

Follow Me Leading the Great Divide

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Abstract

Currently, there are four generations of workers in the workforce today. The generations to be discussed during this study are: the baby boomers who were born between 1946 -1964, generation x who were born between 1965-1980, and generation y who were born between 1981-2000. In order to tap into the wealth of talent in this diverse workforce, the leader must understand the differences that define and make each generation unique.

Introduction

Currently, there are four generations of workers in the workforce today. Inevitably, leading and communicating with these multicultural and multigenerational workers is a challenge for the most seasoned and progressive leaders of an agency or department. The generations to be discussed during this study are: the baby boomers who were born between 1946 -1964, generation x who were born between 1965-1980, and generation y who were born between 1981-2000. Central to the effective leading of these generations is an understanding of each generation's core values and beliefs. This paper will explore the styles and social influences during the formative years of each generation in an effort to discover what it will take to lead the future workforce.

Literature Review

As we move toward a younger workforce, a majority of the leaders of organizations are baby boomers with members of generation x beginning to make their mark. There are distinct differences between each generation mainly based upon their social environment during their often referred to formative years. Research by AUT's associate professor Keith Macky challenges an increasing reference in the popular management press to the notions that there are clearly defined and identifiable generations at work (Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y, among others) with different world views, work ethics and workplace expectations, derived from different major life experiences in their formative years (for example, wars, major technological developments and social movements), and who therefore require different management techniques (Reed, 2007). Some of the significant sociocultural events for the three identified generations are as follows:

<u>Baby Boomers</u>	<u>Gen X</u>	<u>Gen Y</u>
46 to 67 year-olds	27 to 45 year-olds	13 to 26 year-olds
Vietnam	PC computers	Globalisation
Nixon	Crash of 1987	Global warming

Threat of nuclear war	Market economies	Islamic radicalism
Hippies and flower power	Loss of job security	Corporate greed
Feminism	Multiculturalism	Iraq
TV	Fall of communism	Consumerism
Drugs culture		Full employment
Civil rights		Student loans
Free tertiary		Internet

(Reed, 2007)

Baby Boomers

The arrival of the Baby Boomer generation changed the physical and psychological landscape forever. As products of the "Wonder Years," they were influenced by the indulgence of Beaver Cleaver, the can-do optimism of JFK and the hope of the post-World War II American Dream. But the intense social and political upheaval of Vietnam, assassinations, and civil rights, led them to rebel against conformity and to carve a perfectionist lifestyle based on personal values and spiritual growth (Anonymous, 2009). The core values of the baby boomers are optimism and team orientation. They also are into personal gratification and growth, are focused on their work and have almost an obsession with youth, health and wellness (Muirhead, 2008). Baby boomers are extremely loyal to their institutions and often view a sixty hour work week as the norm. They value hard work, long hours, and loyalty. They live to work and work to live. As a result, their personal lives are secondary and not a driving factor in their professional lives. Their self worth is directly linked to their status.

Generation X

Generation X children were born at a time when the divorce rate was doubled that of boomers when they were children. This group is significantly smaller than the boomer generation, mainly due to easier access to birth control, and the decision to have smaller families. (Glass, 2007) The often-maligned generation x, so named because no one could settle on an accurate definition, is characterized by an economic and psychological "survivor" mentality. They grew up very quickly amid rising divorce rates, latchkeys, violence, and low expectations (Anonymous, 2009). Many do not expect employer loyalty and may frequently change jobs to advance professionally (Massoni, 2009). Generation X would rather take time off than work in excess of their prescribed workday. They seek a balance between work and play. Work status is not as important as their self worth. They are known for techno literacy and informality. They have portable careers and value themselves and their needs, rather than the organizations (Clare, 2009).

Generation Y

Generation Y is known for sociability and street smarts. They are known for expecting rewards or 'trophies' just for showing up and participating in events. They are multitaskers, confident and team-oriented. They are technologically savvy and eager to learn (Clare, 2009).

Generation Y, were the once ubiquitous "babies on board," the beneficiaries of a backlash against hands-off parenting and a cultural elevation of stay-at-home moms. Coddled and confident, they've let neither the Columbine shootings nor the Oklahoma City bombings dim their collective sense of optimism, tenacity and heroic spirit, traits sure to be reinforced by the national unity following the September 11th tragedy (Anonymous, 2009). Members of this generation priorities are live first work second, they question authority, they always ask why, they are informal, they are keen multi-taskers, and digitally savvy (Alter, 2007).

Traditional social structures such as religion and class, have much less relevance that they once did, but the key changes have been the reduced significance of marriage, the breakdown of gender barriers, and the weakened connections people feel towards the communities in which they were born. The literature suggests that the baby boomer generation is more traditional and possess a strong sense of traditional values. In contrast, generation x and generation y are more "me" oriented and mobile in regards to employment longevity.

