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COMPARING GENERATION X TO GENERATION Y ON WORK-RELATED BELIEFS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Susana Fernandez

December 2009

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COMPARING GENERATION X TO GENERATION Y

ON WORK-RELATED BELIEFS

by
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ABSTRACT

COMPARING GENERATION X TO GENERATION Y
ON WORK-RELATED BELIEFS

by Susana Fernandez

A new generation of employees with new expectations is entering the workplace. They are known by many names, but most will recognize them as the Millennials or Generation Y (Gen Y). With many Gen Y members already in the workforce, managers are likely to be required to deal with the generational differences that appear to exist among employees. Given that Gen Y members are likely to work closely with Gen X members, the present study explored possible differences between Gen X and Gen Y on their work-related beliefs.

Using data from 290 employees in a large Silicon Valley technology company, the present study examined potential generational and gender differences on three work-related beliefs, namely, work engagement, teamwork, and career development. Results showed that Gen Y was more engaged at work than Gen X. Furthermore, men were found to be more engaged at work and are more content with their career discussions than women. Implications of the findings are discussed.

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Introduction

A new generation of employees with new expectations is entering the workplace. They are known by many names, but most will recognize them as the Millennials or Generation Y (Gen Y). The 1999-2000 Occupational Outlook Quarterly has indicated that in the 1998-2008 ten year period, the number of 35 to 44 year old Generation X (Gen X) workforce members is expected to decline by 7%, additionally those in Gen X that are in the 25 to 34 year old age category are expected to fall by 1%, whereas those from Gen Y in the age group between 16 to 24 years old will increase by 15% (Cole, Lucas, & Smith, 2002). To get some perspective of what these changes in headcount actually represent, it is approximated that while there are 75 million Traditionalists, 76 million Baby Boomers, and 44 million Gen X members, Gen Y is closer to 80 million (Sujansky, 2004). Furthermore, although Gen Y members are already in the workforce, they have not begun to reach critical mass. As a result, managers are likely to be required to deal with the generational differences that appear to exist among employees and understand the unique needs of Gen Y (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Sujansky, 2004). Only in this manner will the inevitable clash amongst the generations become more controllable, lessening the possible misunderstandings, miscommunications, and mixed signals among employees of different generations (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

The entrance of Gen Y to the workplace and this generation's unique work attributes have created quite the commotion in the workplace, as employers appear to be scrambling to find out everything they can about them (Raines, 2002). Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to explore possible differences between Gen X and Gen Y

on their work-related perceptions. This paper begins by describing the two generations of focus in this paper. Then, previous industry and research findings concerning potential differences between Gen X and Gen Y on three work-related beliefs (i.e., work engagement, career development, and teamwork) are reviewed.

Generational Categories

A generational group, often referred to as a cohort, includes those individuals who share historical and/or social life experiences (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Weston, 2006). Such experiences unite people of the same generation, lead them to come to share common values, and a large number of them may then come to experience the world in similar ways (Patterson, 2007; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Although each individual within a generation is unique, each generation tends to develop a collective personality that influences the way members live their lives, including feelings toward authority and organizations, their participation in and desires from work, and even how they plan to attain those desires (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Weston, 2006). Although it is inappropriate to make generalizations about the individuals in each generational cohort, it is inevitable to recognize that those who are born in the same era have had common influential experiences that predispose them to similar expectations, and as a result such life experiences are what tend to distinguish one generation from another (Patterson, 2007; Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Although there appears to be agreement as to what to label a generation that is defined by the shared birth years and significant life events, there are inconsistencies as to what exact years to use to classify the generations (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Of the two

generational groups in this study, there is less agreement as to what the birth years of Gen X are. Some report that they begin in the mid 1960s and extend until 1975, whereas others end the Gen X years in 1982 (Barton & Skiba, 2006; Greene, 2003; Patterson, 2007; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Sujansky, 2004; Vejar, 2008). This study defines Gen X as those who were born between 1965 and 1977. As for Gen Y, considering they follow Gen X, their generation beginning year also tends to vary ranging from 1978 to 2000 (Greene, 2003; Howe, 2004; Leo, 2003; Patterson, 2007; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Sujansky, 2004; Vejar, 2008). Since this study is about the experience of real-world working Gen Y-ers, the year range that will define Gen Y will be that of 1978 to 1990.

With the retirement of some of the earlier generations, Gen X-ers are and will be the experienced employees and managers as Gen Y continues to enter the workforce (Smola & Sutton, 2002). These two generations are the ones I choose to focus on due to the fact that these two generations will be working closely together for at least the next 20 years.

Generation X (1965-1977)

As previously mentioned, Gen X is classified as those born between 1965 and 1977. As children, members of Gen X were exposed to high rates of parental divorce, in addition to their mothers and other females pursuing higher educational degrees and attaining jobs previously reserved for men (Vejar, 2008). As a result, the "latchkey" phenomenon originated within this generation, whereby single mothers worked extended hours at the office and left unsupervised children at home to watch over themselves and at times over their siblings as well (Vejar, 2008). Due to the extensive periods of time

Gen X happened to spend alone or without parental supervision, they found support among their peers who were undergoing similar experiences. As a result, they built strong networks of friends which were often preferred over their family relations (Vejar, 2008). Therefore, a label that fittingly applies to Gen X is "independent" (Cole, Lucas, & Smith, 2002). Since many had to face and solve their own problems as children, the Gen X cohort gained the confidence to make decisions for themselves (Cole et al., 2002).

