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THE IMPACT OF GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES ON ORGANIZATIONAL
RELATIONSHIPS: A COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

by

Mecca M. Salahuddin, B.A., M.S.

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

December 2013

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2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The sun rises among us
A new day is here to stay
Wait, the sun has set . . .

All praises due to Allah for guiding me through this doctoral journey. During the five years of this journey, I began to label it affectionately as a triathlon due to its three major components: coursework, qualifying exam, and dissertation writing. As I entered the home stretch of my dissertation writing, I reflected on each component and the many individuals who played a key role in helping me to get to the finish line. First, I would like to thank my family. The support I have received from my parents, siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews has been tremendous and graciously received. To my mother, Estella Salahuddin, and father, Muhammad Salahuddin, Sr. thank you for bringing me into a world where anything is possible with focus and determination and supporting me through it. To my five siblings: Karen Anthony, Muhammad Salahuddin, Jr., Elijah Salahuddin, Safiyyah Wyatt, and Sultan Salahuddin thank you for providing your baby sister the right amount of encouragement, space, time, and laughter that gave me the courage and motivation to see this journey through to completion.

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. . . and still the sun will rise

DEDICATION

“Homo sum, humani nil a me alienum puto”

“I am a human being; nothing human can be alien to me”

If a human being did it, I have in me all the components that are in him or in her.

I intend to use my energies constructively as opposed to destructively.

~ Quoted by Maya Angelou, Oprah Winfrey’s Masters Class

To the next generation of dreamers, explorers, creators, and educators, continue to have the energies to do the great work of those who have left you a path.

THE IMPACT OF GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES ON ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS: A COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

Mecca Maha Salahuddin

University of the Incarnate Word, 2013

The purpose of this mixed methods sequential explanatory study was to investigate the relationship between an individual's generation and the communication styles used with other generations, and explore the influence of intergenerational communication styles on organizational relationships. The study utilized the Global Perceptions of Intergenerational Communication (GPIC) survey to assess participants' perceptions of others and one's own communication styles on three factors: accommodation, nonaccommodation, and respectful avoidance. Three hundred and eighty-five participants of staff and administrators employed at five community colleges located in South Texas completed the survey. Principal component analyses and multiple analysis of variance analysis results showed the younger generations perceived more nonaccommodation communication among the older generation. In addition, the younger generations indicated they use more respectful avoidance communication with the older generation. Inter-generational focus groups also highlighted these different communication experiences among the generations. Specifically, the focus groups showed Veterans/Baby Boomers find their communication experiences to be problematic with Millennials. Millennials also find their communication experiences to be problematic with the Veterans/Baby Boomer generation, whereas the Generation Xer focus group participants characterized the Veteran/Baby Boomer communication as rough and inappropriate. The study concluded there are differences in communication experiences between members of the generations that leads to tension and

conflict in the workplace along with the perception of differences in their values. Specifically, the research highlights the values of respect, trust, and openness, which are all important among employees within an organizational setting.

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Chapter 1: Intergenerational Communication in the Workplace

Today's organizations reflect individuals of different generations working together in an effort to sustain and address organizational goals (Bartley, Ladd, & Morris, 2007). It is important to understand the impact that generational differences has on the ability of an organization to create an environment of harmony, mutual respect, and joint effort leading to effective organizational relationships. Strauss and Howe (1991) define generation as a "cohort-group whose length approximates the span of life and boundaries and fixed by peer personality" (p. 429). Kupperschmidt (2000) provides an additional component to the definition, stating generation is "an identifiable group (cohorts) that shares birth years, age location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages (times)" (p. 66). Tossi (2012) indicated approximately 4.4% of the U.S. workforce is comprised of the Veteran generation, 38.5% are Baby Boomers, 43.5% are Generation X, and 13.6% are Millennials.

Context of the Study

The research by Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (2000) and Strauss and Howe (1991) detailing generation differences has been used by many authors in subsequent studies to test their assertions about each of the generations (Cennamo & Gardner, 2007; Gentry, Griggs, Deal, Mondore, & Cox, 2011; Sullivan, Forret, Carraher, & Mainero, 2009; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2008). In the literature, there are slight differences in the years that span each cohort and the naming conventions of each; however, there is still considerable agreement on what sets these generations apart from each other. Table 1 outlines, for each of the generations, the naming conventions, birth years, age ranges, and defining influences.

Table 1

Birth Years, Age Ranges, and Defining Influences by Generation

Generations	Birth Years	Age Ranges	Defining Moments
Veterans	1922-1943	70-91	The Great Depression, WWII, FDR
Baby Boomers	1944-1960	53-69	JFK, civil and women's rights
Generation Xers	1961-1980	33-52	The Challenger explosion, AIDS, MLK
Millennials	1981-2000	13-32	Terrorism, OKC bombing, computers

Note. From *Generations at work: Managing the clash of veterans, boomers, xers, and nexters in your workplace* by R. Zemke, C. Raines, and B. Filipczak, 2000, New York: AMACOM. Copyright 2000 by Performance Research Associates, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Zemke et al. (2000) suggested the first cohort, the Veterans, were born between 1922 and 1943. The authors characterized this generation as having experienced similar events and trends: the Great Depression, WWII, and the rise of labor unions. In contrast, the Baby Boomers (1943-1960, other authors suggest 1946-1964) are defined by events, such as Vietnam, the Civil Rights movement, and assassinations. The Boomer era of free love and abortions gave birth to the smallest cohort, Generation X. This was the generation (1960-1980) of the latchkey kids, single-parent homes, the Challenger disaster, and computers. Finally, according to the Zemke et al., 1980-2000 represents the generation of the Nexters (referred to as Millennials for the purpose of this study). Computers, schoolyard violence, Columbine, and the Oklahoma City bombings can mostly characterize the Millennials generation.

Although four generations are widely recognized in today's workforce, some authors suggest recognizing either more or fewer than four (Arsenault, 2004; Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007). These suggestions are based on the notion of the cusp that refers to the idea that individuals are born within a few years of the end of one generation or the beginning of

another generation, therefore a person can be considered to belong to either generation (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007). Some researchers have discussed the impact of the cusp on their study findings (Sullivan, et al., 2009). For this study, the number of currently recognized generations was decreased. Although Veterans are still present in the workforce, the common age bracket delineated for this generation places the youngest Veteran at 70 years of age. In the current workplace, the commonly viewed benchmark age for retirement is 65 (Eslinger, 2000). This study encountered a limited number of employees who met the oldest Veteran age requirement. Therefore, for the data analyses, I combined the Veteran cohort with the Baby Boomers to create three generational cohorts (Veterans/Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials) who for the next 15 to 20 years will be working together (Lester, Standifer, Schultz, & Windsor, 2012) in various organizational relationships.

Researchers (Arsenault, 2004; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010) have concluded organizations are experiencing issues related to productivity, satisfaction, and retention due to changes in the workplace (e.g. horizontal structure, globalization, use of technology, and information friendly atmosphere) that impact effective communication and organizational relationships among employees. Edmondson (2009) states, “conflicting situations are bound to occur in the workplace . . . we can take an active approach by being aware of others’ communication styles and adapting our style to find that balance” (p. 30). Thus, Edmondson suggested having a clear understanding of the different communication methods used by individuals within your organization as a means to effectively address and resolve conflict that may occur.

Along with communication differences, researchers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; McMullin, Comeau, & Jovic, 2007; Tulgan, 2004) have recently begun to examine

organizational issues through the lens of generational differences. Howard Giles conducted one of the first empirical studies on intergenerational communication using the Communication Accommodation Theory (McCann & Giles, 2006). They based their study on the idea that individuals spend a considerable amount of time communicating in the workplace. McCann and Giles argued communication played a major role in the intergenerational interactions leading to age discrimination (p. 74). It was also suggested,

the workplace represents a stirring context to examine intergenerational communication in that rank-based power differentials, job task concerns, and workplace age stereotypes (to name a very few) should make individuals acutely aware of their age and organizational rank. This could potentially lead to different types of interactions than may be found in nonorganizational intergenerational contexts (e.g., family). (p. 75)

Results of the McCann and Giles (2006) study showed a difference in perceived nonaccommodation communication from younger respondents about their older co-workers, such that younger respondents believed that older employees were less accommodating in their communication. As well, they found a significant difference in younger respondents who indicated more respectful avoidance communication with older coworkers and less respectful avoidance communication with their peers.

Also within the intergenerational literature (Jones, Watson, Gardner, & Gallois, 2004; McCann & Giles, 2006; Monge & Poole, 2008; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010), there is evidence showing the impact communication between the different cohorts has on organizational relationships (Karp, Fuller & Sirias, 2001). Giles, Coupland, and Coupland (as cited in McCann & Giles, 2006) concluded “younger and older people may find themselves conversing across a cultural divide, predisposed by their predictably varying social experiences, social attitudes and priorities for interaction” (p. 152). In addition, McCann and Giles (2006) argued “that just as stereotyped age biases are common in nonorganizational talk, they should also be reflected (and

perhaps even enhanced) in the language people use at work when speaking with people of different age groups” (p. 77).

Quinn (2010, p. 34) argued the four generations have different communication styles in the workplace, such that Veterans were characterized as having a top-down communication style. On the other hand, Baby Boomers were characterized as being guarded in their communication. Generation Xers’ communication style was described as “hub-and-spoke” (communication is both centralized and decentralized), and the Gen-Yers’ as collaborative. While some of the evidence is empirically-based (McCann & Giles, 2006; McCann & Giles, 2007) and other is based on popular assertions (Quinn, 2010), enough questions remain to support for a continuing analysis of the role the generational cohort a person belongs to plays in differences in communication preferences that influence organizational relationships.

Statement of the Problem

In light of the inconsistencies in findings related to generational difference in such aspects as work values, work behavior, and employee satisfaction, researchers may need to focus more on organizational relationships that are impacted by how persons of different generations perceive their own and others’ communication. However, few researchers (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010) have actually conducted studies focusing on how the communication styles of these generations impact organizational relationships. Similarly, although there have been studies examining intergenerational communication (Chen & King, 2002; Giles, Hajek, Stoitsova, & Choi, 2010), McCann and Giles (2006) suggest there have been few studies examining intergenerational communication within organizations, stating, “this omission is particularly surprising given the many hours we spend communicating in organizational settings” (p. 75).

Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) published an article based on the communication perspective of Millennials in the workplace. These authors assert some positive characteristics among this generation, which are often overlooked, whereas the negative stereotypes (impatience, self-importance, and disloyalty) are used to conclude potential issues with communicating with this group. Myers and Sadaghiani suggested further studies on what each generation could offer to team and organizational performance as well as how these qualities can positively affect communication and behaviors influencing organizational relationships. This study will attempt to address this gap in the literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this sequential mixed methods explanatory study was to examine the communication styles used between individuals belonging to three generational cohorts employed within five community colleges located in South Texas. This study of intergenerational communication investigated the relationships between an individual's generation and the communication styles used with other generations and explored the influence of intergenerational communication styles on organizational relationships.

Research Questions

The research was designed to answer the following overall research question: What are the communication styles of the different generations? The study addressed two additional questions to answer the overall question (a) when interacting with someone of a different generation do individuals perceive differences in their own and others' communication? and (b) How do individuals describe their experiences with intergenerational communication in the workplace and their influence on organizational relationships?

Theoretical Framework

Creswell (2009) discussed the use of a theoretical perspective (framework) as a way to discuss, provide a rationale, or explain phenomena that occurs in the world (p. 51). Using a theoretical framework allowed me to organize a model to explain the research question, hypotheses, and data collection procedures used in the study (p. 52). A theoretical framework commonly used in intergenerational communication research endeavors (Scott, 2007; McCann & Giles, 2006, McCann & Giles, 2007) is the Communications Accommodation Theory (CAT) based on the work of Giles and McCann. Due to the limited amount of research on intergenerational communication within an organizational setting, such as community colleges, it is important to expand the existing literature on intergenerational communication.

The CAT postulates when individuals communicate with each other they might alter their communication style to fit with the other person. CAT was derived from the intersection of three other theories, the main one being social identity theory. Social identity theory explains the reasons why some individuals favor those they perceive as being in-group members and discriminate against perceived out-group members. The CAT theory extends the social identity theory by hypothesizing individual's social stereotypes fuel their communication behaviors. Giles, Coupland, and Coupland (as cited in McCann & Giles, 2006) suggested these social stereotypes lead to social distance and avoidance of people of different generations based on their predisposed varying social experiences, social attitudes, and priorities for interaction.

The theory discusses three main communication styles: convergence, divergence, and overaccommodating. Convergence communication deals with the perspective that individuals shift their communication pattern to match the pattern of the person with whom they are communicating. Unlike convergence, divergence is based on the notion that individuals are more

likely to maintain their speech pattern to highlight the differences between individuals.

Overaccommodating is based on the idea that individuals attempt to converge their communication may actually be offensive to the other individual.

The social identity theory as developed by Tajfel and Turner (1985) asserts there are cognitive and motivational factors that influence inter-group differentiation. The theory is used to understand why some group members are more in favor of their in-group members and likely to discriminate against out-group members. Tajfel and Turner further describe the notion of personal selves. Based on these personal selves, an individual is likely to develop multiple social selves based on the type(s) of interactions that occur in their lives: family, friends, and work. Scott (2007) describes two socio-cognitive processes of the social identity theory: categorization and self-enhancement. Categorization “which helps distinguish group boundaries and membership” (p. 125), whereas self-enhancement involves the comparison between salient groups which “serve to enhance the self by favoring one’s own ingroup” (p. 125).

It is reasonable to assume individuals use generational factors to categorize and self-enhance themselves within their generation. It is also reasonable to assume the processes of categorization and self-enhancement to develop a certain social self that impact the communication styles of individuals. McCann and Giles (2006, 2007) and Giles, et al (2010) intergenerational communication studies have found differences in communication between younger and older individuals. However, none of these studies looked specifically at individuals identified as one of the three generational cohorts.

Definitions of Terms

Following is a list of operational definitions of key terms used in the study:

<i>Generations</i>	An identifiable group that shares birth years, age location, and significant life events at critical development stages (times)
<i>Generational cohorts</i>	Veterans/Baby Boomers (prior to 1960) Generation Xers (1961-1980) Millennials (1981-2000)
<i>Communication</i>	The process of both transference and understanding of meaning
<i>Inter-generational communication</i>	The process of transference and understanding of meaning between individuals of different generations
<i>Intra-generational communication</i>	The process of transference and understanding of meaning among individuals of the same generation

Overview of Research Design

The research employed a mixed methods sequential explanatory strategy research design. Creswell (2009) describe a sequential explanatory study as one using the “collection and analysis of quantitative data in a first phase of research followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in a second phase that builds on the results of the initial quantitative results” (p. 211). Creswell further explains, in a sequential explanatory study, “weight is given to the quantitative data, and the mixing of the data occurs when the initial quantitative results *informs* the secondary qualitative data collection” (p. 211).

For this study, greater weight was given to the first phase of the study. The first phase used a survey design to describe the communication styles of participants based on their generation and the generation of the individual with whom they are communicating. This quantitative portion of the study utilized the Global Perceptions of Intergenerational Communication (GPIC) survey developed by McCann and Giles (1987) to assess participants' perceptions of communication experiences. The GPIC assesses individual's perception of other's and one's own communication styles.

The GPIC survey was administered to staff and administrators employed at five community colleges located in South Texas. Participants were asked to complete the survey based on their experiences with individuals of varying generations. Results were compiled as to the perceived communication style differences.

The qualitative phase of the study was conducted upon completion of the quantitative phase. The qualitative portion of the study used the focus group method to collect individual's views regarding the use of the different communication styles among employees in the workplace. The focus groups were a purposive sample of employees selected to represent the three generational cohorts (Veterans/Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials).

Significance of Study

If organizations such as community colleges are to continue to be effective in their organizational goals they should seek to understand the impact generational differences may have on organizational relationships that can lead to employee satisfaction, retention, and organizational success (Cennamo & Gardner, 2007; Gentry, et al., 2011; Sullivan, et al., 2009). Over the last few years, community colleges have experienced changes related to decreased budgets and increased accountability. In Texas, community colleges account for a significant

portion of student enrollment. However, in the last few years, these institutions have experienced pressures to increase student completion rates (Completion by Design Initiative, 2011; President Obama 2020 College Completion Goal, 2009).

Because of these educational pressures, institutional personnel are being asked to work together under both resource and time constraints to develop goals and objectives to meet the identified student completion goals. With these work groups come the increased opportunity for the four generational groups to work together to develop plans and solutions for meeting these completion goals. It is difficult to change or alter a person's core or work value; however, a clearer understanding of how individuals tend to communicate within an organizational workgroup may aid institutional leaders in developing workgroups that will produce solutions, while increasing satisfaction with organizational relationships through effective communication among the groups.

Limitations of the Study

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design as individuals participated in the study at one point in time. Some researchers have suggested this is a problematic method, as it does not account for other factors that may influence a person during this one period in time. However, due to time and resources, it was not feasible to conduct a longitudinal study. The other limitation is the study used several community colleges, sampling from the staff and administrators, thus it will not be appropriate to generalize the results to populations outside these five institutions.

In addition, this study employed a qualitative basic interpretive design using focus groups. As an inductive study, the findings are not generalizable to other individuals or settings. However, the results can be linked with other findings on the topic. In addition, the study

findings may be useful to leaders within other higher education institutions, as well as to other type of organizations whose structure, functions, and goals are similar.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Most researchers examining differences among generations believe these differences are not just a function of similarity in years representing the age groups, but that these individuals have had experiences that have influenced their feelings toward authority and organizations, what they value from work, and how they plan to satisfy their work desires (Westerman & Yamamura, 2006). This review of literature will focus on three aspects of generational differences: (a) the identified core and work value differences between the generations (b) generational differences and communication styles in the workplace, and (c) generational differences and organizational relationships.

Generational Differences

In recent years, research has focused on issues of diversity in the workplace, especially as it relates to generational differences (McCann & Giles, 2006; Quinn, 2010; Zemke, et al., 2000). Some researchers have concluded that it is important to understand the impact that generational differences has on an organization ability to effectively create an environment of harmony, mutual respect, and joint effort that can lead to organizational success (Arsenault, 2004; Jones, et al., 2004; Monge & Poole, 2008). However, there are researchers who have concluded some aspects of generational differences in organizations, such as work values, may be more myth than true differences (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Many researchers use the work of Strauss and Howe (1991) and Zemke et al. (2000) to hypothesize and test other facets of generational differences. Table 2 outlines Zemke et al. (2000) work on generational differences as it relates to their core and work values.

Table 2

Generational Cohorts, Core Values, and Work Values

Generational Cohorts	Core Values	Work Values
Veterans	Dedication, hard work, respect for authority	Loyalty, Dependability
Baby Boomers	Optimism, personal gratification and growth	Service-oriented; Driven, Team Player
Generation Xers	Diversity, technoliteracy, fun, informality	Adaptability, Independent, Creative
Millennials	Optimism, civic duty, confidence, achievement	Collective Action, Optimistic, Centralized Authority

Note. From *Generations at work: Managing the clash of veterans, boomers, xers, and nexters in your workplace* by R. Zemke, C. Raines, and B. Filipczak, 2000, New York, NY: AMACOM. Copyright 2000 by Performance Research Associates, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Veterans. The first cohort is the Veterans born 1922-1943. Social experiences dealing with the Great Depression and the personal hardships brought on by WWII influence the values held by this generation. Individuals in their youth were listening to Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and Frank Sinatra on the radio. Significant individuals from this era are George Bush, Jimmy Carter, Lee Iacocca, and Sidney Poitier.

Core values. A set of core values developed during the years representing their generation identify each generational cohort. For the Veterans, “their mind-set has so dominated our culture that every other set of beliefs is weighed against theirs” (Zemke et al., 2000, p. 30). This mind-set consisted of core values of dedication and sacrifice brought on by the Great Depression. Living in conditions of poverty and war, this generation rose up to the occasion and led the industrial revolution. Increasingly seen with this generation are the values of delayed reward, duty before pleasure, honor, patience, and hard work.

