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Generation Y ; An Exploratory Study of Worker Experiences, Values and Attitudes in the Federal Government

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GENERATION Y:

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF WORKER EXPERIENCES, VALUES, AND

ATTITUDES IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all of my ancestors who so bravely paved the way for me to have the opportunity to matriculate into a doctoral program. Lastly, rest in peace Grandma Hattie Moss, Grandpa "Sims," Uncle Arthur Long, and Chanel Lori. I miss you all dearly and dedicate this work to you as well.

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GENERATION Y:

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ABSTRACT

As a result of the unprecedented retirement wave within the federal government, federal agencies are aggressively recruiting young professionals that have been categorized as Generation Y. However, there is currently a lack of systematic research that has been conducted on this new cohort of employees; particularly, within the federal government. A lot of the available information that pertains to Generation Y can be classified as pop journalism, as opposed to scholarly research. Furthermore, many federal leaders are utilizing this information along with outdated traditional management assumptions about employee motivation to design and develop their public organizations. This tenuous approach can prove to be very costly and detrimental to the success of public institutions. Therefore, many scholars have purported that a lot of young civil servants leave the federal government due to poor management.

In an attempt to alleviate the aforementioned concerns, this dissertation offers information to public leaders about how federal Generation Y employees view their work, so leaders can better understand this cohort of employees. By using an interpretative framework with phenomenological research methods, five Generation Y subjects explained their workplace views, attitudes, and experiences as they pertain to motivation. In addition, five federal supervisors explained their viewpoints and experience with Generation Y within the work setting. There were a total of 10 research

participants that worked for eight different federal agencies that are located in the

Cleveland, Ohio metropolitan region.

Key themes emerged and were discussed based on data gathered from an in-depth

analysis of 10 semi-structured interviews. Since this was an exploratory qualitative based

dissertation, research questions instead of hypotheses were used to gain a deeper

understanding of Generation Y employees. It was concluded that the federal supervisors

are aware of Generation Y's needs; however, they have been obstinate in effectively

responding to them. This systematic research could serve as the foundation for future

researchers to examine cause and effect relationships that are predicted based upon

motivation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

As a fundamental value of the U.S. Constitution, every year the federal branch of government offers thousands of citizens the chance to fulfill the concept of true citizenship—to actively participate in government. Administrative agencies have the ability to enhance and multiply public spiritedness through citizen active participation (Cook, 1996). At this current juncture in our nation's history, young citizens are highly valued due to the demographic shift of the aging federal workforce. Blimes and Gould (2009) substantiated this claim by asserting, "the federal government hires about 250,000 employees each year, and this number will increase as the pace of retirement accelerates" (p. 28). To this end, in an attempt to strategically stabilize the federal workforce, federal supervisors are intensely recruiting and endeavoring to better understand young citizens.

The reductions in force (RIFS) and "the near freeze on hiring in the 1990s, combined with the loss of many young people to private sector jobs during those boom years, contributes to an acute shortage of candidates within government to replace those nearing retirement" (Blimes & Gould, 2009, p. 26). "In the next five years, 44 percent of all federal workers will be eligible to retire, and 61 percent will reach eligibility four

years later. In addition, nearly 90 percent of six thousand federal executives will be eligible to retire in the next ten years, and one million federal workers may retire by 2010" (Poindexter, 2008, p. 11). "Assuming that federal workers retire at about the average retirement age of sixty-two, one should expect a loss of close to 50 percent of the most experienced government workers within the coming decade" (Blimes & Gould, 2009, p. 25).

Furthermore, data between 1989 and 1998 from the U.S. General Social Survey was analyzed by Lewis and Frank (2002) only to find impactful correlations between altruistic motives and the preference to secure a public service position. It is believed by some that this correlation is stronger amongst younger members of this modern society (Perry, Hondeghem, & Wise, 2010) partly because of a Partnership for Public Service (2007) survey of 32,000 college students that underscored this research finding. Frederickson (1994) wrote an article entitled, "Can Public Officials Correctly Be Said to Have Obligations to Future Generations?" In this article Frederickson primarily theorizes that yes, these officials are responsible for intergenerational social equity and fairness issues. In line with Frederickson's theory, my position is that public officials are also responsible for effectively recruiting, motivating, and retaining young professionals while integrating them into the multigenerational public workforce as Baby Boomers begin to retire.

Statement of Problem

The underpinning catalyst that has created a high level of urgency for federal leaders to recruit and understand Generation Y is the unprecedented retirement wave that the federal government is facing. Over the past years and within the next few years,

many federal civil servants will continue to prepare for their mass exits from the government by means of retirement. As a young professional who is working in the federal government on a daily basis, I experience Baby Boomers discussing their anxiety to reach the date they will become eligible for retirement. Many of them are literally counting down the days, and have calendars posted by their desks with their retirement dates circled in red. Consequently, "as our retirement population increases, a growing shortage of skilled labor is forcing government agencies to make better use of their people" (Blimes & Gould, 2009, p. x). To corroborate this statement, the quote below was extracted from one of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) strategic plans—NASA is one of the federal government's largest agencies.

> As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, there is a greater diversity of age in our workforce than ever before, with four generations working side by side in many of our organizations. Currently NASA is implementing new programs to pull more Generation Y workers, those with birth dates starting from the mid-1970s, into the NASA community as a way to strengthen our diversity and skill sets. New employees will be able to learn from expert employees, retaining valuable institutional knowledge that would otherwise be lost to future generations. The Office of Human Capital Management is implementing a new program called the Early-Career Hiring Initiative to increase the number of people hired for entry-level and early-career positions. (National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 2009, p. MD&A3)

Synonymous to NASA's approach to strategically recruiting younger employees, other federal departments and agencies are actively seeking to incorporate them into their workforce as well. Albeit many federal agencies recognize the workforce deficiency is due to looming Baby Boomer retirements, a lot of these agencies do not possess a sufficient understanding of the young people they are integrating into their workforce. These young professionals have been labeled as Generation Y, which are individuals who were generally born between 1978 and 1994 (Thompson, 2005).

Many of the federal supervisors are Baby Boomers and they often espouse traditional assumptions and methods for developing Generation Y employees. Perhaps one of the most qualified public officials to speak on behalf of the federal government's struggling personnel system is Linda M. Springer, who was appointed by President Obama as the U.S. Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). During a public forum, she expressed her discontent with the current traditional way of thinking and nature of business within the federal government. Some of the highlights from the federal government's top personnel officials' talk were documented in an article entitled, "Getting Ready for the Retirement Tsunami" Fillichio (2006). Linda M. Springer stated with much passion and conviction that:

> We've got to hire these [young] people, and yet we don't even have the system in place to be able to compensate them in a way that's going to be attractive to these people. It'll be too late then [when more of them enter the federal government]. So we need to be thinking about it now and putting it in place now. (p. 5)

> We've got to make ourselves a welcoming workplace for people who want that type of non-traditional pattern. It's not one size fits all. That's the thing that's important. (p. 5)

> The federal government must welcome citizens who have different career patterns. By career patterns, we mean the type of working relationship that will be defined by several different dimensions and will not just be the 'traditional' relationship—come and stay for your whole career, come early and stay for twenty, thirty, forty years. That will be one of the many different types of patterns. So the first step is to identify what the potential patterns will be because we don't want to be caught by surprise. We want to plan for those patterns. And candidly, each of those types of patterns and relationships adds a particular type of value to the federal workforce. We don't want to be one-dimensional. We want to have the benefit of what those different types of relationships and people that are in those types of patterns can give to the federal government's effort. (p. 4)

> The first thing that needs to change is our mindset. We've got to make it work, and it starts with having a mindset that says, 'Yes, we can make this work.' People are going to need to feel that they can be successful in their

job, that they have the tools that they need, the access they need, and the leadership that they need. The bottom line is that we want them to be successful, and they need to perceive that they can be successful. (p. 5)

This isn't going to be the old OPM anymore, and it can't be. (p. 6).

One reason why it is believed that some federal leaders still espouse traditional beliefs is because there has been minimal scholarly research, as opposed to pop journalism conducted on motivating Generation Y, particularly with federal employees. As it will be covered in more detail in subsequent chapters of this research project, much media propaganda and imagery have been instilled in the minds of federal leaders. Many of these media proclaimed Generation Y stereotypes have been presented to federal employees as factual information, as opposed to mere stereotypes and perceptions. To substantiate this claim, during one of the interviews for this research, one of the federal supervisors subconsciously made reference to Generation Y motivational stereotypes that were introduced to her in the form of media sound bites. A good starting point for addressing this problematic issue of Generation Y stereotypes and perceptions is to examine the direct experiences of federal Generation Y employees, as they describe them with their own words, via a scholarly and systematic research framework.

Significance of the Study to Public Leadership

Federal organizations are strengthening their recruiting efforts in hopes of attracting more "fresh-out" talent in response to ominous retirement trends and predictions. Consequently, disparate generational workplace values are being conflated within the federal government as this massive public entity strives to reinvigorate its tenuous workforce (Downing, 2006). This unprecedented movement engenders an age and culturally diverse federal personnel system that must be properly managed by public

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leaders. This is an important action because a mismanaged multi-generational workforce can negatively impact the work environment and employee performance.

Gravett and Throckmorton (2007) exclaimed that, "there are four generations attempting to work harmoniously in today's workplace, and disparate perceptions, worldviews, experiences, and communication styles sometimes block the synergy required for organizations to succeed" (p. 14). Moreover, generational integration could serve as the impetus for the creation of intergenerational disconnects because of cohort differences in values, worldviews, working habits, communication tools, strategizing, and styles of dress in the workplace (Raines, 2003).

In fact, in a recent survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, "40 percent of human resource professionals have observed conflict among employees as a direct result of generational differences" (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007, p. 116). Furthermore, Gravett and Throckmorton (2007) indicated that in organizations with 500 or more staff members, 58 percent of human resource professionals witnessed strife between older and younger employees primarily due to differing perspectives on certain values.

After reading the preceding paragraphs, it is not difficult to fathom that such disparate characteristics and mindsets have the capacity to partition an organization into an "us" vs. "them" mentality (Yang & Guy, 2006). This problematic experience can also be greatly intensified because the new labor pool of entrants are so young that their superiors lack well studied information about the values that shape their workplace motivation. Consider the short vignette below that Linda Gravett provided from her research on multigenerational organizations:

"Does this sound familiar?

> The sales manager, a man about 50 years old, is at the front of the room. He's addressing sales reps of varying ages who have flown in for the annual meeting. As the sales manager is explaining next year's goals and exhorting everyone to "pull together" to achieve targets, a group at a table in the back is clearly disengaged. There's a lot of eye rolling and pretend gagging from this group of 25-to-30 year olds.
>
> What's going on?
>
> I've observed this scenario—or versions of it—frequently over the past few years: Older, experienced staff tries to guide and lead the "young pups." That guidance, though well intentioned, is not always well received. As a consultant called upon to help this sales department work together more effectively with less conflict, I sat in on sales meetings for the company for a few months. In private, I asked younger sales reps why the sales manager turned them off. They said, "He just gives us the rah-rah cheerleader bit. Just tell us our goals and get out of our way. I'm in this for me, not the so-called team."
>
> In private, I asked the sales manager how he perceived his sales reps. He said, "The kids have no sense of tradition or respect. They have no work ethic." (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007, pp. 11-12)

The level of distrust and misunderstanding described above undermines the culture and performance of the organization because "miscommunication and conflict across generations affect productivity, morale, and customer satisfaction. So we must do better if we want our organizations to survive and thrive" (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007, p. 12). "In today's knowledge economy, attracting and motivating skilled workers and making them highly productive are crucial to an enterprise's continued success. People are a strategic asset to be leveraged through careful investment" (Blimes & Gould, 2009, p. 5). "Put simply, the United States is not managing its enormous investment in human capital strategically to deliver the highest possible quality of government for everyone" (Blimes & Gould, 2009, p. 5).

In an article in *PA Times* entitled, "The Graying of our Workforce: Crisis or Prevention?" public practitioners expressed:

> As organizational leaders we can pretend that the graying of our workforce will not affect how our organizations function and continue to do the work as usual, but the question becomes are we setting ourselves up to be in crisis or prevention mode? The reality is no matter what we do our workforce will change and how we prepare our organizations on the front end will determine its survival and the survival of our workforce. (Williams & Baker, 2008, p. 6)

Furthermore, "[t]he aging and retirement trends present challenges and opportunities for managers who must harness and effectively channel talent, experience, and knowledge represented by older workers" (West, 2005, p. 165). Part of the solution to averting a crisis mode organizational atmosphere is recruiting new employees from the newly emerging class of Generation Y. So as an organizational leader or human resources recruiter you have to aggressively and methodically take action to hire this array of fresh blood, but then what? The other side of the coin is productivity and retention. What type of organization should leaders foster that motivates and actually helps Generation Y become effective career civil servants?

To answer this question, according to Kogan (2001), leaders are able to enhance productivity and retention when they take the time to *understand* the various generations and offer them the tools they need to be effective. In the book *The Proper Study of Mankind,* Berlin (1998) stated, "the goals and motives that guide human action must be looked at in the light of all that we know and understand; their roots and growth, their essence, and above all their validity, must be critically examined with every intellectual resource that we have" (p. 2).

Berlin also discussed the notion that each society has different realities, gifts, and visions that "must *be understood*, not necessarily evaluated" (p. 7). To this point, public managers must examine and understand the workplace perspectives of the new Generation Y employees. Generation Y has been overly analyzed, yet still misunderstood and therefore many leaders "are simply reinforcing prevailing misconceptions about Generation Y" (Tulgan, 2009, p. 11). One reason why they are still misunderstood is because there has not been a lot of systematic research conducted, and many supervisors still maintain 20th century outdated assumptions about employee motivation. Consequently, this lack of understanding can be attributed to the high attrition rate of new civil servants. The federal attrition problem was examined in a report entitled, "Beneath the Surface: Understanding Attrition at Your Agency and Why it Matters" (Partnership for Public Service & Booze Allen Hamilton, 2010), which explained:

> The government is losing too many new hires—the same talent it is working so hard to recruit and bring on board. We conducted a longitudinal attrition analysis of newly hired employees from fiscal 2006 through fiscal 2008 and discovered that 24.2 percent left their jobs within two years …. with some federal workplaces such as the Departments of Treasury, Commerce and Homeland Security losing more than one-third of their new workers within two years. The reasons for the turnover of the newly hired undoubtedly vary from agency to agency, and may include the nature of jobs and a host of other factors. But the loss of a high percentage of newly hired employees should raise a warning flag and be cause for further examination to find out exactly where and why the turnover is occurring and whether or not it represents a problem. (Partnership for Public Service & Booze Allen Hamilton, 2010, p. 3)

Furthermore, a Deloitte (2010) study asserted:

> Moreover, recruiting a new generation of federal employees is not the only challenge—even the Gen Y recruits who find their way into a full-time Civil Service position often choose to leave quickly, despite the cohort's strong interest in public service. Retention is especially difficult since

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Millennials have different attitudes and expectations towards work than previous generations. Yet, the federal workplace and career model are still largely for the expectations of a mature and retiring workforce. (p. 3)

As it is stated above, there needs to be a review of current Generation Y perceptions and an abdication of traditional leadership styles that were predicated upon the tyranny of "common sense," which are unchallenged historical suppositions of effective industrial management and leadership practices (Jacques, 1996). This is integral because "managers need to understand why people behave as they do. If you are going to get things done through other people, you have to know why other people engage in behavior that is characteristic of them" (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977, p. 9). "The leader's challenge will be not only to understand these differences, but also to embrace the different perspectives and find ways to bring out the best in everyone" (Downing, 2006, p. 6). This research project will most certainly provide federal leaders with information that will help them effectively develop and retain Generation Y employees.

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation is significant because prior to executing this research, it was assumed that some federal supervisors have begun to cultivate and adopt fallacious assumptions about motivation factors for the federal government's new cohort of civil servants. Perry and Porter (1982) discovered that "the literature on motivation tends to concentrate too heavily on employees in industrial or business organizations" (p. 97). Furthermore, I am grateful to have this opportunity to study the new entrants of the public workforce specifically within the federal government because limited funding and resources have been allocated for this type of scholarly research. Most funding is

allocated to research in the "hard sciences" which studies "things" instead of people

(Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). Moreover, a study was conducted by a Harvard University

professor which found that hourly workers were able to hold on to their jobs by

performing at about 25 percent of their full potential. However, workers that were highly

motivated not only maintained their jobs, but they performed at approximately 85% of

their optimal capacity (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). From this particular dissertation

project, the extracted and analyzed themes should be helpful for both public and private

sector managers to review and analyze as they strive to better motivate and retain their

Generation Y employees that have the potential to be the most high-performing

workforce in history (Tulgan, 2009).

Study Population

Employees from eight different federal agencies within the Greater Cleveland,

Ohio region were part of this study. The purposive selection method was used by

identifying individuals who were in Generation Y and a federal employee. In total, I

conducted in-depth interviews with 10 civil servants. Five employees were from

Generation Y (born between 1978-1994) and each person was employed by a different

federal agency. The subjects were primarily line staff employees, with the exception of

one subject, who worked in an administrative support role. There was a continuum of

interaction with the general public. Two of the subjects regularly interact with the public

to perform their civil service duties, two have no public interaction, and one employee

has some public interaction while completing their work responsibilities. There was an

attempt made to mix up the demographics of the study population to take into account

other variables, such as cultural differences. Three were males and the other two were

females. Three of the participants were African-American and two were Caucasian. Their age range was between 24 and 31. One participant was a parent; all of the others were not.

The other five subjects were supervisors that are either frontline supervisors or a higher supervisor who has regular interaction with Generation Y employees within their organization. Four subjects were Caucasian and one was African-American. Their age range was from 34 years old to 55 years old. They work for five different organizations within the federal government. As a whole, they supervise both line and support staff civil servants on a daily basis.

Research Questions

This study examined Generation Y's experiences as a federal employee to gain a deeper understanding of motivational factors in the federal work environment. Also, the managers that were interviewed discussed their perceptions of Generation Y within their respective work environment.

Primary Generation Y Research Question

1. How do Generation Y employees within federal agencies describe what their work experiences mean to them?

Secondary Generation Y Research Questions

1. What do they say is valuable or important about their work experiences?

2. What do they say makes them want to work hard and/or effectively?

Primary Supervisory Research Questions

1. How do frontline supervisors of Gen Y employees within federal agencies describe Generation Y employees?

2. What do they think motivates Generation Y employees?

Assumptions

One primary assumption I held, was that the interviewees would provide truthful information about their lived experiences within the federal government. Also, I carried the assumption that interviewees would offer information based upon their own experiences as opposed to perspectives that are highlighted in media outlets. Lastly, although there was no specific requirement for employees to have maintained employment as a federal civil servant for a certain number of years, it was assumed that each participant had gained enough experience to sufficiently easily answer the interview questions that are set forth in this study.

Limitations of the Study

Although it is not a limitation per se for phenomenological research, I want to address the traditional research approach concern for large, random sample sizes. In this qualitative study the purposive selection method was utilized, and this method does not require a random mix of participants to be selected. Also, 10 research participants are considered to be a relatively small population according to conventional research guidelines. However, with phenomenological research, sample size is not a factor because past scholarly studies have been constructed based on conducting an in-depth interview and analysis with just one subject. According to Hycner (1985):

> Phenomenological research for the most part requires that only a limited number of people be interviewed given the vast amount of data that emerges from the interview… Even with a limited number of participants, though the results in a strict sense may not be generalizable, they can be phenomenologically informative about human beings in general. (pp. 294-295)

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The study strictly included young people from the federal government; however, this study can be replicated in other workplace settings. In addition, there are many variables that impact a person's experiences, values, and attitudes that transpire outside of the workplace environment. This is a primary reason why I mostly focused on formulating common themes from the interview responses, as opposed to differences. Despite these few limitations, this research project was carefully planned and executed, which helped in shaping a substantive qualitative based dissertation.

Delimitations of the Study

This study limited itself to interview 10 federal employees in total and they are employed by eight different federal agencies in the Greater Cleveland, Ohio area. Five of them were Generation Yers, with an age range of 23 to 31 years old. For the Generation Y employees, there was some diversity in race and gender. The other five participants were federal supervisors of Generation Y employees. This study was carefully designed and executed by utilizing well documented research methods. The data produced from the semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed, and carefully analyzed.

As a part of the analysis phase, I formulated summaries for each interview and extracted common themes. To reduce bias, I ascertained that I let the interviewees freely speak to the questions while trying not to influence their responses with any of my preconceived thoughts. Furthermore, each participant reviewed their respective summary and modified anything they believed misrepresented their intent. For instance, after reviewing her summary one interviewee emailed me a message that said, "I made a few minor adjustments that I think get my responses across more in the manner I intended, but the overall summary was right on point." This person's response portrays the essence

of phenomenological research, and that is to extract the subjects' personal meaning and experience from a relative situation. Lastly, since I as the researcher am also a federal Generation Y employee, it appeared as if they were extremely excited and comfortable with expressing their true experiences and feelings with me.

