**Multigenerational Teams in the Workplace:**

**Exploring the Outcomes, Conflict, Value, and Ways to Maximize Effectiveness**

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MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE
## Abstract

The multiple generations present in the workforce today has led to an exponential increase in teams with a multigenerational composition.  The individuals in these teams have varying values, goals, and characteristics as well as stereotypes that are perceived by other generations, which leads to many open questions such as: What outcomes and conflicts do teams of this nature produce?  What ways can the effectiveness of these teams be enhanced? This review of literature seeks to address these questions by first examining the varying attributes of the generations present in the workforce today. Then, it reviews the effect of age inclusive practices, multigenerational team composition, and conflict on outcomes such as productivity and employee satisfaction.  The paper concludes with recommendations for creating an age-inclusive environment to enhance the effectiveness of multigenerational teams and identifies important areas for future research.

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

## The Multiple Generational Cohorts in the Modern Workplace

There are four different generations in the workforce today, and this generational mix is projected to continue into the future (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020) (Fry, 2020).  One of the contributing factors to this generational mix is that people today are staying in the workforce later in life (SHRM Foundation, n.d.).  Generational distinctions are important because they contribute to the understanding of values and characteristics of the population that experienced shared events during their formative years (Fry, 2020). Understanding the common work values and characteristics of each generation will help facilitate practices within an organization that will combat workplace challenges associated with age diversity (Yang et al, 2018).  Within multigenerational teams, understanding and appreciating generational characteristics, preferences, and tendencies will help to formulate effective value creation, interaction, and generational composition.

Generations are not merely defined by the dates of birth for a specific population. Specifying generations includes analysis of demographic, attitudinal, labor market, and behavioral measures within a frame of time (Fry, 2020). Members of generational cohorts have developed distinguishable personalities and work values that have been shaped by common experiences such as wars, cultures, political, economic, and technological events (Mannheim, 1952) (Zabel et al, 2017). Although there are differences between individuals within each generation, studies have shown that these shared experiences create some commonly shared personality characteristics and work value systems within each generation (Kupperschmidt, 2000).  Importantly, studies have produced a lack of consensus concerning the validity of these generational constructs overall (Hayes et al., 2018). Therefore, the following generational

descriptions should be considered generalized attributes considering this subjective nature of generational constructs.

Stereotypes of generational cohorts are also important to understand because they are perceptions held by one generational cohort about another (Hayes, et al., 2018) The perceiver of these stereotypes views them as accurate attributes, then treats the stereotyped generation in accordance with those views. Stereotypes help humans process stimulus quickly by generalizing a group of people and are formed automatically but cannot be relied upon as they can lead to biases within the workplace (Fiske, 1998) (Heilman, 2012). Biases create negative performance expectations as well as normative behavior expectations that can cause harm because of their inaccuracy (Heilman, 2012). In addition to biases, stereotypes can create internal conflicts, diminish relationships, and degrade the work environment within the multigenerational workforce (Mergan, 2018).

**Baby Boomers**

"Baby Boomers", or the generation born from 1946-1964, is a term for the population that was born after the end of World War II (Fry, 2020). The birthrate after the war was markedly elevated in many industrialized countries, which created the Baby Boomer term for the people born during that period (Phillipson, 2008). Before WWII, the birthrate was at a record low in the United States. The sharp increase in births after the war was likely the result of planned births that had been postponed due to the insecurity of war (Hughes & O'Rand, 2005).

23% of people born during this timeframe do not identify as a member of a specific generational group (Hayes et al., 2018). This could be either an indicator of their independent nature or their self-perception of deviance from generational stereotypes or norms. Baby

Boomers were the largest adult generation from the years 1999 until 2019 (Fry, 2020). Not only was the Baby Boomer generation large, but it was also a pivotal generation (Hughes & O'Rand, 2005).

*Experiences*

Baby Boomers have lived through a variety of notable experiences unique to the generation. Baby Boomers "inherited, encountered, and redirected social change" (Hughes & O'Rand, 2005, p.224). The population born during this period were exposed to the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, the assassination of President Kennedy, and economic prosperity (Hopkins et al., 2018) ("November 22, 1963: Death of the president," n.d.). Their exposure to these events gave them experience with controversy, conflict, and idealism.

The Baby Boomer generation also was the first generation to live through a large transformation of popular tastes and lifestyles by way of a mass consumer revolution (Phillipson, 2008).

*Common Characteristics*

The experiences common to Baby Boomers shaped the way they relate with and experience the world around them. The historical events they experienced contributed to the development of attributes that are shared throughout the Baby Boomer generational cohort (Hayes et al., 2018). Baby Boomers are commonly found to be "hardworking team players who remained… achievement-oriented and competitive" (Hayes, et al., 2018, p 846). Baby Boomers are also able to focus on the task at hand, resourceful, and experienced (Dahl, 2019c).

According to Dahl, Owen J (2019c), Baby Boomers in the workforce today have three categories of workplace characteristics. The first type of Baby Boomer is the type who has worked their way up the ranks to a leadership or management position. The second type of Baby

Boomer loves what they do and are well suited for their role, so they work very hard to contribute to the overall mission (Dahl, 2019c). The third type of Baby Boomer in the workforce is just waiting to retire, so their work consists of the bare minimum to retain employment (Dahl, 2019).

### *Values*

Many of these characteristics exhibited are symptomatic of the strong values that Baby Boomers hold. Baby Boomers are very goal oriented. They also value a sense of community and teams, and value a structured environment (Dahl, 2019c). Loyalty is something that Boomers value deeply and have sometimes been criticized as being loyal to the point of personal detriment to their workplace (Hayes et al., 2018).

Considering the type of historical events that Baby Boomers were exposed to, it is not surprising that Boomers are "motivated to change the world with their idealism and considered optimistic" (Hayes, et al.,2018, pp 846).