Bartley et al. (2007) concluded that the conservative nature of the Veterans, along with a grounded and logical attitude “causes many younger employees to view Vets as harsh, gruff and rigid in their professional relationships and decisions in an organizational setting” (p. 29).

Work values. There are major differences between the generations in the values they hold in the workplace. Zemke et al. (2000) used characters to provide a detailed overview of the differences exhibited in the workplace among the generations. Susan R. Rhodes (1983) conducted a review and a conceptual analysis of age-related differences in work attitudes and behavior. For the Veterans, due to the events surrounding the Great Depression and loss of jobs by many, taking a job for granted was not in the DNA of this generation, thus their work values/ethics include such behaviors as loyalty and dependability.

In addition, the industrial revolution and the manufacturing economy influenced their work ethic, valuing obedience over individualism leading to a communication structure that is characterized as being “circuitous and indirect” (Zemke et al., 2000, p. 48). Veterans believe in authority and the power of those that are in charge to make the decisions that are best for the institution. Based on this work ethic and value, research suggest leaders should provide messages of motivation to Veterans that says they respect their experience, they are willing to listen to those opinions, and most important, their perseverance will be valued as well as rewarded. Zemke et al. (2000) identified some characteristics of Veterans that may be problematic in the workplace: ineptness with ambiguity and change, reluctance to buck the system, and discomfort with conflict.

Baby boomers. In contrast to the Veterans, the economic recovery and boom that occurred post WWII define the Baby Boomers generation who were born 1944-1960. Oprah

Winfrey, Bill Gates are notable individuals from this era. They listened to rock ‘n’ roll, Elvis, Jimi Hendrix, and the Supremes.

Core Values. Because of the work of the Veterans, Baby Boomers grew up in more optimistic and positive times as the nation experienced the greatest economic expansion in its history (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). They share core values of optimism, team orientation, hard work, and personal gratification.

Work Values. Whereas Veterans are loyal and dependable, work environments that are characterized as democratic, humane, and casual influence the Baby Boomer work ethic. They are the ones who began the revolution of participative management—consensus, team building, and quality circles. Thus, they are service oriented, driven, willing to go the extra mile, good at relationships, want to please, and are good team players (Zemke, et al., 2000, p. 76). The Boomer work ethic is very important as they occupy many of the middle- and upper-management positions in organizations today (Bartley et al., 2007, p. 29). However, Zemke et al. (2000) suggest they are uncomfortable with conflict, go against their peers, may pursue process ahead of results, overly sensitive to feedback, and are judgmental to those who see things differently than they do. Some of the messages that motivate are similar to those of Veterans, consisting of expressions that they value their contributions—“Your contribution is unique and important” and “you’re valued here” (Zemke, et al., 2000, p. 77).

Generation xers. The Boomer era gave birth to the smallest cohort, Generation Xers born 1960- 1980. Generation Xers are also known as Twenty-something, Thirteener (representing the 13th major generation), Baby Busters, and Post-Boomers. This was the generation of high divorce rates leading to single-parent homes, recreational drugs, and the advancement in computers and technology. Michael Jordan ruled the basketball court, Kurt

Cobain and Jewel were musical geniuses, and Brad Pitt had the women swooning. Rap was the music of choice, along with Elton John, Bruce Springsteen, and Michael Jackson.

Core Values. Zemke et al. (2000) explained that the core values of Veterans and Baby Boomers differ dramatically from Generation Xers. The Xers core values stem from a generation characterized by being “some of the first babies whose mothers took pills to prevent them. This generation came of age in an era of fallen heroes, a struggling economy, soaring divorce rates, and the phenomenon of the latchkey child” (p. 98). This contributed to the development of core values that are described as diverse, global thinking, balanced, technologically literate, fun, informal, self-reliant, and pragmatic (p. 101).

Work Values. Adaptability, independence, lack of intimidation by authority, and creativity characterizes the Generation Xers work ethic. There is a downside to their independence on the job—they are impatient, have poor people skills, are inexperienced, and work from a place of cynicism. These perceptions by the older generations affect their ability to lead, effectively, employees of the Generation Xers. Although, they have this view, they can be motivated to do good work by having flexible work hours, an informal work environment, and just the right amount of supervision. Providing messages such as “do it your way” and “there aren’t a lot of rules here” will motivate them (Zemke et al., 2000, p. 113).

Millennials. The years 1980-2000 were the generation of the Millennials (Nexters, Generation Y, Nintendo Generation, Generation Net, and Internet Generation). Lewis and Ford-Robertson (2012) discuss the World Trade Center attacks, homegrown terrorism, cell phones, and the expansion of the internet as historical events that frame this group’s reference. During

this pivotal time the Spice Girls, Puff Daddy, Will Smith, and Backstreet Boys played on the radio.

Core values. The Millennials are the newest generation, and they have core values that are similar to Generation Xers, but differ from the Veterans and the Baby Boomers. The Millennials generation brought back the rise of the child as the most important person in a family, a belief that disappeared during the Generation Xers' period. It is the soccer mom mentality, it is all about the children, and this shaped their core values of optimism, civic duty, confidence, achievement, sociability, morality, street smarts, and diversity.

Work values. Millennials' work ethic embodies behaviors similar to those of the Veterans with beliefs in collective action, optimism about the future, and trust in centralized authority (Zemke et al., 2000, p. 132). They combine the teamwork of the Baby Boomers, the can-do attitude of the Veterans, and the technologically literacy of Generation Xers. The Millennials believe that hard work and goal setting leads to the achievement of their dreams. While these work behaviors among Millennials are highly regarded, their newness to the work place causes them to need more supervision and structure, as they are very inexperienced in handling issues with so-called difficult people. Therefore, to motivate their work behavior it is important to give messages such as "you will be working with other bright and creative people," and "you and your coworkers can help turn this company around" (Zemke et al., 2000, p.145).

Stanley–Garvey (2007) noted, "generational diversity and interaction has the potential to foster creativity and diverse thought, which can benefit an organization's bottom line" (p. 13). On the other hand, Zemke et al. (2000) suggests "just as with other aspects of diversity, generational differences can also cause misunderstandings and confusion, creating tension and conflict between team members" (p. 121).

Previous Studies

Based on the work by Zemke et al. (2000) and the work of Strauss and Howe (1991), other researchers have examined generational differences using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Smola and Sutton (2002) used work values as the construct to examine generational differences. They conducted an empirical study to analyze the relationship between work values and generations. There were two research questions posed: (a) Are there generational differences in work values and (a) Do work values change or remain constant, as workers grow older. The study replicated the survey administration for a 1974 study by Cherrington (as cited in Smola & Sutton, 2002) also examining generational differences. Due to issues with sampling, the analyses for this study only included results from the Baby Boomers and Generation Xers generations. The study found mixed results. For most of the work value measures there were no differences between the two groups. However, researchers found inconsistencies with the work values by Zemke et al. (2000) discussed earlier. Findings showed Generation Xers are likely to respond that they would be less loyal to the company, want promotion more quickly, and less likely to feel that work should be an important part of one's life. However, unlike the characteristics above, Smola and Sutton found that when compared to Baby Boomers, Generation Xers felt more strongly that working hard is an indication of one's worth. They were more likely to feel that one should work hard, even if a supervisor is not around. The authors suggested this could be an indication of Generation Xers' need to find a balance in doing a good job and maximizing their own individual goals. As for the change or constant nature of work values, based on comparing findings with the 1974 study the authors concluded that differences in work values are more a function of generational differences than of age or maturation.

Westerman and Yamamura (2006) examined generational differences from the viewpoint of their preferences for work environment fit. In an accounting firm, they used a survey methodology similar to other researchers. The authors wanted to determine what dimensions of employee fit with work environments effect employee job satisfaction and turnover intentions between the generations. They examined three dimensions for job satisfaction and intention to remain: (a) goal orientation (i.e. his/her desire for a work environment providing suitable levels of job challenge, participation, and strong expectations for accomplishment), (b) system maintenance (i.e. the expectations for and the reality of an orderly, organized work environment, with clear expectation and control, and (c) relationship (p. 154). Westerman and Yamamura hypothesized goal orientation and system maintenance would be a more significant determination for Generation XY group for job satisfaction and intention to remain than for the Baby Boomer generation. Whereas for the Baby Boomers, the authors hypothesized the relationship orientation dimension would be a more significant determination for job satisfaction and intention to remain. In addition, the authors hypothesized, Baby Boomers would be less satisfied in the workplace than Generation XYers.

Findings showed mixed support for these hypotheses. Goal orientation was a significant predictor for job satisfaction and intention to remain for the younger generations, but not for Baby Boomers. However, the system maintenance dimension was only a predictor for intention to remain, not satisfaction for the younger generations. As well, the relationship dimension was only a predictor of job satisfaction for Baby Boomers, not for the intention to remain. Lastly, the findings did not support the notion that Baby Boomers would be less satisfied in the workplace overall than the younger generations.

Similar to the work of Westerman and Yamamura (2006), Cennamo and Gardner (2007) also examined generational differences from a person and organization value fit. The study used a range of industries in New Zealand. For this study, “the supplies provided by the organization to satisfy the individual’s values” (p. 893) defined person and organization fit. The authors hypothesized that Baby Boomers will show higher levels of extrinsic reward, status, altruism and social work (similar to Westerman and Yamamura relationship dimension) than Generation Xers and Millennials. In addition, they hypothesized Generation Xers and Millennials would show higher levels of intrinsic and freedom-related work values (work-life balance and work hours) than Baby Boomers. Similar to the findings by Westerman and Yamamura (2006), the authors found mix support for their hypotheses. Results showed Millennials placed more importance on status and freedom-related work values. Baby Boomers reported better person and organization values fit with extrinsic values and status values.

Whereas Westerman and Yamamura (2006) and Cennamo and Gardner (2007) discussed aspects of the work environment to examine generational differences, Sullivan, et al. (2009) used a career model to examine generational differences in work attitudes. The Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) is a career theory that suggests individuals use three parameters when making a decision. Those three parameters consist of authenticity, balance, and challenge. Authenticity focuses on the alignment of an individual’s internal values with their external behaviors and the values of the organization. Balance deals with the individual striving to reach equilibrium between work and non-work. Finally, challenge is an individual’s need for stimulating work and career advancement. The authors hypothesized that Baby Boomers would report a greater desire for challenge, whereas Generation Xers would have a greater desire for authenticity and balance. Using a quantitative survey design and controlling for several variables (gender, children, marital

status, education, and income) results showed differences for authenticity and balance. As hypothesized, Generation Xers had a greater desire for authenticity and balance than Baby Boomers. However, the research failed to show differences for the challenge parameter.

Parry and Urwin (2011) conducted a critical review of the theoretical and evidence used to conclude there are differences in work values based on the generation to which an individual belongs. Parry and Urwin concluded mixed results of these studies due in part to the methodologies. Most of the studies reviewed used a cross-sectional design. Parry and Urwin (2011) suggested the use of this approach prevents researchers from making a true distinction in differences in work values related to generations. This assertion is due to research needing to be able to distinguish between differences that may be generationally impacted and those that are result of age (maturation) or period effects. Parry and Urwin (2011) discuss in detail the differences in the theoretical constructs of generations, cohorts, age effects, and period effects. Generations is defined as “a set of historical events and related cultural phenomena” (p. 84). Cohorts are defined as “a group of individuals born at the same time who are presumed to be similar as a result of shared experiences. Only chronological proximity to events and other drivers of difference are assumed to distinguish them from other cohorts” (p. 84). Age effects are “the changing views, attitudes, and behaviours of individuals as they mature” (p. 84). Period effects are “the (often confounding) impact of environment on values, behaviours, and attitudes that one must take into account when attempting to identify generational, cohort, or age-related impacts” (p. 84).

In summary, it seems there is still more to be gleaned from researching generational differences. While there is empirical research, papers, and opinions being conducted on this particular phenomenon, there does not seem to be any consistency in the research findings to

suggest specific patterns or factors in generational differences. Some researchers such as Jennifer Deal (2010) have suggested that the differences in generations are more myth than fact. Deal suggests that there are more similarities between the generations in terms of values, need for respect and trust, and being loyal than the research suggest. Thus, Deal suggests organizations focus more on employee's similarities and the best way to maintain and retain them, than their differences.

The lack of consistency in findings may not suggest a lack of validity to generational differences. The lack of consistency may suggest researchers need to focus more attention on identifying and operationalizing the constructs that are studied. Whereas the results have been mixed, the research has shown there are some aspects of differences among generations. The next section looks at age/generational differences from a lens other than work values. The research is reviewed based on how individuals of different ages/generations communicate with one another.

Generational Differences and Organizational Communication

Edmondson (2009) states, "conflicting situations are bound to occur in the workplace . . . we can take an active approach by being aware of others' communication styles and adapting our styles to find balance" (p. 30). A clear understanding of the differing communication methods used within an organization may not be a way to alleviate conflict rather a means to effectively address and resolve conflict that may occur.

Like Edmondson, Quinn (2010) asserts that to reap the most value from employees, managers should take a multigenerational perspective in employee communications. Quinn believes if organizations take into account these differences in communication style they may be

able to learn what is likely to motivate and influence workers, as well as to help the organization develop an internal messaging that is more targeted towards the different styles (p. 34).

Evolution of communication. Monge and Poole (2008) wrote an article on the evolution of organizational communication and development. Monge and Poole expanded on previous research on the intersection between the study of human communication and human organization from three perspectives: the cultural, the interpretive, the critical, postmodern, and the network perspective. They postulated this intersection could also be studied from the ecological/evolutionary theory and the organizational discourse perspective. These two new perspectives, ecological/evolutionary and organizational discourse, are discussed below.

Ecological Perspective. Monge and Poole (2008) began the discussion of the ecological perspective by describing the difference in the interconnected relationship among social communities or ecologies. The authors indicated that these relations are typically defined as symbiotic or “commensalist” (Monge & Poole, p. 680). They describe a symbiotic relation as one that is mutually beneficial between members of different populations, each benefitting the other and neither does the other harm. On the other hand, the commensalist relationship is described as being “among members of the same population and cover a continuum between mutually supportive and highly competitive” (Monge & Poole, p. 680). Monge and Poole ascertained that among these relationships are individuals and organizations that vary as they are created, grow, mature, and decline. As well, these organizational communities differ in where they are in their evolutionary trajectory; some are young upstarts, some growing rapidly, and others in decline. It can be hypothesized that these differences in evolutionary trajectories can impact the individuals within the organization. This impact is based on the notion that as organizations/communities strive to acquire the resources needed to survive and to thrive, the

process of communication exchanged between members and the development of a communication infrastructure plays an important role.

Finally, it is suggested the ecological theory has “at its core three highly generalized forces: variation, selection, and retention” (Monge & Poole, 2008, p. 682). According to Monge and Poole, variation is generated by random events, natural disasters, or economic downturns and is a source of evolutionary change. Furthermore, they suggest the more variation that occurs the greater the level of change that occurs in populations or communities. Selection is based on the process of choosing (“selected for”) or rejecting (“selected against”) one or more variations. This selection can be based on *vicarious selection*, which is based on observing the behaviors of other organizations; *benchmarking*, which is based on communicating best practices; and, *disruptive selection*, due to community competition leading to the demise of a targeted population. Retention is based on making the selected variation an accepted part of organizational practice. The ecology theory has been applied by researchers to the communication processes within organizational populations and their communities.

Organizational discourse. The second perspective of the Monge and Poole (2008) ecology theory, organizational discourse, has its basis in the interest among researchers in topics such as organizational rhetoric, organizing, conversation, dialogue, political functions of narrative, and communication and unobtrusive control. Monge and Poole define organizational discourse as “the structures and collections of text embodied in the practices of talking and writing as well as a variety of visual representations and cultural artifacts” (p. 684).

Monge and Poole (2008) outline the four domains of organizational discourse differentiated by Grant, Hardy, Oswick, and Putnam (2004):

Conversation and dialogue operate via message exchanges between two or more parties. The conversation and dialogue highlights the discourse in organizing, extended over time,

and generates text and artifacts that are used in other conversations. Narrative and stories are focused on the form and meaning of conversations. Effective narratives are coherent, “has fidelity to accepted forms, and received knowledge” (p. 684). However, narratives have the ability to transmit and reproduce existing structures and power relations or serve to undermine them.

Rhetoric uses discourse for strategic purpose to persuade both internal and external audience in particular contexts and situations, as well as to create organizational identity and identification with the organization. Tropes have to do with the literary and rhetorical devices used to represent ways in which language can operate to create and project meaning (p. 685).

The authors suggest these four domains are transposable and related to one another. In addition to their relatedness, the dynamics of intertextuality and reflexivity interconnect the four domains. Intertextuality posits that texts achieve meaning through interplay with other texts interpreted by individuals. Reflexivity is discourses that are uttered, reproduced, responded to by active agents who can reflect on the discourse.

Examining the ideas put forth in the Monge and Poole (2008) article on the evolution of organizational communication, it is possible to postulate how these two new perspectives, ecological theory and organizational discourse, can be used to study the impact of communication among people, organizations, and/or communities. Below is a review of researchers who have studied communication among groups of individuals in different contexts.

Communication accommodation theory. Much communication research uses the Communications Accommodation Theory by Giles and McCann (McCann & Giles, 2006). The CAT predicts that people of different generations may communicate in ways that are biased for which they favor their own age group and not the other age groups. The theory further proposes that individuals accommodate to their age group due to a desire for social acceptance and the facilitation of communication. The CAT is a derivative of the social identity theory that explains why some individuals are in favor of those they perceive as being in-group members and discriminate against perceived out-group members. The theory assumes individuals have several

selves, which they utilize based on the various social groups (from family, school, ethnic contexts) for which they interact. These actions result in individuals categorizing themselves as group members and this categorization leads to positive self-esteem by virtue of distinguishing himself or herself from the out-group. In addition to their self-categorization based on social experiences and attitudes, social stereotypes causing distance and avoidance of people of different generations inform individuals' communication behaviors (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991).

Intergenerational communication. McCann and Giles (2007) conducted one of the first empirical studies on intergenerational communication. The purpose of the study was to “investigate younger full-time workers’ accounts of their intra- and intergenerational communicative (dis)satisfaction in the workplace with variables such as target age, culture, and organizational rank” (p. 75). The study had several hypotheses related to communication between younger and older workers. The Global Perceptions of Intergenerational Communication scale developed by McGann and Giles (2006) was used in this study. The survey uses two main scales: perception of others’ communication and perception of one’s own communication. Results showed a difference in perceived accommodation communication from younger respondents about their older co-workers. There was also a significant difference in younger respondents indicating more respectful avoidance communication with older coworkers.

Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) published an article based on the communication perspective of Millennials in the workplace. The authors reviewed sources of data and information from press, popular literature, and empirical studies to ascertain more “credible perspectives on Millennial communication and behaviors” (p. 226). Myers and Sadaghiani assert some negative stereotypes about Millennials that contribute to widespread concern about how

communicating with them may impact the organization. However, Myers and Sadaghiani took a closer look at the more positive characteristics of this group and their potential impact. Positive characteristics, such as, more accepting of diversity than past generations, capabilities with advanced communication and information technologies, ability to see problems and opportunities from a fresh perspective, and being more comfortable with working in teams may be an asset in the workplace.

The Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) review showed that communication is very important for Millennials. Specifically, Millennials expect close relationships along with frequent feedback and open communication from their supervisors. Not only do Millennials expect frequent feedback, they expect that feedback to be positive and affirming. Myers and Sadaghiani suggest this expectation of frequent, supportive, and open communication may cause senior level workers to feel disrespected by Millennials with whom senior level workers feel have not earned this type of communication. Specifically, Baby Boomers may resent this request for communication and information. However, the authors ascertain that increased openness might provide opportunities for frank communication and problem solving between Millennial workers and their supervisors. As well closer relationship between the supervisor and the Millennial may lead to organizational commitment by the Millennial.

Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) recommend conducting further research that is focused on what each generation can offer to team and organizational performance, and how these qualities affect workplace communication, behaviors, and relationships. They also suggest a study of how members of an organization have modified their communication to manage conflict between the cohorts. Burk, Olsen, and Messerli (2011) in their article on generational differences among Millennials, asserts that for Millennials

often, our value systems and goals are the same as our supervisor or co-worker, but the way we communicate these can be quite different. ... As Generation Y, get a bad reputation for our communication styles and desire to be heard, but this may be because we have been told we must speak up and speak often if we want to advance in the workplace. We may not have the best idea for a solution, but much of our education or training has taught us that any idea is better than no idea. (p. 35)

As outlined above, there is considerable evidence showing the significance of communication between different age cohorts. Some evidence is based on empirical research and while other evidence is not; however, there is still a need to continue to analyze how generational differences in communication may influence organizational relationships. Using various cultures, Giles and research associates (2006, 2007) have consistently found that intergenerational communication differs among old and young individuals when communicating within the in-groups or between the out-groups. In addition, these differences in communication can have an impact on job satisfaction and perceived work conflict.

Generational Differences and Organizational Relationships

Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture (as cited in Parry & Urwin, 2011, p. 82) assertions are based on the notion that differences in generations is a result of conflict over economic and cultural resources and of the fact that different generations will see different resources as important. The traits of self-direction, self-motivation, and self-reliance characterize the emergent mindsets (Green, 2008).

Whereas Bourdieu's conflict perspective is related to economic and cultural resources, Weingarten (2009), examined workplace conflict in a nursing environment, and concluded, "that conflict is a fact of life whenever there is a diverse groups of people working together under stress" (p. 29). She further states that resolved conflict can lead to team building, whereas unresolved conflict can lead to gossip and whispering which can result in work being stressful and upsetting.

Much of the research on conflict resulting from differences in communication has focused on the medium being used to communicate and the best medium used to communicate with the different generations. Wagner (2007) discusses the types of communication preferred by the generations—Baby Boomers and Traditionalists more formal, layered communication (face-to-face or phone) and Gen X and Millennials less formal and less layered communication (email and text messages). It is suggested these differences may cause frustration and conflict, especially among the Gen X and Millennials who, it is believed, want more prompt and frequent feedback. To deal with this type of conflict, researchers have suggested tailoring the organizational communication methods to meet each generation's need.

Wagner (2007) talks about differences in the amount of time spent at work as a source of tension and frustration between generations. Wagner describes a vignette where a Millennial is using multi-tasking to complete their work and leave for the day, and the Baby Boomer who is frustrated with the lack of work ethic of the younger generation tends to remain at work late. Therefore, conflict arises when one employee feels another employee does not value the work in the same way – time on task, staying late, agreeing to work overtime.

Another value oft quoted in the literature on differences in the generations has to do with the notion of “paying your dues” (Derrick & Walker, 2006). Articles have been written and researchers have examined the notion that the younger generations (Generation Xers and Millennials) have no respect for the job promotion cycles in the workplace. Thus, employees are promoted based on the length of their career, not necessarily on the knowledge and experience they have. The conflict due to this value difference leads to what researchers see as organizational exit and shift among Generation Xers (Smola & Sutton, 2002) and loyalty and job satisfaction among Baby Boomers (Cennamo & Gardner, 2007).

Although there have been articles (Lewis & Ford-Robertson, 2012; Skaer, 2006; Wagner, 2007) written on workplace conflict due to generational differences, as with the literature on the topic as a whole, the empirical results have been mixed. However, we do know generations are working together and conflict within organizations is on the rise leading to such effects as organizational exit and in some cases organizational violence.

Summary

Over the last few years, there have been extensive research studies conducted and papers written on the subject of generational differences. Many have concluded that there generational differences impact working relationships. Others have suggested strategies for dealing with these generational differences, from employing collaborative working teams to using different communication methods to fit better the needs of each generation (e.g. email, text messages, face-to-face, etc.). However, there are those who believe the notion of generational differences is more a myth than a fact and the conflict experienced in organizations is more a function of differences in individual's personality than differences in a cohort of individuals.

Twenge and Twenge (2010) have studied various aspects of the generational difference claims and recently wrote an article reviewing the empirical evidence of generational differences in work attitudes. Similar to other reviews, Twenge and Twenge found the results to be mixed. There was support for the notion of differences in work ethic among the generations, with the younger workers indicating work is less central to their lives and value leisure and work-life balance. However, there was no support in her study for differences in intrinsic/extrinsic value differences, affiliation/social values, and job satisfaction.

Although the results of the empirical studies have been mixed, the study of generational differences is a viable one as there are still areas of the phenomenon not fully explored with

some of the finding being anecdotal and opinion based. For instance, many of the differences in communication between the generations focus on the medium used. However, there remains a gap in the literature related to actual communication styles between the generations. An understanding of individuals perceived communication style differences might provide further insight into the influence these generational differences may have on organizational relationships.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this sequential mixed methods explanatory study was to examine the communication styles used between individuals belonging to three generational cohorts employed within five community colleges located in South Texas. This study of intergenerational communication investigated the relationships between an individual's generation and the communication styles used with other generations and explored the influence of intergenerational communication styles on organizational relationships.

Rationale for Research Design

To address the purpose of this study, the research used a sequential explanatory mixed method research design. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) describe a mixed method research study as one using “qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques in either parallel or sequential phases” (p. 11). The authors conclude:

A major advantage of mixed methods research is that it enables the researcher to simultaneously answer confirmatory and exploratory questions, and therefore verify and generate theory in the same study. Furthermore, there are two goals usually involved in these type of studies: (a) to demonstrate a particular variable will have a predicted relationship with another variable and (b) answer exploratory questions about how that predicted (or some other related) relationship actually happens. (p. 15)

For the current study, both the quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to answer the overall research question regarding participants' use of intergenerational communication.

The use of the sequential explanatory mixed method allowed the researcher to confirm previous research findings regarding the relationships between individuals' generation cohorts and the type of communication styles used, as well as to explore how the intergenerational communication actually occurs between employees within the organizational setting.

Creswell (2009) discusses three aspects to consider when designing a mixed method study: timing, weighting, and mixing (pp. 206-207). Timing in a mixed method design has to do

with whether the study will occur in phases (sequential) or at the same time (concurrent). In the sequential method, whether the quantitative or qualitative data collection comes first depends on the intent of the researcher. In this study, I wanted to establish a link with intergenerational communication differences among employees in the workplace. I expanded on the understanding of the quantitative phase by exploring intergenerational communication with small focus groups in the second qualitative phase.

The second aspect of a mixed method design is weight. Creswell (2009) describes weight as “priority given to quantitative or qualitative research in a particular study” (p. 206). In some studies, the weight might be equal; in other studies, it might emphasize one or the other. In the current study, I placed emphasis on the first quantitative phase of the study as a means to deduce the differences in intergenerational communication underlined by the CAT theoretical framework.

The third aspect of the mixed methods research design is mixing. According to Creswell (2009) “mixing means either that the qualitative and quantitative data are actually merged in one end of the continuum, kept separate on the other end of the continuum, or combined in some way between these two extremes” (pp. 207-208). Creswell further delineates mixing by describing three types of mixing: connected, integrating, and embedding.

Connected in mixed methods research means a mixing of the quantitative and qualitative research [data] are connected between a data analysis of the first phase of research and the data collection of the second phase of research . . . integrating the two databases by actually merging the quantitative data with the qualitative data . . . [or] embedding a secondary form of data within a larger study having a different form of data as the primary database. The secondary database provides a supporting role in the study. (p. 208)

This study used the embedding mixing method to situate the second qualitative phase of the study that employed a focus group methodology into the larger confirmatory quantitative

phase that examined individuals' perceptions of the use of intergenerational communication within an organizational setting. Figure 1 is a graphical depiction of the sequential explanatory mixed method design used in the study. It shows the administration of the survey to the participants followed by the data analysis. Upon completion of the survey analysis, I conducted focus groups where information was analyzed for key themes. Finally, the survey and focus groups were analyzed together to develop some key findings that emerged in the study.

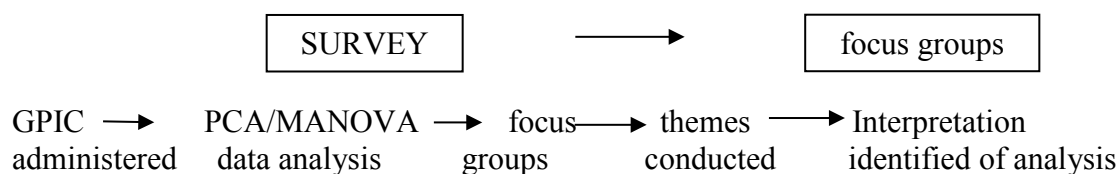


Figure 1. Sequential Explanatory Mixed Method Design. The “→” indicates the study was conducted in sequential phases, as well as, the capitalization in SURVEY indicates the priority weight for the study was placed on the first quantitative phase of the study. Adapted from “Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research,” by Tashakkori, A and Teddlie, C., 2003, p. 225. Copyright 2010 by Sage, Inc.

Setting for the Study

This study was conducted using participants' employed in five community colleges located in South Texas. Community colleges provide a rich, diverse, population of employees working together toward a common goal—student success. In addition, community colleges serve as an ideal setting for the study of intergenerational communication. As the accountability for community colleges to produce more college graduates increases so does the need for cross-departmental and cross-institutional communication. Changes are occurring rapidly in higher education institutions focused on helping to meet President Obama's 2020 College Completion Goal (2009). These changes will need to be planned and implemented; therefore, communication will play a major role. How well individuals are able to communicate with each other will have

an impact on organizational relationships and the ability to successfully plan and implement strategies that will help to meet the completion goal.

Protection of Human Subjects

The American Psychological Association (2011) outlines the standards and code of ethics that must be followed when conducting research involving human subjects. Three of the areas to consider are the ethical issues involved in data collection and data analysis and interpretation. For this study, to assure the protection of the participants, I received certification through the online Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative required by the University of Incarnate Word for researchers conducting research on human subjects.

In addition to the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative certification, I protected the individuals participating in the study by submitting a research application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Incarnate Word. The submitted application (Appendix A) included two informed consent forms (Appendix C and Appendix F) reviewed by each participant prior to inclusion in the research study. The informed consent forms outlined the rights of the participants, such as their right to withdraw from the study at any time during the study. In addition, the informed consent form outlined the purpose of the study, the selection of participants, and the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. The IRB application also indicated that all survey and focus group responses will remain anonymous and kept confidential and secure. In reporting the analysis of the focus groups, participants' names were not used to assure anonymity. Each of the five institutions also required an IRB submission and granted approval prior to conducting the study (Appendix B).

Methodology Overview

Population and sample. All staff and administrators employed at five community colleges in South Texas were the target population for this study. All staff and administrators were invited to participate in the survey portion of the study. A purposive sample of participants was selected to participate in the focus groups. Creswell (2009) defines purposive sampling

as a means of selecting specific units (e.g., events, people, groups, settings, artifacts) or types of units, based on a specific purpose rather than randomly. Examples of such sampling include quota, snowball, extreme case/group, and sampling for maximum variation (heterogeneity). (p. 713)

Based on the study interest in generational difference, the sample consisted of individuals representing the three generations: Veterans/Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials. As mentioned earlier, the Veterans and Baby Boomers were combined into one category based on the small number of Veterans employed in the institutions at the time of the study as well as taking into account the issue of the cusp.

Quantitative Method

Survey research strategy. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) provide a data collection matrix for data collection strategies that are used in mixed methods research. The data collection matrix is based on two dimensions(a) the research approach and (b) the method of data collection (Tashakkori & Teddlie, p. 297) that are used in mixed method research. Tashakkori and Teddlie state, “data collection is simply a technique that is used to collect empirical research, how researchers get their information” (p. 297). Tashakkori and Teddlie outline six major methods of data collection: questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, tests, observations, and secondary data (p. 298). Based on the matrix, this study used the data collection methods of a survey and a focus group.

Survey instrument. According to Creswell (2009), quantitative research involves “testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables” (p. 4). Creswell further states, “these variables can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures” (p. 4). To test the relationship between the generational cohort variable and the communication style variable, this study used the GPIC scale (see Appendix D) developed by McCann and Giles (2006). The GPIC scale was used to measure respondents’ ratings of their communicative experiences in generational out-groups contexts. McCann and Giles (2006) developed the GPIC for their research on communication among people of different ages in the workplace. Previous studies have used the GPIC to examine age-based communication styles among different cultures and gender (Guan, 2009; McCann & Giles, 2006, 2007; McCann, Ota, Giles, & Caraker, 2003).

The GPIC scale is a 24-item Likert scale survey with two major dimensions (Table 3). Fourteen survey items relate to perceptions of others’ communication and 10 items relate to perceptions of one’s own communication. The survey instrument uses a five-point Likert scale (“1” Strongly Disagree to “5” Strongly Agree”) to measure respondent’s communication style on three factors. The first factor consists of eight items on “accommodation” which refers to the behaviors that can confirm or identify an in-group membership. The second factor consists of six items on “nonaccommodation” which refers to the behaviors that can distinguish people from another group. Last, the third factor consists of ten items on “respectfully avoidant” communication which refers to certain behaviors that can save face for themselves or others. Mean scores for each of the three factors was obtained to use in the data analysis. Previous research (Guan, 2009) has shown the accommodation scale with a reliability of .88, the nonaccommodation reliability is .81, and the respectfully avoidant scale reliability is .79.

Table 3

Revised GPIC scale by dimensions, factors, and scale items

Perception of Others' Communication	Perception of One's Own Communication
<i>Accommodation</i>	<i>Respectful Avoidance</i>
They were supportive	I spoke in a respectful manner
They were helpful	I felt obliged to be polite
They gave useful advice	I spoke in a polite way
They complimented me	I did not criticize them
They had kind words for me	I waited until asked to speak
They were considerate	I held back my opinions
They comforted me	I restrained myself from arguing with them
They were nice to me	I tried not to embarrass them
<i>Nonaccommodation</i>	I avoided conflicts with them
They ordered me to do things	I expressed my opinion indirectly
They acted superior to me	
They talked as if they knew more than me	
They spoke as if they were better than me	
They did not support my plans or ideas	
They criticized me	

In addition to the communication perceptions items, there were items to determine how many years the respondent had been working in their current position, an item where the participant indicated with which generational cohort they identified, and two demographic items for gender and cultural background.

Survey Data Collection Strategies

Survey instrument. The GPIC scale used in this study was converted to an online survey administration tool, Survey Monkey®. I used a personnel file of current staff and administrators of the five community colleges. The personnel file contained the employees first and last names, email, college of employment along with their generational cohort that was based on their birth year and the established cohort years. All individuals in the file were emailed an informed consent requesting their participation in the study. Upon reading the consent form, those individuals willing to participate in the study clicked on an embedded link to access the survey. The survey began with the years of service question, and the three demographic questions. The

demographic questions were followed by the GPIC survey items. The items from the GPIC survey were presented randomly to prevent scale items from being presented in sequence. Survey responses were compiled by the online survey tool.

Collection. Participants were given four weeks to complete the survey. Weekly reminders were sent to everyone. The reminders excluded individuals indicating they had completed the survey.

Response rate. For this study, the GPIC survey was sent to 1,692 individuals employed within the five community colleges. Four hundred and fifty four employees completed the survey for a 27% response rate.

Survey Data Analysis

After closing the survey, responses from the online survey tool were exported into IBM-SPSS 19® statistical software for further data analysis. The database contained the participant's ratings of the communication statements, years of service, cultural background, the generational cohort of the participants along with the generation of the employees the participants asked to think of as they answered the survey questions.

Prior to analyses, data were reviewed to exclude any data points not meeting the established criteria. Invalid cases were removed, and the tests for the assumption of normality were conducted. Based on the test of normality, both exploratory and confirmatory analyses were conducted. Exploratory analyses in the form of descriptive statistics were conducted. Principal Component Analyses (PCA) and Cronbach's alpha analyses were conducted to obtain factor loadings of the scale items and determine reliability and validity of the survey instrument. Upon completion of the PCA, multiple analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted using the

mean scores obtained on the three factors (accommodation, nonaccommodation, and respectful avoidance).

Qualitative Method

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) argue “that a mixed methods analysis offers a more comprehensive analytical technique...to the ability to get more out of the data provides the opportunity to generate more meaning...enhancing the quality of data interpretation” (p. 353). The data analyses for this study attempted to address one of the five purposes outlined by Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003)—complementarity (i.e. seeking elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results of one method with the results from the other method).

Population and sample. For the qualitative study, a purposive sample was employed to identify individuals to participate in one of three focus groups. Creswell (2009) defines and discusses the role of focus group as a

Situation in which a group moderator keeps a small and usually homogeneous group of about 6 to 12 people focused on the discussion of a research topic. ... The group moderator typically facilitates group discussion on a series of about 5 to 10 open-ended items written on the moderator’s focus group interview protocol. (p. 308)

The focus group sampling procedure also used the aforementioned personnel file to identify individuals representing each of the three generational cohorts. I generated pivot tables of employee’s name, college, and generational cohort. I selected and invited individuals employed at each of the five colleges to assure a cross-institutional sample.

Focus group research strategy. Merriam (2002) in her introduction to qualitative research states, “meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (p. 3). With this statement, it is understood that qualitative research allows for the understanding of individuals in a way that gives rise to their personal experiences and perspectives. Further, this

approach allowed the reporting of these experiences in an effort to help other researchers, individuals, and/or organizations to understand the impact these experiences and perspectives have on the behavior under study.

This study used the focus group design to ascertain participants' views and insights related to their observations and experiences with intergenerational communication differences in the workplace, with a specific focus on the impact the type of communication used has on organizational relationships. Krueger and Casey (2000) state, "the goal of a focus group is to collect data that are of interest to the researcher—typically to find the range of opinions of people across several groups" (p. 11).

This type of interviewing differs from interviewing an individual, as the focus group participants "are influencing and influenced by others—just as they are in life" (p. 11). In addition, the role of the researcher differs in a focus group. In a focus group, the researcher serves as "moderator, listener, observer, and eventually analyst using an inductive process . . . deriving understanding based on the discussion as opposed to testing a preconceived hypothesis or theory" (pp. 11-12).

Considering the topic of this study was intergenerational communication and the role it plays in organizational relationships, employing the focus group method allowed the participants to feel comfortable in self-disclosing their experiences with the topic. The comfortable environment was created by providing a nonjudgmental climate. This nonjudgmental environment was refreshing to the participants who otherwise may feel as if they work in a judgmental environment. Krueger and Casey (2000) state,

Focus group interviewing is about listening. . . paying attention. It is about being open to hear what people have to say . . . being nonjudgmental. It is about creating a comfortable environment for people to share . . . being systematic with the things people tell you . . .

improve listening, and results can be used to benefit the people who shared the information. In addition, people go away feeling good about having been heard (p. xi).

The study used a structured focus group interview protocol (Appendix G) with selected individuals to document their views and insights as to the types of intergenerational communication experienced in the workplace among workers of different generations, along with their reactions to the results of the survey.

Focus Group Data Collection Strategies

Focus group data collection. Three intra-generational focus groups were conducted. The first round of focus groups was a purposive sample of individuals selected to represent the five colleges. At least two individuals who represented a generational cohort from each institution were selected to obtain 10 participants per focus group. I selected and invited individuals to participate based on the following criteria:

- Individuals who were known by the researcher to interact with individuals of different generations within and across the five colleges (e.g. cross-institutional committees).
- Individuals who were known by the researcher to have a role in developing and influencing decisions within and across the five colleges (e.g. Vice-Chancellors, Presidents, Deans, and Directors).
- Individuals who were known by the researcher to have a vital role in implementing decisions that are made (e.g. Coordinators, Managers, Administrative Assistants, and Other Professionals).

Individuals were contacted via email and invited to participate in the focus group. The email invite explained the purpose of the research study and specifically the purpose of the focus group. Due to the low response rate of the first round of focus groups, I conducted a second round of focus groups.

