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Managing Generations of Individuals

A Study of Generations, Work Values, and Their
Relevance in Management Strategy in Engineering
Consulting

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Master's thesis within General Management

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Abstract

With up to four generations working together in today's workforce, research suggests that managers may feel overwhelmed at the idea of strategically managing the diversity of work values amongst their teams. Many studies suggest practical implications for managing a generationally diverse work force, however strong opposition does exist questioning the impact that generation alone has on work values and management strategy. There exists a lack of research studying how managers themselves perceive these conclusions regarding generational differences in work values, and their effect on how they should manage their teams, an intriguing scenario, as it is them whom the conclusions have been derived for. As such the purpose of this study was to be one of the first to determine the degree to which practicing managers acknowledge common conclusions pertaining to the effect an employee's generation has on their work values, and it's relevance in management strategy.

The research followed a deductive approach as existing theories and conclusions were tested with the perceptions of practicing managers. A qualitative design allowed for the researchers to engage with respondents in a way that is not possible through a quantitative survey, avoiding the potential overgeneralizations already perceived by some to be abundant in the field. 11 experienced respondents from a single company within the engineering consultancy industry were interviewed addressing three research questions.

Results of the study revealed that practicing managers do recognize work value differences between generations, showing consistencies with existing research however with some deviations in certain work values. Analysis of results revealed that generation was not the only contributing factor in these differences. Factors such as age, life stage and career stage, as well as industry trends were also revealed to be factors. Generation was not found to be an important influence on an employee's individual work values compared to individual traits such as one's personal upbringing, as well as other external, and dynamic factors. Generation was also not an important consideration when creating project teams. As such, understanding employees as individuals was regarded as more relevant than generation in the context of management strategy. Two preliminary models were developed to illustrate the theories and were updated reflecting the results of the analysis.

The study added to the existing body of knowledge by gaining insight on the idea of generational work value differences from a unique perspective by employing a different methodology than commonly seen in the area.

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1 Introduction

A manager in today's workforce find themselves facing the seemingly daunting task where, within one organization, they are required to manage a very age diverse workforce, spanning up to sixty years and four generations (Wong, Gardner, Lang & Coulon, 2008; Cogin, 2012; Giancola, 2006). Major media outlets such as "60 Minutes", *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Fortune Magazine* have taken note, giving the idea of generational differences in work values extensive coverage (Twenge, 2010). Coincidentally, with the abundance of media coverage and research being done, Lyons, Urick, Kuron and Schweitzer (2015) note, "a new industry of consultants and speakers emerged to capitalize on the popularity of this hot topic" (p. 346). A survey done by Burke in 2005 (as cited in Cogin, 2012) found that within organizations of 500 or more employees, 58% of Human Resource Management (HRM) professionals reported conflicts between older and younger workers, citing differing ideals towards work life balance and work ethics. Potentially adding further complexity to the issue is the increased incidence of older employees reporting to younger managers (Cogin, 2012). With the responsibility of effective personnel management resting on their shoulders, those in middle management positions may look towards organizational frameworks or HRM strategies derived from research and popular practitioner literature that attempt to generalize key attributes of each generation, or birth cohort, and provide strategies for effective management. These strategies can have an effect on multiple aspects of management from recruitment, training and development, career development, rewards, working arrangements, and overall management style (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

Although difficult to identify the theory's exact origins, Karl Mannheim's contribution in 1952 (Mannheim, 1952) is often cited as the most notable early work on generational differences (Parry & Urwin, 2011). William Strauss and Neil Howe contributed significantly to the theory (Strauss & Howe, 1991) with their insights on the cyclical nature of generational theory and how generations are destined to repeat themselves. Rhodes (1983) provided a clear chronological start for the study of age related work influences, however was clear to establish these changes were comprised of cohort effects, age effects, and period effects, and did not focus explicitly on generational effects (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Despite the lack of consensus on definitions, and dates the theory of generational differences, our context is motivated by the belief that there are four generations (veterans, baby boomers, generation X, and generation Y) each comprised of individuals that share a unique set of values and attitudes evolving from shared events and experiences and possess an individual set of skills and characteristics based on their social and historical background (Parry & Urwin, 2011). As such, each generation is restricted to a particular range of opportunities and experiences, based on collective memories that have an influence on their future attitudes and behaviours (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Kopperschmidt (2000) broadly defines these generations as workforce groups that share a birth year, mutual age locations, and significant life events such as social and historical life experiences at critical development stages. As a result these cohorts have differences in their attitudes and hence identifiable characteristics on which they differ.

Researchers past and present however continue to attempt to establish if these differences amongst people born at different times are in fact related to generational theory, and if so, to what extent they have an effect on the workplace. Although the idea of generations has a strong base in the realm of sociology, Parry and Urwin (2011) found from their review that the empirical evidence supporting generational differences in work values is at best mixed, citing a failure by many to distinguish between generation and age as drivers of difference, as well as multiple methodological implications. Lyons et al. (2015) along with Costanza and Finkelstein (2015) warn of the dangers presented by managerial and HRM decision making based off of

weak research evidence and generational stereotypes. Giancola (2006) cites the lack empirical evidence on generational theory as supporting a notion that the generational approach “may be more popular culture than social science”(p. 33).

Nevertheless there still remains an increasing perception among managers that the interaction of multigenerational workforces are producing novel challenges within an organization to attract, motivate and retain both new talents as well as experienced and established professionals (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015). Gursoy, Geng-Qing Chi and Karadag (2013) agree noting that managing different generations based on their individual work values may improve working conditions and job structure as well as increase employee productivity, innovation and employee engagement and lead to a redesign of compensation packages. One can easily observe a lack of consensus as to whether managerial and HRM strategies based on generational work value differences can be derived from these findings. Furthermore, there is also support for focus to be placed on managing the employee as an individual rather than a group which can be stereotyped, and overgeneralized (Wong et al., 2008). Twenge (2010) states a need for managers to try and treat employees as individuals and not just a member of their generation and Lyons et al. (2015) state there needs to be an appreciation of the diversity and inclusiveness of individuals which does not benefit from stereotyping and overgeneralization of available evidence. As such it is easy to recognize a debate as to generational theory’s relevance when it comes to managerial strategy and HRM practices in the workplace despite having a strong theoretical base from a social context.

1.1 Research Problem

A review of the literature reveals significant opposition to the idea of generations contributing heavily to noticeable work value differences within a workforce and relevance in management strategy. The most prolific argument is the inability to distinguish between generations from other factors as the cause for any differences (Parry & Urwin, 2011). This is most commonly attributed to the use of cross sectional data in studies which take into account only one particular point in time. Rhodes (1983) suggests this method is an insufficient way of examining such differences, as they could also be interpreted by age, life cycle or career stage. One solution to the limitations of cross sectional studies is a longitudinal study, which takes into account different periods of time and thus can eliminate the effects of age. However data for these types of studies is difficult to obtain, usually coming from secondary sources and can literally require generations to complete.

The idea of heterogeneity within a single generation is another issue raised by Parry and Urwin (2011). Gender, ethnicity and location all play a role in perceptions of a generation and lead to the probability of significant differences within a generation. Parry and Urwin (2011) cite the results of a questionnaire by Eskilson and Wiley in 1999, which found little to distinguish work values between generations, however did find significant differences within Generation X, based on gender and ethnicity. Denecker, Joshi and Martocchio (2008) even suggest that heterogeneity within generations may be as much as between them, further adding to the complexity.

The prominent use of employee surveys followed by quantitative statistical analysis also poses an issue as a quantitative approach tends to draw large, representative samples, and attempts to construct generalizations regarding the population as a whole (Hyde, 2000). Researchers generally proceed to include practical implications based on their findings, suggesting ways in which managers can adapt to, or mediate the potential effects within their workforce or project teams based off of these statistical generalizations. Little if any empirical research has been done to determine if these differences are actually recognized by practicing managers

substantiating their claims, or if managers look to other strategies as being more important. One such strategy is that of managing team members based on their individual characteristics, as suggested by Costanza and Finkelstein (2015):

The key to managing a multigenerational workforce effectively is for managers not to make decisions about employees using their generation as a shortcut to their characteristics and needs but rather to measure critical individual differences as well as to track the gradual developmental and demographic changes that occur within and among individuals over time (p. 317).

1.2 Research Purpose and Questions

A review of the literature identified a research gap in that no previous studies could be found which drew on the experiences and insights of practicing managers regarding their recognition and acknowledgment of work value differences and adaptation of management strategy based on generational theory. Therefore, the purpose of our research is to determine, from personal experiences and insights, the degree to which practicing managers recognize common conclusions pertaining to the effect an employee's generation has on their work values, and its relevance in management strategy. To fulfill this purpose, the study will explore certain generational work value differences that are both addressed in the reviewed literature, and relevant to the industry studied, as well as any others brought forth by the respondents, and attempt to estimate the degree to which generation is a factor in any noticeable differences. The study will also determine how much of an influence generation may have on an employee's overall work values, compared to other influences, such as personal background. Finally the study will investigate how an employee's generation is considered when creating and managing project teams, compared to other individual factors such as experience, skills, and personality.

Three research questions were developed to address the purpose:

- RQ1: To what degree do practicing managers recognize differences in work values between generations and to what level does generation contribute to each difference?
- RQ2: How much of an influence do practicing managers feel generation has on an employee's work values, compared to other influential factors?
- RQ3: When creating a project team, what level of importance do managers put on team member's generations when compared to other individual characteristics?

This study will focus on the experiences of practicing managers within the engineering consulting, industry. This industry was chosen as the project teams typically consist of multiple generations, representing various skill levels from multiple professional and cultural backgrounds.

By answering the above research questions the study will contribute to the existing body of research by being one of very few studies to investigate the relevance of common conclusions put forth from previous research regarding generational theory and work values by exploring the thoughts and experiences of those whom many of the conclusions and practical implications have been derived for.

2 Frame of Reference

2.1 Generational Theory

The origins of generational theory lie within the field of sociology, where sociologist Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) started to emphasize the importance of generations to gain a better awareness of social and intellectual movements. According to Mannheim, generations consist of two important elements. First, members of the same generation have to share the same range of birth years, in other words they share common location in historical time. Furthermore they have to be capable of participating in certain collective historical experiences that will create a concrete bond between each member, to share a mutual identity of responses (Mannheim, 1952). The second element of historical experiences has been studied and further refined by Turner (Edmunds & Turner, 2002; Eyerman & Turner, 1998; Turner, 1998) who's results revealed cultural elements such as music or technological advances were found to influence and help shape generations. Every new generation forms their own unique reactions according to social forces like laws, schools and families (Baltes, Reese & Lipsitt, 1980). Individuals do not have the option to be part of a generation, nor are members necessarily aware of their membership (Kowske, Rasch & Wiley, 2010). Instead membership in a generation is based on a shared position of an age group (Mannheim, 1952).

Egri and Ralston (2004) explored the impact that significant cultural, political and economical developments facing different generations in their pre-adult years had on their value orientations, and how they varied accordingly. They discovered for instance that generations experiencing war may grow up with modernist survival values such as materialism and respect for authority. In contrast, generations growing up within a socioeconomically secure background may value postmodern qualities such as egalitarianism and tolerance of diversity.

In order to allocate each generation to their years of birth, we refer to Table 2-1, from one of the most frequently cited books on generational theory, Strauss and Howe (1991).

Table 2-1. Definitions of Generations Currently in the Workforce

Generation Name	Birth Years	Also Known As
Veterans	1925-1942	Traditionalists Silent Generation Matures
Baby boomers	1943-1960	
Generation X	1961-1981	Gen X Baby busters Lost generation
Generation Y	1982 -	Millennials Nexters Eco boomers

Although it is possible to have all four generations present in the modern workforce, recent studies have found a significantly low number of veterans remaining in the workforce to obtain a proper sample for analysis. As such, this generation will not be addressed in detail or further analyzed in this study.

Baby Boomers

Growing up during Cold war, Baby boomers expect the best from life (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Attitudes such as intellectually arrogant, culturally wise, critical thinkers and self-confident portray Baby boomers as much heralded, but failing to meet expectations (Strauss & Howe, 1991; Howe & Strauss, 2000). According to Smith and Clurman (1997) they want to be on top and in charge and have a foible for status symbols (Adams, 1998).

Generation X (Gen X)

Gen X grew up with financial and societal insecurity that led to a preference of individualism over collectivism (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). Strauss and Howe (1991) and Howe and Strauss (2000) describe them as cynical, distrusting, independent and self-reliant. They highly value the development of skills to move into management (Eisner, 2005) and prefer a coaching style of management with plenty of recognition for results (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000).

Generation Y (Gen Y)

Gen Y, currently entering the job market, is socialized in a digital world and constantly connected to digitally streamed information and contacts (Eisner, 2005). They desire minimal rules and bureaucracy (Morrison, Erickson and Dychtwald, 2006), demand flexibility to move from project to project (Martin, 2005) and prefer openness and transparency (Eisner, 2005) combined with a high expectation of empowerment (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). Strauss and Howe (1991) and Howe and Strauss (2000) describe Gen Y with attributes such as team players, smart and optimistic.

