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AN ANALYSIS OF GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS

THESIS

Stacey L. Williams, Captain, USAF

AFIT/GCA/ENV/04M-12

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
AIR UNIVERSITY

**AIR FORCE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

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Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio

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AFIT/GCA/ENV/04M-12

THE ANALYSIS OF GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty

Department of Systems and Engineering Management

Graduate School of Engineering and Management

Air Force Institute of Technology

Air University

Air Education and Training Command

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Science in Cost Analysis

Stacey L. Williams, MS

Captain, USAF

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AFIT/GCA/ENV/04M-12

THE ANALYSIS OF GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS

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### **Abstract**

There seems to be a wide held belief that different generations have different attitudes toward work, organizations, and co-workers. Clearly, these observed differences have implications for managers and leaders. Actions taken by leaders might be misunderstood by junior organizational members, leading to undesirable outcomes. Considering that many generational groups are represented within government service, there is a need to analyze and understand potential generational differences. With the exception of the Smola and Sutton (2002) study, little empirical research has explored the extent to which these differences actually exist and whether differences exist among civil servants. This research explores the extent to which differences exist among three generations of civil servants and the affects these potential differences have on leadership strategies.

Hypotheses were developed based on generational characteristics and tested using a questionnaire that includes 77 items to assess general work attitudes, attitudes towards job and organization, and individual preferences toward work processes. The results of the study indicate that while generational differences were shown to exist, significant differences among the groups accounted for a small proportion of the variables tested. Ultimately, the study's significant findings could be explained by factors such as age or frame of reference.

## **Acknowledgements**

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Stacey L. Williams

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# AN ANALYSIS OF GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS

## **I. Introduction**

### *Background*

There seems to be a wide held belief that different generations have different attitudes toward work, organizations, and co-workers. Indeed, Smola and Sutton (2002) recently studied differences between Baby Boomers (born 1946 – 1964), Generation Xers (born 1965 – 1977), and Millenials (born 1978 – 1995). They found that work is not the central focus in one's life among younger people; yet, younger people hope to be promoted quickly through an organization's ranks. In contrast, the older workers reported less of a desire to be promoted quickly and felt more strongly that work is one of the most important parts of life. Clearly, these observed differences have implications for managers and leaders. Actions taken by leaders (who are often older) might be misunderstood by junior organizational members (who are often younger), leading to undesirable outcomes (i.e., turnover).

Considering that many generational groups are represented within Government Service, there is a need to analyze and understand potential generational differences. However, with the notable exception of the Smola and Sutton (2002) study, little empirical research has explored the extent to which these differences actually exist. Moreover, the influence these potential differences have on today's all-volunteer force has not been explored; yet, it appears to be a vital area of study for the Department of Defense and more specifically, Government Service. Accordingly, this research explores

the extent to which differences exist among three generations of civil servants and the affects these potential differences have on recruitment and retention strategies.

The purpose of this literature review is to investigate generational differences among the workforce. First, generations and cohorts will be defined and the history of generational analysis will be discussed. This will be followed by an exploration of the generational labels and years associated with the labels as found in the literature. Third, the characteristics, stereotypes, foci, and concerns of three generational groups currently in the workforce will be investigated. Finally, the findings related to general work attitudes, attitudes towards job, and organization will be highlighted, culminating with a series of hypotheses that will be tested in this study.

### *Generational Groups*

Generational labels and cohort theory date back to the 1920's. In an attempt to explain the political attitudes and behavior of German youth after World War I, German philosopher and sociologist Karl Mannheim (1928/1952) hypothesized that groups of people are bound together by historical events. Specifically, he suggested that groups of different ages undoubtedly share experiences; however, those of the same age tend to view those experiences differently than those that are older or younger. From these differing perspectives, distinct cohorts and generational groups emerge. Since Mannheim's 1928 analysis, the concept of cohorts and generational differences have been accepted and studied.

Based on Mannheim's theory, Meredith, Schewe, and Karlovich (2002), for example, determined that generational labels and periods for the US citizenship are as follows: Matures (born prior to 1946), Boomers (born between 1947 and 1965), and Xers

(born after 1965). Essentially, a generation is defined as a group of individuals born during the same time period and who experience similar external events during their late adolescent or early adult years (Schewe, Meredith, & Noble, 2001). Generational groups, referred to as cohorts, are influenced by these shared experiences. These shared experiences unite these individuals of a similar age and give them a common perspective to view the world around them. These common experiences and shared perspectives tend to shape attitudes, values, and preferences during late adolescence and early adulthood (generally between the ages of 17 and 23). These attitudes, values, and preferences endure as these individuals grow older, guiding subsequent activities and choices in later life.

While the idea that there are specific generational groups with shared beliefs is generally accepted, many have acknowledged that the extent to which these groups completely share beliefs should be viewed with some caution (e.g., Bennett & Rademacker, 1997). In other words, the experiences that develop the shared perspectives among a generation are viewed through diverse economic, political, and racial lenses. Therefore, it may be difficult to point to an absolute generational group that is defined by a set of shared experiences. Given this idea, it is not surprising that authors differ in the labels given to these generational groups and the birth years that are linked to each.

Figure 1 demonstrates the diversity of generational labels and birth years associated with those labels. These generational labels, and the birth years associated with each group, vary considerably. Typically, however, a generation is 20 to 25 years in length or the approximate time it takes a person to grow up and have children (Meredith & Schewe, 1994). The length of specific generations still varies because a generational

Figure 1. Summary of Generational Labels

Sources assigning generational Labels	Generational Labels & Years Associated with Each							
Meredith & Schewe (1994)	Depression (1912-1921)	WW II'ers (1922-1927)	Post-war (1928-1945)	Leading-edge Boomers (1946-1955)	Trailing-edge Boomers (1956-1965)	Generation X (1966-1976)	N Generation (1977-1984)	
Schewe & Meredith (2002)	Depression (1912-1921)	WW II'ers (1922-1927)	Post-war (1928-1945)	Leading-edge Boomers (1946-1955)	Trailing-edge Boomers (1956-1965)	Generation X (1966-1976)	N Generation (1977-1984)	
Schewe et al. (2001)	Depression (1912-1921)	WW II'ers (1922-1927)	Post-war (1928-1945)	Boomers I (1946-1955)	Boomers II (1956-1965)	Generation X (1966-1976)		
Pekala (2001)		Matures (1909-1945)		Boomers (1946-1964)	Generation X (1965-1978)	Generation Y (1979-Present)		
Zemke (2001)		Veterans (1922-1943)	Boomers (1944-1960)	X'ers (1960-1980)	Nexters (1980-Present)			
Smola & Sutton (2002)	World War II'ers (1909-1933)	Swingers (1934-1945)	Boomers (1946-1964)	Generation X (1965-1978)	Millenials (1979-1994)			
Cufaude (2000)		Matures (1909-1945)	Boomers (1946-1964)	Generation X (1965-1978)	Generation Y (1979-Present)			

group is defined by shared events among the groups' members. The earliest groupings and labels seemed to revolve around two significant events—the depression and the Second World War. Schewe and his colleagues (1994, 2001, 2002) suggest that there is a Depression Cohort (born between the years 1912 and 1921), a World War II Cohort (born between 1922 and 1927), and the Post-War Cohort (born between 1928 and 1945). These three cohorts, as defined by Schewe et al. (1994, 2001, 2002), are often grouped with the Depression Cohort and labeled the Matures who were born between the years 1909 and 1945 (Pekala, 2001). Zemke (2001) defines individuals born between the years 1922 and 1943 as Veterans.

The subsequent cohort was born during the surge of population that was observed in the United States immediately after the Second World War as service members returned from Europe and the Pacific. This surge in population, commonly termed the Baby Boom, has led to individuals born during this time being referred to as Boomers. While most authors agree that there is a large cohort termed Boomers that were born between 1946 and 1964 (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Cufaude, 2000), the Boomer cohort is often divided further. Born between the years 1946 and 1954, the Boomer I cohort is followed by the Boomer II Cohort, born between the years 1955 and 1965 (Meredith & Schewe, 1994). More recently, these two groups have been fused together. Smola and Sutton (2002), for instance, have defined the Baby Boomers as those individuals born between 1946 and 1964 while Jurkiewicz (2000) has defined the Baby Boomer generation as those born between 1946 and 1962.

The end of the Boomer cohort and the start of the next cohort appear to occur as the US began to dramatically escalate its commitment to Vietnam in the early 1960s.



Termed Generation X (often referred to as Xers), the literature consistently suggests that this group of individuals was born between the years 1960 and 1980 (Zemke, 2001).

Consistent with these dates, Meredith and Schewe (1994) defines the Generation X Cohort as the group born between 1966 and 1976 and Smola and Sutton (2002) define this generational group as those born between 1965 and 1978.

Finally, the newest generation born after 1979, the Millennials, often given the label Generation Y or Echo Boomers (Smith & Clurman, 1997), are still emerging in the workforce and continue to be redefined in the literature. The beginning of the Millennial generation is characterized by the economic strength of the Reagan and Clinton administrations, having never known a recession or life without computer technology. Howe and Strauss (2000) define the Millennials as the generation born between 1982 and 2000. The Millennial Cohort, as defined by Smola and Sutton (2002), were born between the years 1979 and 1994.

While many of the generational groups are active in today's workforce, this study will focus on the generations represented in today's civil service. Therefore, the study will examine differences between Boomers, Generation X, and Millennial's because the typical civil servant gains employment sometime between age 18 and serves until retirement age (Air Force Personnel Center, 2003). The average age average age of the civilian employee is 46.3 years with an average length of service of 16.2 years (Air Force Personnel Center, 2003). The labels for each generation and the years associated with each were based on those used by Smola and Sutton (2002). While not a consensus (see Figure 1), these labels and year groupings are commonly found in the literature. Moreover, by using Smola and Sutton's definitions, it was possible to compare the results

from this study with those of that study. In essence, this study replicates portions of Smola and Sutton's effort, expands it to include the Millennial generation, and includes other influential dimensions. Baby Boomers will be defined as born between the years 1946 and 1964. Generation X will be defined as born between the years 1965 and 1978 and the Millennials will be defined as born between the years 1979 and 1994. While the literature is not entirely in agreement on the labels that should be assigned to specific generations, the shared experiences and defining events are more consistent across the groups.

### *Defining Events*

Shared experiences that are important enough to have lifelong social consequences, referred to as defining events, influence characteristics, stereotypes, foci, and concerns of generational groups. Table 1 provides a summary of the shared experiences of the three generational groups and the influences these defining events have had on the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and the Millennials (a more comprehensive list of influences is provided in Appendix A). The influences examined in Table 1 include characteristics, stereotypes, focus, concern, beliefs, attitudes, and values.

