obtaining all aspects of participant interviews and lessen the

amount of note taking during each interview. Following interview sessions, I transcribed

audio recordings. Transcripts enhance a researcher's ability to identify details that might be missed on an audio recording (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Tessier, 2012; Yin, 2018).

I emailed each participant an informed consent form to be signed and collected prior to the interview. They were given a 3-week period to schedule their interviews. This time frame accounted for any vacations or potential scheduling conflicts. Interview times and location were confirmed by email. Each interview was expected to take approximately 45 minutes. Once each interview was completed, the participant was told that I would provide a word-for-word transcript of their interview within two weeks. The intent was for them to review for accuracy and potential concerns. They were further instructed, if they did not receive a transcript within two weeks, to notify me via email. Appendix A contains further follow-up procedures. I planned to contact additional fire departments in Pennsylvania if there was an insufficient number of volunteers.

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of data analysis is to reveal patterns and attach meaning to the data collected (Patton & Appelbaum, 2003). Data analysis was performed on data collected from audio recorded semistructured interviews, transcripts, field notes, and documentation. Analysis focused on generating themes and patterns in line with the two central research questions of the study. Qualitative data analysis involves coding to extrapolate themes and patterns.

I began with pre-coding, which is the process of identifying and highlighting participant quotes that stand out prior to coding (Layder, 1998). After completion of data

collection, I manually coded without the use software. Saldana (2016) assessed that manual coding can provide high quality context with smaller sample sizes. It was further appraised, researchers utilizing manual coding are able to concentrate on the data without the distraction of software.

In the first cycle of coding, the data were evaluated holistically. I searched for words, phrases, and behaviors that were thematic. Saldana (2016) assessed that the first cycle of coding is appropriate for researchers to categorize themes prior to synthesizing the collected data. In the second cycle of coding, pattern coding was applied to aide in substantiating identified patterns and the attached meaning. Discrepant answers given during the interview process were uncovered during coding cycles. Those answers were documented but not included to eliminate the possibility of hindering the discovery of themes and patterns. Themes and patterns identified in the coding process might lead to a greater understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and the discovery of how leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Maxwell, 2013). Collins and Cooper (2014) conducting a study on emotional intelligence in qualitative research, determined researchers must be self-regulated and take personal responsibility for the trustworthiness and quality of their studies. In

qualitative research, trustworthiness encompasses credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence that can be placed in the truthfulness of findings in a study (Cope, 2014). To ensure credibility, I conducted member checking and triangulation. Member checking was achieved by ensuring each participant received a transcript of their interview to ensure the accuracy of their responses (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Triangulation was performed by using multiple data sources. In addition to interviews and field notes, I used interview transcription and requested documents such as operating procedures and policies for use as secondary data. These documents were analyzed for triangulation purposes and to further substantiate themes and findings related to the two central research questions.

Transferability

Transferability indicates the results of a study can be transferred and applied in other settings (Watkins, 2012). To achieve transferability, I provided a thick description of the participants' responses by coding and documenting patterns and themes that emerged. Additionally, variation in participant selection was reflected in the study as multiple generational cohorts were interviewed. Each participant had to be employed with their respective fire department for at least 1 year at the time of their interview, affording them an opportunity to work with cohorts from other generations. Their unique experiences ensured transferability during data analysis.

Dependability

Dependability involves consistently collecting and analyzing data and interpreting findings to the extent other researchers can replicate the procedures and arrive at similar conclusions (Morse, 2015). To ensure dependability, I used an objective interview protocol (see Appendix A), which included field tested interview questions. I also established an audit trail by describing and maintaining research records throughout the data collecting and data analysis process. Field notes were used as part of the audit trail.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the study's findings are based on participant stories and not researcher biases and can be confirmed by other researchers (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). Critical reflexivity was employed to ensure confirmability. Critical reflexivity involves the researcher examining values and beliefs that might be affected as a result of the study (Farrell, Oerton, & Plant, 2018). A reflexive journal was used to achieve reflexivity. To further minimize bias, participants were asked questions that were field tested and reflected their experiences uninfluenced by me as the interviewer.

Ethical Procedures

Due to the inclusion of human subjects in the study, I received IRB approval prior to collecting data. An organizational consent form was sent to the respective fire department chiefs. Once I received IRB approval, I created an informed consent form. This form was transparent and provided potential participants with all pertinent

information regarding the study. The relevant information included the purpose of the study, the procedures, the voluntary nature of the study, the risks and benefits of being in the study, privacy rights, the definition of each generational cohort, and researcher contact information.

Participants had the right of refusal to answer any question. They also had the capability to terminate the interview at any time. Interview recordings were stored safely and securely, and I was the only person with access to the data. Each participant had an opportunity to review a word-for-word transcript of their interview for accuracy. Once my dissertation was accepted, all data were destroyed. Paperwork was shredded, and digital recordings were erased. Incentives were not given for participation to avoid the appearance of coercion and the risk of skewed responses.

Summary

In this chapter, I explained the rationale for employing a case study design for this study. A qualitative exploratory case study is intended to function as a guide to address the two central research questions of the study. Chapter 3 was meant to serve as an outline describing the role of the researcher, the data collection plan, the data analysis plan, and details regarding procedures to ensure the study's trustworthiness. The findings of this study might fill the research gap regarding the unique skill sets of each generational cohort and how leaders can adapt their leadership style. This might aid in the development of effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational

workforce in the public sector in the United States. In Chapter 4 I will detail results of the

interviews I conducted using the methodology described in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory multiple-case study was to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style. This might assist in the development of effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States. The two research questions central to this study were: (a) What skill sets are associated with each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States? and (b) What strategies can leaders adapt to properly utilize the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States? In alignment with a multiple-case study design, the data collection included 13 semistructured interviews, a review of secondary data sources, and field notes for triangulation purposes. The secondary data sources consisted of fire house policies, bylaws, and operating procedures. These secondary data sources were used to provide context related to guidelines established by leaders for a multigenerational workforce. This chapter contains details regarding research setting, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and study results.