Each focus group was conducted in a neutral location selected based on the level of convenience and comfort for the participants. The focus group began by providing the participants with an overview of the topic being studied —intergenerational communication in the workplace. In addition, I set some ground rules to assure each participant felt comfortable engaging in the discussions. Ground rules consisted of informing the participants' that I will be recording notes (using large sticky notes) during the discussion, they are allowed to ask follow-up and clarifying questions, to disagree with each other respectfully, the importance of discussing both negative and positive comments, and being mindful of allowing everyone the opportunity to speak.

Upon completion of the ground rules, I began by showing the group the results from the survey and posing questions as to their perception of the results. Following the quantitative discussion, the moderator posed open-ended questions to the group to have them describe their experiences with communication with individuals of different generations in the workplace providing further insight into how these differences may impact organizational relationships.

During the focus group, I recorded notes of the participants' responses and other observations of behaviors made by the participants. After the focus group, analysis involved aggregating the responses into themes based on each of the focus groups conducted.

Focus Group Data Analysis

Krueger and Casey (2000) suggest that focus group data analysis be purpose driven, such that “the depth or intensity of analysis is determined by the purpose of the study” (p. 127). They further suggest that during the analysis phase, the researcher continually weigh choices against two factors: available resources and the value of the new information (p. 127). During the focus group, I recorded key responses on large post-it notes and reviewed them with the participants to

clarify any statements that were made. Responses were captured based on each of the guided questions outlined earlier, as well as follow-up questions that were asked based on the direction of the dialogue.

Once each of the three focus groups was completed, I engaged in a deep review of the responses to identify key themes for each of the generational cohorts. For each generational cohort, the large post-it notes were taped onto a wall for further review. During this coding stage, using different color markers on separate coding sheets, I identified repeated words, phrases, and concepts.

Validity and Reliability

In discussing research validity and reliability, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) refer to the issues of data quality and inference quality. Tashakkori and Teddlie define data quality as “the degree to which the collected data meet the standards of quality to be considered valid and reliable” (p. 706). To determine data quality, Tashakkori and Teddlie suggest addressing the following questions related to validity and reliability: (a) Did we indeed capture the phenomenon or attribute that we intended to (or we believe we captured)? and (b) Did we accurately capture/represent these data? (p. 694). Tashakkori and Teddlie propose inference quality as a mixed methods term incorporating the quantitative internal validity and the qualitative trustworthiness and credibility.

Inference quality is the degree to which the interpretations and conclusions made on the basis of the results meet the professional standards of rigor, trustworthiness, and acceptability as well as the degree to which alternative plausible explanations for the obtained can be ruled out. Inference quality consists of design quality and interpretive rigor. (p. 709)

To address inference quality, Tashakkori and Teddlie suggested addressing the following questions related to (a) design quality: Where the procedures implemented with quality and

rigor? and (b) interpretive rigor: Are the results/findings interpreted in a defensible manner? (p. 694).

To assure validity and reliability the study used an established survey instrument that has been analyzed to have construct validity. In addition, the survey instrument has been used in other studies (Guan, 2009, McCann & Giles, 2006, 2007) showing consistency in its findings. In addition, I analyzed the validity of the current data using principal component analysis and reliability using Cronbach's alpha.

Design quality was further determined by showing the use of the sequential mixed method explanatory design was appropriate for addressing the research question. In addition, I employed the methods of reflexivity and member checks to assure trustworthiness for the qualitative portion of the study.

Reflexivity. In Hunt's article (2010) dealing with the habits and practice of conducting qualitative research, reflexivity is defined as "the process used to describe a researcher's sensitivity to the often subtle ways that their particular location, experience, worldview, and assumptions contribute to shaping the data that are collected and how they are analyzed" (p. 70).

As a Generation Xer, I have had the opportunity to work with individuals employed in the community colleges under study. My job duties require interaction on a daily basis with individuals from the other generational cohorts; as such, I have experienced and observed the different communication styles used between these individuals. To assure these experiences and biases did not impact the inferences made from the focus groups, I continuously reflected on their biases throughout the collection and analyses of these data. Upon completion of each focus group, I engaged in a reflexivity activity to determine any biases that may be present due to their own experiences with generational differences with communication. To assure separation of my

own experiences and that of the focus group participants, the researcher immediately conducted the process of identifying key themes that seemed to be prevalent in the participants' responses.

Mehra (2002) in her article on the inherent bias in qualitative research asserts the researcher should approach the study assuming the participants have the knowledge about a topic. Thus, the qualitative method has the potential to validate the experiences of the participants. It can bring value to their experiences in a way that makes them feel they are contributing to the body of research and literature on the topic. In this way, the role of the researcher in this study was to be an agent of interpreting the meaning of the participants' experiences.

Member checks. Qualitative research has been criticized for its inherently biased approach. For example, trustworthiness is a major issue in qualitative research. It is very important that researchers employ practices that enhance trustworthiness (Merriam, 2002). One method of trustworthiness is member checking. Member checking involves providing an opportunity for participants to review data that has been collected for appropriateness and accuracy (Bowen, 2005; Lichtman, 2012; Merriam, 2002). To enhance trustworthiness in this study, I employed the method of member checking. Member checking occurred after the focus groups. I selected two participants from each focus group to check the accuracy of the key statements scribe to assure the wording and information was captured correctly. I allowed the participants to check the phrases and ideas that were generated during the theme development process. Any edits suggested were incorporated into the final themes selected.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this sequential mixed methods explanatory study was to examine the communication styles used between individuals belonging to three generational cohorts employed within five community colleges located in South Texas. This study of intergenerational communication investigated the relationships between an individual's generation and the communication styles used with other generations and explored the influence of intergenerational communication styles on organizational relationships. This chapter presents results of the two quantitative and qualitative phases used in the study.

The quantitative section presents results in four sections: (a) demographics, (b) missing data and test of normality, (c) PCA, and (d) MANOVA analyses. The qualitative section presents results in two sections: profile of the participants in the focus groups along with the major themes and supporting statements extracted from the focus groups.

Quantitative Results

This study used the GPIC scale developed by McCann and Giles (2006) to test the relationship between the generational cohort and the communication style. The scale measured respondents' ratings of their communication experiences in generational in-groups and generational out-groups contexts.

Data screening. For this study, 454 individuals employed within the five community colleges completed the GPIC survey. This section provides results from the data screening. Prior to statistical analyses, these data were analyzed for missing data and normality of the factor scores. Seventeen respondents did not indicate how many years of employment they had with the college(s). Forty-six respondents did not provide ratings for the 23 perspective statements on the GPIC survey; therefore, these cases were removed from the database and subsequent analyses. In

addition, 23 respondents indicated the same generation as them when asked, “please select the generation group that is different than your own you are thinking about as you are answering the questions about intergenerational communication”; therefore, these 23 cases were removed from the database and subsequent analyses. There were 69 cases removed from the database, leaving 385 cases remaining for analysis.

Descriptive analysis. Table 4 shows the relationship between the generation of the respondent and the generation of the employee. Data show Veterans/Baby Boomers and Generation Xers chose each other at a higher rate than Millennials—about 60% to 40%, respectively. For Millennials, they chose the other two generational cohorts in about equal proportions.

Table 4

Relationship between Respondents and Employee Generations

Generation of Respondent	Intergenerational Communicants' Generations		
	Veterans/Baby Boomers	Generation Xers	Millennials
Veterans/Baby Boomers	--	91 (59.5%)	62 (40.5%)
Generation Xers	114 (59.1%)	--	79 (40.9%)
Millennials	19 (48.7%)	20 (51.3%)	--

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for years of employment, gender, and culture of the respondents, and generational cohort of respondents. Participants' years of service ranged from 1 to 35 years of employment. There were more female respondents. The majority of the respondents were Hispanic American. Most of the respondents indicated they were of the Generation Xers generational cohort. Most of the respondents indicated they were of the Generation Xers generational cohort at 50%.

Table 5

Statistics for Years of Employment, Gender, Culture, and Generational Cohort

	Number	Percentage
Years of Employment		
1 to 5 years	200	54.3
6 to 10 years	79	20.1
11 to 15 years	49	13.3
16 or more years	45	12.2
Gender		
Female	273	71.5
Male	109	28.5
Culture		
European American	84	21.9
Hispanic American	208	54.2
African American	48	12.5
Asian American	4	1.0
Other	40	10.4
Generational Cohort		
Veterans/Baby Boomers	153	39.7
Generation Xers	193	50.1
Millennials	39	10.1

Principal component analysis. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was performed using IBM-SPSS 19 ® on 24 items of the GPIC scale for a sample of 385 respondents. Principal components extraction was used to estimate number of factors, presence of outliers, absence of multicollinearity, and factorability of the correlation matrices. With an $\alpha = .001$ cutoff level, no cases were deleted from principal components extraction.

Four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted. The four factors explained 55% of the variance with a Cronbach's alpha of .70. The results of the PCA were as expected for the three factors identified by the authors (Accommodation, Nonaccommodation, and Respectful Avoidance). Four of the six items in the fourth component also converged in one of the other three factors. Previous research by Keaton and McCann (2011) examined the differences between the three- or four-factor models of the GPIC Survey. Results of the in-group and out-

group indices showed the three-factor model best represented the survey. For the purpose of this research analysis, only three factors were used. Appendix H shows the PCA results for the four-factor analyses that were conducted.

The PCA of the eight items measuring accommodation communication style forced to one component explained 58.75% of the variation among items with a Cronbach's alpha of .90 as shown in Table 6. Communalities and factor loadings were well within acceptable ranges for each item.

Table 6

PCA of Accommodation Communication Style

Item	Communalities	Factor Loadings	% Variance Explained	Alphas	Alpha if Item Deleted
			58.75	.90	
They were supportive	.74	.86			.87
They were helpful	.67	.82			.87
They gave useful advice	.48	.79			.89
They complimented me	.59	.78			.88
They had kind words for me	.62	.77			.88
They were considerate	.62	.77			.88
They comforted me	.39	.69			.90
They were nice to me	.59	.62			.88

The PCA of the six items measuring nonaccommodation communication style forced to one component explained 61.00% of the variation among items with a Cronbach's alpha of .87 as shown in Table 7. Communalities and factor loadings were well within acceptable ranges for each item.

Table 7

PCA of Nonaccommodation Communication Style

Item	Communalities	Factor Loadings	% Variance Explained	Alphas	Alpha if Item Deleted
			61.00	.87	
They ordered me to do things	.54	.86			.86
They acted superior to me	.74	.85			.83
They talked as if they knew more than me	.66	.80			.84
They spoke as if they were better than me	.73	.73			.83
They did not support my plans or ideas	.52	.72			.86
They criticized me	.49	.70			.86

The PCA of the ten items measuring respectful avoidance communication style forced to one component explained 66.77% of the variation among items with a Cronbach's alpha of .68 as shown in Table 8. Communalities were low, less than .30 for two of the items. However, deleting them would not have increased improved alpha but would have weakened the comparability of these results with those from other studies. Therefore, all items were included in further analysis.

Normality of data. Normality of the three factors was checked by examining the mean, median, skewness, and kurtosis scores. Table 9 shows the descriptive statistics for each variable. Based on the mean and median, there was support for the assumption of normality for each of the three variables. In addition, the kurtosis and skewness scores for the Accommodation and Respectful Avoidance variables supported the assumption of normality. However, the skewness and kurtosis scores for the Nonaccommodation variable did not support the assumption of normality. Normality was further explored by examining the histogram for each variable.

Table 8

PCA of Respectful Avoidance Communication Style

Item	Communalities	Factor Loadings	% Variance Explained	Alphas	Alpha if Item Deleted
			66.77	.68	
I spoke in a respectful manner	.64	.71			.66
I felt obliged to be polite	.24	.62			.66
I spoke in a polite way	.67	.63			.66
I did not criticize them	.49	.61			.66
I waited until asked to speak	.33	.51			.66
I held back my opinions	.50	.49			.65
I restrained myself from arguing with them	.44	.82			.63
I tried not to embarrass them	.21	.80			.66
I avoided conflicts with them	.45	.70			.62
I expressed my opinions indirectly	.40	.39			.64

Table 9

Statistics of the Three Dependent Variables

Dependent Variables	Mean	Median	Skewness	Kurtosis
Accommodation	3.50	3.50	-.234	-.172
Nonaccommodation	2.55	2.50	.244	-.687
Respectful Avoidance	3.39	3.40	.099	-.083

Figure 2 shows the histogram of scores for the Accommodation variable. Based on the histogram it was assumed these data do not come from a normal population. Other transformations were performed on these data: square root, log, inverse, and log10, to obtain normality. Normality was not better by conducting these additional transformations, thus based on the large sample size normality was assumed for this variable.

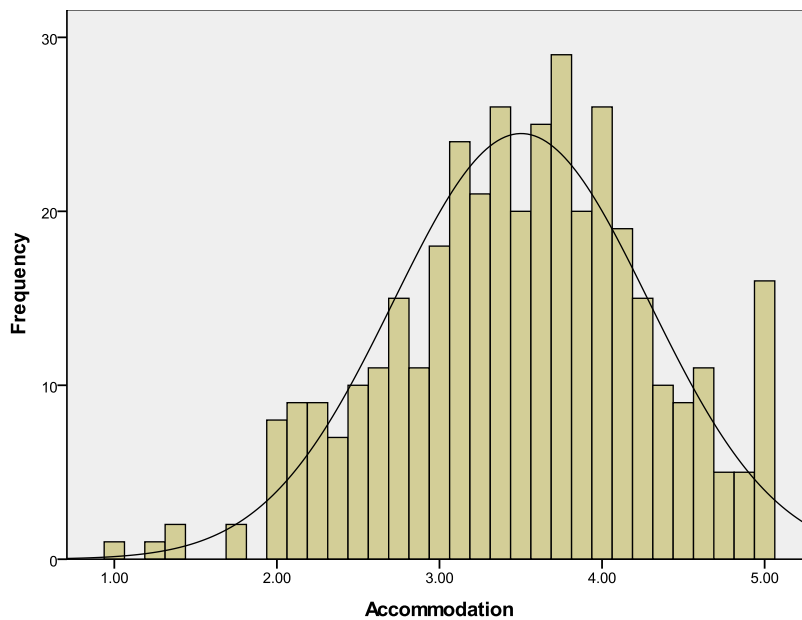


Figure 2. Histogram of accommodation scores

Figure 3 shows the histogram of scores for the Nonaccommodation variable. Based on the histogram it was assumed these data do not come from a normal population. Other transformations were performed on these data: square root, log, inverse, and log10, to obtain normality. Normality was not better by conducting these additional transformations, thus based on the large sample size normality were assumed for this variable.

Figure 4 shows the histogram of scores for the Respectful Avoidance variable. Based on the histogram it was assumed these data come from a normal population.

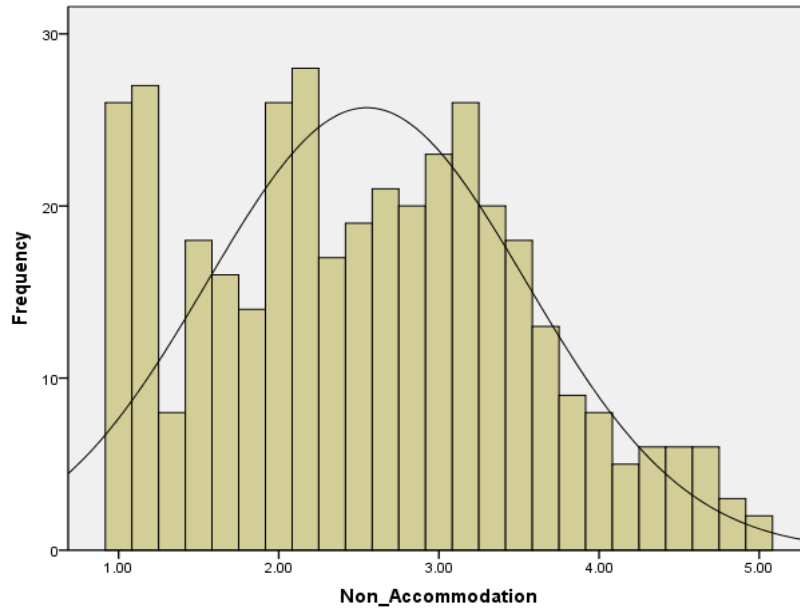


Figure 3. Histogram of nonaccommodation scores

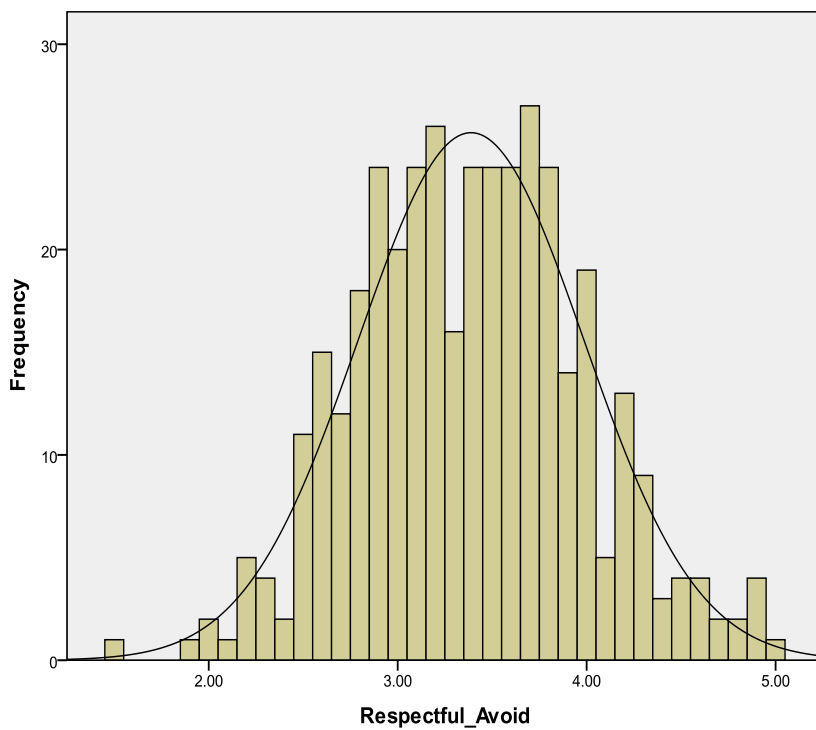


Figure 4. Histogram of respectful avoidance scores

Factorial MANOVA analysis. A 3 x 3 between-subjects factorial MANOVA was performed on the three dependent variables: accommodation, nonaccommodation, and respectful

avoidance with generational cohort of respondent and generational cohort of the employee as the independent variables.

The test of homogeneity of variance-covariance using Levene's Tests of Equality of Error Variances was not significant as shown in Table 10. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices $F(5, 379) = 27035.781, p = .995$ was not significant. Both not significant tests support the assumptions necessary for using a MANOVA.

Table 10

Levene's Tests of Equality of Error Variances

<u>Accommodation</u>	<u>Nonaccommodation</u>	<u>Respectful Avoidance</u>
<u>F(5, 379)</u>	<u>F(5, 379)</u>	<u>F(5, 379)</u>
.377	.569	1.087

Table 11 MANOVA results show there was no significant interaction between the generational cohort of the respondent and the generational cohort of the employee (GR x GE).

Main effects. Further review of these data did show a main effect for both generational cohort of respondent and generational cohort of employee. Table 13 shows for the generational cohort of the respondent (GR) main effect, there was a significant difference in nonaccommodation scores. However, there were no significant differences for accommodation and respectful avoidance. For the generational cohort of the employee (GE) main effect, there were significant differences among cohorts for all communication styles.