2.2 Work Values

Values define what an individual, or group of individuals believe to be fundamentally right, or wrong (Smola & Sutton, 2002). This holds true in many contexts, whether it be social values, religious values or family values. Therefore, this simple description can be applied to an individual's work values, as what one feels as right or wrong within the work setting (Smola & Sutton, 2002). However the consensus was that a more comprehensive definition was required and thus the definition used in this study, among others was proposed by (Dose, 1997) stating that work values are the evaluative standards relating to work or the work environment by which individuals discern what is 'right' or assess the importance of preferences (Dose, 1997; Parry & Urwin, 2011; Smola & Sutton, 2002).

When studying values of individuals from multiple generations or age cohorts, the question is naturally raised regarding whether values can be attributed to the generation within which one resides, or if values change over time as a function of age or life stage. This issue was addressed by Rokeach (1973) (as cited in Cogin, 2012), who argued that individuals develop values in their early years, and these values remain fairly constant over the course of their lives. The extent to which an individual attributes importance to certain values may change over time, however the appreciation for the value does not. This idea was supported up by Lyons, Duxbury and Higgins (2007) who suggest that "values are enduring but not immutable. They are learned during an individual's formative years and remain fairly constant over the life course" (p. 340).

2.3 Generational Work Value Differences

The increasing value of leisure is often considered as the largest change in work values. Quantitative research done by Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman and Lance (2010) discovered a generational shift in the value of having free time between both, Gen Y relative to Gen X as well as Gen X relative to Baby boomers. This refers back to the observation of Gen X and Gen Y grew up witnessing increased working hours while receiving limited vacation time. The same

study also discovers a change in value of extrinsic rewards such as salary, which is appreciated more by Gen Y than Baby boomers. Demanding more money while working less shows a stereotypical sense of entitlement and overconfidence within Gen Y (Tulgan, 2009; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Gursoy et al. (2013) found significant differences between 'recognition' comparing the three generations, finding specifically that Gen Y is more likely to perceive a lack of recognition and respect from their colleagues, more than Baby boomers and Gen X. However, Appelbaum, Serena and Shapiro (2005) found that baby boomers do indeed doubt the commitment of younger generations. Likewise Parry and Urwin (2011) identified in their study the craving of younger generations of immediate recognition through title, pay, praise and promotion. However also finding that Gen Y does show a strong will to get things done by believing in collective action and teamwork.

Specific generational characteristics regarding intrinsic values have been uncovered by Arnett (2004) as well as Lancaster and Stillman (2003) who found a decline of 'pride' and the 'meaning for work' within younger generations. Gursoy et al. (2013) uncovered in their quantitative research significant differences of 'work centrality' between Baby boomers compared to both, Gen X and Gen Y. In other words Baby boomers value their job more important than the other two generations. Another study done by Smola and Sutton (2002) confirm these findings, adding that newer or younger workers were less inclined to feel their work should be an important part of their life; and would be more likely to stop working if they suddenly came into a large amount of money. Likewise, research of Cugin (2012) discovered a decline of work ethic among young people including reluctance to working hard. Cugin (2012) further uncovered in her study a big contrast between Gen Y and Baby boomers regarding the level of satisfaction obtained from working hard. Where older generations equate 'working hard' to personal and professional success, Gen Y's definition of success comes rather by attaining a solid work-life balance and flexibility. Gursoy et al. (2013) investigated work-life balance further as a work value. Contrary to Baby boomers, both, Gen X as well as Gen Y strongly believe in a separation of work and personal life with Gen Y being least attached to work. For Gen Y, friends and families will always be prioritized before work. Within this study these values are referred to as the "moral importance of work".

Parry and Urwin (2011) identify in their study the need for guidance, direction and leadership of Gen Y where the older two generations tend to be less reliant on strong, competent leadership. Another contrasting attribute has been detected regarding 'thinking outside the box' which is strongly related to Gen Y. This type mentality is likely to bother both Gen X as well as Baby boomers, who are traditionally stuck to their well-established approaches. With respect to Gen X, they have a high ambition towards power, desiring quick promotions (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Additionally they appreciate working independently (Chen & Choi, 2008; Tulgan, 2000) and self-direction (Lyons, 2003) the most among the three generations.

Martin (2005) discovers less respect for rank in regards to Gen Y in his research of managerial challenges concerning different generations. Several other studies have confirmed this result with each finding increased questioning amongst the younger generation for hierarchy in the workplace (Helyer & Lee, 2012; Zemke et al., 2000). Gursoy, Maier and Chi (2008) explain this trait with a strong believe in collective action and hence the preference of centralized authority. On the other end of the spectrum, older generations, especially Baby boomers, do respect authority, however wish to be viewed as an equal (Eisner, 2005; Helyer & Lee, 2012).

Eisner (2005) found that team spirit is most strongly developed within Gen Y, who prefers a management style involving team orientation. Martin (2005) found Gen Y performing better when working in teams, however they still work well alone. Likewise, the results of Cugin (2012) show teamwork is significant within younger generations, as well as building cohesion

through social activity. Tulgan (2004) identified in his study a desire amongst Gen X towards teamwork, finding teamwork beneficial to support their individual effort and establish strong relationships (Karp, Sirias and Arnold, 1999). Additionally Karp et al. (1999) discovered less team orientation of Baby boomers compared to Gen X, however research is available that argues that Baby boomers also value team work (Benson and Brown, 2011), thus there is no clear tendency identified regarding Baby boomer's overall willingness or ability to work in a team environment.

2.4 Age, Career Stage and Life Stage as Factors

One of the main criticisms associated with generational research lies within the complex interrelation and thus disassociation of generation from other contributing factors that can affect someone's work values, primarily chronological aging career stage and life stage (Parry and Urwin, 2001; Rhodes, 1983; Twenge, 2010; Wong et al., 2008). This challenge was identified by Erickson (1968) and Gould (1978) who noted that when conducting cross-sectional research, there is no absolute method to know whether a result is really due to the generational group, maturation, the particular career stage occurring concurrently, or even the developmental stage that the person is in.

Rhodes (1983) describes aging with two effects. First is psychological aging, which explains the systematic changing of someone's personality, needs, behavior and expectations over time. Different roles such as child, student, worker etc. carry certain expectations for behavior and have influence on someone's needs. The second is biological aging that comes along with anatomical and physiological changes (Rhodes, 1983).

Wong et al. (2008) conclude that some work value differences could be better explained with career stage as a main contributing factor. Career stage theories (e.g., Super, 1957, 1980) claim that people progress during their career through multiple stages. Each career stage represents its own work attitudes and behaviors (Mount, 1984), thus people in the same career stage strive to gratify their work-related needs similarly (Bedeian, Pizzolatto, Long & Griffeth, 1991). In the study of Morrow and McElroy (1987), age, organizational tenure, and positional tenure were identified as three major criteria affecting an individual's career stage. The most common approach in past research is to categorize career stage into three periods (e.g., Allen & Meyer, 1993; Bedeian et al., 1991; Morrow & McElroy, 1987). The first stage, or trial stage, is where a worker needs to discover their capabilities as well as interests. In the second stabilization stage, career advancement and consistency in aspects of personal lives are of bigger concern. The last stage, referred to as the maintenance stage, is where someone looks to maintain current status at work and hold onto his or her position.

Rhodes (1983) and Polach (2007) further researched the effect that certain periods in life have on someone's behavior or values, rather than just considering age or generation. They arrived at the same conclusion as (e.g. Appelbaum et al., 2005; Johnson & Lopes 2008) who argue that some generational differences are more a factor of different life stages. Levinson (1978) established a model of adult development that recognizes diverse periods or cycles that adults pass through. By going through adulthood, people face new challenges and implement different social roles. Levinson (1978) identified key life events that typically signal a transformation in life cycle. These key events are entry to occupation, marriage, as well as starting a family.

2.5 Cross Sectional and Longitudinal Studies

A considerable limitation facing researchers' studying generational differences is as Twenge (2010) states "to put it facetiously, the lack of a workable time machine" (p. 202). This statement refers to the predominate use of cross sectional studies which collect data from individuals representing different generations, however at only one point in time. As such, any differences could be attributed to age, career stage, as well as generation, being nearly impossible to distinguish between each (Twenge, 2010). Rhodes (1983) agreed with this analysis of cross sectional studies concluding that they are an insufficient method of examining generational and cohort effects as it is impossible to disentangle the data this produced for either generational, or age effects. Parry & Urwin (2011) cite a number of studies (Appelbaum et al., 2005; Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998; Lyons et al., 2007; Wong et al., 2008) which all claim to investigate differences between generations. However given that each used cross sectional data in their analysis, Parry and Urwin (2011) reiterate that it is impossible to be confident that the findings were not due to age or career, or life stage effects.

The solution to the issues raised by the use of cross sectional data is for researcher to perform longitudinal or time lag studies (Rhodes, 1983; Twenge, 2010). In these studies age is held constant as individuals of the same age are examined at different points in time. Therefore, any differences noticed between the sample sets can be attributed to generation, or time and period (changes over time that affect all generations) effects only. As such these time lag studies present distinct advantages over cross sectional studies when attempting to isolate generational differences (Twenge, 2010). The problem with conducting such studies is that in order to be reliable, they require sample sets of very similar demographics to be asked the same questions at different times and they can literally take generations to complete. As such, very few time lag studies regarding generational differences in work values have been conducted (Twenge, 2010).

2.6 Heterogeneity Within Generations

Gender, ethnicity and location all play a role in perceptions of a generation and lead to the probability of significant differences within a generation. Parry and Urwin (2011) use the example of how based on generations, the expectation is that women within one generation would have similar values as men, or how members of one generation are expected to be similar despite different levels of education. Lippmann (2008) identified clear differences between both males and females, as well ethnic groups in their experiences after being displaced. While investigating the civil right movements in the US, (Griffin, 2004) discovered that location had an impact on the collective memories of white women. Those who had first hand experiecnes of the problems while living in the southern US had stronger memories than white women of the same age living in different locations. All of these findings support Denecker, Joshi and Martochio (2008) conclusion that heterogeneity does add a challenge and complexity in defining generational groups.

If we consider political, historical and technological events in diferent countries, concerns arise defining generations, as much of the research to date has been done in the US. For example the Veteran generation can be seen as being heavily influenced by WWII and the Vietnam war, which has vastly different perceptions in different countries. It is very unlikely that individuals of the US and all other countries involved have been impacted or experienced these historical events in the same way. Consequently research regarding experiences of generations of the US cannot be simply superimposed onto experiences of other countries (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Hence academic literature proposes that generational characteristics in Eastern countries are not similar to Western. In this context, (Murphy, Gordon, & Anderson, 2004) investigated cross-cultural age and generational differences in Japan and the US. They result was significant

cross-cultural age and cross-cultural generation differences between the two countries. As a result, when researching about generational differences on a global scale, the effects of nationality, ethnicity and gender must also be considered together with generational cohort (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

2.7 Contradictory Viewpoints of Results

A thorough review of existing literature revealed mixed conclusions towards the applicability of generational theory as the foundation of work value differences between generations and its applicability in management strategy. Therefore, in order to fully frame the context of this study, we must further explore this lack of consistency amongst existing literature.

Many previous studies and practical managerial literature conclude that both companies and managers need to be cognizant of the generational differences amongst their employees. Smola & Sutton (2002) conclude from their longitudinal study on work values that “companies must adapt practices and policies to respond to these changes” (p. 380), referring to changes their study found with regards to employees attitudes towards work centrality, and requirements for work life balance. Gursoy et al. (2013) suggest from the results of their study that managers and coworkers alike need to understand each other’s generational differences or else tensions among employees are likely to increase affecting job satisfaction and productivity (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Other studies have advised that managers who understand generational differences and the priorities of each generation are likely to create a workplace environment that foster leadership, motivation, communication and generational synergy (Gursoy et al., 2008; Smola and Sutton, 2002). Lancaster and Stillman (2002) suggest generational differences may have a substantial influence on workplace attitudes, and influence interactions between employees and managers, employees and customers, and employees and employees. Gursoy et al. (2013) further suggest that failing to manage generational differences in an effective way may increase turnover rate, losing valuable employees, and affect profitability. If not managed well, these differences can be a source of significant frustration for everyone in the workplace. Gursoy et al. (2013) even suggest that intergenerational training and mentoring programs may be required to identify generational gaps and enhance the opportunity of interaction between managers and employees from different generations.

Although there is little opposition to the idea of creating a workplace that promotes worker satisfaction, production, and enhances retention, the use of generational theory as its basis faces strong opposition. Despite suggesting multiple managerial strategies based off generational differences, Gursoy et al. (2013) do concede that some managers may view work values differences based on generation as superficial and may decide to ignore them. Through their thorough review of the existing literature Parry and Urwin (2011) found that “evidence is at best mixed, with as many [studies] failing to find differences between generations as finding them” (p. 88). Studies that were able to identify differences in work values, could not distinguish them from age being the possible driver or other factors in national context, gender or ethnicity. They suggest that given the multitude of problems inherent to the evidence on generational work value differences, that the value it provides to practitioners remains unclear, and suggest that the concept be ignored. Wong et al. (2008) found from their study that the results were not supportive of generational stereotypes that are common in managerial literature with few meaningful differences found. The factors contributing to the few differences their study did find once again could not be differentiated from age or career stage, echoing the results of Parry and Urwin (2011). Wong et al. (2008) found that their results “emphasize the importance of managing individuals by focusing on individual

differences rather than relying on generational stereotypes which may not be as prevalent as existing literature suggests” (p. 878).