Setting

Participants involved in this study were from two fire departments in Pennsylvania. After receiving IRB approval, I contacted the two Pennsylvania fire chiefs

and requested they forward the participation invitation letter (see Appendix D) to their respective departments. I contacted each volunteer to coordinate the time, date, and location of the interview. The participants were asked to select a location that was convenient and comfortable for them that also provided enough privacy to maintain their anonymity. The interviews were conducted, and audio recorded, in the following settings: eight (61%) took place at the participants fire station; four (31%) took place at the participants home; one (8%) took place at the participants college. Each setting was conducive to the communicative nature of the interview. One interview at a fire station was interrupted by the subsequent interviewee. Two water bottles were delivered, and the subsequent interviewee immediately exited the room.

Demographics

The study's participants shared their experiences regarding the skill sets of each generational cohort and strategies leaders can adapt to properly utilize the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce. As required for inclusion in the study, each participant was employed in their current job for at least 1 year. The participants consisted of 12 (92%) volunteers from one fire department and one (8%) volunteer from the second fire department. Two (15%) participants were chief officers, three (23%) were executive officers, and eight (62%) were nonofficer fire fighters. Additionally, two (15%) were Traditionalists, two (15%) were Baby Boomers, two (15%) were Gen X'ers, two (15%) were Millennials, two (15%) were Gen Z'ers, and three (23%) were leaders. Also, one (33%) of the leaders was a

Baby Boomer, while the other two (67%) leaders were Millennials. Although gender was not a focus of the study, it is important to note, 11 (85%) of the participants were men and two (15%) were women.

Data Collection

I began data collection following IRB approval (09-20-19-0609813). Data collection took place from September 25, 2019 to October 16, 2019. The interviews ranged from 11 minutes to 56 minutes with an average duration of 28 minutes. Data were collected through the use of semistructured interviews. The interview protocol (see Appendix A) served as the data collection instrument for each interview. All participants were made aware of the scope of the study, identified risks and benefits, and their ability to terminate the interview at any time. Each participant signed and acknowledged they understood the consent form. All questions were answered by each participant.

I was unable to generate further participation from either fire department beyond the 13 volunteers. It was my intention to conduct five additional interviews following the initial 13. However, new themes and patterns ceased to emerge following the seventh interview. The lack of new emergent themes and patterns precluded the need to contact additional fire departments to request further participation.

Each interview was audio recorded with a digital voice recorder. A second digital voice recorder was available during each interview in case the primary recorder failed. Each audio recording was uploaded and saved to my computer. I transcribed each interview and reviewed them for accuracy. I saved the transcriptions as Apple Pages

documents to a folder on my computers desktop and forwarded them to the respective

participants for review. I used field notes to annotate observations made during each

interview. They were also used to describe the nonverbal actions of participants. I used a

diary to document personal feelings regarding the study and themes as they emerged. The

diary was also used to maintain an awareness of potential biases that might surface. I

remained objective throughout the data collection and data analysis processes.

I requested and was sent fire house policies, bylaws, and operating procedures for

one of the fire departments. These secondary data sources were used to further

substantiate emergent themes and patterns. I also reviewed publicly accessible data

related to each fire department through an internet search.

Data Analysis

Field notes were used for pre-coding purposes (see Layder, 1998). During

participant interviews, I highlighted repeating words and phrases. After completion of

data collection, I commenced the first cycle of coding by evaluating data holistically, as

contextualized by Saldana (2016). Searching for words, phrases, and behaviors that were

thematic allowed me to categorize themes prior to synthesizing the collected data. In the

second cycle of coding, I identified patterns, which helped to interpret coding completed

during pre-coding and the first cycle of coding. Patterns that emerged from participant

responses might provide insight for leaders into the skill sets of each generational cohort

and highlight the need to adapt their leadership style to create a more productive

workforce.

Organization of Data

I created a qualitative data analysis worksheet in Microsoft Word. The document included four categories: participant code, data, code categories, and patterns and meanings. Participants were coded 1 through 13. The code correlated to the order of interview. The data category contained words and phrases used by each participant. Code categories was used to indicate emerging themes. Patterns and meanings was a literally named category used to identify patterns and attach meaning.

Themes and Patterns

I followed the data analysis plan outlined in Chapter 3. Audio recorded semistructured interviews, transcripts, field notes, and secondary documentation were analyzed to answer the two central research questions of the study. I listened to the audio recordings during the transcription process. I also read the transcripts, field notes and secondary documentation several times to extract themes and patterns. Those themes and patterns were entered in the qualitative data analysis worksheet. Common themes were grouped into patterns. Themes and patterns were then categorized as emergent by generation, least effective strategies, and most effective strategies. This process allowed for a clear understanding and synthesizing of themes and patterns.

Discrepant Cases

In multiple instances, participant six responded to questions of generational skill sets by alluding to specific actions each generation should take to increase production in the fire department. One such illustration was the response to question number three.