### *Stereotypes*

Baby Boomers also have some prevalent stereotypes from the other generations that include being overbearing, resistant to change, being bad with technology, and caring too much about the chain of command (Hayes et al.,2018) (Ferri-Reed, 2013). Table 1 explains common characteristics, values, and stereotypes of the Baby Boomer generation.

**Table 1**

*Baby Boomer's Common Characteristics, Values, and Stereotypes*

| Characteristics | Values | Stereotypes |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Achievement Oriented | Goal oriented | Being bad with technology |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Experienced | Motivated to change the world, optimism | Resistant to change |
| Comfortable with hierarchy | Structured environment | Rigid with chain of command |
| Characteristics | Values | Stereotypes |
| Resourceful | Loyalty | Being loyal to a fault |
| Team players | Community, Teamwork | |

*Note:* Adapted from (Dahl, 2019c) (Hayes et al, 2018) (Ferri-Reed, 2013)

**Generation X**

The "Middle Generation" or Generation X is the term used for the population that was born between 1965-1981 (Dahl, 2019b). This generation has also been called the "sandwich" or "forgotten generation." Punk rock, heavy metal, and MTV became popular with this generation (McIntosh-Elkins et al., 2007). According to a study by Hayes, et al (2018), 82% of this generation identifies as Generation X. This means that among the generations, Generation X most identifies with their typical generational description.

*Experiences*

The residual policies from the Baby Boomer birth era brought about significant events that would shape the lives of Generation X. Economically, the nation wanted to ensure the prevention of another Great Depression, so it enacted policies that attempted to buy lower unemployment with higher inflation (Bryan, 2013). These actions led to an event known as "The Great Inflation", and eventually four recessions within this period (Bryan, 2013). In addition, in 1973 there was an Arab oil embargo that quadrupled the price of crude oil prices (Bryan, 2013). In 1979 after the Iranian Revolution, there was an energy crisis that tripled the cost of oil (Bryan, 2013). Lastly, President Nixon's attempts to control inflation by enacting wage and price

controls from 1971 and 1974 were unsuccessful.  These controls only temporarily slowed inflation while increasing shortages of food and energy (Bryan, 2013)

A significant portion of Generation Xers had two working parents, which qualified this generation as some of the first "latch-key" children (McIntosh-Elkins et al., 2007).  Generation X was also the generation whose parents boasted the highest divorce rate in history in 1970 at 40 percent (McIntosh-Elkins et al., 2007), In addition, Generation X saw many technological advances with home computers, video games, and was the first generation with an internet connection in the workforce (McIntosh-Elkins et al., 2007). Generation X witnessed the bust and boom of dot coms which added to their sense of resiliency. (Dahl,2019b). All these events helped contribute to the environment of change and uncertainty that cohorts of this generation were raised in. This type of environment has led Generation X to expect uncertainly and adversity.

### *Common Characteristics*

The uncertainty and change experienced by members of Generation X shaped the characteristics that are commonly seen in this generation.  Being latchkey kids molded Gen Xers into independent. efficient adults who were more flexible than the last generation (Dahl, 2019b). Gen Xers are also reliable and resilient in the workforce (Dahl, 2019b).

Although Generation X are used to self-reliance, resiliency pushes them to seek outside help if necessary. This generation is open to attending conferences and external coaching (Dahl, 2019b). Generation X is also a device friendly generation who are "familiar with all platforms" (Dahl,2019b). Generation Xers are entrepreneurial, and don't want to work for the institution. They also have a cynical sense of humor (McIntosh-Elkins et al., 2007).

### *Values*

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

The values of Generation X line up with many of the events they had to navigate during their formative years. Because of their latchkey upbringing, this generation does not simply comply with the tradition of their parents. Generation Xers question tradition (McIntosh-Elkins et al., 2007). Because the Middle Generation witnessed their parents struggling despite their intense efforts to work as hard as possible, Gen Xers have learned to value balancing their personal life with their work life (McIntosh-Elkins et al., 2007). This generation also values benefits and flextime more than wages (McIntosh-Elkins et al., 2007). In addition, this generation is likely to form stronger relationship bonds within the organization than with the organization itself (McIntosh-Elkins et al., 2007). Because Generation X values variety and change, many cohorts of this generation would not be satisfied with a repetitive occupation (McIntosh-Elkins et al., 2007).

***Stereotypes***

Some stereotypes of Gen Xers according to other generations include distrusting authority and being "easily frustrated by lack of promotions and increases in pay" (Hayes et al.,2018, pp.846). Also, they can be seen as disloyal to an organization and trying to disregard rules by members of other generations (Hayes et al.,2018). Table 2 explains characteristics, values, and stereotypes common to members of Generation X.

**Table 2**

*Generation X's Common Characteristics, Values, and Stereotypes*

| Characteristics | Values | Stereotypes |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Cynical | Questioning tradition | Disregarding of rules |
| Reliable | Work/ Life balance | Skeptical of authority |
| Open to coaching/ outside help | Variety/ Change | More loyal to personal goals than to company |

| Independent | Relationships within an | Comfortable with technology |
|---|---|---|
| Resilient | organization | |
| Flexible | | Comfortable with organizational change |

**Note:** Adapted from (Dahl, 2019b) (Hayes et al, 2018) (McIntosh-Elkins et al, 2007)

**Millennials**

Millennials or Generation Y is name for the generation that was born between the years 1981-1997 (Dahl, 2019a).  This generation is the biggest population in the workforce in America today and gets a large amount of its expanding population from young immigrants (Fry, 2020). Only 40% of Millennials identify as members of this generation, and 33% of all Millennials identify as members of Generation X over the Millennial generation (Pew Research, 2015). Many Millennials tend not to agree with generational constructs. As one Millennial participating in a study stated, generational groups are "broad stroked generalizations that serve no real purpose other than to let others blame entire swaths of people for problems" (Hayes et al, 2018, pp.850).