Having had, what some might call "self-centered" and "workaholic" parents, Gen X members learned to be pragmatic, self-reliant, and adaptive to change (Patterson, 2007). Assuming that they want to avoid the same "latchkey" lifestyle for their children, Gen X members are more likely to focus on family and quality of life, rather than exerting their efforts in their careers (Patterson, 2007). The relative importance of work may be the single most distinguishing workplace value of the Gen X cohort. Work is not the most important part of their lives as it had been for Baby Boomers and other previous generations (Cole et al., 2002). Yet it would be incorrect to assume that a decline in the importance of work is equivalent to a decrease in the willingness to work hard (Cole et al., 2002). Surprisingly, in regards to work ethic, Smola and Sutton (2002), using 335 MBA students most employed in over 13 different industries, found that this generation felt strongly that an indication of one's worth was in how hard they worked. They also found that Gen X was more likely to feel that one should work hard, even when not being supervised. Moreover, Gen X-ers want to work toward their own goals at the same time as they work towards their organizational goals (Wiant, 1999). This may be an indication that Gen X is not solely 'me' oriented, but they seek to find a good balance between

doing a good job and maximizing their own individual goals (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Again, this is where one sees the independent characteristic in which Gen X wants to participate in decisions that affect them. In the workplace, Gen X expects and often demands to have a say on issues that may affect their lives (Cole et al., 2002).

Generation Y (1978-1990)

The years chosen to classify the Gen Y cohort are those born between 1978 and 1990. Members of this cohort have initiated a spur of interest in many with their new set of rules and unique characteristics (Raines, 2002). Although 60% of the Gen Y cohort was born into a home where both parents worked, compared to the Gen X cohort, Gen Y members not only had the support from their parents, but also had established infrastructures such as childcare, preschool, and after school programs (Weston, 2006). As a result, since their childhood years, Gen Y has lived highly structured and scheduled lives with many extracurricular activities such as soccer camps to piano lessons (Raines, 2002; Weston, 2006). The Gen Y members appear to be quite family-oriented, open-minded in that they tend to overlook differences among people and treat everyone the same, deeply committed to authenticity and truth-telling, extremely stressed, and believe to live in a "no-boundaries" world where they make short-term decisions and expect the outcomes to be rather grandiose (Leo, 2003; Raines, 2002). Yet, it is no surprise that this generation has such large expectations, considering that their technological sophistication allows Gen Y members to consider the world a smaller, diverse, highly-networked environment, with pretty much everything at the tip of their fingers (Patterson, 2007).

While some believe that the new and improved technological methods of communication used by Gen Y give this generational cohort the characteristics of authenticity, authorship, and autonomy (Weston, 2006), others believe that those same methods make this generation to be disloyal, anxious, and disrespectful (Kovarik, 2008). With such a variation in traits and characteristics this generation portrays, it is suspected that managers might need a whole new set of rules in order to manage and retain employees of Gen Y (Sujansky, 2004). Gen Y has been entering the workforce since 1998 and will continue to do so in rather large masses (Sujansky, 2004). Therefore managers need to get ready for a generation that is not only large in numbers, but also comes with a variety of unique characteristics. More specifically, Gen Y is a cohort that ranks at the top in many areas such as being the most affluent, educated, and diverse (36% non-white) (Howe & Strauss, 2004). In a 2006 administration of the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) (UAO, 2006), where 1,248 incoming first-year students were surveyed, data suggest that those students belonging to Gen Y view themselves as high-achieving and high-potential students. Further, 94% of these students described themselves as team-oriented and team-players. In addition, several researchers (e.g., Howe & Strauss, 2003; Howe & Strauss, 2004) found that Gen Y-ers tend to follow rules and have an easier acceptance towards authority.

What is noteworthy is the work ethic of this generation; they prefer a fun working environment, non-monetary perks as well as flexible hours are important (Cole et al., 2002). Once again, fostering a "team" mentality and environment is important for this generation because it provides a sense of acceptance and belongingness (Cole et al.,

2002). Most importantly though, these sociable, confident, optimistic, talented, well-educated, collaborative, open-minded, and achievement-oriented members of this generation are joining organizations in hefty numbers just as talent and skill shortages are surfacing in a number of organizations (Raines, 2003).

Work-Related Beliefs

It is important to note how the work environment has changed over time, and realize that at the same time the new generation (i.e., Gen Y) is entering the workforce. In traditional bureaucratic structures, the interactions between people from different generations followed hierarchical lines (Weston, 2006). Although this structure is still common in various organizations, the introduction of total quality management and continuous quality improvement has actually led many organizations to implement a more team-based approach (Weston, 2006). Such an approach allows individuals from various "levels" of the organization to become involved as equal members of a team, and as a result, it attempts to neutralize the hierarchical structure and permit individuals of different age groups to interact as peers (Weston, 2006). Further, the heavy reliance on computers has made it possible for the youngest in the workplace to be the most expert at a critical skill, such as computer programs, which has resulted in the more senior generations' seeking support and guidance from the younger generations. This whole concept of the older getting help from the young or vice versa is difficult to accept because each generation has their own way of carrying out a task. What makes this concept even harder to adopt is that unfortunately there are still members of each

generation that seem to believe their values and expectations are universal (Weston, 2006).