When asked, "What skills do you believe are associated with Generation X that are or can be beneficial to productivity for the organization?", Participant 6 stated, "they should drive equipment, fundraise, and help younger guys more often." Extraneous responses were minimal. As recommended by Saldana (2016), they were noted but not used to influence themes or patterns.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As outlined in Chapter 3, the trustworthiness of qualitative research incorporates credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers are responsible for ensuring their studies are consistent with the procedures established for qualitative research. In the following paragraphs, I detail the steps used to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

Credibility

As stated in Chapter 3, in accordance with a case study design, I used multiple sources of evidence to ensure credibility. In addition to field notes, I requested and was granted access to fire department operating procedures, policies, and bylaws. These documents were analyzed for triangulation purposes and to further substantiate themes, patterns, and findings related to the two central research questions.

I conducted member checking by sending each of the 13 (100%) participants a transcript of their interview to ensure the accuracy of their responses, as prescribed by Liao and Hitchcock (2018). Each participant was told they would have one week to respond once I forwarded their transcript. I further stated, if I did not hear from them

within one week of sending the transcript, I would assume their consent to continue

participation in the study. I received responses from five (38%) participants. Each of

them confirmed the accuracy of their transcript.

Transferability

Transferability is the ability of the results of this study to apply in other settings

(Watkins, 2012). To achieve transferability, I provided a thick description of my findings

through the use of documented themes and patterns that emerged, and the meanings

assigned to them. Additionally, I provided a descriptive account of research setting,

sample size, sample strategy, and inclusion criteria. The consistency of interviews

through the use of the interview protocol and the recommendations from this study

described in Chapter 5 also support the transferability of these findings to other settings.

Dependability

Dependability involves consistency in the collection and analyzing of data and the

interpreting of findings in a manner that allows other researchers to replicate the

procedures and arrive at similar conclusions (Morse, 2015). To ensure dependability, I

conducted semistructured interviews with each participant using an interview protocol

(see Appendix A) that was field tested by experts in qualitative research. I audio

recorded, transcribed, and analyzed each interview. I also established an audit trail by

using field notes to annotate observations made during the interview and writing in a

diary to document personal feelings regarding the study and emerging themes.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which a researcher is able to relay findings based on participant experiences and not researcher biases (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). I used critical reflexivity to ensure confirmability. Critical reflexivity was accomplished with the use of a reflexive journal that documented my personal values and beliefs and ensured I maintained an awareness of them throughout the data collection and data analysis processes. To further minimize bias, participants were asked questions that were field tested and allowed them to communicate their experiences uninfluenced by me as the interviewer.

Study Results

The two central research questions were: (a) What skill sets are associated with each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States? and (b) What strategies can leaders adapt to properly utilize the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States? The data collection process included data from 13 participants from two fire departments in Pennsylvania. Seven themes emerged as a result of participant responses, data analysis, and the coding process.

Major Themes

Emergent Theme 1: Traditionalists Value

Table 3

Interview Question 1 Data

Theme	Pattern	Total number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
Work ethic	Hard workers who are loyal, put team first, and are hands on	8	62%
Knowledge level	A lot of experience leading to high level of knowledge	9	69%
Direction is not needed	Proactive and prone to resolve things on their own	8	62%

The first theme that emerged from analysis of the data emanated from the first semistructured interview question; what skill sets do you believe are associated with the Traditionalist generation that are or can be beneficial to productivity for your organization? Traditionalists garnered extreme praise for their work ethic. For example, Participant 2 stated,

They don't have to be told. They just go and do. You show them something one time, or like the example, the best example I can give you is the truck pulls out for

a fire call. The guys that don't make the truck, pick up a broom and sweep the

floor.

Participant 5 affirmed, "well, certainly I would say life experience, work ethic, the fact

that, you know, nothing's given to you." Participants conveyed high levels of respect for

Traditionalists and their contributions to production.

Emergent Theme 2: Baby Boomers Are High-Level Thinkers

Table 4

Interview Question 2 Data

Theme	Pattern	Total number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
Education	High level of college education	7	54%
Business acumen	Very focused on the business aspect of the organization	7	54%
Challenge the status quo	Always looking for ways to improve the organization	7	54%

The next emerging theme was the higher-level thinking of Baby Boomers. This

theme derived from the second semistructured interview question; what skill sets do you

believe are associated with the Baby Boomer generation that are or can be beneficial to

productivity for your organization? Baby Boomers were generally regarded as educated,

business minded, and constantly seeking ways to improve the organization. Participant 3

summed up Baby Boomers as having a, "higher level of education, maybe to understand what we're doing. You know, creating better ways to work together, manage people and stuff like that." Participant 7 stated,

> They have time in the industry and have learned. They have a maturity about them and a maturity in business that's applicable to this organization.

Participant 8 said the following,

> Most of them are highly educated, that we see. They have the ability to look at the big picture, that's something that I see. It stems, as you may know, from their education as much as anything.

Emergent Theme 3: Gen X'ers Experience and Task Accomplishment Focus

Table 5

Interview Question 3 Data

Theme	Pattern	Total number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
Get things done	Accomplish the task, no matter what it takes	6	46%
Work Experience	Experience facilitates relating to and helping the younger generations	8	62%

The third emergent theme was Gen X'ers level of experience and their focus on task accomplishment. This theme originated from the third semistructured interview question; what skill sets do you believe are associated with Generation X that are or can be beneficial to productivity for your organization? Participant 3 stated,

> That generation, you know, they're bringing their experiences. They've been around a while and they've seen some of the changes. They're in a position now where they can pass on a vast amount of knowledge because there was a significant change in the operations of emergency services across the board: fire, police, EMS. So, they can relate directly to the younger generation.

Participant 8 detailed the following,

> Git-er-dun. Whatever it takes, get it done. That's where I see this generation. Also, an interest in the wider responsibility. And we're not using any names, but a chief officer that I know is very helpful to other companies in showing up at scenes when he knows we eventually will be there. Showing up to offer his help to people he knows, never aggressively inserting himself, but, let me see how I can phrase this, knowing where the limits are to say I'm available if you need my help.