Table 11

Multivariate and Univariate Analysis of Variance F Ratios for Generational Cohort of Respondent by Generational of Employee Effects for Communication Style Measures

Variable	ANOVA			
	MANOVA	Accommodation	Nonaccommodation	Respectful Avoidance
	$F(5, 379)$	$F(5, 379)$	$F(5, 379)$	$F(5, 379)$
GR	2.32*	1.035	4.908*	1.066
GE	7.64**	6.461*	5.222*	9.062**
GR x GE	.84	.573	.258	1.854

Note: Multivariate F ratios were generated from Pillai's statistic. MANOVA = Multivariate Analysis of Variance; ANOVA = Analysis of Variance.

* $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$.

Posthoc tests. Posthoc analyses Bonferroni and Scheffe were conducted on the significant main effects for generational cohort of the respondents and generational cohort of the employee. Results of the analyses are discussed below.

Posthoc tests for accommodation. Posthoc analyses showed significant differences for accommodation among employees. Bonferroni results showed there were significant differences between Millennials and the other generational cohorts, Veterans//Baby Boomers, $p = .005$ and Generation Xers, $p = .027$. Further analysis using Scheffe showed Millennial employees were rated lower on their perceived use of accommodation communication, $\bar{X} = 3.32$ than Veterans/Baby Boomers and Generation Xers employees, $\bar{X} = 3.62$ and $\bar{X} = 3.58$, respectively.

Thus, Millennials were less likely to use an accommodation style of communication with the other generations.

Posthoc tests for nonaccommodation. Posthoc analyses showed there were significant differences between the Veterans/Baby Boomers respondents and the other cohorts, Generation Xers, $p = .009$ and Millennials, $p = .000$, and between Generation Xers and Millennials, $p = .030$. Further analysis using Scheffe showed Millennial respondents reported more nonaccommodation communication, $\bar{X} = 3.06$ than Generation Xer, $\bar{X} = 2.63$ and Vets/Baby Boomers, $\bar{X} = 2.32$ respondents. Thus, Millennials perceived more nonaccommodation communication from the other generational cohorts.

Results also showed significant differences for nonaccommodation among the three generational cohorts of employees. There were significant differences between Veterans/Baby Boomers and the other generational cohorts, Generation Xers, $p = .000$ and Millennials, $p = .000$. Further analysis using Scheffe showed Veterans/Baby Boomer employees were rated higher on nonaccommodation, $\bar{X} = 2.88$ than Generation Xer, $\bar{X} = 2.37$ and Millennial, $\bar{X} = 2.38$ employees. Thus, Veterans/Baby Boomers employees are more likely to use a nonaccommodation communication with the younger generations.

Posthoc tests for respectful avoidance. Posthoc analyses showed significant differences for respectful avoidance among employees. There were significant differences between Veterans/Baby Boomers and the other generational cohorts, Millennials, $p = .000$ and Generation Xers, $p = .005$. Further analysis using Scheffe showed respondents rated higher their use of respectful avoidance communication with Veterans/Baby Boomer employees, $\bar{X} = 3.56$ than with Millennials, $\bar{X} = 3.27$ and Generation Xers, $\bar{X} = 3.33$ employees. Thus, Millennials and

Generation Xers are more likely to use respectful avoidance communication with Veterans/Baby Boomers.

Summary of the Quantitative Results

Results of the survey analysis showed the combination of the participants' generation and the generation of the employee they are communicating with did not make a difference in communication style scores. However, there was a significant difference for the nonaccommodation communication style based on the respondent's generation. Respondents of the Millennial generation perceived more use of the nonaccommodation communication style. In addition, there were significant differences for the three communication styles depending on the generation of the employee. Respondents perceived Millennials as being less accommodating and Veterans/Baby Boomers as being more nonaccommodating in their communication. As well, respondents indicated more use of respectful avoidance more often with Veterans/Baby Boomers.

Qualitative Results

This research used data collected from three intra-generational focus groups to determine how individuals describe their experiences with intergenerational communication in the workplace that may affect organizational relationships. Participants were invited to participate in the focus group based on their likely encounters with other generations when communicating in the workplace. For example, employees who are working in a large department with several employees representing the various generations or serving on one or more cross-college committees with a charge to address various student success initiatives such as student advising, student retention, and student completion. Although the quantitative phase of the study combined the Veterans and Baby Boomers into one cohort, only individuals who fell within the Baby

Boomer age range volunteered to participate in the focus group. Therefore, when discussing the results from the focus group, I only reference the Baby Boomers. Each focus group conducted at one of the participating institutions or a central location lasted one hour. There were four to five individuals in each focus group.

Demographics. Table 12 outlines the overall demographics of the three focus groups in terms of gender, culture backgrounds, age ranges, and the job categories representing the Administrators and Staff.

Five individuals participated in the Baby Boomer focus group. The individuals ranged in age from 53 to 60. Participants were all female. Two participants were African-American, two participants were Hispanic, and one White. Participants represented both Administrators as Deans and Staff as Directors and Program Managers.

Four individuals participated in the Generation Xers focus group. The individuals ranged in age from 38 to 52. There were three male participants and one female participant. Two of the participants were Hispanic, one White, and one African-American. The Generation Xers focus group participants represented Staff as Director, Associate Director, and other professional staff job categories.

Four individuals participated in the Millennial focus group. The individuals ranged in age from 25 to 32. There were two male participants and two female participants. Two of the participants were African-American and two participants were Hispanic. The Millennial focus group participants represented the Staff category as Director, Program Manager, and the Administrative Assistant job categories.

Table 12

Demographic Profile of the Focus Group Participants

Focus Group Demographics							
Cohorts	Gender		Cultural Background			Age Range	Job Categories
	M	F	H	W	AA		
Baby Boomers	0	5	2	1	2	53 to 60	Vice President, Dean, Directors, Program Manager
Generation Xers	1	3	2	1	1	38 to 52	Director, Associate Director, Professional Staff
Millennials	2	2	2	0	2	25 to 32	Program Manager, Director, Admin. Assistants

I asked the following questions of the focus group participants:

1. How do the results of the study relate to your experiences in the workplace? Are any of the results surprising?
2. In your opinion, how does generational differences influence organization relationships related to collaboration, conflict, cooperation, and tension? Could you describe them?
3. From your perspective, how does communication between individuals of the different generations impact the workplace?
4. Have you ever personally encountered a conflict or a potential conflict with someone in the organization that was the result of generational differences? Please describe.
5. What are your thoughts about the reasons nonaccommodating communication among individuals of different generations is used in the workplace? Any thoughts about the other communication styles: accommodation and respectful avoidance?
6. What are some strategies that can be implemented to remove the barriers to effective communication between individuals of different generations?

Discussed below are the emergent themes extracted from each of the focus groups. For each theme, the discussion provides examples of the supporting statements from the participants that addressed that particular theme. The tables provide key supporting statements from the participants followed by a discussion of the statements.

Discussion of Themes for Baby Boomers

The following discussion provides an overview of the two main themes from the Baby Boomer generation focus group: Those Millennials and My Leadership Role. Table 13 and Table 14 outline statements by the Baby Boomer focus group participants that speak to their overall perspective and experiences when communicating with individuals of a different generation. In addition, Table 15 outlines the improvement strategies identified by the participants in suggesting ways to help improve the communication between individuals of different generations.

Table 13

Baby Boomer Focus Group Key Theme—Those Millennials

Those Millennials	
Supporting Statements	Working with Millennial students, I find them rude, mindless, and confrontational
	I didn't recognize the rudeness, mindlessness, and confrontational attitude in this group
	Rude in their communication, no filter. They say what they want to say
	Smart, kind, honest, great sense of humor and respect for others
	Expect Millennial generations to be task-oriented

Those millennials. The first theme identified by the Baby Boomer focus group participants was Those Millennials. Within this theme are statements made by the Baby Boomer participants focusing on their interactions with the Millennial generation. In their responses, it

was evident that the Baby Boomer participants see the Millennial generation as needing their help. Specifically, one participant discussed trying to assist Millennial students in and out of the classroom, stating, “I was trying to communicate with the student to explain why she wasn’t progressing in the course. I could not communicate with her. I had to show her deficit before being able to communicate.”

The Baby Boomers participants spoke of the “deficit” character of the Millennial generation (students and employees), “don’t recognize protocols,” “mindlessness,” “rudeness,” and “confrontational.” Furthermore, they characterized Millennials as lacking social skills. The participants linked the Millennials lack of social skills to their dominant advances in technology. However, one Baby Boomer participant did not recognize these characteristics in Millennials. The participant identified Millennials as “smart, kind, honest, and having respect for others.”

While there was great focus on the Millennial generation, participants also highlighted communication issues with members of the Generation Xers cohort. Most of the responses made about Generation Xers were value-based characterizations rather than differences in communication styles. Baby Boomer participants spoke of the Generation Xers as being “skeptical and careful about their duties.” One participant suggested their skepticism and carefulness in duties “keep the work from getting done” by “slowing things down.”

Table 14

Baby Boomer Focus Group Key Theme—My Leadership Role

My Leadership Role	
Supporting Statements	Couldn't communicate with her, I had to show her deficit
	Greater responsibility to redirect, for their growth
	There is tension, as the adult in the situation, my job is to redirect
	They don't recognize the protocols
	Not allowing me to help them move up
Not valuing my experiences and expertise	

My leadership role. The second theme from the Baby Boomer focus group was My Leadership Role. Many of the comments made in the focus group dealt with participants feeling a leadership and/or guidance role with the other generations, especially Millennials. One participant spoke of the lack of recognition of protocols, stating “not allowing me to help them move up, not allowing me to pass on these values.” It was discussed how “there is a greater responsibility to redirect, for their growth,” and “as the adult in the situation, my job is to redirect.”

When asked the strategies needed to improve the communication between the generations, a Baby Boomer focus group participant stated there are four steps to improvement. The fourth step identified was a need to communicate with the other generations that there are consequences to their behavior and using their communication with them as a “coachable moment.”

Table 15

Baby Boomer Focus Group Key Theme—Improvement Strategies

Improvement Strategies	
Supporting Statements	Mix them up on purpose.
	Listen and speak from the other generational perspective
	Tap into common pool of civility
	Immediately address it; Change it to make it an advantage in facilitating the conversation

Improvement strategies. The Baby Boomer focus group participants identified three additional strategies for improving communication in the workplace among employees of different generations. The first strategy identified was to mix them up on purpose. Participants suggested there should be an intentional process for assuring that individuals of different generations are purposely put in situations to work together. Participants discussed how mixing up the generations can lead to the second strategy, listening and speaking from the other generational perspective.

As a third strategy, one participant believes tapping into the common pool of civility would help to improve communication between the generations. It was suggested that individuals acting civil towards each other regardless of generation would help to alleviate any conflict or tension between them. The final strategy discussed was for employees to immediately address any conflict and/or tension among generations and make it an advantage in facilitating conversations about generational differences.

Discussion of Themes for Generation Xers

The following section provides an overview of the two main themes: Just Raw...Curt and Changing of the Guard for the Generation Xers focus group. Table 16 and Table 17 outline statements made by the focus group participants that speak to the overall perspective and experiences of the Generation Xers cohort. In addition, Table 18 discusses the strategies the participants identified that can help improve the communication in the workplace between individuals of different generations.

Table 16

Generation Xers Focus Group Key Theme—Just Raw...Curt

Just Raw...Curt	
Supporting Statements	Difference between giving castor oil versus cherry-flavored Nyquil
	Baby Boomers more cut throat; Generation X friendlier, more competitive, like to network
	You are wet behind the ears and you're green
	Messages are way too rough, not appropriate
	Can you get help? Implying I couldn't do it on my own because I was younger
	Generation Xers would have put syrup on it. Baby Boomers are very matter of fact
Baby Boomers are very clandestine. Telling you what you need to know, but not telling you everything, Harder to approach	

Just raw...curt. The first theme identified among the Generation Xers focus group was labeled Just Raw...Curt. Within this theme, the participants discussed the differences between their communication style in the workplace and that of the Baby Boomer generation. Participants described Baby Boomers as using communication that was much more “rough”, “inappropriate”,

and “very matter of fact.” As one participant described it, Baby Boomer and Generation Xers different communication styles is like being given “castor oil” versus “cherry-flavored Nyquil.” The participants also spoke of the Baby Boomers’ “clandestine” communication style in the workplace. They discussed the way Baby Boomer employees communicate with you by “telling you what you need to know, but not telling you everything” and how they are “harder to approach.”

When asked to discuss an experience that occurred where conflict or potential conflict may have been a result of generational differences, one participant described a recent “taboo” event that occurred in the workplace. The event involved several employees coming together to learn the status of their job. The focus group participant described the discussion led by a Baby Boomer as clandestine in the way they did not fully disclose everything to help individuals understand the current situation. Referencing the same taboo event another participant involved in planning the meetings reminded the leaders who would be providing the status update that “people would be looking for compassion” and “how much you care.” The participant stated he felt this was necessary because during a previous discussion, the leaders were “too raw and curt” and did not show any “compassion for the individuals in the room.”

Table 17

Generation Xers Focus Group Key Theme—Changing of the Guard

Changing of the Guard	
Supporting Statements	Many years of service to the organization
	Generational factors have become business factors
	Older Baby Boomers are hitting retiring age; protective of their turf
	Baby Boomers think there is one way of doing things
	Need to respect the change; That is the old way of doing things; There can be short cuts, what each individual brings to the table
	It's not the way I would've done it
Respect your elders	

Changing of the guard. The second theme identified from the Generation X focus group was the Changing of the Guard theme. Throughout the focus group, Generation Xers participants talked about the “old ways” of doing things by the Baby Boomers and the lack of Baby Boomers to see there are some “short-cuts” to doing things.

One focus group member talked about a recent discussion regarding the implementation of a policy. The participant referenced how the Baby Boomer leading the discussion was “stressing” that the policy is clear about the procedures required in a certain situation. The focus group participant felt the “assumed protocol” did not take into account other forms of communication used by the newer generation, such as text messaging. The participant saw the unwillingness to interpret the protocol differently was a “failure to respect the change.”

One participant was on the cusp of the Baby Boomer and Generation Xers cohorts. When discussing a conflict in the workplace due to generational differences the participant described an incident, in which a member of the Millennial generation was not following proper protocol.

After describing the incident, the participant stated, “I had to realize they thought differently” and “I had to adapt and accept that people do things differently.”

Although, a substantial amount of time was spent discussing the differences in communication style related to differences among the Generation Xers participants and Baby Boomer employees, toward the end of the focus group a participant relayed the experiences with having two Millennial supervisors. The participant stated these were “remarkable experiences” in that the Millennial supervisor “managed the communication very well,” “what I said mattered . . . valued what I had to say,” and “I felt valued.” I probed further as to the words communicated that made the participant feel valued. The participant stated the words were “what do you think?”, “what are your thoughts on this?”, and “how should we handle this?” The participant felt the supervisor communicated a “we thing” in the relationship. Another participant aware of the Millennial supervisor stated, “Baby Boomer leaders valued her respectfulness because she respected the authority role and was very accommodating.”

Improvement strategies. The Generation Xers participants identified four strategies for improving communication between the generations. The first strategy identified was training. They felt training would explain the generational differences and help the generations to see themselves in others. The second strategy identified was to not focus on the generational differences; however, focus on the person by being aware of their differences and respecting those differences. The third strategy expanded on the second one by suggesting suspending the perceptions of generational differences along with suggesting having individuals, Baby Boomers specifically see the importance of inter-generational socialization in the workplace.

Table 18

Generation Xers Focus Group Key Theme—Improvement Strategies

Improvement Strategies	
Supporting Statements	Explain generational differences. Help generations to see themselves in others.
	Do not focus on the generation, focus on the person. Be aware and respect.
	Suspend perceptions. Baby Boomers need to see that socialization is important
	Too much emphasis on training. Some things cannot be trained like people's belief systems. Changed habits, change belief systems.

While the majority of the focus group participants agreed on the need for training as an improvement strategy, one participant stated there was “too much emphasis on training” and “some things can’t be trained such as people belief systems, and that only by changing habits can you change belief systems.” In addition, the participant stated, “power and status influences the workplace more so than the generations.”

Discussion of Themes for Millennials

The following section provides an overview of the two main themes Direct Mail and No Communication for the Millennial generation focus group. Table 19 and Table 20 outline statements made by the participants that speak to the overall perspective and experiences of the Millennial generation when communicating with individuals of the other generations. In addition, Table 21 discusses the strategies the participants identified to help improve the communication in the workplace between individuals of different generations.

Table 19

Millennials Focus Group Key Theme—Direct Mail

Direct Mail	
Supporting Statements	Impact a lot, not stuck in protocol and procedures, freer with thoughts, considered abrasive or aggressive
	I agree, more direct approach to address issues, no dancing around, seen as aggressive or rude
	Lacked appropriate communication, needed to be more direct in what they wanted
	Was not able to communicate; Directly asked what needed to be done Thought to be abrasive and authoritative.
	Now that we are not working together, communication is better
Communication between Millennials is very direct	

Direct mail. The first theme identified with the Millennial focus group was Direct Mail. Within this theme are statements made by the participants where their comments on intergenerational communication referred to their interactions with the other generations. They indicated that communication between the generations impacted the workplace “a lot.” The participants characterized their communication style as more “direct” than the other generations. They indicated being more “freer with thoughts” and “not stuck in protocol and procedures.” However, the Millennial participants felt their direct and freer communication style lead to them being characterized as “rude,” “abrasive,” “authoritative,” and “aggressive.”

Table 20

Millennials Focus Group Key Theme—No Communication

No Communication	
Supporting Statements	Miscommunication, limited in what is shared; Seen as a threat; Been here longer, not going to share
	Caused miscommunication, no communication due to the barrier
	Baby Boomer, no communication; did not know how to communicate with me; He got disrespected easily
	Wasn't able to communicate; Directly asked what needed to be done; Thought to be abrasive and authoritative
	Ordered to communicate limited information; Unrealistic request
Unspoken tension	

No communication. The second theme identified from the Millennial focus group was No Communication. There were a number of ideas shared about the miscommunication in the workplace between them and the other generations. They talked about how this miscommunication led to “no communication,” “unnecessary tension,” and feelings of “disrespect” and a “high peak of frustration.” The participants shared several experiences with conflict among the generations that were due to differences in communication. One focus group participant discussed working with a Baby Boomer employee and how there was not any communication between the two of them because the Baby Boomer employee “did not know how to communicate with me” and “got disrespected easily.”

For the focus group participants, most of the communication conflict had to do with job duties and work flow. One focus group participant discussed an incident with an employee of an older generation,

the older generation employee did not know how to use the system to assist students. I tried to show them how to use the system. She did not like the way I communicated with them and this caused them not to learn how to use the system. The communication barrier with the system caused miscommunication, no communication between us. This lasted a year and we had to pick up the slack because she could not use the system.

Another focus group participant discussed a similar situation with a Baby Boomer employee. They talked about how the Baby Boomer employee had “no computer savvy” leading to miscommunication between the two of them. The focus group participant talked about how he ended up “doing the work for you” because “it’s faster to do it than trying to communicate verbally.”

Similarly, another focus group participant discussed the “no communication” with an older coworker that led to a “high peak of frustration” and “unspoken tension.” The participant talked about not only their age being a factor, but feeling their gender was a factor as well. When asked by another focus group participant how long it took to resolve the conflict, they replied “a year.” When asked what led to the resolution of the conflict, the participant stated, “I spoke to the supervisor to assist the employee with work while Baby Boomer employee was on leave. Seeing the act, the employee attitude changed, more appreciative of me.” The focus group participant added, “now that we are not working together, communication is better.”

When the focus group participants were asked about the use of the three communication styles under study: accommodation, nonaccommodation, and respectful avoidance, they all agreed they have used the respectful avoidance communication style. One focus group participant discussed using all the respectful avoidance communication statements. They stated, “Use when unnecessary tension that has been built...walking on eggshells. Use everything listed. For example, when they are speaking, I won’t stop them, wait for them to stop talking to walk away.” Other participants indicated they use the respectful avoidance communication style, “when I don’t know the person very well,” “used with other individuals . . . respect elders, even

in the workplace,” and “used when trying to build a relationship.” A focus group participant talked about issues with using the respectful avoidance communication style with other generations in that it is “not mutual.” They stated, “when using the respectful avoidance communication style with an employee of another generation I receive the nonaccommodation communication back.”