*Experiences*

There are many significant cultural, societal, and economic events that shaped Millennials. Some of these events include "the fall of the Berlin Wall, 9/11, the great recession and energy crisis, global warming/climate change, increasing international communications and travel, and an explosion in technology" (Hopkins et al., 2018, p. 188).  In addition, many Millennials were called "winners" and "special" by their parents regardless of performance and/ or outcomes (Hopkins et al., 2018).  This generation was the first to have mobile communication

devices and other smart devices.  Millennials were also the first generation to see the rise of

LGBTQ+ rights, which influence their diversity orientation (Hopkins et al., 2018).

### *Common Characteristics*

Although the majority of the Millennial generation do not identify as Millennials, there

are still characteristics common to this generational construct.  Millennials exhibit confidence,

hopefulness, are goal oriented, and inclusive (Hopkins et al., 2018). A higher percentage of

Millennials hold a bachelor's degree or higher than any previous generations (Bialik & Fry,

2021).  They are "technologically savvy, highly skilled," and not largely politically affiliated.

(Dahl, 2019a, pp. 62).  This generation is also less structured and may be less team oriented than

previous generations.  According to a Gallup poll, a disturbing 70% of Millennials are not

engaged at work (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016).

### *Values*

There are many values that are shared among members of this cohort.  Perhaps because

of Millennials' ethnic diversity, this generation values tolerance and is very accepting of

differences. (Dahl, 2019a).  In the workplace Millennials value flexible work hours, lifelong

learning opportunities, personal development opportunities, and electronics (Dahl, 2019a).

This generation values being held accountable at work (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016). Millennials that

are held accountable are twice as likely to be engaged at work than ones that aren't (Rigoni &

Nelson, 2016).  Millennials also greatly value role clarity (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016).

### *Stereotypes*

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

Millennials are a generation that are saturated with stereotypes. A few stereotypes for this generation include being entitled and their constant desire for feedback and praise (Hayes, et al.,2018). Other stereotypes include being lazy and unmotivated (Hayes, et al.,2018) (Ferri-Reed, 2013). Another common stereotype from other generations are that Millennials are often "impatient and do not want to wait in line" (Dahl, 2019a, pp.62).

Table 3 outlines characteristics, values, and stereotypes common to members of the Millennial generation in the workforce.

**Table 3**

*Millennials' Common Characteristics, Values, and Stereotypes*

| Characteristics | Values | Stereotypes |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Confidence | Accountability | Impatient |
| Goal- Oriented | Role Clarity | Unmotivated |
| Not as engaged at work as previous generations | Lifelong learning/ personal development | Desire for constant feedback/praise |
| Characteristics | Values | Stereotypes |
| Inclusive | Tolerance | Entitled |
| Technologically savvy | Flexible work hours | Lazy |

*Note:* Adapted from (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016) (Hayes et al, 2018) (Hopkins et al, 2018) (Ferri-Reed, 2013) (Dahl, 2019a) (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016)

**Generation Z**

The youngest generation in the workforce today was born between the years of 1997 and 2012 (Rodriguez et.al, 2021). Gen Z will be the largest generational population in the United States by 2022, holding 32% of the population globally (Pichler et al.,2021). Generation Z is mostly known for its digital immersion (Pichler et al.,2021). Members of this generation are

"technology natives" who are deeply integrated with technology in every aspect of their lives. (Pichler et al.,2021, pp 600)

Understanding Generation Z- also called "IGen, Homelanders, Digital Natives, and most commonly called Gen Z or Gen Zers" is essential to the success of a team within any organization today (Pichler et al., 2021, pp. 600).

*Experiences*

Arguably the experience that has most impacted the lives of Gen Z is the technological explosion into every area of society and life. Members of the Gen Z cohort do not know what a world without technology is like as most of their daily tasks are facilitated by technology (Rodriguez et.al, 2021). For example, when Gen Z drives somewhere unfamiliar, they have not had to ask a person for directions or look on a paper map as was done by previous generations. Now, simply inputting the destination address into an app such as Google Maps will give them step by step directions on how to get there.  They are also "the first generation to never have used a phone with a cord" (Deloitte, 2021, p 4).

This generation experienced the Great Recession and slow recovery, which came along with witnessing parents losing jobs and older siblings moving back home (Deloitte, 2021). They have also known a wealth gap between the high- and low-income group of 1,425% difference (Deloitte, 2021).  The rising in transportation costs, housing, food, healthcare and education tuition has shaped this generation and its values immensely (Deloitte, 2021). In addition to experiencing increasingly polarized world politics, Generation Z has now also had the difficult experience of navigating a worldwide pandemic (Pichler et.al, 2021).

*Common Characteristics*

Although Gen Z is a highly educated generational cohort, this generation is entering the workplace with less experience on the average than other generations have (Pichler et al.,2021) (Rodriguez et.al.,2021). This generation is the most ethnically diverse generation so far (Rodriguez et.al, 2021). Although Gen Z is ambitious and hardworking, members of this generational cohort change jobs the most frequently of the generations. They are often individualistic because of their technology orientation, and disdain hierarchal roles (Pichler, et.al.,2021).

Generation Z is very comfortable and integrated with technology in their everyday lives, as it has been present for as long as they can remember. However, this constant digital engagement has come at a price. The Digital Native Generation often suffers with elevated depression and anxiety (Pichler et.al.,2021). The digital engagement also adds to their individualistic nature and makes them less social.  Gen Z is more anxious than previous generations about group contributions. 70% with in person communication itself, and a good majority struggle with the decision to communicate face-to-face or digitally. (Pichler et al.,2021) (Rodriguez et al,2021). Gen Z is also used to solitary learning. Gen Z is more comfortable with independent than team-based tasks (Deloitte, 2021).