Participant 13 affirmed, "you give them a task they accomplish a task. That's part of their thing."

Emergent Theme 4: Millennials Are Tech Savvy and Want to Learn

Table 6

Interview Question 4 Data

Theme	Pattern	Total number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
Tech savvy	Highly proficient with all technology	8	62%
Want to learn	Excited to learn and add to organizational production	6	46%

The next emergent theme was the Millennials tech proficiency and their

willingness to learn. This theme emanated from the fourth semistructured interview

question; what skill sets do you believe are associated with Millennials that are or can be

beneficial to productivity for your organization? Participant 3 stated,

Yeah, this group in particular, in my opinion, brings that technology aspect into

play. They bring that, everything is very technology driven. Everything is very

'the latest and the greatest.' So they're the ones that I rely on for technology.

That's the group that I usually go to.

Participant 6 offered, "I'd say we're new, we're young, we're energetic, we want to learn.

Participant 8 said the following,

To me, their biggest skill is to say, I want to learn how to be a productive

member. I say that as a skill because, again, it's how you insert yourself into the

equation. I want to help, what do you think I should do to be the most helpful?

Emergent Theme 5: Generation Z Have a Lot to Learn

Table 7

Interview Question 5 Data

Theme	Pattern	Total number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
Learning	They have a lot to learn and are motivated to learn	7	54%
Too soon to tell	They are still new to the workforce and not a lot is known about them	4	31%

This theme emerged from the fifth semistructured interview question; what skill

sets do you believe are associated with Generation Z that are or can be beneficial to

productivity for your organization? Participant 10 stated,

I would say they are the generation that has the most to learn but also has the most

potential to improve. You know, because you're starting at zero. So you can only

go up from there.

Participant 13 said, "I don't know. The verdict is still out. They are kids that are

motivated."

Emergent Theme 6: Yelling and Treating Everyone the Same Are the Least

Effective Leadership Strategies to Create a More Productive Multigenerational

Workforce

Table 8

Interview Question 9 Data

Theme	Pattern	Total number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
Yelling	Getting upset and losing temper is unproductive	4	31%
Treating everyone the same	One size fits all approach does not take individualism into account	4	31%

This theme emerged from the ninth semistructured interview question; what

leadership strategies have been the least effective in utilizing the skill sets of each

generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public

sector in the United States? Participant 4 stated,

I think just like getting upset and yelling. I feel like that really doesn't do much to

anyone. Especially with people having kids and stuff like that. Yelling kind of

upsets the person getting yelled at. And they kind of do the opposite of what you

yelled at them for. Especially with my generation or the generation above. So, I

feel like that hurts a lot. And especially not giving constructive criticism. Because

if you yell at them for something that they did wrong and they don't know how to

fix it, you're not getting anywhere.

Participant 5 said, "you have to be accommodative of your employees and know what

drives them, what motivates them, and what their belief system is." Participant 8

followed by stating, "yelling at people. The whole thing, whether it's loud voices or

language. Yeah, yelling or language, that would be inappropriate in any situation."

Participant 12 stated,

I would say, not considering your audience. Everybody is so different because

everybody grew up in a different day and age and you have to be accommodating

of that. What works for your college student isn't going to work for the man who's

been doing this for 75 years.

Emergent Theme 7: Communication and Fair Treatment Are the Most Effective

Leadership Strategies to Create a More Productive Multigenerational Workforce

Table 9

Interview Question 10 Data

Theme	Pattern	Total number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
Communication	Listening and communicating	4	31%
Treating everyone fairly	Fair and consistent means taking individualism into account	4	31%

This theme emerged from the tenth semistructured interview question; what leadership strategies have been the most effective in utilizing the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States? Participant 1 stated, "just being able to communicate." Participant 4 stated the following,

Listen to them as a friend and not just, oh well I'm you're higher up, I'm not going to listen to you. I think it's just better that they make it so if you are friends with them, or not even friends, just coworkers. They act like coworkers that are listening.

Participant 5 stated,

Yeah, I think I alluded to that, you know the individualist. You know there's

always this fairness aspect of things that you know, even if you're not treating

people equivalent, like exactly the same way because again, one person doesn't

value what others do. And there needs to be sort of a fairness and consistency

around it all, which sounds a little contradictory sometimes. And I think it's a

constant balancing act.

Summary

The purpose of this exploratory multiple-case study was to gain an understanding

of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their

leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive

multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States. In Chapter 4, I

presented the study's findings by describing research setting, data collection, data

analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and ultimately the results of the study. The

participants addressed the research questions by describing their unique experiences

regarding the skill sets of each generational cohort and how leaders can develop effective

strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce.

The semistructured in-person interviews yielded approximately 300 minutes of

audio recordings comprising the experiences of 13 participants. Their responses and

themes and patterns were entered in a qualitative data analysis worksheet. An analysis of

the data produced seven emergent themes. Chapter 5 includes the interpretation of the

findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and implications for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory multiple-case study was to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style. This might facilitate the development of effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States. The study included a sampling of 13 participants from two fire departments in Pennsylvania. The data collection process involved one-on-one, audio recorded, semistructured interviews. For triangulation purposes, I collected and reviewed fire department policies, bylaws, and operating procedures. The data analysis process included hand coding and identifying themes and patterns. Seven themes emerged from the data that were consistent with each other as well as with the literature review presented in Chapter 2. In this chapter, I present my interpretation of the study's findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for action, recommendations for future research, and the study's implications.