The following section reviews industry and research findings on three work-related beliefs, namely work engagement, career development, teamwork, and how Gen X and Gen Y view these work-related beliefs.

Work Engagement

One might ask how engagement is defined. There are many different definitions of work engagement. Apparently some 'engagement experts' are not sure on how to exactly define engagement. For example, while some define engagement as "the degree to which employees are satisfied with their jobs, feel valued, and experience collaboration and trust" (Catteeuw, Flynn, & Vonderhost, 2007, p.152), still others define it as "a state where employees find meaning in their work and devote discretionary effort and time to work" (Matz-Costa & Pitt-Catsouphes, 2008, p.216). Of the many definitions, the definition suggested by Galpin, Linley, Page, and Stairs (2006) was chosen because it makes reference to not only the organizational benefits, but to the personal benefits that can come from having organizationally committed and engaged employees. Galpin et al. (2006) defined it as "the extent to which employees thrive at work, are committed to their employer, and are motivated to do their best, for the benefit of themselves and their organization"(p. 20). However, many employees are not engaged at work. In recent studies, such as a study by Corporate Leadership Council (CLC) (2004), where more than 50,000 employees from 59 organizations, 30 countries, and 14 industries participated in a survey, it has been found that only 15% of employees are

highly engaged in their work, while 21% are actively disengaged (Flade, 2003, as cited in Galpin et al., 2006; Towers Perrin, 2006). Given that only 15% are engaged, organizations should be concerned about employee engagement, considering all the positive outcomes that engaged employees could bring to the workplace. For example, Galpin et al. (2006) conducting a literature review on employee engagement, report that high levels of employee engagement are associated with reduced absenteeism, greater employee retention, increased employee effort and productivity, reduced error rates, increased sales, higher profitability, enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty, faster business growth, and higher likelihood of business success.

As to how the engagement findings apply to the generations of focus in this study, Galpin et al. (2006) suggest that Gen Y employees are significantly more focused than earlier generations on finding work that is meaningful and that allows them to make a meaningful contribution. For this generation, the factors that drive engagement go beyond tangibles like rewards and benefits; the Gen Y cohort rather seeks a meaningful compensation that is more closely aligned to their values. Gen Y members want the ability to contribute towards something worthwhile that draws from the best each unique Gen Y-er has to offer (Galpin et al., 2006). Therefore, placing members of this generation in cross-functional teams where they are constantly given diverse and new information about the business, industry or the world in general is where Gen Y-ers will be best utilized and most likely to stay engaged at work (Kovarik, 2008).

Workplace engagement is truly a complex matter in itself, therefore, having to deal with the intricacy of different generational mind frames only makes it harder to

decipher what are the different factors that influence an employees' work engagement level (Galpin et al., 2006). Based on the above findings, the present study tests the following research question:

Research question 1. Does Generation X differ from Generation Y on their belief of being engaged at work?

Career Development

Developing experienced and skilled employees is vital to any organization hoping to compete in the future (Sujansky, 2004). Employees want their organization to help them meet their career development aspirations. Therefore in this study, career development refers to the employees' fulfillment of having career development discussions with their managers. That is important, because knowing how to properly address career growth and development concerns to different generations should be something managers should stay on top of. As mentioned earlier, the views of Gen X and Gen Y are quite different when it comes to authority and organizations. One of the clearest contrasts between Gen X and Gen Y members is the issue of pessimism versus optimism. Members of Gen X are rather pessimistic, which might make them believe that climbing the ladders to success are not very likely in their future (Cole et al., 2002). Furthermore, the lack of promotional opportunities and growth has contributed to a small chance of Gen X members staying with the same employer (Weston, 2006). This generation has taken such lack of career growth to heart and therefore believe that no job is guaranteed and as a result, they do not see an advantage of being loyal to or sacrificing

for any one employer (Weston, 2006). At the same time, members of the Gen X cohort are exceptionally loyal to their profession and career, and hard work is an indication of self worth to them; that is, as long as work demands do not begin to alter their balance between personal and family lives (Murray, 1997 as cited in Weston, 2006; Patterson, 2007).