#### *Baby Boomers (1946-1964)*

Baby Boomers are a birth cohort whose impressions were formed by significant cultural events in the mid 1960's. These include the Vietnam War, the Kennedy family's rise to political prominence, Woodstock, the Civil Rights movement, Women's Liberation movement, the Space Race, the Watergate scandal, and emergence of television. The Baby Boomers share core characteristics because of such defining events

Table 1  
 Defining Events, Characteristics, & Focus/Concerns By Generational Group

	<i>Baby Boomers</i>	<i>Generation X</i>	<i>Millennials</i>
<i>Birth Years*</i>	1946-1964	1965-1978	1979 - 1994
<i>Defining Events</i>	Vietnam War Civil Rights Riots Watergate scandal Cold War Proliferation of television	Dual income families Single-parent homes (with increased divorce rate) Introduction of MTV AIDS epidemic World-wide competition Latch-key kids Fall of the Berlin Wall	Internet chat School violence Proliferation of TV talk shows Multiculturalism Girls' movement McGuire and Sosa
<i>Characteristics</i>	Optimistic Driven Idealistic  Individualistic Lonely Cynical high expectations Distrustful of government	Individualistic Independence Desire for work autonomy (set own goals, deadlines, and hours) Creative Competitive Risk propensity Skeptical Family orientation Focused on job, not work hours	Compartmentalized work and life Mindful of authority Cautiously optimistic  Enthusiasm for the future
<i>Focus/Concerns</i>	Retirement Quality of life (over money) Protected individualism Family commitments	Child care Leisure time (over money)	Civic Duty Achievement Sociability Morality Diversity
<i>Citations</i>	Cufaude (2000) Jurkiewicz (2000) Meredith & Schewe (2002) Zemke (2001) Smola & Sutton (2002)	Jurkiewicz (2000) Smola & Sutton (2002) Zemke (2001)	Zemke (2001) Cufaude (2000) Pekala (2001)

\*Generational groups are defined based on Smola & Sutton (2002)

while coming of age. Baby Boomers tend to be optimistic and driven; they seek personal growth and gratification and are health and wellness conscious (Zemke, 2001).

According to Meredith, Schewe, and Karlovich (2002), Baby Boomers have some apparently inconsistent beliefs in that they are both individualistic and family oriented. Baby Boomers have been stereotyped as over-cautious, hierarchy-worshipping, and overly influenced by their parents who experienced the obscurity of the Depression (Jurkiewicz, 2000). Jurkiewicz (2000) also identified retirement issues and being more concerned with quality of life than with money as the major foci of the Baby Boomer generation.

#### *Generation X (1965-1978)*

Generation X defining events of the period include rising divorce, introduction of Music Television (MTV), the spread of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), escalation of world-wide competition, and the fall of the Berlin Wall (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Generation X shares common characteristics because of the influential shared experiences during adolescence and early adulthood. This generational cohort has been labeled skeptical by Lancaster and Stillman (2002) derived from a lack of trust in institutional and personal relationships. Lancaster and Stillman make this claim based on the many major American institutions called into question during this time, such as the presidency and corporate America. Many Xers grew up in single-parent homes due to rising divorce rates (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

In the workplace, Generation Xers are highly individualistic, competitive, and thrive upon a creative and chaotic work environment (Jurkiewicz, 2000). Zemke (2001) characterizes this generation as family-oriented and focused on the job not on work hours. Generation Xers are concerned with child care and are willing to trade high

compensation for leisure time (Jurkiewicz, 2000). Based on some of these ideas, Generation X has been stereotyped as the “slacker” generation, and are perceived to be arrogant and disloyal (Tulgan, 1997).

#### *Millennials (1979-1994)*

The latest generation to enter the workforce, the Millennials, is characterized by such defining events of the period as introduction of the internet, rising school violence, increased threats of terrorism (i.e., Oklahoma City bombing), and the emergence of multiculturalism (Zemke, 2001). Having never known a recession during their formidable years, the Millennials’ shared experiences characterize the generation as optimistic, technologically adept, and compartmentalized (Cufaude, 2000). Pekala (2001) characterizes the Millennials as mindful of authority with enthusiasm for the future and a high faith in the power of technology to deal with challenges. The Millennials are stereotyped as having a short attention span, not truly prepared for the workplace, and wanting opportunities handed to them (Pekala, 2001). The Millennials are concerned with diversity, achievement, morality, and civic duty (Zemke, 2001). Generational groups have different attitudes, values, and preferences because of shared experiences during adolescence and early adulthood. These differences translate into differences in work attitudes and values.

#### *Work Attitudes & Values*

Overall, the generational differences that have been suggested influence the groups’ values towards family, recreation, and work. While all of these areas of one’s life are undoubtedly important, this inquiry was limited to issues related to workplace attitudes and perceptions. Moreover, the study attempted to replicate and extend the

findings of previous studies (Cherrington, 1980; Smola & Sutton, 2002) that have explored intergenerational differences between older and younger workers. The differences that were explored were (a) general attitudes toward work; (b) attitudes toward the current job and organization; (c) attitudes toward the way work is done; and (d) attitudes toward organizational promises.

There were a number of individual variables that could be investigated as part of this study; however, only a limited number could ultimately be included. Considering practical issues, the length of the questionnaire had to be limited such that practitioners would allow it to be administered in a field setting (i.e., many practitioners are apprehensive about administering questionnaires that are too long). Considering theoretical issues, variables were included only if there appeared to be literature that suggested differences between the generational groups. In addition, measures had to demonstrate some level of validity and reliability—a more basic theoretical concern.

At this point, it is worth noting that the literature makes the distinction between differences associated with age and those associated with unique generational experiences. Research examining the relationship between age and work values associated with the traditional work ethic show that the correlation is not due to the effects of seniority, education, income, sex, and occupational status (Cherrington, Condie & England, 1979). According to Miller, Woehr, and Hudspeth (2002), the work ethic construct is characterized as multidimensional, pertaining to work and work-related activities. The work ethic is learned, related to attitudes and beliefs reflected in behaviors, and are secular but not tied to any one set of religious beliefs (Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth, 2002). Overall to the manager, it is important to understand the relationship

between shared generational experiences and the work ethic to better recruit, motivate, and retain a cross section of diverse employees.

#### *Attitudes Toward Work Itself*

Generational differences have been suggested to exist among workers' overall attitudes toward work. The general attitudes about work include feelings toward both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards of work, the recognition and enjoyment received from work, the importance and sense of obligation of work in one's life, and the amount of focus that the role of work should play in a worker's life. These attitudes and perceptions about work should provide some insight into today's workforce and the generations that make up that workforce.

#### *Desirability of Work Outcomes*

The desire to attain certain outcomes from work has been expected to differ across generational groups. That is, some generations would be expected to value intrinsic rewards over extrinsic rewards (Cherrington, 1980). Cherrington (1980) studied this phenomenon among 3,053 American that represented three age groups (17-26, 27-40, and 41-65 years of age). Cherrington (1980) concluded that younger workers placed greater emphasis on the importance of money, an extrinsic reward, when compared to their older counterparts. Smola and Sutton (2002), using the same 'desirability of work outcomes' scale, studied differences among Baby Boomers and Generation X. Smola and Sutton (2002) found that the Generation Xers reported a stronger desire to be promoted more quickly than the Baby Boomers. Given the empirical data and the stereotypes that suggest that younger workers are achievement oriented, Baby boomers would be expected to have a strong desirability for intrinsic rewards of work. However,

when compared to Generation Xers and Millennials, the Baby boomers would not be expected to have as strong a desirability for both extrinsic rewards as these two younger generational groups.

### *Pride in Craftsmanship*

Much like the preferences for rewards, the stereotypical generational groups would be expected to differ in their beliefs that work is inherently enjoyable and one should be recognized for doing a good job (Cherrington, 1980). Suggesting that these beliefs collectively reflect one's "pride in craftsmanship," Cherrington (1980) found significant differences across three age groups that were studied. Younger workers felt that "pride in craftsmanship" was less desirable, having leisure and free time was more desirable, and doing a poor job was more acceptable (Cherrington, 1980). In contrast, Smola and Sutton (2002) found no significant differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X in "pride in craftsmanship." Based on these most contemporary findings (Smola & Sutton, 2002), the generational characteristics concerning "pride in craftsmanship" would indicate no significant differences across the three generations.

### *Moral Importance of Work*

Because younger generations are said to be less interested in work than older generations, many have suggested that younger workers' feelings toward their moral obligation to have an occupation and contribute some product or service to society differs significantly from older workers (Cherrington, 1980). Cherrington (1980) tested this hypothesis, finding younger workers were significantly less work-oriented than older workers. Moreover, younger workers did not believe that work should be one of the most important parts of a person's life as did the older workers (Cherrington, 1980).



Replicating Cherrington's study, Smola and Sutton (2002) found significant differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X perceptions regarding the importance of work. Baby Boomers accepted the belief that work should be one of the most important parts of a person's life much more than Generation X. These findings would indicate would indicate that Baby Boomers have a high acceptance of work importance while Generation X and the Millennials would have a low acceptance of work importance.

### *Work Centrality*

Clearly, the attitudes toward work that have been tapped at this point have been designed to explore the extent to which generations may differ with regards to their work ethic (i.e., pride in craftsmanship) and commitment toward work (i.e., moral importance of work). While an array of attitudes were measured, the work done by Cherrington (1980 and Smola and Sutton (2002) relied on single-item measures that were qualitatively grouped. Thus, constructs were not tapped and reliability estimates for the measures could not be estimated.

In an effort to redress these issues, a measure of work centrality was used to extend the findings presented by Cherrington (1980) and Smola and Sutton (2002). Work centrality represents an individuals' belief that work is a central life interest and incredibly an important factor in their lives (Hirshfeld & Feild, 2000). Hirshfeld and Feild's (2000) findings suggest that work centrality is associated with one's value system (i.e., work ethic) and self-identity. Generational differences would be expected to translate into differences in work ethics and values. Based on the relationship between work centrality and generational characteristics regarding the work ethic, Baby Boomers would be expected to have the strongest identification with work, and thus work

centrality, due to characteristics and stereotypes found in the literature and summarized in Appendix A. Generation X and the Millennials are expected to have less loyalty to the work ethic and, therefore, have less of a work centrality focus.

#### *Attitudes Toward Current Job And Organization*

Different opinions and perceptions exist among today's workforce regarding the current job and organizational climate. The extent to which these differences are related to generational groups is not clearly understood. It is reasonable to expect that the events and characteristics that have shaped the attitudes and perceptions of the generations should produce differences in attitudes toward a worker's current job and organization. For instance, an individual's perceptions of what happens at work and its relevance would be expected to influence the worker's satisfaction with the job. The differences should be detected in overall satisfaction and loyalty and should provide valuable insight into today's diverse workforce.

#### *Satisfaction*

*Job satisfaction.* Job satisfaction reflects an overall affective feeling that one has towards his or her job (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983). It arises from one's perceptions of his or her job and feelings of fit between the organization and individual. While there appears to be no studies that have explored the relationships between generational groups and satisfaction explicitly, studies have explored the relationships between age and satisfaction. These studies have suggested that satisfaction does differ as age differs, suggesting that satisfaction may differ across generational groups as well. Schwoerer and May (1996) found an empirical relationship between age and satisfaction where older workers tended to be more satisfied than younger workers.

Of course, generational groups do not change over time. That is, unlike an individual's age, a person's birth cohort does not vary and he or she remains in the same cohort throughout his or her life and career. Longitudinal studies would be needed to determine the extent to which the differences that age groups are satisfied with their jobs can be attributed to generational influences or evolve with maturity. Still, the findings that have investigated the age-satisfaction relationships coupled with the stereotypes that have been discussed give some insights into the differences that might be observed among generational groups. The generational characteristics concerning commitment and loyalty would indicate that Baby Boomers would be expected to score higher on the satisfaction scale than Generation X and the Millennials.