Summary

The federal government is experiencing difficulties with inspiring and developing a new generation of talent to replace retiring civil servants. The situation is so prominent that it is forcing public organizations to quickly address this unprecedented workforce dilemma (Blimes & Gould, 2009). As a current Generation Y federal employee, I found it essential for me to focus this study on examining Generation Y within the federal government to gain a better understanding of their workforce motivation factors. While there is currently a plethora of media and journalism coverage on the topic of Generation Y, there is still a gap in specifically studying federal civil servants in a systematic manner. Also, the well studied traditional management studies seem to be antiquated and not completely germane to Generation Y employees.

Consequently, this research was constructed to reexamine traditional management theories and also to set aside contemporary assumptions about this new generation that have emanated from various media outlets and self-proclaimed experts. The interview participants of this study were asked non-leading, open-ended questions that allowed them to freely speak from their personal experiences as federal civil servants. The interview subjects were five Generation Y employees and five supervisors that were from eight different federal agencies. Chapter II underscores an in depth literature review of

leadership, motivation, and organizational theories that are applied to the generations

within the workforce.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This section will cover a significant amount of material that was researched by reading and analyzing materials such as reports, journal articles, newspapers, and scholarly books. First, the roots of the federal civil service system will be covered as an attempt to underscore some historical public workforce shifts. It is important to review this information because it sheds light on the process in which the government has handled its human resources over time. Analogous to these monumental personnel trends of recruiting Generation Y employees, the Baby Boomer retirement wave, is another significant federal workforce movement that deserves proper study.

Also, the workforce generations will be looked at by reviewing some of the history and trends that have shaped their respective values and mindsets. Subsequently, literature on motivation, leadership, and organizational development will be analyzed. In addition, information on federal personnel issues will be highlighted as well. By the end of this literature review, readers will have a more sound understanding of the importance of designing a federal workforce that effectively attracts and develops Generation Y.

A Brief Walk in History: The American Democratic Civil Service System

After America had successfully triumphed over Britain's reign, the country's founding fathers eventually agreed to formulate legal documents that promoted and supported the establishment of a democratic enterprise. However, "the ringing words of the Declaration of Independence provided objectives and principles rather than descriptions of actuality" (Mosher, 1968, p. 56) because there were many unethical human resource practices that were adopted directly from the succession of the British Empire. Many of these practices were taken lightly until President James Garfield was shot and later killed in 1881. He was killed by a disgruntled campaign worker who felt he was entitled to a governmental post due to his advocacy and support for Garfield.

Consequently, an unprecedented adjustment to the civil service reform became manifest when the Pendleton Act was passed in 1883. The civil service system was instituted as a reaction to perceptions that the administrative system was corrupt because of party-based favoritism in the hiring of workers. The Pendleton Act created the U.S. Civil Service Commission, which promoted competitive examinations and the elimination of regarding party affiliation as a civil service hiring standard. It was part of a pivotal campaign that was predicated on the need for a (a) moral government, (b) efficient government, and (c) government that eradicated evil and restored public trust (Mosher, 1968, p. 65).

In later years the emergence of scientific principles and rationality in the social sciences precipitated the creation of government position classification. Jobs were meticulously studied and these analyses were used as a basis for testing and recruiting the "best" employee for the position in an objective and honest fashion (Mosher, 1968,

p. 73). And as a result of the position classifications, a standard government pay scale

was developed that could be applied to the classified positions. Another historical epoch

of the ongoing civil service reform movement was the management era that emphasized

the hiring of general administrators in addition to specialists (Mosher, 1968, pp. 81-82).

Representativeness in Government

The preceding federal workforce developments received a significant amount of

attention from both practitioners and scholars over the past few decades. However, in

modern government, the government needs a plan that will assist them in recruiting,

developing, and retaining its talented employees from our competitive labor pool (Blimes

& Gould, 2009). "The Government Accountability Office has put human capital

management on its 'high risk' list of the most pressing challenges facing our

government" (Partnership for Public Service, 2007, p. ii). According to a different report

from the Partnership for Public Service (2005):

> The loss of experienced personnel is one of the surest ways to undercut an
> organization's effectiveness. When this loss occurs rapidly and is
> concentrated in critical positions, the results can be devastating. The
> departure of top-level employees at the Federal Emergency Management
> Agency (FEMA) is often cited as a key reason why it struggled to respond
> effectively to Hurricane Katrina. The coming wave of baby boomer
> retirements, combined with other turnover, threatens to dramatically
> diminish the Federal Government's effectiveness in meeting urgent public
> needs. (p. 1)

To this end, in today's government recruiting and developing a class of

underrepresented Generation Yers is one of the most indispensable issues that need to be

resolved in order to maintain a "representative" government. In the book *Representative*

Bureaucracy, Krislov (1974) explained the implications of a representative bureaucracy

within an administrative state. He stated:

The concept of representative bureaucracy was originally developed to argue for a less elite, less class-biased civil service. As such it was hardly of great interest in the United States because this country's problem then was to develop a respected administrative structure that could attract elite groups. The bureaucracy has since gained in prestige and power. More significantly, our society now sees other lines of division – race, ethnicity, and sex – as becoming even more relevant than class. These new lines of division in turn have particular relevance to contemporary bureaucratic structures. (p. 334)

I would like to take Krislov's quotation a step further to include age as a new line of division that must be considered. Therefore, contemporary leaders of public administrative institutions must espouse the value of representativeness to achieve our democratic oriented goals. "Democracy in administration rests upon the idea of broadening participation. Let the citizen take a hand in the working of his government, give him a chance to help administer the programs of the positive state" (Selznick, 1949, p. 220). Kaufman (1969) believed the search for representativeness in this generation lies mostly on administrative agencies. Since administrative agencies have tremendously expanded in size and responsibilities, this is not surprising. Furthermore, as societal and administrative problems become more complex and convoluted, public administrators will gain more responsibility for influencing and executing policies that will affect the quality of lives for many citizens (Cook, 1996).

In addition, Long (1949) wrote an essay that underscored the importance of administrative agencies acquiring power as a means to achieve legitimacy. He stated:

There is no more forlorn spectacle in the administrative world than an agency and a program possessed of statutory life, armed with executive orders, sustained in the courts, yet stricken with paralysis and deprived of power. An object of contempt to its enemies and of despair to its friends. (p. 257)

Furthermore, Galston (2002) warns institutions against the illusion that legitimacy will always be present due to their longstanding history and premiere reputation for serving the public. On the same front, Krislov (1974) explained that:

> No matter how brilliantly conceived, no matter how artfully contrived, government action usually also requires societal support. And one of the oldest methods of securing such support is to draw a wide segment of society into the government to convey and to merchandise a policy. (p. 332)

Organizations can gain support through a mechanism such as passive representation in hopes of building on its legitimacy and power base (Wise, 2005) from societal members of Generation Y.

In *Democracy and the Public Service,* Mosher (1968) defined the term passive representation as everyday citizens having an opportunity to be employed by the government in hopes of them being able to represent for and mirror all classes within society. Mosher said:

> [S]uch a breadth of characteristics and origins suggests the absence of any single ruling class[1] from public personnel are drawn or of any single perspective and set of motivations . . . a broadly representative public service, especially at the level of leadership, suggests an *open service* in which access is available to most people, whatever their station in life, and in which there is *equality of opportunity*. (Mosher, 1968, pp. 10-14)

Passive representation creates active representation, to the extent that inclusion of representatives from different classes and ages in the bureaucracy provides a mechanism for their disparate values, preferences and moral principles to be a part of government and its decision making process (Wise, 2005). Terry (2003) summarized Cook's (1992) argument of "representativeness" within the public sector that was expressed in *The*

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[1] It's important to note that Baby Boomers are currently or at least can be considered as a "single-ruling class" within many governments due to their large level of representation.

Representative Function of Bureaucracy: Public Administration in a Constitution

Perspective by stating:

> Cook makes a persuasive argument. The role he describes and prescribes for public bureaucracies makes it clear that public administrators share with all others in governing the American Republic. The continuing process of fostering citizenship, increasing opportunities to participate in policy deliberations, and assisting elected political officials and the citizenry determine what is in the public interest requires more than a mere preoccupation with the coordination of means or specialized activities. These regime-sustaining tasks dictate that public administrators become actively involved in governance, the exclusive domain of leadership. (pp. 20-21)

Today administrative agencies should to take a drastic step toward appreciating diversity by holistically embracing the notion of inclusion. Once agencies have strategically recruited people with different backgrounds and experiences into the working environment, the most integral ingredient necessary for learning to appreciate diversity will be in place (Broadnax, 1994). This is indispensible because citizens must enjoy an equal social minimum that grants them the opportunity to meet basic needs and participate in activities of citizenship . . . espousing the principle of equality takes the form of ensuring equal access to posts that enable individuals to receive monetary gain and benefits from the government (Galston, 2002).

Federal Government's Representativeness Assessment

Recently, many practitioners and researchers throughout the public and private sectors have asserted that federal agencies must incorporate more effective recruitment, training, and career development practices to enhance their representation of young professionals due to the retirement tsunami (Blimes & Gould, 2009). One of the federal entities that value the notion of representativeness is the U.S. Military. Over the years, military branches of government have studied and assessed the problematic issues of

recruitment and retention of Generation Y employees. Lieutenant Colonel Jill Newman (2008) conducted a strategy research project on the military's need to focus on recruitment and retention efforts. Newman emphatically suggested that the Department of Defense adapt its expectations and environment in order to attract young employees to join their rank and file.

In a paper written by an Army official Triscari (2002), it was asserted that, "to a certain extent Army leadership attempted to react to generational differences as it relates to recruitment, but remains challenged with how to respond to those differences once recruits are indoctrinated into the force" (p. 42). As an attempt to exhibit a cultural shift, in 2001 the Army launched a new slogan, "An Army of One" in hopes of better appealing to Generation Y (McHugh, 2001).   Furthermore, according to Triscari's report, the Army's Chief of Staff, General Eric K. Shinseki, formulated a Blue Ribbon Panel on Leadership and Training to investigate generational factors that attribute to Army attrition as well as, its organizational cultural impacts on retention. It was stated that this panel produced the most in-depth analysis and study that has been produced on the Army's personnel within the last 30 years.

Also, the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) and the Government Accountability Agency (GAO) were highlighted in *The People Factor: Strengthening America by Investing in Public Service* by Blimes and Gould (2009). After conducting an in-depth analysis, it was determined that over the years these two agencies have taken drastic measures to improve their workforce issues that emanated from an aging federal workforce. Both the DLA and GAO strategically developed succession plans; invested in

training and development opportunities for their employees; and flattened organizational

structures to better motivate their human capital.

Lastly, it is important to reiterate (as it is highlighted in a preceding section) that

the director of the Office of Personnel Management, Linda M. Springer, publicly

expressed her discontent with the current state of the federal personnel system due to the

lack of young civil servants. The Department of Defense, NASA, Defense Logistics

Agency, and Government Accountability Office are examples of only a few federal

entities that have assessed this problematic issue with the personnel system. In addition,

nonpartisan think tanks such as the Partnership for Public Service have identified gaps

that parallel the federal government's assessment of its workforce. All of these reviews

and case studies of the federal government underscored the fundamental need for the civil

service to undergo a personnel transformation in hopes of enhancing this historic

conundrum that ultimately impacts the lives of everyday citizens.

Understanding Generation Y in the Workplace

In Jean-Francois Lyotard's (1988) *Peregrinations: Law, Form, and Event* writing

it was stated that:

> I suggest that each thinking consists in a rethinking and that there is
> nothing the presentation of which could be said to be the "premiere."
> Every emergence of something iterates something else, every occurrence
> is a recurrence, not at all in the sense that it could repeat the same thing or
> be the rehearsal or the same play, but in the sense of the Freudian notion
> of the *Nachtraglich,* the way the first offense touches our mind too soon
> and the second too late, so that the first time is like a thought not yet
> thought while the second time is like a not-thought to be thought later.
> (pp. 8-9)

In the aforementioned statement, it says that "every occurrence is a recurrence." Along

these same lines, with each workforce generational cycle (or recurrence) comes the need

to review and conduct an analysis to gain an in-depth understanding of worker

experiences, values, and attitudes as they pertain to motivation.

Some researchers espouse the notion that, "the development of effective and

efficient workplace strategies and management practices requires a thorough

understanding of workforce needs and wants" (Gursoy, Maier, & Chi, 2008, p. 449).

Barzilai-Nahon and Mason (2010) explicitly stated, "marketers, educators, corporations,

and employers must recognize the need to understand the net generation's [Generation Y]

learning and working styles" (p. 398). By understanding the values of each generation

and in turn giving employees what they need to thrive, leaders can do more to increase

productivity, morale and employee retention (Kogan, 2001). Creating such a culture

helps to advance the organization as it endeavors to fulfill its mission.

However, some organizational culture scholars believe that the mainstream

perspectives of organization theory are utilizing the wrong "lenses" to look at the wrong

organizational elements in an effort to understand and predict organizational behavior.

These theoretical tools are as ineffective as a hammer is for fixing a pipe leak … and they

are rather useless (Ott, 2007). To this end, understanding:

> The problems that we face cannot be solved by scientific and technical
> skills alone; they will require social skills. Many of our most critical
> problems are not in the world of *things,* but in the world of *people*. Our
> greatest failure as human beings has been the inability to secure
> cooperation and understanding with others. (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977,
> p. 1)

In order to ameliorate current organizational structures and improve cooperation,

leaders will have to effectively manage organizational change. In the article

"Organizational Change and Development" by Weick and Quinn (1999) it was stated that

oftentimes change emanates from a structural failure, such as lack of planning. And in

particular, "episodic change is driven by inertia and the inability of organizations to keep up" (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 379). Change may encompass a new perspective in personnel, operational systems, organizational structure, and allocation of resources (Huber & Glick, 1993). This new process attempts to enhance personnel development and organizational success through alteration of employee viewpoints and work performance (Weick & Quinn, 1999). However, there must be "cognitive restructuring in which words are redefined to mean something other than what had been assumed, concepts are interpreted more broadly, or new standards of judgment and evaluation are learned" (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 372).

Bartlett and Ghoshal (1997) believe that it is critical to not just consider organizational structure, but also the mentality of those who design the structure and these managers should resist to solely relying on traditional concepts of organizational structure. Burns (1997) has studied organizations extensively and found that traditional organizations were able to operate on a mechanical basis because the internal and external work environments were relatively predictable and more controllable. However, most contemporary organizations are much less predictable while being more arduous to manage as a result of many dominant environmental factors and stakeholders. Albeit this is the case in today's times, many federal agencies are trapped in antiquated work modes and structures. According to Weick and Quinn (1999):

> Our review suggests both that change starts with failures to adapt and that change never starts because it never stops. Reconciliation of these disparate themes is a source of ongoing tension and energy in recent change research. Classic machine bureaucracies, with their reporting structures too rigid to adapt to faster-paced change, have to be unfrozen to be improved. Yet with differentiation of bureaucratic tasks comes more internal variation, more diverse views of distinctive competence, and more diverse initiatives. (p. 381)

This is why the topic of culture management is prevalent in many peer reviewed articles and scholarly books that focus on reforming and reinvigorating government. "Culture management deals with the ability of leaders to know and understand what the organizational culture is, modifying that culture to meet the needs of the organization as it progresses" (Homer, 1997, p. 272). Leaders must also understand the importance of socialization. Socialization emanates from feeling valued by a respective institution and therefore, creating a new social identity within that organization (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). "As a consequence, people are more supportive to the institutions they embody, they may internalize institutional values, norms, and attitudes, and the institutional structure may be reinforced" (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008, p. 61). A study that analyzed the socialization of Generation Y within the Army explained that once managers understand generational views that pertain to values, leaders may be able to align generational values with organizational core values (Triscari, 2002).

Baron (1995), an expert on organizational culture and change, has conducted extensive research studies on the topic of change. He has discovered that organizations that resist socialization factors and change in the external environment have negatively impacted the mission of their organizations. Conversely, those organizations that embrace change and offer employees new opportunities, flexibility, and development can experience a positive shift in the socialization process with its employees in very intricate environments.

Due to the critical and complex elements of society's current social problems which make organizational structure and alignment more difficult, some leaders embrace the Japanese concept of *kaizen* (continuous improvement), and this entails conducting

ongoing assessments of contemporary tools and practices that produce new knowledge.

Consequently,

> Knowledge about organizations can be thought of as a set of tools. In a changing world, it is periodically useful to step back from asking how tools can be used, asking instead what tools need repair or replacement and what new tools – and new tool-users – are appearing or are needed. (Jacques, 1996, p. vii)

Douglas McGregor perhaps put it best when he discussed Theory Y in one of his writings. According to the *Human Side of the Enterprise* by McGregor (2007):

> It is not important that management accepts the assumptions of Theory Y. These are one man's interpretations … and they will be modified – possibly supplanted – by new knowledge within a short period of time … The purpose of this volume is not to entice management to choose sides over Theory X or Theory Y. It is, rather, to encourage the realization that theory is important, to urge management to examine its assumptions and make them explicit. (pp. 245-246)

> Synonymous to Jacques (1996) and McGregors' (2007) aforementioned

assertions, this literature review and overall dissertation will bring to light new understandings of how Generation Y sees the work world; and therefore, encourage leaders to re-evaluate their assumptions about Generation Y along with their motivational factors through a phenomenological interpretive methodology. The goal of this research is not theory testing, instead it is theory building to describe and understand the values of Generation Y (Rowlands, 2005).

Generational Stereotypes

Organizational leaders often endeavor to satisfy and please their employees based upon their erroneous perceptions, instead of reality. However, when these leaders bring their perceptions closer to reality they can better empower their subordinates. But they have to limit their debilitating assumptions and understand who their employees really

are and what motivates them (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). This literature review section will trace the literature that underscores some of the history and values of the three primary generations that are within today's workforce to gain a better understanding of what type of people they are in general.

It is important to note that while some of the information provided will be extracted from carefully studied research projects, some of the information provided will be generalized stereotypes. The date ranges that will be given for each generational cohort are estimates at best. Nonetheless, this information will be helpful in conceptualizing and understanding how one can better manage across generations within the public sector, as myths and stereotypes are important because they often guide actions.

"When managers hold stereotypical views of workers, their responses can be inappropriate and counterproductive. Similarly, policies based on erroneous ideas can debilitate worker performance and morale" (West, 2005, p. 167). Managers must analyze their employees' work behaviors, but "in examining their work styles and aspirations, remembering not to stereotype them is important. People are individuals and should not be placed in boxes, and clearly not everyone in a generation will exhibit the traits described. These characteristics are merely guidelines for understanding some of the dynamics that affect relationships in the office" (Poindexter, 2008, p. 12).

A Brief Biography of the Generations

A primary factor that has the potential to greatly impact an employee's job satisfaction and their commitment to an organization are their work values (Gursoy et al., 2008). "Since employees from the same generation are likely to share similar norms, it is

likely that their work values and their attitudes toward work are likely to be influenced by the generation they belong to, which suggests that changes are likely to occur in the structure of work value and domain from generation to generation" (Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 450).

A generation is a cohort of people who are born in the same respective time period that typically falls within a 10-25 year period. Consequently, a generation experiences the same societal and community activities, especially significantly historical events that transpired. These events create a "personality that is likely to determine what individuals want from work, what kind of workplace environment they desire and how they plan to satisfy those wants and desires" (Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 450). Strauss and Howe (1991) suggested that from these experiences, each generation cultivates a biography that tells the story of development and growth. Therefore, people from different generations often have problems understanding others' perspectives and concerns of the work setting and this can be stressful, create disagreements, and many frustrations (Zvikaite-Rotting, 2007).

Baby Boomers

The three primary generations that are in most contemporary industries are Baby Boomers, Generations X, and Generation Y. The Baby Boomers are close to retirement or already eligible for retirement. These individuals were born within the two-decade span of 1946–1964. Most of these individuals were born after World War II and experienced the tough times of President Nixon and the Watergate scandal along with the Vietnam War. Many of the Baby Boomers were employed in industrial work settings and maintained pretty stable careers. As a result, they were assumed to be loyal to

companies because they provided stability without requiring one to attain a formal education beyond high school (Reynolds, 2005). A common journalistic stereotype is that many of them cultivated a "live-to-work" mentality, which was the impetus for their hard work ethic and dedication to their organizations.

They also executed most of their work processes the long and hard way without much of the current advanced technologies that contemporary organizations are equipped with. It is believed that this is one reason why many of the Baby Boomers within today's organizations are often obstinate when it comes to learning about computers and other technologies. In short, popular press assumptions are that they sometimes are inflexible, slow learners, and short on energy and enthusiasm when it comes to experiencing change (West, 2005). However, as a consequence of their extensive work experience, they maintain a lot of practical skills coupled with institutional knowledge that are often considered to be indispensable for organizational survival. Many of them are resistant to the new work values and beliefs of Generation Y employees, and therefore are out of sync with Generation Y's attitudes toward work. While doing generational research Gravett and Throckmorton (2007) discovered this belief and highlighted a brief anecdote below in their published book to share with readers.