Gen Y-ers, on the other hand, are optimistic about what they could accomplish and how they will do in life. This generation is likely to tackle tasks at work with the expectation that success is likely (Cole et al., 2002). Yet, this generation can be rather impatient because they want immediate feedback and not just once or twice a year, but as often as possible (Sujansky, 2004; Wood, 2006). This is how members of this generation get an idea of how and where they are going from the very onset of their career. Gen Y members have been identified to be highly educated and they are willing to accept challenges. As a result they set high goals (Kovarik, 2008). However, Kovarik (2008) goes on to mention that once a Gen Y member has achieved his/her goals, the organization needs to fulfill their part of the psychological contract or actual agreement, and provide him/her with the promised reward. This is important because research has found that when specific promises go unmet, this can be interpreted by an employee that they are not valued by the organization, lowering the employee's organizational trust (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000; Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2006; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Further, psychological contract breach can lead to an employee's unwillingness to engage in organizational citizenship behavior (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000), reduced levels of job satisfaction (Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2003), and higher levels of

absenteeism (Deery et al., 2006). Breaking promises or not providing proper career development can be one of the fastest and surest ways to lose a Gen Y employee (Kovarik, 2008). Although some suggest that Gen Y are disloyal to their employers (Kovarik, 2008), it simply might be that their desires are not being met and therefore are in search of another organization that is likely to value their worth. Based on the above findings, the present study tested the following research question:

> *Research question 2. Does Generation X differ from Generation Y on their belief of having had fulfilling career development discussions with their managers?*

Teamwork

As mentioned earlier, teamwork appears to be one of those work attributes in which a clear difference between Gen X and Gen Y seems to exist. Although personal relationships are important to Gen X, many workers of this generation are considered poor team players and often do things themselves (Patterson, 2007). It is found that Gen X members do not have the patience for a working group to come together, perhaps due to their 'independent' characteristic (Patterson, 2007). On the other hand, in 2000, Fortune, along with Youth Intelligence, and Towers Perrin, conducted interviews and focus groups with more than 220 teens, mostly high school students in 12 cities in nine states. They were asked about their career plans, social concerns, and anxieties; about their attitudes toward money, their relationships with friends and family, and their expectations for the future. Overall, results show that these teens are under severe stress

to perform well in all that they do from choosing to go to college (and which college) to thinking about the future careers they might go into. These teens are overwhelmed and exhausted. Yet the most striking finding about these Gen Y teens is the amazingly close bonds they have developed with their friends (O'Reilly, 2000). This finding should come as no surprise as it was previously mentioned from the 2006 BCSSE survey that 94% of incoming college students indicated moderate or high levels of team participation during their high school years (UAO, 2006). Additionally, Gen Y members reported that their ability to work in teams was above average (UAO, 2006). These findings appear to indicate that Gen Y has not only been involved in teamwork since they were children through events such as their little league teams, but also they have the confidence that during the group project process they have "struck a harmonious chord" with the others (Barton & Skiba, 2006; Vejar, 2008). Since Gen Y members tend to gravitate towards group work, whether it is through face-to-face or virtual projects, organizations should see teamwork as an effective way to organize tasks and initiatives for this generation (Barton & Skiba, 2006; Cole et al., 2002; Howe & Strauss, 2000).

Beyond these differences, both Gen X and Gen Y seek comfort and tend to have more respect for those who share their own values, therefore this easily presents an opportunity for group assignments (Childs & Kipnis, 2004). In Weston's (2006) study, nurses who acknowledged and appreciated their colleagues from different generational backgrounds had an advantage at teamwork. Furthermore, such collaboration allowed them room for higher levels of job satisfaction, but most importantly, it gave these nurses a higher probability of positively impacting patient outcomes. Cooperative and diverse

teams offer a strategic advantage to the learning of both the individual and what the team as a whole can accomplish. Therefore, creating cooperative and cohesive teams that allow different generations to learn from each other and work well together can further enhance an organization's value (Weston, 2006). As a result, in this study, teamwork is defined as the belief that an employee is part of an effective and collaborative team. Based on the above findings, the present study tests the following research question:

> *Research question 3. Does Generation X differ from Generation Y on the belief of being part of an effective and collaborative team?*

Potential Sex Differences

Previous research has found numerous sex differences when it comes to work-related beliefs and treatment. For example, there is the never ending topic of salary and the importance of pay. In 1988, Bigoness studied 428 participants from 27 graduate MBA programs across the United States, and found that males placed a greater emphasis on salary than females. Elizur (2001), using over 1,300 managers, employees, and students from Hungary, Israel, and the Netherlands, also found that men tended to rank pay higher than women. Moreover, in a study by Cao, Horn, and Lynn (1996) where 718 accountant participants were studied, it was found that male accountants received significantly more promotions than women accountants. Yet, it is rather difficult to believe that men are getting promotions and more concerned with compensation when in various studies it is the women who put a higher importance in challenging and meaningful work when compared to men (Bigoness, 1988; Elizur, 2001; Singh, 1994). It

makes one wonder, if pay is not as important to women as it is to men, then what other satisfaction factors or non-monetary incentives are women obtaining from their jobs? In a study by Singh (1994) where 196 business executives from various Indian metropolitan cities participated, women tended to be more involved in their work and were more likely to obtain higher satisfaction from performing well at their jobs than men did. These findings make one wonder if the sole satisfaction of a job well done is truly rewarding for women? Yet, there appears to be more factors that women value. Elizur (2001) found that women tend to give higher importance to coworkers, interaction with people, and convenient work hours than did men. Beyond the differences, in a cross sectional survey conducted to high school seniors from 1976 to 1991, it was found that both sexes reported that a job which was interesting to do was very important (Beutel, Fan, Finley, & Marini, 1996). Knowing that sex differences exist on work attitudes and beliefs, it is important to shed more light on those differences in order to successfully manage all types of employees. Based on the above findings, the present study tests the following research question:

Research question 4. Are there sex differences in the work-beliefs of work engagement, career development, and teamwork?