Giancola (2006) identified nine major issues with generational theory based on his literature review, many of which state over simplification and lack of empirical evidence, consistent with Wong et al. (2008) and Parry and Urwin (2011). Giancola (2006) concludes that the multiple reasons he identified raise too many doubts regarding the validity of the theory, and the idea of differences caused by generation gaps and thus should be regarded as “more myth than reality” (p. 36) so that real talent management issues of the 21st century can be addressed. Jorgensen (2003) argues that the majority of generational data is subjective, non-representative, utilizes use cross sectional single-point-of-time data and uses retrospective comparisons, stating that the current knowledge base and findings are lacking the necessary “empirical rigor needed to base workplace strategies and practices on their conclusions alone” (p. 879). Jorgensen (2003) suggests evidence supports development of workforce strategy that tailors to individual needs, rather than generic, generational approaches. He concludes that organizations “would be better served by acknowledging the technical, economic, political and social dynamism of modern life rather than the flawed conclusions of popular generational literature” (p. 41).

As mentioned in the introduction the strongest opposition comes from Costanza and Finkelstein (2015). Their own comprehensive review of the literature and theories resulted in four conclusions which identified: minimal empirical evidence actually supporting generationally based differences, ample evidence supporting alternate explanations, no sufficient explanation for why such differences should even exist, and finally a lack of support for the effectiveness of interventions designed to address any such differences. Costanza and Finkelstein (2015) mention that research identifies stereotypes as heuristics or “cognitive shortcuts that we use like any other timesaving devices to make quick judgments in an increasingly busy world” (page 312), and as such can be purposefully difficult to dismiss when the alternative is time consuming commitment and cognitive effort to recognize people’s individual qualities. Costanza and Finkelstein (2015) therefore advise that managers and organizations rather focus on real individual differences, which supported by theory, can predict important work related outcomes.

2.8 Creation of Project Teams

Teamwork within and project teams has established itself in many companies as the preferred method of organizing work. Not only being an effective way to increase production, teamwork fosters innovation, creativity and overall sharing of knowledge. Additionally, teamwork enhances identity and cohesion while reducing bureaucratic and organizational barriers (Buch & Andersen, 2015). However critical research of (Baker, 1999; Haregraves, 2000; Heckscher & Adler, 2006) investigated other, less success-contributive consequences of teamwork. Conflicts, unresolved organizational tensions, group pressure as well as not paying enough attention to member’s individual traditions and identities all potentially present problems within teams (Buch & Andersen, 2013a). These challenges have to be managed properly to have the most possible outcome of teamwork. Managers have to be aware that diversity in terms of expertise, levels of responsibility, proper communication as well as developing trust and collaboration are critical factors for every project team performance (Anantatmula, 2008; Flynn & Mangione, 2008).

2.9 Summary of Theoretical Framework

To help summarize the theoretical framework, two preliminary models are introduced. Figure 2-1 below is a preliminary model illustrating the results of the literature review pertaining to the four main work values that will be investigated and analysed during the study. These four values were chosen as they were established in existing literature, as well as relevant to the industry being studied. The model was developed to illustrate each value and the trend in the level of appreciation of the work value progressing across the three generations being studied. The y-axis represents the level that each work value is appreciated. For example, research suggests Baby boomers have a higher appreciation for moral importance of work relative to Gen X and Gen Y, and lower recognition or requirement for work life balance. The generations are represented on the x-axis, starting with Baby boomers and progressing to Gen Y. In the preliminary model, each work value trend arrow is the same thickness, representing equal recognition of the value based on literature. The model will be updated to reflect the results of the analysis of the empirical study, including the trends, and level of recognition by respondents in Section 5.1.5.

Figure 2-1: Preliminary Model RQ1 – Results of Literature

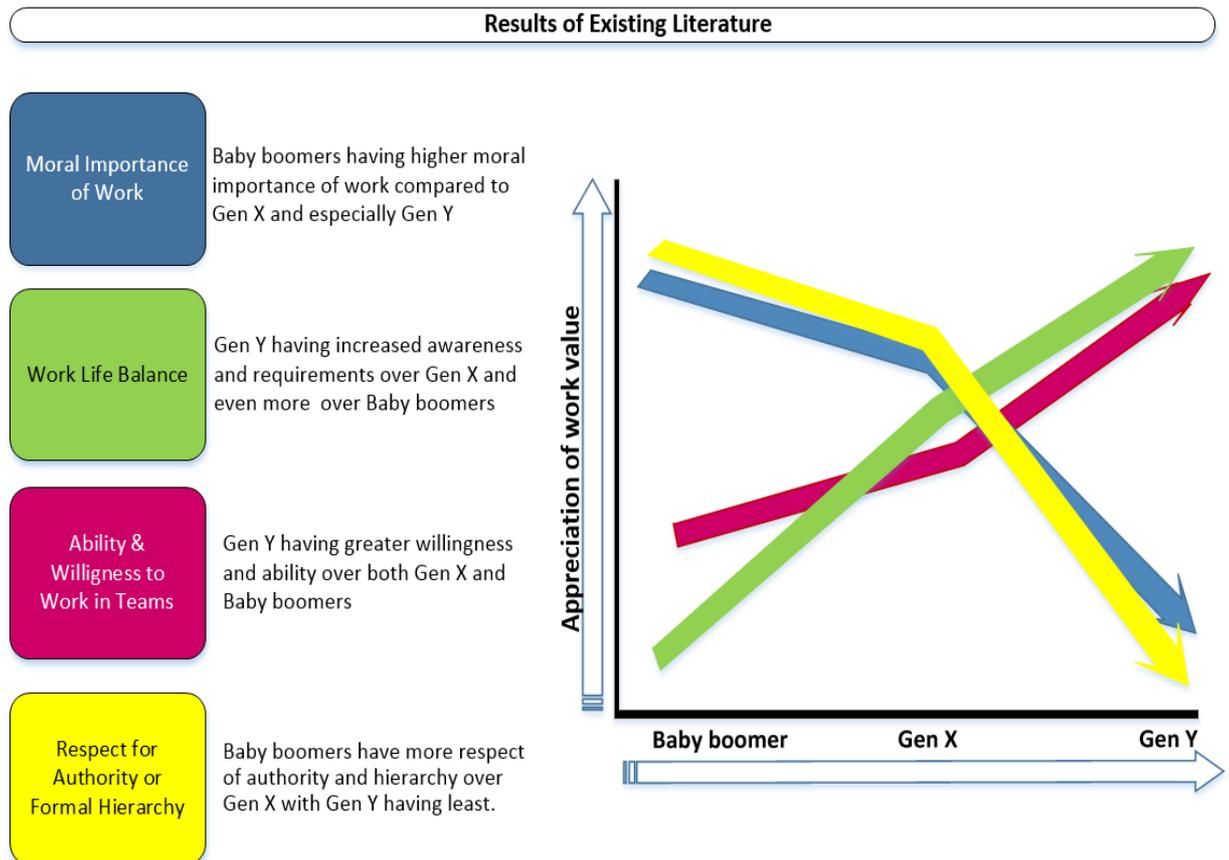
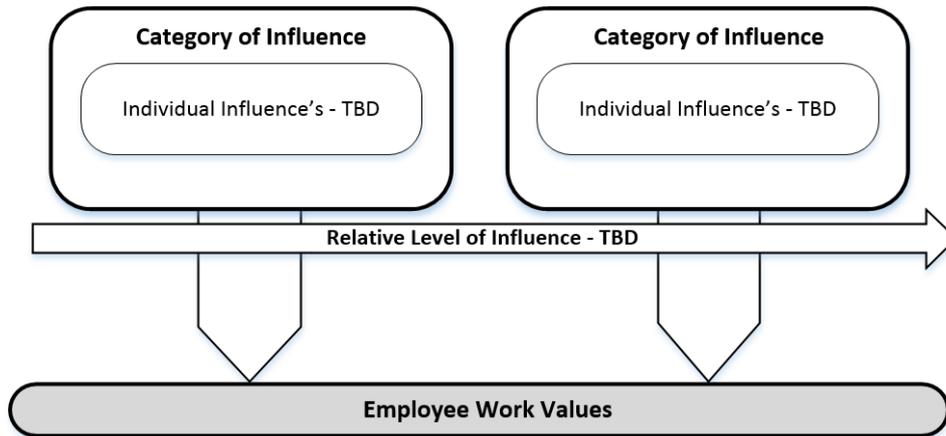


Figure 2-2 below is a preliminary model developed to represent influences of employee work values in response to RQ2. The model was developed to represent the categories of work values influences as identified by respondents in the interviews, and the relative level of influence of each category based on prevalence and significance of responses. Both RQ2 and RQ3 are more exploratory in nature and thus will not be compared to existing literature in similar fashion to RQ1, hence no initial information is contained in the preliminary model for RQ2. This will be updated in Section 5.2.1 based on the results and analysis of the study. No preliminary model was created for RQ3.

Figure 2-2: Preliminary Model RQ2 – Work Value Influences



3 Research Method

3.1 Research Design and Method

The purpose of our research is to determine, from personal experiences and insights, the degree to which practicing managers recognize common conclusions pertaining to the effect an employee's generation has on their work values, and its relevance in management strategy. As such, the research follows a deductive reasoning approach which is effectively employed when the research will test an established theory or generalizations and strive to determine if the generalizations apply to specific instances or contexts (Hyde, 2000). Through answering the three research questions collectively, the study is designed to deduce whether practicing managers recognize the conclusions from existing research regarding the impact generation has on work values, and its relevance in management strategy, or if other factors or strategies are more relevant, coinciding with the opposing literature mentioned in Section 2. The specific context of the research is middle managers actively practicing in the engineering consulting industry.

To address RQ1 four work values were chosen based on established theory in existing literature, and relevance to the industry being studied. These considerations provided a strong basis for comparison during analysis, and promoted insightful responses during interviews. Results of RQ1 were used in determining the degree to which managers recognize work value differences in comparison to conclusions from existing literature. To address the concept of age, career, and life stage as contributing factors to recognized work value differences, a systematic approach was developed and implemented during analysis, with relative results of each factor displayed graphically. Description of this approach is provided in Section 5. RQ2 was designed to develop the concept of work values in the context of management strategy, by determining what influences managers see as most important to their employee's work values relative to generation, thus identifying which influences managers feel as most important to focus strategy around. As described in Section 2, preliminary models were developed for RQ1 and RQ2 and updated to present the results of the analysis in Section 5. RQ3 was designed to present respondents with a management scenario relevant to the industry and respondent's roles, to determine the importance they placed on generation. This again placed generation in a practical context of management strategy, which along with the other two research questions provided the basis to perform analysis and draw conclusions regarding respondent's overall perceptions of generation's relevance within management strategy.

3.1.1 The Qualitative Approach

The study followed qualitative research design as this type of design provides researchers the ability to interpret a phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them, drawing on personal experiences, introspective life stories and observations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2002). This is important to the purpose of this study as gaining an understanding of respondents views based on their experiences, as well as the ability to probe into this experience was very relevant, and could not be done using a quantitative questionnaire or survey. Qualitative research also allows for a protection against "the seeing what you are already believing" risk and can allow for more effective conceptualization (Doz, 2011, p. 584). As seen in the literature opposing the applicability of generational theory in management strategy, many conclusions are regarded as being drawn in the absence of empirical rigor. As such, the data obtained from this qualitative design will help to minimize this "the seeing what you are already believing" effect as follow up questions as to why respondents answered in a certain way can be asked, as well as exploring any opposing theories to what they may already believe. A qualitative approach can also help communicate an existing theory's applicability, as well as help build or test the theory as emphasis can be put on key elements and relationships

(Doz, 2011). A common perception exists that a qualitative research method is more applicable in inductive studies (Hyde, 2000), however in this context, a qualitative approach strongly supports the deductive approach and purpose of this study.

Hyde (2000) argues that use of a qualitative approach allows attention to be paid to the details of each particular element or respondent studied, whereas a quantitative approach tends to draw large, representative samples, and attempts to construct generalizations regarding the population as a whole. It is not uncommon for a large proportion of the individual elements of the population to not match the behaviors and character of the generalized population profile. This argument is of particular relevance to this study as the predominant method of research to develop the theory being tested has been statistical analysis of quantitative data obtained through surveys. According to Hyde's arguments, the lack of qualitative studies while developing the theory could be the reason for the perception of over generalized conclusions, potentially providing the basis of a key argument in the opposing literature that managers should focus on individuals as a result of the lack of heterogeneity within a generation. A qualitative design permits a greater understanding of each respondent and response, allowing for much deeper analysis of responses; helping to avoid further generalized conclusions.