*Perceived organizational support.* Perceived organizational support is defined as individuals' feeling that the organization values their contributions, treats them favorably, and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Based on the relationship between loyalty, commitment, and generational characteristics, this study would expect to detect differences across the generational groups. The generational characteristics concerning commitment and loyalty would indicate that Baby Boomers would be expected to score higher on the perceived organizational support scale than Generation X and the Millennials.

### *Loyalty*

*Commitment.* Commitment represents some level of loyalty to the organization. The extent to which commitment is related to generational categories is not clear. Feingold, Morhman, and Sprietzer (2002) found that individuals of all ages were committed to their firms if they felt that certain needs were being met. However,

younger employees appeared less committed when needs were not met, indicating that they would be more willing to leave a company if dissatisfied with opportunities. When these findings are considered along with the common generational characteristics that have been discussed, it seemed appropriate to examine the extent to which generational groups differed in two types of organizational commitment, normative and affective. Allen and Meyer (1990) suggest that normative commitment refers to the individuals' sense obligation to remain with their organization while affective commitment refers to the individuals' emotional attachment to the organization. The generational characteristics concerning commitment and loyalty would indicate that Baby Boomers would be expected to express higher levels of commitment than Generation X and the Millennials.

*Turnover Intentions.* The turnover intentions scale measures whether workers have intentions to leave the organization with high scores indicating the intention to leave and low scores indicating the intention to continue organizational membership (Blau, 1989). Based on the relationship between loyalty, commitment, and generational characteristics, this study would expect to detect differences across the generational groups. The generational characteristics concerning commitment and loyalty would indicate that Baby Boomers would be expected to score lower on the turnover intentions scale than Generation X and the Millennials.

*Careerism.* The careerism scale measures whether workers feel that the relationship with the organization is nothing more than a stepping stone in their career (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). The generational characteristics concerning commitment

and loyalty would indicate that Baby Boomers would be expected to score higher on the careerism scale than Generation X and the Millennials.

### *Attitudes Toward The Way Work Is Done*

Defining events, characteristics, and concerns of a generation will shape attitudes towards the way work is done which includes an individual's outlook on personal independence, group productivity, and individualism. This research suggests that generational differences should produce differences in attitudes toward the way work is done. For example, an individual's preference to work alone would be expected to influence the worker's attitudes toward the way work is done (i.e., group productivity vs. individualism). These attitudes were shaped based on influences during late adolescence and early adult years and this research suggests they will differ across the different generations present in today's workforce.

### *Personal Independence*

The personal independence scale measures whether workers prefer to work alone rather than in groups (Wagner, 1995). Low scores indicate a strong agreement with personal independence. Wagner (1995) concludes that individualism-collectivism has a direct effect: individualists who feel independent and self-reliant are less likely to value cooperative behavior, and collectivists who feel interdependent and reliant on groups are more likely to value group productivity. Based on the relationship between teamwork mentality and generational characteristics, this study would expect to detect differences across the generational groups. Generation X had been characterized as determined individualists and fiercely independent by Jurkiewicz (2000) and this study would expect the group to have a higher personal independence score indicating a weak agreement with

teamwork. The generational characteristics concerning team-orientation would indicate that Baby Boomers and the Millennials would be expected to score low on personal independence measures indicating a strong agreement with teamwork.

### *Group Productivity*

The group productivity scale measures workers' feelings towards individuals pursuing their own interests contribute to group effectiveness (Wagner, 1995). Low scores indicate a strong agreement with group productivity. Based on the relationship between teamwork mentality and generational characteristics, this study would expect to detect differences across the generational groups. Generation X had been characterized as determined individualists and fiercely independent by Jurkiewicz (2000) and this study would expect the group to have a lower group productivity score indicating a strong agreement with individuals pursuing their own interests contributing to group effectiveness. The generational characteristics concerning team-orientation would indicate that Baby Boomers and the Millennials would be expected to score higher on group productivity measures indicating a strong agreement with teamwork.

### *Individualism*

The individualism scale measures whether workers place greater importance on personal interests and desires (Wagner, 1995). High scores indicate a strong agreement with individualism. Based on the relationship between teamwork mentality and generational characteristics, this study would expect to detect differences across the generational groups. Generation X had been characterized as determined individualists and fiercely independent by Jurkiewicz (2000) and this study would expect the group to have a high individualism score indicating a strong agreement with the importance of

personal interests and desires. The generational characteristics concerning team-orientation would indicate that Baby Boomers and the Millennials would be expected to score lower on individualism measures indicating a strong agreement with teamwork.

#### *Attitudes Toward Organizational Promises*

Finally, the psychological contract violations scale measure perceived expectations between organizations and employees. The psychological contract violation scale measures the extent to which respondents believe some form of a promise has been made (between themselves and the organization) and that the terms and conditions of the contract have been accepted by both parties (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).

Psychological contracts differ from expectations in that the psychological contract demands a belief in what the employer must provide, based on perceived promises of a reciprocal exchange (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). The longer and stronger the employment relationship endures, the more the reciprocity grows. This relationship would suggest that if an individual feels mutual loyalty and optimism for an employer, the worker would not expect violations of the psychological contract. The generational characteristics concerning optimism and loyalty would indicate that Baby Boomers would be expected to score higher on the psychological contract, Millennials would be expected to have the second highest score, and Generation X would be expected to score the lowest.

#### Summary

Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials are described extensively throughout the literature with each generation's shared experiences and defining events translating into common characteristics, foci, concerns, and, ultimately, work values and

preferences. The generational differences that were explored were (a) general attitudes toward work; (b) attitudes toward the current job and organization; (c) attitudes toward the way work is done; and (d) attitudes toward organizational promises. Hypotheses were established based on the relationship between the appropriate characteristic and generational group. Table 2 provides a summary of all hypotheses presented.



Table 2  
Hypotheses

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Birth Years	1946-1964 <i>(Smola and Sutton, 2002)</i>	1965-1978 <i>(Smola and Sutton, 2002)</i>	1979 - 1994 <i>(Smola and Sutton, 2002)</i>
<b>Attitudes Toward Work Itself</b>			
Desirability of Work Outcomes	Stronger Desirability for Intrinsic Rewards	Stronger Desirability for Intrinsic/Extrinsic Rewards	Stronger Desirability for Extrinsic Rewards
Moral Importance of Work	High Acceptance	Low Acceptance	Low Acceptance
Pride in Craftsmanship	No Significant Differences	No Significant Differences	No Significant Differences
Work Centrality	Strongest Identification	Less Focus	Less Focus
<b>Attitudes Toward Current Job &amp; Organization</b>			
Job Satisfaction	Higher Satisfaction	Lower Satisfaction	Lower Satisfaction
Perceived Organizational Support	Higher Score	Lower Score	Lower Score
Turnover Intentions	Lower Turnover Intentions	Higher Turnover Intentions	Higher Turnover Intentions
Careerism	Higher Careerism	Lower Careerism	Lower Careerism
Normative Commitment	Highest Score	Second Highest Score	Lowest Score
Affective Commitment	Higher Score	Lower Score	Lower Score
<b>Attitudes Toward The Way Work Is Done</b>			
Personal Independence	Strong Agreement with Teamwork	Weak Agreement with Teamwork	Strong Agreement with Teamwork
Group Productivity	High Score	Lower Score	High Score
Individualism	Lower Score	High Score	Lower Score
<b>Attitudes Toward Organizational Promises</b>			
Psychological Contract Violations	Highest Score	Second Highest Score	Lowest Score

*Note: Hypotheses presented based on the relationship between appropriate characteristics and the generational group.*

## II. METHOD

In order to examine the effects of generational differences on work values, three groups were purposefully selected and invited to participate in the study such that comparisons could be made between each generational group. To ensure the ethical obligations were fulfilled, the researchers had the study reviewed and received prior approval to proceed in accordance with the EN Operating Instruction 40-1 and Human Subjects Regulations and Protocols defined by Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46 (45 CFR 46). Included in the review were the exemption letter, located at Appendix B, the protocol outline, located at Appendix C, the actual questionnaire, located at Appendix D, and the summary of study variables, located at Appendix E.

### Sample

The participants were placed in the appropriate generational category based on their self-reported age that was collected with a single open-ended item (i.e., participants will identify their age in years). The first generational group is a sample of Millennials. The Millennials (often referred to as Nexters, Internet Generation, or Generation Y) were born in the years 1979 to 1994 based on a definition by Smola and Sutton (2002). The second generational group consists of a sample of Generation X'ers who were born between the years 1965 and 1978 (as defined by Smola & Sutton, 2002). Finally, the third generational group represented in the sample is Baby Boomers born between the years 1946 and 1964 (as defined by Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Other demographical information was collected to include the gender, occupation/job information, number of organizations (government service is considered

one organization), number of jobs, years of service (if applicable), category of current job status (active duty or civilian), and category of race. Occupation/job information, number of different organizations worked for, number of different job titles, and years of service were collected with open-ended items. Gender was selected from two options: male or female. Category of current job status was selected from three options: Active duty, DoD Civilian, and Other. Race was selected from six options: White, African American, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian American/Pacific Islander, and Other.

In summary, two hundred and ninety-six civil servants of various grade levels and responsibilities completed the questionnaire. Some questionnaires were unable to be used due to missing information, particularly the date of birth. An estimated twenty questionnaires could not be used for analysis due to this error. The average age of the respondents was 46.3 years ( $SD = 7.86$  years). Of the 296 respondents who indicated their gender, 39% were female and 61% were male. Career fields or professions ranged from administrative assistant to engineer. On average, the respondents had (a) worked for 2.7 organizations (considering government service as one organization), (b) held 3.2 different jobs (considering each the government job family as one job), (c) worked in government service for 19 years ( $SD = 8.48$  years). The following is a break down of percentages of the 290 respondents that indicated their category of race: 86.6% White, 7.3% African American, 1.0% Hispanic, 1.0% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 1.7% Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 2.4% Other. Table 3 summarized these demographics as well as the demographic profile of the organization involved. In all, it appears that our sample generally reflected the demographic profile of the

Table 3

*Mean Numbers of Respondents Background Information and Organizational Profile*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Sample</b>		<b>Organizational Profile</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	
<b>Age</b>	46.3	7.86	46.3
<b>Job/Organizational Totals</b>			
<i>Number of Organizations</i>	2.7	2.14	--
<i>Number of Different jobs</i>	3.2	2.05	--
<i>Total time in Government Service</i>	19	8.48	--
<b>Gender</b>			
<i>Male</i>	61%		71 %
<i>Female</i>	39%		29 %
<b>Sample Size</b>			
<i>DoD Civilians</i>	100%		63.6 %
<b>Race</b>			
<i>White</i>	86.6%		84 %
<i>African American</i>	7.3%		12 %
<i>Hispanic</i>	1.0%		1.5 %
<i>American Indian/Alaskan Native</i>	1.0%		--
<i>Asian American/Pacific Islander</i>	1.7%		--
<i>Other</i>	2.4%		3 %

*Note.* Organizational profile data were provided by the Human Resources Directorate of the organization. Some demographic information for the organization was not available.

organization involved. For instance, the average age of an employee on the installation was 46.3 years and the average age of the participants were 46.3 years ( $SD = 7.86$ ).