Summary

Differences in work-beliefs might occur from one generational cohort to another, but as we can see, both generations want to build a portfolio of skills and are in their own unique generational ways committed to career development (Sujansky, 2004). Yet, what

organizations need to keep in mind is that although there are some similarities between Gen X and Gen Y, as there probably would be with past generations, more importantly, there are differences. Past generations have been cultivating certain work environments and organizational cultures that we know are not ideal for all generations (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Therefore, knowing how and on what work-beliefs Gen X and Gen Y differ is relatively a new line of research with incremental importance. Especially considering that these two generations will primarily be the ones carrying out organizational initiatives and their success is likely to rely on how well the managers of an organization know the work ethic of these two generations.

Methods

Participants

An online company-wide survey was administered to all employees in a large Silicon Valley technology company in 2008. However, the present study focused only on 400 employees from the Human Resources department, which consisted of 200 Gen X and 200 Gen Y employees. Of these employees, 330 completed the survey. However, data from additional 40 respondents were discarded because they did not provide information about their gender. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 290 individuals. Of these, 149 were Gen X members and 141 were Gen Y members. Table 1 shows demographic information as a function of generation. Most of the participants were female (n = 207). Of the employees falling under Gen X, 54% of them (n = 80) had been with the organization from 5-20 years, where 77% of the Gen Y employees (n = 109) fell in the tenure of 0-3 years. For the job level position, 88% of the sample (n = 254) held

entry and intermediate level positions, with Gen Y employees holding 48% of those jobs (n = 139).

Procedure

The present study used part of archival data that were originally collected via an organization-wide survey from a large Silicon Valley technology company in 2008. Every single employee was sent an email with a link to the survey. Although the survey was not mandatory, participation to complete the survey was highly recommended and communicated through company-wide emails, manager reminders via email, or staff meetings. The survey was composed of multiple sections with a total of 44 questions. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Results were analyzed by an outside-vendor; therefore, all individual data were kept confidential from the organization.

Measures

The original survey contained a total of 44 items, with an additional optional demographic section. These items were originally categorized into multiple sections (e.g., passion for customers, trust and respect, achievement and contribution). All the items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = "Strongly Disagree," 5 = "Strongly Agree," and with an option of "Don't Know/Not Applicable").

Table 1. *Demographic Information*

	Gen X		Gen Y	
	n = 149	%	n = 141	%
Gender				
Male	48	32%	35	25%
Female	101	68%	106	75%
Tenure				
< 1 year	11	7%	57	40%
1 - 3 years	29	19%	52	37%
3 - 5 years	20	13%	23	16%
5 - 10 years	46	31%	8	6%
10 - 20 years	34	23%	1	1%
> 20 years	4	3%	0	0%
Job Level Position				
Entry	56	38%	134	95%
Intermediate	59	40%	5	4%
Manager/Supervisor	34	23%	2	1%

Because the present study focused on work engagement, career development, and teamwork, the survey items were examined and 11 face-valid items were selected to reflect the above three constructs. A factor analysis was conducted with varimax rotation for each generation. Items loadings at or above .45 were selected to represent the different constructs. Three factors were emerged for both generations, for Gen X, 4% of variance explained in Factor 1 (work engagement), 34% of variance in Factor 2 (career development), and 3% of variance in Factor 3 (teamwork). For Gen Y, 30% of variance explained in Factor 1 (work engagement), 5% of variance in Factor 2 (career development), and 4% of variance in Factor 3 (teamwork). Items and factor loadings are presented in Table 2. Based on the inspection of the items, the first factor was named work engagement, second factor as career development, and the last factor as teamwork.

Work engagement. Work engagement was measured by four-item summated scale. Sample items include "I am proud to work for my company" and "Even if I were offered a comparable position with similar pay and benefits at another company, I would not leave my company." The higher the score on the measure, the more committed and engaged respondents were at their work. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .84.

Career development. Career development was measured by four-item summated scale. Sample items include "I have had a career development discussion with my manager" and "I understand how my performance is evaluated." These items are measuring an employees' fulfillment with the career development discussions the employees has had with their manager. The higher the score in the measure, the more

Table 2. *Factor Analysis Loadings*

		Work Engagement		Career Development		Teamwork	
		Gen X	Gen Y	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen X	Gen Y
39.	I am proud to work for my company.	.71	.79				
40.	Overall, I feel my career goals can be met at my company.	.65	.78				
41.	I would recommend my company as a great place to work.	.81	.83				
42.	Even if I were offered a comparable position with similar pay and benefits at another company, I would not leave my company.	.66	.77				
15.	My manager and I have discussed my individual goals.			.62	.75		
16.	I have had a career development discussion with my manager.			.73	.78		
17.	I understand how my performance is evaluated.			.57	.65		
18.	I know what skills I will need in the future to be a valuable contributor at my company.			.65	.54		
20.	My work group cooperates with other work groups to achieve business objectives.					.59	.71
21.	My work group looks for ways to change processes to improve productivity.					.67	.77
22.	Before my work group makes changes, we consider how the changes could impact other areas in the company.					.66	.68

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

positive respondents were about their perceptions on their career development. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .80.