*Values*

Understanding the values of Generation Z will help effectively increase engagement within workplace teams.  A big part of Gen Z's value system stems from their immersion in technology.  This generation values both jobs within the tech industry and tech related positions within the workplace (Rodriguez et al.,2021).  The workplace environment is the most important factor to this cohort, then flexibility of hours, and quality of pay is last. (Rodriguez et al.,2021).

Gen Z demands personalization of their career journey, stable employment, and entrepreneurial

opportunities (Deloitte, 2021).

Gen Z highly values the ethics and social impact of a company, as well as diversity

within an organization (Deloitte, 2021). For example, a Gen Z employee will prefer to work for a

company whose ethics and social impact align with their own values than for a company who

offers a top-of-the-line quality product (Deloitte. 2021).  Although Gen Z prefers individual

tasks, they also value personal connection.  This generation values the ability to have a flexible

balance of power within the workforce (Deloitte, 2021). Recognition is an important part of

Generation Z's work life (Rodriguez et.al, 2021).

*Stereotypes*

According to Camfield et al.(2020) Gen Z has many prevalent stereotypes that need to be

examined.  Gen Z's complete integration with technology feeds the perception that they are

completely tethered to their smartphone and therefore distracted (Camfield et al, 2020). Many of

this generation is perceived to have had helicopter parents and be protected and privileged, with

all adversity removed by their parents (Camfield et al, 2020).  Another stereotype of Generation

Z is that they are unable to communicate because of their integration with technology (Pichler et

al.,2021) (Rodriguez et al,2021).

Table 4 outlines common characteristics, values, and stereotypes of Generation Z.

**Table 4**

*Generation Z's Common Characteristics, Values, and Stereotypes*

| Characteristics | Values | Stereotypes |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ambitious | Recognition | Unable to communicate |
| Complete integration with technology | Technological careers, related workplace | Tethered to smartphone/ distracted |
| Highly educated with less work experience | Financial security over personal fulfillment | Privileged |
| Most diverse cohort | Inclusion | Protected/ all adversity removed |
| Independent | Independence without isolation | Disrespects authority |
| Increased anxiety | Meaningfulness in work | |

Note: Adapted from (Pichler, et.al.,2021) (Camfield et al., 2020) (Rodriguez, 2021) (Deloitte, 2019)

## Outcomes of Multigenerational Teams

Age diversity within teams is an important topic that contributes to the success or failure of organizations in the workforce today. Considering a large portion of the workforce today functions in teams, the outcomes of teams affect not only the team itself, but the individuals within the team as well as the overall organization. The amount of age diversity within teams is increasing within the workforce. For example, in Germany 60% of teams were reported to have considerable age differences (Jungmann et al., 2020). This trend is common throughout industrialized nations (Jungmann et al.,2020). Age diversity is an important topic in the workforce today considering the four generations that are present. The question is whether

putting members of different generations into teams is an effective way to achieve increased performance and goal achievement within an organization. The performance of age diverse teams, organizational performance, and the performance of individuals within these teams varies depending on factors related to age inclusive practices and team composition (Bashir et al. 2021) (Wegge et al.,2012) (Leonard & Levine,2006) Inclusive practices make employees feel respected, valued, and supported (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.) An inclusive environment recognizes and appreciates every employee's individual strengths, which allows every employee to feel valued for their unique contributions (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). When there is high appreciation of age diversity within teams and employees feel that their contributions matter, their job satisfaction and productivity are enhanced, while conflicts do not seem so insurmountable (Wegge et al, 2012).  This type of environment is important for the effective functioning of multigenerational teams.  The positivity, negativity, or neutrality of outcomes surrounding multigenerational teams also change when analyzing different dynamics present within the teams (Seong & Hong, 2018). Despite the conflict faced between age diverse teams, after working through conflict multigenerational teams in an optimal environment can be more productive and yield more effective solutions than homogeneous teams (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019) (Wegge et al.,2012).

**Team Level Outcomes**

Conclusions about the impact of generational diversity on team performance and productivity are mixed.  One study found that age diversity within teams was the only demographic diversity factor that improved performance in every area in a marketing project simulation (Kilduff et al., 2000). Another study by Bunderson & Sutcliffe (2002) found no

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

significant effects of age diversity on team performance. Williams & O'Reilly (1998) found in a

review of literature both negative and positive effects of age diversity on group performance.

What are the factors explaining these mixed results?

There may be conditions that help to explain why the literature shows mixed results of

the impact of generational diversity on team performance. For example, Seong & Hong (2018)

discovered that the effect of age on group performance was positively enhanced when (1)

members of the group engaged more actively in decision making processes within the group and

(2) when the group's leader was rated high on charismatic leadership. These factors were not

controlled for in previous studies. Charismatic leadership refers to the extent to which leaders

within the group are trusted, communicate with group members, and are respected by group

members (Seong & Hong, 2018). Charismatic leadership may be important to multigenerational

teams because these teams often face a lot of uncertainty wherein charismatic leadership would

be most impactful. (Seong & Hong, 2018). Charismatic leaders also show respect to team

members, which adds to feelings of competency and value within the team (Seong & Hong,

2018). In summary, when age diverse members are more active in decision making team

performance is enhanced by increasing the diversity of ideas. Also, age diverse team members

having their decisions heard as well as having a charismatic leader adds to their sense of value

and competency within the team. This sense of value enhances the performance of the overall

team, as well as mitigating any negative effects present with group diversity (Seong & Hong,

2018).

***Quality of Solutions***

One study found that age diverse teams yield more high-quality, innovative solutions when age differences are not salient (Wegge et al., 2012). The same study showed that even when age differences were particularly obvious, high appreciation of age diversity mediates the salience and produces higher levels of innovation (Wegge et al.,2012). In tasks that require complex decision making an innovation, the multiple perspectives of age diverse teams enhance the quality and maturity of solutions reached (Wegge et al.,2012),

### *Common Interpersonal Conflicts Between Generations*

Conflict in any team is inevitable because of differing goals, opinions, ideas about task accomplishment, leadership, personalities, and many other factors (Salas et al.,2017). Considering the varying experiences, characteristics, and values between the generations that were mentioned earlier, conflict within multigenerational teams is an expected phenomenon.