### Procedure

The data were collected anonymously. A paper-and-pencil questionnaire was administered to employees of a large Department of Defense organization that were participating in a Diversity Awareness Training course. The training course was directed by the organizations senior leadership. These leaders felt that today's workforce required a better understanding of the ever-increasing global society of different backgrounds, races and ethnic groups. To facilitate this understanding, all organizational members, supervisors and their subordinates, needed some training that emphasized the importance of tolerance when interacting with a diverse group of co-workers, and staying within the legal boundaries (Right Brain, n.d.). Beyond traditional, race, gender, or particular ethnic groups issues addressed in many of the courses (Arai, Wanca-Thibault, and Shockley-Zalabak, 2001) the course spent time discussing generational differences as well. Ultimately, this course was designed to promote the policy of individual opportunity, and professional growth in an environment free from discrimination and harassment, enhancing the overall performance of the organization.

Prior to the questionnaire's administration, the purpose of the research was explained to participants in a brief oral presentation. In addition, the written instructions that were included with each questionnaire were read aloud to all participants. The oral review was closed with the instructor reminding the participants that they should not include their name anywhere on the questionnaire. As questionnaires were completed and returned to the instructor, participants were given the researcher's contact

information to ensure they can get in touch with the researcher if they have future questions.

### Measures

A questionnaire that includes 77 items was used to assess general work attitudes, attitudes towards job and organization, and individual preferences toward work processes. Unless otherwise noted, participants expressed their agreement with each item by choosing one of the seven response options on a 7-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Slightly Disagree*, 4 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, 5 = *Slightly Agree*, 6 = *Agree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*). A copy of the questionnaire and a list of items grouped according to the construct each taps is presented in Appendix D and E.

#### *Attitudes Towards Work Itself*

##### *Desirability of Work Outcomes*

Nine items developed by Cherrington (1980) were used to measure the desirability of work outcomes. These nine items represented the extent to which respondents feel value in intrinsic and extrinsic rewards of work. Participants responded with the following options: 1 = *Extremely Undesirable*, 2 = *Undesirable*, 3 = *Somewhat Undesirable*, 4 = *Neither Undesirable or Desirable*, 5 = *Somewhat Desirable*, 6 = *Desirable*, or 7 = *Extremely Desirable*. One item asked, “Being recognized and gaining the respect of other.” Each of the items were reported individually; therefore, no estimates of reliability were available. Cherrington (1980) and Smola and Sutton (2002) have used these items in previous studies that have explored generational differences.

### *Pride in Craftsmanship*

Six items developed by Cherrington (1980) were used to measure pride in craftsmanship. These six items represented the extent to which respondents feel they should enjoy their work and receive recognition for doing a good job. For instance, one item asked, “A worker should do a decent job whether or not his supervisor is around.” Again, there were no estimates of reliability; however, along with Cherrington (1980), Smola and Sutton (2002) have used these items in previous studies that explores generational differences.

### *Moral Importance of Work*

Five items developed by Cherrington (1980) were used to measure the moral importance of work. These five items represented the extent to which respondents feel their moral obligation to have an occupation and contribute some product or service to society. For instance, one item asked, “I would quit my job if I inherited a lot of money.” There were no estimates of reliability; however, along with Cherrington (1980), Smola and Sutton (2002) have used these items in previous studies that explores generational differences.

### *Work Centrality*

In an effort to include more reliable scales along with those previously used in generational studies, twelve items developed by Paullay, Alliger, and Stone-Romero (1994) were used to measure work centrality. These twelve items represented the extent to which respondents feel work is an important factor in their lives. For instance, one item asked, “Work should only be a small part of one’s life. (reverse score)” The scale appears reliable; for instance, Hirschfeld and Field (2000) reported an estimate of

reliability with an alpha of .76. The reliability coefficient of the scale utilized in this study was .80.

### *Attitudes Towards Current Job and Organization*

#### *Satisfaction*

*Job Satisfaction.* Three items developed by Cammann, Fishman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1983) were used to measure satisfaction. These three items represented the extent to which respondents view their job positively. High scores indicated overall satisfaction with the job. For instance, one item asked, “All in all, I am satisfied with my job.” Cammann et al. (1983) report an estimate of reliability of .77 (coefficient alpha). The reliability coefficient of the scale utilized in this study was .84.

*Perceived Organizational Support.* Six items developed by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) were used. These items represented the extent to which respondents feel that the organization values their contributions, treats them favorably, and cares about their well-being. High scores indicated that respondents feel the organization is committed to them. For instance, one item asked, “The organization shows very little concern for me. (reverse score)” The reliability coefficient of the scale utilized in this study was .91.

In their original study, Eisenberger et al. (1986) used a 36-item instrument to measure perceived organizational support, reporting a coefficient alpha of .97. Following the lead of more recent research as who have measured perceived organizational support, this research utilized an abbreviated scale composed of six items with the highest factor loadings from Eisenberger et al.’s (1986) research. These more abbreviated scales have



demonstrated sufficient levels of reliability to warrant their use. Wayne, Shore, and Liden (1997), for instance, used a nine-item variation of Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) scale that produced a coefficient alpha of .93 in their study. The reliability coefficient of the scale utilized in this study was .91.

### *Loyalty*

*Turnover Intentions.* A five item scale was developed based on items from Blau (1989) and Cammann et al. (1983) to measure turnover intentions. These five items represented the extent to which respondents have intentions to leave the organization. High scores indicated the intention to leave while low scores indicate the intention to continue organizational membership. For instance, one item asked, "I am actively looking for a job outside of Government Service." The estimates of reliability do not exist for the combined scale however, the estimate of reliability for the items developed by Blau (1989) was .82 and the estimate for the items from Cammann, et al. (1983) was .83. The reliability coefficient of the scale utilized in this study was .80.

*Careerism.* Five items developed by Robinson and Rousseau (1994) were used to measure careerism. These five items represented the extent to which respondents feel that the relationship with the organization is nothing more than a stepping-stone in one's career. For instance, one item asked, "I took this job as a stepping stone to a better job with another organization." Robinson and Rousseau (1994) have estimated the reliability of the scales at .78. The reliability coefficient of the scale utilized in this study was .56, which was too low and unreliable. All methods to improve the careerism scale reliability were attempted and proved unsuccessful; therefore, the careerism scale was removed from the study.

*Normative Commitment.* Five items developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) were used to measure normative commitment. These five items represented the extent to which respondents feel an obligation to remain with the organization. For instance, one item asked, “I think that people these days move from company to company too often.” Allen and Meyer (1990) reported a reliability coefficient of .79. The reliability coefficient of the scale utilized in this study was .63, which was too low and unreliable. All methods to improve the scale’s reliability were attempted and proved unsuccessful; therefore, the normative commitment scale was removed from the study.

*Affective Commitment.* Eight items developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) were used to measure affective commitment. These eight items represented the extent to which respondents are emotionally attached to the organization. High scores indicated strong identification and involvement in the organization. For instance, one item asked, “I could be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.” Allen and Meyer (1990) reported a reliability coefficient of .87. The reliability coefficient of the scale utilized in this study was .83.

#### *Attitudes Towards The Way Work Is Done*

##### *Personal Independence*

Three items developed by Wagner (1995) were used to measure team environment. These three items represented the extent to which respondents prefer to work alone rather than in groups. For instance, one item asked, “Given the choice, I would rather do a job where I can work alone rather than doing a job where I have to work with others in a group.” Wagner (1995) reported a reliability coefficient of .83. The reliability coefficient of the scale utilized in this study was .78.

### *Group Productivity*

Three items developed by Wagner (1995) were used to measure team environment. These three items represented the extent to which respondents feel that individuals pursuing their own interests contribute to group effectiveness. For instance, one item asked, “A group is more productive when its members do what *they* want to do rather than what the group wants to do.” Wagner (1995) reported a reliability coefficient of .76. The reliability coefficient of the scale utilized in this study was .56, which was too low and unreliable. All methods to improve the scale’s reliability were attempted and proved unsuccessful; therefore, the group productivity scale was removed from the study.

### *Individualism*

Four items developed by Wagner (1995) were used to measure team environment. These four items represented the extent to which respondents place greater importance on personal interests and desires. For instance, one item asked, “Only those who depend on themselves get ahead in life.” Each of the items were group in different factor groupings, therefore, no estimates of reliability were available. The reliability coefficient of the scale utilized in this study was .41, which was too low and unreliable. All methods to improve the scale’s reliability were attempted and proved unsuccessful; therefore, the individualism scale was removed from the study.

### *Attitudes Towards Organizational Promises*

Two items developed by Robinson and Rousseau (1994) was used to measure psychological contract violations. These two items represented the extent to which respondents believe that some form of a promise has been made (between themselves and the organization) and both parties have accepted the terms and conditions of the contract.

The first of these two items asked, “Please indicated how well, overall, your first employer has fulfilled the promised obligations that they owed you?” Participants will respond with the following options: 1 = very poorly fulfilled, 2 = poorly fulfilled, 3 = neutral, 4 = fulfilled, 5 = very well fulfilled. Participants also responded to a second item with the following options (yes or no) and open-ended if response is yes. The second item asked, “Please respond yes or no: Has or had your employer failed to meet the obligation(s) that were promised to you? If yes, please explain in the space below.” Robinson and Rousseau (1994) reported a reliability coefficient of .78. In this study, only one item could be measured in the psychological contract violations scale; therefore, no estimates of reliability were available.

#### Summary

In summary, the Smola and Sutton (2002) study identified differences between the three generations and found they had different expectations concerning their desirability of work outcomes, importance of work, along with their desire for promotion and additional responsibilities. These differences influence actions taken by managers and their subordinates in their daily interactions. To date, additional studies have been done in other areas such as work centrality, job satisfaction, and perceived organizational support; however, studies have not directly tied these areas to generational differences. This research identified four main areas of study along with their associated variables to determine if generational differences exist and evaluate each perspective within the active duty and civilian population. The next chapter will discuss the analytical procedures used to explore the variables of the generational differences instrument utilized in this research.

### **III. Results**

#### Descriptive Statistics

The purpose of the research was to study the three generations currently in the workforce. While our sample appeared representative of the population (i.e. civil servants at a particular installation), very few Millennials were represented n= 18 out of N= 314. Subsequently, this study is focused on generational differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X.

#### *Attitudes Towards Work Itself*

##### *Desirability of Work Outcomes*

The sample was analyzed to detect generational differences in desirability of work outcomes among civil servants. A significant differences was found between Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers in extrinsic rewards of work (Table 4, Columns 6-8), with Gen X-ers reporting a stronger desire to get more money or a large pay increase.

##### *Pride in Craftsmanship*

The sample was analyzed to detect generational differences in pride in craftsmanship among civil servants. No significant differences were found between Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers on how each of the generations feel they should enjoy their work and receive recognition for doing a good job (Table 4, Columns 5-7).

##### *Moral Importance of Work*

The sample was analyzed to detect generational differences in moral importance of work among civil servants. No significant differences were found between Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers on how each of the generations feel about their moral obligation

to have an occupation and contribute some product or service to society (Table 4, Columns 5-7).

#### *Work Centrality*

The sample was analyzed to detect generational differences in work centrality among civil servants. No significant differences were found between Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers on how each of the generations feel work is an important factor in their lives (Table 5, Column 1).

#### *Attitudes Toward Current Job and Organization*

##### *Satisfaction*

*Job Satisfaction.* The sample was analyzed to detect generational differences in job satisfaction among civil servants. No significant differences were found between Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers on how each of the generations view their job positively (Table 5, Column 1).