Teamwork. Teamwork was measured by three-item summated scale. A sample item is "My work group cooperates with other work groups to achieve business objectives" and "My work group looks for ways to change processes to improve productivity." These items are measuring the belief that an employee is part of an effective and collaborative team. The higher the score in the measure, the more positive respondent felt about being part of a collaborative team. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .74.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 displays the means and standard deviations of the measured variables as a function of generation and gender. As can be seen in Table 3, both generations responses on the three work-related beliefs seem to be high, 4 or above, except Gen X's mean score for work engagement. Both generations seem to agree most with being part of a collaborative team, with Gen Y showing the higher level (M = 4.32, SD = .62) than Gen X (M = 4.26, SD = .68). Gen Y respondents also seemed to be more engaged at work (M = 4.36, SD = .69) than their Gen X counterparts (M = 3.88, SD = .81). Both generations seemed to have similar levels of career development and teamwork, with Gen X showing a slightly higher level of fulfillment with the career development discussions (M = 4.15, SD = .70), than Gen Y (M = 4.04, SD = .79). For gender, women seemed to agree less with work engagement items and career development items than men. Both

Table 3. *Means and Standard Deviations of the Measured Variables as a Function of Generation and Gender*

	Gen X	Gen Y	Total
Work Engagement			
Male	3.97 (.82)	4.62 (.52)	4.24 (.78)
Female	3.84 (.81)	4.27 (.72)	4.01 (.79)
Total	3.88 (.81)	4.36 (.69)	
Career Development			
Male	4.31 (.67)	4.15 (.73)	4.24 (.70)
Female	4.07 (.70)	4.01 (.81)	4.04 (.76)
Total	4.15 (.70)	4.04 (.79)	
Teamwork			
Male	4.18 (.70)	4.37 (.60)	4.27 (.67)
Female	4.29 (.67)	4.31 (.62)	4.30 (.64)
Total	4.26 (.68)	4.32 (.62)	

genders had similar levels of teamwork, with females showing a slightly higher level (M = 4.30, SD = .64) than males (M = 4.27, SD = .67).

Furthermore, correlations among the measured variables were computed (see Table 4). Results show work engagement significantly and positively correlated with generation, indicating that Gen Y respondents were more engaged at work than Gen X respondents. However, generation was not related to either career development or teamwork. Career development was significantly and positively correlated with gender, indicating that male respondents are more content with career development discussions than females. Yet, gender was not related to either work engagement or teamwork. There were moderate relationships among the three work-related beliefs.

Tests of the Research Questions

In order to test the research questions, a series of an analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted. Table 5 shows the ANOVA results for work engagement. The result of the ANOVA showed that there was a significant main effect for generations, $F(1,290) = 30.49$, $p < .001$, and gender, $F(1,290) = 6.08$, $p < .01$. More specifically, Generation Y members reported higher work engagement (M = 4.36, SD = .69) than Generation X (M = 3.88, SD =. 81). Furthermore, men reported higher work engagement levels (M = 4.22, SD = .78) than women (M = 4.06, SD = .79). No interaction effect was found between generation and gender $F(1,290) = 1.26$, $p > .05$.

Table 4. *Correlations and Cronbach Alpha (N=290)*

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Generation							
2. Gender			-.08				
3. Work Engagement	4.11	.80	.30**	.11	(.84)		
4. Career Development	4.10	.74	-.07	.12*	.36**	(.80)	
5. Teamwork	4.29	.65	.05	-.02	.41**	.38**	(.74)

Note. Cronbach Alpha in parentheses.
Generation (1 = Gen X, 2 = Gen Y)
Gender (1 = Female, 2 = Male)
*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$

Table 5. *ANOVA Summary Table for Work Engagement*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Generation	17.12	1	17.12	30.49**
Gender	3.42	1	3.42	6.08**
Generation x Gender	.71	1	.71	1.26
Error	160.64	286	.56	
Total	180.98	289		**p<.01

Table 6 shows the ANOVA results for career development. Results from the career development ANOVA shows that there was only a significant main effect for gender, $F(1,290) = 3.89$, $p < .05$, with men feeling more content with their career development discussions ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .70$) than women ($M = 4.04$, $SD = .76$). No effect was found between generation and career development $F(1,290) = 1.25$, $p > .05$. No interaction effect was found between generations and gender $F(1,290) = .18$, $p > .05$.

Table 7 shows the ANOVA results for teamwork. Results from the teamwork ANOVA showed no significant main effect between generation and teamwork, $F(1,290) = 1.36$, $p > .05$, and no significant effect between gender and teamwork $F(1,290) = .05$, $p > .05$. In addition, there was no significant interaction effect between generation and gender $F(1,290) = .99$, $p > .05$.

Overall, results of the ANOVA showed that Gen Y employees were more engaged at work than Gen X. Furthermore, men were more engaged at work and are more fulfilled with their career development discussions than women. There were no effects of generation and gender on other variables.

