AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics anticipates a shortage of employees by 2010, a result of older workers retiring and fewer skilled younger workers. Organizations should encourage older workers to remain in the workplace. The purpose of this study was to examine employee perceptions and work attitudes toward older workers among all generations. It was hypothesized that employees will exhibit negative perceptions and work attitudes toward the Veteran generation. Data on 183 employees were used to test the research hypotheses. Generation Y negative perceptions and work attitudes were found to exist toward the Veteran group. Veteran negative perceptions and work attitudes were found to exist toward Generation X. Limitations of the study and future research directions are discussed.

EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS AND WORK ATTITUDES TOWARD OLDER

WORKERS: A GENERATION EXAMINATION

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Department of Psychology and Special Education

EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

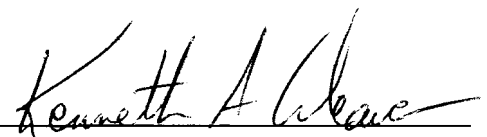———————

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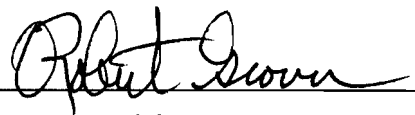of the Requirements for the Degree

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by

Susan J. Hoffman

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Corporate America is facing a serious economic challenge. The U.S. Bureau of

Labor Statistics anticipates a shortage close to 10 million employees by 2010, a result of

older workers retiring and fewer skilled younger workers (Griffiths, 1999; Joyce &

Voytek, 1996; Minton-Eversole, 2003). The current economic slump has forced

organizations to respond through the implementation of restructuring strategies. One

outcome most often affiliated with organizational restructuring is employment cuts by

eliminating positions through layoffs, attrition, buyouts, or retirement incentives.

Workforce reductions are often targeted at the types of jobs frequently occupied by older

workers (Farr, Tesluk, & Klein, 1998). Taking early retirement is an attractive option for

older employees who have accumulated enough pension credits to consider early

retirement incentives, thus avoiding the problems associated with career loss. Also,

taking early retirement can help to avoid age-related career barriers sometimes faced by

older employees (Marshall, 1998).

A trend toward taking early retirement has been recognized (Schooler, Caplan, &

Oates, 1998). Some employees (i.e., Baby Boomer and Veteran) have already begun

leaving the workforce through early retirement. Consequently, work participation rates

among older employees are declining. Predictions are that more employees within these

age-based generation groups will be retiring in large numbers in just a few years leaving

a gap in the labor market. Coupled with the population decrease in the younger post-

Boomer generation, a future labor market shortage will be felt by many organizations (Schooler, Caplan, & Oates, 1998).

The current economic slump is the "calm before the storm" (Grossman, 2003). Grossman (2003) argues that when the economy turns around and there is more demand for products and services, the worker shortage will be the number one issue faced by organizations. Because of the future scarcity of younger workers, an important economic interest would be for organizations to retain older workers; however, this ideal is not generally associated with effective and efficient organizational policy or of current work perceptions and expectations (Boerlijst, Munnichs, & vander Heijden, 1998; Griffiths, 1999). Organizations need to realize this future dilemma and take steps now to prepare for the future by modifying and/or creating policies, programs, and benefits that will attract and retain productive older workers. Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to recognize that older employees have needs, values, and interests that must be met by their jobs for a decision to remain employed. Similarly, older workers need to recognize that organizations also have needs and that they must adjust, adapt, and continue to upgrade knowledge, skills, and abilities (Yeatts, Folts, & Knapp, 2000).

Due to economic and medical advances, the American population is healthier and living longer. As a result, older workers who were not terminated from downsizing or not offered early retirement are remaining longer in the workplace (Watkins, 1999). According to the American Association of Retired People (AARP), Baby Boomers will at a later age (Workplace Visions, 2003). In examining the Bureau of Labor Statistics survey, Fullerton and Toossi (2001) noted a substantial increase in the number of labor

force participants 45 years of age and older. Workforce participants over age 55 will increase by about 33 percent (from 16 million to 21 million), and those between the ages of 45 and 54 will increase by about 31 percent (from 26 million to 34 million). There will be a more modest increase of 8.5 percent for young persons 16 to 24 and a decline of 10 percent for 25 to 34 year olds. Hence, the age make-up of the labor force is changing; America's workforce is aging (Bureau of Labor Statistic Releases, http://www.bls.gov/emp/emplab2000-2004).

For the first time in history, four very different generations (i.e., Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomer, and Veteran) are now interacting within the workplace, producing misunderstandings and resentment between younger, not so old, and older employees in the workplace largely based upon economics, demographics, and worldviews (Filipezak, Raines, & Zemke, 2000; Jamieson & O'Mara, 1991). That is why it is imperative for organizations to pay more attention to age-related issues (e.g., demographic planning, worker perceptions, knowledge transfer, and diversity training). In order to do this, organizations need to assess their workforce to understand what work barriers (perceptions and attitudes) exist thus providing guidelines as to what specific program interventions are needed. The question that this study attempted to address was what are the employee perceptions and work attitudes towards older workers since there are now four different generation groups interacting within the workplace.

Review of the Literature

Today's American workforce is "unique and singular" because there has never before been a workforce so diverse in so many ways (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). What is significantly changing in today's workforce pertains to age distribution, bringing with it a mixture of values, perceptions, and attitudes. Today's workforce is comprised of individuals who bring different resources and perspectives to the workplace and who have distinctive needs, preferences, expectations, and lifestyles. Organizations that can meet the needs of this diverse and aging workforce and create a workplace environment where members from all generations can work harmoniously and productively will have a competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining the highest quality workers. Thus, identifying and managing such diversity are critical to the health of an organization (Jamieson & O'Mara, 1991; Zemke et al., 2000).

A shifting of economic norms has occurred from a past sector era characterized as pre-industrial and dominated by small scale agricultural production to the current large technology intensive production era. This technology based economic shift requires a highly skilled and educated labor force. International competition, fast-paced market developments, and the need for organizational, economic, and technological modifications and innovations forced organizations to recognize obsolescence pertaining to worker knowledge and skill. The workplace theme now emerging describes the need of human qualities and activities such as survival, renewal, adaptability, and creativity. Such human attributes are more often associated to younger than to older workers placing a premium upon younger workers. Consequently, older workers received "signals" that to

cease their employment would be preferable (Boerlijst et al., 1998; Schooler, Caplan, & Oates, 1998). It then becomes advantageous to understand who these under-valued older workers are.

Older Worker Definition

Many different definitions describe an employee as an "older worker" (Boerlijst et al., 1998; Faley, Kleiman, & Lengnick-Hall, 1984; Miller, Kaspin, & Schuster, 1990; Simpson, Greller, and Stroh, 2002). Boerlijst et al. (1998) point out that the operational definition for an older worker cannot be empirically defined for the dividing line between middle age and older age worker categories is a gradual one and varies among companies. An age band width typically exists within companies categorizing workers into middle or old age worker categories. In our society, the label "older worker" is generally applied to employees who terminate employment at age 65. However, in organizations that offer voluntary or mandate early retirement programs, the older worker label is applied at an age younger than 65. An exception would be employees who work in certain professions and retire at a younger age (e.g., in the military services you could retire at age 38). Boerlijst et al. (1998) also identified that the label "older worker" will vary within an organization due to individual self-perceptions as well as perceptions and attitudes held by other workers.

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) implemented in 1967 and later amended in 1974, and then again in 1978, is the primary statue for dealing with age discrimination complaints in the federal courts. The purpose of the ADEA is to promote the employment of older persons based upon ability rather than age. In the private sector

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class, older workers are defined in age ranging from 40 to69. For employees of the federal government there is no upper age limit (Faley, Kleiman, & Lengnick-Hall, 1984).

Surveys commissioned by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) regarding corporate management attitudes toward older workers define an older worker as 50 years of age and older (Miller et al., 1990). In litigation cases, Miller et al. (1990) ascertained that the average age of the complaint when the employee won the case was 59. A possible explanation could be that courts do not perceive individuals under the age of 50 as being subject to age bias and that the effective protected age group would appear to be age 50 and over. Simpson et al. (2002) also defines older workers as above age 50. This definition was based upon research gathered in the individual career development area identifying that career engagement and work attitudes change after age 50. This lead to the belief that the period following age 50 may be quite different from that before 50.

Since this study is examining generational age-based perceptions and work attitudes toward older workers, employee age was divided into four categories as defined by generation groups: Generation Y, ages 24 or younger; Generation X, ages 25 to 38; Baby Boomer, ages 39 to 57; and Veteran, ages 58 and older (Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001). Given the reasoning previously explained (Miller et al., 1990; Simpson et al., 2002) regarding older employees over the age of 50, this study focused attention toward older employees over the age of 50. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the term "older worker" will operationally be defined as a worker aged 50 or older; encompassing employees from both the Veteran and Baby Boom generations.

Multigenerational Workforce

There have always been different generations in the workplace and they usually got along, so why is it different now? Gomolski (2001) and Watkins (1999) both mention the explanation lies in the fact that in the past, generational differences were managed through status and power. Daft (2001) explains that in the past, the traditional top-down organizational structure was predominately used by organizations. The framework of responsibilities, reporting relationships, and employee and departmental groupings were structured around functional top-down control. This would mean that individuals of similar age worked together and were for the most part separated from other age groups. For example, employees in the Veteran and Baby Boom age groups would most likely hold high-level management positions making the decisions to be communicated down to lower level employees. Employees in the Generation X and Y age groups would then execute those decisions. In other words, authority and control were most definitely distinguished by age. Gomolski (2001) and Watkins (1999) both described the organizational structure in today's business as completely rearranged with different generation groups working side-by-side; managing, leading, and communicating at all organizational levels. Organizational re-structuring has introduced new work patterns within the workplace: a) teleworking, b) self-regulated work teams, c) increased reliance on technology, and d) a flexible workforce in regards to employee number and in their skills and functions (e.g., sub-contracting and outsourcing). People with many different socializing experiences come together more frequently and under very different circumstances. To effectively manage a multigenerational workforce, organizations must

identify generational characteristics as well as understand the different perceptions, attitudes, values, and life experiences that set each generation apart (Buhler, 1993). This salient multigenerational understanding is eloquently stated as follows, "To be effective with other human beings, we must know them as individuals—their unique background, personality, preferences, and style" (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000, p. 14). This may be accomplished by profiling each generational group accordingly: a) defining events, b) values, c) work attitudes, d) team membership, and e) leadership/managing styles. Defining events (i.e., challenger explosion, 9/11) capture the attention and emotions of individuals at a formative stage in their life (Zemke et al., 2000). These moments are so significant in long-term memory that the clarity of memory includes such details as the day's weather, the location, the activity, and the other people when the person learned of the event. Therefore, the defining events that occur within each generation are important to recognize and understand for they form the foundation that helps to establish an employee's perceptions and work attitudes.

Generation Y

Generation Y (known as "Nexters," "Dot-Comers," or "Generation Why") include those individuals born after 1978. Generation Y can be referred to as the "found generation." They have devoted parents who will make high sacrifices to ensure that their needs are met. This is quite the opposite of coming of age period for Generation X (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Defining events. Some of the defining events that have occurred thus far during the coming of age period for Generation Y include: a) violence of Oklahoma City

bombing and Columbine High School massacre, b) multiculturalism, c) body piercing and tattoos, d) President Clinton/Lewinsky scandal, e) terrorist attacks, f) Reality TV, g) computer technology expansion, and h) corporate business scandals. The Generation Y group has an optimistic outlook and enthusiasm for the future built upon a strong dependency on technology. This generation is the first to grow up without expectations of a strong nuclear family. Generation Y children were born to unmarried women and have moms with jobs away from home. Generation Y has much greater exposure to and acceptance of multiculturalism and as a result is the most tolerant of all the generations (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Values. Generation Y places high values on teams, achievement, diversity, cooperation, and energy. They want straight talk, "tell me like it really is." They demonstrate high organizational citizenship behavior (OCB); defined as an individual's contribution in the workplace that goes beyond role requirements and contractually rewarded job achievements (Organ & Ryan, 1995). However, their OCB will only be demonstrated after they witness appropriate and continuous role-modeling behavior exemplified by employees in leadership positions. Generation Y appears to have stricter morals than the previous Generation X. Also, manners reappear in this generation of families (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Work attitudes. The work attitudes of Generation Y tend to resemble those of Veteran; optimism about the future, trust in authority, and a desire to complete tasks. Although they are just beginning to make their presence in the workforce, they are predicted to be hard workers, dedicated, and ready to sacrifice personal pleasure for the

good of the team. This generation of employees will possess high multitasking capabilities largely as a result developed by the overly planned lives and technology exposure. Generation Y will be the best educated generation and will recognize the importance of continuing education in order to keep up with rapidly changing technology. (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Team membership. Team membership for Generation Y employees can be described as "the networking group." This generation of employees have been raised in homes, as well as taught in schools, about accomplishing tasks and achieving results as a team member. There is a high possibility for conflict to occur when Generation Y and Generation X employees work together on teams. This conflict situation evolves somewhat naturally for both generations have quite opposite values and work styles. About the only aspect these two generations have in common revolves around the knowledge and usage of technology (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Leadership/managing styles. The leadership and managing style of this generation are just starting to be developed. Generation Y employees will need definite supervision and structure because of their lack of work experience exposure. These young employees have been raised with strong parental protection and avocation whereby most of their needs have been met without too much adversity. Because of this fact, these young Generation Y employees may need to "toughen up" when working in large corporate environments. Established mentoring programs where a seasoned employee would be matched up with a younger Generation Y employee would be extremely valuable in

learning how to navigate through rocky organizational waters (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Generation X

Generation X (known as "Gen Xers") are those individuals born between 1965 and 1978. Gen Xers grew up in the shadows of the Boomer generation and as a result will most likely resist anything the older generation embraces. This generation's strong technical skills and growing business knowledge are putting them on the same hierarchical corporate level with older generations. They are starting to settle in and move up the corporate ladder to become an increasingly critical part of the workforce (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Defining events. The defining events for this generation produced a group of workforce employees with a survivor mentality. Some of the defining events this generational group experienced during their formative years include: a) the Watergate scandal, b) the mass suicide in Jonestown, c) the Challenger disaster, d) Exxon Valdez oil tanker spill, e) Operation Desert Storm, f) Rodney King beating, g) MTV, and h) the Fall of the Berlin Wall. As can be recognized from the previous list of defining events, Gen Xers grew up in an unpopular and unstable time. They were coming of age as America struggled economically, militarily, politically, and diplomatically. They were the most attention deprived and neglected children among the generational groups. This is due to the beginning of two-income households as well as high divorce rates among their parents. The once nuclear family was starting to be replaced with single parent families, weekend visitation with the absent parent, and working moms. They had the

responsibility of taking care of themselves after school which began a new phenomenon known as "the latchkey kids." As a result of these defining events, Gen Xers are survivors looking out for themselves (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Values. Gen Xers value new skills because their value is created in what they know how to do. The mere fact of the split family environment plus moms now working on a full-time basis developed generational values of self-reliance and independence. Generation X is committed to more balance in their lives and less time and energy devoted to work. This was a result of witnessing the enormous amount of time and energy their parents gave to companies only to be laid off. Generation X employees value non-traditional values relating to work time. For example, they may show up late to work and then leave early but to them, as long as they get the work done, it should not matter where and when they do it. They also value informality, wanting to keep work situations and dress very informal and casual. This casual approach is also taken regarding authority. Gen Xers are not impressed with hierarchical relationships and authority (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Work attitudes. Work attitudes held by Gen Xers can be described by the phrase "my way or the highway." They are thought to be the most entrepreneurial group of all the generations because they want to do things their way and hold an opinion that it is better to work for themselves than to work for someone else. Gen Xers are tech-savvy, highly task oriented, and can be counted on to get the work done on time. Also, Gen Xers are more independent, more self-reliant, quicker, smarter, and more educated than any

other generation. Flex-time and balance of work and personal life are important to them. This generational group is the most criticized generation largely due to their work ethic, attitude, attention span, and sense of corporate loyalty. Gen Xers will quit a job with no other job in sight because they feel a need to make a change. They may stay on a job for 18 months, learn what there is to learn, and then move on. There is no long-term affiliation with a company for they are suspicious of big companies and want financial stability without giving any loyalty in return. This generational group tends to be cynical, defiant, and unwilling to sacrifice life for a career mainly because they watched the Boomers climb that corporate ladder to only then be downsized out of the company. Managers are noticing the decline of employee loyalty that is the result of workforce members making light of reliance on job security or employer commitments (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000). Robinson, Kraatz, and Rosseau (1994) confirmed a decline in how Gen Xers perceive their employment obligation.