Methodology

The purpose of this research is to determine the differences between generations in an effort to understand what type of leader is needed to lead the multigenerational workforce. The data was collected through surveys from three central Florida law enforcement agencies. This sample was a convenience sample that consisted of individuals randomly selected. A survey consisting of twenty-three items was given to 100 sworn deputies/police officers. The entire existing population was surveyed resulting in a response rate of 100%. Although all the surveys were returned, ten were not completed in their entirety and therefore the limited data contained therein was not tabulated. All percentages are truncated to whole numbers, and are derived from the total number of completed surveys. For the purpose of this writing, the total percentage for those respondents that agreed, disagreed, and neither agreed nor disagreed were tabulated.

The surveys were administered at different locations during their daily briefings. The selected individuals were assured that their responses would be anonymous. The surveys were completed within fifteen minutes.

The sample comprised of sworn law enforcement officers. All respondents had at least a high school diploma with a majority of the respondents having attended college for four years.

The sixteen-item survey tapped six personal information items: date of birth range, gender, education level, law enforcement experience, and rank which were measured by single items. Generational specific questions were measured through multiple items on a five-point Likert scale.

This study was limited by the amount of time the author was able to commit to this research project. The distribution of the survey to the sample population is not an accurate representation of the general population. The author's limited statistical interpretation skills

of the data that was collected. Some of the noted biases contained in this study were the population survey and author's interpretation of literature reviewed.

Results

Of the three agencies surveyed, I received a one hundred percent return rate on all surveys. This was accomplished by contacting key personnel within each agency to administer and oversee the survey process at their respective agency. Upon completion of the surveys, I was contacted by the agency representative and I personally retrieved all the surveys. The combined results of the Personal Data section of the surveys are as follows:

- Generation - 23 % of respondents were Baby Boomers, 59% were Gen X'ers, and 18% were Gen Y.
- Gender - 87% of the respondents were males and 13% were females.
- Education - 14 % of the respondents have a High School Diploma or GED, 28% have some college, 24% have two years of college, 22% have four years of college, and 11% have a graduate degree or higher.
- LE Experience - 29% of the respondents have 1-5 years, 21% have 6-10, 20% have 11-15, 10% have 16-20, and 20% have 20 plus years of law enforcement experience.
- Rank - 79% of respondents were Officers/Deputys, 3% were Corporals, 10% were Sergeants, 4% were Lieutenants, 1% were Captains, and 2% were Majors.
- Race – 80% were Caucasians, 8% were Black, 1% were Asian, 7% were Hispanic, and 4% were other.

The combined results of the Generation Specific section of the surveys are as follows:

- Question number one asked, *I would rather take time off than work extra duty.* 14% Strongly Disagreed, 18% Disagreed, 38% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 19% Agreed, and 11% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number two asked, *I view law enforcement as a job and not a lifestyle.* 20% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 38% Disagreed, 19% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 10% Agreed, and 13% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number three asked, *I am defined by my profession.* 11% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 26% Disagreed, 23% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 26% Agreed, and 14% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number four asked, *I do expect to be held accountable.* 20% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 38% Disagreed, 19% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 10% Agreed, and 13% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number five asked, *I work better when I'm not micro managed.* 4% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 1% Disagreed, 8% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 29% Agreed, and 58% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number six asked, *Benefits were a factor when I entered the field of law enforcement.* 3% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 20% Disagreed, 32% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 33% Agreed, and 11% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number seven asked, *Technology has made the job more rigorous.* 13% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 23% Disagreed, 33% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 26% Agreed, and 4% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number eight asked, *I accept or embrace change easily.* 3% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 19% Disagreed, 32% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 41% Agreed, and 4% Strongly Agreed.

- Question number nine asked, *I resent authority.* 64% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 20% Disagreed, 4% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 4% Agreed, and 4% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number ten asked, *I will retire with my current agency.* 7% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 2% Disagreed, 19% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 24% Agreed, and 48% Strongly Agreed.

The results of each individual generation surveys are as follows:

Baby Boomers (1946-1964)

- Gender - 90% of the respondents were males and 10% were females.
- Education - 10 % of the respondents have a High School Diploma or GED, 24% have some college, 19% have two years of college, 24% have four years of college, and 24% have a graduate degree or higher.
- LE Experience - 19% have 6-10, 5% have 11-15, 14% have 16-20, and 62% have 20 plus years of law enforcement experience.
- Rank - 48% of respondents were Officers/Deputies, 5% were Corporals, 29% were Sergeants, 10% were Lieutenants, 5% were Captains, and 5% were Majors.
- Race – 86% were Caucasians, 10% were Black, 4% were other.