*Perceived Organizational Support.* The sample was analyzed to detect generational differences in perceived organizational support among civil servants. No significant differences were found between Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers on how each of the generations feel their organization values their contributions, treats them favorably, and cares about their well-being (Table 5, Column 1).

##### *Loyalty*

*Turnover Intentions.* The sample was analyzed to detect generational differences in turnover intentions among civil servants. A significant difference was found between Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers on items in the turnover intentions scale, with Gen X-ers

reporting a stronger indication to leave the organization ( $F=4.613, p<.05$ ) (Table 5, Column 1).

*Affective Commitment.* The sample was analyzed to detect generational differences in affective commitment among civil servants. No significant differences were found between Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers on how each of the generations are emotionally attached to the organization (Table 5, Column 1).

*Attitudes Toward the Way Work is Done*

The sample was analyzed to detect generational differences in personal independence among civil servants. No significant differences were found between Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers on how each of the generations prefers to work alone rather than in groups (Table 5, Column 1).

*Attitudes Toward Organizational Promises*

The sample was analyzed to detect generational differences in psychological contract violations among civil servants. No significant differences were found between Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers on how each of the generations believe that some form of a promise has been made (between themselves and the organization) and that the terms and conditions of the contract have been accepted by both parties (Table 5, Column 1).

Table 4

*Smola & Sutton (2002) and Study Sample (2003) Mean and Standard Deviation Comparison Table*

2003 Survey Items	Smola & Sutton (2002)		Study Sample (2003)					
	Boomers	Gen-X	Boomers		Gen-X		Millenials	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b><i>DESIRABILITY OF WORK OUTCOMES<sup>a</sup></i></b>								
39. Being recognized and gaining the respect of others (Intrinsic)	8.67	8.70	5.91	0.87	6.00	1.03	--	--
40. Being of service to others (Intrinsic)	8.58	8.65	6.00	0.87	6.02	0.91	--	--
41. Feeling more worthwhile (Intrinsic)	8.68	8.51	5.91	0.91	5.89	0.83	--	--
42. Feeling pride in craftsmanship in your work (Intrinsic)	9.13	8.97	6.28	0.74	6.40	0.68	--	--
43. Getting more money or a large pay increase (Extrinsic)	8.52	8.78	5.73	0.99	6.04	0.96	--	--
45. Having the flexibility to balance work and family <sup>b</sup> (Extrinsic)	-	-	5.51	1.05	5.75	1.11	--	--
46. Being promoted more quickly (Extrinsic)	7.78	8.13	5.60	0.97	5.69	1.09	--	--
47. Receiving more fringe benefits (Intrinsic)	8.13	8.24	5.64	0.95	5.71	1.07	--	--
48. Having your supervisor compliment you (Extrinsic)	8.17	8.23	6.13	0.80	5.98	1.01	--	--
44. Having leisure and free time (Intrinsic)	8.45	8.61	6.46	0.78	6.60	0.66	--	--
<b><i>PRIDE IN CRAFTSMANSHIP</i></b>								
27. A worker should do a decent job whether or not his supervisor is around	6.42	6.48	6.58	0.64	6.56	0.60	--	--
25. A worker should feel a sense of pride in his work	6.28	6.45	6.37	0.73	6.31	0.69	--	--
37. An individual should enjoy his/her work	5.93	5.94	6.27	0.82	6.44	0.71	--	--
18. Getting recognition for my own work is important to me	5.55	5.78	5.29	1.26	5.67	1.35	--	--



1. There is nothing wrong with doing a poor job at work if a person can get away with it	6.55	6.39	6.58	1.29	6.69	0.89	--	--
20. <i>In your job, if you work hard, how probable is it that: You will feel more worthwhile and be a better person?</i>	5.33	5.37	5.38	1.18	5.24	1.23	--	--
<b>MORAL IMPORTANCE OF WORK</b>								
19. I would quit my job if I inherited a lot of money	3.45	3.61	4.85	1.92	4.50	2.04	--	--
8. Working hard makes one a better person	5.29	5.66	5.17	1.53	4.96	1.77	--	--
21. A good indication of a man's worth is how well he does his job	6.01	4.91	4.74	1.43	4.53	1.56	--	--
30. Rich people should feel an obligation to work even if they do not need to	3.36	3.31	3.78	1.55	3.56	1.46	--	--
13. Work should be one of the most important parts of a person's life	4.33	3.86	3.83	1.68	3.87	1.62	--	--

*Note: Numbers correspond to item number on this study's questionnaire.*

<sup>a</sup>Smola & Sutton (2002) measured these items on a 1 to 100 scale. <sup>b</sup>This item was added to this study's questionnaire.

Table 5  
*Study Sample and Generational Groups Comparison of Means*

	Study Sample (2003)	AFIT (2003)					
		Boomers (1946-1964)		Gen-X (1965-1977)		Millenials (1978-1995)	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b><i>ATTITUDES TOWARD WORK ITSELF</i></b>							
Work Centrality ( $\alpha=.80$ )	3.55	3.54	0.90	3.57	0.79	--	--
<b><i>ATTITUDS TOWARD CURRENT JOB &amp; ORGANIZATION</i></b>							
Job Satisfaction ( $\alpha=.84$ )	5.30	5.31	1.34	5.27	1.27	--	--
Perceived Organizational Support ( $\alpha=.91$ )	4.27	4.33	1.42	4.01	1.27	--	--
Turnover Intentions ( $\alpha=.80$ )	2.70	2.63	1.22	3.02	1.26	--	--
Careerism ( $\alpha=.56$ )	3.63	3.56	1.06	3.95	1.05	--	--
Normative Commitment ( $\alpha=.63$ )	4.25	4.30	0.93	4.00	0.91	--	--
Affective Commitment ( $\alpha=.83$ )	4.16	4.20	1.17	3.96	1.01	--	--
<b><i>ATTITUDES TOWARD THE WAY WORK IS DONE</i></b>							
Personal Independence ( $\alpha=.78$ )	3.71	3.72	1.33	3.65	1.13	--	--
Group Productivity ( $\alpha=.56$ )	2.64	2.64	1.07	2.63	1.08	--	--
Individualism ( $\alpha=.41$ )	3.16	3.14	0.83	3.29	0.93	--	--
<b><i>ATTITUDES TOWARD ORGANIZATIONAL PROMISES</i></b>							
Psychological Contract Violations	3.38	3.41	0.94	3.24	0.94	--	--

## Summary

Based on the above analysis it can be seen that the results support the hypotheses' that there are generational differences between Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers. In particular, the Gen X-ers have higher intentions of leaving the organization than Baby Boomers. Since the average age of the current workforce is 46.3 years, which validates the majority of the current workforce are Baby Boomers, the Baby Boomers are closer to retirement than Gen X-ers and are less likely to be inclined to leave the organization. While there was significance in turnover intentions, four scales had unreliable alphas and were removed from the study, which resulted in a total of ten scales. The next section will address the conclusions of this study, its limitations, and potential areas of future research.

## **IV. Discussion**

### Conclusion

The primary objective of this research was to explore the extent to which generational differences exist. Specifically, differences in general work attitudes, attitudes towards job and organization, and individual preferences toward work processes were explored. While previous research has been done concerning generational differences, with the notable exception of the Smola and Sutton (2002) study, little empirical research has explored the extent to which these differences actually exist. Using the three variables from the original study done by Cherrington (1980), Smola and Sutton (2002) utilized the variables to measure the items of desirability of work outcomes, pride in craftsmanship, and moral importance of work; all of which attempted to measure differences in attitudes towards work itself. In addition to the Smola and Sutton (2002) study, eleven additional variables were measured. Work centrality, one of the additional variables, also attempted to measure attitudes towards work itself. Differences in attitudes toward current job and organization were measured using the following additional variables: job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, turnover intentions, careerism, normative commitment, and affective commitment. Personal independence, group productivity, and individualism attempted to measure differences in attitudes toward the way work is done. Lastly, psychological contract violations attempted to measure differences in attitudes toward organizational promises. A primary goal of this research was the application of a generational differences instrument that could serve as a tool for leaders and junior organizational members to

help increase the knowledge of work differences among the generations present in the work force.

To test the study's hypotheses, a comprehensive instrument was administered to employees of a large Department of Defense organization that were participating in a Diversity Awareness Training course. The hypotheses were created by investigating each of the generation's characteristics corresponding with the appropriate variable. The comparison of the three generational groups resulted in the final formulation of hypotheses (Table 2).

The results of this study support the hypotheses' that there are generational differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X; however, the findings represent only a small proportion of all total measurements. In particular, Gen X-ers showed a stronger desire for getting more money or a large pay increase than the Baby Boomers; which supports the hypotheses that Gen X-ers have a stronger desirability for extrinsic rewards. Additionally, the Gen X-ers have a stronger intention to leave the organization than the Baby Boomers. This too supports the hypotheses in that Gen X-ers have a higher turnover intention than Baby Boomers.

All other hypotheses tested in this study detected no significant differences among the generations. For example, all variables measuring attitudes toward the way work is done detected no significant differences among the groups. Based on attitudes toward teamwork and individualism, the study expected to find differences. However, no significant differences were found regarding the personal independence, group productivity, and individualism variables. Attitudes toward current job and organization, to include satisfaction and loyalty variables, detected no significant differences among

Baby Boomers, Generation X, and the Millennials. Finally, no differences were detected, contrary to this study's hypotheses, among the generational groups regarding attitudes toward organizational promises.

While the results of this study support the idea that there are generational differences based on the groups' characteristics and stereotypes, it would appear that these differences can easily be explained using other factors. Age, for instance, can contribute to both significant findings. For example, Gen X-ers might have shown a stronger desire for getting more money or a large pay increase due to the stage of life they are in. Gen X-ers are still seeking advancement and more likely to be parents with school age children, which requires more money. However, Baby Boomers are more likely to be established and settled in their career and have adult children who are no longer financially dependent on them. The next significant finding of stronger intentions to leave the organization can also be attributed to an individual's age. As stated earlier, Gen X-ers are still seeking advancement in their careers and are more inclined to change organizations than the Baby Boomers.

Knowing these findings, if a leader or manager relies on generational stereotypes to establish human resource management policies and practices they will be incorrectly applying leadership the majority of the time. Instead of focusing on generational stereotypes, leaders should focus on an individual's current stage of life. An individual's stage of life will more accurately reflect their attitudes towards work, loyalty to the organization and job satisfaction.

## Limitations

Clearly, there were a few limitations to the study. The limitations revolved around two principle issues, the research setting and the questionnaire. The research setting created the following limitations: insufficient sample size of Millennials and the population of the participants not representing a true random sample. The questionnaire limitations include: the overall design of the questionnaire and common method variance.

The mean age of civil servants, plus or minus two standard deviations, does not include any of the Millennial generation in the sample. Knowing this, it is unreasonable to expect a large number of Millennial participation in the study. Due to this limitation, the Millennial generation was the removal from the study.

Additionally, the questionnaire was administered over a limited period of time to employees of a large Department of Defense organization that were participating in a Diversity Awareness Training course that is on-going; therefore, the data collected were not necessarily representative of the population or a true random sample. Because of this, bias was introduced into the data and ultimately into the analysis.

Another limitation to the study was the overall design of the questionnaire. Specifically, participants overlooked items due to their location, which caused missing data. One particular item “Please indicate how well, overall, your first employer has fulfilled the promised obligations that they owed you.” was singled out at the bottom of the page and was the most overlooked question on the survey. Keeping items grouped by category on the page would help alleviate overlooked questions. Additionally, the most important question on the entire survey, which was “what year were you born”, was

located on the last page. This location caused participants to leave the question blank. Changing the survey to include this question on the first page would decrease the chance of participants overlooking the item. Approximately twenty surveys missing this one item (birth year) had to be removed from the data set.