Table 21

Millennials Focus Group Key Theme—Improvement Strategies

Improvement Strategies	
Supporting Statements	Training; Use of Technology
	Not enough teambuilding
	Believe with knowledge comes understanding
	Managers setting expectations for employees working together

Improvement strategies. The Millennial focus group participants identified three strategies for improving communication between individuals of different generations. Use of technology training was the first strategy identified. The participants believe the lack of technological knowledge by the older generations causes communication barriers with the other generations. The second strategy identified dealt with Millennials feeling there are not enough teambuilding activities in the workplace. The participants do not think team-building exercises have to become “too personal.”

The final improvement strategy identified deals with managers setting expectations for employees who are working together. The Millennial focus group participants believe managers are responsible for communicating expectations of their work behavior when working with others. The participants further explained how the lack of expectations by managers leads to

miscommunication or no communication between employees when there are disagreements or tension in the office setting.

Summary of the Qualitative Results

Results of the focus group analyses showed there were some key differences in communication experiences that differed across the generations. Each of the generational focus group members identified key aspects of their communication experiences with individuals of a different generation. Both Generation Xers and Millennials highlighted the difficulty they experience when communicating with a Baby Boomer employee. For example, Generation Xers discussed the harsh and inappropriate communication of the Baby Boomers. The Millennials discussed the lack of communication or miscommunication between them and Baby Boomers due to a lack of understanding their direct communication style or their ability to multitask effectively in the completion of their work. Baby Boomer focus group participants highlighted their difficult communication experiences with Millennials, such that Millennials can be rude and abrasive as well as unwilling to allow them to lead and guide them.

Interpretation of the Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses

Using the embedded mixing method in the current study, I was able to situate the second qualitative phase of the study using focus groups into the larger quantitative study using the GPIC survey. The overall findings link the key themes from the focus group to the results of the survey analysis. Figure 5 through Figure 7 illustrates the link between the survey and focus group findings by aligning the communication perception statements by the three factors of the survey with some of the key supporting statements that emerged from the focus groups.

Table 22 shows the integration of some of the perception statements for accommodation and the key themes that emerged from the focus groups that highlights the communication

experiences of the three generational cohorts that speak to how accommodation or the lack thereof plays out in the workplace. Based on the survey findings Millennials employees, chosen by 40% of the Vets/Baby Boomers and Generation Xers respondents, were rated lower on their use of accommodation style of communication. Subsequently, in the focus group Baby Boomers highlighted how the communication of Millennials is rude and mindless. In addition, Generation Xers focus group participants also highlighted the lack of accommodation communication from the Baby Boomer employees, chosen by 59% of the Generation Xers in the survey, by being very matter of fact and clandestine in their communication which for them shows a lack of consideration and respect. However, one Baby Boomer focus member had kind words to say about the Millennial group, saying they are “smart, kind, honest, great sense of humor and had respect for others.”

Table 22

Integration of survey and focus group findings for accommodation

	Perceived Communication With . . .	Example Survey Statements	Example Focus Group Statements
Veterans/ Baby Boomers	Millennials Less Accommodation	They were considerate	They were mindless and confrontational
Generation Xers	Millennials Less Accommodation	They had kind words for me	They were rude in their communication, no filter
Generation Xers	Veterans/Baby Boomers Less Accommodation	They were supportive	You are wet behind the ears and you're green
Millennials	Veterans/Baby Boomers Less Accommodation	They were nice to me	

Table 23 shows the integration of the perception statements for nonaccommodation and the key themes that emerged from the focus groups that highlights the experiences of the three generational cohorts that speak to how nonaccommodation communication plays out in the workplace. Based on the survey findings Veterans/Baby Boomer employees, chosen by 49% of

Millennials in the survey, were rated higher on their use of nonaccommodation communication. In addition, Millennial employees were more likely to perceive the use of nonaccommodation communication than the other generations. Subsequently, in the focus group Millennials highlighted various experiences with Baby Boomers that speak to the nonaccommodation communication style from them being criticized for been abrasive and aggressive to being ordered to do things, such as communicate limit information, for which they are not comfortable doing. Generation Xers also find the Baby Boomer communication as nonaccommodating in terms of them being stuck in protocols and procedures and thinking there is only one way to do something.

Table 23

Integration of survey and focus group findings for nonaccommodation

	Perceived Communication With . . .	Example Survey Statements	Example Focus Group Statements
Veterans/ Baby Boomers	Millennials More Nonaccommodation	They talked as if they knew more than me	Not valuing my experiences and expertise Couldn't communicate with her, I had to show her deficit
Generation Xers	Veterans/Baby Boomers More Nonaccommodation	They did not support my plans or ideas They criticized me	Baby Boomers think there is one way of doing things It's not the way I would've done it Messages are way too rough, not appropriate
Millennials	Veterans/Baby Boomers More Nonaccommodation	They ordered me to do things They criticized me	Ordered to communicate limited information, unrealistic request Seen as aggressive or rude. Freer thoughts considered abrasive or aggressive

Table 24 shows the integration of the perception statements for respectful avoidance and the key themes that emerged from the focus groups that highlights the experiences of the three generational cohorts that speak to how respectful avoidance communication plays out in the workplace. Based on the survey findings, the younger respondents (Millennials and Generation Xers) indicated higher use of respectful avoidance communication than the Baby Boomers, chosen by 57% of the Millennials and Generation Xers in the survey. Subsequently, in the focus groups Millennials highlighted various experiences with Baby Boomers that speak to their use of the respectful communication style from expressing their opinion indirectly because their direct communication style is often viewed as abrasive or rude by Baby Boomers. In addition, the focus group participants spoke of waiting to speak and how they avoid conflict through no communication; however, they recognize no communication or miscommunication leads to unspoken tension and feeling as if they are walking on eggshells.

Table 24

Integration of survey and focus group findings for respectful avoidance

	Perceived Communication With . . .	Example Survey Statements	Example Focus Group Statements
Millennials	Veterans/Baby Boomers Respectful Avoidance	I avoided conflicts with them	Unspoken tension
		I held back my opinions	Walking on eggshells
		I waited until asked to speak	When they are speaking, I won't stop them I wait for them to stop talking to walk away
		I restrained myself from arguing with them	Its faster to do the work than trying to communicate verbally

Summary of Analyses

In summary, using the sequential mixed method research style demonstrated that although there was no support for the interaction between the generational cohort an individual belongs and the generational cohort of the employee; there is enough evidence to support the overall research question. Using the GPIC survey, findings showed perceived differences in the use of the three communication styles among the generations. In addition, key themes emerged from the intergenerational focus groups that highlighted these different communication experiences in the workplace. Thus, the survey and focus group findings together showed differences among the generational cohorts' styles of communication. Baby Boomers are more likely to be perceived as using the nonaccommodation communication style. Employees of the other generations highlight their workplace experiences with the Baby Boomer who are using the nonaccommodation communication style. As well, the younger generations, more specifically Millennials, tend to use more of the respectful avoidance communication style than do the other generations. Below is a further discussion of these findings as it relates to the theoretical framework used in the study and the implications for higher education institutions, such as community colleges.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this sequential mixed methods explanatory study was to examine the communication styles used between individuals belonging to three generational cohorts employed within five community colleges located in South Texas. This study of intergenerational communication investigated the relationships between an individual's generation and the communication styles used with other generations and explored the influence of intergenerational communication styles on organizational relationships. This chapter highlights the key findings from the study and their relationship to the current literature.

The discussion also highlights the emergence of key insights focused on the way individuals interpret others' value systems based on their communication experiences with these individuals. The discussion uses the social identity theory and the Communications Accommodation Theory (CAT) frameworks to explain these different in-group and out-group communication experiences. The chapter concludes with potential implications for community colleges dealing with the impact intergenerational communication has on organizational relationships: (a) change and knowledge management, (b) training, and (c) recommendations for future research.

Key Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Using a two-phase data collection strategy – quantitative and qualitative – result of the study showed there are perceived communication style differences among individuals of the three generational cohorts. Below are the key findings based on the overall and two supporting research questions addressed in the study.

Research question one. *When interacting with someone of a different generation do individuals perceive differences in their own and others' communication?*

The study used the GPIC scale (Guan, 2009; McCann & Giles, 2006) to assess individuals' perceptions of intergenerational communication. The GPIC scale assesses how individuals' perceive their own and others' communication styles. The GPIC scale is a 24-item Likert scale measuring respondents' communication style on three factors: accommodation, nonaccommodation, and respectful avoidance. Accommodation refers to the behaviors that can confirm or identify in-group membership and characterized as satisfying conversations. Nonaccommodation refers to those behaviors that can distinguish people from another group and characterized as dissatisfying conversations. Respectful avoidant communication refers to certain reluctance to accommodate behaviors and communications.

For this study, due to the small number of Veteran employees within the population along with the research that discusses the issue of the generational cusp, I combined the Veteran cohort with the Baby Boomers to form the Veterans/Baby Boomers cohort. Three hundred and eighty-five participants' responses were included in the data analysis. Overall, the younger Generation Xer and Millennial generational cohorts perceived less satisfying communication experiences with the older Veterans/Baby Boomers generation. Specifically, Millennial respondents perceived more use of nonaccommodation by the other generations. For respectful avoidance communication, Generation Xer and Millennial respondents perceived themselves as using more respectful avoidance communication with Veterans/Baby Boomer employees than with each other.

These findings are consistent with the literature on intergenerational communication differences among older and younger employees (Du, 2011, Giles, et al., 2010; Guan, 2009; McCann & Giles, 2006, Siebert, 2008). The research showed that younger employees were more likely to indicate using nonaccommodation communication with their older supervisors and

peers. As well, younger employees were more likely to indicate using respectful avoidance communication with their older supervisors and coworkers and less respectful avoidance with their peers. Zhang and Lin (2009) found criticism as a frequently reported nonaccommodation communication style among older adults. Based on the quantitative findings of perceived communication differences among the generations I used the focus group methodology to explore how individuals of the different generations experience communication in the workplace, answering the second research question.

Research question two. *How do individuals describe their experiences with intergenerational communication in the workplace and their influence on organizational relationships?*

To address the second research question three intra-generational focus groups were conducted with four to five participants per focus group. The key themes identified suggest differences in communication experiences among the generations that are influencing relationships in the workplace. The Baby Boomers find their communication experiences to be problematic with Millennials. Baby Boomers focus group participants discussed how Millennials are rude and confrontational in their communication, which causes the inability for Baby Boomers to guide and lead individuals that are members of the Millennial generation. These findings can be linked to other research showing Veterans and Baby Boomers have a desire to be task-oriented, have a strong work ethic (Bartley et al., 2007) and are highly driven (Zemke et al., 2000).

Similarly, Millennials found their communication experiences to be problematic with the Baby Boomer generation as they attempt to be more direct and freer with their thoughts. The Millennial focus group participants recognized that members of the older generations view this

type of communication as abrasive and aggressive. The Millennial focus group participants discussed while they are confident in their ability to multitask, when assigning tasks Baby Boomers communicate with them in a way that suggests they do not understand this ability of Millennials. Zhang and Lin (2009) echoed this finding noting young respondents viewed older individuals' criticism as inappropriate and patronizing. Similarly, the Generation Xer focus group participants characterized the Baby Boomer communication as rough and inappropriate.

Results of the two supporting research questions show there are communication style differences among the generations while also addressing the overall research question: *What are the communication styles of the generations?* When communicating with someone of a different generation, results of both the survey and focus group show typically the nonaccommodation communication style characterizes the Veterans/Baby Boomers whereas the respectful avoidance communication style typically characterizes Generation Xers and Millennials. Further review of the results highlighted some underlying values that are expressed within an individual's style of communication. Below is a discussion about the role communication plays in developing and reinforcing the one's values, especially as it relates to the differences among the generations.

Discussion

Values translate into behavior, what people value is fundamental to their sense of self, and in this case, their in-group peers. Therefore, individuals are likely to see themselves or others through the communication of these values. The level of value congruence determines the extent of communication effectiveness between individuals. Thus, individuals who differ in their values may experience more communication difficulties (Ayoko, 2007). For example, Millennials direct communication style and being freer with their thoughts when communicating aligns with the values of confidence and optimism often used to describe them (Bartley et al., 2007; Lancaster &

Stillman, 2002; Zemke et al., 2000). Herriot (2002) found that revealing shared values through communication enables coworkers to forge and sustain productive organizational relationships. In addition, Schullery (2013) suggests an exploration of employees' underlying values can illuminate effective approaches toward engagement.

To understand fully the impact intergenerational communication can have on organizational relationships it is important to explore the value system that underlies the different generational cohorts' communication styles. The value system of the generations is one that both the popular press (Quinn, 2010; Wagner, 2007) and empirical literature (Goldman, 2010; Green, 2008; Westerman & Yamamura, 2006) as focused great attention on as a factor influencing the differences among the generations. Gibson (2009) suggests that understanding the core values and communication patterns of the different generations can enhance intergenerational communication between them.

This study focused on the communication experiences between the generations that influence these value differences. Some of the findings from the study, the focus group especially, relates back to work values. One member of the Generation Xers focus group when asked about improvement strategies stated, "We all have traits of other generations, highlight those traits, identify with them first, do not stereotype." The discussion below frames the key findings from the study to the underlying values expressed among individuals of the different generational cohorts.

Communication and values. The findings that emerged from this study suggest that while participants indicated some differences in communication experiences based on their own and others' generational cohort some of the same values underline the communication styles used between them. Research (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010) suggests that the different ways of

communicating their values is what results in conflict and tension among the various generations. Discussed below are the three key values that emerged from the study based on the participants' communication experiences: respect, trust, and openness.

Respect. While discussing their communication experiences, members of all three focus groups discussed the value of respect. During the focus groups, each generational group discussed respect differently based on their communication experiences. For example, the Generation Xers discussed the raw, cutthroat, and rough communication style of the Baby Boomers. The Generation Xers feel Baby Boomers expect them to have a tougher skin and respect how and what they are told. However, Generation Xers have a difficult time respecting what they are being told when they perceive the Baby Boomer communication as rough and inappropriate.

Some members of the Baby Boomer generational cohort often see the Millennials direct ("say what they want to say"), free and fast communication style as rude and abrasive. Individuals often characterize this type of communication style as disrespectful. In addition, members of the Baby Boomers describe the younger generation, Millennials especially, as lacking respect in that they do not recognize protocols and they do not value the experiences and knowledge of the Baby Boomers. Generation Xers participants' also discussed how their ability to follow procedures and protocols is often used by Baby Boomers to measure their level of respect. Members of the Millennial generation describe tension and conflict that lead to miscommunication with the older generation, Baby Boomers especially, when they are trying to communicate with them about the use of technology. Millennials perceive Baby Boomers feel disrespected when they attempt to communicate with them in a way that indicates they may have a higher level of knowledge about technology. Millennials also talked about how the older

generation respects them more when they do not speak, just act. Similarly, a Generation Xer discussed how Baby Boomer leaders valued a Millennial because the employee respected the authority role of the Baby Boomers and was very accommodating.

Although each generation indicated a lack of respect from another generation based on their communication experiences, each generation shared how they do respect the other generation. One member of the Baby Boomer group acknowledged feeling Millennials were respectful to others in that they are smart, kind, and honest with a great sense of humor. Both Generation Xers and Millennials acknowledged they do respect and value the wisdom and experiences of Baby Boomers. In addition, data from the survey showed the younger generations are more likely to use the respectful avoidance communication style with the older generations. However, in the focus group Millennials indicated when using respectful avoidance with the older generation, they typically receive back from them communication that is nonaccommodating.

Covey (2013) leadership across generations training materials highlight the differences in the underlying value of respect among the generations identifying it as the number one point of friction among the groups. When thinking about respect, members of the Veterans generation see it as a hierarchy for which they will find their place. Members of the Baby Boomer generation believe in working their way up to a position that gets respect. Members of Generation X think they will give respect to anyone who proves they deserve it and members of the Millennial generation will give respect to anyone who “gets them” and will take them seriously.

Trust. The second value that emerged from the findings is that of trust. Each group discussed their various communication experiences with members of the other generations related to trust or the lack thereof that underlines these communicative experiences. Members of

the Baby Boomer group find it very difficult to communicate with Millennials. Baby Boomers may see their difficult communication with Millennials as Millennials lacking trust in them. Baby Boomers feel Millennials do not allow them to direct and help them grow which they see as their responsibility. They also believe Millennials do not value their experiences and expertise. The discussion with this group suggests Baby Boomers may feel that tension and conflict arises when Millennials do not trust what they are saying or do not trust they know what they are saying.

Members of the Generation Xer group discussed how they receive push back from Baby Boomers when they suggest a change or a short cut. Generation Xers feel Baby Boomers think there is only one way to do something. As well, Generation Xers discussed how Baby Boomers communicate with them in a way that assumes they need assistance with the completion of a task, “can you get help?”, not trusting their ability to complete the task on their own. Generation Xers feel Baby Boomers do not make a conscious effort to allow others to take charge. Generation Xers also talked about speaking more freely with individuals of the same generation, being more trusting and comfortable with their in-group peers.

For members of the Millennial group, trust also means independence. Members of the Millennial generational cohort discussed the importance of being able to complete assigned projects through multitasking and with little supervision, however, with clear and direct instructions from their supervisor. Millennials oftentimes feel it is easier and quicker to complete tasks when using their technological skills.

In the workplace, decision-making ability often describes trust, which according to Covey (2013) is another point of friction. In the workplace, the generations consider decision-making differently. For members of the Veterans group, the boss is trusted to make the decisions.

Baby Boomer group members trust the process and the ability of the boss to decide. For members of the Generation Xer group, whoever is the most “savvy” on the topic should be trusted to make the decision. For Millennial members, decision-making is a function of the group to work through the options and decide together. The way the generations communicate and experience communication related to whom and how to make decisions oftentimes causes tension, miscommunication and/or no communication among the groups based on a negative interpretation of how the decision was communicated to them.

Openness. The third and final value that emerged from the data is openness. Members of each of the focus groups discuss openness as a means to explain that is direct and clear, that is appropriate, and that includes everything. In the workplace, feedback describes this type of communication, which according to Covey (2013) is another point of friction among the generations. Members of the Baby Boomer generation discussed openness as feedback to the younger generation, mainly Millennials, to their areas of deficit and a means to redirect their behavior and to help them grow. Baby Boomers see this as their leadership role within the organization. However, this is the only purpose for feedback the group identified.

Generation Xers identified the lack of openness from the Baby Boomer generation in terms of their clandestine communication style and not telling them everything, but telling them what they needed to know. Generation Xers feel Baby Boomers are protective of their turf when they do not engage in open communication with them.

Similarly, members of the Millennial group prefer more open and direct communication from the older generation, mainly the Baby Boomers. Millennials want Baby Boomers to be more direct in what they want in terms of required work. Millennials describe Baby Boomers communication as “dancing around” the issue and inappropriate. In addition, Millennials think

Baby Boomers see them as a threat, therefore they limit what they share causing miscommunication between the two groups.

According to Covey (2013), Veterans see openness only necessary to indicate something is wrong, “no news is good news”. Baby Boomers see openness as a way for employees to know where they stand. Generation Xers relate openness to respect in that a person is more likely to be open with you and just say what they think if they respect you. Millennials prefer instantaneous feedback to show you are listening and provide a means to problem solving. Ayoko (2007) found within culturally diverse workgroups, open communication was associated with productive reactions to conflict and open communication moderated the relationship between destructive reactions to conflict and group task performance.

The current study showed the influence of inter-generational communication experiences in helping others determine what is valued. These inter-generational communication experiences of values relate back to the social identity theory and CAT that framed the current study. Below is an explanation of how the individual’s social group influences the development and reinforcement of their underlying value systems.