   Team membership. Gen X thinks in terms of "virtual teams." They like being part of a team where members get together on an occasional basis to check on progress, work out problems, and consolidate project pieces. They prefer spending most of their time working alone on their own piece of the project, in their own cubicle, and with minor supervision. They do not possess the group community mentality of the previous generations. Communication and collaboration is preferred through email correspondence. Communication through face-to-face group conversations and

conferences are acceptable but only when necessary (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Leadership/managing style. The leadership and management style of Gen X can be associated with egalitarian relationships. They encourage diverse viewpoints, thrive on change, are used to being challenged and will challenge. They have been exposed to team participation and involvement through Boomer supervision. Gen X leaders/managers lack interpersonal people skills and political tactfulness. Although they tend to be fair, competent, honest and straightforward, their tactfulness is often absent when delivering information or in working with others (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Baby Boomer

The Baby Boom group (known as "Boomers") are those individuals born between 1946 and 1964. Boomers represent the largest generational group in today's workforce. They also represent the most stressed out generation in history due in large part to their workaholic attitude. Boomers have come to expect accommodation established by past experience in that every life stage the Boomers have come to, their needs have been met through change and accommodation. This is mainly due to the large number this generation represents (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Defining events. Defining events for Boomers include: a) television, b) the Civil Rights Movement, c) the Vietnam War, d) Women's Liberation, e) the Equal Employment Opportunity Movement, f) assassinations of President Kennedy and Martin

Luther King, g) Woodstock, h) prosperity, and i) birth control pills. Boomers grew up in optimistic positive times due to the greatest economic expansion ever experienced in the US. The American economic infrastructure was forced to expand to accommodate Boomer needs (i.e., new hospitals, schools, health care, and education). They lived in nuclear families with a working dad and a stay-at-home mom surrounded by the expansion of material wealth. Boomer children were the first generation where child rearing was a pleasure and a hobby; hence, they were healthier children who were doted on and attended to (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Values. Boomers value health and wellness, personal growth, and involvement by means of education, meditation, or self-help. Boomers are also interested in simplifying their lives, making the generation connection, and reducing stress; hence, Starbucks coffee, aromatherapy, and day spas evolved. The Boomers "are the hippies turned Yuppies;" they redefine each phase of life to meet their specific needs. Boomers have also helped to revolutionize the workplace by pushing for casual work environments, flexible schedules and the opportunity to work from home. They move from job to job to be competitive but never leave a job until they had another one lined up. Veteran dads and moms reminded their Boomer children of their great destiny paid for by sacrifice. This helped to shape the importance of work life for Boomers where work is work and leisure time is work. Boomers are defined by their jobs, putting in at least 60 or 70 hours a week to feel worthwhile. There is no rest for a Boomer which is how the term "workaholic" came to be (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Work attitudes. The Boomers developed early work attitudes relating to teamwork. There were so many of them they had to collaborate and cooperate, sharing school texts and desks. They were the first generation to be graded on their report cards for "sharing materials with classmates" and "working with others." Boomer employees are driven, good at relationship building, want to please, willing to "go the extra mile," and service oriented. They are also self-centered and politically savvy spawned only for self-protection, territorial improvement, or self-betterment. They are committed to lifelong learning and prefer a "coaching" development style (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Team membership. Team membership in the Boomer generation relates to "community." The phrase "it takes a village" perfectly describes Boomer team ideals. Boomers like the whole team working together on a project in one shared area so that they can converse and collaborate on a continuing basis. Boomers enjoy being on work teams; but at times, the need to prove oneself in order to feel worthwhile tends to override what is best for the team. Not many Boomers are good at confrontation or directly dealing with conflict (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Leadership/managing style. The leadership and management style of the Boomer generation is about consensus and relationship building. They are passionate and concerned about participation and spirit in the workplace. They are about creating a fair and equal playing field for all employees. This leadership ideal was largely a result of the Civil Rights movement (one of the Boomer's defining events). Although the Boomer

manager talks of a participative management style, their actions do not necessarily reflect their words. The reason for this managing inconsistency can be traced backed to their upbringing and early career development. Boomers grew up with conservative parents and began their careers under the command-and-control leadership of the Veteran generation. Boomers learned and developed under one leadership style but their defining events (e.g., Civil Rights movement, Women's Liberation, Equal Employment Opportunity movement, and Vietnam) gave birth to another (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Veteran

The Veteran group (sometimes known as "Matures" or "Traditionalists") are those individuals born between 1909 and 1945. All but the youngest came of age before and during World War II. They are the true traditionalist and the last of the "gray flannel suits" in corporate America. They are the power brokers in US big business holding the majority of chief executive officer slots, holding three-quarters of all the financial assets in the US, holding total net worth over $7 trillion, and holding combined personal income of more than $800 billion. These facts point out the tremendous amount of influence Veteran employees hold (Zemke et al., 2000).

Defining events. Defining events for the Veteran group are "tempered by war, and disciplined by a hard and bitter peace" (Zemke et al., 2000, p. 30). Some of the defining events in the lives of the Veteran Generation Group include: a) The Great Depression, b) the Star Spangled Banner being the national anthem, c) the Dust Bowl, d) the Social Security system, e) Pearl Harbor, f) World War II, and g) the Korean War. Veteran

employees are the children who grew up living on rations. They learned how to "use it up", "wear it out", "make it do", or "did without". Mostly, it was a "do without" era and would be the reason why members of this generation group are tight with a dollar and are somewhat risk averse. This generation developed into "hardy scouts" for they had gumption (shrewd common sense). They knew how to get things done, would bear any burden, and would pay any price to accomplish any worthy goal (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Values. Perceptions and values held by employees in the Veteran group believe in duty, honor, and country. They progressed through life stages of relatively poor childhood to a comparatively affluent adulthood, brought about by the era of economic prosperity that followed World War II. They knew what it was like to do without, to sacrifice, and to not have. They value hard work, law and order, respect for authority, loyalty, dependability, positions held, praise, and recognition. Doing the right thing and a good job at it was of high importance. The mindset generated from this generational group has become so dominated in our culture that many beliefs/perceptions are weighed against theirs. For example, when managers say young employees today lack a work ethic, they mean they do not have the work ethic of the Veteran. When someone mentions that parents are not teaching values in the home anyone, what is really being said is that parents are not teaching Veteran values (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Work attitudes. Veteran employees share a belief in the intrinsic value of work. They grew up in times when employees were trained once for life and easily answered

the question, "What are you going to be when you grow up?" Most managers desire

employees who possess Veteran work attitudes (i.e., loyalty, dependability, hard working,

thorough and detail oriented). They were strong team members who believed in an

"honest day's work for an honest day's pay" (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala,

2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Work requirements that some Veteran employees either feel uncomfortable with

or dislike relate to technology. For example, many Veteran employees dislike voice mail

and prefer personal service. Electronic mail, voice mail, cellular phones, faxes, computer

systems and work processes are just a few of the technology innovations that Veteran

employees have not grown up with. In other words, technology usage does not come

naturally but must be learned and developed (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala,

2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Team membership. Team membership is valued by Veteran employees. They

grew up watching a nation form teams that worked together to overcome hardship. Most

Veteran team members are use to large teams, have highly specialized team roles, and

prefer a strong directive leader. This is an important aspect to understand regarding

Veteran team membership for Veteran employees worked on teams under strong

leadership; they were told what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. This is a totally

different mindset when compared to team membership in today's organizations (Elswick,

2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Leadership/managing style. The leadership and managing style of the Veteran

group was built on top-down hierarchical command and control procedures. Executive

decisions were made and communicated without all the complexities of getting the

employee masses involved. Seniority correlates to age; meaning, that employees move up

the corporate ladder through time, perseverance, and hard work. Relationships are formal

with authority. There is little socialization between boss and worker, and work life and

family life are separate and distinct with little conversation relating to one's personal life

(Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Since each generation brings its own attributes to the workplace, it is important

for companies to periodically assess their workforce in order to identify and understand

what values, perceptions, and attitudes exist. With more age generation diversity existing

within a workplace, greater diversity of perceptions and attitudes should be expected

(Watkins, 1999).

Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA)

In previous decades, age has been recognized as a significant factor affecting an

individual's perceived job qualifications. As a result, the Age Discrimination in

Employment Act (ADEA) of 1967 was passed prohibiting discrimination against

individuals aged 40 and over. The ADEA is the only federal law protecting age; however,

it does share some common dimensions with Title VII (law protecting certain employee

classes who have rights and cannot be discriminated against: race, color, religion, sex,

national origin, age, disability, pregnancy, veteran, and uniform services); and the Equal

Pay Act (EPA, law relating to "comparable worth" where equal jobs require equal pay

irrespective of gender) (Goodman, 1999). The agency charged with ADEA enforcement

is the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). In order to minimize its

backlog of complaints, EEOC implements a three-step approach where complaints are categorized according to priority: 1) Investigation, top priority cases that most likely involve illegal discrimination; 2) Conciliation, second priority cases where complaints have some merit but require additional investigation; and 3) Litigation, third priority cases where complaints can be dismissed. Throughout the complaint process, the EEOC encourages the parties involved to settle and to consider alternative resolution of disputes (Cascio, 1998; Gutman, 1993).

The ADEA does help to reduce obvious age discrimination; however, Grossman (2003) argues that it may not be adequately protecting older workers against subtle age biases. Several explanations reveal why barriers faced by older workers have not been recognized and therefore not understood. The first explanation lies in the fact that employers can avoid liability for age discrimination if they can show valid, non-discriminatory reasons for actions making it easier to hide prejudicial attitudes against older workers (Faley, Kleiman, & Lengnick-Hall, 1984). The second explanation lies in the fact that employers are not recognizing and responding to the concerns over the way older workers are treated because of litigation settlement agreements or confidentiality agreements with the organization in exchange for retirement incentives, severance and buyouts. The third explanation lies in the EEOC ruling regarding cutbacks; older employees can waive their rights to sue under this law in exchange for early retirement incentive offers. Under the Older Workers Benefit Protection Act, enacted in 1990, employees have up to 45 days to consider these waivers, and up to 7 days after signing to revoke them. As a result of this EEOC ruling, there has been an increase in the number of

older workers being asked to sign such waivers in exchange for early retirement packages (Cascio, 1998). The main purpose of the ADEA law is to prevent organizations from targeting older employees but ironically, it appears that the EEOC is encouraging the opposite.

Previously mentioned, older workers who make complaints are often dealt with quietly in order to avoid expensive litigation. At this point, older workers are relieved to accept face-saving exit deals for they fear losing their jobs or pensions. Or, if they have been terminated, they most likely lack the funds to pursue further legal action. Older people who have lost jobs are most often out of work longer than younger employees thus making it more difficult to find a job with comparable responsibilities and wages and become disheartened (Grossman, 2003). Accepting retirement is often times the accepted choice rather than the desired choice for unlike affirmative action, ADEA does not "promote" the employment of older workers. These confidentially agreements of retirement settlements leave no legal or historical record. Consequently, unemployment statistics among older workers are understated because people who retire out of frustration are not tallied. Unfortunately, this adds to the continued ignorance regarding the scope of work barriers faced by older workers.

Grossman (2003) reports that age-bias lawsuits have increased approximately 14% from 2001 to 2002 with the enforcement of ADEA and the Age Act of 1986 (which helps to eliminate mandatory retirement age at age 70). Still, older workers hesitate to make discrimination complaints for several reasons: a) absence of income makes it difficult to afford an attorney, b) monetary settlement awards are generally not large

enough to cover legal costs, c) their damages are limited to double their salary (unlike individuals who allege other types of discrimination), d) filing discrimination complaints can shamble their remaining career, and e) most claimants do not win. According to Grossman's (2003) report on age discrimination cases brought before the EEOC in 2002; 52% found no reasonable cause, 33.5% were closed for administrative reasons, 6.5% were settled, 4.3% found reasonable cause, and 3.6% were withdrawn with benefits.

Perception of Older Workers

Davis and Palladino (2002) describe perception as a process of organizing information received through the senses and interpreting it. According to Davis and Palladino (2002), perceptions are influenced by motives (i.e., needs, drives, and prejudices) and will change over time primarily due to age and significant life experiences. Therefore, perceptions vary from person to person and from situation to situation. When applying this concept to the workplace, some perceptions can negatively impact an older worker's career while other perceptions may leave a positive impact. Negative perceptions reported by some older workers relate to lack of recognition, devaluing judgments from their supervisor and colleagues, and disappointment with management (Griffiths, 1999).

Organizational perceptions of older workers. Organizational perceptions of older workers are quite often found regarding the normal age for retirement consideration. Greller (2000) explains that models of social aging are based upon the idea that people share beliefs about what are appropriate behaviors and feelings for people of differing ages. Greller (2000) surveyed 626 college business graduates ranging between the ages of

35 to 51 years of age developing an age appropriateness assessment of their beliefs relating to career advancement, new relationships, health, mentoring others, developing new skills, and security. The majority of the participants (75%) were men and of those participants, 66% held supervisory, management, or executive positions. Greller (2000) explains that employees are expected to become less concerned with career advancement, forming new relationships, and developing new skills as they age. Additionally, older employees are expected to be more concerned with health, mentoring others, and security. Greller's (2000) research findings revealed that beliefs are consistent with age norms. There are consistent beliefs that relate to the importance of specific concerns for employees at different ages. In other words, worker identity may be shaped as people age within an organization due to consistent communication regarding shared age-related beliefs. Feldman's (2000) literature research further explains this social aging identity model with the observation that in certain work situations identical behavior performed by an older and a younger worker is often interpreted differently. For example, an older worker who shows memory lapse is sometimes viewed as forgetful and thought to suffer from some mental disorder, whereas similar memory lapse behavior displayed by younger workers is judged as temporary forgetfulness as a result of having too much on their mind. Social modeling especially holds true regarding the influence organizations have in shaping behaviors and feelings toward older workers that pertain to retirement. The fact that more older workers are taking early retirement, coupled with frequent dissatisfaction found in being without work after retirement, suggests that older workers are not entirely making this career choice based upon their own needs but rather due to

indirect and applied social pressure (Greller, 2000). There is the possibility of subtle

pressure being applied by organizations in shaping individual career behavior to leave the

workforce. Personnel policies and procedures held by organizations are products of

people acting together. If there is a belief regarding the positive and negative value of

older workers, it may be expressed in policies, procedures, and practices created within

the organization. The following illustrates the influence of organizational social

modeling: "if the electorate does not believe older workers wish to learn new skills, it

would not make sense to vote for job training programs geared toward people in late

career" (Greller, 2000, p. 224). This organizational social conditioning principle may

explain why both Boerlijst and his colleagues (Boerlijst et al., 1998) and Sterns (1998)

argue that older workers are experiencing subtle mixed messages regarding the decision

to continue work, to modify work, or to retire. Moral pressure (the pressure to conform to

the organization's standards of right behavior) to retire is sometimes felt by older

workers; thus, promoting feelings of social isolation within the work environment.

Consequently, stress and frustration levels will increase ultimately resulting in the

departure from the workplace. This type of scenario is thought to be the most likely

reason why so many older workers will voluntarily accept offers of early retirement. In

fact, Grossman (2003) reports that happy older workers who are utilized effectively are a

rare exception.

Occupational perceptions of older workers. Occupational perceptions of older

workers particularly relate to information technology. A five month longitudinal study

conducted by Morris and Venkatesh (2000) found that age influences technology usage in

the workplace. The research study was conducted at a financial accounting firm with approximately 118 participants randomly selected throughout the organization. Participants were introduced to a new Windows95 based data and information retrieval computer system. None of the participants had any prior knowledge about the new software system, and all participants received a 2-day training session. Short-term measurement performed immediately after training captured initial user reactions, and long-term measurement performed after three months of new system usage to captured situational effects relating to direct technology exposure. Morris and his colleague (Morris & Venkatesk, 2000) identified differences regarding technology usage between younger and older workers during both short and long-term periods. During the short-term period, attitude was very important among younger workers in learning new technology for it correlated to higher productivity levels and greater advancement opportunities. Perceived social pressure from peers and superiors regarding work performance and ease or difficulty in technology use was very important among older workers. Over the long-term period, there were no differences found between younger and older workers regarding the use of technology (Morris & Venkatesh, 2000). This could be credited to the defining life events where younger workers have been exposed to information technology at a very early age with continual usage into their adulthood and have become more reliant on the use of technology for job accomplishment. A striking contrast can be assessed for older workers because information technology was not introduced to them at an early age; thus, there is the tendency to apply traditional (non-technology) solutions to job-related tasks. In other words, past experiences (i.e.,

exposure, training, and the use of information technology) of the younger workers are much different from the past experiences of the older workers. Morris et al. (2000) suggest that when new technology systems present information in an unfamiliar cognitive domain and are somewhat complex, it does become more difficult and takes a longer training and adjustment period for older versus younger workers.