3.2 Choice of Industry and Respondents

3.2.1 Choice of Industry

To properly address the research purpose in the time period allocated to complete the study, it was important to identify a single industry which contained a relevant group of respondents with experience in managing diverse project teams, comprised of team members from multiple generations. As such, the engineering consulting industry was chosen for two significant reasons. First, this industry employs a multitude of resources from various professional, non-professional, and cultural backgrounds, from multiple generations. It is evident that engineers are the primary driver of the industry, however individuals with backgrounds in business, business development, accounting, human resources, as well as various aspects of administration all play important roles in the success of a project. Therefore, even though only one industry was chosen to study, it is comprised of individuals with a variety of different backgrounds and skill sets whom interact together on a single project or goal, and therefore respondents have the ability to provide insight regarding the wide range of personnel working for them. Furthermore, given the highly competitive nature of the industry, cost was found to be a primary driver for business sustainability. As such, it is inherent in the consulting industry that multiple generations will be continuously engaging with each other as a mixture of "junior", "intermediate", and "senior" employees are required to maintain acceptable levels of cost for the clients. Second, the authors have practical experience working within the industry with an understanding of terms and concepts providing more meaningful conversation and much deeper interpretation of interviews.

3.2.2 Choice of Company

A single engineering consulting company was identified and utilized for the study for similar reasoning to that of the single industry. Given the time constraints of the study, utilizing a single company allows for a greater understanding of that one single company which can then be interpreted for other companies. More importantly however, obtaining data from a single company allows for a common ground to be established for respondents pertaining to company culture, management structure, and policies towards human resource management. These aspects can vary greatly from one company to another and can all greatly affect a manager's perception of potential generational differences within their workforce. By focusing on one company, the potential for different corporate cultures or policies has been constrained; ensuring consistency among respondents with regards to these factors.

The company chosen for the study is a large engineering consultancy company headquartered in the United States, with a vast number of offices in the US, fourteen in Canada, as well as offices in Europe, Latin America, The Middle East, India, and nine countries from the Asia Pacific region. It is inherent that cultural differences are noticed in each of the offices locations, however despite the large global presence, the company maintains a common company culture and set of policies. Managers have the ability, if necessary, to draw on personnel resources from almost any office around the world in order to successfully execute a project or to mitigate potential issues within their teams.

3.2.3 Choice of Respondents

Selection of respondents was completed using purposeful sampling, which is employed when the researcher is looking for participants who possess certain traits or qualities. In this sampling method, the researcher considers the aim of the research and selects samples accordingly (Coyne, 1997). In purposeful sampling, an important principle is still achieving high variation within sample set, representing the widest variety of perspectives possible within the range specified by their purpose (Higginbottom, 2004). Contact was initially made with the company expressing the desired experience level and roles for interview candidates, and a variety of potential respondents were provided to the authors. After review of the candidate's experiences and roles, 11 were identified as possessing the experience to fulfill the purpose. 11 respondents was determined to be an adequate amount to ensure confidence in the results as an accurate portrayal of the respondent group, fulfilling the purpose in the timeframe of the research, as it provided enough variance to establish common themes, and still identify any outlying views or opinions. The 11 candidates selected represent the desired variety in generation, gender, and experience while all still possessing the desired traits to fulfill the purpose. A table showing attributes of the respondents is shown below.

Table 3-1: Interview Respondents

Respondent	Gender	Location	Generation
R1	Male	Alberta, Canada	Baby boomer
R2	Male	Yukon, Canada	Gen X
R3	Female	Ontario, Canada	Gen X
R4	Male	Alberta, Canada	Gen X
R5	Male	California, USA	Baby boomer
R6	Male	Alberta, Canada	Gen X
R7	Female	Alberta, Canada	Baby boomer
R8	Male	Alberta, Canada	Gen X
R9	Male	Alberta, Canada	Gen X
R10	Female	BC, Canada	Gen X
R11	Male	Alberta, Canada	Gen X

The respondents for the study were generally in a middle management position, both giving, and receiving direction (Stoker, 2006). Kanter (1982) stated that "because middle managers have their fingers on the pulse of operations, they can also conceive, suggest, and set in motion new ideas that top managers may not have thought of" (p. 96). Huy (2001) further illustrates the unique position of these managers as finding themselves closer than senior managers to the companies frontline employees and day-to-day operations, but still "far enough away from frontline work that they can see the big picture" (p. 73). Adapting these theories to the engineering consulting industry, "middle managers" are typically involved with decisions involving high level planning and oversight of multiple projects, and allocating

resources to create the project teams responsible to execute the project. Therefore, only candidates currently in these roles, or in more senior positions with experience in such roles were identified as appropriate respondents to fulfill the purpose of this study as they have the greatest exposure and influence over decisions that may be affected by generational differences. Because of the level of experience needed to fulfill the requirements of a respondent, Gen Y was not represented, as they would at this time still generally be in a junior position, or have less than the desired experience in the roles described.

3.3 Data Collection

Data was collected utilizing a general interview guide approach. This approach allows assurance that the same general areas of information can be collected from each interviewee while still allowing certain degrees of freedom on the researcher's behalf (McNamara, 2009). Given the deductive nature of the study, this method was effective allowing the vital important information to be gathered, while at the same time allowing freedom for researchers to adapt the sequencing to the flow of the conversation and providing freedom for the respondent to fully express their thoughts and allow for insights outside of those in the interview guide. A drawback of this type of interview is the potential for inconsistencies with how the questions are posed, and thus respondents may not be answering identical questions as presented by the interviewer (McNamara, 2009). To mitigate this, both researchers were present for all interviews, however only one researcher asked the questions to increase consistency in delivery, while the other took notes, paying particular attention to question format as well as ensuring all pertinent points were covered.

Due to geographical limitations, interviews were conducted over Skype using both video and audio interviews, depending on the respondent's preference and availability. Nine interviews were conducted while the respondent was at work, and two while they were outside of a work setting. To address the time change and avoid inconvenient interviewing times, which could affect the quality of the interview, all interviews were scheduled and conducted in the morning for the respondent's, and afternoon and early evening for the authors. The length of each interview varied from 45 to 65 minutes.

3.3.1 Interview Strategy

Respondents were initially asked to provide their general thoughts and experiences with working in, and managing multi-generational project teams. This allowed for initial expression or identification of work values differences as well as providing opportunities to follow up in specific areas pertaining to the interview guide. Research question one was addressed with the four specific work values of interest present in the guide, however the openness of the questioning allowed for respondents to identify other particular differences they've noticed, and probing as to why the differences may exist. Research question two was addressed through both follow up questioning to previous responses, as well as more direct questioning pertaining to influences of work values. Research question three was addressed by providing two hypothetical scenarios or vignettes to the respondents. Vignettes can be an effective way to allow actions in context to be explored and provide a less personal, less threatening way of exploring potentially sensitive topics (Finch, 1987). The first vignette placed respondents in a scenario in which they had just received a request for proposal (RFP) from a client, and they were asked to help decide whom the company would allocate to execute the project. They were each asked what their main considerations would be in an open manner to determine if generation was a consideration. If not, follow up questions were asked to determine if and how generation was considered in this context. A follow up scenario then was provided asking what their considerations would be when having to choose between two equally qualified candidates of different generations to fill a final remaining spot on a project team. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 1.

3.3.2 Interview Pilot Test

Preparation is key to conducting meaningful interviews and provides maximum benefit to the research study (McNamara, 2009). As such, performing a pilot test interview prior to conduction of the study was seen as a very important step in the research process. Pilot test interviews allow for a practical test run of the interview format allowing identification and revision of any potential flaws, limitations or other weaknesses in the interviews design (Kvale, 2007; Turner, 2010). Pilot interviews allow the researcher to manage the interviews length as well as obtain feedback from the pilot participant to identify ambiguities and difficult questions (Chenail, 2011). As such it was deemed of significant importance that the researchers conduct a pilot test interview. This was completed utilizing a participant with both a technical engineering background, as well as practical middle management experience relevant to the study.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical compliance, the researchers considered the four following points during the research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006):

- Reducing risk of unanticipated harm
- Protecting interviewee's information
- Effectively informing interviewees about the nature of the study
- Reducing the risk of exploitation

As such, respondents were provided a background of the research topic, and purpose of the interview via email prior to the interview as well as provided the opportunity for any clarifications prior to commencing the interview. Confidentiality was discussed and agreed upon with each candidate, ensuring no names or other means to identify individual responses would be included. Permission to record the audio for future transcription was granted at the start of each interview. These transcriptions helped promote the transparency of the interviews, ensuring that respondent's views are represented in an ethical manner as a reproduction of their actual thoughts and feelings within the context of the questions.

3.5 Trustworthiness of Study

Trustworthiness of qualitative research can be maintained by addressing Guba's four components; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba, 1981). Credibility, or extent to which results are believable, is enhanced by the authors' prolonged engagement in the research area. Previous work experience of one of the authors in the industry studied helped ensure proper understanding of the context and detection of possible distortions (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). To get a clear picture of attitudes and opinions, and to be able to verify viewpoints against others, an appropriate number, and range of respondents were interviewed. Honesty of respondents was assured by making sure they all respondents participated voluntarily, with prior understanding of the context of the study (Shenton, 2004). Transferability describes the degree of which the research can be transferred to another context. An in depth background of the theory of research as well as detailed information about the data collection, analysis methods, description of the interviewees, as well as the industry and finally the limitations of the study is provided (Shenton, 2004). Future researchers can replicate the study in other contexts and relate their findings, if they believe their situations to be similar to that described in the study (Bassegy, 1981). Dependability ensures the consistency and ability of repetition of the research findings. Again, a detailed description of the research design, data collection and analysis methods is provided by the authors (Shenton, 2004). The last of Guba's four components, confirmability, is referring to the degree of how the research findings are carried out by the data collected without involving

motivations, perspectives and interests by the inquirer. Once again, describing the methodology in detail enables the reader to decide the constructs and data coming out from it can be accepted (Shenton, 2004). The standard interview guide strategy allowed the authors to obtain critical information from respondents' based on their experiences, while inflicting minimal influence on their responses. Audio recording, and transcriptions further ensured responses were accurately understood and reported.

Through detailed description of each action taken as well as an in depth theoretical frame of reference, the authors are confident that this study possesses the appropriate academic level of trustworthiness to add value to the existing body of research on the topic.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Interview Transcription

A key step in the analysis process was the transcription of the interviews. This allowed the researchers to review each interview in depth and create a written document facilitating full immersion in the data for analysis. A denaturalized transcription method was used which meant the transcription text was absent of interview "noises" including pauses in speech, coughs, involuntary sounds, stutters, grammatical errors, and body language (Bocholtz, 2000; Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005). This method best suited the purpose of the research and analysis due to its relative clarity, facilitating more effective identification and understanding of the content and meaning of the data.

3.6.2 Analysis Method

The data was analyzed using thematic content analysis, which is effective for identifying, and reporting patterns or themes within data (Boyatzis, 1998). This involved immersion and thorough understanding of the data in order to make sense of what was uncovered (Creswell, 2003). This method involves organizing data in a manner that describes your data set in detail and can interpret various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998).

A key step to the analysis was organization of the data into themes or codes that represent consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas that were common among research participants (Kvale, 2007). How the researcher formulates themes or codes vary (Creswell, 2007). As mentioned, the deductive approach of the study required establishing pre-determined or priori themes and code based on the theories tested, to which critical data would fall under (Weber, 1990). As such, three themes coinciding with the three specific research questions were established. Within these themes, a coding structure was identified with further priori codes. Careful review and familiarization with the data revealed the emergence of multiple undefined or emergent codes, an advantage of this analysis method, particularly for the research purpose of this study. An example of a priori code was "moral importance of work" as this was one of the work values that were addressed within the interview guide. However within that code, others emerged, for example "commitment to employer" which was extracted purely from the data. Each transcript was thoroughly reviewed and relevant statements or ideas from each respondent coded accordingly. The developed thematic map utilized for analysis can be found in Appendix 2. The nature of the study also required elements of a content analysis to be utilized. This involved simple quantification of certain aspects of the data, codes and themes to allow for interpretation of frequency of certain responses as well as prevalence amongst respondents.

Thorough analysis of the content of both the predefined and emergent themes allowed for comparison to existing theory and empirical studies enabling conclusions to be drawn pertaining to the research purpose. This analysis involved a high level of interpretation of responses, which is common in qualitative studies. Examples of such interpretation can be found in the empirical results section.

4 Empirical Results

4.1 RQ1: Work Value Difference Recognition and Factors

Below we present the results of the responses given regarding the recognition of work value differences between generations, with emphasis on the four work values studied.

4.1.1 Moral Importance of Work

Five respondents directly identified a noticeable difference between generations with regards to an employee's moral importance of work. All five were consistent with reference to older generations and Baby boomers possessing a stronger moral importance of work when compared to Gen Y. One interviewee described their experience as:

There I would say is a generational difference. It seems like our more senior folks or baby boomers may wear their job as part of their personality, as part of who they are, and a part of what makes them who they are. For our younger staff, work is a place where they come to, to earn money so they can go do the things that they want to do the things that make them who they are. So work doesn't necessarily define who they are. It's a means to an end.

Three respondents felt that moral importance of work was more of an individual characteristic, dependent on the employee, rather than a value defined by generation.

Five respondents also addressed work ethic directly as pertaining to the moral importance of work. Three respondents identified a difference between the "older" generations and Gen Y, all with emphasis on a lesser work ethic amongst Gen Y. One respondent identified Gen X as "much more likely to do hard work", and one respondent did not notice a difference in work ethic between generations within the industry.

An employee's willingness to work outside of normal working hours or overtime was also addressed within the moral importance of work. Five respondents noticed a difference with consistent responses pointing towards more willingness to work overtime or outside of office hours within the older generations compared to Gen Y. This was mentioned twice by one respondent who found that that, "the older generations, they will spend more time, the opportunity to do a lot more work outside of office hours, is more so than you'll see in the younger generations."