> In private, I asked the sales manager how he perceived his sales reps. He said, "The kids have no sense of tradition or respect. They have no work ethic." (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007, pp. 11-12)

Generation X

Another cohort of employees that can be seen in today's workforce is Generation X. Generally speaking, Generation Xers were born during the decade of 1965–1975. This was a very pivotal and progressive decade in America. Many more people began to

enter the workforce as a consequence of the development of legislation that attempted to promote and restore equality. There were equality movements such as feminist and affirmative action movements, civil service reforms were popular, and many other liberal initiatives that were pursued engendered diversity within the public personnel system (Guy & Newman, 2005).

Since women were afforded the opportunity to work and advance their careers, some mothers of the Generation Xers were opportunistic and joined the workforce as well to make ends meet. As a result, many children were left in the care of nannies or an alternative parental figure while others were left at home alone to watch and look after themselves during their parents' work shifts. The common stereotype is that this created a certain level of autonomy amongst some of the Generation Xers that can often cause them to be apprehensive toward top-down hierarchies (Guy & Newman, 2005).

Generation Y

The other prominent generation that is being integrated into the modern public workforce that will be discussed in this essay is Generation Y. Since this generation is the focal point of this dissertation, more substantive information will be highlighted in the following paragraphs. This group was born between 1978–1994 (Thompson, 2005). With at least 55 million members, Generation Y is equivalent (if not greater) in size as the Baby Boomers.

> They are also perceived as having values and behavioral characteristics that differ from prior generations. In many cases, these behaviors are viewed as inefficient, ineffective, or even unethical by those already in the workforce. These perceptions, whether true or not, stimulate tensions between new employees from the net generation [Generation Y] just entering the workforce with other generations. (Barzilai-Nahon & Mason, 2010, p. 413)

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Many of them have Baby Boomers as parents and it is often thought that they tried their best to develop and prepare them for a healthy and productive life. Although Generation Y's parents were very protective, they instilled a lot of confidence in their children. One common assumption is that during their upbringing, they were encouraged to believe in themselves and their unique perspectives, abilities, and thoughts. To further this assumption, Generation Y was nurtured by making certain that "everyone received a trophy" just for participating (Tulgan, 2009). Consequently, many people assume and purport that Generation Yers are very lazy and expect rewards for both good and bad workplace performances. Take for example what Rea Pyle, a supervisor of some young employees, exclaimed while offering his stereotypical views on this generation to Ian Shapira (a reporter from the *Washington Post*) who titled his newspaper article "Millenials Accused of Lax Work Ethic Say It's Not All About 9-5":

> They've been blessed with parents and grandparents laying the foundation
> to give them a better life. But that hunger is not really in them. But the
> desire for success is. They want to make money but don't want to put in
> the required hours or effort. (Shapira, 2010)

Many leaders maintain perceptions and stereotypes that view Generation Y as using information technologies very differently from prior generations (Barzilai-Nahon & Mason, 2010). In February 2010, the Pew Research Center produced a report on Generation Y and used a telephone survey approach to reach thousands of Generation Yers. From this structured research it was determined that technology is Generation Y's identity badge that they proudly carry. Furthermore, Quinney, Smith, and Galbraith (2010) conducted a survey study on generational technological differences and they stated that Generation Yers are "digital natives" while Baby Boomers are "digital immigrants." Tulgan (2009) indicated that Globalization and technology have become so

advanced that Generation Y is interconnected to people and information across all of the

world's continents.

They have experience in receiving instant 24-hour global news, communicating

via text messaging/instant messaging, Facebooking and enjoying the benefits of other

computer social networking websites. The amount of overwhelming and steady

information streams do not intimidate this generation, instead they feel as if they are

well-rounded and confident experts on everything, says the data from the Pew Research

(2010) survey.

These contemporary tools afford them the opportunity to participate and interact

immediately, remain empowered, and stay inextricably connected to the world at all

times. Also, the proliferation of reality television and virtual reality video games have

played a role in shaping their desire for quick change, competition, and to continuously

be entertained by engaging in interactive activities in the workplace. A reporter in the

Oberlin Review expressed a similar stereotypical perspective:

> Television shows and movies both have a rapid story-telling pace, so
> brains may grow accustomed to this constant bombardment of change. If
> there is less stimulation, it becomes harder to concentrate. Old-fashioned
> fun that might help concentration like reading has fallen to the wayside
> with iPods and MySpace taking over. (Yan, 2006)

In addition, from the Pew Research Survey, Generation Yers are better on track to

become the most formally educated generation in history. With their education

background that taught them analytical skills and the ability to promote self-expression,

"they are more likely to disagree openly with employers' missions, policies, and

decisions and challenge employment conditions and established reward systems" says

Tulgan (2009, p. 11) from his interview research. In a *USA Today* newspaper article, a respondent expressed his viewpoints of Generation Y by saying they are:

> [M]uch less likely to respond to the traditional command-and-control type of management still popular in much of today's workforce … They've grown up questioning their parents, and now they're questioning their employers. They don't know how to shut up, which is great, but that's aggravating to the 50-year-old manager who says, "Do it and do it now." (Armour, 2005)

Furthermore, the Generation Yers that Gravett and Throckman (2007) interviewed indicated "that they would expect community service/outreach of their coworkers once they enter the management ranks" (p. 109). Moreover, within Shapira's (2010) Washington Post article, another respondent shared her perspectives on some young interview candidates, "[t]he younger candidates start talking about how their shifts need to fit into a predetermined schedule, rather than working around whatever the hospital needs. But for me, how I was schooled and you don't put up roadblocks at all in an interview." Another writer stated, "because of the confident nature of Millenials, they are looking to contribute immediately to an organization and are not willing to wait years before they are heard" (Downing, 2006, p. 3).

Generation Y is known to be less traditional and more liberal than other generations. For example, this generation is more accepting of gay marriage, producing unwed children, and interracial dating (Pew Research Center, 2010). From the interviews that Tulgan (2009) has been conducting since 1993, he asserts that, "Generation Y is the most diverse generation in history in terms of ethnic heritage, ability/disability, language, life style preference and many other ways" (p. 8). Consequently, they have become more receptive than any other generation to the notion of diversity and embracing its concepts. This uniqueness triggers them with the desire to customize their experiences to fit who

they are and what they believe, as opposed to conforming to institutional values (Tulgan, 2009).

In *TIME Magazine* a journalist stated, "old assumptions about what employees value in the workplace don't always apply with Generation Y. Friendship is such a strong motivator for them that Generation Y workers will choose a job just to be with their friends" (Trunk, 2007).

Furthermore, from their interviews with Generation Y, Gravett and Throckman (2007) indicated that as a result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, this generation is fairly patriotic and understands the importance of maintaining independence and a robust country. Many of them have become eager for change and desire to see younger representatives have the opportunity to administer government policies and duties. One could potentially argue that this was proven by Generation Y's active role in the latest presidential election. Many of them indicated that they were ready for a change and believed if they utilized their citizenship rights correctly, they could change the landscape of politics in America by electing President Obama. The young voter turnout during the election of President Obama was historic. The Pew Research Survey (2010) found that with the president's message of optimism, change, and fresh energy, this cohort of people supported and helped to vote him into office.

As it was highlighted in a recent survey conducted by the Partnership for Public Service, most American undergraduates identified government as their ideal work environment immediately after graduation (Partnership for Public Service and Universum, 2009). However, unprecedented shifts in the economy and job security have left an indispensable impression on Generation Y. Industries that previously deeply

valued their employees began to cut costs and layoff personnel. Job stability was a key

selling point for organizations as long as employees showed up and worked hard.

However, many of these same employees cannot assure a long job tenure or career access

(Noer, 1993). Consequently, Generation Y employees often do not see their first job as a

place where they will retire. Instead, according to some media based claims, many of

them work 3-5 years to gain experience before transitioning to a new organization.

Another writer said:

> [A]nother area of potential generational conflict is Geneartion Y's
> preference for having fun at work. Baby Boomers and Veterans may
> define fun at work as a planned party, whereas Y'ers define it as simply
> hanging out, chatting, and being silly. You might see Y'ers sitting around
> relaxing a lot. (Lower, 2008, p. 83)

In addition, they seek instant gratification and short term rewards instead of being

excited by long-term rewards (Tulgan, 2009). In the federal government's newspaper,

The Federal Times, a Generation Y manager believes that today's young people are very

impatient and ambitious. For example, "if you say, 'Where do you want to be in four

years?' they will say, 'Where President Obama is right now" (Maze & Losey, 2010).

Furthermore, another writer expressed that:

> Senior employees believe that junior employees ignore tried-and-true
> approaches and question the standard practice without a firm sense of the
> possible drawbacks of a new approach or knowing what failed in the past.
> (Derrick & Walker, 2006, p. 64)

In a *Washington Post* article entitled, "A New Batch of Younger Employees Finding

Their Place in Federal Government," the reporter summarized her conversation with a

federal supervisor, "[the federal supervisor] finds the impatience of her younger

colleagues refreshing. She has become something of a cheerleader and coach who

embraces their enthusiasm" (Rein, 2010).

Brian Tulgan (2009), who has traveled the Western world to conduct research on Generation Y and organizational leaders' perceptions and stereotypical views of them, offers below some comments that various leaders have shared with him.

"They walk in the door on day one with very high expectations."
"They don't want to pay their dues and climb the ladder."
"They walk in the door with seventeen things they want to change about the company."
"They only want to do the best tasks."
"If you don't supervise them closely, they go off in their own direction."
"It's very hard to give them negative feedback without crushing their morale."
"They walk in thinking they know more than they know."
"They think everybody is going to get a trophy in the real world, just like they did growing up." (p. 3).

Again, it is very important for me to reiterate that the aforementioned information includes some of the prevalent generational stereotypes and perceptions. While some of the remarks about the personalities and thoughts on the generations may hold true in a rigorous study, for example the surveys and interviews that are referenced, many of them are just tenuous claims that can be found in the popular press. Nonetheless, these generalizations were included to give readers a sense of some viewpoints and perspectives of generational groups. As a method within this carefully planned and designed dissertation, the interview subjects will respond to open ended questions and describe their values, attitudes, and work experiences as federal civil servants. Even with the data that will emerge from this research, they will be presented as generational experiences as opposed to factual information.

Literature on Motivation

A lot of the human motivation research attempts to develop cause and effect findings. For instance, Wade and Tavris (2000) stated that industrial and organizational

psychologists study motivation theory to discover conditions that successfully impact

productivity and satisfaction. Much of this research has been investigated to establish

rules and formulas on what could serve as an effective catalyst in encouraging and

motivating employees to produce at an optimal level. Unlike such positivistic research,

this dissertation's goal is to have a different impact that does not necessarily suggest that

one should immediately act. Instead, if nothing else, managers should become more

equipped to reflect and develop a deeper understanding of their diverse workforces'

thoughts on motivation (Jacques, 1996, p. viii).

The word motivation means to move, and the psychology of motivation is the

study of what moves us to take some form of action towards a goal or away from an

unsavory situation (Wade & Travis, 2000). According to Hersey and Blanchard (1977):

> The motivation of people depends on the strength of their motives. Motives are
> sometimes defined as needs, wants, drives, or impulses within the individual . . .
> They arouse and maintain activity and determine the general direction of the
> behavior of an individual. In essence, motives, or needs are the mainsprings of
> action. (p. 16)

And if you want to positively influence an employee, one must *understand* what their

most important motives and needs are (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977).

Most researchers have identified two basic types of motivation, extrinsic and

intrinsic. "Extrinsic motivations respond to incentives external to the individual's

response to the task itself, while intrinsic motivation derives from interest and

engagement in the actual work involved in the task" (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008, p. 39).

During the middle of my research quest, I discovered a Symposium on Public Service

Motivation that was being highlighted by the Public Administration Review. "In

particular, it is assumed that the devices used to motivate private sector employees are

useful for public sector employees. This obviously overlooks the fact that people join public and private organizations for very different reasons" (Peters & Savoie, 1994, p. 423).

Public service motivation (PSM) is a form of intrinsic motivation that Perry and Wise (1990) defined as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations" (p. 368). While there are several other iterations and slightly different definitions for PSM:

> At the heart of the construct is the idea that individuals are oriented to act in the public domain for the purpose of doing good for others and society…the commonality is that human behavior is driven by other-regarding motives, not only by self-concern and self-interest. (Perry et al., 2010, p. 687)

It has been noted by Kim and Vandenabeele (2010) that PSM has three primary motives embedded in this framework of motivation. Instrumental motives are derived from the desire to be an active participant in the public policy process with intentions on positively influencing the social service. Value-based motives pertain to public organizational values that a person internally espouse and identify with. They attain satisfaction as a consequence of being employed by an agency that pursues the same goals and values as they do personally. Lastly, public servants that carry identification motives are concerned with specific populations they identify with and have a passion to serve to enhance their quality of life.

Some researchers have stated that individuals who maintain a high level of PSM are more likely to seek and hold a public service job, produce good work, and remain committed to the organization due to their level of intrinsic reward and value. "It is thought that employees with high PSM are motivated to perform more effectively

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because their jobs provide opportunities to express and fulfill their values of compassion, self-sacrifice, civic duty, and policy making" (Wright & Grant, 2010, p. 694).

Conversely, "several studies suggest that employees with high PSM may be less satisfied with, and more likely to leave, public sector jobs because they feel unable to make public service contributions at work" (Wright & Grant, 2010, p. 692). Consequently, PSM can be negatively impacted due to the structure of the organizational and the working climate that has been cultivated by organizational leaders.

The opposite of intrinsic motivation is extrinsic motivation. Historically, many practitioners have espoused the notion that extrinsic motivation was the primary driver to the overall satisfaction of an employee. During The Industrial Management era a philosopher named Bentham (1890) emphasized the selfishness of humans. He believed their sole purpose in life was to rationally eliminate pain and optimize pleasure. From this emanated the carrot and stick approach that offered the idea of good monetary rewards (carrot) and uneasy punishment (stick) to motivate workers. It was theorized that if a leader offers enough monetary based rewards or on the flip side, threats of punishment, then employees would become motivated to comply with the organization's standard of performance.

Another set of motivation researchers, Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (2009), developed a two-factor theory of motivation that included motivators and hygienefactors. Motivators are factors which are internal to the work, such as: how rewarding it is, the likelihood of it leading to increased recognition, the possibility of receiving better compensation packages, etc. Conversely, hygiene factors pertain to the environment, such as organizational safety and working conditions. Herzberg et al.

purported that both factors had to be considered when attempting to motivate staff members.

In the book *Work and Motivation*, it was Vroom (1994) who introduced the expectancy theory, which postulates that employees are motivated in relation to their expectations of the reward. That reward can be compensation, a bonus, or promotion. But it depends on how strongly the employee believes they will achieve the expected and desired reward/award as a result of their hard work. However, in the book *Human Motivation* McClelland (1987) asserted that employees have the desire to achieve success, power, and influence within the workforce. This statement expands beyond the limited self interest of employees only having the desire to receive rewards. They want to possess the ability to shape the workforces' mission, goals, and values as well.

Some researchers have concluded that mechanical jobs can be induced by extrinsic rewards while more complex tasks (such as altering a large portion of an organization as described in McClelland's (1987) theory) are induced by other sorts of motivators. In today's flat world and fast paced environment, employees have to depend less on their left/mechanical side of their brain and depend more on their right/creative portion of their brain. This revelation should be the impetus for leaders to reconsider and modify their understanding and tool sets that are used to inspire their subordinates. This is particularly important in the governmental setting, due to their lower compensation and rewards structure.

Literature on Leadership

Pink (2009), author of *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us,* uncovered a very prominent truth that organizational leaders are often subconsciously

oblivious to and take for granted. Pink asserted that leaders often forget that management

is not produced by nature, it is not a natural resource like a tree or lake. Unlike some

practitioners:

> The social scientist does not deny that human behavior in industrial
> organization today is approximately what management perceives it to be.
> He had, in fact, observed it and studied it fairly extensively. But he is
> pretty sure that this behavior is not a consequence of man's inherent
> nature. (McGregor, 2007, p. 159)

Instead, it is a mechanical socially constructed tool that is predicated upon the

fundamental assumptions about the nature of mankind.

In "Pygmalion in Management" Livingston (2003) emphasizes the impact of the

"pygmalion effect" that leaders have on their subordinates. This theory states that

employees are managed and led based upon their supervisors' expectations of them.

"Some managers always treat their subordinates in a way that leads to superior

performance. But most managers unintentionally treat their subordinates in a way that

leads to lower performance than they are capable of achieving. The way that managers

treat their subordinates is subtly influenced by what they expect of them" (Livingston,

2003, p. 97).

 Consequently, "the other side of motivation is leadership. If workers need to be

motivated, they need to be motivated *by* someone or some group. One could say that

leadership is the study of how to effectively and legitimately motivate members of an

organization" (Jacques, 1996, p. 162). Bass and Stogdill (1990) stated that leadership

transpires through an "interaction between two or more members of a group that often

involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and

expectations of the members" (p. 19). And for many centuries, leaders have tested and

designed various organizational structures to enhance employee motivation and performance.

As it pertains to contemporary leadership practices, "the industrial revolution and its many social, economic, and political implications are fundamentally responsible for the new social philosophy and the new concept of public administration" (White, 1926, p. 52) and the school of thought for developing employees. At the turn of the twentieth century the "carrot and stick" management approach prevailed as the "gospel truth," and many scholars suggested that leaders had to coerce employees to work by offering them money or some other substantial reward to increase their output due to their inherent laziness.

Taylor (1911) is notorious for espousing such a system that automatically assumed what McGregor (2007) referred to as Theory X.

> Behind this conventional theory there are several additional beliefs—less explicit, but widespread: 1) The average man is by nature indolent—he works as little as possible. 2) He lacks ambition, dislikes responsibility, prefers to be led. 3) He is inherently self-centered, indifferent to organizational needs. 4) He is by nature resistant to change. 5) He is gullible, not very bright, the ready dupe of the charlatan and the demagogue. (p. 158)

Some would argue that this "push" helped shape and create the notion of management. The manager would serve as an agent to monitor and micro-manage the efforts of the subordinate crew. In this sort of management system workers are often treated as adolescents because their parents (management team) are forever watching them. Taylor (1911) believed an employee's work had to be de-skilled by management systematically studying their every move to make certain they are not deviating from any work instructions. Inflexible rule making and methods are considered as de-skilled

because they undermine personal and professional development. This is because workers are rarely able to be autonomous, and therefore are limited when it comes to being innovative. "The conventional approach of Theory X is based on mistaken notions of what is cause and what is effect. Perhaps the best way to indicate why the conventional approach of management is inadequate is to consider the subject of motivation" (McGregor, 2007, p. 159).

Maslow's (1943) research and theories on human motivation played an integral role within the field of management. He introduced the "hierarchy of needs" paradigm that underscored the foundations of human needs that needed to be satisfied. This framework included the following five layers that are in ascending order by levels of importance (according to Maslow, each level needs to be at least partially satisfied before their higher ordered needs can be fulfilled). The needs are as follows,

1. Physiological needs – The basic necessities of life: shelter, water, air, clothing, etc.

2. Security/safety needs – Protection from emotional or physical harm.

3. Social needs – To be included and accepted by other groups or people.

4. Esteem needs – To maintain self confidence and receive positive and noteworthy recognition from others.

5. Self-actualization needs – Desire to optimize personal effectiveness and potential.

Prior to Maslow's (1943) work, the 1924 Western Electric Hawthorne studies that were written about by Roethlisberger and Dixon (2003) triggered the Human Relations movement, which emphasized the human side of the enterprise. Researchers monitored employees working in a factory setting. At the outset, managers wanted to learn if increasing the lighting at the plant would improve employee performance. As this was

discovered to be the case, plant managers wanted to expand the research project.

Employees were given more flexible work shifts and schedules that afforded breaks and

the opportunity to interact with their coworkers. And as a result:

> Their output jumped to a new all-time high. Why? The answers to this
> question were *not* found in the production aspects of the experiment
> (changes in planet and physical working conditions), but in the *human*
> aspects. As a result of the attention lavished upon them by experimenters,
> the women were made to feel they were an important part of the company.
> They no longer viewed themselves as isolated individuals, working
> together only in the sense that they were physically close to each other.
> Instead they had become participating members of a congenial, cohesive
> work group. The relationships that developed elicited feelings of
> affiliation, competence, and achievement. These needs, which had long
> gone unsatisfied at work, were now being fulfilled. The women worked
> harder and more effectively than they had worked previously. (Hersey &
> Blanchard, 1977, p. 52)

This study and its findings were epoch in the realm of organizational leadership

and employee development. However, many motivators that the study unveiled were

initially ignored or not deemed as important to Theory X advocates. Subsequently, the

new popular organizational theory was Theory Y. In this framework it is thought that

employees are not naturally lazy. In fact, according to Hersey and Blanchard (1977),

"work is as natural as play, if the conditions are favorable" (p. 55). Moreover,

proponents of both the Theory Y movement and Human Relations movement do not

support Taylor's (1911) approach that emphasized monetary gain as the absolute

motivation for employees. Many of the researchers who shifted believed that

management would fail miserably if they were to automatically assume that money was

the sole motivator for increasing employee productivity.