**Differences in Characteristics, Values, and Stereotypes.** First, it is important to emphasize that the generational descriptions are only a generalization and are certainly not true for every individual born within the defined years of a generation. Many conflicts arise between the generations because of real and perceived differences, or stereotypes among the generations (Hayes et al.,2018). However, sometimes a member of one generation will use their knowledge of stereotypes of another generation to avoid conflict with that generation (Hayes et al., 2018).

Norms include standard operating procedures and behavioral standards that the members of the group adhere to (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019). One challenge with multigenerational teams is that the differences in attributes and values between the generations often create conflicting norms within the group, which leads to intragroup conflict (Huseein & Al-Mamary, 2019). The two types of intragroup conflict are task and process conflict (Hussein & Al-Mamary,

2019).  The task conflict is regarding the clarity of goals and objectives of a task, and process conflict is a disagreement about how those goals and objectives should be achieved (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019). The differences between the generations often give individuals a different view of what goals should be embraced and what processes would best help meet those goals. The sections below explain how these differences add to the disagreements in task and process.

**Organizational Authority and Structure.** Considering Baby Boomers are often accustomed to a hierarchal structure and have learned what it means to 'pay your dues', conflict often occurs with Boomers when another generation disrespects the chain of command or tries to get extras or promotions without 'paying their dues' (Ferri-Reed, 2013).  This attribute can be a significant problem when working with Gen Z because of Gen Z's elevated disregard shown to traditional hierarchy within an organization (Rodriguez, 2021).  Gen X also has a problem with the Boomer's values in this area because of Gen X's tendency to have a skeptical view of authority (Ferri-Reed, 2013).

This discrepancy may create ambiguity about the amount of structure and hierarchy within a multigenerational team, as well as how closely to follow rules and regulations.  Also, the generations that are more relaxed in observing chain of command may be seen as disrespectful by the Baby Boomer generation- which may lead to resentments and a breakdown in team cohesion.

**Change and Technology Orientation.** Another conflict that is prevalent with Baby Boomers is the real (or perceived) difference of them being resistance to change and being bad with technology (Hayes et al., 2018).  These two characteristics are connected (but not interdependent), as being resistant to change can often prevent this generation from the desire to learn new technologies, and the lack of knowledge of new technologies is often preceded by

one's resistance to change. However, Baby Boomers do not see themselves as resistant to change

because of all the drastic changes they have tackled throughout their lifetimes (Hopkins et al.,

2018) ("November 22, 1963: Death of the president," n.d.).

Flexibility to change and embracing of technology characterizes the Gen X, Millennials,

and Gen Z generational cohorts (Dahl, 2019a) (Dahl, 2019b) (Rodriguez, 2021).  Not only is Gen

Z comfortable with technology, but most of this generation would be unable to function without

it (Fry, 2020). Millennials are known for challenging the status quo- which can be very

uncomfortable to the often-resistant experienced Baby Boomers (Ferri-Reed, 2013). This

inconsistency in behaviors and goals can often create frustration and conflict within a

multigenerational team and workforce.  The question of whether to use traditional or innovative

technological processes is an issue that is often raised within multigenerational teams.

**Work Ethic.** One conflict within the generations regarding work ethic seems to be with

the Millennials (Ferri-Reed, 2013).  The other generations perceive Millennials are lazy and

unmotivated (Hayes et al.,2018).  This could be tied to Millennials desiring both a large amount

of feedback and praise (Hayes et al.,2018). Baby Boomers' reputation among the other

generations for working hard makes this Millennial attribute especially pronounced (Hayes et

al.,2018).  Perceived differences in work ethic may lead to conflict especially when one

generation feels that the next is not pulling their weight.  This difference in perceptions can make

it difficult during task and responsibility distribution.  If one person believes that another is not

willing to do a fair amount of work- or is unable to handle a workload, the first person might be

hesitant to share responsibility with the second person.

Also, Gen Z is different from the other generations because they have worked less jobs at

a younger age than any other generation before them (Schroth, 2019).  This lack of early

experience can lead them to have a less realistic view of what work can be like, which could lead to lower workplace commitment (Schroth, 2019).   Not understanding this lack of early work experience as a reasoning behind Gen Z's behavior can lead to a misconception of them being lazy or incompetent.  This can cause great frustration for previous generations that are working in teams with Gen Z.

Another difference in work values among multigenerational teams is the discrepancy of what working hours are acceptable (DiRomualdo, 2006).

**Breaks in Communication.** Quality communication essential to the success of any team. Communication is the method teams use to share their ideas, concerns, and build and foster relationships between one another.  Team members communicating their diverse ideas is what gives multigenerational teams their competitive advantage (Gay, 2017). Unfortunately, the differences in the generations often lead to a lack of quality communication.  Below are the areas that communication most frequently breaks down between the generations.

*Hierarchy Orientation.* The differences in the organizational structure that are prevalent among the generations can cause communication to break down (Ferri-Reed, 2013).  For example, a Baby Boomer may believe that he should not communicate a complaint that he has against a Millennial directly to the Millennial.  The Boomer may think he needs to go through the supervisor to make the complaint, while the Millennial does not understand why the Boomer does not just tell him directly.  This misinterpretation of the appropriate channels of communication can cause perceptions of disrespect when the hierarchal orientation of the generations is not properly considered (Ferri-Reed, 2013).

*Technology*. Communication through technology is a significant issue that causes communication breakdowns between the generations (Schroth, 2019). The decision to when and how often to use technology in communication is one factor that is a source of conflict between the generations (Hayes et al.,2018). The generations are often at both ends of the spectrum- with Gen Z wanting to always use technology and Baby Boomers often being somewhat uncomfortable with technology (Scroth, 2019) (Hayes et al., 2018).