The results of the Generation Specific section for the Baby Boomers are as follows:

- Question number one asked, *I would rather take time off than work extra duty.* 10% Strongly Disagreed, 19% Disagreed, 19% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 29% Agreed, and 24% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number two asked, *I view law enforcement as a job and not a lifestyle.* 19% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 43% Disagreed, 5% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 14% Agreed, and 19% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number three asked, *I am defined by my profession.* 19% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 14% Disagreed, 24% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 24% Agreed, and 19% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number four asked, *I do expect to be held accountable.* 24% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 24% Agreed, and 52% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number five asked, *I work better when I'm not micro managed.* 9% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 24% Agreed, and 67% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number six asked, *Benefits were a factor when I entered the field of law enforcement.* 5% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 14% Disagreed, 10% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 33% Agreed, and 67% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number seven asked, *Technology has made the job more rigorous.* 19% of the respondents strongly Disagreed, 5% Disagreed, 24% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 43% Agreed, and 10% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number eight asked, *I accept or embrace change easily.* 19% of the respondents Disagreed, 38% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 33% Agreed, and 10% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number nine asked, *I resent authority.* 52% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 24% Disagreed, 10% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 10% Agreed, and 5% Strongly Agreed.

- Question number ten asked, *I will retire with my current agency.* 10% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 5% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 18% Agreed, and 67% Strongly Agreed.

Generation X (1965-1980)

- Gender - 89% of the respondents were males and 11% were females.
- Education - 17 % of the respondents have a High School Diploma or GED, 23% have some college, 26% have two years of college, 26% have four years of college, and 8% have a graduate degree or higher.
- LE Experience - 25% of the respondents have 1-5 years, 25% have 6-10, 32% have 11-15, 9% have 16-20, and 9% have 20 plus years of law enforcement experience.
- Rank - 85% of respondents were Officers/Deputies, 4% were Corporals, 6% were Sergeants, 4% were Lieutenants, and 2% were Majors.
- Race – 83% were Caucasians, 8% were Black, 4% were Hispanic, and 6% were other.

The generation specific section of Generation X's surveys are as follows:

- Question number one asked, *I would rather take time off than work extra duty.* 19% Strongly Disagreed, 15% Disagreed, 45% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 13% Agreed, and 8% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number two asked, *I view law enforcement as a job and not a lifestyle.* 23% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 38% Disagreed, 15% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 9% Agreed, and 15% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number three asked, *I am defined by my profession.* 9% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 28% Disagreed, 23% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 25% Agreed, and 15% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number four asked, *I do expect to be held accountable.* 21% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 25% Agreed, and 55% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number five asked, *I work better when I'm not micro managed.* 2% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 2% Disagreed, 8% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 26% Agreed, and 62% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number six asked, *Benefits were a factor when I entered the field of law enforcement.* 11% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 28% Disagreed, 17% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 34% Agreed, and 9% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number seven asked, *Technology has made the job more rigorous.* 15% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 32% Disagreed, 32% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 19% Agreed, and 2% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number eight asked, *I accept or embrace change easily.* 4% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 21% Disagreed, 30% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 42% Agreed, and 4% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number nine asked, *I resent authority.* 70% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 19% Disagreed, 3% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 4% Agreed, and 4% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number ten asked, *I will retire with my current agency.* 4% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 4% Disagreed, 23% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 26% Agreed, and 43% Strongly Agreed.

Generation Y (1981-2000)

- Gender - 75% of the respondents were males and 25% were females.
- Education - 13 % of the respondents have a High School Diploma or GED, 50% have some college, 25% have two years of college, 6% have four years of college, and 6% have a graduate degree or higher.
- LE Experience - 81% of the respondents have 1-5 years, 13% have 6-10, 6% have 11-15 years of law enforcement experience.
- Rank - 100% of respondents were Officers/Deputies.
- Race – 63% were Caucasians, 6% were Black, 6% were Asian, 25% were Hispanic.

The generation specific section of Generation Y's surveys are as follows:

- Question number one asked, *I would rather take time off than work extra duty.* 6% Strongly Disagreed, 25% Disagreed, 38% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 25% Agreed, and 6% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number two asked, *I view law enforcement as a job and not a lifestyle.* 13% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 31% Disagreed, 50% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 6% Agreed.
- Question number three asked, *I am defined by my profession.* 6% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 31% Disagreed, 25% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 31% Agreed, and 6% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number four asked, *I do expect to be held accountable.* 37% of the respondents Agreed, and 68% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number five asked, *I work better when I'm not micro managed.* 6% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 19% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 44% Agreed, and 31% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number six asked, *Benefits were a factor when I entered the field of law enforcement.* 19% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 19% Disagreed, 25% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 19% Agreed, and 19% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number seven asked, *Technology has made the job more rigorous.* 19% of the respondents Disagreed, 50% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 25% Agreed, and 6% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number eight asked, *I accept or embrace change easily.* 6% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 14% Disagreed, 31% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 50% Agreed.
- Question number nine asked, *I resent authority.* 63% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 19% Disagreed, 13% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 6% Agreed, and 4% Strongly Agreed.
- Question number ten asked, *I will retire with my current agency.* 12% of the respondents Strongly Disagreed, 25% Neither Disagreed Nor Agreed, 25% Agreed, and 38% Strongly Agreed.