The findings from the Hawthorne studies highlighted the need for leaders to

understand social relationships. In similar studies, the most important factor impacting

productivity was not just pay, but it included the interpersonal relationships that are developed at work (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). On almost every organizational chart these types of networks are absent from the formal organizational structure and hierarchy of an organization. Theory Y says that these informal networks are indispensible components to all organizations. They create a sense of social being that cannot be achieved through monetary gain. These circles also help to achieve what Maslow considered as social acceptance and recognition amongst peers. There are many more benefits of informal networks, but the crux of the argument is that employees are not only motivated by money, but also, other intangible factors like social networks, are vital motivational factors.

Another factor that leaders must cultivate is their employees' "zone of indifference." Barnard (1938) stated that employees cultivate a zone of indifference, which essentially means that workers will accept and obey orders depending upon how well they accept them and are motivated to execute them. He stated:

> The zone of indifference will be wider or narrower depending upon the degree to which the inducements [offered by management] exceed the burdens and sacrifices which determine the individual's adhesion to the organization. It follows that the range of orders that will be accepted will be very limited among those who are barely induced to contribute to the system. (Barnard, 1938, p. 169)

With the traditional management approach, employees' zone of indifference was adversely impacted due to the debilitating structure of organizations during this era.

Perry (2010) noted that Moynihan (2008) observed, "the normative model on which we once relied is being displaced by different institutional designs that have embedded within them different assumptions about human nature" (p. 679). In particular, our federal agencies are in great danger of being designed based upon

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fallacious suppositions that will create self-fulfilling prophecies which are detrimental to

the overall success and productivity of these instrumental public institutions (Perry,

2010). Furthermore, the complexity of modern work tasks and an extremely diverse

labor pool are steering federal organizations to enhance their attracting, retaining, and

motivating methods with their human resources (Perry, Mesch, & Paarlberg, 2006).

This is important because the traditional compensation and reward approaches to

developing employees in the public sector may actually have limited or even adverse

effects on employee performance (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010).

> Traditional human resource practices based on assumptions of managing
> employee self-interest have largely focused on transactional acts of
> management in which those in charge exchange rewards for desired
> employee performance, seeking to align the self-interest of employee and
> manager. (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010, p. 711)

Unfortunately, many studies have researched and underscored evidence that public

agencies are being run by ineffective leaders and frontline supervisors partly due to their

outdated modes of management thinking. According to the scholarly article, "In the Eye

of the Storm: Frontline Supervisors and Federal Agency Performance," Brewer (2005)

believed that federal managers have been ineffective in motivating civil servants and

executing the mission of their organizations across the federal sector. It was stated that:

> Several recent studies have acknowledged the chronic nature of this
> supervisory management problem and how it has exacerbated the larger
> human capital crisis in the federal government (Light 1999b, 2002;
> National Academy of Public Administration 2003; National Commission
> on the Public Service 2003). These studies seem to agree that supervisory
> management is the crucial link between human capital and high
> performance in the public sector. . . . Moreover, frontline supervisors
> influence employees' attitudes and motivations toward their work. Thus, it
> seems likely that frontline supervisors—who are near the heat of action—
> are important determinants of organizational performance and
> effectiveness in the public sector. (pp. 506-507)

While many of the traditional assumptions on human nature analyze the extrinsic motives that individuals carry, there are some "rediscovered models of human nature that gave rise to different views of motivation and its foundations" (Perry, 2010, p. 679). "The art of the creative leader is the art of institution building, the reworking of human and technological materials to fashion an organism that embodies new and enduring values" (Selznick, 1957, pp. 152-153). To this end, public managers must effectively manage the new cohort of employees (Generation Y) in order to restore the face of public management in hopes of improving governmental performance and increasing support from society at large.

Similar to Taylor's classical scientific management approach to developing organizations, Burns (1997)stated that many leaders believe that leadership is based on transactions. Transactional leadership is a non-personal style and is predicated on rewarding employees for outputs. However, after composing an extensive review on scholarly literature it's been purported that transformational leadership is possibly one of the most effective leadership styles for managing Generation Y within the public sector. Unlike transactional leadership, transformational leaders "personally evolve while also helping their followers and organizations evolve. They build strong relationships with others while supporting and encouraging each individual's development" (Homer, 1997, p. 274).

Transformational leadership is advantageous to organizations for at least several reasons that have been researched empirically. Emery and Barker (2007) studied job satisfaction and concluded that job satisfaction and organizational commitment are positively correlated with a transformational leader. It was explained that the correlation

is so strong to where followers of transformational leaders often aspire to emulate such leaders. Transformational leadership is an effective paradigm that directly aligns with the Human Relations movement and its goal to empower employees by valuing both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Statement of Research Questions

It was stated earlier in this dissertation that the federal government will focus on

extensively and strategically recruiting many employees from Generation Y. As a

current federal employee, I am witnessing this dynamic hiring push firsthand. Recently

my agency disclosed public notices underscoring its agenda and efforts on diversifying its

workforce by recruiting "fresh-outs." Similarly, other federal agencies have implemented

recruiting practices that are centered on recruiting and retaining recent college graduates

by using outdated traditional methods or media generated stereotypes about Generation

Y. Consequently, it is important for federal agencies to examine the motivational factors

that influence Generation Y employees to have the desire to perform better at work.

The questions are,

1. How do Generation Y employees in the federal government describe what their work experiences mean to them?

   1a. What do they say is valuable or important about their work experiences?

   1b. What do they say makes them want to work hard and/or effectively?

2. How do frontline supervisors of Generation Y employees within the federal government describe Generation Y employees?

2a. What do they think motivates Gen Y employees?

Study Design

Selecting a particular research methodology for a dissertation can arguably be deemed as the most important step in successfully executing a dissertation. During this process, the general guidance is, "what one wants to learn determines how one should go about learning it" (Trauth, 2001, p. 4). A philosophical term that captures "what" one desires to learn is cognitive interests, and it took Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutics and Charles Peirce's pragmatism to develop a philosophical platform that mobilized the exploration of cognitive interests (Baert, 2005) that expand beyond the traditional positivistic data interests. To this point, Rowlands (2005) stated that qualitative research is a broad term that includes many techniques that endeavor to describe, decode, translate, and develop meanings, as opposed to measurements of phenomena in the world.

A lot of qualitative work falls under the interpretivism intellectual camp (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Interpretivism can be viewed as an umbrella because it covers multiple schools of thought that share some basic philosophical assumptions (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). These prevalent philosophical assumptions provide the methodological principles that are adhered to in the realm of interpretive methods for accessing, generating, and analyzing data (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). In an effort to reflect on and better understand Generation Y and their words and expressions, this research was conducted under the interpretivist framework while utilizing the phenomenological school of thought and research methods approach.

Listed below are the specific interview questions that were asked of the interview subjects. These were used to extract information from the participants that would address the research questions of this dissertation.

Generation Y Interview Questions

1) What are the things that are helping you to be effective at work?

    a. Can you think of a story or incident about this?

2) What is keeping you from being more effective?

    a. Can you think of a story or incident about this?

3) What excites you about your job?

    a. Can you think of a story or incident about this?

4) What lowers your excitement at your job?

    a. Can you think of a story or incident about this?

5) What do you value or appreciate about your work environment?

    a. Can you think of a story or incident about this?

6) If you could change something on your job, what would it be?

    a. Can you think of a story or incident about this?

7) How do you know that your supervisor understands your generation's wants and needs?

    a. Can you think of a story or incident about this?

8) What should your supervisor understand about your generation within the work environment?

    a. Can you think of a story or incident about this?

Supervisory Interview Questions

1) What are some things that Generation Y likes about an effective supervisor?

2) What are some things that Generation Y dislikes about a supervisor?

3) What do Generation Y employees need from a supervisor to do their jobs more effectively?

4) Can you tell me what Generation Y employees are like in the workplace?

5) Anything else you want to add or mention about your Generation Y employees?

Justification of Research Design

> More qualitative research (e.g., interviews, nonparticipant and participant observation) on motivation is encouraged because it has untapped potential for building theory and its impact on organizational performance . . . qualitative research can be powerful in providing rich examples, creating contextual realism to make research findings more credible and persuasive for practitioners. (Wright & Grant, 2010, p. 697)

Furthermore, some researchers will argue that a powerful story can have as great or an even greater impact than a statistical analysis. Consequently, this research takes a step back to reflect on and understand Generation Y's contemporary values through the lens of phenomenology. This research project is particularly important because there has been minimal scholarly research, as opposed to journalism, on Generation Y. From a scholarly standpoint, a good place to start is with direct experiences of members of this group, as they describe them. Through phenomenology, the preconceptions and stereotypical views will be set aside while Generation Yers express and describe themselves with their own words. Next, I will first highlight some of the main tenets of interpretivism and subsequently underscore the phenomenological approach.

Qualitative Research as Interpretivism

Interpretive research is a hermeneutic approach and:

Students of hermeneutics insist that explaining action is a matter of meaning. It follows, therefore, that the methods of social science must reflect the influence of the distinctive human capacity for language and the learning of it. And the purely physical character of human behavior captured in causal regularities must be relegated to subsidiary importance in the social sciences. (Rosenberg, 2008, p. 100)

Fay (1975) stated:

The interpretive approach to social science, as construed from the viewpoint of analytic philosophy, starts with the fact that a large part of the vocabulary of social science is comprised of *action concepts*, and it attempts to give an account of social science by examining the logical implications of employing this class of concepts. (p. 71)

These action concepts are not necessarily analyzed to understand the nomological factor, but the researcher wants to explain and interpret actions from the subjects' point of view.

Interpreting and explaining actions are tools that help interpretivists conceptualize the meaning of something from subjects. This interpretivistic research approach allowed me to have in-depth, intimate conversations. I achieved this by placing myself in the shoes of my subjects to understand their beliefs, rules, and traditions, which often precipitate their actions. This was helpful because it assisted me in not relying on common tacit assumptions about their perspectives of the federal work environment. Faye (1975) explained that the interpretivistic method creates a bridge that could never have possibly been established between factions of society in the absence of this level of intersubjectivity. This intimate relationship is acknowledged and accepted by the phenomenological community because researchers concede at the outset that this level of research cannot be achieved by positivist objectivity standards.

As a result, some historical scholars of this framework argued that the level of objectivity that is maintained in the natural sciences could never be achieved in the social sciences. The process of understanding meaning cannot truly be achieved through mere observances and remote experiments. Humans communicate and possess a priori knowledge that helps in the interpretation and sense making processes (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006), and not only are their actions predicated upon prior knowledge, but they also possess the ability to make conscious choices which makes things more complex.

Phenomenology

Since the foundation for interpretivism has been laid, this section highlights the basic underpinnings of phenomenology.

> The term signifies a study of "phenomena," that is to say, of *that* which appears to consciousness, *that* which is 'given.' It seeks to explore this given—'the thing itself' which one perceives, of which one thinks and speaks—without constructing hypotheses concerning either the relationship which binds this phenomena to the being *of which* it is phenomena, or the relationship which unites it with the I *for which* it is phenomena. (Lyotard, 1991, p. 32)

Or put in different terms, "phenomenology seeks to make explicit the implicit structure and meaning of human experiences . . . The point of phenomenology is to get straight to the pure and unencumbered vision of what an experience essentially is" (Sanders, 1982, p. 354).

A very central tenet of this philosophical approach is how phenomenologists view reality. Going back to the twentieth century, some scholars name Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) as the most prominent on phenomenology (Vandenberg, 1997). Thoughtfully, Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), Husserl encouraged researchers to 'go

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back to the things themselves' during their epistemological quests. This is so because the

subjects' reality is a socially constructed and sustained reality (Boland & Wesley, 1989).

The subject or focus of phenomenology is not things in themselves in an ideal or

objective sense, but rather "experiences themselves" as reported by research subjects.

They speak freely from their own interpretations and understandings of things, as

opposed to judgments and opinions that are impressed upon them by other researchers.

Furthermore, a foundational assumption for interpretive and phenomenological

research is to acquire knowledge and meanings through social construction. My research

paradigm "explores the ways in which humans weave not only the social world in which

we live, but the very identities we construct for ourselves as we live in those worlds"

(Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). "Phenomenology investigates how in fact there is

truth for us: experience in the Husserlian sense, manifests this fact" (Lyotard, 1991,

p. 74). Husserl placed a significant value on the immediate experience of people because

it shapes and creates their 'reality' and "realities are thus treated as pure phenomena and

the only absolute data from where to begin" (Groenewald, 2004, p. 4). Judgments of

experience cannot be deemed as true or false, instead they are simply to be described and

experience of truth cannot be gained by excluding the subject that consciously

encountered a respective phenomenon or experience (Lyotard, 1991).

Judgments emanate from perceptions that we all possess as it pertains to

experienced concepts.

> Thus concepts become actual; principals become contingent conditions of
> psychological mechanisms; and truth becomes belief reinforced by
> success. Since scientific knowledge is itself relative to our organization,
> no law can be said to be absolutely true; it is simply a hypothesis in view
> of verification without end, and its validity is defined in terms of the
> efficacy of the operations that render it possible. (Lyotard, 1991, p. 38)

The phenomenological study will unveil an individual's perceptions, interactions, and perspectives of unique situations in their life world in hopes of interpreting meanings of experiences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The next subsection will underscore the general process that I followed to effectively capture and describe my subjects' meaningful experiences within the federal government.

Phenomenological Research Methods

Phenomenology "yields a rich understanding of the human phenomenon being examined by bringing lived experiences into the conscious realm of human existence (Krider & Ross, 1997, p. 441). It asks, "what is this or that kind of experience like?" It differs from almost every other science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it (van Manen, 1990, p. 9).

"Gathering phenomenologically based data on human experiences recognizes that phenomenology, as a method, provides a framework for examining the 'description of experiences' which provides an 'interpretation of that experience'" (Krider & Ross, 1997, p. 441). However, during the phenomenological process one must be mindful that to become effective at producing a quality phenomenological research project, one must adhere to a systematic process.

> Human science operates with its own criteria for precision, exactness, and rigor. In the quantitative sciences, precision and exactness are usually seen to be indications of refinement of measurement and perfection of research design. In contrast, human science strives for precision and exactness by aiming for interpretive descriptions that exact fullness and completeness of detail, and that explore to a degree of perfection the fundamental nature of the notion being addressed in the text. (van Manen, 1990, p. 17)

"In the view of critical positivists, certainty of knowledge could be entrusted only to claims based on the senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell); to eliminate error, science had to be limited to sense descriptions of experience" (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006, p. 8). Furthermore:

> Experience of the world is subjective and best understood in terms of individuals' subjective meanings rather than the researcher's objective definitions. By choosing the assumption of subjectivity as part of the phenomenlogical methods for research, the phenomena that are being examined call for a participation process, which is too complex to define and measure with standard instruments. (Rowlands, 2005)

To thoroughly and effectively understand such subjects' explanations, the researcher must be able to proficiently describe their data. This is often a difficult feat because interpretation is a little bit like learning another language. An individual's responses must be correctly understood and analyzed to interpret an action. This calls for a research process that is intersubjective in nature so that an intimate dialogue can be held between the two (Fay, 1975).

Another important aspect of phenomenology that is highly important is having the ability to get subjects to open up and share specific examples and/or anecdotes of what they experienced as they pertain to the phenomenon that's under study. According to Van Manen (1990) anecdotes have power,

1) To compel: a story recruits our willing attention.

2) To lead us to reflect: a story tends to invite us to a reflective search for significance.

3) To involve us personally: one tends to search actively for the storyteller's meaning via one's own.

4) To transform: we may be touched, shaken, moved by story; it teaches us.

5) To measure one's interpretive sense: one's response to a story is a measure of one's deepened ability to make interpretive sense. (p. 121)

"Listening to and uncovering anecdotes help the researcher to develop 'thick descriptions' of the conversation so one can get a full account of the subject that is under study (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006, p. 70). In order to do this one must be reflexive and adaptable during the research process. Lastly, the researcher must review their written summaries with their subjects to ascertain that their interpretation makes sense.

Selection Methods and Participants

According to Patten (2005), "if you will be conducting qualitative research, you should propose to purposively select participants who meet criteria that will yield a sample that is likely to provide the types of information you need to achieve your research purpose" (p. 65). Purposive selection is a form of nonprobability sampling that allows the researcher to use their professional judgment to select participants that are stakeholders or can provide substantive information for the research project (Rea & Parker, 2005). For this dissertation, I adhered to the recommendation to utilize the purposive selection process to identify interview subjects.

There has been a substantial amount of information on Generation Y provided within the arena of journalism. In the form of media broadcasts, newspaper articles, and non-peer reviewed journal articles many self-proclaimed experts have offered their perceptions of Generation Y as factual information. Jumping on the bandwagon, the federal government has emulated this approach by consulting with some external non-scholarly consultants in hopes of gleaning tips and strategies that will help them attract and develop young talent. Consequently, this dissertation was constructed in a scholarly format to carefully analyze and examine Generation Y; not to prove anything, but to gain a better understanding of who they are.

To this end, initially this research project was going to only focus on Generation Y employees from one particular federal agency. However, in order to get a broader scope and representation of the federal government as a whole, a determination was made to extend my research to include a very diverse set of federal agencies. The expectation was if perhaps many differences were discovered by interviewing employees from eight different federal agencies then it could be determined that Generation Y employees and their supervisors had disparate experiences, relative to their respective agencies. Nevertheless, on the flip side, if employees from eight different organizations shared the same or very similar meaningful experiences, then this research would become germane to the federal government at large. Invariably, when researching human beings, there are hundreds of factors that play into their work experiences and outlook on life in general. Considering this basic level of understanding, when more than a few common themes can be formulated by asking very broad and open ended questions from civil servants at various agencies, the epistemological implications become quite strong.

Criteria for participant selection were as follows: It was required that all participants be civil servants within the federal government to be eligible to participate in this study. Generation Y employees had to be born within the timeframe of 1978–1994. The supervisors had to be a frontline supervisor for a Generation Y employee or a higher level supervisor that maintained daily interaction with Generation Y employees.

As a young federal employee, I have had the opportunity to network with other employees within the federal government and I was able to use some of these contacts to identify subjects for this research. Upon identifying possible interviewees, I emailed them a brief synopsis of my research project and asked for their consent to participate in

this study. An informed consent form was issued to all participants to assure integrity and confidentiality of the responses throughout all research phases. After each participant willingly agreed to and signed the consent form, I issued them a copy for their records.

Description of Participants

Employees from eight different federal agencies within the Greater Cleveland, Ohio region were part of this study. I conducted interviewees with a total of 10 employees. Five employees were from Generation Y and each person had a different job title and list of responsibilities from the others; some were line staff employees while others worked in an administrative support role. There was a continuum of interaction with the general public. Two of the subjects regularly interact with the public to perform their civil service duties, two have no public interaction, and one has some public interaction while completing their work responsibilities. There was an attempt made to mix up the demographics of the study population to take into account other variables, such as cultural differences. Three were males and the other two were females. Three of the participants were African-American and two were Caucasian. There age range was between 24 and 31. One was a parent of while all of the other participants were not parents.

The supervisors were either frontline supervisors or a higher supervisor who has regular interaction with Generation Y employees within their organization. Four were Caucasian and one was African-American. Their age range was 34 through approximately 55 years old. They work for five different agencies within the federal government. As a whole, they supervise both line and support staff civil servants.

Ethical Considerations

Before this research was conducted approval from the Institutional Review Board was received. Each participant signed a consent form and was left with a copy for their records. It was explained to them that their identity would remain anonymous due to any fear of reprimand. In addition, they were encouraged to not share any information that could jeopardize their relative careers if they felt uncomfortable sharing certain stories.

CHAPTER IV

DATA INTERPRETATION, RESEARCH FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSION

Preface

As more and more Baby Boomers are preparing for retirement from the federal government, many federal agencies have begun to formulate strategies that are being marketed towards Generation Y in hopes of strengthening its recruitment practices. However, this is only the first step that must be taken to effectively balance a robust public workforce. One other major component to cultivating a healthy workforce is employee development. To this end, many public sector leaders are designing work structures, incentive systems, and environments based on two types of suppositions: (a) traditional management practices and (b) Generation Y stereotypes that are unveiled by the popular press and media outlets. Adhering to these two assumption bases could prove to be disastrous to the government as it strives to effectively ameliorate societal problems through the services it offers to the general public. This means that it is integral for public leaders to gain a thorough understanding of the values and things that are important to this new cohort of employees if they desire to enhance the federal personnel system. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to examine Generation Y's experiences and develop a better understanding of their work values within the federal

government. In particular, a primary interest was to analyze some of their organizational related motivation factors.

There were 10 participants in this study who were all interviewed by using questions that helped me accurately capture and understand their experiences as a Generation Y and supervisory federal employee. Five of the subjects were Generation Yers and the remaining five possessed supervisory authority over young employees within the federal government.