Besides the issue of technology's frequency of use in communication, there is another conflict technology causes that is especially prevalent in Gen Z (Schroth, 2019). Gen Z has been so accustomed to communicating with technology and social media, they often have a hard time with face-to-face interactions (Schroth, 2019). Knowing what to say and how to say it is what makes communication successful, and Gen Z has little experience doing this face-to-face. Gen Z has missed out on valuable rules of conversation like how to interject respectfully, ask questions, resolve conflicts, and solve problems in real time because of their primarily technological mode of communication (Schroth, 2019). When a message is complicated or there is conflict, it is better to send it face to face (Schroth, 2019). Face to face interaction is also important for trust-building and interpersonal synchrony (Schroth, 2019). Members of Gen Z often miss the value of face-to-face communication and opt for digital communication instead (Schroth, 2019). When this relationship with technology is not understood by outside generations, both misinterpretations of communications and perceptions of disrespect or detachment are likely within these multigenerational teams.

*Disclosure Level.* The types and levels of details about one's personal, social, political, or religious life that is appropriate to share varies throughout the generations (Abrams & Von Frank, 2014). Boomers and Gen Xers are much less willing to share details about their personal

lives at work, and do not always have the best reaction when Millennials and Gen Xers do so (Abrams & Von Frank, 2014).  This mismatch may make the older generations seem uncaring to the younger, while the younger generations may look dramatic to the older (Abrams & Von Frank, 2014).

*Slang and Grammar.* Although every generation uses language that can be seen as specific to their generation, this does not equate to understanding of other generations' specific language used (Abrams & Von Frank, 2014).  Many terms that are commonplace to one generation may seem crude or weird to another.  One example of this is how the term, "that sucks" used by younger generations can seem crude to the Boomer generation (Abrams & Von Frank, 2014).

To add to the list of changes that technology has brought about is the decrease in correct grammar use.  Social media and texting have diminished the quality of grammar used while increasing acronyms, abbreviations, and unpunctuated language (Abrams & Von Frank, 2014).

The slang used by the different generations as well as the diminished quality of grammar in communications today are both recipes for increased misunderstanding within multigenerational teams. For example, acronyms that are often used in text communications by younger generations in place of words such as "RN" in place of "right now" are not always understood by older generations. Also, if a Gen Z team member tells a member of another generation they just "beat their face", the other generation might infer self-inflicted harm.   However, "beat your face" simply refers to applying makeup.

**Positive Team Level Effects of Conflict.** Although many researchers in the past have only viewed conflict as harmful, the appearance of the Contemporary View changed this

perception (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019).   The Contemporary View of Conflict sees conflict as

a necessary action for the progression of all groups (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019).  This type of

conflict is called functional conflict (Zahed & Farzad, 2017).

Positive effects of functional conflict on team dynamics include:

1.  Conflict can lead to positive social changes. When concerns are voiced and the status quo

    is challenged, conflict can create a better environment for all. (Hussein & Al-Mamary,

    2019).

2.  Conflict prevents teams from making decisions prematurely.  Groupthink is the opposite

    of this premise. Conflict forces teams to keep iterating to find new, better, ideas that will

    aid in goal completion. (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019).

3.  More creative solutions are reached through conflict. Conflict forces individuals in a

    team to keep searching for answers, instead merely accepting a preliminary idea (Hussein

    & Al-Mamary, 2019).

4.  Conflict that produces positive results can build team psychological safety (Raes, 2015).

    Team psychological safety is important for the effective functioning of teams because it

    makes team members feel comfortable enough to share information (Raes, 2015).

    Psychological safety has shown a positive significant relationship on team learning (Raes,

    2015).

5.  The conflict during the storming stage of group development is necessary to refine the

    group from a random collection of individuals to a performing integration of individuals

    who have already been through the adversity of conflict together.  Open communication

    is essential for constructive conflict in this stage of a team lifecycle (Raes, 2015).

**Negative Team Level Effects of Conflict.** Although there are many positive outcomes of conflict, the negative outcomes must be addressed also to help ensure mitigating factors are put into place.

The first type of conflict that produces negative outcomes is during the storming stage of team formation (Raes, 2015). The differing opinions that are presented by a team member in this stage can be misinterpreted as a personal rejection from other members of the team instead of a unique opinion (Raes, 2015). Subgroups are also often formed within a team during this stage if sides are taken, which can prolong the conflict and solidify members' respective positions (Raes, 2015).

Besides conflict present during the storming stage, other negative effects of conflict can include:

1. Focusing narrowly on the conflict and being absentminded to other issues.  This can prevent team members from both seeing a solution and seeing the situation accurately.

2. Making team members feel alienated from other team members

3. Wasting time that could be spent productively

4. Diverting from the essential goals of the team. (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019).

**Organization Level Outcomes of Multigenerational Teams**

Bashir et al. (2021) found that organizations continuously improve and sustain market share when they maintain an age-diverse workforce; age diversity is mandatory for improved organizational performance. However, according to Kuntz (2013) age diversity can have a negative effect on organizational performance if (1) there top managers have negative age-related stereotypes and (2) diversity- friendly HR processes are not implemented (Kuntz, 2013). Increased intellectual capital and social capital have been cited as positive organizational level

outcomes of age diverse teams functioning within optimized environments (Li et al.2021). Thus, when age-diverse team members feel valued, respected, and understood within an organization, age diverse teams will enhance the performance, intellectual, and social capital of an organization. When this environment is not present, age diversity will have a negative effect on organizational performance (Kuntz, 2013).