Interpretation of the Findings

During the data analysis phase, themes emerged from the coding process based on the frequency of words and phrases. I generated seven significant themes using the semistructured interview responses, field notes, and document reviews. The themes were as follows: Traditionalists value, Baby Boomers are high-level thinkers, Gen X'ers experience and task accomplishment focus, Millennials are tech savvy and want to learn,

Generation Z have a lot to learn, yelling and treating everyone the same are the least

effective leadership strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce,

and communication is the most effective leadership strategy to create a more productive

multigenerational workforce.

The analysis and interpretation of participant responses led me to make three

conclusions. First, consistent with the literature and Strauss and Howe's (1991)

generational theory, each generational cohort exhibit specific behaviors and values and

offer unique skill sets that can be attributed in large part to historical events and social

trends that transpired during their lifetime. Second, due to Gen Z'ers recent entrance into

the workforce, little is known regarding their skill sets. Finally, to create a more

productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States, leaders

should be aware of generational skill sets. However, their leadership strategies should

focus on engaging individual followers based on their distinctive characteristics. I will

expound on each conclusion and describe their relationships to the reviewed relevant

literature, and applicable conceptual framework, in the following sections.

Traditionalist Value

The first significant theme emanated from responses to the first interview

question: What skill sets do you believe are associated with the Traditionalist generation

that are or can be beneficial to productivity for your organization? Eight (62%)

participants indicated Traditionalist have a strong work ethic, are loyal, and put the team

first. Participant 1 commented, "from what I can tell in my interactions with folks of that

generation, there was the notion of doing things for the greater good. They weren't so self-centered." This theme is consistent with the literature on Traditionalists. Hernaus and Vokic (2014) assessed Traditionalists as having a strong work ethic, resolute loyalty, and a desire to put the needs of the team ahead of their own. Wiedmer (2015) analyzed that Traditionalist grew up during the Great Depression and World War II. As a result, Americans in that timeframe placed high value on and displayed hard work and self-sacrifice. That assessment and this theme also correlate to the conceptual framework of Strauss and Howe's (1991) generational theory. Strauss and Howe formulated that historical events and social trends during the lifetime of each generational cohort are responsible, in large part, for the development of their values, traits, and beliefs. They further determined, these attributes often carry over to the workplace.

Baby Boomers Are High-Level Thinkers

The second theme emerged from responses to the second interview question: What skill sets do you believe are associated with the Baby Boomer generation that are or can be beneficial to productivity for your organization? Seven (54%) participants suggested Baby Boomers are well educated, focused on the business aspects of the organization, and are always looking for ways to improve the organization. Participant 3 commented that Baby Boomers are always, "creating better ways to work together, manage people and stuff like that." Participant 8 stated, "most of them are highly educated, that we see. They have the ability to look at the big picture." Those assessments align with Hernaus and Vokic's (2014) findings that Baby Boomers thrive in situations

that require process improvement and that they have an affinity for self-development and achievement.

Gen X'ers Experience and Task Accomplishment Focus

The next emergent theme resulted from the third interview question: What skill sets do you believe are associated with Generation X that are or can be beneficial to productivity for your organization? Six (46%) participants suggested Gen X'ers are task accomplishers. Participant 8 stated Gen X'ers, "whatever it takes, get it done." This theme supports Schoch's (2012) assessment that Gen X'ers are hard workers. Additionally, eight (62%) participants suggested Gen X'ers use their experience to relate to and assist younger generations. Coulter and Faulkner (2014) evaluated, Gen X'ers are loyal to coworkers and those they lead. This theme aligns with that evaluation.

Millennials Are Tech Savvy and Want to Learn

The fourth emergent theme derived from the fourth interview question: What skill sets do you believe are associated with Millennials that are or can be beneficial to productivity for your organization? Eight (62%) participants intimated that Millennials are tech savvy. Six (46%) participants alluded to Millennials' desire to learn. This theme is consistent with the literature outlined in Chapter 2. Bolton et al. (2013) assessed, Millennials are the first generational cohort to spend their entire lives in the digital age. As a result, they are tech savvy. Aker (2009) determined Millennials take pride in learning.

Generation Z Have a Lot to Learn

This emergent theme emanated from the fifth interview question: What skill sets do you believe are associated with Generation Z that are or can be beneficial to productivity for your organization? Seven (54%) participants offered, Gen Z'ers still have a lot to learn and are motivated to learn. Four (31%) participants indicated Gen Z'ers are new to the workforce and not much is known of their skill sets. Participant 13 said, "I don't know. The verdict is still out." A. Turner (2015) analyzed, while Gen Z'ers are new to the workforce, generational skill sets have begun to emerge. This theme partially aligns with the literature.

Yelling and Treating Everyone the Same Are the Least Effective Leadership Strategies to Create a More Productive Multigenerational Workforce

The next emergent theme originated from the ninth interview question: What leadership strategies have been the least effective in utilizing the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States? Four (31%) participants suggested yelling and treating everyone the same are ineffective strategies for leaders in motivating and creating production amongst a multigenerational workforce. Participant 5 offered, "yelling or language, that would be inappropriate in any situation." Participant 12 followed with, "what works for your college student isn't going to work for the man who's been doing this for 75 years." This theme correlates to the conceptual framework of Burns' (1978)

transforming leadership, which requires leaders to listen to and connect with their followers. It also necessitates leaders build mutually respectful relationships.

Communication and Fair Treatment Are the Most Effective Leadership Strategies to Create a More Productive Multigenerational Workforce

The seventh theme resulted from the tenth interview question: What leadership strategies have been the most effective in utilizing the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States? Four (31%) participants suggested communication and fair treatment are the most effective strategies for leaders to create greater production in a multigenerational workforce. This theme correlates to the conceptual framework of Burns' (1978) transforming leadership, which makes it essential for leaders to communicate frequently with followers. Additionally, the literature affirms, transforming leaders are skillful at satisfying the needs of followers. The literature also asserts, transforming leaders adapt their style to fit the needs of the followers and thereby the organization (Burns, 1978; Dugan, 2017).