Data Interpretation

The bedrock of this phenomenological research dissertation was the notion of developing themes. Themes are created by way of a thoughtful analysis of the responses and anecdotes of the lived experiences that are shared by research subjects. Many of the personal anecdotes were triggered by asking the participants to give an example or share a story of their relative lived experiences. Again, formulating themes is an indispensible process phenomenological researchers must respect and be very careful with due to its significance. van Manen (1990) explained that themes highlight the experience that one lived, and it gives meaning to the phenomena. In this research, the method of identifying themes helped me shape the answers to the research questions that are centered on understanding Generation Y employees within the federal government.

In an attempt to be very transparent with the research methods, the actions and processes that are outlined in Table 1 were followed my phenomenological pursuit.

Table 1. Phenomenological Research Methods

Guideline	Explanation
1. Transcription	Record (audio and written) and transcribe interviews and focus group data.
2. Bracketing the phenomenological reduction	Researcher should be open to emerging meanings by suspending any preconceived ideas, thoughts, or stereotypes.
3. Listening to the subjects for a sense of the whole and extracting general units of meaning	Revisit the tape and transcription multiple times to listen for units of meaning and themes.
4.	
5. Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question	Do the same thing as in step number three, but watch for units of meaning that addresses the research question in some fashion.
6. Eliminating redundancies	After completing the above steps, the researcher should carefully remove any redundant units of meaning.
7. Clustering units of relevant meaning	Researcher should look for units of meanings that could fit into a cluster.
8. Determining themes from clusters of meaning	Researcher should analyze the data to search for some central themes from the clusters. Also, a written description of the clusters should be developed.
9. Writing a summary for each individual interview	After these steps have been followed, the researcher should review the interview transcription to write a summary while including the central themes that have been discovered.
10. Giving participants a chance to review notes from the interview	Allow participants to review the summaries of the interview to correct any written miscommunication or translation.

Table 1 highlights the process and it was compiled from information that was extracted from Hycner's (1985) article, "Some Guidelines for the Phenomenological Analysis of Interview Data," and also van Manen's (1990) book *Researching Lived Experiences*.

<center>**Research Findings**</center>

<center>**Generation Y Interviews**</center>

By systematically following the steps that are described above, themes were developed to address the research questions. Furthermore, below you will read some of the verbatim responses that were given by the interviewees. To give you a general idea of the process I followed while analyzing the data, for Theme 1, I underlined some of the words and phrases that helped me derive meaning and understanding of the responses.

In regards to the interviews that were conducted with the five federal Generation Y employees, three primary themes emerged from the research process. These themes engendered various subthemes that will be highlighted as well. The three themes are: (a) public service motivation, (b) development opportunities, and (c) traditional bureaucratic management.

The central research question for this dissertation is,

Primary Research Question: How do Generation Y employees within federal agencies describe what their work experiences mean to them?

Theme 1: Public Service Motivation

According to Perry and Hondeghem (2008) public service motivation has "a common focus on motives and action in the public domain that are intended to do good for others and shape the well-being of society" (p. 3). While sharing stories and explaining their various responses to the interview questions, each Generation Y employee expressed that they had a desire to improve the conditions of society. To directly answer this dissertation's primary research question, having the opportunity to be

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a civil servant and cultivate experiences within the federal government means that they

are in a position to positively contribute to and impact society at large.

<div align="center">Gen Y Civil Servant 2</div>

> *I like my job because it is unpredictable. I personally like politics and foreign affairs so getting <u>to work on the inside and know what's actually going on is cool</u>. So when I see it on CNN I know the whole truth to the story and it is <u>very exciting</u> for me. It is just <u>fascinating</u> to be on the inside and you are there in person actually participating in what you get to see on the news that sometimes <u>impacts the whole U.S. government and society at large</u>.*

<div align="center">Gen Y Civil Servant 3</div>

> *But I think most importantly is that <u>you feel like you are making a change</u>. I think from my perspective it is to <u>set a good example not only to the children that are coming up in today's society</u>, but also the clientele I serve on a daily basis. As a federal employee I represent the United States of America … And when you work for the United States of America, <u>I work for you and everybody else in society and I don't take it for granted</u> because my power can be stripped. I have been <u>given the privilege</u> to work for the people and the President, whether it is George Bush or Barak Obama, <u>I am proud to work for the President and the people</u>. Also, when people in the public thank you for doing your job, it makes you feel good. It lets you know that there are people out there who care.*

<div align="center">Gen Y Civil Servant 4</div>

> *I like my job because <u>it is fun and I love doing it</u>. Since people's lives are at stake in the kind of work that I do, it is <u>my job to make certain people from the general public are safe</u>.*

<div align="center">Gen Y Civil Servant 5</div>

> *When you are interacting with the general public and offering services, I am the government and I am the face of the government to that person I'm assisting. But <u>working for my agency is awesome</u>. <u>I get a thrill out of helping people</u>, even the people who hate the government. I just feel like <u>it is my calling</u>.*

The aforementioned statements were from employees that were line staff

members within their respective organizations. However, there was one subject who

works in an administrative support staff role. While he is dedicated to working hard so

he can improve the government and change the negative perception that some members

of society have on government, he explained that, for him, there was a disconnect

between his role and the overall mission of the organization. Consequently, he didn't

experience the same level of thrill, excitement, and satisfaction from executing his

primary work responsibilities. Nonetheless, he was able to find a similar type of public

service motivation by participating in an outreach program that his job was a part of.

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 1</u>

> *My tasks are so far disconnected from our clientele base, sometimes I do not see the meaning in what I am doing. Oftentimes, I just don't see the purpose in what I'm doing. And my passion is not to serve in an administrative support capacity. I mean you have some people who absolutely love working in an administrative role. But <u>my passion is helping my community</u> and I don't truly get that where I'm at with this job. However, I've been given opportunities to participate in different things where I'm actually able to do that on top of my job tasks. The <u>federal government has a tutoring program where we do things out in the community, so this gives me my fulfillment</u> outside of work because I don't always have a passion for my work responsibilities. <u>My community oriented experiences have been amazing</u>. Trying to help empower people in general is something that I love to do. So I can take some of my experiences from working and volunteering in the community and they make me more excited about work. I think it's <u>cool that my job actually offers a program like this where the government can go into the community and do those types of things</u>.*

Another noteworthy finding that is related to public service motivation is centered

on the feeling of having a social responsibility to improve the conditions for minorities in

the American society. Three out of the five interview participants were African-

American and they all freely discussed their feeling of personal responsibility to uplift

minority members within their communities. The open ended question that was the

impetus for these responses was, "What excites you about your job?"

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 1</u>

The tutoring program has been amazing because <u>I have a passion for helping youth, in particular young Black men that came through situations like I came through</u>. I went to college so I could begin to build myself up until I got to a certain level in life to help these kids. Then this opportunity came up and I was like, well maybe I don't need to be at a certain level. I just need to start now as a federal employee. I started off tutoring one student but now I have two, and <u>being in their corner and helping to support their development and growth makes me proud</u>.

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 3</u>

<u>There was a time when a lot of Black men and women couldn't join agencies like this</u>. Whether it was written in stone or common knowledge that Blacks weren't hired by such agencies. <u>I take great pride in being in this position</u>.

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 5</u>

Our organization has developed <u>special interest working groups that are broken down by race and ethnicity</u>. One of the primary goals of these groups is to <u>strategically target people</u> that look like them <u>in hopes of recruiting them so they can join the agency</u>. <u>I am a member of the African-American group and I really enjoy working with this team</u>.

Theme 1 Summary

Working in the capacity of a federal civil servant is highly important to all five of the Generation Y interviewees. From their sincere comments that caused their eyes to light up and faces to smile as they were sharing their respective stories, it can be extrapolated that they possess a high level of public service motivation. As citizens and active participants in the federal government, they use their positions as a vehicle to transform the society they live in for the better. Although all of them do not have regular interaction with the public and serve in a line staff position, their jobs are fulfilling to them as they are able to find some work related activity that affords them the opportunity to help or empower everyday citizens.

Secondary Research Question 1: What do they say is valuable or important about their

work experiences?

Theme 2: Development Opportunities

As it pertains to the second theme, development opportunities are very important

to this generation of employees. From analyzing theme one it was discovered that

Generation Y subjects have a high level of public service motivation because they desire

to make a positive impact on society. However, in order to be fully prepared to meet the

needs and demands of society, they want to be trained at an optimal level. They value

many different forms of training and developmental opportunities. For some they

appreciate formal and informal substantive mentorship relationships. The other

Generation Yers prefer formal training programs and sessions that are tailored toward

their specific needs to help them become more proficient at their job. Despite the

particular developmental format, they are able to conceptualize the big picture to

understand the benefit of being effectively trained and developed.

<center>Gen Y Civil Servant 1</center>

*I'm in a program that allows me to rotate through many different areas
within my agency. This helps me to be effective because I can see a bigger
picture of the agency. I can also build on what I've learned previously and
I can also connect the dots. In addition, we have mandatory training and
also some additional training that you can request. These things are very
important to me and my professional development.*

<center>Gen Y Civil Servant 2</center>

*My coworkers are essential because I am very reliant on them because
that's where I get most of my training in the agency. It's on the job
training and that's what I rely on. Since I don't get a whole lot of formal
training, I depend on my coworkers to share knowledge with me and tell
me how they've done things in the past.*

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 3</u>

I would like to see my agency develop more of the younger employees at a faster pace. Some of us younger guys have a need and would like to take advantage of more opportunities.

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 4</u>

Trainers are a big part of being successful at this job. You have to have a good trainer who is willing to help you go the extra mile to show you what you need to do and learn. We have too many trainees and not enough trainers. Although the program has improved a lot, I still have to fight and ask for training every day. I even have to skip some of my breaks so I can get the proper training I need.

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 5</u>

Having a mentor is really good. My relationship with my mentor is very strong and she is very thorough. She's been with the agency for 30 years and having her as a mentor has made me become great at what I do. And I know this because my supervisor has told me that I'm thorough like my mentor. The mentor relationship is very important because she passes on all of her knowledge to me. I know people in my office who haven't had good mentors before and it affects their work and this impacts them all day. I wish I had more one-on-one time to spend with my mentor so I would be able to receive more focused development.

In addition, my agency recently abbreviated a training class that you have to take. I don't agree with this adjustment and would never recommend it to anyone because you just don't have enough time to cover all of the training material. By taking this short training class, it's basically like you are going out there with a blindfold over your eyes and it's like you are being thrown to the wolves. For the people who have bad mentors and a lack of training, I understand why some of them are miserable and hate their jobs. But even for me, I don't think that I always receive enough training.

Theme 2 Summary

Development opportunities are indispensable to the growth and success of Generation Y employees. In accordance, for them, attaining the proper training helps them to become more effective and inefficient in making society better.

Secondary Research Question 2: What do they say makes them want to work hard and/or effectively?

Theme 3: Traditional Bureaucratic Management

In response to this research question, the subjects discussed their experiences with working inside a bureaucratic environment. Five subthemes were developed from analyzing the interviews with the Generation Yers—outside life, challenging work environment, decision making involvement, efficiency, and socialization.

All of the interview subjects expressed a certain level of dissatisfaction or discontent with the traditional and bureaucratic nature of their public organizations. The definition of a bureaucracy is,

> A body of non-elective government officials, an administrative policy making group; government characterized by specialization of functions, adherence to fixed rules, and a hierarchy of authority; a system of administration marked by officialism, red tape, and proliferation. (Webster, 1972, p. 112)

In the name of efficiency, traditional leaders developed bureaucratic organizations that were very structured, hierarchical, stringent, and mechanical. However, unlike their Baby Boomer colleagues, Generation Y has disparate organizational values and expectations. To this end, many of them are outlined in the subthemes that are underscored below.

Outside Life

The interviewees emphatically emphasized the importance of being able to maintain a healthy personal life. While they highly respect and appreciate working for their respective agencies, they value their outside lives even more. It was explained that this is perhaps one of the biggest differences between Generation Y and the older

generations. For instance, the Baby Boomers "live to work" while Generation Y "work

to live." Consequently, they expressed their gratitude for having flexible work schedules

and shifts. A flexible work schedule means - these young people will have the

opportunity to live their outside life.

Unlike with traditional bureaucratic organizations, they expect their supervisors to

fully understand their need to utilize their vacation days regularly. In addition, they

sometimes like to come in later than normal and take longer breaks periodically.

Nevertheless, they are willing to make the time up by staying later or reporting to work

earlier the next day to compensate for the loss time. It was mentioned that they simply

want to create a healthy work-life balance and it is important for their supervisors to

understand this concept.

Gen Y Civil Servant 1

*My agency kind of understands some things about my generation. I think
that one of the things that is typical for our generation is flextime.
Management understands that we may not always want to be there on a
strict schedule, like starting at 8 a.m. Maybe past generations adhered to
a strict schedule but sometimes you know, I don't feel like getting out of
the bed so I get in to work at about 9:30 a.m. and sometimes I maybe
feeling rambunctious and want to go in at 6 a.m.*

Gen Y Civil Servant 2

*There's definitely a difference in work ethic between the generations. I
think my generation puts a lot more emphasis on their out of work life.
Like social activities outside of work are very important to them so they
want flexible schedules and stuff. Like maybe they will say I have a
baseball game today, is it okay if I work two hours late tomorrow so I can
play in my baseball game today? But for the older generation, work is a
much more central part of their life versus the outside activities and they
are much more stringent with their work times and schedules. But my
generation may want to take a longer lunch to meet some other friends
from a different agency or some college friends. The older generation
thinks that's kind of odd but we don't think that way. We often feel as if*

work is a second priority, but it's the means by which we can have fun with our outside lives. But the older generation, it's the opposite. Their outside lives is kind of there to support their work lives. There's definitely a difference there and I think that it causes tension sometimes because like my boss sometimes will get kind of angry at our scheduling because we're not here a lot at times and she feels as if we have important projects due and we shouldn't be taking vacation. But she doesn't understand that in our minds to us our vacation is more important than their project.

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 3</u>

My management is very relaxed when it comes to me needing to travel, whether it be internationally or domestically to present papers for school or to just travel for a study abroad program. They don't try to hinder my progression and academic pursuit and I think they are starting to see it line up with my career. Regardless if I stay with the agency or leave. I remember going to my boss's office a couple of weeks ago because I'm going to out of the country soon to deliver a presentation on a paper and I told her that with my one of my family members' illness and everything; instead of me flying them to see me present my paper, I would like to drive them so I might want to take the whole week off so I can spend some time with them, and she didn't have a problem with it. Also, my supervisor comes to me and ask me if I need some time off and she will let me break out a little early to finish up a paper or something.

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 4</u>

My family comes first, and if I need to take a sick day even if I'm supposed to train, I will use a sick day to get off. I love my job and feel like I do it not exceptionally well but I feel like I do a good job for some reason. If I had to choose between family and work, it would be family because my kids are everything to me. Anyone who knows me knows that my family comes first.

Challenging work environment

The interview subjects appreciate being challenged at work as opposed to working in a routine, mechanical work environment. Working in a fast past work environment means they are being challenged throughout the day in a way that makes them think for instantaneous solutions. It was explained that they like to work in an environment that is unpredictable and fast paced. They believe that a static environment

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is boring and does not afford them the opportunity to grow. For most of them, interacting

with and providing services to the general public breaks the monotony of their work days.

The unpredictable nature of "any given day" gives them something to look forward to

each morning. For the one subject who does not interact with the public regularly, he

rotates through different departments within his agency every few months. As a result,

he only has a short amount of time to learn a lot of new material and this is how he is able

to make his work environment fast paced (his experience is shared below).

However, one goal of a traditional bureaucracy is to predict as much as possible

so mechanisms of control can be incorporated into work processes. The traditional

bureaucratic management structures were designed to be stable and disempowering for

the employees.

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant One</u>

*By coming into the government and working at such a large agency, I had
to step outside of my comfort zone and my box in order to develop myself.
And that excites me about stepping into the government. This agency just
went through some major changes so there's been a lot of work shifting.
Furthermore, there are a lot of opportunities for this agency to improve.
As a result, I've been given the chance to get on projects and take the lead
on certain projects. This excites me because it's not like I just come to
work and have to do boring tasks every single day. One of the projects
was the first big one that I got. I was new and I didn't know anything. And
my boss gave me a project that she didn't really want to take the time to
do. But at the same time, I think she was testing me to see if she could give
me a task and I could actually complete it. It was a lot bigger than what I
anticipated so at first I kind of took it like she know I don't know these
people and I don't know what to do or whatever. Then I thought about it
like wow, if I could get this to work, this could be a great opportunity for
me to get my name out there. And I was like how do you expect me to do
this because this project impacted a huge part of the entire federal
government, and I'm just a dude that just started working here a couple of
months ago. So I'm like okay, I had one point of contact and I had another
one at our HQ level and he was kind of resistant, which I figured he would
be, at first because who am I to come to this man and ask him for this
information, do this that and the third? He was thinking that this should*

come from a higher level in order to get certain people to move. At first he was resistant and I kept being persistent, trying to tailor my communication to him so he could give me the information that I needed and once I got to him, I was talking to people in DC, and before I knew it, I was talking to people in these different agencies and starting to get this coordination to work. It ended up working and we ended up getting the project to be a success. So that was a great opportunity for me to, like I said, it was my first big thing, and one of my big issues was communication, I was scared to step out and talk to people and that forced me to do it, and I became comfortable with it after that.

Decision making involvement

Another goal of a bureaucratic organization is to have a centralized decision making process; often with this process, the lower the rank, the less of a voice one has in matters. Since the Generation Y employees in this study are fairly new to the workforce, their positions are not high in rank. Nonetheless, they still have a desire to offer their opinions, knowledge, and thoughts in hopes of improving work processes and cultures. Most importantly, they want to have the ability to convey their opinions without fear of being reprimanded. The response below summarizes how most of the interviewees felt about being able to freely express themselves.

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 5</u>

I remember when we had one of our big bosses come by or office because most of them are located offsite at a different location. And I remember asking him the question, have you guys did any type of research showing that your new decision will be effective? And he basically didn't answer the question. He avoided the question the whole time and I just felt like I didn't really know what the deal was. In order to keep employees happy you want it to be an environment where they can be open about stuff and any of their concerns. And feel like they are going to really get listened to and have changes made based on the stuff that they give you. Because as an employee, we do a lot of the grunt work, so if I'm voicing my opinion to you I want it to feel like some action is being taken. Not just me sharing things with you and nothing is going to be done about it.

Efficiency

The Generation Yers from this study population have a desire to change the stereotypical views of an inefficient and wasteful government. To this end, they work hard to become more efficient themselves and they also encourage work structure efficiencies to be adopted. It was explained by some that they often feel as if they are ineffective and inefficient with their work responsibilities due to the lack of resources recourses and work overload.

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 1</u>

My agency has a leadership program that seeks to bring in young people for them to bring new ideas and help the agency become more efficient. But things aren't organized and that bothers me. But once things get more organized and more efficient things will be better. But like I say, that's opportunities for me to improve, opportunities for me to step out and do things better. So I guess if everything was so smooth and efficient, then I wouldn't of had the opportunities that I've had to do some of the things I've done. But it is frustrating because like I will step into a position or rotation and nobody knows what to do with me. They would be like, the last person I had used to do this, so maybe contact them. It's very unorganized.

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 2</u>

There are other things like administrative policies that really hinder you. What the law says and what my agency says we can do are very different, my agency places artificial restrictions on itself and that hinders your ability to actually do things that the law says you can do and that of course ends up taking more time and making you less efficient.
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All of them emphasized that technology is important to them, as they are savvy with modern technological tools and applications. As it pertains to technology, on the surface it may appear that they relish technology for its leisure and entertainment benefits. However, they transfer their technology knowledge into the work setting quite effectively. By this cohort of employees being so advanced with technology, they are

able to help their organizations grow and keep up with the impacts of globalization. To

them, having access to modern technology means they can be more effective at work.

They can be more responsive and provide better service to their clientele, which helps

them improve society. To substantiate this concept, one of the subjects described how he

volunteered to serve on an agency level team to improve its technological infrastructure.

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 2</u>

The technology here certainly doesn't help me to do my job better because our technology is from the 80's and that doesn't really help you. Our biggest hindrance, in my organization is our technology. You have to really work hard to manually connect the dots on things. Older generations are familiar with some of the older technologies and computer systems. So trying to learn these older systems can be hard. Our generation is used to Iphones and high tech stuff, it's a hindrance to you to have to try and got back and not use those tools you want because the back end systems are so out dated. And that really adds a lot of time. If you had a consolidated mechanism of modern systems, it would save a lot of time on your day, which would give you more ability to do other things. The other hindrance is just resources. There's a high volume of work to where you can only work on the top tier stuff. But one thing I am doing is sitting on a HQ working group that meets quarterly to review all of my agency's IT projects that are in development right now to ensure that they are actually meeting the needs of the of the program users. So we are developing a couple contracts at the moment and we go up there every 90 days and the contractors actually brief us on the progress and we tell them if that's what we really want or not to make sure that these projects will meet the needs of the people that will actually use them versus just being developed by people at HQ who aren't actually in the job. And that was HQ's idea to form that group and it's actually 16 of us throughout the country.