Furthermore, the participant's frame of reference in their current career status was an additional limitation in this study. Depending on whether the participant was just starting out in their career, near retirement, or somewhere in between, heavily influenced their response to the turnover intentions items. An additional item could have been added to the questionnaire to determine their frame of reference in their current career status.

Finally, as with all research involving questionnaire items with self-report variables, there is the risk of common method variance. Common method variance may inflate the results of the items due to participants' responses being overly influenced by previous items on the questionnaire. In addition, each participant completed only one questionnaire eliminating the ability to compare responses. Although a seven-point Likert scale was used extensively throughout the questionnaire, the questionnaire items were randomly ordered to minimize the effects of common method variance.

#### Future Research

There are a few potential areas in this field of study that can be made into future research projects. The most significant area involves sampling from different populations and analyzing the potential between them. For example, this study focused on analyzing the civil servants in government service, but there are also large populations that can be analyzed in active duty military service. Additionally, comparisons can be made between the civil servants/active duty and those out in the civilian work force. There are



numerous companies and universities that can participate in the study to compare, not only the generational differences among today's work force, but a comparison between government employees (civil servants and active duty) and the civilian work force.

### Summary

In summary, this study substantiates the idea that there are generational differences between Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers. The civil servant population is an older generation of work force, the majority being Baby Boomers. Not only are Baby Boomers closer to retirement age than Gen X-ers, research has shown that they are more satisfied with their current job and organization than Gen X-ers and are less likely inclined to leave the organization. Research has also shown Baby Boomers are more loyal to their organization than Gen X-ers, which once again solidifies the hypothesis that Gen X-ers are inclined to have a higher turnover intention than Baby Boomers. Knowing this valuable information, the civilian work force can begin to prepare themselves for the retirement of the Baby Boomers and focus on the retention of Gen X-ers and recruitment of Millennial's.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Comprehensive List of Defining Events, Characteristics, Stereotypes,**

### **Focus/Concerns, Beliefs, Attitudes and Values by Generations**

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Years	1946-1964 <i>(Smola and Sutton, 2002)</i>	1965-1978 <i>(Smola and Sutton, 2002)</i>	1979 - 1994 <i>(Smola and Sutton, 2002)</i>
Era	American High <i>(Howe and Strauss, 2000)</i>	Consciousness Revolution <i>(Howe and Strauss, 2000)</i>	Culture Wars & Roaring Nineties <i>(Howe and Strauss, 2000)</i>
Presidents	Truman to Kennedy <i>(Howe and Strauss, 2000)</i>	LBJ to Carter <i>(Howe and Strauss, 2000)</i>	Reagan to Clinton <i>(Howe and Strauss, 2000)</i>
Technology	Broadcast TV 78s and LPs 8mm film Vacuum tubes mainframes sedans and stationwagons electric ranges <i>(Howe and Strauss, 2000)</i>	cable TV cassettes and CDs VCRs transistors calculators Beetles and hatchbacks microwaves <i>(Howe and Strauss, 2000)</i>	interactive TV streaming and MP3s DVDs microchips personal computers minivans and SUVs delivered foods <i>(Howe and Strauss, 2000)</i>

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Defining Events	Vietnam War Civil Rights Riots Kennedy's Watergate Woodstock <i>(Smola and Sutton, 2002)</i>  Television Assassinations Cold War Women's Lib <i>(Zemke, 2001)</i>  The Great Society Watergate Sex, drugs, and rock and roll <i>(Cufaude, 2000)</i>  First man on the moon Fall of Vietnam Nixon's resignation Energy crisis Stock market tumble <i>(Meredith and Schewe, 2002)</i>  Women in the workplace Sexual revolutions of the pill and AIDS <i>(Paul, 2001)</i>	Both parents working or one parent due to divorce Influenced by MTV AIDS World-wide competition Latch-key kids Fall of the Berlin Wall <i>(Smola and Sutton, 2002)</i>  Watergate Single Parents Computers Challenger Glasnost Wall Street Frenzy <i>(Zemke, 2001)</i>  Desert Storm Internet Divorce <i>(Cufaude, 2000)</i>	Internet Chat School Violence TV Talk shows Multiculturalism Girls' movement McGuire and Sosa <i>(Zemke, 2001)</i>  Grown up in a multicultural country Have never known a recession Columbine War in Kosovo Oklahoma City bombing Princess Di's death Clinton impeachment trial O.J. Simpson trial Rodney King riots Lewinsky scandal Fall of Berlin Wall <i>(Howe and Strauss, 2000)</i>  Challenger Free Agency and the Brand You <i>(Cufaude, 2000)</i>  Good economic times Terrorist attack on World Trade Center and Pentagon <i>(Meredith and Schewe, 2002)</i>  Lockerbie Germany reunited <i>(Paul, 2001)</i>

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Characteristics	Optimism	Determined individualists	Team-oriented
	Teamwork	Fiercely independent	optimistic
	Driven	Wants to set their own goals, deadlines, and work hours	Poised for greatness on a global scale
	Willingness to "Go the extra mile" <i>(Zemke, 2001)</i>	Thrive upon a creative and chaotic environment	Embraces law and order, morality, diversity and problem solving
	idealism	Competitive	Technology planners
	individualism	Risk-taking <i>(Jurkiewicz, 2000)</i>	Community-shapers
	high expectations <i>(Cufaude, 2000)</i>	Diversity	Institution-builders <i>(Howe and Strauss, 2000)</i>
	Desires teamwork, relationships and bonding	Thinking Globally	Confidence
	Loyal until the next job offer comes along <i>(Pekala, 2001)</i>	Technoliteracy	Street Smart
	Lonely individualism	Informality	Tenacious
	Cynicism and distrust of government <i>(Meredith and Schewe, 2002)</i>	Self-Reliance	<i>(Zemke, 2001)</i>
		Risk-Takers	Mindful of Authority
		Skeptical	Cautiously optimistic outlook
		Family Oriented	Enthusiasm for the future <i>(Pekala, 2001)</i>
		Focused on Job, not work hours <i>(Zemke, 2001)</i>	
		Pragmatism	Tolerance and diversity
		Entrepreneurial spirit	Respect for institutions
		Savvyness <i>(Cufaude, 2000)</i>	<i>(Meredith and Schewe, 2002)</i>



	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Characteristics		Distrustful of authority but respects mentors Loyal to individuals, not companies Very tech-savvy Highly task oriented Can be counted on to get the work done on time Have high energy level Need challenge <i>(Pekala, 2001)</i>  Free agency and independence Street smart <i>(Meredith and Schewe, 2002)</i>  Powerful achievers Eager to make lasting contributions Voracious learners Fierce individualism Confidence <i>(Tulgan, 1996)</i>	

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Stereotypes	Over-cautious	Being less honest, less dependable, less trustworthy	Short attention span
	Hierarchy-worshipping	Career fatalistic	Aren't truly prepared for the workplace Perceived as having a sense of entitlement and wanting opportunities handed to them
	Overly influenced by their parents depression mentality	Have job whimsy	Fall short when it comes to listening, communication, independent thinking, time management, commitment to the job and a good work ethic <i>(Pekala, 2001)</i>
	<i>(Jurkiewicz, 2000)</i>	Disrespect for rules and authority Lacking employer loyalty <i>(Jurkiewicz, 2000)</i>	
	Too political Don't practice what they preach	Aren't loyal Have no work ethic Are not committed	
	Workaholics Self-righteous Lacking Structure Spoiled posers who want to be in charge but don't want to be seen as authority figures	Self-focused	
	Try to be fair and are good at managing and motivating teams <i>(Pekala, 2001)</i>	Have no respect Short attention span Bored easily  <i>(Pekala, 2001)</i>	
	"Free spirits" avoiding responsibilities Individualism	Slackers Cynical about the future <i>(Meredith and Schewe, 2002)</i>	
	Skeptical, questioning everything <i>(Meredith and Schewe, 2002)</i>		
	Indulgence of Self, stimulation and questioning nature		

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Stereotypes	Narcissistic preoccupation with themselves <i>(Schewe, Meredith, and Noble, 2001)</i>	Whiners  A generation of Bart Simpsons Armed and possibly dangerous <i>(Schewe, Meredith, and Noble, 2001)</i>  Arrogant Cynical Lazy <i>(Tulgan, 1996)</i>	

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Focus/Concerns	<p>Concerned with retirement issues More concerned with quality of life than with money <i>(Jurkiewicz, 2000)</i></p> <p>Health and Wellness Personal Gratification Personal Growth <i>(Zemke, 2001)</i></p> <p>self-improvement  <i>(Oufauve, 2000)</i></p> <p>Personal and social expression</p> <p>Protected individualism Family commitments <i>(Meredith and Schewe, 2002)</i></p>	<p>Focused on child care Willing to trade off high compensation for leisure time <i>(Jurkiewicz, 2000)</i></p> <p>Balance Fun <i>(Zemke, 2001)</i></p> <p>Quality of Life <i>(Oufauve, 2000)</i></p> <p>Value Flextime and balance Demand interesting work, praise and recognition Want financial stability without giving loyalty in return <i>(Pekala, 2001)</i></p> <p>Friendships important Pursuit of quality of life <i>(Meredith and Schewe, 2002)</i></p> <p>Respect, support and honor <i>(Tulgan, 1996)</i></p>	<p>Civic Duty</p> <p>Achievement Sociability Morality Diversity <i>(Zemke, 2001)</i></p> <p>Compartmentalized work and life <i>(Oufauve, 2000)</i></p> <p>Expect to start at the top like their Gen-X counterpart</p> <p>Mentoring is a top priority Flexibility and personal priorities are very important  <i>(Pekala, 2001)</i></p> <p>Belonging to a global community <i>(Meredith and Schewe, 2002)</i></p>

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Beliefs, Attitudes & Values	<p>"Let's have a meeting" "Thank God it's Monday" <i>(Zemke, 2001)</i></p> <p>Sacrifices everything for the job; believes in paying dues  <i>(Pekala, 2001)</i></p> <p>Conformity and being pro- business "Don't rock the boat" work ethic <i>(Meredith and Schewe, 2002)</i></p> <p>"Me Generation" "I'm Ok - You're Ok" <i>(Schewe, Meredith, and Noble, 2001)</i></p>	<p>"It's only a job" <i>(Zemke, 2001)</i></p> <p>Work until I get the job done. I will work harder for time than money Willing to quit a job with no other job in sight View work simply as a means to support their leisure time  <i>(Pekala, 2001)</i></p> <p>"What's in it for me?" <i>(Schewe, Meredith, and Noble, 2001)</i></p>	<p>"It takes a village" <i>(Zemke, 2001)</i></p> <p>Change is good  <i>(Meredith and Schewe, 2002)</i></p>

**Appendix B**  
**Exemption Letter**



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
AIR UNIVERSITY (AETC)

8 May 03

MEMORANDUM FOR AFIT/ENV  
AFIT/ENR  
AFRL/HEH  
IN TURN

FROM: AFIT/ENV/GCA

SUBJECT: Request for Exemption from Human Experimentation Requirements (AFI 40-402): Thesis Research, AFIT/ENV/GCA, Analysis of Generational Differences.