### *Knowledge Transfer*

Knowledge transfer is an important factor for the longevity of an organization because its ability to ensure that the valuable experiences and expertise of employees do not vanish after they move on (Cancialosi, 2014). One benefit of having individuals from differing generations who generally have varying experience levels is the potential for capturing and transferring knowledge throughout the organization (SHRM Foundation, n.d.).

According to a study by Ellwart et al. (2013) the amount and quality of knowledge transfer is dependent upon the dynamic of the multigenerational teams. Individual workers' perception of age diversity within teams is positively correlated with knowledge sharing, perhaps because of the individuals perceiving the different levels of experience or expertise that go along with age diversity (Ellwart et al., 2013). Also, individuals within a team that have positive diversity beliefs engage in higher amounts of knowledge transfer than those with no positive diversity views (Ellwart et al., 2013). Scheduling specific knowledge sharing times as well as maintaining a positive team climate with psychological safety are also factors that contribute to increased knowledge sharing within multigenerational teams (Ellwart et al.,2013).

Finally, a benefit of continued knowledge transfer is the increase in human and social capital within an organization.  A study by Li et al. (2021) found that age diversity resulted in a

statistically significant increased amount of intellectual (human) capital and social capital within

an organization.  Intellectual (human) capital is the knowledge, skills, and abilities that

employees possess and add to the organization, and social capital is the social connections that

employees form that add value to the organization (Li et al, 2021). These are important resources

necessary to sustain competitive advantages over time because they are unique and difficult to

imitate (Li et al.,2021).  According to Li et al (2021) this type of value is best added to an

organization when there is age-inclusive management and functional (sales, marketing, etc.)

diversity within the organization.

### *Ripple Effects on Other Diversity and Inclusion Strategies*

Age diversity is only one diversity factor in the workplace today.  Although there are

many definitions of diversity, for our purposes social category demographic diversity is the type

we are discussing.  Within social category demographic diversity, there are categories such as:

age, gender, and ethnicity (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004).  Employees within groups are able to

see these differences easily, which makes it obvious when one type of diversity is not being

supported.

When inclusion policies are excluding a type of demographic (age), employees can get a

sense of hypocrisy and diminish their view of the authenticity of their organization. Authenticity

in organization's diversity policies is when statements made about commitment to diversity and

inclusion by the organization match up to the actual practices (Marcinko, 2020). Hypocrisy that

is perceived within an organization can do more to harm employee's commitment and attitudes

than the actual offense of not having an age diverse workforce (Marcinko, 2020).  In summary,

ensuring the mutigenerational composition of workforce teams will help support the evidence for

authenticity and effectiveness of an organization's overall diversity and inclusion strategy.

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

*Common Organizational Level Conflict Present with Multigenerational Teams*

**Age Discrimination.** One problem with not understanding and valuing the differences in the generations is that this lack of understanding and one-sided view can lead to complaints of age discrimination. Under the Age Discrimination and Employment Act (ADEA) age discrimination is when someone over 40 is treated less favorably because of their age (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d). Some states also have laws protecting people under 40 from age discrimination (U.S. EEOC, n.d).

Like other forms of discrimination within the workforce, age discrimination harms the health of an organization because it takes adverse actions based on judgements about the competency of an entire group and (Lipnic, 2018). Stephan et al (2015) found in a study that being subjected to age discrimination increases employees' subjective age. Subjective age is the age one feels or believes that they are (Stephan et al.,2015). This subjective age was found to have effects on pulmonary and muscular function (Stephan et al.,2015). Therefore, experiencing discrimination in the workplace can influence an employees' health, which in turn can have both negative productivity and financial considerations. Age discrimination of an older person also effects younger employees' organizational perception, since they understand that one day they will be on the receiving end of such discriminatory treatment (Li et al, 2021).

While observing differences between the generations, it is important to remain teachable, flexible, and openminded. Discrimination not only affects the individual being discriminated against, but it also creates a ripple effect on the overall culture of the organization.

**Additional Organization Level Outcomes of Team Conflict.** When one team within an organization has an environment that is characterized with this negative conflict, it can have

negative effects not only on the team but on the entire organization. (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019). Negative effects of conflict that are not mitigated can waste scarce resources and can even cause damage, theft, sabotage, or violence in extreme cases (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019).

**Individual Level Outcomes of Multigenerational Teams**

Individual level outcomes of age diverse teams are affected by various criteria concerning team composition and organizational environment. Employee retention was found to be higher when age diverse team members were more generationally isolated within the workplace (Leonard & Levine, 2006).  Employee satisfaction was found to be higher when there was more outcome interdependence within generally diverse teams (Schippers et al.,2003).  Age diverse employees being generationally isolated within the workplace likely adds to their sense of worth by highlighting their unique value.  Outcome interdependence adds to employees' sense of value and worth because they feel they are an integral part of a team mechanism. When these factors are present within a multigenerational team, the outcomes are beneficial for age diverse individuals.  However, when negative conflict is escalated and continues to flourish, individual satisfaction, sense of value, and progress is diminished (Bazerman & Moore, 2012). Psychological safety within a team, however, has been found to create positive outcomes resulting from conflict (Raes, 2015) (Huseein & Al-Mamary, 2019).

*Employee Retention*

Leonard & Levine (2006) relayed interesting findings on age diversity and employee turnover within an organization.  Isolation is when a member of a diverse group does not have (or has few) comparable members of that same diverse group within an organization (Leonard & Levine, 2006).  When concerning ethnic and gender diversity, there is a positive correlation

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

between isolation and employee turnover.  However, when concerning age diversity, there is a

negative correlation between isolation and turnover (Leonard & Levine,2006).  Hence, the study

found that less isolated an age diverse worker is, the more likely they are to leave their place of

employment (Leonard & Levine, 2006).  This finding supports the need for multigenerational

teams in the context of employee retention and relates to the area of employee satisfaction.