This was echoed by another respondent who had noticed, when referring to older generations, "There's more of a willingness to sacrifice personal time to get the job done I think." Two respondents did not notice any difference between the generations.

One further theme that arose within the moral importance of work was the idea of commitment of employees to their employer. Of the three respondents whom identified this as a difference, all three noticed less commitment to a company or employer by Gen Y or the "younger" employees.

4.1.2 Work Life Balance

Eight respondents identified a noticeable difference between generations pertaining to work life balance, and work life balance requirements, with a consensus that the "younger" generations had a better understanding of work life balance. A typical response from one respondent describing their experience was:

I really think that the younger generations really know how to do a work life balance, better than the older generations. I just think the younger generations really know how it works; they are really understanding how to get the most out of life and how to do it.

The reasons for these differences varied from amongst respondents from young generations wanting time to develop personally outside of work, to awareness and recognition of potential personal health issues, and higher importance placed on family life.

Two respondents felt that a requirement for increased work balance could not be attributed to a single generation, or particularly a trait of Gen Y, mentioning they felt it differed from individual to individual.

4.1.3 Ability and Willingness to Work in Teams

Eight respondents did not recognize a difference between the generations with their ability of willingness to work in teams. Individual attitudes of employees were emphasized. For example:

I don't think you can put a generational divide on that because it comes down to attitude. If you've got a good attitude, it doesn't matter what generation you're from, teamwork will happen if you've got the right attitude. It's not discriminant to which generation it may be at. Team dynamics I don't think are influenced by generation.

Four respondents identified the general team nature of the consulting industry as a reason for consistency amongst generations with regards to working in teams.

Of the three respondents that did notice a difference, each of the three identified Gen Y as being able or more willing to work in a team environment. One respondent experienced that older generations worked better independently stating that, "I think the younger generations work better together in team, and the older generations work better alone."

4.1.4 Respect for Authority or Formal Hierarchy

Seven respondents noticed a difference between generations pertaining to respect for authority or a formal hierarchy. All seven experienced the younger generations as having less of a respect for authority or a formal hierarchy. One respondent who noticed a difference mentioned, "I think there is definitely more of a respect in the older generations of a hierarchy". Of the seven who experienced a noticeable difference, four referred to organizational structure, and changes in how companies are organized as having an effect as to why this difference may exist.

Four respondents did not notice a difference amongst generations. One respondent stating:

I don't see any issues. I don't think I've seen a point where, wherever you've had a team environment, across multiple generations, or different generations that have not respected the project manager and delivered what they needed to deliver a project.

Two respondents who did not notice a difference also mentioned organizational structure in their responses, in particular a move towards organizational flatness. For example one respondent when asked if they had noticed any differences between generations:

Not too much, most organizations have changed for that too. A lot of organizations have tried to flatten down a little bit, and not be so hierarchical. I can't say I've seen any more disrespect for authority or anything like that, from pretty much any of the places I've been.

Another theme merged from the discussions on respect for authority and hierarchy with three respondents identifying a noticeable difference within Gen Y's willingness to ask why something is being done. One respondent noted, "Younger generations will sometimes question the reason why things are being done from a corporate policy standpoint, but once that understanding is there its fine."

4.1.5 Other Identified Work Value Differences

Given the nature of the interviews, respondents were able to identify other noticeable differences amongst the generations which were not addressed directly in the interview guide.

Communication Styles and Preferences

Six respondents noticed a difference in preferred method of communication amongst the generations. The emergent theme was clear that Gen Y was more reliant on, and preferred electronic communication methods of email and texting. An example response reflecting this idea was:

I find younger folks, probably the millennials I guess you call them, are addicted to email and electronic communication. Again I am generalizing but for the more junior staff it doesn't seem to matter how urgent the issue is. They still just want to use email as their communication tool.

Three respondents noticed a difference when comparing Gen Y to the other generations who preferred phone communication. For example one respondent noted "the folks that are 20 years into their career they are much more likely to respond to a phone call."

Influence of Social Media

The influence of social media also emerged as a theme with six respondents mentioning its prevalence within Gen Y, as well to a lesser degree Gen X. There was no consensus among the six respondents as to whether it had a positive or negative effect on work values, or the work place.

Need for Recognition or Accelerated Career Advancement

Three respondents noticed an increased desire for career advancements within Gen Y. One respondent experienced the following:

They [Gen Y] tend to value title and status more than say I would. They just seem to think it's a given that after two years they have this title and after another two years they have this title. I find that they can get frustrated and I have actually seen people to resign and move to somewhere else when they don't get that.

Two respondents mentioned they had not experienced any differences in the requirements for recognition across generations.

Coach-ability, and Adaptability to Change

Four respondents noticed a difference in the generations pertaining to their ability to be coached, and adaptability to change. There was consensus that Gen Y was most adaptable and coachable, Gen X and the Baby boomers were less in both categories.

Energy and Positive Attitude

Three respondents experienced a noticeable difference in the energy and positive attitude that Gen Y exhibits when compared to the other generations.

4.2 RQ2: Work Value Influences

Below we present the results pertaining to our second research question investigating the significance that practicing managers feel generation has on the work values of their employees compared to other influences.

Emphasis on Individual Over Generation

Eight respondents identified that the individual characteristics of an employee were more significant and had a stronger influence on their work values than the generations they belonged to. One respondent noted, "There are certain things that peg you to a generation but I don't necessarily believe that you can apply somebody's working characteristics to how old they are." Another respondent emphasized individuality over generation or age noting:

From my perspective the individualistic [approach] takes way more presence than their age. I think culture and heritage and your individual character traits are more defining than your age.

Four other respondents identified individual attitudes and personalities as having a stronger influence on work values compared to generation. One respondent asserted:

The person's personality really will, a lot of time, dictate how they are moving ahead...it's not so much just a generational thing, it's a personality thing. I really see that more than just the generation side of it.

Two respondents felt that generation played a role but was part of a combination of effects having an effect on work values. One respondent stated, "I always try to stray from generalizations. [Generation] is only one piece of the puzzle, or one factor, when you're dealing with someone."

Personal Background

Ten respondents identified an employee's personal background as having some level of influence on their individual work values. Seven respondents felt that an employee's ethnicity, or culture that they come from has an effect. For example one respondent noted, "I think the big thing I've probably noticed is more where they come from more than what their age is." One respondent felt that culture did not have a significant influence, emphasizing individuality by stating, "I [have] worked with a lot of different ethnic backgrounds, and I would say in all of them you had winners and you had losers "

Six respondents felt that an individual's upbringing influenced their work values significantly. Two respondents used the term "nature versus nurture"; one of whom strongly felt this contributed to a "learned response" during one's upbringing and was the primary influence of their work values. The respondent noted, when comparing to generational influences, "I think that in fact it's more of a, I don't want to say personality, it's a learned response on how to work." Three respondents identified the socio-economic background of a family as influencing their work values.

Age, Career Sage and Life Stage

It emerged from the data that some respondents felt an employee's age, career stage, and life stage also influenced their work values in general, for similar reasons to how they played a role into the specific work values differences.

Describing the effect that age has, one respondent stated:

I think historically the older generation when they were 20 [years old] they did the same thing. When I was 20, I did the same thing. But that's a life or evolution skill. I don't think you are this way now, and you are always going to be that way because that is your generation.

Career stage was viewed as influencing work values by four respondents', one that felt it had a strong influence when compared to generation stating:

Interesting enough though, sometimes I think that it's not so much your generation that affects your outlook on career and aspirations and behaviors so much as your time in the industry. I sort of feel like time in the industry is what actually defines how you behave.

A combination of career and life stage was recognized by one respondent as influencing work values stating, "[Gen Y] are in a certain stage of their career or their life and different things are important to them." Life stage was identified by one respondent as having a very strong influence when compared to generation, asserting:

I think now more than ever, where you are in your personal status, your life, whatever stage, trumps everything else in the workforce now. Regardless of whether you're a 30-year employee, or a 3-year employee.

Other Influences

Respondent's also alluded to other sources of influence for employee work values. One influence was the economy, which was mentioned by three respondents. One respondent felt that immediate economy had influence stating:

If things are really tight, works tight, jobs are scarce, like in Alberta right now, our economy has gone down quite a bit, so a lot of people are thinking about "how do I ensure that I'm going to be working? How do I continue to keep busy?" When times are busy, you don't really pay a lot of attention to it, everyone is just doing their work as fast as we can, but the attitudes change quite a bit.

The industry in which one works, and the evolution of the industry was also seen to influence their work values, being mentioned by five respondents. One respondent felt that, "Dealing with construction on site is a whole lot different than dealing with people here in a professional office." This statement also alludes to corporate culture that was identified by three respondents as having influence, particularly with respects to the evolution towards corporate flatness and the value of respect for authority or formal hierarchy.

Four respondents also identified changes in educational systems as well as technological advancements as having influence. One notable response was:

Also just with technology, people are able to get information so much quicker and at their fingertips so learning could be done so much faster. So I think there is some merit to the fact that people's learning abilities and capacities and the technology they have in hand is probably providing the capability of being able to gain more experience a little bit more quickly than it was 30/40 years ago.

4.3 RQ3: Generational Considerations Creating Project Teams

Below we present the results of the responses given when respondents were presented with the two vignette's regarding generational considerations when creating project teams.

4.3.1 Generational Considerations vs. Individual Traits

Ten respondents specifically mentioned that they are not considering an employee's generation when forming teams as exemplified in one response: "I have never assembled a team by thinking what generation are they in".

Specific generational considerations were only identified in three responses to the second vignette regarding requirement to make a choice between two equally qualified and cost effective individuals from different generations. All three respondents stated a preference towards younger employees.

Several individual traits were identified by all respondents as having a much stronger influence on the decision making process of who to assign to a project team than just the particular team member's generation. Each of these traits pertained to two main categories, technical experience and skill set, and personality.

Technical Experience and Skill Set

Ten respondents mentioned specific project-related technical experience and know-how as the most important attribute that they are looking for first, when choosing team members as shown in one of the responses below:

I think it will be going back to resume, what experience are they bringing to the table? And it is not necessarily resume as in how many projects or how many years, but as in more specific, have they done that? Do they bring for a particular scope that particular skill to the table?

Personality

Ten respondents noted a team member's personality as a significant factor to be considered when creating a project team. This also included the individual's communication skills as well as their ability to contribute within the team environment. One respondent illustrated this stating; "I see the personalities as a very important factor in helping team development and selling the projects, and future projects to the client." Another response highlighted the importance of personality when compared to generation, stating, "We do have some real mature younger generation who can get on well with the older people. It's more personality I think, definitely."

4.3.2 Industry Specific Considerations

Cost

Eight respondents brought up the cost-factor as being strongly considered when determining whom to assign to a team. This can be seen as being somewhat of a unique consideration of the consulting industry, where in order to stay competitive on the market, the increasing salaries from junior up to senior managers have to be considered.

Client Perception

Six respondents stated that the expectations of the client with regards to certain titles and experience of project managers play an important role when assigning members to a team. One interviewee's experience was:

The other side of it is, and that's internally on the teams, matching some of our staff with our clients. Our clients also come from their own generations. And some of them may have expectations that they only want to deal with. Somebody that has grey hair, they want to see a certain technologist with a certain amount of experience across the table.

Availability and Location

Five respondents identified availability to do the work, current workload and geographical location of the potential team members as another critical factor influencing their decision.

4.3.3 Team Diversity

A consistent theme emerged from all respondents noted of a positive effect of having diversity within their teams and trying to achieve diversity when creating teams. One example response was:

My preference, just being my preference, is having as much generational diversity within the team as possible. So we get the broadest spectrum of viewpoints and information exchange we possibly can to deliver the best product for the client.

4.3.4 General Perceptions of Generation in Management Strategy

When asked for any concluding remarks on the topic at the end of the interview, five respondents stated reservations with the use of generation as a determinant of work values as a manager. One respondent felt that it could lead to prejudice, stating:

... to have this stereotyping approach in life for anybody, as far as I'm concerned, whether its young or old whatever ... that stereotyping can all lead into development prejudice. For me, as an individual, and my contribution to society, it's destructive. Having prejudice is destructive.

A second respondent felt it might be too simplistic to look at employees from only a generational perspective as a manager.

I think it's just too simplistic to make a distinction between generations in terms of how they will affect the workplace or how they will approach a particular project. I do think it is a factor, and in some cases maybe a bigger than other, but I do think it's more of the learned response that is more important at this point.

Three of these respondents addressed the heterogeneity issue within generations as contributing to their reservations. One identified the problem as:

I think it generalizes a bit too much. I think from a generational perspective that society and social media have used very broad-brush strokes to characterize generations, or entire populations of certain age demographics, and the reality is that even though these are general traits that may be exhibited across that demographic, they don't apply 100% consistently to individuals within that population.

5 Analysis and Interpretation

The following sections will answer the three research questions through the analysis and interpretation of the results of the empirical study. Comparisons to existing research, as well as updates to the two preliminary models from Section 2 will be presented and discussed.