Key Findings and Theoretical Framework

Based on the results of the current study, there seems to be clear differences in the communication experiences that lead one generation to see another generation as lacking the values of respect, trust, and openness. The social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and CAT (Giles & McCann, 1987) both explore the communication experiences of individuals based on group membership. The social identity theory suggests individuals self-categorize themselves based on the similarities or differences they share with others. Individuals who see others as similar to them will categorize those individuals as the in-group, whereas individuals seen as

different are categorized as the out-group. Hobbs and Abrahams (as cited in Stets & Burke, 2000) indicate a major consequence to self-categorization is the accentuation of both the perceived in-group similarities and the out-group differences. Accentuation extends to the beliefs and values, as well as styles of speech, correlated with the in-group categorization. Thus, members of a generational cohort are likely to self-identify with the values and styles of speech ascribed to their cohort more than the ones that are ascribed to another generation. This accentuation of similarities and differences leads to a positive judgment of the in-group and a negative judgment of the out-group. These in-group biases and out-group stereotypes develop and reinforce individuals' communication behaviors.

According to CAT, within the age domain, negative social stereotypes fuel our communicative behaviors and these stereotypes are the “cognitive precursors to intergenerational discourses” (p. 76). Chen and King (2002) found individuals with a positive age stereotype toward the opposite age group perceived a higher level of intergenerational communication satisfaction and a lower level of dissatisfaction than those who held a neutral or a negative stereotype. Du (2011) also discussed the role of generational stereotypes that lead to conflict and tension among the various generations concluding that generational stereotypes can lead to such behaviors as misunderstandings, indifference, and distance.

Understanding the significant impact intergenerational communication has on organizational relationships will help in the development of structures built to assist with breaking down these communication barriers. Lester, Standifer, Schultz, and Windsor (2012) noted the dyadic interactions among colleagues from other generations affect the perceptions they hold which lead to mistaken conclusions and reinforcement of generational stereotypes, reducing the ability of cross-generational colleagues to function together at the highest level

possible. Institutions of higher education are especially important when examining the impact of intergenerational communication on organizational relationships. As institutions go through major changes due to accountability, budgets, and outside competition pressures, it is imperative that they explore how best to communicate and manage their change initiatives while maintaining a strong human resource base.

Implications for Community Colleges

The findings of the study provided evidence of the impact differing intergenerational communication styles can have on organizational relationships, specifically those within higher education institutions. Some researchers have concluded generational differences in the workplace can lead to misunderstandings and confusion (McCann & Giles, 2006; Zemke et al., 2000) while others see the positive impact of generational diversity on creativity (Helyer & Lee, 2012, Jans, Postmes & Van der Zee, 2012), increased flexibility and an overall stronger and healthier organization (Siebert, 2008). Both the survey and focus group participants indicate they hold different perceptions of their own and others communication styles when interacting with someone of a different generational cohort. There are two implications of intergenerational communication within higher education institutions: change and knowledge management and the role of training workers on the differences among the generations.

Change and knowledge management. In light of the increasingly important role placed on higher education institutions during times of high-level changes, such as decreased budgets and increased accountability, it is imperative to communicate and manage effectively the change to ensure the performance of the organization is not negatively impacted. These high-level demands pushing community colleges into organizational change are creating a difficult and stressful working environment for employees. Lewis (as cited in Jones et al., 2004, p. 735)

argued the “communication process and organizational change are inextricably linked processes.” Further, the author identified communication management of the change as one of the issues to organizational change, suggesting researchers should focus on the actual communication in organizations during times of change and explore the variables or circumstances affecting the change process. Further, note that researchers often fail to acknowledge the variability of human action that leads to difficulties and challenges. In this instance, one of the variability of human action is the generation of the employees and their underlying values that inform their communication styles.

As a result of increasing accountability and economic pressures among community colleges to develop an educated workforce, retrain workers, and nurture emerging industries (Shults, 2008) institutions are having to shift from the traditional hierarchical structure (Zemke, et al., 2000) usually segregated by seniority, and by default, generation to a decentralized, bottom-up influence (Shults, 2008). This new structure allows organizations to have access to the knowledge that is usually embedded within these organizational subgroups. Shults (2008) suggests during times of organizational change,

the growing importance of creating and controlling knowledge is forcing organizations to recognize the importance of valuing, developing, utilizing, and maximizing human capital because individuals hold the knowledge organizations depended on for a competitive advantage. Simply having access to information, however, is not the cornerstone of succeeding within a knowledge economy; rather, organizations need to utilize available information (especially tacit knowledge) to create and disseminate new knowledge. (p. 133)

Siebert (2008) reported that organizational structure was a precursor to conflict between the generations. It was concluded that “the organizational structure that Traditional workers built and which Baby Boomers revered do not have the same meaning for members of Generation X or for Millennials, particularly” (p. 125). Findings from the current study highlight the potential impact

the lack of change and knowledge management may have on organizational relationships among the generational cohorts.

A common theme between the three focus groups in discussing their differences in communication styles was openness, which relates to knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is defined as

an action initiated in response to a perceived need for knowledge on behalf of self or in response to a similar action initiated by another; “the ability of employees to share their work-related experience, expertise, know-how, and contextual information with other employees through informal and formal interactions within or across work units” (p. 122).

For Baby Boomers, change and knowledge management was in the form of leadership and guidance. This generation believes they are capable, if allowed to do so, of leading and guiding the other generations through change. However, Generation Xers change management is difficult with Baby Boomers due to their unwillingness to change or see there is a different way of doing things. In addition, Generation Xers suggest knowledge sharing among the Baby Boomers is limited as they attempt to protect their turf. Millennials struggle with the view that their direct communication and willingness to share is abrasive; therefore, during times of change they are not likely to share their knowledge with the other generations. For community colleges to implement change effectively and increase opportunities for knowledge sharing, it will be important that the knowledge silos that are created by top-down bureaucracies be dismantled (Pettitt & Ayers, 2002).

There are difficulties in transferring knowledge at community colleges due to the inherent centralized structure of this type of organization along with the various subcultures: administrators, faculty, and other staff (Shults, 2008, p. 136). These subcultures promote knowledge hoarding. Eversole, Venneberg, and Crowder (2012) examined the role the culture on

an organization's ability to attain and retain workers across generations. The authors suggested developing an organizational culture that promotes the retention of employees across generations by reframing the problem from an individual one to a systemic one (p. 618).

Several of the participants indicated they enjoyed being able to participate in the focus groups. They indicated participating in the focus group allowed them to share their experiences, as well as to hear of the experiences of others. Therefore, a strategy that may help to lessen or alleviate knowledge hoarding is providing opportunities for dialogue among higher education personnel. Boyce (2003) contends that dialogue enables organizational members to examine assumptions and strategies (p. 123) allowing change to be embedded in the systems, structures, and cultures of the institution (p. 130). Allowing the space and time for individuals to dialogue and reflect on the various perspectives of generational differences in their values and communication styles will benefit the implementation of change initiatives that are designed and successful at meeting the organizational goals and objectives.

Training. Although the participants highlighted differences in their communication styles, there was some agreement on how to improve communication between the generations. A key theme for improving communication among the generations was training. Focus group participants indicated that training individuals on generational differences and perspectives in the workplace would help to improve organizational relationships. However, there were slight differences as to the objectives of the training. Participants of the focus groups discussed the role of generational training to facilitate conversations, develop the ability to listen and speak from the other generational perspective, change habits and belief systems, and create awareness and teambuilding. Beaver and Hutchings (2005) suggest a mentor component to training and development that can help to build on the life experiences of the Baby Boomer workers, the

entrepreneurial talent of the Generation Xers, and the technical aptitude of the Millennials in leveraging new ideas (p. 602).

While the focus group participants indicated training as a strategy for improving intergenerational communication, implementing this type of training may not be easy or effective. Van Vianen, Dalhoeven, and De Pater (2011) found a negative relationship between age and acceptance of training among workers of different age groups. Specifically, older workers were less likely to invest time and energy in training compared to younger workers when the organization requested the training.

Kezar (2004) noted the importance of people and relationships in altering organizational processes and structures. Kezar found individuals believed that being involved in dialogue with individuals that are different from you leads to feelings of trust. The focus group participants shared this idea. The Millennial focus group participants discussed training that helped each generation to see themselves in others, focused on the person more so than the generation, and developed a notion of family between the generations. Generation Xer focus group participants discussed the need for compassion and highlighted the traits that is similar among the generations rather than the stereotypes. Jans et al. (2012) found that sharing of differences (an inductive process) within a group setting was a basis for which individuals formed a new social identity.

Summary. The current study employed a mixed method research design. A review of the generational literature found that researchers tend to use either the quantitative or the qualitative method to study this phenomenon. However, by using a mixed method the study was able to show that individuals of different generational cohorts perceive differences in their own and

others' communication style while interacting within an organizational setting along with how these communication experiences influence the workplace.

The significance of the present study was to show the communication experiences between members of the generations are the major points of friction not their differences in values. The study highlighted how the in-group and out-group communication experiences led individuals to conclude there are also differences in their values that result in conflict and tension. Based on the social identity theory and CAT, individuals' social group predisposes them to behaviors that help to develop and reinforce these communication styles. These social group behaviors and communication styles are especially important in community colleges that employ individuals from the various generations.

Participants indicated training as a potential solution; however, not all employees are amenable to workplace training. Not all individuals see the value of training. Therefore, there is an opportunity to create a structure of dialogue that is outside the realm of your traditional training sessions. Organizations should provide the opportunities for individuals to reflect and dialogue in a way that deals with the whole-person—mind, heart, body, and spirit (Covey, 2013). This type of dialogue will allow for the emergence of the underlying values, which develops and reinforces an individual's communication style, especially with individuals outside their defined social group.

I found that by sharing their communication experiences individuals also highlight the underlying values they hold for themselves as well as the ones they attribute to others. Specifically, the inter-generational focus groups highlighted the values of respect, trust, and openness, which are all important among employees within an organizational setting. These focus groups provided an opportunity for individuals to share their experiences in the workplace.

Members of each of the focus groups indicated they enjoyed the focus group experience. One member asked if they could get together once a month for this type of dialogue. Members also discussed the importance of training that allows individuals to understand the different generational perspectives and develop an appreciation for both the differences and similarities between groups.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current study employed a mixed methodology using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore intergenerational relationships. This type of mixing of methodologies has not been widely used in the generational or communication research. Jones et al. (2004) suggested combining these approaches to achieve a full examination and understanding of communication in organizations. Therefore, one recommendation for future research is to replicate the current study using the same methodology to determine similar results in other settings. In addition, considering communication is something that occurs over time, this type of intergenerational research can benefit from a longitudinal approach to assessing the differing communication style used among and between generations.

The focus groups were intra-generational similar to other research using this method. However, in these intra-generational focus groups, individuals shared their communication experiences with their peers. Another recommendation for future research is to conduct inter-generational focus groups that will allow participants to share and explore their communicative experiences with their out-group peers.

Organizational culture is a factor to consider when addressing generational differences in the workplace. Schein (2006), a social psychologist, considers organizational culture as

a pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid

and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 12)

In addition, Schein (2006) concluded values adopted and shared by others within an organization's culture become their beliefs that in turn become their assumptions.

By understanding the role the current or changing organizational culture has on employee satisfaction and retention, higher education leaders will have the tools needed to manage organizational change efficiently and effectively. An important outcome of changes in an organization culture is moving toward a learning organization where there is not knowledge hoarding but knowledge sharing. A third recommendation for future research is to conduct a study within an organizational structure where a cultural shift is occurring or has occurred to determine the influence employee relations, particularly among the various generations, may have on the success of the cultural shift.

Another promising area for future research would be to compare and contrast the efficacy of training interventions geared toward helping employees of differing generations to understand the different communication styles and mechanisms used by each of the generations within an organization. As more organizations implement training activities it will be important to assess the effectiveness of these training activities on improving organizational relationships among individuals of the different generations.

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Appendix A

Page 1 of 4

Application for Institutional Review Board Approval Form University of the Incarnate Word

(PLEASE TYPE INFORMATION)

Title of Study: **The Impact of Generational Differences on Organizational Relationships: A Communication Perspective**

College/School or Division/Discipline: **Dreeben School of Education**

Investigators			
Principal Investigator - A UIW PI must be designated for all projects in which UIW is engaged in research.			
Name: Mecca M. Salahuddin	Phone #: 210-273-4440	E-mail: salahudd@student.uiwtx.edu	Address: 1751 Babcock Rd #113 San Antonio, TX 78229
Co-Investigator(s) – List all co-investigators and provide contact information on each one			
Name: Click here to enter text.	Phone #: Click here to enter text.	E-mail: Click here to enter text.	Address: Click here to enter text.
Faculty Supervisor of Project, Thesis, or Dissertation			
Name: Dr. Dorothy Ettling	Phone #: 210-829-2764	E-mail: ettling@uiwtx.edu	Address: 4301 Broadway, San Antonio, TX 78209

Research Information		
Research Category: ☐ Exempt ☒ Expedited Review ☐ Full Board Review		
Purpose of Study: The purpose of this sequential mixed methods explanatory study will be to examine the communication styles used between individuals belonging to one of three generational cohorts employed within five higher education institutions located in South Texas. Examining this relationship, the study will attempt to establish a link between the generation an individual belongs to and the communication style that is used with other generations, known as intergenerational communication, as well as explore the influence intergenerational communication styles has on organizational relationships.		
Number of Subjects: 1,695	Number of Controls: Click here to enter text.	Duration of Study: 12 months

041311

Does this research involve any of the following:	YES	NO
Inmates of penal institutions	☐	☒
Institutionalized intellectually handicapped	☐	☒
Institutionalized mentally disabled	☐	☒
Committed patients	☐	☒
Intellectually handicapped outpatient	☐	☒
Mentally disabled outpatient	☐	☒
Pregnant women	☐	☒
Fetus in utero	☐	☒
Viable fetus	☐	☒
Nonviable fetus	☐	☒
Dead fetus	☐	☒
In Vitro fertilization	☐	☒
Minors (under 18)	☐	☒
For each "Yes", state what precautions you will use to obtain informed consent? Click here to enter text.		
How is information Obtained? (Include instruments used. Attach copy of instrument to this application.) Click here to enter text.		
Confidentiality – Are data recorded anonymously? ☒ Yes ☐ No If answer is "No", how will the study subjects' confidentiality be maintained? Click here to enter text.		
Benefit of research: Benefits to individual participants are in the goal of this study, that is, to discover and understand the communication experiences of employees among coworkers in the workplace.		
Possible risk to subjects: There are no anticipated risks		
Funding Source: Click here to enter text.	Funded by: Click here to enter text.	Grant Proposal Pending: Click here to enter text.
Not Funded: ☒		

CHECKLIST:

- Research protocol ☒
- Informed consent documents ☒
- Instruments used for data collection ☒
- CITI certificate of training on the protection of human subjects ☒

If change in research occurs the Board must be notified before research is continued.

SIGNATURES

Appendix B

Institution #1

Institutional Review Board
Review of Proposed Research Involving Human Subjects

Project Title: The Impact of Generational Differences on Organizational Relationships: A Communication Perspective

Principal Investigator Information:

Name: Mecca M. Salahuddin
 Phone: 210-273-4440
 Fax:
 Email: salahudd@student.uiwtx.edu



Other persons to contact (Provide relevant information below)

Dr. Dorothy Ettiling, Professor
 Dreeben School of Education
 University of the Incarnate Word
 4301 Broadway
 San Antonio, Texas 78209-6397
 210-829-2784
 ettiling@uiwtx.edu

Project Funding Source: None

To be completed by  IRB:

Date submitted to  IRB Chair: October 21, 2012

Date of review by  IRB: December 11, 2012

 IRB Proposal Determination:

- ☐ Exempt Research
☒ Expedited Review
☐ Full IRB Review

IRB approval:

- Study involved minimal risks to participants.
  - Risks were reasonable in relationship to benefits.
  - No vulnerable populations were specifically targeted.
  - Informed consent was included, and will be documented during the study.
  - Data will be maintained in proper fashion, and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.
-
- 

Institution

From 45 CFR 46

*§46.111 Criteria for IRB approval of research.

(a) In order to approve research covered by this policy the IRB shall determine that all of the following requirements are satisfied:

(1) Risks to subjects are minimized: (i) By using procedures which are consistent with sound research design and which do not unnecessarily expose subjects to risk, and (ii) whenever appropriate, by using procedures already being performed on the subjects for diagnostic or treatment purposes.

(2) Risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits, if any, to subjects, and the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result. In evaluating risks and benefits, the IRB should consider only those risks and benefits that may result from the research (as distinguished from risks and benefits of therapies subjects would receive even if not participating in the research). The IRB should not consider possible long-range effects of applying knowledge gained in the research (for example, the possible effects of the research on public policy) as among those research risks that fall within the purview of its responsibility.

(3) Selection of subjects is equitable. In making this assessment the IRB should take into account the purposes of the research and the setting in which the research will be conducted and should be particularly cognizant of the special problems of research involving vulnerable populations, such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons.

(4) Informed consent will be sought from each prospective subject or the subject's legally authorized representative, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.116.

(5) Informed consent will be appropriately documented, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.117.

(6) When appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provision for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of subjects.

(7) When appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of data.

(b) When some or all of the subjects are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons, additional safeguards have been included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects."

Starting Date: December 11, 2012

Estimated Completion Date: December 11, 2013

Information on file with IRB:

IRB Coversheet (this document)

IRB Application

Institution#

Research Proposal
Informed Consent Form
Survey Instrument
Focus Group Informed Consent
Focus Group Protocol

Thomas Pressly
Thomas Pressly
IRB Chair

Dec 11, 2012

Institution #

Date: November 14, 2012

PI: Mecca Salahuddin

Dept: University of Incarnate Word, Dreeben School of Education

Title: The Impact of Generational Differences on Organizational Relationships: A Communication Perspective

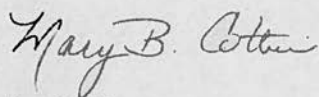
Re: IRB Approval

Dear Ms. Salahuddin:

In accordance with the College's review of research studies, your request for approval to perform research on the above title has been reviewed and approved with no stipulations.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Mary B. Cottler
Institutional Review Board Chair
Dean of Arts and Sciences

Attachment

Institution #:

Print Form

Summary Cover Sheet Protocol for Human Subjects in Research

Please check off or provide details on the following (enter N/A if not applicable)

Yes ☐ Exemption Requested
See Page 2Principal Investigator Name: Menna SalehuddinAffiliation: Faculty ☐ Student ☒ (must include signature of committee chair on protocol) ☐ Professional ☐ Other ☐College/Dept./Organization: University of Indiana West/ Drexler School of EducationContact: Home Phone 210-273-4440 Work Phone 210-480-9357 Email salehuddin@student.uinwbi.eduProject Title: The Impact of Generational Differences on Organizational Relationships: A Communication PerspectiveSubjective Estimate of Risk to Subject: Low ☐ Moderate ☐ High ☐ None ☒Gender of subjects: Male ☐ Female ☐ Both ☒Age of subjects: 18+Total Participants (est.): 300+

Source of Subjects:

☒ Classroom
☐ Campus (General)
☐ Posted notices (attach)
☐ Other

Subject Recruitment:

☐ Direct, person to person contact
☐ Telephone solicitation
☐ Newspaper advertisement (attach)
☐ Letter (attach)
☒ Other Email
Will subjects be compensated? Yes ☐ (if yes, attach compensation conditions and schedule of payment) No ☒Will any means of deception be utilized? Yes ☐ (if yes, attach debriefing form) No ☒Location of Experiment: Will invasive or sensitive procedures be utilized? Yes ☐ (if yes, indicate type below) No ☒
☐ Blood Samples ☐ Urine Samples ☐ Stress Elevation ☐ Physical Measurements ☐ Psychological Inventory
☐ Review of Medical Records ☐ rDNA ☐ Other (Specify)
Will research involve sensitive subject matter? Yes ☐ (if yes, indicate type below) No ☒
☐ Alcohol, Drugs, Sex ☐ Depression/Anxiety ☐ Learning Disability
☐ Other (Specify)
Use of Video or Audio tapes (indicate type): Audio tapeRetained? Yes ☐ No ☒ Length of time retained 1 yr Destroy/Trans? Yes ☒ No ☐Other (Specify): Is use specified in consent form? Yes ☒ No ☐Use/Access to tapes:

Provisions for Confidentiality/Anonymity

Replies Coded? Yes ☒ No ☐ Secure Storage? Yes ☒ No ☐Anonymous Response? Yes ☒ No ☐ Confidential Response? Yes ☒ No ☐Exact location where consent forms will be filed: Researcher home in a filing system

(Must be kept on file for 3 years after completion of the project)

Please enclose a one page abstract of the Research Proposal

1-17-00

Institution #

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW FORM

Principal Investigator: Mecsa Salahuddin
 Check one: ☐ Faculty ☐ Staff ☐ Student ☒ External Party
 Program/Department: Doctorate of Education/Dreben School of Education Campus UIW
 Address: 430 Broadway, Suite 7878 Campus Telephone: 210-829-6000
 E-mail: salahuddin@student.uiw.edu
 Person to contact regarding questions: Dr. Amy Hill
 Campus Telephone: 210-829-2704 Email: ahill@uiw.edu
 Project Title: The Impact of Generational Differences on Organizational Relationships: A Communication Perspective

Are you requesting: Full Review ☐ Expedited Review ☒

Check each of the following that are included in your research:

Yes No

- ☐ ☒ Research on regular and/or special education instructional strategies, curricula, or classroom management.
- ☒ ☐ Test, survey, or observational research in which the subject *cannot be identified*, either directly or indirectly, with their responses or information recorded about them.
- ☐ ☒ Test, survey, or observational research in which the subjects *can be identified* with their responses or information about them.
- ☐ ☒ Survey or observational research in which the subject's responses or behaviors, if they become known outside the research, could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability.
- ☐ ☒ Survey or observational research that deals with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior, such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.
- ☐ ☒ Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, or records which *are not publicly available* OR from which the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects *cannot be identified*, directly or indirectly.
- ☐ ☒ Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, or records which *are not publicly available* OR from which information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects *can be identified*.
- ☐ ☒ Research involving exercise by the subjects.
- ☐ ☒ Research involving noninvasive procedures routinely used in clinical practice.
- ☐ ☒ Research involving voice and video recordings.
- ☐ ☒ Research that will involve manipulating the subject's behavior in a way that is stressful to them.
- ☐ ☒ Research involving minors (under 18).
- ☐ ☒ Research involving subjects institutionalized as mentally disabled.
- ☒ ☐ Research involving interviews.
- ☒ ☐ Research involving questionnaires.
- ☐ ☒ Research involving tests not normally used in educational or clinical settings.