Peer perceptions of older workers. Peer perceptions of older workers play a key role in defining retirement norms (Ekerdt, 1998). Co-workers will indirectly impose informal sanctions (i.e., social stigma, discrimination, and interpersonal devaluation) upon older workers to ensure conformity with the retirement norms. Since older workers are especially concerned with pleasing others and conforming to majority of opinion, the age of retirement consideration is indirectly communicated to older employees through peer work relationships (Ekerdt, 1998; Morris & Venkatesk, 2000).

Buhler (1993) argues that one of the most common intergenerational problems found is in managing and motivating others. It becomes more difficult to motivate, coach, and give assignments to someone you do not understand. Consequently, conflicts, frustration, and stress can potentially increase leading to work distractions that can result in lower productivity and possibly higher employee turnover. Sparks, Faragher, and Cooper (2001) affirm that the increased pressure experienced in managing a multigenerational workforce will play a definite role regarding peer perception toward older worker retirement norms. Management has felt the increased pressure in trying to keep pace and manage their multigenerational workforce while constant and rapid change occurs. Managers will face additional challenges with the anticipated growing number of

older workers expected to remain, or come back into, the workforce. For those older workers deciding to remain in the workforce, an increase in competition could be experienced by younger workers. This fact supports the reported Gen Xer peer perception toward the Boomer generation; "the Gen Xers may want their jobs, but Boomers aren't going to give them up easily" (Pekala, 2001, p. 2). Also, older employees will undoubtedly find themselves working for younger managers. This could possibly present increased pressures on the younger manager who may not have sufficient experience to cope with managerial responsibilities and demands. Sparks et al. (2001) propose that these stressors could possibly be intentional, or unintentional, antecedents of negative employee behavior toward older workers.

Individual self-perceptions toward ageism. Individual self-perception toward ageism can promote age-related prejudices; meaning, that older workers tend to match their behaviors according to societal and organizational images. The most damaging aspect of aging is societal and older people routinely experience ageism. What makes ageism worse is older worker's self-perception that it is justified. Prenda (2001) agrees with the theory that ageism undermines older worker's confidence and capabilities to continue as productive employees. Beliefs exist proposing that people become more absent-minded, slow, forgetful, and fragile with age. To the extent that people believe these characteristics decline with age, and perceive this decline in their own behavior, contributes to their judgment regarding the capabilities of learning and improving. In other words, an older worker's perception of an aging person's declining capabilities will quite easily affect their own self-efficacy.

Rapid changes in technology and in business strategies have placed a critical career importance on continuous learning and skill development activities. As employees get older, there is some tendency not to participate in training and development activities as much as younger employees. As previously mentioned, Boerlijst et al. (1998), Sterns (1998), and Prenda (2001) recognize one of the contributing factors to this age effect is the decline in older workers' self-confidence in their ability to learn and develop. Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1977), refers to learned expectations that one is capable of carrying out a behavior or producing a desired outcome in a particular situation. It is the key predictor of intentions and choice to pursue a task. It also affects persistence, thoughts, and feelings during a task. To apply the concept of self-efficacy to older workers in the workplace would then mean that the more confident employees are they can perform an activity successfully, the more likely it is that they will participate in the activity. Mauer (2001) applies the concept of self-efficacy in the development and improvement of career-relevant skills for older workers, noting the importance of the belief that they are capable of improving and developing their skills. Self-efficacy also plays a significant role in learning and development regarding work attitudes, intentions, and voluntary participation in training and development activities. In the past, traditional linear careers existed where employees could work for a company until retirement, and seniority and maturity were valued qualities. This allowed gradual time gravitation toward a job that suited the worker's existing skills. Workers could afford to avoid learning new things. In today's career world, this traditional linear career has shifted toward flexible, ever-changing careers. Workers must be more flexible and career moves

may be from one career line to another. In order to meet these new career demands, workers must now continuously learn and adapt. An employee's value is now dependent upon maintenance of knowledge and skills. This places critical importance on self-efficacy beliefs held by older workers (Maurer, 2001).

A job satisfaction/job security survey conducted by the Society of Human Resource Management (Easen, 2003) reported older employees generally have more years of combined experience, yet they do not feel their role in the organization makes their job secure. This perception may be linked to the fact that older workers do not feel their contributions to the organization's success is perceived as valuable. The survey identified a psychological need of older workers by revealing that one-half of employees age 56 and above indicated recognition by management was very important to their overall job satisfaction.

According to Grossman (2003), organizations are not recognizing and dealing with these perceptions for there are many disconnects between what an organization believes and what older workers have actually experienced. For example, a) older workers perceive that supervisors reserve promotions for younger employees, b) older workers feel that training and leadership development opportunities are reserved for younger employees, c) older workers feel that age-diversity training is necessary, especially for managers, but organizations generally do not feel this type of training is necessary. These disconnects are not recognized in the courts because they do not qualify as "actionable offenses" under ADEA.

Work Attitudes Toward Older Workers

Attitude is defined in the fifth edition of the Merriam-Webster dictionary as "the mental position or feeling with regard to a fact or state" (Mitsh, 1994, p. 63). Davis and Palladino (2002) explain that attitudes are composed of two parts: a) impressions, where opinions are being developed about others; and b) judgments, where actual decisions have been formed about others. Attitudes can develop into stereotypes that are described as "a set of beliefs about members of a particular group" (Davis & Palladino, p. 672). Both positive and negative stereotypes exist regarding older workers. Negative stereotypes play a major role in de-valuing older workers within organizations by leaving a negative mark on personnel policy decisions (i.e., recruitment, selection, training, career opportunities, performance appraisal, retention). Various reasons are used by organizations in order to justify policy decisions that tend to target older workers when needing to reduce their workforce: a) older workers are higher labor costs to organizations (i.e., salaries, gratuities, pension plans, health care costs) than younger workers, b) older workers are considered to have higher educational training/retraining needs, especially when restructuring occurs; c) older workers have been labeled with the "less right to work" attitude (e.g., remaining in jobs that could provide career growth opportunities for younger workers), and d) human qualities that organizations desire are associated more with younger workers (i.e., energetic, self-renewing, creative, dynamic, adaptable, quick learner) (Boerlijst et al., 1998).

Economic worth attitudes toward older workers. Economic worth attitudes toward older workers, on average, are perceived less economically valuable than younger

workers. This is primarily due to the fact that employer's associate older workers with costly benefits especially when related to health care and pension costs (Faley, Kleiman, & Lengnick-Hall, 1984; Finkelstein & Burke, 1998). Finkelstein and Burke's (1998) comprehensive research study examined the effects of rater age, age-salience, and job relevant information regarding interpersonal skills, economic worth, and the opportunity for being interviewed. Three hundred twenty-four managers were recruited (the majority being men) from four different business industries where an in-basket exercise was used to provide research assessment. One in-basket task consisted of reviewing a cover letter and application from a candidate whose age would not appear directly on the applicant materials but were implied by high school and community college graduation dates. These indirectly implied age dates related to a 28 or a 59 year old applicant. Job experience was kept constant across both applicant age groups and job relevant information presented on the resume varied but was made evident that either age applicant was definitely qualified for the job. Finkelstein and Burke's (1998) found that a main effect of target age on all dependent variables (i.e., interpersonal skills, economic worth, and being interviewed); however, the strongest effects were on the ratings of economic worth. Older employees were rated less economically valuable by both younger and older manager raters. Also, both younger and older manager raters viewed the older applicant (age 59) as less interpersonally skilled and less likely to be interviewed than the younger applicant (age 28). An important finding in this research study is the fact that older managers rated the older applicant as less economically

beneficial. This suggests that older people also hold economic stereotypes of older workers.

When significant restructuring occurs within organizations, downsizing generally takes place resulting in the need to reduce employment numbers. In downsizing situations, older workers are often times targeted. Faley et al. (1984) found this fact to be demonstrated in the 1990s employment cuts where displacement and unemployment rates grew faster for older workers than for other age groups. Their research discovered an increase in the number of age discrimination complaints that were traced back to age-biased stereotypes often attributed to misunderstandings between age and work performance. Survey results extracted from a job satisfaction poll (SHRM, 2002) also affirm similar economic stereotypes regarding older workers. Employer's hold work attitudes toward older workers that are associated with higher employment costs. This stereotype of high employment cost regarding older workers is most likely the explanation that many of the current age discrimination cases focused on older worker retirement benefit issues (Workplace Visions, 2003). As revealed from the previous research study and literature, organizational economics tend to drive older workers from the workplace.

Job attribute attitudes toward older workers. Job attribute attitudes toward older workers have been rated less desirable than younger workers among employers. Prenda (2001) proposed this could be the result of today's fast-paced economic environment where the speed of information processing cannot be ignored. Employers want quick, sharp minds that produce as efficiently as possible. Reasons explaining the undesirability

of employing older workers pertain to the various job attributes required by the modern work environment (i.e., computer skills, ability to learn quickly, energy, stamina, and flexibility). In a similar vein, Yeatts et al. (2000) noted that job attributes relating to flexibility, resistance to change, and learning quickly are more noticeable among older workers. Seniority typically earns informal privileges based on tenure and experience. Older employees with seniority tend to associate job change with loss of earned privileges and status brought about by the possibility of inadequate knowledge and skills. As a result, older employees will tend to resist job change due to perceived loss of control, insecurity associated with uncertainty, and the perception of individual obsolescence. Higher levels of anxiety and resistance to job change have been found among older workers that continue to reinforce the less desirable than younger worker attitude among employers.

Forte and Hansvick (1999) only partially supported this older worker stereotype. Ninety-eight survey questionnaires were received where respondents were requested to rate workers 49 years and younger and 50 and older. Majority of respondents were men ranging in age between 21 and 68 years of age. Forte and Hansvicks (1999) revealed that employers rated older workers more favorably than younger workers regarding attributes associated with academic skill level, attendance, ability to get along with coworkers, work ethics, salary expectations, and supervisory skills. In contrast, employers did rate older workers less favorably than younger workers on attributes relating to computer skills, ability to learn quickly, energy and stamina, and flexibility. Similar age-related stereotypes were also reported in another study conducted by Chiu, Chan, Snape, and

Redman (2001) where both negative and positive stereotypes relating to older workers over the age of 40 were identified. Employer's positive stereotypes for older workers included: a) loyalty, b) interpersonal skills, c) conscientious, d) applicable work experience, e) confidence, and f) job and team effectiveness. Employer's negative stereotypes for older workers included: a) less ready to accept new technology, b) less adaptable to change, c) less able to learn and grasp new ideas, and d) less interested in training. This is indicative of job stereotyping where employers tend to favor younger workers in jobs requiring computer skills and older workers favored more in jobs requiring supervisory skills.

Broad generalization attitudes toward older workers. Broad generalization attitudes toward older workers are misguided in that "one size does not fit all" (Grossman, 2003). Extracting from literature research, Finkelstein, Burke, and Raju (1995) explained how broad generalizations regarding older workers occur. Impressions are formed about a person (e.g., an older employee) with the first encounter (initial categorization) imprinting a cognitive social category. When information is received about an older worker that fits with the initial formed impression, our cognitive social category is reaffirmed (category confirmation). If category confirmation does not occur, then re-categorization takes place where work attributes regarding an older worker will be fit with an alternative cognitive social group category.

Finkelstein and her colleagues (1995) also explain that in-group and out-group categorization occurs. The way that an older worker is categorized (stereotyped) will depend upon the group characteristics of the person observing. The social category group

that the observer belongs to will influence how an older worker will be perceived. For example, if an employee belongs to a particular social category group (i.e., Generation X or Generation Y), that particular social group will influence how an older worker will be perceived. In addition, Finkelstein et al. (1995) pointes out that people are categorized according to characteristics. The most distinguishable characteristic about a person will form the basis of categorization. For instance, age is highly noticeable at first glance regarding older workers and is therefore mostly likely the characteristic used for social group categorization. These processes of categorization allow broad generalizations to continue regarding older workers.

Robertson and Tracy (1998) summarize research studies describing large differences within older worker groups pertaining to training performance, memory, and reaction time. Descriptions of average behavior for specific age groups grow less accurate regarding older worker performance as the age of the group increases. Perhaps the conventional measures used in job performance were more concerned regarding the extent of functional capacity of the older worker (i.e., work content, work environment, and work organization). It may be that claims of what appeared to be an age-related performance decline may have actually been the result of a mismatch between the job and the worker. This would suggest that better matching of workers and jobs would result in a more productive work force. Yeatts et al. (2000) reaffirm this analysis, positing that each job has knowledge, skill, and ability requirements that must be met by an employee. Likewise, each employee has needs, values, and interests that must be met by their job. The extent that a job-employee fit occurs will determine the degree of both employee and

employer satisfaction. Hence, broad generalizations regarding work performance by older workers should be made with caution.

Work performance attitudes toward older workers. Work performance attitudes toward older worker's are generally associated with employer concerns regarding attitudes toward willingness to take directions and productivity. Older workers are viewed as potential high-risk groups because of the age-related stereotype of not being able to keep up (Boerlijst et al., 1998). There is a widespread belief that work performance declines as age increases. According to the decremental theory of aging, general performance does decline with age (e.g., dexterity, response rate, agility, hearing, and vision). Since ability is strongly related to job performance, there are natural expectancies that job performance will also decline with age (Lawson & Shen, 1998).

Older worker productivity levels will differ per profession and per function just as individual productivity levels will vary. Also, productivity differences are usually larger "within" age groups than "between" age groups (Boerlijst, Munnichs, & vander Heijden, 1998). In every age group and level, generalization from a small number of employees whose work is below standard would be inaccurate. An individual's ability to reach performance peaks at a later age is dependent upon patterns of knowledge acquisition and career experience (Boerlijst et al., 1998).

Hoyer (1998) synthesized the findings from several meta-analyses studies where no relationship was found between age and work performance. He pointed out that this may be true at an aggregate level but would not reflect a true picture at an individual level of performance. Some aspects of work performance (i.e., speed performance,

learning new work tasks like computer systems) do show age-related declines for older

individuals while familiar non-speeded tasks were well maintained for older workers.

Hoyer (1998) provided similar analysis regarding the research pertaining to cognitive

demanding tasks required of older workers. Some aspects of cognition show gradual age-

related declines (i.e., speed of mental processing, attention selectivity, working memory,

memory retrieval, mental computational abilities, and fluid intelligence). Other aspects of

cognition are unaffected, like well-practiced skills (e.g., typing). Still other aspects of

cognition increase with age, like crystallized intelligence (knowledge acquired through

life/cultural experience). Older workers will use their acquired knowledge, familiarity in

work situations, technology provisions, and memory aids to compensate for their

cognitive functioning declines.

Career opportunity attitudes toward older workers. Career opportunity attitudes

toward older workers are thought to be limiting. The American Association of Retired

Persons 2002 Conference Board report that 25% of older workers retiring in the next five

years will leave because they were being held back because of their age (Grossman,

2003). Finkelstein et al. (1995) conducted a meta-analysis study in the area of age

discrimination, specifically addressing in-group bias, job information, salience, and job

stereotype. Their results reveal that younger workers tend to discriminate against older

workers when: a) younger workers rated older workers, b) there was no job-relevant

information provided about the older worker, and c) raters were simultaneously rating

both younger and older workers. On average, in-group bias was present among younger

people rating younger workers higher than older workers in having more job

qualifications, in having greater development potential, and as being more physically qualified for demanding jobs. Conversely, younger people tended to rate older workers as being more stable than younger workers, a common stereotype of older workers. When older people were rating workers, there were no differences found between younger and older employees regarding job qualification. This suggests that older people do not rely as heavily on age stereotypes as do younger people. One reason explaining no in-group bias among older workers may be that older people tend to have more knowledge about experiences (wisdom) at all age levels. Most likely this is due to the transitioning through several life span development stages. This suggests that younger people may tend to not empathize with the issues and concerns of older workers. Consequently, younger people may be more likely to discriminate against older people regarding employment decisions (i.e., job qualifications and development potential).

In Forte and Hansvick's (1999) study, the opposite was found regarding in-group bias for ratings of older workers by older employers. Employers aged 50 and over more favorably rated older workers as more desirable on certain attributes (i.e., attendance, work ethics, salary expectations, and supervisory ability). No in-group bias was found among younger employers rating their younger peers. Explanations given for this in-group bias among older workers may be related to company size and workforce demographics. Smaller companies who may have more direct contact with workers of more diverse ages tend to exhibit fewer stereotypes. Also, employers experienced with diversity and sensitivity training would more likely be sensitive to age biases in the hiring process.