Analysis of the results required of interpretation on the researcher's behalf due to the ambiguous terminology used by respondents when referring to generations. In many scenarios generations were not explicitly acknowledged as Baby boomers, Gen X, or Gen Y and often referred you as "older generations" or "younger generations". Furthermore, the engineering consulting industry has three fairly distinct career levels or designations, being junior, intermediate, and senior. These common designations were often used interchangeably by respondents in place of direct reference to a generation as each level can be viewed as coinciding with the three generations studied given the timing of the study with Gen Y now just entering the workforce, and the years of experience required to progress to each subsequent level. As such, a thorough understanding of the context of the respondents answer was required to establish which generation or generations a respondent was referring too.

5.1 RQ1: Work Value Difference Recognition and Factors

Interpretation was required in RQ1 when trying to determine which contributing factors (generation, age, career stage and life stage) we're present and significant in each of the identified work value differences. In multiple instances, an identified work value difference was determined to be a result of a combination of factors. For example one noted difference was:

... as you move into the older generations, there's more folks that have morphed into, "well I really need to get this done, so ill pull out my computer on Saturday morning because I told my client I would have [the deliverable] to them on Monday morning".

In the above example, the work value difference was interpreted as having both generational and career stage factors. The respondent directly mentioned older generations, which indicates a generational difference, utilizing a pluralized comparison to the youngest generation, Gen Y. The respondent also referred to the need to fulfill a deliverable obligation to a client, which represents a level of responsibility that generally would fall outside that of a junior employee. As such, career stage was also interpreted as having an effect on this difference. Experience within the industry allowed an understanding on the author's behalf to allow for this type of interpretation.

A systematic procedure was used to provide an estimation of the relative significance of contributing factors to each of the four main work value's addressed in the interview guide. In the example response above, generation and career stage were both identified as contributing factors to a noticed difference under moral importance of work. As such each factor was given an equal weighting of "1" as a contributing factor. This procedure of interpreting contributing factors was completed for each coded response in which respondents identified a work value difference. An estimation of the relative significance of each contributor (generation, age, career stage, life stage) was determined by summing the total number of each contributor and then dividing by the total sum of all contributors.

5.1.1 Moral Importance of Work

The results of the study show found that seven of the respondents recognized an increased moral importance of work and work ethic within Baby boomers when compared to Gen X and Gen Y. Although three respondents did not notice a difference amongst generations, it is significant that there was consensus as to where the difference was noticed amongst those whom did. In this case, the experience of the practicing managers aligns with conclusions from previous research and conclusions. The idea of work centrality was directly addressed by one respondent whom stated, “But I do think that folks I guess that would be classified as [Gen Y] are more interested in making sure that work doesn’t define them.” A second respondent noted that:

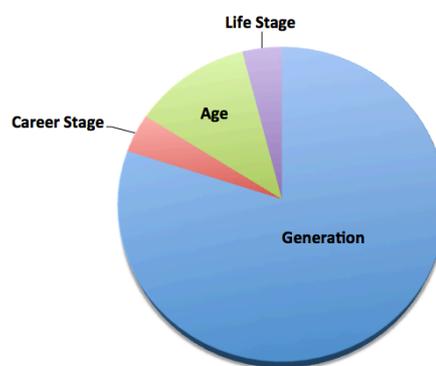
“[Gen Y] want to be known more from a social perspective, being the Facebook era, the twitter area, getting together with friends going snowboarding, whatever it is outside. Younger generations see the 8-5; work is what they need to do to pay for things that they enjoy”.

These experiences and observations support the findings of Gursoy et al. (2013) whom revealed significant reduction in the feeling of ‘work centrality’ in both Gen X and Gen Y compared to Baby boomers. These findings also support Cugin (2012) who found a “stark contrast” between Gen Y and their older generational counterparts, in that Gen Y does not equate hard work to personal or professional success, rather defining success based of attaining a strong work life balance and flexibility. This was consistent with this studies’ results pertaining to an employee’s willingness to work outside normal office hours in which five of seven respondents who addressed the topic experienced a decrease in such willingness amongst Gen Y compared to Baby boomers. Smola and Sutton (2002) found that recent generations are most likely to quit their job when inheriting a lot of money. This matches the feelings of the respondent in the second quotation above in particular, as this inheritance would provide Gen Y the financial stability to “pay for things that they enjoy.”

All three respondents who recognized a difference in commitment to an employer identified Gen Y as having less commitment when compared to the other generations. This is also consistent with Smith and Clurman (1997) who found loyalty to employers being a characteristic of baby boomers, and explained by Hira (2007) that Gen Y’s have often seen their parents downsized and therefore distrusts institutions and lacks this sense of loyalty.

Analyses of the contributing factors towards moral importance of work are shown below.

Figure 5-1: Contributing Factors to Moral importance of Work Differences



The results of the estimation of contributing factors to the recognized differences show that based on the responses received during study, generation is the most significant contributor. This was particularly evident by one respondent who stated, "That's something that was ingrained into [Baby boomers] growing up. Work hard, be respected in the industry you're in and you're a respected pillar of society in doing so." This work ethic could be seen as being attributed to a carryover from the war effort in a time of high development and optimism in North America following the victory (Cogin 2012). Adams (1998) found that Baby boomers felt a need to work long hours to get ahead, which often led to them becoming workaholics (Glass, 2007). Therefore it would seem natural for the younger generations, including the children of these baby boomers witnessing this focus of work centrality to place less of an importance on work as a defining aspect of their lives. As the majority of the previous research attributes differences regarding moral importance of work to generational characteristics, the results of the estimation of contributing factors can be seen as consistent with existing theory.

Of the three respondents who didn't recognize a difference between generations, all three recognized it as a work value dependent on individual characteristics rather than homogeneity of the work value across generations. This is an important distinction because it emphasizes their appreciation of the importance of the individual, and not necessarily a contradiction to the recognized differences of the other respondents.

Given the consistency and consensus of responses, moral importance of work can overall be viewed as being a recognized work value difference and the recognition being consistent with existing theory.

5.1.2 Work Life Balance

The results of the study showed a significant recognition of difference between generations when it comes to work life balance. Of the eight respondents who noticed a difference, there was consensus that "younger" generations had a better understanding or increased desire for work life balance. Once again, the experiences of the respondents are consistent with the existing theory and literature on the topic. For example Cogin (2012) who found that the most important work value for Gen Y was "leisure". One respondent noticed "junior" staff are looking for a "more reasonable approach to work" which agrees with Twenge et al. (2010) who refer to the observation of Gen X and Gen Y growing up witnessing an increase of working hours while having limited vacation time, and thus wanting to make a change. When analyzing to work life balance parallels can be drawn to moral importance of work, as was identified by one respondent with their response:

Well I definitely say that I think that the younger generations are a little bit almost better at work life balance, because sometimes they won't take it so seriously. They are able to walk away from it.

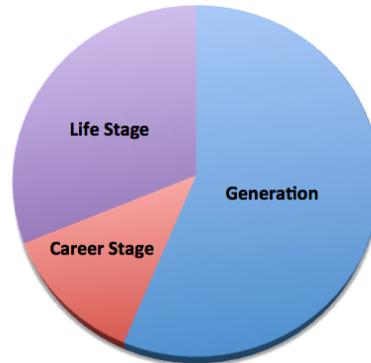
With work being viewed as a less important aspect of younger generation's lives, other aspects will emerge as more important adding to the increased perception of work life balance. Respondents mentioned family commitments, development of personal projects outside of work, and higher recognition of personal health effects as contributing to the emergence of increased work life balance. A higher importance on family agrees with Shaw and Fairhurst (2008) (as cited in Cogin, 2012) who found that Gen Y seeks a work life balance and if forced Gen Y will place family and friend a priority over work over work.

Evolution of working conditions within the industry were also noticed as being more supportive of work life balance with one respondent stating, "you can't expect to send someone out for 2 or 3 or 4 weeks on a job [anymore], but I guess that's just something that's

just changing in general as well as far as the industry goes.” This change in work expectations has been concurrent with the arrival of Gen Y in the workforce and thus may lead to a perception of increased work life balance requirements on their behalf.

Results for the contributing factors towards work life balance are shown below.

Figure 5-2: Contributing Factors to Work Life Balance Differences



The results of the estimation of contributing factors to the recognized differences show that generation was the main factor, however life stage was also an important factor due to the multiple responses indicating a higher appreciation for family life of those with younger children. Career stage was also a small factor with references particularly to junior employees being made.

Of the three respondents who didn't recognize a difference between generations, two recognized it as a dependent on individual characteristics rather than homogeneous work value across generations. Once again, this is an important distinction because it emphasizes the importance the respondent places on individual rather than a contradiction to the recognized differences of the other respondents.

Given the consistency and consensus of responses, work life balance can overall be viewed as being a recognized work value difference by practicing managers and the recognition being consistent with existing theory.

5.1.3 Ability and Willingness to Work in Teams

Eight respondents did not notice a difference between generations in their ability and willingness to work in teams. Of these eight respondents it is notable that four made reference to the nature of the consulting industry as having an effect. These respondents felt that as the majority of their work is completed in project teams, that it is inherent that the employees be willing to work in this type of environment. This is represented by one respondent who stated, "consulting is all about team, so if you are not a team player you are not going to end up in consulting. Or you are not going to be happy there." Therefore we can see that the industry studied may have had an effect on results as an ability to successfully work in a team environment is viewed as paramount for success, regardless of one's generation. One response of particular significance was:

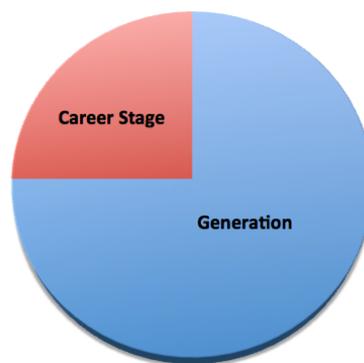
You know the easier answer would be [Gen Y] are collaborators, because that's one of the things that I've been taught. But I don't know that they really are that much more collaborative than the other generations. I think it's just a label that has been applied to them.

This response shows an acknowledgement of a typical generational stereotype that has been “taught” to the respondent in a managerial, however not necessarily being consistent with the respondent’s experiences. This supports the findings of Costanza and Finkelstein (2015) that identified stereotypes as heuristics or a cognitive shortcut rather than recognizing people’s individual qualities.

The results show a lack of noticeable differences amongst generations, which may be initially viewed as contradictory to previous research, however further analysis of those respondents who did notice a difference show consistency with existing theory. Each of these three respondents identified Gen Y or “younger generations” as being more willing or able to work in a team environment. This is consistent with Parry and Urwin (2011) who suggest that Gen Y are team players and show a strong will to get things done through collective action and teamwork. A further distinction is made when comparing Gen Y to their Gen X counterparts, whom grew up with financial and societal insecurity which led to a preference of individualism over collectivism (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). When probed for reasoning as to why the difference may exist, no concrete reasons could be provided from respondents. As such, interpretation of the contributing factors was limited to direct responses, which mentioned only generation, and one that directly made reference to career stage. As such, in the few responses where a difference was noticed, we can interpret generations, and to a lesser effect career stage as being contributing factors.

Results for the contributing factors towards ability and willingness to work in a team are shown below.

Figure 5-3: Contributing Factors for Teamwork Differences



The analysis for the ability and willingness to work in teams reveals it is not a highly recognized work value difference, and that the industry might have an effect.

5.1.4 Respect For Authority or Formal Hierarchy

The results show that seven respondents have recognized difference with respect of authority or a formal hierarchy with less respect in Gen Y and stronger respect or recognition of hierarchy in “older” generations. This supports Martin (2005) who found Gen Y as having less respect for rank, and more respect for accomplishments and abilities. Analysis of the responses however show that respondents did not find it as significantly recognizable, one respondent stating that the difference was “not pervasive, but it’s certainly something” and another stating there was “probably less respect” in Gen Y. Significant to the analysis is that multiple respondents felt that the progression of organizations to a flatter, less hierarchical structure has played a role in why the difference is noticed, both from respondents who did notice a difference, and those who didn’t. One respondent stated that, “the younger generations are not [as] experienced as much and it is a much flatter organization. “ Another

respondent when referring to why older generations have a stronger respect for hierarchy mentioned:

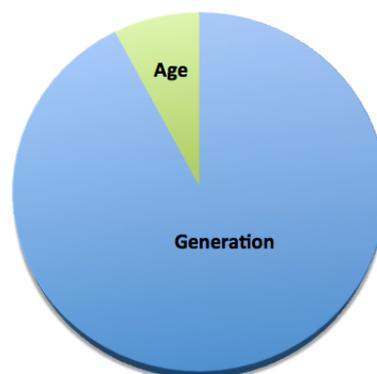
I think there is [a stronger respect] ... that's the way a lot of businesses were set up, that's the way the teams were set up, it [was] very hierarchical, I knew exactly who my supervisor was and I know where I stand in the organization.

Gen Y has therefore entered a workforce which has much less of a hierarchical structure than what previous generations were exposed too when during their career development. As such, they have not had the exposure to these types of business structures and thus would be recognized as having less respect for hierarchy compared to Baby boomers and Gen X. Furthermore, it was discovered that the company being studied was viewed by respondents as being exceptionally flat or “matrixed” when compared to others in the industry, which could have an even larger effect on their perception of their younger Gen Y colleagues. This progression to flatness may also contribute to the recognition of three respondents of Gen Y’s willingness to ask why, and ask authority figures, as to why something is being done. These results supports the findings of Crumpacker and Crumpacker (2007) who noted that when Gen Y is involved, ‘how’ meetings, often end up being ‘why’ meetings.