Discussion

The literature suggests that Baby Boomers are stabilizing workforce whose traditional values are the glue that holds the fabric of our society together. Secondly, Generation X is a group of misunderstood misfits who have a nontraditional orientation to time and space. Lastly, the newest generation entering the workforce is Generation Y. They are the offspring of the digital age that believe they are entitled to everything. However, this study contradicts many of the views that were researched. The surveys revealed baby boomers would rather take time off than work extra duty which directly contradicts the notion that baby boomers live to work and

work to live. On the other hand, Generation X and Generation Y do not consider this an issue. What was surprising was that all the generations surveyed stated they did not want to be held accountable for their actions, and they will not retire with their current agency. All the literature reviewed suggested the baby boomer generation was extremely loyal to their employer. They were regarded as loyal minions to their organization. This would indicate that the law enforcement profession is becoming a transient profession where each individual is becoming a free agent offering their services to the highest bidder or the organization that can fulfill a particular need at that time. However, I believe there are external factors not found during this study that directly influence how the respondents answered this survey questions. The current economic condition throughout the nation and the high unemployment rates are just two factors I believe strongly influenced the respondents answers.

Another interesting response noted during this study was that all the generations represented stated they do not accept or embrace change easily. I find this answer more troubling than any other survey question in this study. The baby boomer generation is perceived as rigid and inflexible so their response to this question is on target. Generation X is widely known for questioning the status quo with the belief that rules are flexible. Now generation y is the main source of my confusion. Generation Y is a very diverse group that has experienced a wide range of catastrophic events during their formative years. I would think their experiences would make them more flexible and willing to accept and adapt to change more easily than the other two generations.

Recommendations

There is a definite trend in modern management that emphasizes the needs of the employee. By understanding generational differences that currently exist in the workplace leaders can adjust their leadership style to tap into the strengths of this dynamic workforce. Long gone are the days when supervisors could rule by fear and intimidation without regard for their subordinates.

Tomorrow's leader will need to blend the different styles in order to fit each situation. The transformational leader will need to recognize the situation and adapt accordingly.

Vance Monroe Jr. has worked with the Polk County Sheriff's Office since 1996 after a ten year career in the United States Air Force. He has worked in several units within the Department of Law Enforcement to include Patrol, Property Crimes, PROCAP Unit, Sex Crimes Unit, and the Robbery Unit. Vance currently is a Lieutenant supervising the Echo Platoon within the West Division. Vance has a bachelor's degree in Organizational Management and a Masters of Business Administration Degree from Warner University. Vance also is a Certified Public Manager.

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APPENDIX A

Section One: PERSONAL DATA

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>1. <u>Your Age</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1923 - 1945 2. 1946 - 1964 3. 1965 - 1980 4. 1981 - 2000 | <p>2. <u>Your Gender</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male 2. Female | <p>3. <u>Education Level</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some High School 2. High School/GED 3. Some College 4. 2 years of College 5. 4 years of College 6. Graduate or Higher |
| <p>4. <u>Law Enforcement Experience</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1 – 5 Years 2. 6 – 10 Years 3. 11 – 15 Years 4. 16 – 20 Years 5. 20 + Years 6. None | <p>5. <u>Rank</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officer/Deputy 2. Corporal 3. Sergeant 4. Lieutenant 5. Captain 6. Major | <p>6. <u>Race</u></p> <p>Caucasian</p> <p>Black</p> <p>Asian</p> <p>Hispanic</p> <p>Indian</p> <p>Other _____</p> |

Section Two: GENERATION SPECIFIC

Scale:

1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Neither Disagree/ Nor Agree 4- Agree 5 – Strongly Agree

For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits. Use the above scale to select the appropriate number.

Description / Identification of Survey Item	Scale				
1. I would rather take time off than work extra duty.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I view law enforcement as a job and not a lifestyle.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am defined by my profession.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I do not want to be held accountable for my actions.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I work better when I'm not micro managed.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Benefits were a factor when I entered the field of law enforcement.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Technology has made the job more rigorous.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I do not accept or embrace change easily.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I resent authority.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I will not retire with my current agency.	1	2	3	4	5