Education and training attitudes toward older workers. Education and training

attitudes toward older workers present obstacles. Simpson et al. (2002) report that

economic models did exist in the past where employers were reluctant to train older

workers. Consequently, older workers received less on-the-job training than younger

employees. Several reasons were given to explain this belief: a) experienced older

workers were too valuable in their current jobs to justify lost productivity associated with

training, b) older workers generally were earning higher salaries that pulled them away

from their duties for training which generated higher associated costs than it did for

younger workers, and c) the pay-back period to recoup training costs was shorter for

older workers than younger workers. The study conducted by Simpson et al. (2002)

found opposite results regarding attitudes presented in past economic models. Employers

now appear to be more willing to support retraining in late career because the adult

education system has reduced the opportunity cost problem and the anticipated severe

skill shortages that are expected in the future. Technology innovation is another reason

why employers may now be more supportive of training opportunities for older workers.

Organizations realize that older employees can be at a disadvantage regarding their

professional qualifications in that their knowledge and skills are not adequate in the

rapidly changing function requirements of modern organizations (Boerlijst et al., 1998).

Technological innovation has had a profound effect on the workplace creating a

constant need for training and retraining of workers. "Training refers to developing one's

current knowledge and skills base. Retraining refers to learning new skills and knowledge

that prepares an individual for a new career direction." (London & Bassman, 1989, p.

333). Sterns and Doverspike (1991) reported technological changes meant new skills often become obsolete after five years. This would require continual development of new knowledge and skills. For this reason, updating the skills of a 55 year old who has 10 or 15 years of employment can represent a benefit to the company that is equal to updating the skills of a 20 year old. Based upon this information, age should not be the determining factor regarding whose skills are current or obsolete for every employee's knowledge and skill level will continue to need updating.

Simpson and her colleagues (Simpson et al., 2002) also found in their study that when specific types of training were considered, older workers were more likely to invest in targeted career or job-related courses and on-the-job computer based training. The primary motivation seems to revolve around productivity enhancement by developing focused occupational skills. This would support the fact that credentialing programs (e.g., college/university based programs) are reporting higher levels of adult education activity. This information suggests that older workers are very much aware of the implications surrounding their educational development situation and are taking corrective actions to update their knowledge and skills to remain competent in the workplace.

Interventions to Decrease Age-Related Stereotypes.

Much progress has been made within today's workplace regarding diversity issues (i.e., gender, race, and ethnicity). However, the idea "that you cannot teach an old dog new tricks does not seem to carry the same taboo status in society as stereotypes involving race and gender" (Grossman, 2003, p. 42). Older workers will be more apt to stay in the workforce if they feel the organization is loyal and committed in listening to

their needs (Grossman, 2003). Organizations must realize that various psychological

components will come into play when considering the needs of age-related employees: a)

the nature of people's work may change with age, b) certain work aspects may become

more/less valued with age (i.e., work volume, time pressures, flexible working hours,

mentoring opportunities, horizontal mobility, gradual retirement, continuous learning)

and c) work abilities will change in varying degrees with age (Griffiths, 1999).

Frequency of contact. Frequency of contact with older workers was found to be

an important determinant of age-related stereotypes. Chiu et al. (2001) suggested that

stereotypical beliefs and discriminatory attitudes may be related to the frequency of

contact with older workers. Meaning, that familiarity with older workers by more

frequent contact can reduce negative stereotypes and discrimination. Larger companies

(i.e., 1,000 or more employees) were found to give less positive ratings to older workers.

Smaller firms were found to have more direct contact with workers of diverse ages; thus,

fewer age-related stereotypes existed regarding strengths and weaknesses of older

workers. Therefore, company size would definitely be one factor affecting the

employability of older workers (Forte & Hansvick, 1999).

Training and development programs. Training and development programs should

be structured with the needs of all age groups taken into account. Our society has

attached labels to the different generation groups (e.g., Generation Y, Generation X,

Baby Boomer, and Veteran) suggesting that each age group is quite different. Given that

fact, training and development needs should be tailored accordingly. Morris et al. (2000)

argue that with the increase in expected working life of individuals, technology adoption

does have important implications regarding age and training and development programs. A thorough user analysis should be conducted to better understand which age groups are most likely to be affected by new technology. Those groups should then be brought into the training and development stage early on. Hoyer (1998) explains that age-related differences can definitely be found in the amount and style of training needed when introducing new work processes or responsibilities. Older workers do tend to learn at a slower pace and may not have the familiarity or comfort level in new technology usage. Also, allowing older workers to learn together with their age peer group is helpful. This is especially true in learning new tasks and in using new technologies. Younger workers respond better to visual and hands-on-learning while older workers respond better reading and witnessing demonstrations (Grossman, 2003; Yeatts et al., 2000).

High anxiety levels about new technologies may interfere with new learning more for older adults than for younger adults. Therefore, it would be beneficial to provide opportunities for technology familiarization prior to teaching the specific, more complex details regarding a new information technology system.

Mentoring. Mentoring relationships between employee groups could possibly promote mutual respect among the different generations. It is resource efficient for older workers to mentor younger workers. Older workers can transfer their work and life experience to younger employees helping to maintain the company's stability. Reverse mentoring would also be valuable where younger workers mentor older workers in up-to-date knowledge as well as in their new generation experiences. A two-way interaction of learning can occur between younger and older generations without age playing an

intervening role. For example, pairing a less technically-savvy older worker with a younger computer whiz can teach the older worker about technology tools. In return, the older worker can provide wisdom based upon actual experience gained throughout their working years that would benefit the younger savvy worker (Marshall, 1998; Watkins, 1999).

It is important for companies to keep an eye on the demographics that compose their workforce in order to plan human resource needs. Companies that have had no or few new hires for long periods of time will be demographically old, since most new employees tend to be young. Important skills and organizational knowledge that are required for efficient production might be lost. Similarly, companies that pursue aggressive early retirement incentive programs risk losing much of their expertise in a short time period. This is another reason emphasizing the importance of mentoring programs.

Work environment. Creating a work environment in which all employees are comfortable and willing to work is important. Managers must recognize age-related differences and tailor programs and incentives taking into account each unique employee's needs. For example, younger employees generally prefer to be given a task, to have the task explained and then be left alone to figure it out. They do not want supervisors and managers looking over their shoulder. On the other hand, senior workers tend to be less confident and may need a little extra time or training to learn a task. They also tend to appreciate reinforcement for a job well done. Flexible work schedules help to accommodate older worker needs. Job sharing would provide an attractive work

alternative for older employees, given the right situation regarding work skills,

performance and accountabilities (Watkins, 1999).

A few forward-thinking organizations are recognizing the possibility of the future

labor shortage and are beginning to take proactive steps to retain older employees. Any

adverse action proposed for a worker with 15 years of service will be scrutinized by a

review committee with the goal of generating the least possible harm, and employees

with at least 5 years of company service may return back to work retaining seniority and

salary level (Grossman, 2003).

The Present Study

Age diversity is a reality that is not going away. It will be important for

organizations to recognize that employees within each generational age group will bring

something unique to the workplace. Making this connection between four very different

generations will be a challenging task that organizations will face. The challenge will be

tapping into each employee's best qualities resulting in lower turnover, less

misunderstandings, and a happier workplace. People judge others by their own

framework that has been influenced by their generation of life events, traits, and

characteristics (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001). In order for organizations

to effectively manage a multigenerational workforce, it would be important to first

recognize to what degree perceptions and stereotypes exist regarding older workers

within the workplace. The following study attempted to examine the degree and add to

the awareness and understanding why multigenerational perceptions and attitudes may

exist toward older workers.

Hypotheses

Based on the insights from the literature, the following hypotheses were

investigated according to the following groupings: a) Hypothesis 1 relates to overall

measurement regarding the oldest generation group, b) Hypothesis 2 relates to overall

measurement regarding the youngest generation group, c) Hypothesis 3 relates to

measurement between Generation X and Baby Boomer generation groups, d) Hypothesis

4 relates to training measurement among all generation groups, and d) Hypothesis 5

relates to older worker age range perception measurement.

Hypothesis 1: Overall, employees within each individual generation group

(Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomer, and Veteran) will exhibit significantly more

negative perceptions and work attitudes toward the Veteran generation as compared to

Generation Y, Generation X, and Baby Boomer generation groups.

Literature research pertaining to organizational, occupational and peer perceptions

of older workers suggest that negative perceptions toward older workers may exist

(Boerlijst et al., 1998; Ekerdt, 1998; Feldman, 2000; Morris & Venkatesh, 2000; Pekala,

2001; Sparks et al., 2001; Sterns, 1998). Finkelstein et al. (1995) research found in-group

bias regarding job stereotypes, job information, and job salience in that: a) younger

workers rated older workers less favorably overall, b) younger workers rated older

workers less favorably when no job-relevant information was provided, and c) younger

workers rated older workers less favorably when rating both younger and older workers

at the same time.

Hypothesis 2: Overall, employees within Generation Y will exhibit significantly more positive perceptions and work attitudes as compared to Generation X, Baby Boomer, and Veteran generation groups.

Overall, literature research suggests positive perceptions and work attitudes toward employees within the younger generational groups (Boerlijst et al., 1998; Chiu et al., 2001; Finkelstein & Burke, 1998; Finkelstein et al., 1995; Forte & Hansvick, 1999; Morris & Venkatesh, 2000; Schooler et al., 1998; Yeatts et al., 2000). Greller's (2000) research reveals organizational perceptions (i.e., career advancement and developing new skills) are more positively valued by younger workers. Promotions, training, and leadership development opportunities are thought to be primarily reserved for younger workers. Occupational perceptions and work attitudes relating to technology, economic worth, and job attributes are more positively attributed to younger workers.

Hypothesis 3: Employees within Generation X will exhibit significantly more negative perceptions and work attitudes as compared to the Baby Boomer generation.

Generation X grew up in the shadows of the Baby Boomer generation and as a result will most likely resist anything the older generation will embrace. Baby Boomers developed early positive work attitudes relating to teamwork whereas Generation X developed opposite teamwork attitudes possessing a sense of being a survivor and looking out for oneself. Generation X employees are the most criticized generation largely due to their work ethic, attitude, attention span, and sense of corporate loyalty (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Hypothesis 4: Employees within the Baby Boomer and Veteran generation groups will significantly report less interest in training opportunities to develop new skills as compared to Generation Y and Generation X employees.

Boerlijst et al. (1998) explain that as employees get older, there is some tendency not to participate in training and development activities as much as younger employees. Mauer (2001) notes the significant role training and development activities provide older workers in that an employee's value is now dependent upon maintenance of knowledge and skills. Older employees established traditional linear careers whereas younger employees have shifted toward flexible, ever-changing careers. In order to meet these new career demands, workers must continuously learn and adapt.

Hypothesis 5: The age range of employees considered to be "older employees" will significantly report age 50 and above.

This age range is reported by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) regarding corporate management attitudes toward older workers (Miller, Kaspin, & Schuster, 1990). Also, litigation cases reported by Miller et al. (1990) reveal average age of the complaint when the employee won the case was 59 suggesting that courts do not perceive individuals under the age of 50 as being subject to age bias and that the effective protected age group would appear to be age 50 and over. Additionally, Simpson et al. (2002) defined older workers as any time following age 50 based upon information gathered regarding individual career development, engagement, and work attitude.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

For the purpose of gathering Generation Y data, this study utilized 40 college

students, who were 24 years of age or younger and enrolled in undergraduate psychology

courses in the Spring of 2004 at Emporia State University (ESU). Participants earned

course credit for their participation in this research, but other alternatives for earning the

course credit were available to them by their course instructor. Participants were recruited

by a research sign-up sheet posted on the bulletin board by the elevator on 3rd floor of

Visser Hall.

This study utilized full-time and part-time employees employed within eight

specifically selected departments from ESU for the purpose of gathering data from

Generation X, Baby Boomer, and Veteran groups. Full-time employees were defined as

an employee who works at least 40 hours a week. Part-time employees were defined as

any employee who works less than 40 hours a week. Also, a midwestern insurance

company was utilized to gather data from full-time employees for the purpose of

gathering data from the Generation X and Baby Boomer generation groups.

Additionally, the Kansan's Older Worker Program sponsored by the Kansas State

Department of Human Resources (KSDHR) was utilized to gather data from the Baby

Boomer and Veteran generation group. The Kansan's Older Worker Program is a state

funded program designed to serve workers 55 years of age and older. Data were gathered

from full-time and part-time employees and affiliated employers.

Instrumentation

Pilot study information memo. A pilot study information memo was attached to the front of each survey packet (see Appendix A). Information contained on this memo pertained to the survey purpose, a request of written feedback regarding the survey cover letter, questionnaire, and completion date.

Survey announcement. An email survey announcement (see Appendix B) was distributed to selected ESU department directors prior to receiving the survey questionnaire. This survey announcement contained the name of the survey study, the purpose of the survey, a confidentiality guarantee statement, permission to conduct survey study, and a request for survey contact identification.

ESU students received survey announcement notification by a research sign-up sheet posted on the research bulletin board on 3rd floor of Visser Hall. Also, Graduate Teaching Assistants responsible for teaching undergraduate psychology courses in the Spring of 2004 at Emporia State University were asked by the author to make this survey announcement to their classes.

The survey announcement was distributed to the participants of the Kansan's Older Worker program in the form of a letter (see Appendix C). This letter was attached to the front of the survey packet and mailed to participating employees and affiliated employers in the Kansan's Older Worker program.

Survey cover letter. A cover letter, attached to the front of the survey questionnaire (see Appendix D), explained the purpose of the study, provided directions for answering the survey questionnaire, and stated confidentiality guarantee.

Employee generations in the workplace survey. A survey questionnaire entitled

"Employee Generations in the Workplace" was used to assess the degree of employee

behavior (perceptions and work attitudes) among the different generations (see Appendix

E). This survey questionnaire was retrieved from a consulting and training services

website (Adrian Walsh & Associates Pty Ltd, 2003) and modified to accommodate this

research study. The survey consisted of three sections: 1) the generation group of the

participant, 2) Questions 1-12 covered areas relating to employee perceptions and work

attitudes among generation groups, and 3) Questions 13-15 related to age range grouping

perceptions.

Hypothesis 1 pertained to the overall total measurement regarding each generation

group perceptions and attitudes toward the Veteran generation that were supported by all

12 survey questions in section 2. Hypothesis 2 pertained to the overall total measurement

regarding each generation group perceptions and attitudes toward Generation Y that were

supported by all 12 survey questions in section 2. Hypothesis 3 pertained to the

measurement between Generation X and Baby Boomer generation groups and were

supported by all 12 survey questions in section 2 using age range groupings 25 to 38

years old (Generation X) and 39 to 57 years old (Baby Boomer). Hypothesis 4 pertained

to the training measurement held among generation groups that were supported by

section 2, question 1. Hypothesis 5 pertained to the age range perception of employees to

include in a group considered to be "old employees" and was investigated by Section 3,

Question 15.

A five point likert rating scale, from (1) anchoring never and (5) anchoring always, was used for the participants to rate each question in Section 2. The actual response number entered by the participant was used for criterion predictors for questions in Section 3.

To check the reliability of the survey instrument, Industrial and Organizational Psychology students categorized each survey question according to young, old, or neutral stereotype association. Also, a pilot study was conducted utilizing instructors, graduate teaching assistants, and graduate research assistants from the department of psychology at Emporia State University. A survey packet (information sheet memo, cover letter and survey) was given to each pilot test participant requesting survey completion and written feedback as a method of gaining an understanding of possible misinterpretations or confusion regarding survey instructions and questions. Based upon the results from the pilot study and written feedback suggestions, the survey cover letter and questionnaire were altered.

Content validity was established for the survey instrument by expert judges within the fields of business and psychology who read and qualified each question item. Questions were revised as necessary.

Proposal for Human Subjects Research. Proposal for human subject's research was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Emporia State University (see Appendix F).

Informed consent. An informed consent form (see Appendix G) was completed by ESU students for the purpose of obtaining their permission to participate in the study.

Debriefing statement. A debriefing statement (see Appendix H) was given to the Emporia State University students for the purpose of explaining the study they participated in as well as the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study.

Procedures

After securing the thesis committee's permission to proceed with the study, the researcher submitted the proposal for the research (see Appendix G) to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Emporia State University and obtained permission to begin the study. After the IRB's permission to proceed with the study was obtained, data collection began.