I volunteered to be on this team. They solicited people and I volunteered. I have an IT background and I already have a couple of IT duties that I do here at the office. So they've kind of all been duties that I've taken on in the office because of my IT background and some of the IT systems are so bad that we don't want to continue to build systems that are ineffective and we don't want to waste money on them. So it's been really good so far, the contractors at HQ are very responsive to our feedback and have made a lot of changes in the software. I enjoy being on that and it's not that much of a time constraint because it's like once week

every 3 months that I go to DC and sit there for a couple of days. Hopefully it will help everybody else out throughout the agency.

Socialization

Within a traditional bureaucracy, the work environment is structured in a way where it is all business and very little room for play. However, a significant theme that emerged from the data was the need for Generation Y employees to socialize with their coworkers. Socialization was described as the open interaction and exchange with fellow coworkers. Naturally majority of these interactions are business and work oriented. However, non-work related socialization is valued just as much. On the surface, it may appear that employees are being distracted by various conversations and interactions that may not be work related. But it was described by the interviewees that such encounters are very meaningful because this is how friendships and trust are developed within an organization.

<u>Gen Y Civil Servant 1</u>

"I feel like Generation Y's needs are not the same as older generation. My generation is worried about making friends and who is kicking it tonight. As an older person, when you have your family at home, all you want to do is come to work and get paid, you want the respect of that person who is assigning you work. I just think that we are at two different points in our lives that those values are a little bit different.

Since it's not just about work we have a genuine friendship but it began work based and it had stayed there, she helps me out and I help her out. That's just one story, but I'm like that with just about everybody that I work with. Because I'm trying to make my work environment comfortable for me, and I need people to understand me, and I need to understand them also. One of the big things we talk about at our agency is building trust, and if I am transparent and you know everything that I'm about, you know that I'm not going to be malicious in any way or try to bring you down in any way. I'm always trying to help you out, and once you do that, that comes back tenfold to you. I will show everybody that I got your back. Now I have a whole lot of people who want to talk to me. When I go in the

morning, on my Instant Message communicator, my screen is lighting up because people want to talk to me because I'm a good, genuine person, and like I said, that makes my work day go by a whole lot easier when I'm are on projects with these people, it goes a whole lot smoother because they trust me. I definitely value my coworkers and the relationships that I have with them."

Gen Y Civil Servant 2

Even though we shifted programs, she went to another organization and then later became my supervisor, we always remained friends and we had lunch together every day. We constantly keep in touch with each other to see what's going on outside of work. It just makes it a lot easier on the work environment when you have that type of relationship with someone in the office versus not having anyone to talk to about other stuff.

So I really like the camaraderie we have in this office. People around here are pretty nice and there are a lot of people here that I hang out with outside the office, like actual friends. And they pretty much always got your back and anytime you have a problem, whether it's at work or in your personal life, people are always willing to help you out with stuff. If I ever have something at my house and need something big moved, someone's always like, oh you can come and borrow my truck or I can come help you. People are always very friendly around here and willing to give you a hand and it's a nice place to be.

Here's an example for you. My friend Mike here, we hang out all the time. Any time I'm traveling he goes over to my house and takes care of my pets. He was out of town last week and got a call that, the house he lives in needed some emergency work done. So since he was out of town, I went to his house to supervise the people that were there making repairs. People are just always willing to help with that kind of stuff. Because a lot of people in this office aren't from Cleveland and they get randomly assigned here so they don't have family around, so they kind of depend on each other to be there as a support network outside of the office.

Gen Y Civil Servant 3

I think the thing that I value is that it's like a family environment, although everyone doesn't always get along with each other all the time. But our work can be dangerous so you have to have each other's back. So if two people have an argument and aren't happy with one another, they let it go. And there's nothing like accomplishing a good goal or achieving great

results by working as a team. This brings everybody together and makes you realize that you did have my back. Here in this office we play a lot of sports together outside the office. The camaraderie is good and that's one of the things I miss by not playing college football anymore. But I think we have it here. It's almost like a big brother and big sister atmosphere because you look out for each other.

Our friendships make me feel good. It makes me feel like we have a purpose here. It has to be about us getting a long first before we work on behalf of society. We have to be on the same page. We don't always have to agree on all the social and political things, but we have to be on the same page.

Gen Y Civil Servant 4

I'm really good friends with all the girls here. One of my best friends is a girl and I just love her to death. They're not only trainers but they're your friends too. I hang out with a lot of them and they are great people to work with. You have complainers but you just take the good with the bad. You brush it off and ignore it. But there are good people here. I mean you have some shady people too, but you have to have chemistry and a good working relationship with the person you're sitting next to because you have to count on them. You have to be able to know that they are going to help you out or look out for you. You should know that if you're in a situation they're going to say hey are you okay or do you need help. They can save you or they can hurt you. But I feel comfortable working with most people here. And I know that if I was in trouble they would ask me if I'm okay with a work problem or dilemma. Plus I hang out with them on my free time outside of work.

Gen Y Civil Servant 5

There needs to be a little joy in the office instead of everything being so serious. Say for example when you working at your desk, being able to talk amongst each other about issues that are going on is a good thing. Even outside of work, employees being able to get together outside of work where we can talk about issues and not have to worry about being criticized or reprimanded for your thoughts. We also have a team that organizes small events for us. They celebrate birthdays, big achievements/accomplishments, engagements, weddings, deaths, births, and just being there for each other. So this team really helps because maybe a person doesn't have a lot of family, but the coworkers become like family because you spend so much time with them, so that helps.

The people in my office are diverse. The people that I work with definitely make the job worthwhile because you have funny people who will keep you going and happy at work. You laugh about different stuff and you might even laugh about something that you did while you were working and it was funny. That makes the work environment that much better when you can just take some time out to laugh or appreciate things.

Theme 3 Summary

Organizations are structured based upon the assumptions that organizational leaders possess about employees. To this end, traditional organizations were structured in a top down fashion to maintain control and increase efficiency because leaders viewed employees as lazy and money driven. However, the new generation of employees within this study expressed that they have different needs, expectations, and values than previous generations. They appreciate a more flexible work environment that is conducive to both their professional development and personal lives. They have a passion to change the landscape of the federal government by improving its overall performance as they strive to work as efficiently as possible. However, they indicated that the work structures are traditional and bureaucratic in nature, which ultimately hinder their effectiveness as a federal employee. They also expressed their gratitude for some effective workplace systems that have been installed that deviate from the traditional bureaucratic structure. One leadership style that embraces many of the values that Generation Y possesses is transformation leadership. More discussion will be offered on this leadership style in the latter portion of this chapter.

Supervisory Interviews

The same research procedures that were utilized to analyze Generation Y's interviews were followed to extrapolate themes to respond to the supervisory research

questions. From the five individual supervisory interviews that were conducted, three essential themes emanated from the data. From these themes, some subthemes emerged, and they will be highlighted where it is appropriate. The three primary supervisory themes are: (a) advancement opportunities, (b) constructive feedback, and (c) traditional bureaucratic management.

The central supervisory research question is: What do supervisors think motivates Generation Y employees?

Supervisory Theme 1: Advancement Opportunities

A majority of the supervisors expressed that today's generation of new employees possess a strong and somewhat premature desire to advance within their respective organizations. In some instances, immediately upon joining the federal government these young employees are asking questions about what they must do in order to be promoted to a higher position. It was explained that they exhibit a very high level of confidence and set of expectations that have never been seen in previous generations. Nonetheless, some of the supervisor stated that their ambition is fortified by the quality work they produce and their zeal to volunteer for additional work assignments.

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 6</u>

> *Generation Y are the ones who want to move up very quickly. They think that time served alone will get them a promotion, but I guess I'm coming from an old school background. They feel as if they've mastered a certain timeframe (not skill per se) then they are where they really need to be. And they think like, well one year I'm here and I don't want to do this anymore because I've done that for the past year already. And I reply to them that that's not really up to them. They say well, I want to do this, I want to do that because I see another person doing that so can I do that? And I say yea, you can get to that level but I think they want it more on their timeframe instead of the government's timeframe. I also think they are more competitive because of their competitive nature so they want it to happen now. But I think eventually they will rise to the occasion because*

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currently, they will volunteer for everything. If I need someone, they are Johnny on the spot and the older people kind of say, well I will think about it and let you know. They are set in their ways and kind of comfortable where they are. My older employees are kind of ready to go out the door almost because they only have a couple of more years so they aren't looking to necessarily do anything extra. But the younger group is taking over and that's good.

Gen Y Supervisor Subject 8

They are more energetic and ambitious. They are more apt to report for additional training and when it comes to training, they will be there as opposed to some other folks that have been here for a long time. The older folks are just more apathetic. For example, if I tell a young person to take a short break and I want you to report back for training at 10:30 a.m., they will be there on time, not early, but on time. But the other generations won't necessarily be on time to this training. But the newer people are more ambitious. They want to get officially certified in their positions and that comes once you complete the training program. Once they are certified they automatically become more versatile because they can now train other employees and they have more flexibility as far as advancing within the agency. And in some cases, the younger employees pass up the older ones due to their high level of ambition.

Gen Y Supervisor Subject 9

The younger generation is really looking for opportunities for advancement, but unfortunately they are limited because they can't just advance like they could if they were in industry. Unless a position comes available in a higher grade, civil servants can't be promoted. So some people get stuck. Some employees who have the skills to be promoted could be stuck in the same grade level for a long time until somebody retires or gets a new position. But the inability for advancement seems to be the biggest complaint among the young people here. But they are still willing to work hard to advance. One of my young employees took on a special project that was very tedious, and I really appreciated him going the extra mile for the organization. And he received some positive recognition for volunteering to do this.

Gen Y Supervisor Subject 10

The young people have high expectations of advancing but advancement may not happen so quick. Also, there's a lot of competition in the government for these positions. They often have an "attitude" about this and are impatient. But the younger crowd needs coaching and mentoring. There is a lot of talent and potential out here. You have to try to harness

that talent early. You ask them about their long term interests. Sometimes
their dreams are beyond our scope of what we can provide them with.

Supervisory Theme 1 Summary

From the supervisors' experiences, their young employees are ambitious and have

expressed that they are motivated by advancement opportunities. It was stated that the

young people have confidence in their abilities and often feel as if they are prepared to

even advance sooner that their older colleagues. It was mentioned that sometimes their

ambition is too aggressive; however, all of the supervisors are confident that Generation

Y will make the government better when they are competent enough to advance.

Nonetheless, offering them a projection as to how they can advance to the next level

really motivates Generation Y to become effective civil servants.

The secondary supervisory research question is: How do supervisors of

Generation Y employees within federal agencies describe Generation Y employees?

To attend to this research inquiry, two prominent themes were developed: constructive

feedback and traditional bureaucratic management. From traditional bureaucratic

management perspective, several subthemes emerged. Those subthemes are as follows:

(a) efficiency, (b) outside life, and (c) socialization.

Supervisory Theme 2: Constructive Feedback

It was explained to me that Generation Y employees are individuals who value

receiving feedback from their supervisors. They desire to acquire individualized candid

feedback because they want to gain the necessary skills that will give them the

opportunities to compete and advance within their organizations. They truly appreciate

constructive feedback; however, they do not like to receive negative feedback that has the

potential of leading to disciplinary actions. Nonetheless, this generation tries to use all

forms of feedback to become a better civil servant.

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 6</u>

They can accept unstructured criticism better than an older individual. They seem to like that better and respond better than others. They like the fact that I do follow through and give them honest feedback at a level they understand. They also like the fact that I try to speak to them in a manner as if they were my children. I think they need good feedback and more information. I've found that if I'm sitting and working with them on something, they like that because I'm showing them attention and am interested in teaching them how they can do their jobs more effectively. They also get monthly evaluations and I have noticed with the young people that they want me to discuss things with them. In addition, they appreciate the fact that I don't only call them into the office for bad things. A lot of the times I want to see them to offer them constructive advice, and they truly appreciate that. However, when the feedback pertains to a something that could get them in trouble, they don't like to hear that. Most of the time they want you to overlook and forgive them for any rules they may break."

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 8</u>

They like feedback. They like to know how they are performing. It seems like they crave attention. So any kind of face time that you can give them, that's what they like, especially the positive feedback. They need more interaction; where the older guys, I will give them a piece of paper to sign and try to explain it to them but they don't want the explanations. They just want to sign the paper and go. But Generation Y, they want to talk about it. They want to know what they did that was good. They want to know how they can get better. Although, they don't want to talk about the incorrect stuff that can get them in trouble, per se.

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 9</u>

From my experience, the young people don't mind working on their own, but they really appreciate having someone they can get guidance and feedback from as they work.

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 10</u>

They also like feedback and constructive criticism. They like to hear glowing feedback because they don't get it enough. For our employees we single them out and bring them in for monthly evaluations and this gives

them an opportunity to get feedback so they can improve. Generation Y
likes to receive their feedback individually and with direct face to face
interaction. This gives them a sense of importance. Just yesterday two
employees were selected to compete for a leadership session so instead of
emailing them we had face to face time with them.

Supervisory Theme 2 Summary

Compared to other generations, Generation Y are more receptive to feedback and

constructive criticism. They were described as being appreciative of individual feedback

that helps them improve their skills and competency levels.

Supervisory Theme 3: Traditional Bureaucracy and Management

The other theme that was formulated from the supervisory data analysis was the

concept of traditional bureaucratic management. The Generation Yers were described as

employees who strongly dislike a very bureaucratic oriented work environment. To this

point, from the traditional bureaucracy theme several subthemes emerged, and they are:

(a) efficiency, (b) outside life, and (c) socialization. The supervisors have experienced

and witnessed younger employees lamenting the fact that bureaucracy makes them less

efficient with work and their ideas on improving work processes. From these

supervisors' experiences they expressed that, Generation Y is very proficient with

modern technological devices and believe they are advantageous for operational

efficiency. Furthermore, Generation Y appreciates a work environment that espouses

flexible work schedules so they can enjoy their outside social lives. Lastly, the Baby

Boomer supervisors find it difficult to understand why these young employees relish

interacting and socializing with their fellow colleagues during hours of operation.

Efficiency

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 6</u>

They always look for a better way. To have a mouse trap for them would be difficult because they like to questions things. They are like, why can't we do it this way? Don't you know we can do it like this? Why can't we do it now? That's what I get from them, they always believe there's a better way to do things. But when I say ok, I will look into it to see if we can do things a little different, they feel as if it's going to take forever because things have to go through the proper channels before they can be done. So they get frustrated about the way things flow.

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 7</u>

The Gen Y group wants to have new technologies at their disposal. I think they appreciate it because it helps them to be more efficient.

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 8</u>

They like technology, so any new kind of technology we can get in the facility they are the first ones who will gravitate towards that. The newer people are very excited about the new facility that is being built because it will have new equipment and new surroundings. And the older people are more comfortable with the way things are. So anything you can get them from the management that's effective as far as making their job easier via technology or new procedures is a plus.

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 9</u>

They really want to change the mentality of the stereotypical government employee, which is for on to sit back in an apathetic manner and just waiting out their 30 years without providing good customer service.

Life outside of work

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 6</u>

The younger employees sometimes don't understand the importance of maintaining a steady work schedule. They want to advance but aren't always able to because they don't always properly balance their outside life. They will tell me that they have a life outside of work rather quickly.

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 7</u>

They really value their time off so in the federal government, I think it's good that my organization has the ability to be flexible with flexible hours. This is attractive to the young people because they have the ability to generously get time off. Also, I think that my perception is the Gen Yers have their beliefs, morals, and values that are counter to a bureaucratic environment. For instance, them reading a directive that somebody else wrote may appear to be a little bureaucratic to them and the young people will have no use for it. Or if it's something more about policies and procedures they have problems with this also. Take for example, their work schedules. They think if they come in at 10 that's fine and then the next day at 8, that's fine. But we try to explain that they can have an alternate work schedule, but you have to still have some consistency with that. You can't just decide to create any type of schedule because people are counting on you to be at work.

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 8</u>

The young people here expect to have more lenient work schedules. A classic example happened today. We had an overnight ice storm and all of the old people including me, we showed up to work on time because we gave ourselves some extra time to get to work. And it seems like almost all of the Gen Y people called in saying they are going to be late. And they want to get their time excused because they couldn't get to work on time due to the weather. But all these other people that have been working here for 25 years knew the storm was coming, so they knew to get up early to get to work on time.

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 9</u>

The younger people appreciate flexible work schedules. They work on a compressed work schedule and they work 4 ten hour days. They seem to appreciate that as far as their own personal time goes. We try to be as flexible as possible with them taking time off. We try to understand that a job is a job and they do have the rest of their lives to live, so we try to help them create a balance.

Socialization

<u>Gen Y Supervisor Subject 7</u>

It's actually kind of funny, but I think they like a lot more personal talk. They want to talk about their experiences and what they do, more so than my generation. I would have never thought about really talking too much

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with my boss about what I did over the weekend or what's on my Facebook page or things like that. It was much more matter of fact, official, and business-like. And I think they are really looking for a setting that's not quite so business oriented.

Gen Y Supervisor Subject 8

They want to know more about other people's lives, which is kind of strange to me. And when I say "strange", I meant that I don' t tend to be the kind of person that really concerns myself about how other people are doing. I concern myself with how I conduct myself and what my operation is. I don't have the time nor the interest to get into other people's lives and what they are doing or who's seeing who. But Gen Y wants to know about everybody else and what they have going on. And I'm sure a lot of it has to do with Facebook and other forms of social media. But, I'm just not interested in that. I think a lot of people my age, for the most part aren't interested. Now some of them have been pulled into that, but my experience is, with the people that I associate with, they don't have the time, patience, or interest in knowing that kind of information.

Gen Y Supervisor Subject 7

They like to have a comfortable environment as opposed to the traditional supervisor-management work structure. We all go out together. We have outings and parties together and it just kind of makes the environment more fun as opposed to coming to work sitting in cubicles because sitting in cubes can become daunting. So we try to make it as entertaining as possible on a day to day basis. It is sort of like a family environment, we all talk quite a bit. Even though first line supervisors have a certain level of authority and respect, they still feel comfortable with talking about weekends, families, sports, and those kind of things.

I'm substantially younger and I am closer to them in age. I think that makes a difference because they tend to be more comfortable in talking to me about their personal issues than they may with our other supervisor. She tends to be a little bit more stand-offish and tries to maintain that distance between being a supervisor and being an employee. She has more of a traditional government employee mentality than younger people do. She takes her job seriously and complains about personal conversations in the office. You know like listening to their Ipods at work is fine with me as long as it doesn't negatively impact their work. But those are some of the kinds of things that she's not really understanding of.

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Supervisory Theme 3 Summary

The supervisory civil servants recognize that Generation Y employees feel as if they sometimes cannot operate effectively within a top-down bureaucratic organization. These young people have a desire to become more efficient; however, bureaucratic policies and procedures inhibit some of their progressive ideas. It was also explained that this new generation of employees often place their outside life as a higher priority than work. This mindset often frustrates supervisors because they feel as if work should be equally important. Lastly, many of the supervisors do not understand why Generation Y employees enjoy so much socialization within the work environment. Most of the supervisors were Baby Boomers and maintain the mindset that work should be strictly business.

Summary

The goal of highlighting the research findings was to align the data to the research questions. Albeit this portion did not include an in-depth discussion, in the subsequent discussion section I will discuss the research findings in more detail.

Discussion

The preceding section was written to lay the foundation and introduce the responses that were engendered during my interviews with the federal Generation Y employees and supervisors. In particular, their responses were systematically analyzed to develop themes that would address the research questions within this project. I felt it was important to explicitly provide some of the anecdotes and responses that were expressed by the subjects themselves. By incorporating this strategy, readers are able to get a sense of the subjects' direct experiences before I offer my interpretation of the data.

To this end, this section will transition from simply aligning the responses to the research questions to presenting a thorough discussion about the Generation Y research. The underpinning of this discussion will be my interpretations of the data. Based on my judgment as the researcher, the most effective way to deliver this discussion was by categorizing the research themes. Consequently, the themes were placed into three disparate categories, and they are: high level of public service motivation, desire for advancement, and dissatisfaction with traditional bureaucratic management structures. Furthermore, the primary generational workforce differences will be highlighted as well.

High Level of Public Service Motivation

Public service motivation is simply the desire to contribute to government in hopes of making a positive difference for society at large or certain social groups within society. It is the internal propensity to ameliorate social problems and conditions. As a result, intrinsic motivation is the key driver for one being driven to accomplish the mission of respective public agencies. Research has shown that younger people possess a larger proclivity to become civil servants than any other generation (Perry et al., 2010). The Generation Y subjects of this study substantiated the notion that they have a high level of public service motivation as they described their phenomenal governmental experiences. They expressed that their federal work experiences have been, "exciting," "amazing," "fun," "fulfilling," and last but not least "fascinating." In particular, one of the respondents stated:

> *It is just fascinating to be on the inside and you are there in person actually participating in what you get to see on the news that sometimes impact the whole U.S. government and society at large.*

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Four of the research participants were all line staff employees, which means their primary duties are explicitly aligned with the mission of the agency. As it is demonstrated by the paragraph below, they felt honored, privileged and humbled to have the opportunity to deliver services to their respective clientele.