(Specify): _____

institution #3

Investigator and other Key Personnel Involved with human subjects on this project:

Mecca Salahuddin
1751 Babcock Rd #113
San Antonio, Texas 78229
Telephone: 210- 273-4440
Email: salahudd@student.uiwtx.edu

Description/Abstract: 100-150 words stating the objectives and specific aims of the research. Describe concisely the research design and methods for achieving these goals. Also address issues such as:

- whether the study uses subjects in a school system, hospital, or other agency;
- the amount of time required of each subject;
- how, if at all, subjects will be rewarded for participating;
- methods of ensuring anonymity and confidentiality;
- debriefing measures, if necessary;
- if/how feedback will be provided to subjects.

Protocol: Include the research question or hypothesis, population selection (inclusion/exclusion criteria), recruitment, study procedures and timetable, sample size determination, outcome evaluation (measures, statistical analysis plan), safety review, criteria for stopping, and anticipated accrual. Attach copies of any grant research plan/specific aims, survey instruments, telephone scripts, etc.

Accrual Information:

Estimated number of subjects to be screened: 1,695
Estimated number of subjects to be enrolled: 400-700
Date of enrollment: Beginning: October 2012 and Ending: March 2013

Risks: Describe potential risks to study participants. Include physical, psychological, emotional, and privacy issues. Outline what follow-up support will be available to subjects experiencing undesirable consequences of participation.

See attached proposal Summary

Procedures to Minimize Risks:

See attached proposal Summary

Benefits: Describe potential benefits to study participants and/or future mankind.

See attached proposal Summary

Institution #3

Assurance: The undersigned assure that the protocols involving human subjects described in this application are complete and accurate, and are consistent with applicable protocols submitted to external funding agencies. All protocol activities will be performed in accordance with Palo Alto College, the Alamo Community College District, state, and federal regulations. No activities involving the use of human subjects will be initiated without prior review and approval by the Institutional Review Board.

Sharon Pala-Budini
Signature of Principal Investigator

10/17/12
Date

If Principal Investigator is a student:

Donna C. C. C.
Signature of Supervising Faculty

10/17/12
Date

INDR 9300
Course

_____
Signature of Department Chair

_____
Date

_____
Signature of Dean

_____
Date

Forward a hard copy of the completed application to the appropriate reviewer(s):

Student Projects must be reviewed by 1) the course advisor/instructor and by 2) Institutional Review Board (IRB) member(s).

Faculty Research must be reviewed by 1) the Department Chair and 2) IRB member(s).

Institutional Research must be reviewed by 1) the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness & Community Development and 2) IRB member(s).

External Research, that which is conducted on the Palo Alto College campus by organizations other than Palo Alto College, must be reviewed by the IRB.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE:

Donna C. C. C.
Signature

11/9/12
Date

Approved
Approved/Further Review

_____
Signature

_____
Date

_____
Approved/Further Review

_____
Signature

_____
Date

_____
Approved/Further Review

_____
Signature

_____
Date

_____
Approved/Further Review

_____
Signature

_____
Date

_____
Approved/Further Review

Institution#4



August 31, 2012

Mecca Salahuddin
University of the Incarnate Word

Dear Mecca,

Your research request has been approved by the [REDACTED]
Board subject to the following conditions:

- (1) Please provide a copy of IRB approval from the University of the Incarnate Word when you obtain it;
- (2) All individual, personally-identifying information relating to [REDACTED] faculty, staff, and students should be secured. It should not be kept on a removable device (flash drive, CD, etc.), nor should it be maintained on a public network or a publically-accessible computer;
- (3) No individual should be compelled to participate in interview or survey requests;
- (4) Please provide the [REDACTED] IRB with a copy of your aggregate results.

Sincerely,

Dr. David A. Wood, Jr.
Director of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness [REDACTED]



Institutional
#

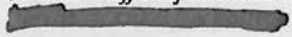
Salahuddin, Mecca M

From: Castillo, Gilbert
Sent: Wednesday, October 10, 2012 1:48 PM
To: Salahuddin, Mecca M
Subject: FW: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I apologize Mecca,

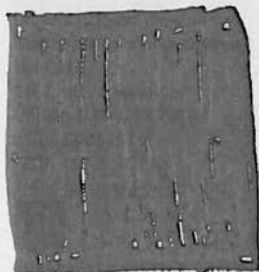
I thought that I had already provided you with this information.
 As I suspected, no one had any issues with it so long as the general concerns are met;
 privacy, voluntary participation, and no specific reference made to the AC District and
 colleges during any publication.

Has anyone else given you anything more specific?
 Has Dr. Cleary been involved with this request?

G. Castillo Jr.
Director - Office of Institutional Research


From: Reno, Eric E
Sent: Wednesday, September 05, 2012 5:24 PM
To: Castillo, Gilbert; Lewis, Elizabeth U; Hamilton, Debbie C; Dove, Tangila C
Subject: RE: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I do not mind as long as all appropriate ACCD policies and procedures are followed and approvals have been granted.



From: Castillo, Gilbert
Sent: Wednesday, September 05, 2012 11:09 AM
To: Reno, Eric E; Lewis, Elizabeth U; Hamilton, Debbie C; Dove, Tangila C
Subject: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Good morning all,

Appendix C

Permission to Use GPIC Survey

Re: Permission to Use Global Perceptions of Intergenerational Communication (GPIC)
 howiegiles@cox.net
 Wed 4/25/2012 6:32 PM
 To: Salahuddin, Mecca M. <salahudd@student.uiwtx.edu>;

Yes permission is of course yours. When my regulae email is up and running I will then send you the paper. Your linguistic precision is acknowledged! :)

Howie

Sent from my Verizon Wireless BlackBerry

From: "Salahuddin, Mecca M." <salahudd@student.uiwtx.edu>
 Date: Wed, 25 Apr 2012 23:00:30 +0000
 To: howiegiles@cox.net<howiegiles@cox.net>
 Subject: RE: Permission to Use Global Perceptions of Intergenerational Communication (GPIC)

To clarify your email, are you granting me permission to use the survey? Yes, I am interested in the Iranian-USA study conducted in this general domain.

Thank you for your reply,

Mecca Salahuddin

From: howiegiles@cox.net [howiegiles@cox.net]
 Sent: Wednesday, April 25, 2012 5:23 PM
 To: Salahuddin, Mecca M.; robertmc@marshall.usc.edu; giles@comm.ucsb.edu
 Subject: Re: Permission to Use Global Perceptions of Intergenerational Communication (GPIC)

Thanks for your interest. I must send u if interested an Iranian-USA study in this general domain. Please keep us in touch with your findings!

Best

Howie

Sent from my Verizon Wireless BlackBerry

From: "Salahuddin, Mecca M." <salahudd@student.uiwtx.edu>
 Date: Wed, 25 Apr 2012 22:03:24 +0000
 To: robertmc@marshall.usc.edu<robertmc@marshall.usc.edu>;
 giles@comm.ucsb.edu<giles@comm.ucsb.edu>
 Subject: FW: Permission to Use Global Perceptions of Intergenerational Communication (GPIC)

Hi Dr. McCann and Dr. Giles,

I wanted to follow up on my email below seeking permission to use the GPIC Survey Instrument. Please advise if this is approved or if I need to contact someone else for permission.

Thank you,

Mecca Salahuddin

From: Salahuddin, Mecca M.

Sent: Friday, April 06, 2012 2:15 PM

To: robertmc@marshall.usc.edu; giles@comm.ucsb.edu

Subject: Permission to Use Global Perceptions of Intergenerational Communication (GPIC)

Dear Mr. McCann and Mr. Giles:

I am in the process of working on my doctoral dissertation at The University of Incarnate Word entitled "The Impact of Generational Differences on Organizational Relationships: A Communication Perspective." I would like your permission to reprint and use in my dissertation the Global Perceptions of Intergenerational Communication (GPIC) scale.

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of my dissertation by ProQuest through its UMI® Dissertation Publishing business. ProQuest may produce and sell copies of my dissertation on demand and may make my dissertation available free for internet download at my request. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you.

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please respond to this email at your earliest convenience. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mecca Salahuddin

University of Incarnate Word

salahudd@student.uiwtx.edu

Appendix D

Survey Informed Consent Form

Date _____:

Dear _____:

I, Mecca Salahuddin, a student at The University of Incarnate Word working on a Doctor of Education with a concentration in Organizational Leadership, am conducting a research study entitled, “The Impact of Generational Differences on Organizational Relationships: A Communicative Perspective.” The purpose of this research is to examine the communication styles used between individuals belonging to one of three generational cohorts employed within institutions of higher education. The study will attempt to confirm and explore the link between the generation an individual belongs to and the communication style that is used with other generations, known as intergenerational communication

Your participation as one of the identified employees will involve participating in a survey describing your experiences with communication in the workplace with individuals of a different generation. You will find the topic of this research interesting and your completion of the survey should not take more than 10 minutes. Your participation will be completely voluntary, and you may choose not to participate and withdraw at any time. The results of the overall study will be published, but your name will not be used. In this study, there are no anticipated risks. Benefits to individual participants are in the goal of this study, that is, to discover and understand the communication experiences of employees among coworkers in the workplace. By clicking on the link below, you are consenting to participate in this study. [Link here](#)

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me:

Mecca Salahuddin
1751 Babcock Rd #113
San Antonio, Texas 7229
Telephone: 210- 273-4440
Email: salahudd@student.uiwtx.edu

Any additional questions or concerns in relation to this study that you may have may be asked of my dissertation committee chair:

Dr. Dorothy Ettling, Professor
Dreeben School of Education
University of the Incarnate Word
4301 Broadway
San Antonio, Texas 78209-6397
Telephone: 210-829-2764
Email: ettling@uiwtx.edu

Sincerely,
Mecca M. Salahuddin

Appendix E

Survey Instrument

Introduction: The purpose of this survey is to help us learn how workers communicate with each other. Thanks for your willingness to help us learn about how workers communicate in the workplace

Part A: Please indicate your choice by circling the answer

1. How many years have you been working in your current position? ____
2. You are:
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
3. Your cultural background
  - a. European-American
  - b. African-American
  - c. Asian-American
  - d. Hispanic-American
  - e. Other____(please specify)

For the purposes of this research, there are three generational cohorts representing the years below:

Baby Boomers (prior to 1960)
 Generation Xers (1961-1980)
 Millennials (1981-2000)

1. What is the generational cohort you identify with? ____
  - a. Baby Boomers
  - b. Generation Xers
  - c. Millennials

Please think about workplace conversations you have had with employees of a different generational cohort as yourself. Circle the response that indicates your degree of agreement or disagreement that each behavior is typical of your conversations with them

Please circle the generational group, that is different than your own, you are thinking about as you are answering the questions (please circle one)

1. Veteran employees 2. Baby Boomer employees 3. Generation X employees 4. Millennial employees

Part B: Based on the group that you choose please indicate how much you agree with each statement by circling one of five numbers provided, with “1” being "strongly disagree” and “5” being “strongly agree.”

		Strongly Disagree to	Strongly Agree
1	They were supportive.	1	2 3 4 5
2	They were helpful.	1	2 3 4 5
3	They gave useful advice	1	2 3 4 5
4	They complimented me	1	2 3 4 5
5	They had kind words for me.	1	2 3 4 5
6	They were considerate.	1	2 3 4 5
7	They ordered me to do things.	1	2 3 4 5
8	They acted superior to me.	1	2 3 4 5
9	They talked as if they knew more than me.	1	2 3 4 5
10	They spoke as if they were better than me.	1	2 3 4 5
11	I spoke in a respectful manner.	1	2 3 4 5
12	I felt obliged to be polite.	1	2 3 4 5
13	I spoke in a polite way.	1	2 3 4 5
14	I did not criticize them.	1	2 3 4 5
15	I waited until asked to speak.	1	2 3 4 5
16	I held back my opinions.	1	2 3 4 5
17	I restrained myself from arguing with them.	1	2 3 4 5
18	They comforted me	1	2 3 4 5
19	They were nice to me.	1	2 3 4 5
20	They did not support my plans or ideas.	1	2 3 4 5
21	They criticized me.	1	2 3 4 5
22	I tried not to embarrass them.	1	2 3 4 5
23	I avoided conflicts with them.	1	2 3 4 5
24	I expressed my opinion indirectly.	1	2 3 4 5

Appendix F

Focus Group Informed Consent Form

Date _____

Dear _____:

I, Mecca Salahuddin, a student at The University of Incarnate Word working on a Doctor of Education with a concentration in Organizational Leadership, am conducting a research study entitled, "The Impact of Generational Differences on Organizational Relationships: A Communicative Perspective." The purpose of this research is to examine the communication styles used between individuals belonging to one of three generational cohorts employed within institutions of higher education. Examining this relationship, the study will attempt to confirm and explore the link between the generation an individual belongs to and the communication style that is used with other generations, known as intergenerational communication.

Your participation as one of the identified employees will involve participating in a focus group designed to collect insights regarding the communication styles employees in the workplace may use due to influences based on differences in generational values. You will find the topic of this research interesting and your participation in the focus group should not take more than an hour. Your participation will be completely voluntary, and you may choose not to participate and withdraw at any time. The results of the overall study will be published, but your name will not be used. In this study, there are no anticipated risks. Benefits to individual participants are in the goal of this study, that is, to discover and understand the communication experiences of employees among coworkers of differing generations in the workplace.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me:

Mecca Salahuddin
1751 Babcock Rd #113
San Antonio, Texas 7229
Telephone: 210- 273-4440
Email: salahudd@student.uiwtx.edu

Any additional questions or concerns in relation to this study that you may have may be asked of my dissertation committee chair:

Dr. Dorothy Ettling, Professor
Dreeben School of Education
University of the Incarnate Word
4301 Broadway
San Antonio, Texas 78209-6397
Telephone: 210-829-2764
Email: ettling@uiwtx.edu

Sincerely,
Mecca M. Salahuddin

INFORMED CONSENT SIGNATURE FORM

By signing this form I acknowledge that I understand the nature of the study, potential risks to me as a participant, means by which my identity will be kept confidential, and name along with responses provided will be destroyed in 3 years.

Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the information shared, the nature of focus groups prevent the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.

My signature on this form also indicates that I am not a member of any protected category of participants (minor, pregnant female when considered part of a research group rather than individual, prisoner, cognitively impaired) and that I give my permission to serve voluntarily as a participant in the study described.

Participant Date

Phone Email

Researcher Date

Appendix G

Focus Group Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today. I want you to know that I think everything you have to say is important and I am here to learn from you. I am working on a research project to include voices and experiences in discussions about how employees of different generations communicate with each other. The discussion should take about an hour. I know you have a lot going on and I really appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts and experiences with me. There are no right or wrong answers—we are interested in knowing more about your experiences. I will be recording the conversation so that I can be absolutely certain that I am capturing all of your ideas, exactly as you present them. I won't quote you—I just want to make sure I'm hearing you accurately.

The information you give us today will be useful to help improve institutions of higher education. I will not use your name. I hope that you can feel comfortable to speak freely about your experiences and I ask that everyone be respectful of what everyone else has to say. If you are unsure about what is being asked, please ask for clarification. If at any time you feel uncomfortable you are free to leave the session.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we start?

Briefly define the generational cohorts and the three communication styles (Provide handout for reference).

1. From your perspective, how does communication between individuals of the different generations impact the workplace?
2. Have you ever personally encountered a conflict or a potential conflict with someone in the organization that was the result of generational differences? Please describe.

Share results of survey

3. What are your thoughts about the reasons nonaccommodating communication among individuals of different generations is used in the workplace? Any thoughts about the other communication styles, accommodation and respectful avoidance?

Wrap up:

4. What are some strategies that can be implemented to remove the barriers to effective communication between individuals of different generations?
5. Before we wrap up, do you have any final thoughts you would like me to include?

Thank you very much for your time. I learned so much from this conversation. You've been a big help to me with this project and I want to thank you. Your input will be an important contribution to helping us better understand differences in communication among the four generational cohorts.

Appendix H
Four Factor PCA Model

Item	Communalities	Factor Loadings		% Variance Explained	Alphas	Alpha if Item Deleted
				.50	.70	
Factor 1: Accommodation $\alpha = .90$						
They were supportive		.74	.86			.87
They were helpful		.67	.82			.87
They gave useful advice		.48	.79			.89
They complimented me		.59	.78			.88
They had kind words for me		.62	.77			.88
They were considerate		.62	.77			.88
They comforted me		.39	.69			.90
They were nice to me		.59	.62			.88
Factor 2: Nonaccommodation $\alpha = .87$						
They ordered me to do things		.54	.86			.86
They acted superior to me		.74	.85			.83
They talked as if they knew more than me		.66	.80			.84
They spoke as if they were better than me		.73	.73			.83
They did not support my plans or ideas		.52	.72			.86
They criticized me		.49	.70			.86
Factor 3: Respectful Avoidance $\alpha = .67$						
I held back my opinions		.51	.64			.60
I restrained myself from arguing with them		.69	.81			.62
I expressed my opinions indirectly		.46	.63			.62
I avoided conflicts with them		.73	.84			.61
I waited until asked to speak		.63	.79			.65
I felt obliged to be polite		.28	.50			.66
Factor 4: Respectful Oblige $\alpha = .65$						
I spoke in a polite way		.65	.82			.45
I spoke in a respectful manner		.68	.81			.48
I did not criticize them		.49	.70			.56
I tried not to embarrass them		.19	.43			.70