Table 6. *ANOVA Summary Table for Career Development*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Generation	.69	1	.69	1.25
Gender	2.14	1	2.14	3.89*
Generation x Gender	.10	1	.10	.18
Error	157.17	286	.55	
Total	160.32	289		*p<.05

Table 7. *ANOVA Summary Table for Teamwork*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Generation	.57	1	.57	1.36
Gender	.02	1	.02	.05
Generation x Gender	.42	1	.42	.99
Error	120.77	286	.42	
Total	121.53	289		

Discussion and Conclusions

With the new generation of employees coming into the workplace, new ways of managing and developing employees might be needed. Further, Gen X and Gen Y will be working closely together for at least 20 more years. Organizations must understand the work-beliefs of these two generations in order to avoid miscommunications and maintain the organization's productivity. Therefore, the current study was conducted in order to shed light on those differences between Gen Y and Gen X. It was hoped that current findings would give organizations and managers generational knowledge to further understand the employees working for them.

Present Findings

Analysis of the three work-related beliefs showed that there was a significant difference between Gen X and Gen Y on the belief of work engagement. Gen Y showed higher levels of work engagement than did those members of Gen X. More specifically, compared to Gen X members, Gen Y members in the present study agreed more with the statements such as "I feel my career goals could be met by my company", they are "proud of the company they work for", and "would recommend their company as a great place to work". Gen Y also agreed more with the statement "I would stay with my current company, even if they were offered a comparable position with similar pay and benefits at another company".

The higher levels of work engagement for Gen Y members than for Gen X members might be explained through the other non-significant results of this study. Although there was no statistically significant difference between the members of the two

generations on beliefs regarding career development and teamwork, Gen Y did show higher levels in those two beliefs. As previous research has shown (Barton & Skiba, 2006; Cole et al., 2002; Galpin et al., 2006; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Sujansky, 2004; Wood, 2006), career development and teamwork are of importance to Gen Y members and when the work needs of Gen Y are met, they are likely to stay engaged at work. Another potential reason for the difference can be that attracting, retaining, and engaging Gen Y has been a focus for many organizations, thus neglecting the needs of the members of other generations such as Gen X. Although the current study did not find significant difference in career development amongst the generational cohorts, previous research has found that Gen X members do not believe that work is the most important part of their lives, which one can use such generational characteristic to explain why in this current study we found a difference in work engagement (Murray, 1997 as cited in Weston 2006; Patterson, 2007). According to such characteristic, Gen X simply does not give work such importance which might indicate the lower levels of work engagement.

Lack of differences between the two generational cohorts on career development and teamwork may be due to the organizational culture of the company. All employees from where this data were collected are asked to document and track their career and personal goals. Further, employees at this organization are constantly reminded of what is available to them in order to develop and grow in their careers. In addition, both of these generations value work-life-balance and although they care about their career development, they are not likely to make it a priority over their personal life.

As for teamwork, this company is predominantly set up in teams. Beyond the larger department (e.g. Human Resources) in which one belongs to, employees also belong to more specific teams, like a diversity team. Apart from the organization's culture, research has shown that both generations have either needed peers or have needed to be a part of a team at one point in their childhood (Raines, 2002; Weston, 2006; Vejar, 2008). Gen X needed friends and built friendships in order to get through a tough independent childhood; whereas Gen Y also saw the need for teamwork in order to get through school projects and team sports.

Consistent with previous research, the present study found gender differences on work engagement and career development (Bigoness, 1988; Cao, Horn, & Lynn, 1996; Elizur, 2001; Singh, 1994). Results showed that men had higher levels of work engagement and career development than women. When it comes to work engagement, men, when compared to women, had a higher belief that their career goals could be met at their current company, they were more proud of where they worked, would recommend their company to others, and were more likely to stay even if a comparable offer were presented to them. In regards to career development, men, in comparison to women, agreed that they had more career development discussions with their managers, understand more how their performance was evaluated, and they had a better understanding of what skills were needed in order to contribute to their company. As previous research has mentioned, pay is of much more importance to men than to women (Bigoness, 1988 & Elizur, 2001), therefore one can assume that men make it more of a priority to understand how they can grow and how they are being evaluated in order to

make themselves a probable candidate for the next promotion that is sure to come with a pay increase. The importance of pay might also be what drives men to stay engaged at work. Showing one's manager that he/she cares about his/her job and the company might also be a great way of quickly growing in one's career.

In regards to the lack of difference between gender and teamwork can also be due to the explanations given earlier, the fact that the company is generally set up in teams and sex plays no factor on to what team a person is part of. In addition, regardless of gender, these individuals were a part of either generation who needed some sort of team-like setup in order to survive childhood and adolescence. However, these interpretations are speculative.