<div align="center">**Limitations of the Study**</div>

The scope of this study was a multigenerational workforce and leadership in the public sector in the United States. The results of the study might allow leaders to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce. There were numerous limitations to this study. The first limitation was related to the use

of a qualitative multiple-case study design. This design involved the selection of participants from two fire departments in Pennsylvania, which limited the representation of the population sample and restricted the generalizability of the research findings (Morse, 2015). The inclusion of other public sector career fields might have produced a different set of emerging themes.

The next limitation was the sample size. I intended to interview 18 participants. I was unable to garner further participation from either fire department beyond the 13 volunteers. However, new themes and patterns ceased to materialize following the seventh interview. The absence of new emergent themes and patterns eliminated the need to contact additional fire departments to request further participation.

The third limitation was Generation Z's lack of workforce experience. Older generations and leadership were unable to assess Gen Z's skill sets, due to their ephemeral employment history. However, the criteria of having at least 1 year of experience allowed Generation Z to provide quality responses regarding the other generations and questions involving leadership.

The final limitation was inadvertent bias, which can be caused by the researcher being the primary data collector. Bias can be mitigated with the use of an interview guide, open-ended questions (D. W. Turner, 2010), and critical reflexivity (Wadams & Park, 2018). I used a reflexive journal that documented my personal values and beliefs throughout the data collection and data analysis processes. I also used a diary to document personal feelings regarding the study and themes as they emerged. The diary

was also used to maintain an awareness of potential biases that might surface. To further

reduce bias, participants were asked questions that were field tested and allowed them to

communicate their experiences uninfluenced by me as the interviewer. Despite these

limitations, the data analysis process of identifying themes and patterns aided in ensuring

transferability.

Recommendations for Action

The research findings were derived from 13 semistructured, audio recorded

interviews, field notes, and a review of secondary data. The following recommendations

are based on the emergent themes that presented from participant responses, a literature

review, and the conceptual frameworks. The first recommendation is for leaders to take

the time to identify and understand the unique skill sets of each generation. All 13

(100%) participants provided input regarding the skill sets of the generational cohorts.

That suggests there are attributes displayed by each cohort that add value to and creates

greater production for their organizations. That aligns with the literature outlined in

Chapter 2, which indicates leaders and organizations that take the time to increase their

awareness of the distinguishing values and attributes of each generational cohort can

engender harmony and production in a multigenerational workforce (Kupperschmidt,

2000; Lawson, 2017; Young, Sturts, Ross, & Kim, 2013).

The second recommendation is that leaders adapt their style to display the

characteristics of a transforming leader (Burns, 1978). Participants were asked about

leadership strategies that have been the most effective in utilizing the skill sets of each

generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce. Four (31%) participants listed communication. Four (31%) participants also suggested leaders treat everyone fairly and individually. Burns' (1978) transforming leadership theory advocates communication and mutual respect. Additionally, while leaders should understand and acknowledge the attributes of each generational cohort, the literature suggests it is essential they also understand the importance of the individual aspect of relationship building. Within the concept of generational theory and generational cohorts lie individual followers with distinctive personalities, abilities, backgrounds, and experiences (Dugan, 2017; Stanton, 2017). Taking the time to engage followers as individuals, while understanding the skill sets of collective cohorts, might foster greater trust and increased productivity (Johnson & Johnson, 2010).

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this exploratory multiple-case study was to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style. This might assist in the development of effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States. The study's findings have created future opportunities for further research. The scope of this study was a multigenerational workforce and leadership in the public sector in the United States. The first recommendation for future research is to expand the scope to include the private sector in the United States. This will provide an opportunity for future researchers to compare the results of this study with future outcomes.

One (33%) of the leaders was a Baby Boomer, while the other two (67%) leaders were Millennials on the older spectrum of the generation. The second recommendation for future research is a longitudinal study to identify changes in leadership styles and strategies as younger Millennials and Gen Z'ers age and become leaders. The third recommendation for future research is to consider aspects such as socioeconomic background, gender, education, and race. These aspects might produce a different set of interview questions and emergent themes regarding a multigenerational workforce and the leadership within such an environment.

Implications

Positive Social Change

For the first time in American history, there are five generations co-existing in the workplace (Wiedmer, 2015). Actions based on Themes 6 and 7 from this study have the potential to create positive social change related to a multigenerational workforce and its leaders. The results of this study revealed there are unique skill sets associated with generational cohorts, and that leaders should be aware of those skill sets. Findings further revealed, leaders should focus on engaging followers centered on their individual characteristics. Based on these findings, positive social change might occur if leaders use this knowledge to increase morale, retention rates, productivity, and general job satisfaction.

Theory

The literature review exposed a gap concerning the unique skill sets of each generational cohort and how leaders can develop the most effective strategies to adapt their leadership style to properly utilize the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce. The conceptual frameworks that guided this study were Strauss and Howe's (1991) generational theory and Burn's (1978) transforming leadership theory. Themes 1 – 5 support Strauss and Howe's generational theory by exhibiting that historical events and social trends during the lifetime of generational cohorts are responsible, in large part, for the development of their values, traits, and beliefs, and that these attributes can carry over to the workplace. Themes 6 and 7 support Burns' transforming leadership theory by demonstrating that followers can be more productive when leaders communicate effectively and treat each individual fairly.