> *But I think most importantly is that you feel like you are making a change. I think from my perspective it is to set a good example not only to the children that are coming up in today's society, but also the clientele I serve on a daily basis. As a federal employee I represent the United States of America … And when you work for the United States of America, I work for you and everybody else in society and I don't take it for granted because my power can be stripped.*

Most of the employees had regular contact and interaction with the general public. They have all experienced their fair share of the citizenry who are disgruntled, infuriated, and disappointed with the nature of "government." However, according to them, the good outweighed the bad. Experiencing the satisfaction and witnessing how lives are being changed by the services these Generation Y employees offer to the public make their jobs worthwhile.

When asked questions in regards to what excites them about their jobs, all of the young civil servants responded with excitement, enthusiasm, and zeal. Many of them smiled and became rather energetic as they relived their experiences by sharing personal anecdotes with me. They thoroughly "enjoy," "love," and find their jobs to be "fun" and "awesome" according to the cluster of responses that were received. For those who interact with the general public on a daily basis, they relish the interaction especially when they can tell a difference is being made in their lives. However, one of the subjects does not interact with the public as part of his normal job because he works in an administrative support staff capacity. Moreover, his intrinsic motivation does not

completely align with and is somewhat disconnected from the overall mission of the agency. Perry et al. (2010) noted that some public employees have a difficult time realizing their contributions to society due to a lack of interaction with their public clientele base and a failure to see the efficacy of their work in society. Nonetheless, he experienced an astronomical level of excitement by volunteering in his local community with underserved students. His high level of intrinsic public service motivation was exhibited as he empowered these students. He stated that, "helping and empowering the youth is my passion, so that's cool that they offer a program like that where the government can go into the community and do those things."

Another striking observation is that this Generation Y cohort truly values their civil service duties because they are "grateful" and "do not take their current positions for granted," in accordance with the clusters that were developed. They feel honored and understand that it is actually a privilege to work for the President, and on behalf of the general public. In regards to his feelings on working in the federal government, one subject said, "I'm proud of it, whether it be George Bush or Barack Obama." Another noteworthy data point is that all of the African-American research participants carried a natural passion to be an example and provide "service" and "exemplary leadership" to their minority communities in some type of way. They believe that this is an inherent social responsibility that comes with their position in the federal government because as one interviewee stated:

> *There was a time when a lot of Black men and women couldn't join*
> *agencies like this. Whether it was written in stone or common knowledge*
> *that Blacks weren't hired by such agencies. I take great pride in being in*
> *this position.*

As a whole, Generation Y's active participation in the federal government provides them with the opportunity impact society. They are not overly concerned with money as an extrinsic motivator. Only one Generation Y respondent mentioned money. She feels that although her job pays very well, she is more inspired by the inherent mission of her agency than her salary. With such a large amount of internal motivation towards the public sector, these young employees have already dedicated their careers to government and the idea of making the United States a better country to live in.

Desire to for Advancement

Generation Y's high level of public service motivation engenders many implications. As a result of their natural inclination to become representatives and agents of the federal government, one salient implication is they are much more zealous than any other generation once they gain entry into the public workforce. The supervisory interview subjects were very adamant when they openly discussed how eager these young professionals are compared to older employees. As it pertains to their eagerness, one supervisor indicated that Generation Y is "a different animal" in today's work environment because they are so eager. She believed that federal supervisors must develop unconventional strategies to keep these anxious young people inspired.

They enter government with higher expectations and they do not have a problem expressing their desire to grow. Sometimes their urgent desires are not aligned with their level of competency in their positions. Oftentimes, these employees believe that if they have been working in a certain position for a couple of years then it is automatically time for them to become promoted. It was expressed that these Generation Y employees must understand the importance of mastering the skills within their job description instead of

merely using time as a metric. When older generations first entered the work arena, they valued time in a position; they often maintained a longer time metric. For example, instead of 2 years, they would expect a raise or promotion after 10 or 15 years.

When an advancement opportunity becomes available, these young civil servants have to compete with older employees in a very structured environment. One federal supervisor stated:

> *There's a difference between a young and old person applying for a position. The older generation understands the structure of government and are more patient … The younger employees didn't get the two recent position promotions that became available mostly because it was a structured interview and the older people had more experiences than the younger people. So from their past exposures the older employees were able to answer the questions more effectively. But the young applicants were upset and felt they were treated unfairly.*

In some cases, another supervisor stated, some of the younger employees actually become more proficient and receive promotions sooner than their older colleagues. While all of the zealous young employees are not able to achieve this goal, this is a testament to their strong desire to grow and advance within government.

One supervisor stated that his employees have an "attitude" about how individuals are selected for promotion. It is actually not that they have a defiant attitude, but instead, are very eager to improve the government—including the hiring and promotion process. Due to the federal government's personnel structure, a lot of times young professionals are indeed competent enough to become promoted but remain stagnant in the same position for many years. Their talent and growth becomes undermined because of the government's intricate and arduous advancement process. Unlike the private sector, if a supervisor notices a very talented Generation Y employee, they are very limited when endeavoring to quickly promote this employee. One supervisory respondent stated:

They are really looking for that and unfortunately with government employees; you are limited because you can't just advance someone like you are able to in private industry. Unless it's a position that comes available with a higher grade in government, you can't advance and promote them. So some people get stuck. And so that's the biggest complaint that I have heard. These promotable people could be stuck in the same grade level for a long time until somebody retires or get a new position—unless the person is willing to move across the country or something like that. But more ability for advancement seems to be the biggest complaint.

In such instances, some federal supervisors do their best to keep these young employees interested in the government by explaining the importance of having patience due to the large amount of Baby Boomers that are expected to retire within the next five years. A different supervisor stated that while young employees are waiting to be advanced they can capitalize on their stagnant time by matriculating into graduate school to attain master's degrees. This is significant because it will make them even more qualified for various positions once they become available.

Many researchers have purported that Generation Y is that smartest generation in the history of mankind. If this is indeed the case, then there is no surprise that they are very excited and zealous about putting their intellectual talent to use. Albeit they have succeeded academically and are very confident in their abilities, they are willing to do whatever it takes to become competent enough to advance. To ascertain they receive the proper developmental attention and instruction, they often become proactive by seeking development opportunities that are not normally offered. In 2006, Gallup and the council for Excellence in Government revealed that 55% of young people that were surveyed highly valued growth and development potential. This is consistent with my research because all of the young research subjects stated that they have voluntarily joined

committees, assumed additional responsibilities, or sacrificed personal time to become a better civil servant.

One supervisor realized this and said:

But the inability for advancement seems to be the biggest complaint among the young people here. But they are still willing to work hard to advance. One of my young employees took on a special project that was very tedious, and I really appreciated him going the extra mile for the organization. And he received some positive recognition for volunteering to do this.

They will volunteer for extra duties to gain experience, but they feel that the formal developmental opportunities are just as inadequate as the promotion process. One supervisor expressed, "The younger crowd needs coaching and mentoring. There is a lot of talent and potential out here." One Generation Y employee mentioned that his organization does a good job with affording him with opportunities to develop his skills. He indicated:

There is a lot of opportunity for this agency to improve therefore; there have been a lot of opportunities for me to get on projects that I can take the lead on or projects that I can learn more about the agency or different opportunities for me to step out and develop my professional skills.

But the remainder of the participants felt their development opportunities were tenuous. One employee expressed that her organization's training program has improved somewhat over the years, but it still has a long way to go to meet the needs of Gen Y. To this point, the Generation Y employees contended that their supervisors must do a more effective job with developing the younger employees. To them formal development opportunities can come in the form of training, mentoring, or specially assigned details. It was stated by one Generation Y civil servant that,

> *I would like to see my agency develop more of the younger employees at a faster pace. Some of us younger guys have a need and would like to take advantage of more opportunities.*

Another subject said, "I wish I had more one-on-one time to spend with my mentor so I would be able to receive more focused development." This same research participant underscored her frustrated position by stating:

> *My agency recently abbreviated a training class that you have to take. I don't agree with this adjustment and would never recommend it to anyone because you just don't have enough time to cover all of the training material. By taking this short training class, it's basically like you are going out there with a blindfold over your eyes and it's like you are being thrown to the wolves.*

Oftentimes, they hear that traditionally older, more experienced employees are more mature and ready to take advantage of advanced training options. However, the younger employees would like to see supervisors deviate from how things are traditionally done. They want supervisors to give them a fair shot at proving themselves and afford them the opportunity to become developed more effectively and quicker. One Generation Y interviewee exclaimed, "Sometimes supervisors are afraid of change and afraid to try things a different way or listen to new ways to try to do things more effectively." But in regards to doing things in an unconventional manner with training opportunities and developing Generation Y at a faster pace, one of the Gen Y respondents raised a rhetorical question and asked, "What could it hurt?"

Supervisors described Generation Y employees as being more receptive and appreciative of constructive feedback. A couple of them stated that they desire focused time and attention. One supervisory interviewee stated that, "[t]hey don't feel intimidated if they have to ask their supervisor for help." And when receiving advice and

constructive criticism, they often do not take it personal and develop a negative attitude about the situation. In comparison to the other generations, a supervisor exclaimed:

> *Generation Y employees like feedback. They like to know how they are performing. It seems like they crave attention. So any kind of face time that you can give them, that's what they like, especially the positive feedback. They need more interaction where the older guys, I will give them a piece of paper to sign and try to explain it to them but they don't want the explanations. They just want to sign the paper and go. But Generation Y, they want to talk about it. They want to know what they did that was good. They want to know how they can get better. They don't want to talk about the incorrect stuff that can get them in trouble, per se.*

One supervisor indicated that her Generation Y employees really drain her energy some days. These young employees who possess a very high level of public service motivation really just want to become better at what they do. Their intention is not to drain supervisors of their time and energy, but many of them simply try to place themselves in positions where they can learn and grow. A Gen Y civil servant responded and said that while it is not always easy, she appreciates critical assessments. In regards to the reviews her supervisor conducts on her performance she said:

> *She would do reviews and would be critical of every little thing. Sometimes it's kind of discouraging when someone is that critical. But it does help you because mistakes are how you learn. If she corrects you on a mistake you've made, it sticks out in your head next time. Next time it happens, you may not know the solution right off the top of your head, but you are going to remember that you need to look something up.*

At least a couple of the supervisors mentioned that there is a monthly or annual assessment that is conducted on their employees, and it has been discovered that Generation Y in particular really values these constructive sessions.

Partly due to the lack of training and developmental opportunities, Generation Y is more receptive to receive constructive feedback and criticism than other generations.

Again, they have a strong desire to equip themselves with the necessary experiences and skills that will assist them in becoming better civil servants. They understand that by participating in some training and development opportunities, sometimes they will have to make sacrifices. They are cognizant of the fact that these sacrifices include, staying later than normal or working a few additional hours throughout the week. From their experiences, some of them are more satisfied than others as it pertains to how they are currently being developed on their jobs. Although some training and development opportunities are better than others at their respective agencies, they believe that there is definitely room for improvement.

The Generation Y subjects that participated in this research realize the retirement "tsunami" that the federal government is currently experiencing. In closing this section on the desire to advance, the statement below that was voiced by a Generation Y interviewee captures the essence of why they possess a strong desire to advance.

> *Our generation does have high goals and standards for things that we want to do, so we are always trying out what we have to do to get to the next place we want to be, and we want to know how the supervisor can help us get there. And how can you prepare me to take over your position because you are not going to be there forever.*

Dissatisfaction with Traditional Management Bureaucracy

Another line of interest for this dissertation was Generation Y daily experiences within their organizational work environment. Many traditional work environments were structured in a way that attempted to predict situations so they can be prepared with a standard or procedural response. And considering the bureaucratic nature of government, it is hardly a surprise that many Generation Y employees are working daily in public

bureaucratic machines. While interpreting their lived experiences, it was discovered that this young generation laments the fact that their organizations are so bureaucratic.

Working within a mechanical organization where they have little control over the direction of their work activities would be a hindrance because they enjoy having autonomy, as this affords them the opportunity to utilize their creativity and intellectual knowledge. Many of the interviewees indicated they appreciate a work environment that is challenging. One of the Gen Y employees indicated, "I love doing my job and I love pushing myself. It's challenging, especially as a trainee. So when you get something right it feels good." Another interviewee disclosed a story about how his supervisor challenged him as a new employee. Initially he was intimidated by the challenge, but he gained confidence and executed the daunting task he was assigned. As he relived his experience he said:

> *Then I thought about it like wow, if I could get this to work, this could be a great opportunity for me to get my name out there. . . . It ended up working and we ended up getting the project to be a success. So that was a great opportunity for me. Like I said, it was my first big thing, and one of my big issues was communication, I was scared to step out and talk to people and that forced me to do it, and I became comfortable with it after that.*

Another mechanism that creates a challenge for these young professionals within the work environment is unpredictability. Rather than monotonous work days, they enjoy when they are unaware as to what to expect from their job on any given day. One of them exclaimed, "What excites me is that no day is ever the same. No day is ever the same. It is like an excitement. It is like a rollercoaster. It is like you are at the amusement park and you are waiting in line to get on a ride." A different young civil servant simply said, "I like my job because it's a very fast changing and unpredictable

job." However, for an employee to compare their work experiences to the thrill of an amusement park, it can understandably be interpreted that some of them really enjoy a volatile work atmosphere.

Within their preferable challenging and unpredictable work environments, Generation Y really espouses the principle of efficiency. To them, by being more efficient, work processes can be greatly improved so services delivered to the public are enhanced. One reason why efficiency is so critical to Generation Y is because of their high level of public service motivation. They want to improve work processes so their clientele can receive superior customer service and benefits. One young employee firmly stated, "You want to serve the public as efficiently as possible. To be efficient, you want to make sure you process their claims correctly and then get them taken care of so you can help the next person. You want to be able to help as many people as possible." However, a couple of the interviewees were infuriated by the bureaucratic inefficiency they experience from day to day within their organizations. One said:

> *There are other things like administrative policies that really hinder you. What the law says and what my agency says we can do are very different, my agency places artificial restrictions on itself and that hinders your ability to actually do things that the law says you can do and that of course ends up taking more time and making you less efficient.*

Another employee from a different agency shared his perspective by saying:

> *But things aren't organized and that bothers me. So just, once things get more organized and more efficient things will be better, but like I say, that's opportunities for me to improve, opportunities for me to step out and do things better. So I guess if everything was so smooth and efficient, then I wouldn't of had the opportunities that I've had to do some of the things I've done. But that is frustrating because like I will step into a position or rotation and nobody knows what to do with me.*

In addition to formulating work processes that allow young employees to meet the expectations of their stakeholders efficiently, they value modern technology. Some supervisors are under the assumption that young people love technology because they like to utilize theses gadgets for personal entertainment. One of them indicated that one of her colleagues is a Baby Boomer and vehemently opposes her young employees operating their fancy Ipods while working. But one of the Gen Y employees stated that:

> *I think that supervisors need to understand that just they should keep an open mind because the way their employees act and work is going to be different from what they are used to, but that doesn't mean that they're not working as hard as other employees. I think that a lot of times young people here will be sitting at their desks with their Ipods out with their head phones and working on something and the other generations think they are goofing off because they are listening to their music, but they really aren't they just have a different way of doing things, but they are still getting their work done as long as they aren't interrupting any of their coworkers, supervisors should be fine with this.*

While most of the supervisors in this research study did not understand Generation Y's technological appetite, some of the supervisors possess a better understanding of Generation Y's desire to have better technology. Not only does their interaction with technology (e.g., Ipods) provide them with a morale boost, but effective technology helps them to execute their jobs more efficiently. One interviewee described his experience with working with antiquated technology that made him less effective and efficient. However, when new organizational technology becomes available within the workplace, the younger employees are usually more adept with these devices; so much so to where they sometimes train and instruct the older employees on how to utilize the work based technologies. Having this edge over the older generations makes Generation Y feel valued, as if they have a competitive edge to offer that will help the organization

grow—technology is definitely a staple in their pursuit of cultivating public organizational effectiveness.

The last topic that emerged and is related to efficiency is having the ability to be involved with the decision making process. Within a traditional bureaucratic environment, mechanisms are in place to avert individuals from having too much of a voice in decision making. However, from the Generation Y responses, they want to be a part of the decision making process because it makes them feel valued as an employee. They want to work within an environment that appreciates constructive feedback that permeates the organization entire organization, as opposed to the decisions and constructive criticism flowing only in a top-down fashion. One young employee shared his perspective about how he volunteered for a large team project due to the technology inefficiencies within his organization. Participating on the team made him feel as if he was a citizen of his organization because he had the opportunity to sit on a team and "vote" on a monumental agency decision.

Another indispensible workforce motivational factor that emerged from this research is the concept of socialization. This is very noteworthy because many Baby Boomers supervisors still espouse a traditional view on their employees. In particular, it is believed by some that the work environment should be comprised of formal interactions. Supervisors with this mindset usually prohibit extracurricular activities and the development of social relationships. It is perceived that these things serve as distractions to the employee who is tasked with attaining absolute efficiency. Therefore, superiors endeavor to design an organization that inhibits one from the act of socialization.

Many of the supervisors within this research project disclosed that their young employees like to socialize and engage in social activities that appear to be unrelated to their jobs. Highlighted below, one of the supervisors described her experience and understands that this new generation of employees is different from colleagues who are Baby Boomers as well. It was stated:

> *They like to have a comfortable environment as opposed to the traditional supervisor-management work structure. We all go out together. We have outings and parties together and it just kind of makes the environment more fun as opposed to coming to work sitting in cubicles because sitting in cubes can become daunting. So we try to make it as entertaining as possible on a day to day basis. It is sort of like a family environment, we all talk quite a bit. Even though first line supervisors have a certain level of authority and respect, they still feel comfortable with talking about weekends, families, sports, and those kind of things.*
>
> *I'm substantially younger and I am closer to them in age. I think that makes a difference because they tend to be more comfortable in talking to me about their personal issues than they may with our other supervisor. She tends to be a little bit more stand-offish and tries to maintain that distance between being a supervisor and being an employee. She has more of a traditional government employee mentality than younger people do. She takes her job seriously and complains about personal conversations in the office. You know like listening to their Ipods at work is fine with me as long as it doesn't negatively impact their work. But those are some of the kinds of things that she's not really understanding of.*

While the aforementioned supervisor is aware that socialization is very important to Generation Y, the other supervisors cannot fully conceptualize its importance. When recounting their stories, federal supervisor believed that it was very peculiar for any employee to aspire to cultivate social relationships. As they shared their stories some of them shook their heads in dismay because they just really do not understand the need for personal workplace socialization. The following stories capture the essence of their beliefs on the emerging generation:

One supervisor said:

It's actually kind of funny, but I think they like a lot more personal talk. They want to talk about their experiences and what they do, more so than my generation. I would have never thought about really talking too much with my boss about what I did over the weekend or what's on my Facebook page or things like that. It was much more matter of fact, official, and business-like. And I think they are really looking for a setting that's not quite so business-oriented.

Another supervisor indicated that:

They want to know more about other people's lives, which is kind of strange to me. And when I say "strange", I mean that I don't tend to be the kind of person that really concerns myself about how other people are doing. I concern myself with how I conduct myself and what my operation is. I don't have the time nor the interest to get into other people's lives and what they are doing or who's seeing who. But Gen Y wants to know about everybody else and what they have going on. And I'm sure a lot of it has to do with Facebook and other forms of social media. But me, I'm just not interested in that. I think a lot of people my age, for the most part aren't interested. Now some of them have been pulled into that, but my experience is, with the people that I associate with, they don't have the time, patience, or interest in knowing that kind of information.

Again, some supervisors understand Generation Y's strong desire for socialization. However, in talking to the young interview subjects, they stated that this is something that supervisors must embrace. One said, "[t]here needs to be a little joy in the office instead of everything being so serious." They highly value a work environment that is not always "strictly business." It has been observed by some of them that the older generations have a more stringent work ethic. The younger people like to discuss personal affairs, weekend events, and their activities on social media such as Facebook and Twitter. With one of their goals being to alter the perception of civil servants, they want to socialize yet be effective at work. In hopes of thwarting stereotypical perceptions of the government, they value a jovial workplace as opposed to a negative environment that is full of pessimism and gossip. It is believed that this sort of unattractive atmosphere is not conducive to enhancing the overall success of the agency. One of the

Generation Y employees divulged his discontent for a pessimistic work atmosphere by

saying:

> *The thing that's keeping me from being more effective, I would say is just*
> *the environment. You know, working in the government, people will say*
> *certain things about government workers. They are lazy and things like*
> *that. Sometimes they are true and sometimes they are not true. But*
> *depending on the area that you are in, some people just have a laxidasical*
> *and go through the motions type of attitude and oftentimes that's draining*
> *to me. When you are gung-ho about trying to get a project done and then*
> *you have people who aren't as optimisic or enthusiastic about the*
> *outcomes as you are it presents a problem. I guess just that whole*
> *government feel. Everybody's not trying to perform optimally because*
> *they have their job security. So they are just coming to work and going*
> *through the motions.*

Some leaders may ask, why is socialization so important? From the Generation Y

interpretations, it is significant because building robust relationships within the work

environment helps to create an atmosphere that is filled with unity and trust. It is a

mechanism that is used to cultivate organizational teams, citizenship, and support

systems. Socialization engenders organizational commitment because it has the ability

make others feel as if they are human beings, as opposed to just being an "employee."