1. Request exemption from Human Experimentation Requirements of AFI 40-402 for the proposed Analysis of Generational Differences Questionnaire and Protocol to be conducted in conjunction with thesis research at the Air Force Institute of Technology (see attachment 1). Purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which differences exist among three generations of Air Force members and the affects these potential differences have on recruitment and retention strategies. The results of this study should be used to further understand younger workers and guide the development of programs that lead to the successful recruitment and retention of younger Air Force members.

2. This request is based on the Code of Federal Regulations, title 32, part 219, section 101, paragraph (b) (2); Research activities that involve human subjects will be exempt when the research involves the use of survey procedures provided (i) information obtained cannot be directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and (ii) disclosure of subjects' responses does not place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, financial strain, employability or reputation ruin. Methodology used to collect information for generational differences research is based on questionnaire procedures. The following information is provided to show cause for exemption:

2.1. Equipment and facilities: No special equipment or facilities will be used.

2.2. Subjects: Subjects will be three purposefully selected groups. The first group will be those termed as Millenials born in the years 1979 to 1994. The second group will be those termed as Generation X'ers born in the years 1965 and 1978. The final group will be Baby Boomers born in the years 1946 and 1964.

2.3. Timeframe: Data will be collected in the months of June through March 2004.

2.4. Description of the survey: A questionnaire was developed to assess work values and desirable work environments. It will be distributed to select organizations for participation in printed and a web-based format. The

- 2.5. Data collected: No identifying information is obtained through the survey. Data collected on individual subjects include: attitudes and general beliefs toward work, attitudes toward job and organization, and individual demographics and background (see attachments 2 & 3).
- 2.6. Informed consent: All subjects are self-selected to volunteer to participate in the survey. No adverse action is taken against those who choose not to participate. Subjects are made aware of the nature and purpose of the research, sponsors of the research, and disposition of the survey results. A copy of the Privacy Act Statement of 1974 is presented for their review.
- 2.7. Risks to Subjects: Individual responses the participants provide will not be disclosed. This eliminates any risks to the participants. There are no anticipated medical risks associated with this study.
3. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Lt Stephanie M. Skibo or Lt Stacey L. Williams - Phone 255-3636 ext 6344 or 6338, E-mail – [stephanie.skibo@afit.edu](mailto:stephanie.skibo@afit.edu) or [stacey.williams@afit.edu](mailto:stacey.williams@afit.edu). Major Daniel T. Holt will serve as the Faculty Advisor (primary investigator) and can be contacted by phone 255-3636, ext. 4574 or E-mail – [daniel.holt@afit.edu](mailto:daniel.holt@afit.edu).

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Faculty Advisor, AFIT/ENV/GEM

Attachments:

1. Protocol
2. Item Summary
3. Questionnaire



**Appendix C**  
**Protocol Outline**

**Protocol Outline  
For  
ANALYSIS OF GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES**

**1. Title:** An analysis of generational differences and the influences on an individual's propensity for recruitment and retention.

**2. Principal Investigator:** Major Daniel T. Holt; AFIT/ENV; 255-3636, ext. 4574; daniel.holt@afit.edu.

**3. Associate Investigator(s):** Lt Stephanie M. Skibo, AFIT/ENV/GCA, Phone 255-3636 ext 6344, E-mail - stephanie.skibo@afit.edu or Lt Stacey L. Williams, AFIT/ENV/GCA, Phone 255-3636 ext 6338, E-mail –stacey.williams@afit.edu.

**4. Medical Monitor:** Not applicable.

**5. Contractor and/or Facility:** Not applicable.

**6. Objective:** To explore the extent to which differences exist among three generations of Air Force members and the affects these potential differences have on recruitment and retention strategies.

**7. Background:** There seems to be a wide held belief that different generations have different attitudes toward work, organizations, and co-workers. Indeed, Smola and Sutton (2002) studied differences between groups termed as Baby Boomers (born 1946 - 1964), Generation Xers (born 1965 - 1978), and Millennials (born 1979-1994). When comparing the generational groups to one another, they found that work is not the central focus in younger people's lives; yet, these same younger people hope to be promoted quickly through an organization's ranks. Clearly, these differences have implications for managers and leaders. Actions taken by leaders (who are often older) might be misunderstood by junior organizational members (who are often younger), leading to undesirable outcomes (i.e., turnover).

Considering that many generational groups are represented within the Air Force, there is a need to analyze and understand potential generational differences. However, with the notable exception of the Smola and Sutton (2002) study, little empirical research has explored the extent to which these differences actually exist and no studies appear to have looked at differences among military members. And, the influence these potential differences have on today's all volunteer force has not been explored.

**8. Impact:** As suggested in previous research, differences among generations are expected. Specifically, younger people are expected to be less committed to the organization, work, and their co-workers. These findings should be used to further understand younger workers and guide the development of programs that lead to the successful recruitment and retention of younger Air Force members.

## 9. Experimental Plan:

- a. Equipment and facilities: None
- b. Subjects: Subjects will be three purposefully selected groups such that comparisons can be made. The first group (i.e., Group 1) will be Millennials born in the years 1979 to 1994 (as defined by Smola & Sutton, 2002). The second group (i.e., Group 2) will be Generation X'ers born between the years 1965 and 1978 (as defined by Smola & Sutton, 2002). The final group (Group 3) will be Baby Boomers born between the years 1946 and 1964 (as defined by Smola & Sutton, 2002). The number of participants has yet to be determined and it will be gender neutral. Additionally, there will be no additional screening or special tests required of the participants.
- c. Duration of the study: The questionnaire should take participants approximately 30 minutes to complete.
- d. Description of experiment, data collection, and analysis: A questionnaire (see attachment 3) was developed to assess work values and desirable work environments. It will be distributed to select organizations for participation in either hard copy format or web-based format. The participants will be placed in the appropriate generational category based on their self-reported age that will be collected with a single open-ended item where they will identify their age in years. Responses from the Values Scale questionnaire will be analyzed using a statistical computer software program. The open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire will be reviewed by the researchers.
- e. On-site monitoring: None. Each specific location will have a main point of contact that we will be working closely with during the administration of the questionnaire.

**10. Medical Risk Analysis:** No anticipated medical risks associated with this research.

## 11. References:

Smola, K. W. & Sutton, C. D. (2002). Generational differences: Revisiting generational work values for the new millennium. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23, 363-382.

**Appendix D**  
**Generational Differences Questionnaire**

## Generational differences survey

**Purpose:** Our research team is investigating generational differences.

**Participation.** We would greatly appreciate your completing this survey. Your participation is COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. However, your input is important for us to understand generational differences. Your decision to participate or withdraw will not jeopardize your relationship with the Air Force Institute of Technology, the Air Force, or the Department of Defense.

**Confidentiality.** ALL ANSWERS ARE ANONYMOUS. No one other than the research team will ever see your questionnaire. Findings will be reported at the group level only. We ask for some demographic information in order to interpret results more accurately. Reports summarizing trends in large groups may be published.

To ensure anonymity for the web-based version of the questionnaire, certain precautions have been built into the database to ensure that your anonymity is protected. First, the questionnaire and database are not stored on your organization's server; instead, the questionnaire and database will be stored on the Air Force Institute of Technology's secure server. This makes it impossible for your leaders to circumvent the researchers and try to access any identifiable data without their knowledge. Second, you will only have access to your responses. Finally, the database is protected by a password that is known only by the researchers making it impossible to access data. Still, if you don't feel comfortable completing the on-line version of the questionnaire you can print a paper version of the questionnaire, complete it, and return it directly to the researchers.

**Contact information:** If you have any questions or comments about the survey contact Capt Williams and Lt Skibo at the mailing addresses or e-mail addresses.

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Capt Williams & 1Lt Skibo  
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### **INSTRUCTIONS**

- Base your answers on your own thoughts & experiences
- Please print your answers clearly when asked to write in a response or when providing comments
- Make dark marks when asked to use specific response options (feel free to use an ink pen)
- Avoid stray marks and if you make corrections erase marks completely or clearly indicate the errant response if you use an ink pen

### **MARKING EXAMPLES**

Right



Wrong



**Section I**  
**GENERAL WORK ATTITUDES**

**We would like to understand how you generally feel about work. The following questions will help us do that. For each statement, please fill in the circle for the number that indicates the extent to which you agree the statement is true. Use the scale below for your responses.**

① Strongly Disagree	② Disagree	③ Slightly Disagree	④ Neither Agree Nor Disagree	⑤ Slightly Agree	⑥ Agree	⑦ Strongly Agree
1. There is nothing wrong with doing a poor job at work if a person can get away with it.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
2. Working with a group is better than working alone.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
3. If (the) unemployment benefit was really high, I would still prefer to work.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
4. Life is worth living only when people get absorbed in work.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
5. I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to the organization.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
6. A group is most efficient when its members do what <i>they</i> think is best rather than doing what the group wants to do.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
7. The major satisfaction in my life comes from my work.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
8. Working hard makes one a better person.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
9. I think that people these days move from company to company too often.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
10. Only those who depend on themselves get ahead in life.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
11. The most important things that happen to me involve my work.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
12. People in a group should realize that they sometimes are going to have to make sacrifices for the sake of the group as a whole	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
13. Work should be one of the most important parts of a person's life.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
14. Work should only be a small part of one's life.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
15. A group is more productive when its members follow their own interests and concerns.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
16. Things were better in the days when people stayed with the organization for most of their careers.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
17. Given the choice, I would rather do a job where I can work alone rather than doing a job where I have to work with others in a group.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
18. Getting recognition for my own work is important to me.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦

① Strongly Disagree	② Disagree	③ Slightly Disagree	④ Neither Agree or Disagree	⑤ Slightly Agree	⑥ Agree	⑦ Strongly Agree
19. I would quit my job if I inherited a lot of money.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
20. <i>In your job, if you work hard, how probable is it that: You will feel more worthwhile and be a better person?</i>	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
21. A good indication of a man's worth is how well he does his job.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
22. One of the major reasons I continue to work for the Air Force or in government service is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
23. Most things in life are more important than work.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
24. Winning is everything.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
25. A worker should feel a sense of pride in his work.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
26. Work should be considered central to life.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
27. A worker should do a decent job whether or not his supervisor is around.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
28. I prefer to work with others in a group rather than working alone.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
29. I feel that winning is important in both work and games.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
30. Rich people should feel an obligation to work even if they do not need to.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
31. Jumping from organization to organization does not seem at all unethical to me.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
32. A group is more productive when its members do what <i>they</i> want to do rather than what the group wants to do.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
33. Overall, I consider work to be very central to my existence.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
34. To me, my work is only a small part of who I am.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
35. In my view, an individual's personal life goals should be work oriented.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
36. I would probably keep working even if I didn't need the money.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
37. An individual should enjoy his/her work.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦
38. I have other activities more important than my work.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥ ⑦

**Please tell us how desirable and important you think these items are associated with your work (item 39 through 47).**

① Extremely Undesirable	② Undesirable	③ Somewhat Undesirable	④ Neither Undesirable or Desirable	⑤ Somewhat Desirable	⑥ Desirable	⑦ Extremely Desirable				
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

**Section II**  
**ATTITUDES TOWARDS JOB & ORGANIZATION**

**We would like to understand how you feel about your current job, the Air Force or government service. The following questions will help us do that. For each statement, please fill in the circle for the number that indicates the extent to which you agree the statement is true. Use the scale below for your responses.**