Practice

The findings of this study might prove critical to leaders within a multigenerational workforce seeking to find ways to create greater production. Tse and Chiu (2014) assessed, transforming leaders are skilled at enhancing the creativity and productivity of followers. They further determined, when leaders appeal to the values of followers, mutual goals are achieved. Participant responses provided insight to the skills sets of generational cohorts as well as the least effective and most effective strategies to create greater production. Organizations and leaders may find this information useful

when devising strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States.

Conclusion

The purpose of this exploratory multiple-case study was to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style. This might assist in the development of effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States. The study involved the semistructured interviews of 13 participants. By sharing their experiences, these participants provided context for the study's purpose. Seven themes emerged from the data. Based on those themes, data analysis, and interpretation of participant responses, I made three conclusions. First, each generational cohort exhibit specific behaviors and values and offer unique skill sets that can be attributed, in large part, to historical events and social trends that transpired during their lifetime. Second, due to Gen Z'ers recent entrance into the workforce, little is known regarding their skill sets. Finally, to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States, leaders should be aware of generational skill sets. However, their leadership strategies should focus on engaging individual followers based on their distinctive characteristics.

The findings from this study addressed the two central research questions, corroborated the conceptual frameworks, and aligned with the literature review delineated in Chapter 2. The results of this study also confirmed the need for leaders to

elevate their awareness of generational skill sets and to adapt their leadership style to create greater production. Recommendations for future research might further extend meaningful findings pertaining to a multigenerational workforce and how leaders can positively transform such an environment.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date:

Start time:

Stop time:

Total Time:

Participant code:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my study. This interview will take
approximately 45 minutes. My name is Kevin Danley, and I am a candidate for the PhD
degree in Management at Walden University. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory
multiple-case study is to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational
cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective
strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in
the United States [provide birth years of the five cohorts]. I have several open-ended
questions and I will take notes as you respond. As we previously discussed, your entire
interview will remain anonymous. I will not ask you to identify yourself during this
interview. You can choose to not answer a question if it makes you uncomfortable, and
you have the right to terminate this interview at any time. Do you have any questions
before we get started?

Do I have your permission to audio record this session as we previously discussed?

[*Researcher turns on recorder*]

The recorder has now been switched on. For the record, please verbally confirm that you have read, signed, returned, and understood the information contained in the consent form emailed to you previously.

[*Interviewee response*]

Which generational cohort are you a member of?

[*Interviewee response*]

How many years of service have you had in the public sector?

[*Interviewee response*]

We will now commence with the interview questions.

1. What skills do you believe are associated with the Traditionalists generation that are or can be beneficial to productivity for your organization? Please provide examples and elaborate fully.

 [*Researcher asks pertinent follow-up questions based on interviewee response*]

2. What skills do you believe are associated with the Baby Boomer generation that are or can be beneficial to productivity for your organization? Please provide examples and elaborate fully.

[*Researcher asks pertinent follow-up questions based on interviewee response*]

3. What skills do you believe are associated with Generation X that are or can be beneficial to productivity for your organization? Please provide examples and elaborate fully.

[*Researcher asks pertinent follow-up questions based on interviewee response*]

4. What skills do you believe are associated with the Millennial generation that are or can be beneficial to productivity for your organization? Please provide examples and elaborate fully.

[*Researcher asks pertinent follow-up questions based on interviewee response*]

5. What skills do you believe are associated with Generation Z that are or can be beneficial to productivity for your organization? Please provide examples and elaborate fully.

[*Researcher asks pertinent follow-up questions based on interviewee response*]

6. Are the skills you have just described being properly utilized?

      A. If so, how

      B. If not, what strategies do you believe leaders can adapt to properly utilize the skill sets of each generational cohort?

 [*Researcher asks pertinent follow-up questions based on interviewee response*]

7. What is leadership's approach to ensuring productivity in a multigenerational workplace?

[*Researcher asks pertinent follow-up questions based on interviewee response*]

8. Do leaders use a different approach for each of the generational cohorts?

      A. If so, how?

      B. If not, why?

[*Researcher asks pertinent follow-up questions based on interviewee response*]

9. What leadership strategies have been the least effective in utilizing the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States?

 [*Researcher asks pertinent follow-up questions based on interviewee response*]

10. What leadership strategies have been the most effective in utilizing the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States?

[*Researcher asks pertinent follow-up questions based on interviewee response*]

That is all of the questions I have for now. I sincerely thank you for participating in my study. If it is OK with you, I may contact you if I need further clarification on any of your answers. Over the next few weeks I will continue to interview additional participants. I will transcribe and study each transcript before conducting my analysis. I will provide you with a word-for-word transcript of your interview within the next two weeks. If you do not receive the transcript within two weeks, please contact me via email at Kevin.Danley@waldenu.edu. Please review the transcript and let me know if you have concerns over its inclusion in the study. If I do not hear from you within one week of sending you the transcript, I will assume your consent to continue your participation in the study. If you are interested, I will share the results of my study with you once it is completed and has been accepted by my University.

Are there any additional aspects you wish to discuss before the interview ends?

[*Interviewee response*]

We have now come to the end of the interview. I will switch off the recorder.

[*Researcher turns off recorder*]

Appendix B: Field Test Requests to Qualitative Experts

Good Morning Dr.,

I am Kevin Danley, a doctoral candidate pursuing a Ph.D. in Management at Walden University. Dr. Rich Schuttler, my committee chair, has given me permission to conduct a field test. I am seeking your input to determine if my research questions and interview questions are aligned to the research design to elicit necessary responses to the two central research questions guiding my study.