Pilot study. The pilot study utilized instructors, graduate teaching assistants, and graduate research assistants from the department of psychology at Emporia State University. The pilot study was conducted by distributing a survey packet (information sheet, survey cover letter, and survey questionnaire) into each instructor, graduate teaching assistant, and graduate research assistant mailbox. An email reminder was distributed to the pilot study participants five days after initial survey packet receipt requesting completed survey and written feedback to be turned in to the psychology department office within the next couple of days. A manila folder labeled "Employee Generations" was placed in the psychology department for completed surveys to be dropped off. The manila folder containing the completed surveys was picked up from the psychology department seven days after initial receipt of survey packet. Based upon the results of the pilot study feedback, the survey cover letter and/or survey questionnaire were altered: a) survey was shortened, b) asking participant's age was replaced with

asking participant's generation group they belonged to, c) replaced young, middle-aged, old, and own item categories with generation group age ranges.

To check the reliability of the survey instrument, a survey packet (cover letter and survey) was given to each pilot test participant asking for written feedback regarding survey instructions and questions. Questions were not revised.

Emporia State University students. Emporia State University students signed an experiment participation sheet as they entered the classroom where the survey was conducted. An informed consent form (see Appendix H) was read to the students and asked that they read along. Each participant was given a survey packet (cover letter and survey) after the informed consent was obtained. Twenty minutes was allotted to complete the survey. Due to confidentiality purposes, no research experiment documents contained the participant's name. At the end of the allotted time, survey packets were collected from each participant. Each participant was given and read a debriefing statement about the purpose of the study and given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study. As each student exited the classroom, a research participation slip was given confirming participation and authorization of one research participation point. Returned survey questionnaires were numerically coded and entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Emporia State Uuniversity. Eight ESU departments were specifically selected by the Human Resource Department based upon survey distribution convenience: 1) Library Services, 2) Financial Aid, 3) Registration, 4) Business Affairs, 5) Admissions, 6) Budget, 7) Human Resources, and 8) Payroll. The Human Resource Department sent an

email letter of survey endorsement to these department directors asking for permission to conduct survey and a contact person for the researcher to give survey packets to for employee distribution. Department directors responded to Human Resource Department with approval or disapproval in conducting survey. The approved department contact received the survey packets to distribute to department employees and a manila envelope labeled "Employee Generations" to place anonymous, completed surveys in. An email reminder was sent to the approved department contacts five days after initial survey packet receipt asking for assistance in reminding department employees to turn in completed surveys within the next couple of days. "Employee Generations" manila folders containing the completed surveys were picked up from each approved department seven days after initial survey packet distribution. Returned survey questionnaires were numerically coded and entered into SPSS.

Midwestern insurance company. Midwestern insurance company employees received the survey packet (cover letter and survey) after survey questionnaire and procedure had been discussed with the HR Vice President and HR Consultant for approval to conduct the survey. Human Resource Consultants distributed the survey packets and requested completion to their respective department employees during the last twenty minutes of their weekly business meeting. The HR Consultant provided a brief explanation regarding the researcher and purpose (i.e., "graduate thesis requirement") for the survey. Completed surveys were placed in a manila envelope labeled, "Employee Generations." The researcher picked up the manila folders containing the completed survey questionnaires from the HR Consultants 7 days after initial

distribution. Returned survey questionnaires were numerically coded and entered into SPSS.

KSDHR Older Worker Program. The participants affiliated with the Kansas State Department of Human Resources (KSDHR) Older Worker Program received a survey packet (letter of survey endorsement, cover letter, survey, and self-addressed stamped envelope) in the mail, distributed by the researcher. Survey procedure and questionnaire were discussed with the KSDHR Older Worker program manager and supervisor for approval to conduct survey. Completed surveys were returned in an enclosed self-addressed stamped enveloped to the researcher. Returned survey questionnaires were numerically coded and entered into SPSS.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

A pilot study was conducted utilizing instructors, graduate teaching assistants, and graduate research assistants from the department of psychology at Emporia State University. The purpose of this pilot study was to check survey reliability and validity. Each pilot test participant was given a survey packet (cover letter and survey) and asked for feedback regarding clarity, content, and interpretation of survey instructions and questions.

Pilot Study Results

Eleven employee generation surveys were received out of 34 distributed which resulted in a 32% participation rate. As a result of survey feedback, the following changes were made:

1. The employee generations survey was shortened from 25 items, (each item containing 4 age categories, totaling 100 items) to 12 items, (each item containing 4 age categories, totaling 48 items). This resulted in removing neutral trait items leaving 6 items associated with younger employee classification and 6 items associated with older employee classification.

2. Several surveys were received expressing a negative connotation relating to the "old worker" descriptor regarding survey age categories. Therefore, survey age categories were changed from young, middle-aged, old, and own to generation group age range categories: a) 24 years of age or younger, correlating to Generation Y; b) 25 to 38 years old, correlating to Generation X, c) 39 to 57 years

old, correlating to Baby Boomers, and d) 58 years of age or older, correlating to

the Veteran group.

3. Asking for the participant age was changed to asking what generation group they

belonged to. Several surveys were received with the survey being completed;

however, the participant's age was not reported even though no name was

associated with the survey. Also, a few survey comments were received about

providing their age. This fact, coupled with the negative "old worker" connotation

expressed, lead the researcher to believe that asking a person's age is a sensitive

issue which could result in some participants not providing their age. Thus, the

remaining survey item responses would be useless.

Employee Generation Survey Results

186 participants completed the employee generations survey which resulted in a

70% return rate. Three respondents failed to identify the generation group they belong to

on the survey; consequently, they were excluded from the analyses because generation

data could not be associated to a particular generation group. Thus, data on 183

participants were used to test research hypotheses.

Generation group rating. Overall generation group mean score rating revealed the

younger generation groups (Generation Y and Generation X) rated Generation X highest

and the oldest generation group (Veteran) lowest. The older generation groups (Baby

Boomer and Veteran) rated Baby Boomers highest and the youngest generation group

(Generation Y) lowest. Generation groups were rated by total mean scores with 1

denoting highest generation rating and 4 denoting lowest generation rating. Generation Y

rated the following generation groups accordingly: 1) Generation X, 2) Generation Y, 3) Baby Boomer, and 4) Veteran. Generation X rated the following generation groups accordingly: 1) Generation X, 2) Baby Boomer, 3) Generation Y, and 4) Veteran. Baby Boomers rated the following generation groups accordingly: 1) Baby Boomer, 2) Generation X, 3) Veteran, and 4) Generation Y. Veteran employees rated the following generation groups accordingly: 1) Baby Boomer, 2) Veteran, 3) Generation X, and 4) Generation Y. Overall generation group rating can be seen in Table 1.

Item analysis. Item analysis of employee perceptions and attitudes were calculated (mean and standard deviation) for each item and for each generation group. Using a likert rating scale of 1 to 5, a cut-off score was established to denote high and low mean scores. A mean score of 3 and greater denoted high mean scores. A mean score below 3 denoted low mean scores.

Generation Y employees rated Generation Y, Generation X, and Baby Boomer generation groups high on all behavior dimensions. Generation Y employees rated the Veteran group high on all dimensions except four (training, constant change, fast pace, and technology). Generation Y item analysis can be seen in Table 2.

Generation X employees rated Generation Y employees high on all behavior dimensions except two (sensitive to others and loyalty). Generation X employees rated both Generation X (their own peer group) and Baby Boomer generation groups high on all behavior dimensions. Generation X employees rated the Veteran group high on all dimensions except five (training, constant change, fast pace, flexibility, and technology). Generation X item analysis can be seen in Table 3.

Table 1

Generation Group Total Mean Score Rating by each Generation Group

Generation Group	Generation Y			Generation X			Baby Boomer			Veteran		
	N	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Generation Y	40	45.78	6.13	23	45.83	5.04	23	43.96	5.06	23	40.39	5.74
Generation X	35	43.31	5.54	40	47.30	4.11	35	43.69	3.13	35	38.60	7.96
Baby Boomer	60	41.60	6.61	62	43.31	8.65	72	45.81	5.35	60	41.73	5.05
Veteran	24	39.79	7.20	24	43.67	7.50	25	45.76	8.03	30	45.73	8.80

Table 2

Generation Y Descriptive Statistics of Employee Perceptions and Attitudes

Item	Generation Y			Generation X			Baby Boomer			Veteran		
	N	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Training	40	3.80	0.93	23	3.70	0.82	23	3.26	0.75	23	2.78	0.85
Sensitive others	40	3.43	0.81	23	3.48	0.79	23	3.74	0.81	23	3.74	0.86
Constant change	40	3.93	0.86	23	3.74	0.54	23	3.39	0.78	23	2.78	1.00
Diversity	40	4.20	0.79	23	3.96	0.71	23	3.52	0.85	23	3.04	1.02
Communicating	40	3.90	0.78	23	4.00	0.60	23	3.78	0.74	23	3.44	0.51
Conscientious	40	3.53	0.91	23	3.87	0.69	23	4.17	0.65	23	4.22	0.80
Dependable	40	3.45	1.06	23	3.65	0.98	23	4.09	0.67	23	4.13	0.69
Loyalty	40	3.33	0.97	23	3.52	0.95	23	4.09	0.60	23	4.30	0.64
Team player	40	3.68	0.94	23	3.87	0.63	23	3.87	0.63	23	3.57	0.66
Fast pace	40	4.18	0.75	23	4.17	0.58	23	3.48	0.67	23	2.87	0.81
Flexible	40	3.93	0.92	22	3.77	0.69	22	3.50	0.91	22	3.14	1.17
Technology	40	4.45	0.68	23	4.26	0.54	23	3.22	0.60	23	2.52	0.79
Total	40	45.78	6.13	23	45.83	5.04	23	43.96	5.06	23	40.39	5.74

Table 3

Generation X Descriptive Statistics of Employee Perceptions and Attitudes

Item	Generation Y			Generation X			Baby Boomer			Veteran		
	N	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Training	35	3.91	0.78	40	4.05	0.60	35	3.17	0.79	34	2.44	0.75
Sensitive others	35	2.91	0.78	40	3.63	0.63	35	3.94	0.48	34	3.82	0.76
Constant change	35	3.86	0.77	40	3.90	0.55	35	3.09	0.51	34	2.59	0.86
Diversity	35	4.14	0.69	40	4.20	0.56	35	3.77	0.73	34	3.32	0.88
Communicating	35	3.37	0.55	40	3.83	0.55	35	3.71	0.62	34	3.35	0.81
Conscientious	35	3.17	0.75	40	3.93	0.57	35	4.03	0.30	34	4.15	0.50
Dependable	35	3.26	0.74	40	4.05	0.64	35	4.11	0.53	34	4.12	0.73
Loyalty	35	2.91	0.85	40	3.63	0.70	35	4.02	0.62	34	4.18	0.72
Team player	35	3.57	0.78	40	3.88	0.69	35	3.54	0.56	34	3.21	0.77
Fast pace	35	3.83	0.71	40	4.05	0.55	35	3.29	0.68	34	2.74	0.80
Flexible	35	3.83	0.86	40	3.88	0.65	35	3.40	0.77	34	2.97	1.11
Technology	35	4.54	0.51	40	4.30	0.46	35	3.60	0.65	34	2.85	0.82
Total	35	43.31	5.54	40	47.30	4.11	35	43.69	3.13	35	38.60	7.96

Baby Boomer employees rated Generation Y employees high on all behavior dimensions except four (sensitive to others, conscientiousness, dependability, and loyalty). Baby Boomer employees rated both Generation X and Baby Boomer (their own peer group) generation groups high on all behavior dimensions. Baby Boomer employees rated the Veteran group high on all dimensions except two (conscientiousness and constant change). Baby Boomer item analysis can be seen in Table 4.

Veteran employees rated Generation Y employees high on all behavior dimensions except four (sensitive to others, conscientiousness, dependability, and loyalty). Veteran employees rated both Generation X and Baby Boomer generation groups high on all behavior dimensions. Veteran employees rated their own peer group high on all dimensions except one (conscientiousness). Veteran item analysis can be seen in Table 5.

Internal consistency. Overall internal consistency was measured using the coefficient alpha on continuous data (e.g., 5 = always, 4 = often, 3 = sometimes, 2 = rarely, and 1 = never). The coefficient alpha reliability ($a = 0.91$) was high reflecting consistency of most items in the evaluation of perceptions and work attitudes construct. It also suggested that this survey was successful in capturing a homogenous group of test items.

Internal consistency of young worker items. Internal consistency of young worker items was measured using the coefficient alpha on continuous data (e.g., 5 = always, 4 = often, 3 = sometimes, 2 = rarely, and 1 = never). Six items were categorized as young worker associations: 1) item 1, training; 2) item 3, constant change; 3) item 4, diversity;

Table 4

Baby Boomer Descriptive Statistics of Employee Perceptions and Attitudes

Item	Generation Y			Generation X			Baby Boomer			Veteran		
	N	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Training	59	3.83	0.67	59	3.90	0.52	72	3.61	0.72	61	2.72	0.90
Sensitive others	59	2.98	0.57	60	3.43	0.62	71	4.06	0.58	60	3.82	0.68
Constant change	60	3.58	0.72	59	3.73	0.58	71	3.55	0.71	60	2.87	0.85
Diversity	59	3.97	0.64	60	3.95	0.53	71	3.87	0.72	60	3.47	0.79
Communicating	58	3.36	0.64	58	3.71	0.59	71	3.79	0.58	59	3.54	0.70
Conscientious	59	3.10	0.78	59	3.58	0.75	72	4.17	0.58	60	4.17	0.59
Dependable	59	3.25	0.76	60	3.85	0.63	71	4.21	0.56	60	4.25	0.57
Loyalty	59	2.71	0.79	59	3.27	0.72	72	3.79	0.67	59	3.93	0.81
Team player	59	3.32	0.65	60	3.67	0.75	71	3.86	0.66	60	3.57	0.72
Fast pace	59	3.80	0.64	60	3.95	0.53	71	3.72	0.64	60	3.20	0.71
Flexible	59	3.85	0.58	60	3.82	0.54	71	3.75	0.71	60	3.20	0.73
Technology	59	4.54	0.57	60	4.27	0.58	71	3.92	0.63	60	3.08	0.62
Total	60	41.60	6.61	62	43.31	8.65	72	45.81	5.35	60	41.73	5.05

Table 5

Veteran Descriptive Statistics of Employee Perceptions and Attitudes

Item	Generation Y			Generation X			Baby Boomer			Veteran		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Training	24	3.67	0.96	24	3.75	0.74	25	3.68	0.90	30	3.47	0.97
Sensitive others	24	2.83	0.92	24	3.25	0.61	25	3.88	0.73	30	4.17	0.79
Constant change	24	3.58	1.02	24	3.79	0.72	25	3.68	0.69	30	3.47	1.04
Diversity	24	3.79	0.66	24	4.08	0.65	25	4.08	0.76	30	4.07	0.78
Communicating	23	3.22	0.52	23	3.65	0.49	24	3.83	0.56	29	3.86	0.83
Conscientious	22	2.91	0.68	22	3.50	0.91	23	3.96	0.71	28	2.96	0.71
Dependable	23	2.96	0.71	23	3.70	0.70	24	4.29	0.62	29	4.34	0.67
Loyalty	23	2.96	0.93	23	3.22	0.74	24	4.04	0.69	29	4.17	0.71
Team player	23	3.17	0.78	23	3.57	0.84	24	4.00	0.59	29	4.00	0.93
Fast pace	23	3.78	0.67	23	4.13	0.55	24	3.92	0.65	29	3.69	0.81
Flexible	23	3.39	1.12	23	3.83	0.78	24	3.79	0.78	29	3.79	0.98
Technology	24	4.58	0.58	24	4.42	0.58	25	3.88	0.60	30	3.57	0.63
Total	24	39.79	7.20	24	43.67	7.50	25	45.76	8.03	30	45.73	8.80

4) item 10, fast pace; 5) item 11, being flexible; and 6) item 12, technology. The coefficient alpha reliability ($a = 0.85$) was above average describing the fact that these six survey items were consistent regarding young worker association.