Implications for Work and Organization

In the last 25 years, employees have shown to give work less and less importance in their lives (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Attempting to understand why this has become the case should be the first step organizations should take. Further, as most managers know, the reason(s) why the importance of work is decreasing usually vary from person to person. This study is of much importance because it helps managers and organizations understand how the generational workforce cohorts differ when it comes to work-related beliefs. Knowing that Gen Y is kept engaged at work and loyal to an organization through meaningful work, proper career development, and sufficient teamwork projects is noteworthy. Many organizations do not reward immediately after a job well done, knowing that Gen Y seeks immediate feedback or some type of recognition is important for organizations to keep in mind (Sujansky, 2004; Wood, 2006). Organizations can

consider implementing or changing their reward/recognition system in order to maintain those Gen Y employees' fulfilled.

Further, knowing that Gen X is not feeling as engaged as Gen Y at work suggest a re-visit as to what is causing such work engagement plummet. Is this truly one of the characteristics of this Gen X cohort? Or could it be that most efforts and attention are directed at Gen Y, consequently making Gen X members feel neglected and unvalued by the organization? An additional possibility for the lack of work engagement seen in Gen X employees can be their length of tenure with the organization. In this sample, more than 50% of Gen X employees had been with the company for over five years, which one can speculate that after a certain amount of time with a company, ones engagement level depletes. This is important because in a longitudinal study by De Witte, Lange, and Notelaers (2008) they found that when workers become less engaged, they start contemplating whether to stay or leave the company. Their results suggested that employees in that situation are more likely to leave the company. This is an important implication because, as previously mentioned, Gen X members are more likely to be the mentors and managers of some of the Gen Y workforce, therefore, keeping Gen X members' attitudes about work and the organization positive is of extreme importance in order for that attitude to be passed on to the Gen Y members. In addition, this research will help give those potential mentors and coaches the support and training to develop the necessary skills to tailor feedback to the needs of each person and their generational preferences (Patterson, 2007).

In regards to gender, it is important that female employees not be disregarded or overlooked when it comes to career development opportunities. It is crucial to provide all employees with opportunities for growth and professional development. Managers should challenge their female employees to set career development goals and encourage them to take charge of their careers. Further, research has shown that women give greater importance to coworkers, interaction with people, and convenient work hours than men (Elizur, 2001). Although not significant, this study did show that women tended to have higher levels of teamwork, therefore enforcing previous research. This is of importance because by giving women those experiences and interactions that they prefer could help to meet their needs and optimistically increase their work engagement.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

When one is trying to imply research findings to a workforce, it is best when the sample used is that of the real business world versus college student sample, which usually have limited work experience. Therefore, a strength of this study is the use of actual working Gen X and Gen Y employees as respondents. Having such a sample gives credibility to the results knowing that the findings came from individuals from an environment where these results could be similarly applied. Another strength of this study is the method the survey data was collected. The organization used an outside-vendor to collect the individual results. Thus, employees might have been even more willing to honestly and openly complete the survey, reducing the possibility of the participants responding in a socially desirable manner. An additional strength of the study is that the data were collected from one organization and one department. This can

be seen as strength because both generations in the sample were undergoing the same experience, policies, and rules, which might enhance the reliability of the survey responses.

At the same time, the fact that the sample came from one organization and one department could also be a limitation because the sample is not from diverse departments or industries, which can make it difficult to generalize the results to the larger population. Generalizing the results can imply that in a different department like Engineering, we are assuming that there is no difference between the generations and the feeling of working in collaborative team. This could be a wrongful generalization since engineers work in teams quite often and a collaborative team is needed in order for successful project to be accomplished. Therefore, knowing if there are generational differences on work-related beliefs in other departments, like Engineering, can be critical to a job well done. In addition, my sample was predominantly females, which implies that there could be large gender bias in regards to the results. Another limitation to this study is that some of the previous generational findings are U.S. centered and the participants in this study were from various locations around the world, not just the U.S. Therefore it is rather speculative to apply U.S. culturally centered findings to a more ethnically diverse population. Applying U.S. centered findings to other cultures, such as the need to have career development discussions can imply going against cultural traditions, such as the hierarchical set-up that is seen in places like China.

Future Research

This study, along with previous research, has found both similarities and differences between two generational cohorts. Such research findings can be used by organizations to make strategic changes in their policies and business practices. For such reasons, future research should be conducted in understanding the changes that the Gen Y cohort will bring to the workforce. Research has shown that Gen Y will bring some interesting and different attitudes and behaviors to the workplace, getting to know what those are will only enhance an organization's knowledge that can help towards gaining higher productivity results. Future research needs to study the values of Gen Y and compare them to those of Gen X and even to those of Baby Boomers since due to the current economic situation, they too will be in the workforce longer. As a result of the current literature review and research, work-related beliefs that kept coming up as important work aspects to various generations are those of teamwork, work-life balance, and flexible work schedules. Further research in those areas can only further identify what in the workplace is of value to the different generational cohorts. Lastly, additional research in different countries and of employees of different cultures will further enhance the study of generational differences. This research will greatly come in use to managers of expatriates.

Conclusion

As ordinary individuals living in this everyday world, we have experienced and noted that generational differences exist. Research shows that generational differences can be found in all types of environments, therefore the conscious examination of generational assumptions provides a rich and educational opportunity for many organizations. Shedding light on generational differences gives organizations the knowledge to better understand their current workforce and make the workplace a more enjoyable place for all generations and productive for the organization.

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