Please find the attached problem statements, purpose statement, research questions, and interview questions. I would appreciate if you could provide feedback by the end of next week to help me generate an adequate dissertation proposal.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Respectfully,

Kevin Danley

703-200-1752

Kevin.Danley@waldenu.edu

General Problem

The general problem is that there is an overall lack of awareness related to the unique skill sets of each generation, which is creating challenges for leaders in the workplace(Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014).

Specific Problem

The specific problem is that without an understanding of how to lead and manage each generation, leaders lack the capacity to develop the most effective strategies to create a productive multigenerational workforce.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory multiple-case study is to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

RQ1. What skill sets are associated with each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States?

RQ2. What strategies can leaders adapt to properly utilize the skill sets of each generational cohort to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States?

Interview Questions

1. What skills do you believe are associated with the Traditionalists generation that are or can be beneficial to productivity for the organization?

2. What skills do you believe are associated with the Baby Boomer generation that are or can be beneficial to productivity for the organization?

3. What skills do you believe are associated with Generation X that are or can be beneficial to productivity for the organization?

4. What skills do you believe are associated with the Millennial generation that are or can be beneficial to productivity for the organization?

5. What skills do you believe are associated with Generation Z that are or can be beneficial to productivity for the organization?

6. Are the skills you have just described being properly utilized?

    A. If so, how?

    B. If not, what strategies do you believe leaders can adapt to properly utilize the skill sets of each generational cohort?

7. What is leadership's approach to ensuring productivity in a multigenerational workplace?

8. Do leaders use a different approach for each of the generational cohorts?

    A. If so, how?

    B. If not, why?

9. What leadership strategies have been the least effective in utilizing the skill sets of each generation?

10. What leadership strategies have been the most effective in utilizing the skill sets of each generation?

Appendix C: Responses from Field Test Experts

Table C1

Responses from Field Test Experts

Expert	Responded (Y/N)	Response
Expert 1	Y	Hi Kevin. I really like your topic of study and the problem and purpose statement that you outlined here. I think it's an important topic. Cheers to you for focusing on this. As for your interview questions, they certainly make a great deal of sense to me. However, depending on who your sample is, I think you are inferring that each of your interviewees will know how each cohort is defined and they will know the difference between a Traditionalist and a Baby Boomer and that they will know the difference between a Millennial, Gen X and Gen Z. You might be making an assumption that they know the breadth of what those skills should be. So you may want to give some additional thought about that. Additionally, you asked, "what skills do you believe are associated with each generation that are or can be beneficial to productivity for the organization?" What organization are you referring to? An organization in general seems a bit too broad. For those like you and I, and everyone else in the scholarly community, we can certainly work through those sorts of questions. But, when you go out to the field in the practitioner world, I think the more clearly you

		can address them in the field test, the better results you'll get. Again, I really applaud the topic you've chosen and the work you've done getting this far.
Expert 2	N	Hi Kevin. I have not been assigned to your committee. Be sure to check with Dr. Schuttler on the alignment of questions.
Expert 3	Y	I think that this aligned. I do think that your topic is too broad. I would narrow this down to a type of industry in the U.S. or even a location (ex. city, state) in the U.S. You could also narrow this down to what level of leaders.
Expert 4	Y	Kevin, your questions align with the RQs. I would make the final two more specific so they align with RQ2, esp. since the public sector may use a variation of business strategy utilized within the private sector. The public sector leadership literature is considered its own body of leadership knowledge. I am attaching some sources, in case you don't have them, that may help out in Chap 2 and later when writing Chap 5.
Expert 5	N	
Expert 6	Y	Thank you for the opportunity. I do not see that the problem is aligned with the Purpose and RQs. Understanding and leading are two different areas and do not align with skills. Leadership style is not part of the problem but is part of the other areas.

Expert 7   N

Expert 8   Y   General Problem
The general problem is that there is
an overall lack of awareness *(bias
writing)* related to the unique skills
sets of each generation, which is
creating challenges for leaders in the
workplace (Al-Asfour & Lettau,
2014). *(You have one article which
does not speak for the entire industry
or situation.)*
Specific Problem
The specific problem is that without
an understanding of how to lead and
manage each generation, leaders lack
the capacity to develop the most
effective strategies to create a
productive multigenerational
workforce. *(How did you come to
this information based on the
general problem?)*
Purpose Statement
The purpose of this qualitative
exploratory multiple-case study is to
gain an understanding of the skill
sets of each generational cohort and
to discover how leaders can adapt
their leadership style to develop
effective strategies to create a more
productive multigenerational
workforce in the public sector in the
United States. *(How many
generations are you going back?)
What specific skills sets are you
seeking? How will these skill sets
connect to this current technological
generation? If any at all! Are you
seeking the potential connection
between the loss of knowledge
between the generations? How is this*

information (purpose) increasing the
real-world management issue?
8. Do leaders use a different
approach for each of the generational
cohorts? *(How would this person*
know this information?)
A. If so, how?
B. If not, why?

Appendix D: Participation Invitation Letter

Dear Invitee,

My name is Kevin Danley. I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am kindly requesting your participation in a doctoral research study that I am conducting titled: Leading a Multigenerational Workforce: Leveraging the Skill Sets of Each Cohort. The purpose of this multiple-case study is to gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how leaders can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States.

Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The study is completely anonymous, therefore, it does not require you to provide your name or any other identifying information.

If you would like to participate in the study, please email me at kevin.danley@waldenu.edu Your participation in the research will be of great importance to assist in social change in ensuring leaders gain an understanding of the skill sets of each generational cohort and to discover how they can adapt their leadership style to develop effective strategies to create a more productive multigenerational workforce in the public sector in the United States.

Thank you for your time and participation

Sincerely,

Kevin Danley, MBA, MPhil, Doctoral Student, Walden University