Internal consistency of old worker items. Internal consistency of old worker items was measured using the coefficient alpha on continuous data (e.g., 5 = always, 4 = often, 3 = sometimes, 2 = rarely, and 1 = never). Six items were categorized as old worker associations: 1) item 2, relating to sensitivity; 2) item 5, communication; 3) item 6, conscientious; 4) item 7, dependability; 5) item 8, loyalty; and 6) item 9, team player. The coefficient alpha reliability ($a = 0.86$) was above average describing the fact that these six survey items were consistent regarding old worker association.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 speculated that overall, employees within each individual generation group (Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomer, and Veteran) would exhibit significantly more negative perceptions and work attitudes toward the Veteran generation as compared to Generation Y, Generation X, and Baby Boomer generation groups. Literature research pertaining to organizational, occupational, and peer perceptions of older workers suggest that negative perceptions toward older workers may exist (Boerlijst et al., 1998; Ekerdt, 1998; Feldman, 2000; Morris & Venkatesh, 2000; Pekala, 2001; Sparks et al., 2001; Sterns, 1998). Also, Finkelstein et al. (1995) research found in-group bias regarding job stereotypes, job information, and job salience in that younger workers rated older workers less favorably overall. Additionally, Prenda (2001) explains that older workers tend to match their behaviors according to societal and organizational

images. Therefore, their self-perceptions regarding ageism (e.g., beliefs of absent-mindedness, being slow, forgetfulness) is believed to be justified undermining confidence and capabilities that relate to learning, training, and improving knowledge and skill level.

A one-way multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) (1 x 4) was used to measure all age categories, for all 12 survey items, for all 4 generation groups, regarding overall perceptions and work attitudes toward the older Veteran generation group. Hypothesis 1 was not supported because no significant difference was found in "all" generation groups regarding negative perceptions and work attitudes toward the older Veteran group. However, Generation Y and Veteran groups reached the specified .05 significance level, $F(3,136) = 2.84$, $p < .05$, and $F(3,136) = 4.92$, $p < .01$, respectively. Cohen's measure of effect reported for Generation Y significance was small, $d = .04$, indicating that the likelihood of detecting Generation Y negative perceptions and work attitudes toward the Veteran group is small. Also, Cohen's measure of effect reported for the Veteran group significance was small, $d = .08$, indicating that the likelihood of detecting Veteran negative perceptions and work attitudes toward Generation X is small. This statistical inferential analysis suggests that Generation Y perceptions and work attitudes, rated by all generation groups, are perceived to be significantly higher than Veteran perceptions and work attitudes as rated by all generation groups. Hence, Generation Y is perceived to hold more negative perceptions and work attitudes toward the Veteran group. And, Veteran perceptions and work attitudes, rated by all generation groups, are perceived to be significantly higher than Generation X perceptions and work attitudes as rated by all generation groups. Hence, Veteran employees are perceived to

hold more negative perceptions and work attitudes toward Generation X employees. Inferential statistics for this one-way MANOVA analysis measuring overall perceptions and work attitudes for each generation group are presented in Table 6.

Multiple one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) (1 x 4) were also performed yielding slightly different results from the comprehensive one-way MANOVA that fell more in line with what the researcher expected. Hypothesis 1 was still not supported because not "all" generation groups reported significance relating to negative perceptions and work attitudes toward the older Veteran group. However, the effect of the four generation groups specifically rating Generation Y reached the specified .05 significance level, $F(3,155) = 5.48, p < .01$. The proportion of variance accounted for by Cohen's measure of effect was small, $d = .08$, indicating that the likelihood of detecting Generation Y negative perceptions and work attitudes toward Baby Boomer and Veteran groups is small. Tukey tests showed that Generation Y perceptions and work attitudes, rated by all generation groups, are perceived to be significantly higher than Baby Boomer and Veteran group perceptions and work attitudes as rated by all generation groups. Inferential statistics for this one-way ANOVA measuring overall generation group perceptions and work attitudes of Generation Y analysis are presented in Table 7.

The effect of the four generation groups rating Generation X reached the specified .05 significance level, $F(3,145) = 3.03, p < .05$. The proportion of variance accounted for by Cohen's measure of effect was small, $d = .04$, indicating that the likelihood of detecting Generation X negative perceptions and work attitudes toward the Baby Boomer group is small. Tukey tests showed that Generation X perceptions and work attitudes,

Table 6

One-Way MANOVA Measuring Overall Perceptions and Work Attitudes of Each

Generation Group

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*
Between subjects				
Generation Y	3	252.52	84.17	2.84*
Generation X	3	117.82	39.27	1.75
Baby Boomer	3	91.98	30.66	1.15
Veteran	3	664.09	221.36	4.92*
Error				
Generation Y	136	4026.66	29.61	
Generation X	136	3060.06	22.50	
Baby Boomer	136	3642.27	26.78	
Veteran	136	6125.59	45.04	

*p < .05

Table 7

One-Way ANOVA Measuring Overall Generation Group Perceptions and Work

Attitudes of Generation Y

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*
Between subjects				
Generation Y	3	666.56	222.19	5.48*
Error	155	6282.9	40.54	

*p < .01

rated by all generation groups, were perceived to be significantly higher than Baby

Boomer perceptions and work attitudes as rated by all generation groups. Hence,

Generation X is perceived to hold more negative perceptions and work attitudes toward

the Baby Boomer generation group. Inferential statistics for this one-way ANOVA

analysis measuring overall generation group perceptions and work attitudes of Generation

X are presented in Table 8.

The effect of the four generation groups specifically rating the Baby Boomer

generation group did not reach significance, $F(3,151) = 1.65, p = .18$. This suggests that

Baby Boomer perceptions and work attitudes, rated all generation groups, were fairly

consistent. Inferential statistics for this one-way ANOVA analysis measuring overall

generation group perceptions and work attitudes of Baby Boomers are presented in Table

9.

The effect of the four generation groups specifically rating the Veteran generation

group reached the specified .05 significance level, $F(3,144) = 6.24, p < .01$. The

proportion of variance accounted for by Cohen's measure of effect was small, $d = .10$,

indicating that the likelihood of detecting Veteran negative perceptions and work

attitudes toward the other generation groups is small. Tukey tests showed that Veteran

perceptions and work attitudes, rated by all generation groups, are perceived to be

significantly higher than the perceptions and work attitudes of the other three generation

groups. Hence, the Veteran group is perceived to hold more negative perceptions and

work attitudes toward Generation Y, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. Inferential

statistics for this one-way ANOVA analysis measuring overall generation group

Table 8

One-Way ANOVA Measuring Overall Generation Group Perceptions and Work

Attitudes of Generation X

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*
Between subjects				
Generation X	3	443.25	147.75	3.03*
Error	145	7078.22	48.82	

*$p < .05$

Table 9

One-Way ANOVA Measuring Overall Generation Group Perceptions and Work

Attitudes of Baby Boomers

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*
Between subjects				
Baby Boomer Generation	3	146.35	48.78	1.65
Error	151	4478.34	29.66	

perceptions and work attitudes of the Veteran group are presented in Table 10.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 speculated that overall, employees within Generation Y will exhibit

significantly more positive perceptions and work attitudes as compared to Generation X,

Baby Boomer, and Veteran generation groups. Generation Y employees

are thought to hold many of the same positive job attribute values (e.g., hard working,

dedicated, cooperative, high team membership, organizational citizenship behavior) that

are held by Veteran employees. In addition, these young employees have greater

exposure to and acceptance of multiculturalism, are resilient to change, and possess high

multi-tasking capabilities due to early age and constant technology exposure (Elswick,

2000; Gomolski, 2001; Organ & Ryan, 1995; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

A one-way MANOVA (1 x 4) was used to measure all age categories, for all 12

survey items, for all 4 generation groups. No significant difference was found to exist

regarding Generation Y exhibiting more positive perceptions and work attitudes than the

other generation groups. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. In fact, descriptive

statistics, ranked by mean scores, report Generation Y as the third lowest rated generation

group. Generation groups are rated with highest mean score ranked as 1 and lowest mean

score ranked as 4 accordingly: 1) Baby Boomer, 2) Generation X, 3) Generation Y, and

4) Veteran group. Inferential statistics for this one-way MANOVA analysis are presented

in Table 5. Descriptive statistics for this generation group ranking are presented in Table

11.

Table 10

One-Way ANOVA Measuring Overall Generation Group Perceptions and Work

Attitudes of Veterans

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*
Between subjects				
Veteran Generation	3	862.20	287.40	6.24*
Error	144	6629.48	46.04	

*p < .01

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics for Generation Group Ranking

Generation Group	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Rank
Generation Y	159	42.75	6.63	3
Generation X	149	44.83	7.13	2
Baby Boomer	155	45.05	5.48	1
Veteran	148	41.59	7.14	4

Note. Rank based on *M* (1 = highest rank, 4 = lowest rank).

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 predicted that employees within Generation X will exhibit significantly more negative perceptions and work attitudes as compared to the Baby Boomer generation. Literature research elicits that Baby Boomers developed early positive work attitudes relating to teamwork whereas Generation X developed opposite teamwork attitudes possessing a sense of being a survivor and looking out for oneself. Also, Generation X employees are the most criticized generation largely due to their work ethic, attitude, attention span, and sense of corporate loyalty (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

A one-way MANOVA (1 x 4) was used to measure total scores generated in Generation X and Baby Boomer age categories, for all 12 survey items, for all 4 generation groups. Generation X was rated lower than the Baby Boomer group; however, significance was not found. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported. Inferential statistics for this one-way MANOVA analysis measuring perceptions and work attitudes of Generation X and Baby Boomer among all generations are presented in Table 12.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 speculated that employees within the older generation groups (Baby Boomer and Veteran) will significantly report less interest in training opportunities to develop new skills as compared to employees within the younger generation groups (Generation Y and Generation X). Literature research explains that as employees get older, there is some tendency not to participate in training and development activities as much as younger employees. Also, older employees established traditional linear careers

Table 12

One-Way MANOVA Measuring Perceptions and Work Attitudes of Generation X and

Baby Boomer Among All Generations

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*
Between subjects				
Generation X	3	249.95	83.32	1.75
Generation Y	3	91.38	30.46	1.08

whereas younger employees have shifted toward flexible, ever-changing careers and recognize the importance of continuing education and upgrade of knowledge and skills (Boerlijst et al., 1998; Mauer, 2001). A two-tailed independent t test was used to measure training interest by measuring item 1 as reported by all 4 generation groups. Training scores for Generation Y and Generation X employees were combined to define the "younger" generation group. Training scores for Baby Boomer and Veteran employees were combined to define the "older" generation group. With an alpha level of .05, the younger generation group reported statistically higher training interest than did the older generation group ($M = 3.93$), $t(169) = 2.96$, $p < .01$. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported. Descriptive statistics, ranked by mean scores, report generation group training interest with highest training interest mean score ranked as 1 and lowest training interest mean score ranked as 4 accordingly: 1) Generation X, 2) GenerationY, 3) Baby Boomer, and 4) Veteran. Inferential statistics for this two-tailed t test for independent samples measuring training interest between younger and older generation groups are presented in Table 13. Descriptive statistics ranking generation groups toward training interest are presented in Table 14.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 speculated the age range of employees considered to be "older employees" will significantly report age 50 and older. This age range definition of older employees is reported by several: a) the American Association of Retired Persons regarding corporate management attitudes toward older workers (Miller, Kaspin, & Schuster, 1990), b) litigation cases reported when the employee won the case was age 59

Table 13

Two-Tailed t Test for Independent Samples Measuring Training Interest Between

Younger and Older Generation Groups

Source	N	M	SD	df	t
Younger Generation	80	3.93	0.81	180	2.97*
Older Generation	102	3.57	0.80		

*p < .01.

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics Ranking Generation Groups Toward Training Interest

Generation Group	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Training Interest Rank
Generation Y	40	3.80	0.97	2
Generation X	40	4.05	0.60	1
Baby Boomer	72	3.61	0.72	3
Veteran	30	3.47	0.97	4

suggesting that courts do not perceive individuals under the age of 50 as being subject to age bias and that the effective protected age group would appear to be age 50 and over (Miller et al., 1990), and c) literature research regarding individual career development, engagement, and work attitude define older workers as any time following age 50 (Simpson et al., 2002).

A series of one-sample t tests (t test for each generation group) were used to define the overall old age range category by measuring item 15 as described by all four generation groups. The youngest generation group (Generation Y) did not report significance regarding the age definition of an old employee to be age 50 and older. The other three generation groups (Generation X, Baby Boomer, and Veteran) did report an alpha level of .05 significance describing the age definition of an old employee to be age 50 and older. Generation X reporting significant difference ($M = 53.65$), $t(39) = 3.72, p < .01$. Baby Boomers reporting significant difference ($M = 57.59$), $t(72) = 7.85, p < .01$. The Veteran group reporting significant difference ($M = 56.14$), $t(28) = 6.60, p < .01$. Thus, Hypothesis 5 was not supported for not all generation groups reported significance. Inferential statistics for these multiple one-sample t tests by generation group defining old employee age range to be age 50 and older are presented in Table 15.

Age range categories

Age range categories defining young, middle-aged, and old employees by each generation group were calculated (mean and standard deviation). Separate scores were generated for each generation group using low-end and high-end data reported for young, middle-aged, and old age range categories. No hypothesis was generated pertaining to

Table 15

One-Sample t Tests By Generation Group Defining Old Employee Age Range to be

Age 50 and Older

Source	N	M	SD	df	t
Generation Y	40	48.58	8.01	39	1.13
Generation X	40	53.65	6.20	39	3.72*
Baby Boomer	73	57.59	8.26	72	7.85*
Veteran	29	56.14	5.01	28	6.60*

Note. Test value for starting of old employee age = 50.

*p < .01.

these generation defined age range categories but the researcher was curious as to what they might be.

Generation Y reported the age range for young employees; low-end ($M = 16.60$), high-end ($M = 24.26$). The age range for middle-aged employees; low-end ($M = 27.70$),high-end ($M = 45.72$). And, the age range for old employees; low-end ($M = 48.58$), high-end ($M = 69.34$). Descriptive statistics for age range categories defining young, middle-aged, and old employees by Generation Y are presented in Table 16.

Generation X reported the age range for young employees; low-end ($M = 19.82$), high-end ($M = 29.73$). The age range for middle-aged employees; low-end ($M = 33.30$), high-end ($M = 51.49$). And, the age range for old employees; low-end ($M = 53.65$), high-end ($M = 66.59$). Descriptive statistics for this age range categories defining young, middle-aged, and old employees by Generation X are presented in Table 17.

Baby Boomer generation group reported the age range for young employees; low-end ($M = 19.47$), high-end ($M = 30.92$). The age range for middle-aged employees; low-end ($M = 35.05$), high-end ($M = 55.03$). And, the age range for old employees; low-end ($M = 57.59$), high-end ($M = 71.32$). Descriptive statistics for age range categories defining young, middle-aged, and old employees by the Baby Boomer generation are presented in Table 18.

Veteran generation group reported the age range for young employees; low-end ($M = 18.04$), high-end ($M = 30.18$). The age range for middle-aged employees; low-end ($M = 33.79$), high-end ($M = 54.24$). And, the age range for old employees; low-end ($M = 56.14$), high-end ($M = 74.71$). Descriptive statistics for age range categories defining

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics for Age Range Categories Defining Young, Middle-Aged, and Old Employees by Generation Y

Generation Y	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Young Range			
Low	40	16.60	2.10
High	39	24.26	4.51
Middle-Aged Range			
Low	40	27.70	4.35
High	39	45.72	8.58
Old Range			
Low	40	48.58	8.01
High	29	69.34	13.36

Table 17

Descriptive Statistics for Age Range Categories Defining Young, Middle-Aged, and

Old Employees by Generation X

Generation X	*N*	*M*	*SD*		
Young Range					
Low	34	19.82	2.14		
High	37	29.73	5.81		
Middle-Aged Range					
Low	40	33.30	6.63		
High	37	51.49	5.78		
Old Range					
Low	40	53.65	6.20		
High	17	66.59	5.92		

Table 18

Descriptive Statistics for Age Range Categories Defining Young, Middle-Aged, and

Old Employees by Baby Boomers

Baby Boomer	N	M	SD
Young Range			
Low	64	19.47	2.64
High	72	30.92	6.46
Middle-Aged Range			
Low	73	35.05	6.04
High	72	55.03	7.84
Old Range			
Low	73	57.59	8.26
High	37	71.32	8.66

young, middle-aged, and old employees by the Veteran group are presented in Table 19.

Table 19

Descriptive Statistics for Age Range Categories Defining Young, Middle-Aged, and

Old Employees by Veteran

Veteran	N	M	SD
Young Range			
Low	26	18.04	4.50
High	28	30.18	4.39
Middle-Aged Range			
Low	29	33.79	5.17
High	29	54.24	4.47
Old Range			
Low	29	56.14	5.01
High	14	74.71	9.09

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine employee perceptions and work attitudes toward older workers among all four generation groups. An overview of the literature regarding older employees in the workplace suggests that older workers do face more work barriers as compared to employees within younger generation groups. Also, literature research suggests that there are misunderstandings and resentment between older, not so old, and younger employees in the workplace largely based upon economics, demographics, and worldviews (Boerlijst, Munnichs, & vander Heijden, 1998; Ekerdt, 1998; Feldman, 2000; Filipezak, Raines, & Zemke, 2000; Finkelstein, Burke, and Raju, 1995; Jamieson & O'Mara, 1991; Morris & Venkatesh, 2000; Pekala, 2001; Prenda, 2001; Sparks, Faragher, & Cooper, 2001; Sterns, 1998). Organizations need to assess their workforce to understand what work barriers (perceptions and attitudes) exist; thus, providing guidelines as to what specific program interventions are needed. The question of interest to the researcher was what particular perceptions and attitudes existed toward older workers and did they exist among all generations or just some of the generations?