As this progression to flatness was regarded by respondents as a more recent trend across the industry, it can be viewed as being a trait of the social environment of the Gen Y, and thus when we look at the estimation of contributing factors, it is appropriate that generation emerged as the main contributing factor, with age also being a factor as well.

Results for the contributing factors towards respect for authority or a formal hierarchy are shown below.

Figure 5-4: Contributing Factors for Respect for Authority or Hierarchy



The analysis for this work value reveals that although the majority of respondents recognized it as a difference, however not a significant difference, and that the organizational environment that Gen Y has encountered plays an important role as to why the differences were noticed.

5.1.5 Other Recognized Differences

Communication Styles and Preferences

The most prevalent recognition outside of the main four addressed in the guide strongly supported the findings of Glass (2007) that Gen Y are more comfortable and feel at ease sending an e-mail, instant message or text, other rather than having a face-to-face conversation or picking up the telephone, which was considered normal and often preferable by older generations.

As the advancements in electronic communication within the workplace and recent emergence of social media are recent trends in the workplace, and once again with Gen Y not having the experience of working prior to these advancements, these recognized differences can be viewed as a generational.

Need for Recognition or Accelerated Career Advancement

The need for recognition or advancement was addressed by five respondents, with three recognizing a difference, and two not. Thus there was no consensus as to whether a difference existed. Of the three who did recognize a difference, they agreed with previous research that Gen Y had an increased desire for advancement. However, this difference may not be attributed to generation as much as career stage as employees in more junior positions, typical of Gen Y, would have a stronger desire for advancement than older generations, whom being at an older age would later career stage would already find themselves in more advanced positions. This was noted by one respondent who stated, “[Baby boomers] passion weans a little bit. They might not be as much as a go getter as they were at one point because of [their age].”

Coach-ability and Adaptability to Change

Consensus was made amongst the four respondents who identified Gen Y as being more coachable, and adaptable to change. One respondent’s experience was:

The older generation is usually set in their way, so they are less easy to coach. The younger generations for sure are still learning, still accepting things like a sponge, you know they just graduated. They are the most coachable for sure. That middle-aged generation is getting less and less easy to coach for sure

Once again, this difference may be attributed more to career stage than generation. This particular response mentions recent graduation, which is a characteristic of career stage, as well as older generations being set in their ways, potentially due to years of experience doing something a certain way.

Energy and Positive Attitude

Consensus was made amongst the three respondents who identified Gen Y as exhibiting increased energy and positive attitude. This is also consistent with previous studies (Martin, 2005). One respondent’s experience was:

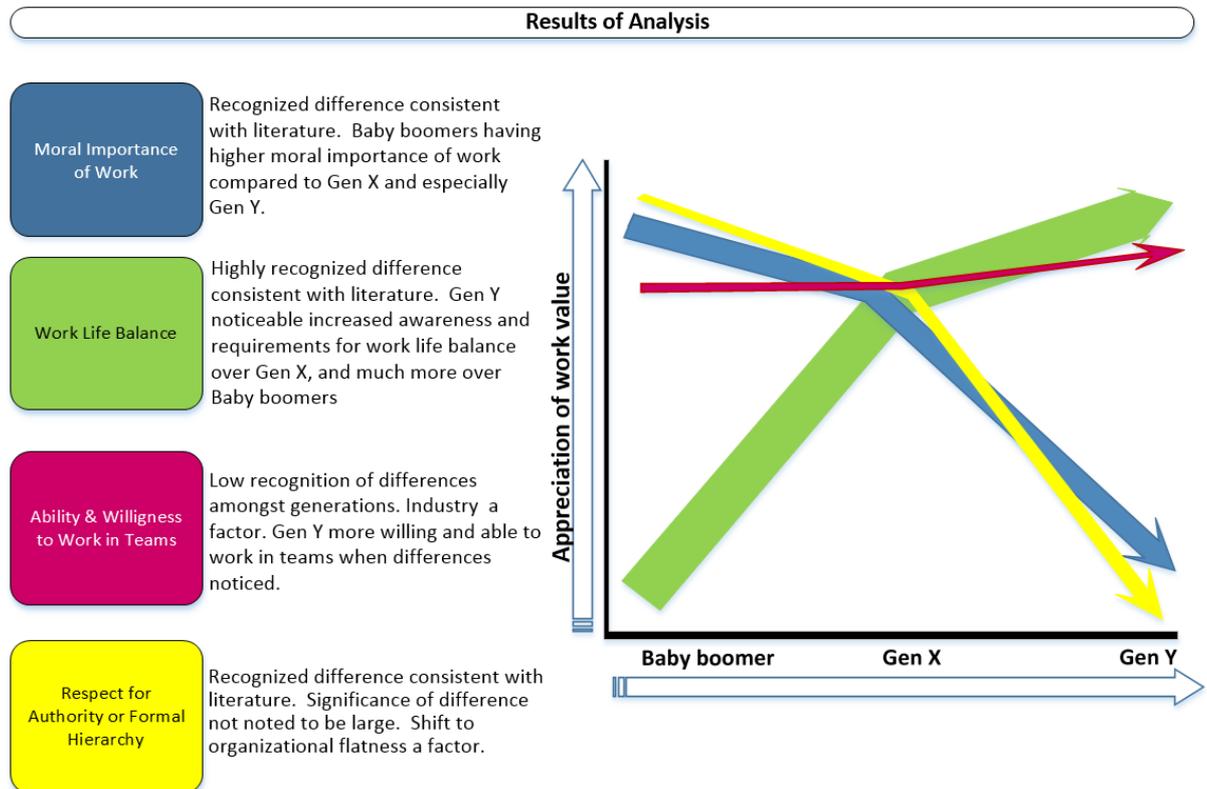
[Gen Y] do bring a lot of new freshness, and most of the energy as well. To see the younger people a bit more enthusiastic, especially those who want to learn a lot more, newer things, a bit more exuberance and vitality which brings a good dynamic to the team for sure.

The respondent makes reference to age which could be seen as playing a more contributing role to this work value difference than generation, and younger people in a different time period could possess the same enthusiasm and exuberance.

5.1.6 Updated Model of Results for RQ1

Comparison to the preliminary model reveals consistency with existing literature in the trends of the four work values studied, however ability and willingness to work in teams and respect for an authority or a formal hierarchy were found to be much less recognized as a difference compared to moral importance of work and work life balance. This level of recognition is represented by the relative thickness of the arrows showing the trend.

Figure 5-5: Updated Model Depicting Analysis of RQ1



5.2 RQ2: Work Value Influences

The empirical results showed respondents felt individual characteristics were more important than generation when it came to influencing work values. Two respondents did identify generation as an influence, however as a combination of other influences as well. Further questioning and analysis of responses revealed that there were a variety of influences that factored into these individual work values. Analysis of each response led to the author's identifying three categories in which each of the influences could be categorized: *personal background*, *dynamic factors*, and *external factors*. Each will be outlined pertaining the empirical results below, along with a tentative model presenting the results of the analysis.

Personal Background

Analysis of the results show that respondents felt that an employee's personal background has the strongest influence on their work values. This included factors such as cultural background and ethnicity as well as an individual's personal upbringing and the socio-economic situation in which they grew up. One respondent compared background directly with age stating, "I think the big thing I've probably noticed is more where they come from more than what their age is." Respondents identified certain traits of cultures and how they have noticed it having an effect on work values, and how they need to be managed. One respondent recalled an

experience where members of a project team we're used to a culture of "siesta" and how it impacted the rest of the team.

Upbringing was the most significant influence with multiple respondents referring to the idea of nature versus nurture, and the importance of how one is raised. Two respondents made direct reference to increased work ethic and stronger work values associated with team members who were raised on a farm as they "know the work ethic is more of an automatic" and they possess a stronger ability to figure out and "muscle through problems".

One respondent felt that generation was not a strong influence on work values and that, "there has to be a better thread to pull, [which] is to look at basically [an employee's] background and what they have done". The respondent went on to mention requirements for previous work growing up and socio-economic influences. Whether or not someone had to work for what they had, or was provided everything by "mommy and daddy" was also mentioned by multiple respondents and considered a relevant aspect of someone upbringing.

The idea of one's personal background and upbringing as being important factors as influencing one's work values are consistent with Rokeach (1973) (as cited in Cagin, 2012) and Lyons et al. (2007) who found that values are developed early in life and remain fairly constant.

External Influences

External influences are influences that can be attributed to effect that one's environment, not associated to chronological age, or background. The industry in which one works in was mentioned by five respondents as influencing work values, and as noted in the analysis of RQ1, had a large influence in particular on the work value of team work, and respect for hierarchy where the industry trend towards flatness was noted. Four respondents identified changes in educational systems and technological advancements as influencing work values. The current ease at which information can now be attained was seen as having an effect on how graduates are educated, and affecting the process of how required work gets completed. The influence of the economy was addressed by three respondents, from both an immediate effect on work values in the current state of the economy, as well as one which the employee grew up in or had exposure too in their formative years. Analyzing these external influences from a generational context it can be seen that changes in education, technological advancements and even economy and trend to organizational flatness do in fact carry a generational element as their emergence and impact during a particular time period has effected work values of certain generation far more than others.

Dynamic influences

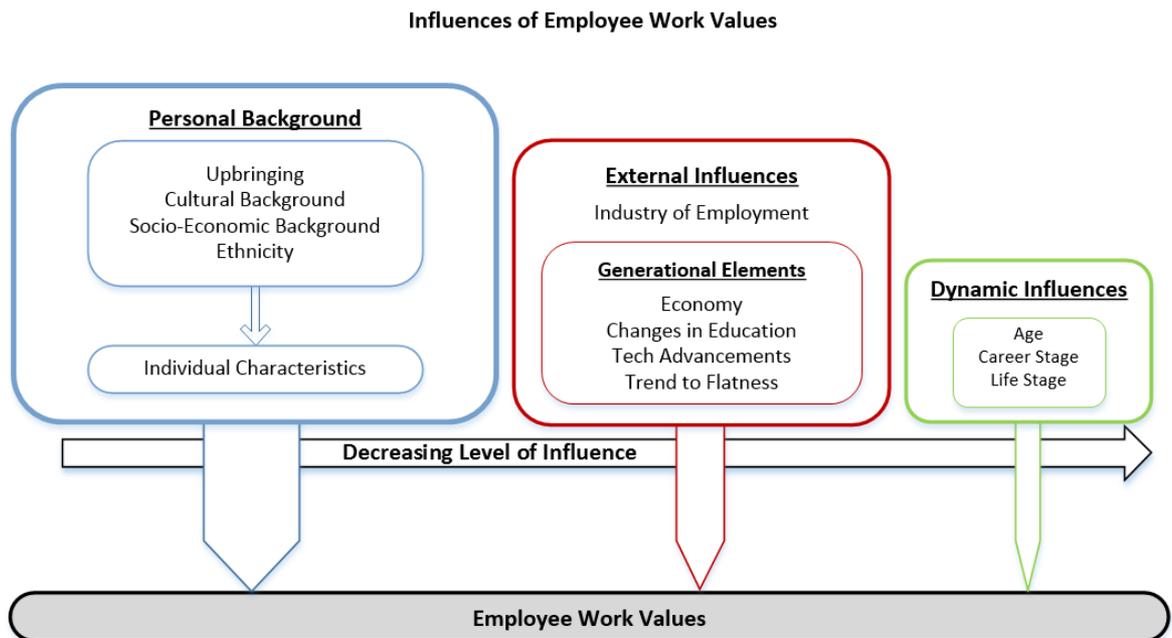
Dynamic influences are those identified by respondents, which can change over time with each individual and thus can have the ability to concurrently change their work values. These factors coincide with those put forth in previous research as having an effect on work values being age, career stage and life stage. Similarly to how each can was found to be a contributing factor to individually recognized differences at a certain place in time, respondents also felt that age, career stage and life stage also had influence on employees overall work values.

Referring back to the empirical results, the prevalence of responses pertaining directly to each of these three influences was lower when compared to personal background and external factors, however were still considered relevant by respondents, particularly career stage.

5.2.1 Updated Model of Results for RQ2

Results of the analysis of the empirical data regarding the influences of work values are shown in the updated model below. The three identified categories of influences are shown, with individual influences as noted by respondents shown within. Prevalence and significance of each influence as identified and interpreted from the empirical data is represented by the relative size of the box, and arrow of decreasing level of influence.

Figure 5-6: Updated Model Depicting Analysis of RQ2



5.3 RQ3: Generational Considerations Creating Project Teams

The empirical results strongly suggest that an employee's generation, and generational work value differences are not considered important when compared to other individual traits particularly experience and skills set as well as personality. When "generational" considerations were made, analysis of each response revealed that age, life stage and career stage factors were of higher significance than generation. Cost was considered very important consideration to maintain competitiveness, as such a mix of junior, intermediate and senior employees was deemed necessary. This cost awareness facilitated team diversity which was highly regarded by the majority of respondents, however the nature of the diversity varied, with only two responses mentioning generational diversity. Significant results were also found when respondents were given the opportunity to comment on the relevance of generational theory as a management strategy as a whole, with four respondents identifying similar weaknesses as put forth in the opposing literature.