This level of loyalty was described as a family structure, as many respondents indicated

that their coworkers are just like family members and best friends. "Our friendships

make me feel good. It makes me feel like we have a purpose here." Synonymous to this,

a Gen Y employee offered this perspective:

> *I'm trying to make my work environment comfortable for me, and I need*
> *people to understand me, and I need to understand them also. One of the*
> *big things we talk about at our agency is building trust, and if I am*
> *transparent to me and everything that I'm about, you know that I'm not*
> *going to be malicious in any way or try to bring you down in any way.*

Not only does Generation Y enjoy organizational socialization, but they highly

value their outside lives as well. A couple of the supervisors understand the importance

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of ensuring that Generation Y employees have a good work life balance, there are some within this study who do not understand this concept at all.

External activities and affairs help them to stay active and connected with the huge world that has manifested itself to them over the years. They desire to have fun, hangout, and develop themselves by taking night classes as opposed to having a stringent work schedule that consumes their "life." Not only do they want to socialize, but they consider their family's needs to be a higher priority than work. However, the federal supervisors expressed that the young employees should understand that consistency in their work schedules is necessary. Furthermore, for organizations that offer flexible work schedules, supervisors would like for Generation Y employees to not take advantage of and abuse their flexible benefits.

Research Questions

The aim of this chapter was to highlight and analyze the research themes that were formulated to address the research questions that are listed below.

Primary Generation Y Research Question

1. How do Gen Y employees within federal agencies describe what their work experiences mean to them?

Secondary Generation Y Research Questions

1. What do they say is valuable or important about their work experiences?

2. What do they say makes them want to work hard and/or effectively?

Primary Supervisory Research Question

      1. What do they think motivates Gen Y employees?

Secondary Generation Y Research Question

      2. How do frontline supervisors of Gen Y employees within federal agencies describe Gen Y employees?

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Discussion Summary

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In the literature review attributes about Generation Y was provided that has been publicized in popular press magazines or newspapers such as: *TIME* Magazine, *USA Today*, *The Washington Post,* and *The Oberlin Reviewer.* In addition, actual studies and research was included that was extracted from Generation Y-based books that were published by authors Gravett and Throckman (2007) and Tulgan (2009). Mostly all of the information that emerged from this research dissertation was corroborated by the findings that were covered in the literature review section. To this point, many of the federal supervisors that participated in this study actually see the Generation Y employees in the same manner that these young professionals describe themselves.

      Generation Y is a very unique generation that has recently entered the government workforce. It has been interpreted that these young employees inherently possess a very high level of public service motivation. From their work experiences, they are able to demonstrate their public service motivation by being dedicated to the mission of their public agencies. They really enjoy being active members of our democracy as civil service administrators within the federal government.

      Due to their high level of public service motivation, they are zealous to advance and grow exponentially within the public domain. Federal supervisors of this study

recognize that advancement opportunities motivate their young employees. They believe that over time Generation Y will make excellent government employees. Although they are fairly new to the workforce, they are very confident and believe that with the proper development and training, they can greatly enhance government. Growth opportunities are important to them and the supervisors expressed that Generation Y takes advantage of development opportunities more so than other generations. As Generation Y strives to improve the government, they would prefer to see the federal government less bureaucratic and top-down. A primary reason for this is because some of the supervisory traditional assumptions of Generation Y are outdated and erroneous. They often assume that the best environment for young people is a stringent business professional environment that limits socialization and the utilization of personal technological devices and applications. However, the young people relish a more contemporary environment that is relaxed and values employee exchanges and relationships.

Not only does Generation Y like to socialize within their organizations, but they desire to have flexible work schedules. Some of the supervisors do not understand how the younger employees feel so comfortable with not making more personal work sacrifices like the Baby Boomers did as they were coming up the ranks. But the young professionals espouse the mentality that they "work to live" as opposed to "living to work", as one particular research participant of this study expressed. Lastly, Generation Y is confident, ambitious, eager and humbled to have the opportunity to represent their generation within the federal personnel system.

In the Fall of 2005, *The Public Manager* included coverage for the 2005 Excellence in Government (EIG) Conference that in part highlighted a panel for four

young government workers. Spahr (2005), editor, summarized the panel discussion with the following excerpt:

> Despite coming from different federal agencies, the "XYZ" conference panelists uniformly described an attraction to government careers because of a desire to contribute to something larger, whether to the missions of their team or division, their agency, or the American people. As part of the EIG track "Path to the Future: Entrepreneurial Strategist," these panelists described how they are trying to reshape their agencies or divisions to achieve a more entrepreneurial government—one that is more fast-paced, promotes flexibility and independence, uses modern technology, and supports the advancement of those who demonstrate the ability to lead and move quickly into management roles. (p. 57)

I thought it was noteworthy to include this excerpt because it captures the essence of the Generation Y experiences rather accurately as it pertains to the themes that were generated from this research dissertation.

Hennessey (1998) published a pivotal article in the *Public Administration Review* (PAR) journal entitled "Reinventing Government: Does Leadership Make a Difference?" In this article Hennessy discusses the impact that leadership has on performance and organizational culture in public agencies. His study suggests that leadership should transcend the traditional motivation and incentive models to reinvent the public service personnel system. After analyzing and reviewing the data that was produced within this study, it can easily be inferred that Generation Y has a strong need and desire to be managed by transformational leaders.

Transformational leaders embrace employees as more than a person who is responsible for completing a job. Instead, they adopt a holistic approach that falls under within the human relations camp because they endeavor to cultivate a genuine relationship with their subordinates that extend beyond work transactions (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010). These leaders empower, develop, encourage, inspire, and motivate

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employees to achieve organizational success by assessing their personal and work needs;

and from the leaders' assessment, they design work structures and processes that respond

to their wants, values, and expectations. This is why Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010)

strongly encourages governmental agencies to adopt transformational leadership styles in

order to drive individual and organizational performance, especially considering the

record number of Generation Y civil servants that are entering the federal government.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP, FUTURE RESEARCH

Conclusion

My goal of this dissertation is not to dismiss behavioral motivation research, instead I wanted to step back and take a different approach to study Generation Y by utilizing systematic qualitative research methods. In the forward to Brain Beakly's translation of Jean-Francois Lyotard's book *La Phenomenologie*, George Orminston stated:

> With every thinking there is a rethinking, a re-collecting that modifies the parameters of the debate, transforms the differend by the very fact that the issues or the contentious points have been (and will have been) recontextualized, recited, and recalled for particular purposes. (Lyotard, 1991, p. 9)

Keeping the notion of "rethinking" in mind, I wanted my subjects to talk to me so I can understand the meaning of their motivation related experiences, as opposed to test and prove them. I revisited some theories of motivation primarily because many modern organizations are "framed in a way that reflects embedded U.S. cultural values . . .These values are predominately values of an *industrial* period; thus they are increasingly outdated for *any* society" (Jacques, 1996, p. 158).

This is research project is significant to the field of public administration because federal employees are retiring on a daily basis in great numbers. Furthermore, federal supervisors are developing work structures and reward systems that are predicated upon traditional management assumptions and media stereotypes. In the words from a Deloitte (2010) research study:

> Recruiting, retaining, and developing this generation [Y] is something that the government has had difficulty doing using current methods and practices. Consequently, government faces two linked challenges: dealing with the retirement of the Baby Boomers and updating its practices to attract their replacement. (p. 1)

As a result, this phenomenological research dissertation was designed to carefully examine federal Generation Y employees in hopes of gaining a more substantive understanding of these new civil servants. Since qualitative research methods were utilized to gather and analyze the data, research questions were constructed in place of a hypothesis.

There were a total of 10 federal employees that participated in this research study: five were Generation Y employees and the remaining five were supervisors of Generation Y employees. Aggregately, these civil servants were employed by an eclectic set of federal agencies located within the Greater Cleveland, Ohio metropolitan region. In total, between the young employees and supervisors that were interviewed, the subjects worked for eight different federal agencies. Drawing from a pool of seven various agencies is advantageous, as it equips this dissertation with a fair cross section of the federal government. Consequently, shared experiences and meanings that were expressed by the subject underscore some noteworthy dynamics of federal institutions.

In particular, Chapter IV presented and highlighted the major themes of this research study that emanated from the 10 semi-structured interviews that were conducted. The three Generation Y themes are (a) public service motivation, (b) development opportunities, and (c) traditional bureaucratic management. Subthemes emerged from the traditional bureaucratic management theme and they are: (a) socialization, (b) outside life, and (c) efficiency. From the supervisory data, the three primary supervisory themes emerged as well and they are: advancement opportunities, constructive feedback, and traditional bureaucratic management.

Since there was a lot of overlap between the Generation Y and supervisory themes, the data was placed in three categories that were presented in the discussion section. They are high level of public service motivation, desire for advancement, and dissatisfaction with traditional bureaucratic management work environments. It was extrapolated that Generation Y is intrinsically motivated to improve they society in which they live in. Some of the supervisors believed that Generation Y is very different from other generations within today's public workforce. Furthermore, a very notable finding is that, the supervisors are actually cognizant of the aspects of organizational structures that Generation Y employees appreciate and are motivated by. However, some supervisors are stuck in their traditional beliefs and according to McGregor (2007), employees respond in indolence and apathy when their work needs are not being satisfied. As a result, early attrition is being experienced by various organizations within the federal government. So the supervisors' views aren't necessarily "outdated or erroneous." Instead, Baby Boomers have been somewhat negligent and obstinate in fully embracing this new generation's set of workforce values. However, they are hoping that Generation

Y will become institutionalized and over time, acquiesce with how government has been run over the years—as the supervisors know it to be. The supervisors adamantly believe that Generation Y employees will effectively manage the government and leave a lasting legacy for many generations to come.

Significance and Implications for the Civil Service System

Leaders design their organizations based on assumptions about human nature, and these assumptions can either lead to crisis prevention or crisis initiation (Weick, 1988). If they believe that humans are driven by external motivators, then they will design work systems predicated upon their beliefs while safeguarding the institution from anything that undermines their construct (Perry et al., 2010). Barzilai-Nahon and Mason (2010) conducted research on executives and stated that:

> According to the executives interviewed, few organizations currently are set up to accommodate these behaviors. Organizations have an inertia that inhibits rapid change, and this presents a challenge even to executives who recognize the need to change. Moreover, organizations that have been led by baby boomers have processes and information systems that were designed by baby boomers, for baby boomers, using technologies that were available at the time baby boomers were becoming managers. These legacy systems, and the accompanying comfort with their use by baby boomers, add to the inertia. (p. 413)

As younger employees express the need for less traditional hierarchical organizations, the role of leadership will have to change (Nygren & Levine, 1995). Consequently, it is important that Baby Boomers maintain a solid understanding of who Generation Y is within the public workforce. "Federal agencies must do more than attract new talent. They also need to lay the groundwork that will encourage new employees to grow and stay" (Partnership for Public Service & Booze Allen Hamilton, 2008, p. 2).

In this research, it was discovered that younger people have a high level of intrinsic motivation that attracts them to the federal government. Albeit they are inherently motivated by the general purpose of government, their motivation and interest in government can easily become diminished if their talents are not fostered properly. McGregor (2007) stated:

> People, deprived of opportunities to satisfy at work the needs which are now important to them, behave exactly as we might predict—with indolence, passivity, resistance to change, lack of responsibility, willingness to follow the demagogue, unreasonable demands for economic benefits. It would seem that we are caught in a web of our own weaving. (p. 161)

Blimes and Gould (2009) stated that "the current civil service system is organized hierarchically and stove-piped by specialty, much like the giant industrial enterprises of the 1950s…It was not designed to foster creativity or innovation, and in most cases it discourages them" (Blimes & Gould, 2009, p. 14). This is problematic for Generation Y because they desire to utilize their knowledge to innovate and make things better without having to encounter resistance and red tape. They also value socialization and the ability to engage in social exchanges. Socialization emanates from feeling valued by a respective institution; and therefore, creating a new social identity within that organization (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). "As a consequence, people are more supportive to the institutions they embody, they may internalize institutional values, norms, and attitudes, and the institutional structure may be reinforced" (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008, p. 61).

Considering the great extent of this generational conundrum within the federal government, it must be addressed in a multi-faceted fashion to improve an inherent governmental system that is failing its people (Blimes & Gould, 2009). It will require

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serious attention from the directly from the President, U.S. Congress, and last, but not least the management within each respective federal agency. It is somewhat manifest that these three stakeholders have not been effectively working to ameliorate personnel conditions, if so, the civil service system would not be experiencing such a deficit of young citizens. I will now briefly offer some considerations for these three essential stakeholders as they endeavor to improve organizational performance by focusing on its human resource capital.

The President should begin to create a more robust sense of urgency not only for the federal government to recruit Generation Y employees, but to also modify organizational structures that will assist in retaining them. He could even possibly work with the Office of Personnel Management to re-structure a few agencies as a pilot to formulating sweeping reforms across the entire federal government. The President should also do more to develop bipartisan support from Congress to create strategies that will transform the traditionally structured government that has been proven to be unfavorable to younger civil servants.

"Congressional committees should convene hearings on personnel reform" (Blimes & Gould, 2009, p. 274) to heighten awareness and urgency on this topic. From these committee sessions, powerful policies could emanate that will direct and allow federal organizations to be more flexible, offer better rewards/incentives, and last, but not least effectively develop its next generation of leaders. And perhaps most importantly, between the President and Congress more budgetary appropriations should be allocated to agencies in order for new reformatory policies to be strategically implemented.

Lastly, organizational leaders should begin to adopt the mindset of a transformational leader. It is indispensible for federal leaders to alter their way of thinking and managing because the pygmalion effect posits that young employees develop lasting self-fulfilling prophecies that are engendered by their supervisors early in their careers. These self-fulfilling prophecies can be positive or negative, depending upon the organizational assumptions that leaders act upon. Currently, many federal supervisors still carry assumptions that align with traditional bureaucratic work environments. From my research and other scholars' standpoint, "[i]t appears that most executives feel more comfortable using top-down approaches, which may not be effective to address tensions with the net generation" (Barzilai-Nahon & Mason, 2010, p. 413).

However, this new generation of employees has cultivated antithetical work values and preferences. While there are perhaps differing opinions on training, Blimes and Gould (2009) stated:

> To make sure that the government's managers know how to structure work and supervise employees, we recommend serious investment in four types of training: 1) leadership/management, 2) supervisory, 3) technical, and 4) general transformation training. These courses will improve not only individual team performance but also the ability of managers to work across stovepipes in the federal government. (p. 182)

In conclusion, federal supervisors must do a better job of attempting to embrace their Generation Y employees and implement organizational strategies that are commensurate with their needs and wants, as the Director of OPM suggested during a forum session. Since there were a total of eight different federal agencies that were represented in this study, hence, the commonalities that derived from the themes should not be taken for granted. It is the leaders' job to ascertain that Generation Y employees are properly developed and utilized so our federal government can continue to improve

the social conditions for mankind. The first step of change is recognition. This study has described how federal supervisors recognize and are aware of Generation Y's workplace desires. Now, these leaders must act and find solutions to better attract, develop, and retain our future federal leaders that the entire U.S. society is depending on to offer their contribution to our great democracy. "This will not happen until the nation adopts a fresh approach to managing the government's human capital" (Blimes & Gould, 2009, p. 4).

Future Research

One noteworthy area of future research can be for a researcher to examine the relationships that a Generation Y employee has with supervisors that are closer to them in age than Baby Boomers. In this study, one young supervisor who was only a couple of years older than her Generation Y employees stated that the young people feel more comfortable discussing work and personal matters with her due to the closeness of age. Also one of the Generation Y subjects of this study indicated:

> But more and more young people come into the Agency and the entire government, that's a good thing because they are moving up and they do understand Generation Y's needs. Being a younger employee of the government and if you have a supervisor who is similar in age, I think they can understand your wants and needs better.

Another future research project could focus on Generation Y employees who work in a technical/science based organization versus those who are business professionals. This would be an interesting study because it would examine Generation Y based upon their occupations and professions. This is very unique because most of the Generation Y research analyzes this cohort of employees as a whole without dividing them into subgroups. Also, more research can be conducted on Generation Y within races in our society to study cultural similarities and differences. Furthermore, research

can be conducted on examining if the Baby Boomer population possessed similar

characteristics as Generation Y when the first entered the federal workforce. Take into

consideration the quote that was stated by the director of OPM:

> You get someone early on, you have the opportunity for them to grow up
> and be really steeped from the very beginning in the government's way of
> doing things, and there's value in that. (Fillichi, 2006, p. 4)

If this is the case, then a reasonable assumption could be made that over time the federal

government institutionalizes civil servants to become a certain type of "civil servant."

Lastly, while using this dissertation as a springboard, a quantitative style research project

could be constructed to determine cause and effect relationships with the motivational

factors that are described in this project.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS IN

RESEARCH APPLICATION

Dear Researcher:

IRB has completed review of your research protocol: 29222-STI-HS. It has been approved under IRB category b2. You may begin your research upon receipt of this email.

Sincerely,
Todd Pesek
Justin Perry
CSU IRB

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant:

My name is Antoine Moss and I a doctoral student under the supervision of Dr. Camilla Stivers at Cleveland State University.

I am asking you to participate in an interview that will involve employees who work for federal agencies within Northeast Ohio. The purpose of these interviews is to gain insight on individuals' work experiences within the federal government, as a young professional. During the interview, I will ask questions about your work environment. It is my hope that information from this project will contribute to a better understanding of the federal workforce.

Although there are no major risks, your responses to the interview questions will be confidential, and complete privacy will be guaranteed. Furthermore, nothing you say will be attributed to you specifically and everything you say will be treated with the utmost confidence. Tapes and notes of each interview session will be kept at my home under lock and key.

Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. There is no reward for participating or consequence for not participating. Participants can resolve at any time without penalty.

For further information regarding this research project please contact me at 440-826-3793 (phone) or adm@AntoineMoss.com.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at (216)687-3630.

There are two copies of this letter. After signing them, keep one copy for your records and return the other one. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Please indicate your agreement to participate by signing below.

I am 18 years or older and have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate.

Signature: _____

Name: _____ (Please Print)

Date: _____

INTERVIEW SUMMARY SAMPLE

Summary of Interview of Subject 2 on 2/4/11

The interview subject enjoys working for his agency because he appreciates the opportunity to work for the federal government because this is allows for him to work on issues that he's genuinely passionate about. He loves to follow politics that pertain to foreign affairs and relations on the national news circuits. Working this closely with issues on national and international affairs excites him. He also expressed that the volatility of his job makes it fun because things are fast paced and changes quickly. He also identifies with the liberal party within the United States political system. As a result, he became an activist to advocate for a recycling program to be formulated within his office environment. While he enjoyed developing and advocating for the program, he sometimes becomes frustrated with the logistics and other rather insignificant aspects of managing the program. For example, employees complaining about food being placed in the recycling containers. However, since most employees are responsible for other collateral duties, managing the recycling program is perhaps the best fit for him.

The interviewee highly values a work environment that encourages unity, trust, and teamwork. To this end, he feels that developing friendships with his coworkers is essential. And this is because the work culture demands that coworkers work well with each other to share knowledge and information so the job can be done effectively. If he could change something, he would change the conservative administrative policies and constraints that are often developed internally. These things hinder him from being more

effective and creative. The interview subject wishes that he could spend more time on the mission of his job as opposed to being burdened by other administrative policies and duties. Furthermore, he would appreciate a condensed workload as this would help him to become more efficient and effective. However, he explained that he's willing to do whatever his boss tells him to do.

Other things that impact his performance are the antiquated technology and information systems that his organization has in place. Since he strongly values the efficiency of modern technology, he volunteered to sit on a HQ team that's developing IT projects for the agency because it allows him to be a part of enhancing his agency's technology systems.

He believes that there's somewhat of a disconnect between the generations partly due to the new technology that's how and the younger employees interact with and discuss these topics at work. In addition, the younger employees highly appreciates a flexible work schedule to engage in external social activities while the older generation places work first and social activities as secondary. Supervisors should maintain a flexible mind and understand that younger employees are effective at work, but they just may do things a little bit different to achieve the goal within the work environment. However, he feels that his supervisor is pretty good and often tries to relate with the employees by watching similar reality television shows that are sometimes discussed in the office.

General themes that were extracted from the interview:

Helpful or Appreciated	Not Helpful or Unappreciated
Participating in decision making process	Administrative policies and constraints
Supervisor is flexible and understanding	Burdensome extra duties
Flexible work schedules	Unnecessary administrative training
Working on mission that's tied to his natural passion	Too large of a workload
Socializing and creating friendships	Supervisors and coworkers who don't try to understand the new generation
Developing trust	Antiquated computer and technology systems
Mentorship and knowledge sharing	Lots of paperwork
Chance to achieve and help improve the overall agency	Inefficiency
Team work, unity, and collaboration	Politics of the overall government structure
Modern technology systems	Not being able to focus more on mission of the job
Unpredictable and fast paced environment	