① Strongly Disagree	② Disagree	③ Slightly Disagree	④ Neither Agree or Disagree	⑤ Slightly Agree	⑥ Agree	⑦ Strongly Agree				
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦



① Strongly Disagree	② Disagree	③ Slightly Disagree	④ Neither Agree or Disagree	⑤ Slightly Agree	⑥ Agree	⑦ Strongly Agree				
54. I could be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
55. The organization is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
56. I definitely want a career for myself in the Air Force or government service.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
57. All in all, I am satisfied with my job.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
58. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
59. The organization shows very little concern for me.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
60. I do not expect to change organizations often during my career.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
61. I am actively looking for a job outside of the Air Force or government service.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
62. I took this job as a stepping stone to a better job with another organization.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
63. The organization takes pride in my accomplishments.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
64. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
65. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
66. Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice me.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
67. I am disappointed that I ever entered the Air Force or government service.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
68. In general, I like working here.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
69. I do not feel like part of the family at my organization.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
70. The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
71. I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
72. I expect to work for a variety of different organizations in my career.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
73. The organization really cares about my well-being.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
74. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
75. I am really looking for an organization to spend my entire career with.				①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

**Use the scale printed below to select the response that most closely corresponds to your personal view about Item 75.**

	①	②	③	④	⑤
	<b>Very Poorly Fulfilled</b>	<b>Poorly Fulfilled</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Fulfilled</b>	<b>Very Well Fulfilled</b>
76. Please indicate how well, overall, your first employer has fulfilled the promised obligations that they owed you?					
77. Please respond yes or no: Has or had your employer ever failed to meet the obligation(s) that were promised to you? If yes, please explain in the space below.		<input type="radio"/> Yes		<input type="radio"/> No	

**Section III**  
**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

This final section contains items regarding your personal characteristics. These items are very important for statistical purposes. Respond to each item by **WRITING IN THE INFORMATION** requested or **CHECKING THE BOX**  that best describes you.

78. What year were you born?      **19**\_\_\_\_\_

79. What is your gender?

**Male**                      **Female**

80. Describe your primary career field or profession (e.g., programmer, personnel specialist, etc.)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

81. How many organizations have you worked for (the Air Force is considered one organization and government service is considered one organization)? \_\_\_\_\_

82. How many different jobs have you had (each Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) held is considered one job and each government job family classification held is considered one job)? \_\_\_\_\_

83. How long have you been in the Air Force or in government service (if applicable)?  
\_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

84. Which category best describes you?

**Active Duty**                      **DoD Civilian**                      **Other (Please specify)**\_\_\_\_\_

85. Which category best describes you?

**White**  
**African American**  
**Hispanic**  
**American Indian/Alaskan Native**  
**Other**

**Thank you for your participation!**

## **Appendix E**

### **Summary of Study Variables**

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**Summary of Study Variables**

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**ATTITUDES TOWARD WORK ITSELF**

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**DESIRABILITY OF WORK OUTCOMES.** Measures the extent to which respondents feel value in intrinsic and extrinsic rewards of work. (Cherrington, 1980)

- 39 Being recognized and gaining the respect of others
- 40 Being of service to others
- 41 Feeling more worthwhile
- 42 Feeling pride in craftsmanship in your work
- 43 Getting more money or a large pay increase
- 45 Being promoted more quickly
- 46 Receiving more fringe benefits
- 47 Having your supervisor compliment you
- 48 Having leisure and free time
- 44 Having the flexibility to balance work and family.

**PRIDE IN CRAFTSMANSHIP.** Measure the extent to which respondents feel they should enjoy their work and receive recognition for doing a good job. (Cherrington, 1980)

- 27 A worker should do a decent job whether or not his supervisor is around
- 25 A worker should feel a sense of pride in his work
- 37 An individual should enjoy his/her work
- 18 Getting recognition for my own work is important to me
- 1 There is nothing wrong with doing a poor job at work if a person can get away with it (reverse score)
- 20 *In your job, if you work hard, how probable is it that:*  
You will feel more worthwhile and be a better person?

**MORAL IMPORTANCE OF WORK.** Measures the extent to which respondents feel their moral obligation to have an occupation and contribute some product or service to society. (Cherrington, 1980)

- 19 I would quit my job if I inherited a lot of money
- 8 Working hard makes one a better person
- 21 A good indication of a man's worth is how well he does his job
- 30 Rich people should feel an obligation to work even if they do not need to
- 13 Work should be one of the most important parts of a person's life

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### Summary of Study Variables

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#### ATTITUDES TOWARD WORK ITSELF

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**WORK CENTRALITY.** Measures the extent to which respondents feel work is an important factor in their lives. (Hirschfeld & Field, 2000)

- 14 Work should only be a small part of one's life. (reverse score)
- 35 In my view, an individual's personal life goals should be work oriented.
- 4 Life is worth living only when people get absorbed in work.
- 7 The major satisfaction in my life comes from my work.
- 11 The most important things that happen to me involve my work.
- 38 I have other activities more important than my work. (reverse score)
- 26 Work should be considered central to life.
- 36 I would probably keep working even if I didn't need the money.
- 34 To me, my work is only a small part of who I am. (reverse score)
- 23 Most things in life are more important than work. (reverse score)
- 3 If (the) unemployment benefit was really high, I would still prefer to work.
- 33 Overall, I consider work to be very central to my existence.

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### Summary of Study Variables

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#### ATTITUDES TOWARD CURRENT JOB AND ORGANIZATION

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#### SATISFACTION

**JOB SATISFACTION.** Measures the extent to which respondents view their job positively. High scores indicate overall satisfaction with the job. (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983)

- 57 All in all, I am satisfied with my job.
- 50 In general, I don't like my job. (reverse score)
- 68 In general, I like working here.

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Summary of Study Variables

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ATTITUDES TOWARD CURRENT JOB AND ORGANIZATION

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**SATISFACTION**

**PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT.** Measures the extent to which respondents feel that the organization values their contributions, treats them favorably, and cares about their well-being. High scores indicate that respondents feel the organization is committed to them. (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986)

- 59           The organization shows very little concern for me. (reverse score)
- 55           The organization is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.
- 66           Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice me. (reverse score)
- 63           The organization takes pride in my accomplishments
- 70           The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.
- 73           The organization really cares about my well-being.

**LOYALTY**

**TURNOVER INTENTIONS.** Measures the extent to which respondents have intentions to leave the organization. High scores indicate the intention to leave while low scores indicate the intention to continue organizational membership. (combination of items from Blau, 1989 and Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983)

- 61           I am actively looking for a job outside of the Air Force.
- 51           I am seriously thinking about leaving the Air Force.
- 49           If I could go into a different industry other than the Air Force which paid the same I would probably do so.
- 56           I definitely want a career for myself in the Air Force.
- 67           I am disappointed that I ever entered the Air Force.

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## Summary of Study Variables

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### ATTITUDES TOWARD CURRENT JOB AND ORGANIZATION

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#### LOYALTY

**CAREERISM.** Measures the extent to which respondents feel that the relationship with the organization is nothing more than a stepping stone in one's career. (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994)

- 62 I took this job as a stepping stone to a better job with another organization
- 72 I expect to work for a variety of different organizations in my career
- 60 I do not expect to change organizations often during my career (reverse score).
- 53 There are many career opportunities I expect to explore after I leave my present employer.
- 75 I am really looking for an organization to spend my entire career with (reverse score).

**NORMATIVE COMMITMENT.** Measure the extent to which respondents feel obligation to remain with the organization. (Allen & Meyer, 1990)

- 9 I think that people these days move from company to company too often.
- 31 Jumping from organization to organization does not seem at all unethical to me (reverse score)
- 22 One of the major reasons I continue to work for the Air Force is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain.
- 5 I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to the organization.
- 16 Things were better in the days when people stayed with the organization for most of their careers.

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Summary of Study Variables

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ATTITUDES TOWARD CURRENT JOB AND ORGANIZATION

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LOYALTY

**AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT.** Measures the extent to which respondents are emotionally attached to the organization. High scores indicate strong identification with and involvement in the organization. (Allen & Meyer, 1990)

- 54 I could be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
- 65 I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
- 69 I do not feel like part of the family at my organization. (reverse score)
- 52 I do not feel emotionally attached to this organization. (reverse score)
- 64 This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
- 58 I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization. (reverse score)
- 74 I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it
- 71 I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one. (reverse score)

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Summary of Study Variables

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ATTITUDES TOWARD THE WAY WORK IS DONE

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**PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE.** Measures the extent to which the respondents prefer to work alone rather than in groups. (Wagner, J. A., 1995)

- 28 I prefer to work with others in a group rather than working alone. (reverse score)
- 17 Given the choice, I would rather do a job where I can work alone rather than doing a job where I have to work with others in a group.
- 2 Working with a group is better than working alone. (reverse score)

**GROUP PRODUCTIVITY.** Measures the extent to which the respondents feel that individuals pursuing their own interests contribute to group effectiveness. (Wagner, J. A., 1995)

- 32 A group is more productive when its members do what *they* want to do rather than what the group wants to do.
- 6 A group is most efficient when its members do what *they* think is best rather than doing what the group wants to do.
- 15 A group is more productive when its members follow their own interests and concerns.



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### Summary of Study Variables

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#### ATTITUDES TOWARD THE WAY WORK IS DONE

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**INDIVIDUALISM.** Measures the extent to which the respondents place greater importance on personal interests and desires. (Wagner, J. A., 1995)

- 10 Only those who depend on themselves get ahead in life.
- 24 Winning is everything.
- 29 I feel that winning is important in both work and games.
- 12 People in a group should realize that they sometimes are going to have to make sacrifices for the sake of the group as a whole. (reverse score)

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### Summary of Study Variables

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#### ATTITUDES TOWARD ORGANIZATIONAL PROMISES

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**PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT VIOLATIONS.** Measures the extent to which respondents believe that some form of a promise has been made (between themselves and the organization) and that the terms and conditions of the contract have been accepted by both parties. (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994)

- 76 Using the scale below, please indicate how well, overall, your *first* employer has fulfilled the promised obligations that they *owed you*?
- 77 Please respond yes or no: Has or had your employer ever failed to meet the obligation(s) that were promised to you? If yes, please explain...

## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

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**13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES**

**14. ABSTRACT**

There seems to be a wide held belief that different generations have different attitudes toward work, organizations, and co-workers. Clearly, these observed differences have implications for managers and leaders. Actions taken by leaders (who are often older) might be misunderstood by junior organizational members (who are often younger), leading to undesirable outcomes (i.e., turnover). Considering that many generational groups are represented within the Government Service, there is a need to analyze and understand potential generational differences. With the notable exception of the Smola and Sutton (2002) study, little empirical research has explored the extent to which these differences actually exist and whether differences exist among civil servants. This research explores the extent to which differences exist among three generations of civil servants and the affects these potential differences have on leadership strategies.

Hypotheses were developed based on generational characteristics and tested using a questionnaire that includes 77 items to assess general work attitudes, attitudes towards job and organization, and individual preferences toward work processes. The results of the study indicate that while generational differences were shown to exist, significant differences among the groups accounted for a small proportion of the variables tested. Ultimately, the study's significant findings could be explained by other factors such as age and frame of reference.

**15. SUBJECT TERMS**  
Generations, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, civil servants

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