Item analysis. Item analysis revealed strengths and weaknesses perceived by all generation groups toward specific generations. Most generations received high dimension ratings on the majority of perception and work attitude behaviors. A few exceptions did exist: a) Generation Y rated Veteran employees low are four behavior dimensions (training, constant change, fast pace, and technology), b) Generation X rated Generation Y low on two (sensitive to others and loyalty) and the Veteran group low on five

behavior dimensions (training, constant change, fast pace, and flexibility, and technology), c) Baby Boomers rated Generation Y low on four (sensitivity to others, conscientiousness, dependability, and loyalty) and the Veteran group low on two behavior dimensions (conscientiousness and constant change), and d) the Veteran group rated Generation Y low on four behavior dimensions (sensitive to others, conscientiousness, dependability, and loyalty) and their own peer group low on one behavior dimension (conscientiousness).

In-group bias would most likely explain why Generation Y rated both younger generation groups higher than older generation groups. Also, in-group bias would explain why Generation X and Baby Boomers rated their own peer group highest. This supports the meta-analysis study performed by Finkelstein et al. (1995) in the area of age discrimination, specifically addressing in-group bias, job information, salience, and job stereotype. Their research results revealed that younger workers tend to discriminate against older workers when: a) younger workers rated older workers, b) there was no job-relevant information provided about the older worker, and c) raters were simultaneously rating both younger and older workers. On average, in-group bias was present among younger people rating younger workers higher than older workers in having more job qualifications, in having greater development potential, and as being more physically qualified for demanding jobs.

Both younger generation groups (Generation Y and Generation X) rated the oldest generation group (Veteran) low on 4 dimensions; training, constant change, fast pace, and technology. This is not surprising for these dimensions are characterized as younger

worker associations as supported by literature research. The workplace theme that has emerged describes the need of human qualities and activities that are more often associated to younger than older workers (i.e., adaptability, creativity, renewal, fast pace). Thus, these employee dimensions place a premium upon younger workers (Boerlijst et al., 1998; Schooler et al., 1998; Yeatts et al., 2000). Also, both younger generations recognize that Veteran employees do not possess strong technology skills. Literature research suggests one intervention method that might help to decrease age-related stereotypes is reverse mentoring. This would entail young workers mentoring older workers in technology knowledge and skills. A two-way interaction of learning can occur between younger and older generations without age playing an intervening role. For example, pairing a less technically-savvy older worker with a younger computer whiz can teach the older worker about technology tools. In return, the older worker can provide wisdom based upon actual experience gained throughout their working years that would benefit the younger savvy worker (Marshall, 1998; Watkins, 1999).

Generation Y received low scores on two common dimensions (sensitive to others and loyalty) by the other three generation groups. This could suggest that Generation X, Baby Boomer, and Veteran employees have witnessed low organizational citizenship behavior demonstrated by the youngest generation group employees. This would support literature research explaining that Generation Y employees will demonstrate high organizational citizenship behavior but only after they witness appropriate and continuous role-modeling behavior exemplified by employees in leadership positions (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Both Baby Boomer and Veteran employees rated the Veteran employees low on conscientiousness. This low rating is surprising for it contradicts literature research regarding Veteran employee work values and attitudes (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000). One possible explanation may be that some Veteran employees have become emotionally disengaged in their work. Several factors could explain this low rating score of Veteran conscientiousness. The fact that Veteran employees are very close to retirement could elicit work behavior of "putting in their time" until they can exit the workforce. Another possible explanation may be that some Veteran employees have experienced work barriers (e.g., age discrimination) and as a result low motivation and work commitment occur.

Veteran item analysis revealed Veteran employees rating Generation Y employees low on several dimensions; sensitive to others, conscientiousness, dependability, and loyalty. These low dimension ratings may be explained by the fact that Generation Y employees are just beginning to emerge into the workforce on a full-time basis. Their work, managing, and leadership styles are in initial development stages. Veteran employees may interpret this as demonstrating low conscientiousness, dependability, and loyalty where in fact it may be due to Generation Y employees trying to figure out how to navigate in the corporate work world.

Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 1 proposed that there would be negative perceptions and work attitudes toward the older Veteran generation as compared to Generation Y, Generation X, and Baby Boomer generation groups. Results of this analysis were definitely in the appropriate direction to support this hypothesis; however, not "all"

generation groups reported significance. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. The one-way MANOVA statistical analysis did report significance in the perceptions and work attitudes between the youngest generation group (Generation Y) and the oldest generation group (Veteran). Also, the one-way MANOVA statistical analysis reported significance in the perceptions and work attitudes between the oldest generation group (Veteran) and Generation X. Out of curiosity, the researcher performed a one-way ANOVA statistical analysis for each generation group. Significant results were reported in some of the generation groups. Overall perceptions and work attitudes thought to be held by Generation Y employees reported significant difference than those perceptions and work attitudes held by the older generation groups (Baby Boomer and Veteran). Overall perceptions and work attitudes thought to be held by Generation X employees reported significant difference than those perceptions and work attitudes held by the Baby Boomer employees. And, overall perceptions and work attitudes thought to be held by Veteran employees reported significant difference than those perceptions and work attitudes held by the other three generation groups; Generation Y, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. The separate one-way ANOVA analyses did report significance in more generation groups than what was found in the one-way MANOVA analysis. The reason is that the separate one-way ANOVA analysis relies on its own N. The one-way MANOVA uses a common N in that only those data points that all participants share were included in the analysis and those participants with a missing data point were excluded. The MANOVA statistical analysis is more comprehensive and therefore carries greater statistical creditability.

The fact that Generation Y is just beginning to emerge into the workforce and have not had sufficient opportunities to interact with the oldest generation group may explain why significance was reported between the youngest Generation Y generation group and the oldest Veteran generation group. Conversely, this fact may also hold true for the oldest Veteran generation group interacting with the youngest Generation Y group in that they have not had sufficient work opportunities to interact with the youngest Generation Y group. Consequently, Generation Y and Veteran generation groups could easily develop and maintain inaccurate perceptions and work attitudes toward each other. This finding would support literature research explaining that stereotypical beliefs and discriminatory attitudes may be related to frequency of contact. Meaning, employees who have more opportunities to interact with one another in the workplace become familiar and understand each other's work styles thus reducing negative beliefs and attitudes (Chiu, Chan, Snape, & Redman, 2001; Forte & Hansvick, 1999).

The Veteran generation group reporting significance toward Generation X would lead one to speculate that differences in generation characteristics (i.e., values, work attitudes, team membership, and leadership/managing style) are setting these two generation groups apart. Many detrimental outcomes can result from this generational misunderstanding (e.g., decline in work performance). This demonstrates why it is essential for organizations to identify and educate employees regarding generational characteristics (Buhler, 1993).

Hypothesis 1 statistical analysis suggested work barriers between younger and older generation groups. Older employees most likely face age-related work stereotypes

but to what degree would depend on various factors. For example, age discrimination may be more prevalent in technology-based industries (i.e., software development organizations) due to the required knowledge, skills, and abilities (e.g., fast work pace, constant change, adaptability, creativity, continued learning) that are most often associated with younger employees (Forte & Hansvick, 1999; Morris & Venkatesh, 2000; Yeatts et al., 2000).

Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 2 relates to Generation Y exhibiting more positive perceptions and work attitudes as compared to Generation X, Baby Boomer, and Veteran generation groups. The one-way MANOVA statistical results did not support this hypothesis. In fact, Generation Y was surprisingly ranked the third lowest generation group, below Baby Boomer and Generation X but above the Veteran generation group. This hypothesis was based upon literature research positing those human qualities and activities so highly valued in today's technology intensive production era (i.e., high technology based knowledge, skills, and abilities) that are held by Generation Y employees. The defining events that occurred during Generation Y formative years played a critical role in the development of such valued work attributes. For example, Generation Y grew up with devoted parents making high sacrifices to ensure their needs were met; thus, Generation Y employees tend to have optimistic outlook and enthusiasm for the future based upon a strong dependency on technology. Generation Y employees have had much more exposure to and have greater acceptance of multiculturalism and as a result are the most tolerant of all the generations. Also, Generation Y employees place high values on teams, achievement, diversity, cooperation, and energy. They also

demonstrate high organizational citizenship behavior and are the best educated generation

and recognize the importance of continuing education in order to keep up with rapidly

changing technology (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Organ & Ryan, 1995; Pekala,

2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Since Generation Y employees are just beginning to emerge into the workforce on

a full-time basis; their work, managing, and leadership styles are just starting to be

developed. This fact most likely contributed to this hypothesis not being supported

because their contributions have not yet been fully recognized. Based upon literature

research, future speculations could be made regarding overall employee perceptions and

work attitudes toward Generation Y employees. One future speculation would be that as

Generation Y employees mature and become engaged into the corporate work world;

their work attributes will most definitely be recognized and valued. Hence, Generation Y

employees will exhibit more positive perceptions and work attributes as compared to

Generation X employees.

Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 3 statistical analyses did not report significant findings

regarding employees within Generation X exhibiting more negative perceptions and work

attitudes as compared to the Baby Boomer generation. However, results of this analysis

were leaning in the appropriate direction to support this hypothesis reporting an overall

higher Baby Boomer mean score ($M = 44.72$) than the overall Generation X mean score

($M = 44.48$). Literature research explains that Generation X employees have been

exposed to team participation and involvement through Boomer supervision. Although

Generation Xers tend to be fair, competent, honest, and straightforward; their tactfulness

is often absent when delivering information or in working with others (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000). Literature research elicits that Generation X employees were the most attention deprived and neglected children among the generation groups; consequently, they are the most criticized generation largely due to their work ethic, attitude, attention span, and sense of corporate loyalty (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000). Largely, the defining events that occurred during Generation X formative years played a huge role in developing and influencing their perceptions and attitudes. As a result, Gen Xers developed a sense of being a survivor and looking out for oneself. The mere fact of the split family environment plus moms starting to work on a full-time basis developed generational values of self-reliance and independence which tends to downplay the importance of becoming an involved team member, a work attribute so highly valued in today's work environment. Generation X employees value non-traditional values relating to work time. For example, they may show up late to work and then leave early but to them, as long as they get the work done it should not matter where and when they do it. This work attitude is difficult for other generation employees to accept, let alone respect (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000). Literature research elicits information that allows interpretations to be formed in that the perspective from which Generation X employees view the world are of a more negative nature than those held by Baby Boomer employees. Although significance was not found, Hypothesis 3 statistical results were leaning in the appropriate direction of supporting this literature research.

Hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 4 related to employees within the older generation groups (Baby Boomer and Veteran) reporting less interest in training opportunities to develop new skills as compared to the younger generation groups (Generation Y and Generation X). The statistical results from a two-tailed independent *t* test measuring training interest between younger and older generation groups reported significant results. Hence, Hypothesis 4 was supported. Also, descriptive statistics ranking generation groups toward training interest illustrate the fact that younger generations do take more interest in training opportunities than the older generation groups. Generation X reports the highest interest in training followed by Generation Y, Baby Boomers, and Veteran generation groups.

Hypothesis 4 significant findings support literature research explaining that as employees get older there is some tendency not to participate in training and development activities as much as younger employees (Boerlijst et al., 1998; Mauer, 2001). The younger generation groups (Generation Y and Generation X) recognize the value of learning new skills and understand the constant flux of the changing work environment. These younger generation groups also recognize career advancement comes with knowledge, skills, and generating fast and effective outcomes. The older generation groups (Baby Boomer and Veteran) grew up in the work world of loyalty and commitment; meaning, their work mentality was once they secured a job with an organization they were committed to staying throughout their career with advancement being credited with seniority. Consequently, the importance of continued education and skill development is not recognized as critical career initiatives as it is in the younger

generation groups. Hoyer's (1998) literature research explained that age-related

differences can definitely be found in the amount and style of training needed when

introducing new work processes or responsibilities. Older workers do tend to learn at a

slower pace and may not have the familiarity or comfort level in new technology usage;

thus, there are tendencies to shy away from training opportunities that relate to greater

technology exposure. Also, the manner in which training is provided to older workers

play a big role in their comfort level regarding learning new skills. Allowing older

workers to learn together with their age peer group is helpful. This is especially true in

learning new tasks and in using new technologies. Younger workers respond better to

visual and hands-on-learning while older workers respond better reading and witnessing

demonstrations (Grossman, 2003; Yeatts, Folts, & Knapp, 2000). High anxiety levels

about new technologies may interfere with new learning more for older adults than for

younger adults. Therefore, it would be beneficial to provide opportunities for technology

familiarization prior to teaching the specific, more complex details regarding a new

information technology system.

Hypothesis 5. Significance was not found for Hypothesis 5 reporting the age

range of employees to be considered "older employees" at age 50 and older. The mean

age score regarding old worker age definition as reported by youngest to oldest

generation group increased respectively until the oldest Veteran generation group was

reached where they reported a younger age than the Baby Boomer group. For example,

the mean age score reported by Generation Y defined old employees ($M = 48.58$); the

mean age score reported by Generation X defined old employees ($M = 53.65$); the mean

age score reported by the Baby Boomer group defined old employees (M = 57.59); and

the mean age score reported by the Veteran group defined old employees (M = 56.14).

High variability regarding the definition of old employees was recognized by all

generation groups. This fact supports literature research explaining that many definitions

do exist defining "older worker" and therefore cannot be empirically defined. For

example, society labels employees who stop work at age 65 to be older workers. Older

employee categories vary across companies because it is a gradual process and there is no

dividing line between a middle-aged and old employee. Organizations offering voluntary

or mandate early retirement label older workers at a younger age. Also, certain

professions (i.e., military) will label employees old workers at a younger age due to

retirement opportunities. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act defines employees'

ages 40 to 69 as older workers whereas in federal jobs there is no upper age limit. The

American Association for Retired Persons report age 50 and older as the older worker

definition regarding corporate management attitudes. And, litigation cases where the

average age of the complaint when the employee won was 59 suggesting that courts do

not perceive individuals under the age of 50 as being subject to age bias and that the

effective protected age group would appear to be age 50 and over (Boerlijst et al., 1998;

Faley et al., 1984; Miller et al., 1990; Simpson et al., 2002).

Age range categories. Age range categories of young, middle-aged, and old

defined by each generation group revealed interesting information. Generation Y reported

high variability regarding the high-end of the old age range category as compared to other

Generation Y age range variance scores. Also, Generation Y surprisingly reports age 28

to be the beginning of middle-age. Generation Y defines a young employee age range to be ages 17 to 24. The high-end of the young age range category (age 24) closely corresponds to Generation Y group definition; any individual born after 1978, which is any individual age 24 years of age and younger. The middle-aged range defined by Generation Y would encompass some employees from Generation X and Baby Boomer generation groups. And, the old age range defined by Generation Y would encompass some employees from both Baby Boomer and Veteran generation groups.

Generation X does not report much variance in reporting low-end and high-end age range categories. Young, middle-aged, and old age range categories defined by Generation X do not correspond to any of the defined generation groups (Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomer, and Veteran). Generation X defines the young employee age range to be ages 20 to 30 which would include employees within Generation Y and some employees within Generation X. Generation X defines the middle-aged age range to be ages 33 to 51 which would include some employees within both Generation X and Baby Boomer generation groups. And, Generation X defines the old employee age range to be ages 54 to 67 which would include some employees within both the Baby Boomer and Veteran generation groups.

The Baby Boomer generation group does not report much variance in reporting low-end and high-end age range categories. Young, middle-aged, and old age range categories defined by Baby Boomers do not correspond to any of the defined generation groups (Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomer, and Veteran). Baby Boomers define the young employee age range to be ages 19 to 31 which would include employees within

Generation Y and some from Generation X. Baby Boomers define the middle-aged age range to be ages 35 to 55 which closely corresponds to the Baby Boomer generation group definition. And, Baby Boomers define the old employee age range to be ages 56 to 71 which closely corresponds to the Veteran generation group definition.