5.3.1 Generational Considerations Creating Project Teams

Nine respondents directly mentioned that generation was not considered important, with all eleven mentioning individual characteristics of members as more important. The significance of the responses is also important with many clearly stating the lack of generational consideration. Some examples are:

I have never assembled a team by thinking “what generation are they in”.

No, because I don’t know that I would see it as a [generational] thing. I would see it as a personality thing.

The individual may be from a certain generation but as long as they have respect for the other generations above and below them and they are well rounded in personality, it doesn’t really matter what generation they are from.

I would look at the individual person more than the generation.

From the prevalence and significance of these responses it is clear that generation was not considered important by practicing managers when assembling project teams. These results strongly support the conclusions of (Twenge, 2010; Lyons et al., 2015; Jorgensen, 2003) who state a need for managers to try and treat employees as individuals, and appreciate diversity, and not just a member of their generation. The results also suggest that respondents practice the recommendations of Costanza and Finkelstein (2015) and are willing to take the time and make the cognitive effort to understand and recognize their employee’s individual qualities rather than relying on heuristics when developing project teams.

An interesting result was that “generational” considerations were made only in response to the second vignette when respondents were asked to decide between two equally qualified personnel of different generations. Three respondents’ made an age distinction in their decision with all three choosing younger team members. Follow up questions revealed respondents felt an advantage of younger employees being more eager as well as more flexible with their time, with less life commitments. One example response was:

I often would almost prefer someone younger because I find that they are more eager and hungrier, so that might factor into my decision.

From a generational standpoint, the responses agree with Lancaster and Stillman (2002) and Baruch (2004) who identified a certain drive of Gen Y when facing new challenges and opportunities as well as the desire of being pushed to their limits.

Analysis of the responses however again does not show clear distinction as generation as the factor of their decisions. Respondents mentioned “younger” employees rather than Gen Y, which indicates this eagerness and hunger as a trait of people, that age, or career stage across all points in time, not necessarily pertaining only to Gen Y. Also flexibility due to less life commitments indicates a life stage factor experienced by all generations.

Client Perception

On several occasions respondents mentioned “grey hair mentality” referring to placing an older person in a position of representing the project team. One example response shows as follows:

In some instances it is that grey hair mentality that I am looking for. Put this person in front of the client. The perception will be that they even got more experience even though that they may have the same as somebody else from a different generation.

This consideration provides an optical perception to the client of dealing with an experienced representative of the project team. Although these team members with “grey hair” may

generally fall into the Baby boomer generation, it once again is more attributed to a characteristic of physical aging, rather than a generational consideration.

Individual Traits

The large majority of responses emphasized considerations of individuals and certain individual traits as being more important than generation when creating project teams.

Ten respondents referred to particular technical experience as a very important attribute they are looking for. Given the particular needs and scope of the project it is given that a specific practical skillset is essential, especially within the highly technical engineering consultancy industry. Skills can be attained through experience and increased career stage, or naturally such as social skills. As such employees can possess the required skill sets regardless of the generation they belong to.

An individual's personality was also highly regarded by ten respondents, emphasizing the importance of an individual contributing within a team environment. How an individual's personality fits within the other members of the team was very important, and is an individual trait, again independent of generation.

5.3.2 Team Diversity

A consistent theme emerged amongst respondents acknowledging diversity within a project teams as being a highly positive attribute they try to achieve when building a team. The nature of the diversity varied amongst responses, with most focusing on a diverse range of experience or career stages. As one respondent noted, "the key to a great delivery of a project, is having a good mix of junior, intermediate and senior staff. "

One respondent viewed diversity from a larger context including generational, cultural and gender diversity, as providing "a more complete and more holistic answer." Another respondent mentioned generational diversity:

My preference ... is having as much generational diversity within the team as possible. So we get the broadest spectrum of viewpoints and information exchange we possibly can to deliver the best product for the client

This response supports the findings of Van Knippenberg, De Dreu and Homan (2004) who found diversity increases team performance and value, with positive effects on knowledge exchange.

Overall the results pertaining to diversity are consistent with existing research. Particularly Twenge (2010), Anantamula (2008) as well as Flynn and Mangione (2008) who agree that a manager's awareness of certain critical factors within generational diversity such as diverse level of expertise, communication and different factors of responsibility, can positively sway the team performance.

Cost Factor

The cost of individual employees emerged as a strong consideration amongst respondents when creating project teams compared to generation. This is important in the consulting industry, as companies need to be cognizant of their costs to clients, as having too many senior employees with a higher charge out rate can make them uncompetitive. As previously mentioned, this could be viewed as a generational consideration as senior staff are generally in the late Gen X or Baby boomer generations and Gen Y in junior positions, however it can be

argued that it really is directly pertaining to a level of experience representative of career stage. One respondent noted:

You can't effectively deliver work, it's not sustainable to deliver work with just baby boomers on the project, because they are too expensive, and they clients not going to want to pay for it.

Another respondent addressed how this cost consideration naturally adds to the diversity of the team:

From a high level looking at the entire picture, being competitive in the market place is really looking at our staff mix and how can we deliver projects that are the most cost effective level.

5.3.3 General Perceptions of Generations in Management Practice

Significant results were revealed when respondents were given the chance to discuss their feelings towards generational theory and its relevance in management practice. Five respondents expressed reservations as to its relevance. One described it as “just too simplistic” again emphasizing the “learned response” aspect of one’s upbringing. One respondent felt strongly that generational theory can lead to stereotyping, which, of any type, can lead to prejudice, which can be “destructive”. These responses again support the conclusions of Costanza and Finkelstein (2015) regarding their views of generation as a cognitive heuristic shortcut.

Three respondents again raised the issue of heterogeneity within a generation. One notable response was:

I could give you examples of millennials who behave like baby boomers and baby boomers who behave like Gen X'ers, and Baby boomers who behave like traditionalists. I get to the point where I could be giving you so many examples you would wonder [do] we really have generations in my work force?

Another respondent identified a lack of information and pre-conceived notions as an issue:

I think the problem is stereotyping and expecting that you're going to see behavior based on [generation] that quite frankly may not be present with that one individual that you're looking to engage with. The idea that you've got a pre-conceived notion of how a relationship or working relationship is going to play out without having the history to back it up, is kind of foolish actually.

The “history” this respondent is referring to aligns with the gender, ethnicity and location of an individual, which Parry and Urwin (2011) found to all lead to significant differences, or heterogeneity within a generation. These opinions also support the findings of Denecker et al. (2008) who found that given the differing opinions of birth years, and length of each generation that heterogeneity within generations may be as much as between them.

From these results we can see an appreciation amongst respondents for the importance of focusing their efforts on understanding their individual employees as a management strategy, rather than focusing on ones generation.

5.4 Concluding Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine, from personal experiences and insights, the degree to which practicing managers recognize common conclusions pertaining to generational differences in work values and their relevance as in management strategy. Results revealed that practicing managers do recognize work value differences between generations, to a relatively high degree, however the level of recognition is dependent on the specific work value. Where differences were noticed, similarities to existing research were found, as presented in the updated model in Figure 5-5. Managers feel they need to be cognizant of the increased work life balance awareness and requirements of Gen X and especially Gen Y, and that Gen Y feels work as a less central part of their lives, and may not be as willing as previous generations to work extra if it conflicts with other personal commitments. Gen Y may be perceived as having less respect for authority or hierarchy, but this can be attributed to the trend towards organizational flatness and dependent on the organizational structure of the company. Managers feel comfortable with the ability of all generations to work together in teams, despite differences in communication styles and preferences, and are not considering one's generation when creating teams. This may be recognized differently in industries where reliance on multiple generations working together is less essential for success. As expected, and suggested in previous research, interpretation of responses revealed age, life stage and career stage as contributing factors to the differences. This illustrates the importance of understanding and monitoring the individual, as these dynamic influences on an employee's work values change as they age, and progress in career and their life.

Generation was found to have little influence on an employee's overall work values, with the strongest influences being personal background and other individual characteristics as shown in Figure 5-6. Individual skill sets and personality were also considered far more important than generation when creating project teams. These results reveal that managers feel understanding individual characteristics and personal background of their employee's is more relevant in management strategy than relying on the perceptions or stereotypes that are commonly attributed to their generation, which some feel may be too simplistic and tend to overgeneralize.

By answering the three research questions this study was able to deduce that practicing managers in the engineering consulting industry do recognize differences in work values across generations, however generation was not determined to be highly relevant in management strategy. The results of the study have contributed to the existing body of knowledge in the field by addressing at the topic from a different perspective than previously undertaken, utilizing the experiences and insights of practicing managers to compare with existing theories.

6 Conclusions

Analysis and discussion of results allows for the two main conclusions of the study to be presented below:

C1: Practicing managers do recognize work value differences between generations with multiple factors contributing to the differences

This conclusion is based off the results and analysis of RQ1. The conclusion is consistent with existing research that suggests that managers need to be cognizant of differences in work values between generations (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Gursoy et al., 2013; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002), however that generation is not the only factor (Wong et al., 2008; Parry & Urwin, 2001; Twenge, 2010; Rhodes, 1983).

C2: Individual characteristics and personal background are more influential to work values and more important to management strategy than generation

This conclusion is based primarily based off of the results of RQ2 and RQ3, however responses pertaining to all three-research questions led to its formation. This conclusion is consistent with Twenge (2010), Lyons et al. (2015) and Jorgensen (2003) who emphasize the importance for managers to treat employees as individuals, and appreciate diversity, and not just a member of their generation. As well the works of Costanza and Finkelstein (2015) who found decisions based on generation to be cognitive shortcuts, with the key being to measure critical individual differences over time.

7 Limitations and Future research

7.1 Limitations of Study

The author's acknowledge that limitations are present in all studies and understand this study, like all is not absent of limitations. The first limitation is the challenges of applying the findings of the study broadly, as it was based on one company, in one industry. Although arguments were made as to why this method was utilized, individual industries and companies can have specific characteristics and nuances that may affect results, or require deeper interpretation to clearly present the findings, which this study clearly showed. Another limitation is the cross sectional nature of the study in regards to time frame. As referenced in Section 2, time lag studies are a more appropriate design when studying generations, however, given the uniqueness of the study, there was no similar study to compare results too from previous years in order to complete a time lag analysis, and the obvious time constraints limited the ability to perform a proper time lag study from scratch. Finally, as with any data obtained through qualitative interviews, exact interpretation of respondent's feelings can be difficult to decipher. Due to geographical limitations, interviews were conducted over Skype, which can be viewed as less effective than in person interviews. This limitation was somewhat mitigated through detailed transcriptions and review of each interview, however still represents a challenge.

7.2 Future Research

The popularity of the topic leads to high probability of future research and the authors feel that the design and results of this study can be the basis and lead to many interesting future studies. First, the study can be replicated for multiple other industries to compare results and further explore the impact that the individual industry characteristics has on results, as it was evident from this study that individual industry does have an impact. Healthcare or medical industries would be an example where there may be a perception of less flexibility and more rigid organizational structure. Or hospitality, where less formal education may be required thus providing a less homogenous group of employees that managers will be basing their experiences from. Another interesting area for future research would be to look at how the generation of the manager interviewed may have an influence on their perception of work value differences. As more members of Gen Y gain experience in managerial roles, it would be interesting to add analysis investigating how perceptions differ between managers of each generation. As time lag studies are considered most relevant when studying generations, the design and results of this study could be utilized in the future as part of a time lag study helping to mitigate the issues associated with cross sectional studies.

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Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

Bullet points below are topics that needed to be addressed for the research purpose. Order of which the topics were addressed and individual questions was dependent on flow of interview and respondents answers to open questions.

Introduction to Interview:

- Greeting, thank respondent for their time.
- Re-address research purpose as stated in previous email, and state general outline of interview.
 - Ask for any questions or clarifications regarding purpose or terminology
- Gain permission for audio recording and transcription of interviews.
 - Re-assure respondent on confidentiality and anonymity of responses
- Ask for any further clarifications or concerns prior to commencing interview

Start of Interview:

- Obtain background information of respondent
 - Role, duties, years of experience, years with company, previous roles etc.
- Open question regarding general experiences working with and managing multigenerational teams
 - Project types, overall impressions, why they felt this way etc.
 - Challenge, advantages of multigenerational project teams, elaboration
 - Follow up on any noticeable work value differences mentioned, influences of work values etc.
- If not already addressed in previous open questions, introduce the idea of work values and any noticeable differences amongst generations
- If not addressed, introduce the four work values individually, and follow up to obtain information regarding:
 - If noticed, where difference is noticed, where and how it is noticed, its effect
 - Thoughts as to why difference may exist, How they have managed this
- Idea of age, career stage and life stage and get thought on their effects
- Discussion regarding overall work value influences and generation
 - What influences are most important, why? Examples etc.
- First vignette regarding important factors in project team creation
 - Why are these the most important?
 - How would their generation factor into your decision?
- Second vignette regarding choice between two equally qualified team members from different generations
 - Follow up on reason for decision
 - Overall thoughts regarding generational considerations and project teams
- Discussion regarding individual traits versus generation
- Final thoughts regarding the research topic

Appendix 2 – Developed Thematic Map

See attached figure.

Appendix 2 – Developed Thematic Map