The Veteran generation group does not report much variance in reporting low-end and high-end age range categories. Young, middle-aged, and old age range categories defined by the Veteran generation group do not correspond to any of the defined generation groups (Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomer, and Veteran). The Veteran group defines the young employee age range to be ages 18 to 30 which would include employees within Generation Y and some from Generation X. The Veteran group defines the middle-aged age range to be ages 34 to 54 which would include some employees within both Generation X and Baby Boomer generation groups. And, the Veteran group defines old employee age range to be ages 56 to 75 which closely corresponds to the Veteran generation definition.

Limitations of the study. Limitations of this study should be directed toward the manner in which some survey responses were provided. In some surveys, participants supplied responses only for their particular generation and did not provide responses for the other three generation groups. In these situations, blank responses were coded for items pertaining to the other generation groups. Perhaps survey instructions were not explicit enough and maybe an item response example should have been provided. This type of survey response was not encountered in the pilot study; hence, survey instructions were thought to be complete.

In this research study, the N of Generation Y (40), Generation X (40), and

Veteran (30) employees were not as large as the N of Baby Boomers (73). Consequently,

generalizations made by Generation Y, Generation X, and Veteran employees may be

misleading. The fact that the N of the Baby Boomer generation group is larger than any

of the other generation groups coincides with literature research in that the Baby

Boomers represent the largest generational group in today's workforce. Hence, Baby

Boomers have tremendous influence in organizations mainly due to the large employee

number they represent (Elswick, 2000; Gomolski, 2001; Pekala, 2001; Zemke et al.,

2000).

The geography sample of survey participants may also be a limitation of this

study. All participants from Generation Y, Generation X, and Baby Boomer generation

groups were white-collar workers. Is it unknown whether Veteran participants were

white-collar or blue-collar employees? It would have been interesting to have captured

the type of industry survey participants had based their employee perceptions and work

attitudes from. Future research consideration should be performed using participants from

known white-collar and blue-collar organizations to gain an understanding how employee

perceptions and work attitudes toward older workers differ between the two industry

types. Also, it would be helpful to identify the industry type where training effort could

be directed in order to help reduce age-related stereotypes.

Awareness of tolerance of other ages may also be related to the type of industry

employees work in. Overall, white-collar employees are thought to hold more education

than blue-collar employees. Hence, one would speculate that white-collar employees

would demonstrate greater awareness and tolerance toward other employees with differing perceptions and work attitudes. Also, the fact that some survey participants were from Human Resource Departments may have presented altered results. As a result of their job, human resource employees are exposed to diversity issues and have most likely received diversity training in order to handle these types of human resource issues. Additionally, Generation Y participants were a representative sample from an advanced educational institution. Hopefully, these student participants have been exposed to information regarding diversity issues and are more open and accepting of differing employee attitudes and work styles. As a result, more positive responses may have been received from these participants toward other generation groups and could have had an overall impact on survey outcome.

Implications. Implications of the aging workforce will most likely influence workplace cultures and values. As the labor pool changes and grows older, organizations will need to devote more attention toward cultivating work environments that will enhance the work attitudes of their older employees. Expected changes in the labor force coupled with the damaging societal myths and stereotypes of older people may leave employers unprepared for new realities (Prenda, 2001). The rapidly changing nature of the workplace will place a new importance in how to best match people with technology. Organizations that are serious about maintaining high levels of skill for both younger and older workers may need to consider tailoring their training techniques, or use multiple techniques.

The nature of an employee's relationship with his/her organization will most likely be demonstrated through withdrawal behaviors (i.e., decisions to retire, absence, punctuality, turnover). Early retirement counseling programs, treatment of older workers, training policies, reward systems, and supervisory practices all have significant effects on the relationships between aging and work outcomes. Understanding age-related changes in work performance is important because it helps to provide a base for employers to utilize the strengths of all workers (Schaie & Schooler, 1998). As the workforce ages and mandatory retirement is eliminated, continued research regarding age-related perceptions and attitudes within the workplace will be critical for organizations to understand. Future research should be considered examining blue-collar employee perceptions and work attitudes toward older workers. Additionally, specific industries should be examined regarding employee perceptions and work attitudes toward older workers. If certain industries are more likely to experience age discrimination, such knowledge would allow practitioners to better communicate and educate organizations regarding the value of training programs that would address issues and implement policies to eliminate older employee work barriers.

In summary, there is a growing realization that multigenerational misunderstanding in the workplace is growing and problematic. It is a problem based in economics, demographics, and world views that must be confronted by organizations in order to be solved. Life for every generation has become nonlinear, unpredictable, and unchartable for no job is safe and no career assured of constancy. With times of uncertainty come work environments filled with high tension where employees are

conditioned into looking out for oneself in order to remain an employed survivor.

Ironically, the nature of an employee's work is becoming and often depends on and

demands collaboration and compromise. In order for this to occur, both employees and

organizations must overcome and understand generational differences (Zemke et al.,

2000). In essence, multigenerational understanding is imperative in today's workplace.

"To be effective with other human beings, we must know them as individuals—their

unique background, personality, preferences, and style" (Zemke et al., 2000, p. 14).

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APPENDIX A

Pilot Study Information Memo

To: Psychology Department Instructors,
        Graduate Teaching Assistants, and
        Graduate Research Assistants

From: Susan Hoffman, ESU I/O Psychology Graduate Student

Date: February 18, 2004

Subject: Thesis Pilot Study

I am conducting a pilot study for my thesis, "Employee Perceptions and Work Attitudes Toward Older Workers: A Generation Examination." I have attached a survey packet (cover letter and survey questionnaire) to this memo that I need your help with. I would really appreciate your feedback (see specific questions below) regarding your assessment and suggestions relating to the survey cover letter and questionnaire. Please take the survey and provide your feedback on a separate blank page, attach it to this survey packet, and drop it off in the manila folder labeled "Employee Generations" located in the Psychology Department. Please complete this by February 27, 2004. Thank you very much for your help.

Survey Cover Letter
    1. Are the instructions understandable and clear?
    2. Is there any wording that might be misunderstood?
    3. What is your overall assessment/feeling regarding the cover letter?
    4. << please provide anything else you would like to comment on >>

Survey Questionnaire
    1. Is the survey understandable?
    2. Is there any wording that might be misunderstood?
    3. Approximately how long did it take you to fill out the survey?
    4. What is your overall assessment/feelings regarding this survey?
    5. << please provide anything else you would like to comment on >>

APPENDIX B

Survey Announcement

Susan Hoffman, a graduate student in the Industrial/Organizational Psychology program at ESU, is conducting a survey, entitled "Employee Generations in the Workplace" to fulfill her graduate degree requirements. All information and responses on the survey will be strictly confidential.

Your department has been selected to receive the survey. I would like to request your permission to allow Ms. Hoffman to conduct the survey with your employees. Susan would deliver the surveys to a designated survey contact person within your department with specific instructions for completion and return. The following employees in your department should receive the survey: (list department employee names)

Please let me know if Ms. Hoffman will be allowed to survey your employees and who the designated survey contact person would be. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

APPENDIX C

Older Worker Program Endorsement Letter

March 20, 2004

Dear "Older Worker" Employee and Employer:

I am a graduate student in the Industrial/Organizational Psychology program at Emporia State University and am working to fulfill my final graduate thesis requirement. As part of my thesis study, I need to gather data from older workers. I have contacted Toni Wellshear, KSDHR Older Worker Program Coordinator, to request assistance in obtaining names of employed older workers. Your name was submitted as a participant or employer of the KSDHR Older Kansas Employment Program. I would greatly appreciate it if you would take approximately 20 minutes to complete the enclosed survey and return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope by March 26, 2004. All survey responses will remain confidential.

After all survey responses are returned and assessed, I will provide my survey results to the Older Worker Taskforce. I truly appreciate your help with my thesis by promptly completing the enclosed survey.

Thank you for your time and helpful information.

Sincerely,

Susan J. Hoffman
2339 SE Oakwood Drive
Topeka, KS 66605

Enclosures: Survey and envelope

APPENDIX D

Survey Cover Letter

EMPLOYEE GENERATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

Employees of different ages may bring different ways of working, talking, and thinking into the workplace. To help organizations gain an understanding of the multigenerational perspectives that now exist within the workforce, age related perceptions and attitudes need to be identified. This survey is intended to increase the understanding of generation age related differences in the workplace.

YOUR OPINIONS

On the following pages, you will find a questionnaire with descriptions of how employees behave in the workplace. I would like to know the extent to which you feel these descriptions are applicable to employees within the age range groupings:

- 24 years of age or younger
- 25-38-years old
- 39-57 years old
- 58 years of age or older

You should make judgments about the behavior of others in the workplace based on **your own experience**. Each question asks you to record your response by circling a number on a five-point rating scale which reads:

ALWAYS (5)   OFTEN (4)   SOMETIMES (3)   RARELY (2)   NEVER (1)

Once you have completed the questionnaire, place it in the provided envelope labelled "Employee Generations." All survey responses are confidential with no name association and individual results will not be reported but rather summarized for group reporting.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION!

Survey Contact: Susan_Hoffman@hotmail.com

APPENDIX E

Employee Generations in the Workplace Survey

Employee Generations in the Workplace

SECTION 1: In the generation table below, please place an 'X' in the generation group you belong to. To determine this, find your age in the generation table that identifies the age range of that particular generation. For example, if your age is 42 then place an 'X' in the "Baby Boomer" column.

Generation Y (24 years of age or younger)	Generation X (25-38 years old)	Baby Boomer (39-57 years old)	Veteran (58 years of age or older)

Section 2: For each question below (1 - 12), please circle a number on the five-point rating scale as it applies to each age range grouping; 24 years of age or younger, 25-38 years old, 39-57 years old, and 58 years of age or older. Use your own experience as the basis for your responses.

■■

When you are working/interacting with other employees within your organization, how often do you find them:

		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. INTERESTED IN TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP NEW SKILLS	24 years of age or younger	5	4	3	2	1
	25-38 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	39-57 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	58 years of age or older	5	4	3	2	1
2. SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS	24 years of age or younger	5	4	3	2	1
	25-38 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	39-57 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	58 years of age or older	5	4	3	2	1
3. ABLE TO COPE WITH CONSTANT CHANGE, UNCERTAINTY, AND PRESSURE	24 years of age or younger	5	4	3	2	1
	25-38 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	39-57 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	58 years of age or older	5	4	3	2	1
4. ABLE TO WORK WITH DIFFERENT GENDERS, ETHNIC GROUPS, AND AGE GROUPS	24 years of age or younger	5	4	3	2	1
	25-38 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	39-57 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	58 years of age or older	5	4	3	2	1

When you are working/interacting with other employees within your organization, how often do you find them:

		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
5. EFFECTIVELY RELATING AND COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS	24 years of age or younger	5	4	3	2	1
	25-38 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	39-57 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	58 years of age or older	5	4	3	2	1
6. CONSCIENTIOUS (self guidance between right/wrong actions/ behaviours)	24 years of age or younger	5	4	3	2	1
	25-38 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	39-57 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	58 years of age or older	5	4	3	2	1
7. DEPENDABLE	24 years of age or younger	5	4	3	2	1
	25-38 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	39-57 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	58 years of age or older	5	4	3	2	1
8. DEMONSTRATING ORGANIZATION LOYALTY	24 years of age or younger	5	4	3	2	1
	25-38 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	39-57 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	58 years of age or older	5	4	3	2	1
9. DEMONSTRATING TEAM PLAYER QUALITIES	24 years of age or younger	5	4	3	2	1
	25-38 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	39-57 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	58 years of age or older	5	4	3	2	1
10. EFFECTIVELY WORKING IN A FAST PACE ENVIRONMENT	24 years of age or younger	5	4	3	2	1
	25-38 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	39-57 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	58 years of age or older	5	4	3	2	1
11. FLEXIBLE	24 years of age or younger	5	4	3	2	1
	25-38 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	39-57 years old	5	4	3	2	1
	58 years of age or older	5	4	3	2	1

When you are working/interacting with other employees within your organization, how often do you find them:

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
12. ABLE TO ACCEPT NEW TECHNOLOGY (e.g., computers, cell phones, pagers, fax machines, email and voice mail systems, software packages) 24 years of age or younger	5	4	3	2	1
25-38 years old	5	4	3	2	1
39-57 years old	5	4	3	2	1
58 years of age or older	5	4	3	2	1

SECTION 3: For each question below (13-15), please provide an age range that includes both a beginning and an ending age. For example, an answer of 35 – 44 would indicate the beginning age range of 35 years old and an ending age range of 44 years old.

13. When you think of "young" employees, what age range do you have in mind?	
14. When you think of "middle-aged" employees, what age range do you have in mind?	
15. When you think of "old" employees, what age range do you have in mind?	

THANK YOU !

APPENDIX F

Proposal for Human Subjects Research

February 17, 2004

Susan Hoffman
2339 SE Oakwood Dr.
Topeka, KS 66605

Dear Ms. Hoffman:

Your application for approval to use human subjects, entitled "Employee Perceptions and Work Attitudes Toward Older Workers: A Generation Examination," has been reviewed. I am pleased to inform you that your application was approved and you may begin your research as outlined in your application materials.

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I wish you success with your research project. If I can help you in any way, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Bill Stinson, Chair
Institutional Review Board for Treatment
  of Human Subjects

pf

cc: Brian Schrader

APPENDIX G

Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Study Name: Employee Generations

Faculty Researcher(s): Dr. Brian Schrader

Student Researcher(s): Susan Hoffman

Telephone Number(s): (785) 233-9077

e-mail(s): Susan_Hoffman@hotmail.com

The Department of Psychology and Special Education at Emporia State University supports the practice of protection for people participating in research and related activities. This study has been reviewed to determine that it poses little or no risk of harm to you. Any information obtained from you will be kept strictly confidential. Although you may be assigned an arbitrary participant number to assist in data collection, we assure you that neither your name nor participant number will be associated in any way with any reportable results. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, and that if you do withdraw from the study, you may do so without penalty.

You will be asked to fill out a survey that includes three sections: 1) Section 1, ask for you to identify your generation group, 2) Section 2, circle the desired number that best describes the behavior of others in the workplace based upon your own experience, and 3) Section 3, general fill-in-the blank questions. Approximately thirty minutes will be required to complete this research experiment. You are not to talk or to leave the room while this experiment is being conducted. Although participation in this study is not expected to cause any discomfort, if you should start to feel uncomfortable or ill during the course of this experiment, it is permissible to leave the room at that time.

You will gain no benefits by participating in this study other than educational (or credit if it is offered by your instructor), and other options are available from your instructor. The researcher is obligated to tell you as much as you care to know about the study after your part in the study are complete.

All persons who take part in this study must sign this consent form. In addition, persons under the age of 18 also must include the signature of a parent or legal guardian. Your signature in the space provided indicates that you have been informed of your rights as a participant, and you have agreed to volunteer on that basis.

"I have read the above statement and have been fully advised of the procedures to be used in this project. I have been given sufficient opportunity to ask any questions I had concerning the procedures and possible risks involved. I understand the potential risks involved and I assume them voluntarily. I likewise understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without being subjected to reproach."

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

For persons under the age of 18:
"With my signature, I affirm that I have read and understand my child's rights and the study described on the other side of this page, and voluntarily agree to allow my child (or legal guardian) to participate in this research study."

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if participant is a minor)   Date

APPENDIX H

Debriefing Statement

Employee Generations

Debriefing Statement

Spring 2004

Thank you for participating in this research experiment. The purpose of this study was to gather information regarding the perceptions and work attitudes toward older workers in the workplace among different generation groups. Based upon results of previous research (Filipezak, Raines, & Zemke, 2000; Jamieson & O'Mara, 1991), it was hypothesized that employee's will exhibit significantly negative perceptions and work attitudes toward workers in the older generation group. The data you provided will be analyzed to determine whether or not it supports my hypothesis. Please do not share this research information with anyone else so that others who also participant in this research study will not be biased in any way.

If future questions develop or you would like more information about this study, please contact Susan Hoffman, email address: Susan_Hoffman@hotmail.com. Faculty research supervisor; Dr. Brian Schrader, Department of Psychology & Special Education.

Again, thank you for participating in this research experiment. Your time and cooperation were gratefully appreciated.

I, Susan J. Hoffman, hereby submit this thesis/report to Emporia State University as partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree. I agree that the Library of the University may make it available to use in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I further agree that quoting, photocopying, or other reproduction of this document is allowed for private study, scholarship (including teaching) and research purposes of a nonprofit nature. No copying which involved potential financial gain will be allowed without written permission of the author.

_____
Signature of Author

_____
Date

Employee Perceptions and Work Attitudes Toward Older Workers: A Generation Examination
_____
Title of Thesis

_____
Signature of Graduate Office Staff

8-23-04
_____
Date Received