### *Employee Satisfaction*

Schippers et al. (2003) discovered factors that contribute or detract from employee

satisfaction within generally diverse teams (age, gender, education, tenure on team) The

questions asked within the study to assess satisfaction were, "I am satisfied with my present

colleagues' and 'I am satisfied with working in this team" (Schippers et al., p.89). The study

found that team members that had higher outcome interdependence were more satisfied with a

highly diverse team (Schippers et al.,2003).  The amount of outcome interdependence in the

study is defined by the degree to which group members were informed of and worked towards

their goals, as well as the degree to which they were evaluated collectively (Schippers et

al.,2003).

Schippers at al. (2003) found that teams with higher longevity were less satisfied when

there were high levels of diversity, and teams with lower longevity were more satisfied when

there was a higher level of diversity.   In summary, the study found that the amount of

satisfaction varied depending on the level of diversity within the team, the longevity of the team,

and the outcome interdependence of the team.

### *Individual Outcomes of Conflicts Within Multigenerational Teams*

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

**Positive Outcomes.** Although conflict is not comfortable, the conflict within multigenerational teams often produces positive outcomes, or functional conflict (Zahed & Farzad, 2017). First, conflict encourages individuals to use their abilities, skills, and talents to their maximum capacity (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019). Team members must exert more effort when there is a struggle than when a solution is easily reached (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019). This struggle encourages growth and self confidence in the individual team member. Second, the conflict within a team is an opportunity for team members to share and respect differing perspectives which increases an individual's feeling of psychological safety within the team (Raes, 2015) (Huseein & Al-Mamary, 2019). In turn, this psychological safety allows individuals to share more and allows individuals to have a deeper understanding of issues. (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019) (Raes, 2015)

**Negative Effects.** When differing opinions are not respected, feelings of psychological safety are diminished (Raes, 2015). A negative factor preventing resolution of conflict is called escalation of conflict (Bazerman & Moore, 2012). Escalation of conflict is when an individual is so focused on winning the conflict that they will continue in the conflict, even when continuing will produce an unprofitable outcome (Bazerman & Moore, 2012). To mitigate escalation of conflict, team members should be encouraged to take advice from unbiased team members on the steps to take to resolve the conflict (Bazerman & Moore, 2021). Continuing lack of respect, as well as unchecked escalation of conflict can cause many negative effects in individuals including:

1. Reducing interest in work and job dissatisfaction. Conflict can make the effort and results of work seem unimportant.

2. Employee turnover could be increased if the conflict is continued and seems insurmountable.

3. Making individuals become more self-interested at the cost of others. If a conflict makes a team member view other members as self-interested, they may follow suit to try to compete.

4. Intense conflicts can affect the health of employees. (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019)

Identification and mitigation of conflicts that produce negative results is imperative for the effective functioning of individuals within a multigenerational team.

### Recommendations for Effective Multigenerational Teams

Considering the complexity of the dynamics involved within multigenerational teams, organizations must proactively employ methods to enhance the effectiveness of teams of this nature. Incorporating and appreciating differences in personalities, values, and goals into the composition of the team as well as mitigating negative conflict is imperative for the success of multigenerational teams. The common factor differentiating positive from negative outcomes of age diverse teams is the sense of value, worth, and competency that an individual in an age diverse team perceives. Utilizing and appreciating each team member's differences and competencies is an important part of inclusive practices that enhance the performance of age diverse teams. When differences are appreciated, age diverse team members feel comfortable bringing their whole authentic selves to work. (Thomas & Ely, 1996). When differences are appreciated, age diverse team members can help improve processes, reach goals, and communicate ideas more effectively (Thomas & Ely, 1996). Without these inclusive practices, a discriminatory environment may be perceived which can lead to diminished workplace

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

performance (Kunze et al., 2010). The following recommendations should be employed as a portion of an organization's diversity and inclusion policy.

**Leaders**

The leader overseeing or within a multigenerational team must employ certain tactics to ensure that the differences in generations do not become barriers but become unique strengths that augment the effectiveness of multigenerational teams.

*Challenge Harmful Stereotypes but Show Appreciation for Differences*

When considering traits commonly ascribed to members of certain generations, leaders need to keep an open mind and try to gain deeper understanding of events that might have caused these attributes, as well as how to interact with generational cohorts with these experiences (Waldman, 2021). Understanding the different experiences that have shaped the way a generational cohort acts is important to combating misconceptions of laziness or disrespect (Waldman, 2021).  Also, understanding that generational descriptions are only generalizations and can have exceptions can help increase understanding and decrease feelings of discrimination within a team (Waldman, 2021). Leaders should engage in age diversity training to help them understand which events have shaped each generation as well as appreciation for differences and similarities between members of diverse generations.  These trainings should then be replicated within the multigenerational team.

**Team Leader Coaching.** While challenging stereotypes is important, the general validity of differences ascribed to the generations should also be recognized.  De Vos (2014) found that leaders of multigenerational teams increased the team's effectiveness when the leaders embraced the differences and incorporated differences into both evaluations and interaction.  Team leader

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

coaching to enhance competencies developed from differing experiences of the generations

increases cooperation, commitment, and loyalty within the team (De Vos, 2014).  Also,

considering variances between cohorts can mean the difference between effective and ineffective

coaching. Table 5 outlines specific coaching techniques for the generations given by Douglas et

al.,2015.

**Table 5**

*Generation- specific coaching techniques*

| Generational Cohort | Coaching Techniques |
| --- | --- |
| Baby Boomers | Prefer coaching by a generational peer. |
| Generation X | Active listening and observation coaching. Prefer to demonstrate own expertise. |
| Millennials | Open to coaching by more experienced individual, provide more personalized feedback. |
| Gen Z | Make coaching interactive and incorporate technology considering this cohort's view of authority and technology orientation. |

Note: Adapted from (Douglas et al, 2015).

**Charismatic Leadership.** Seong & Hong (2018) found charismatic leadership to

enhance the performance of multigenerational teams.  A leader is perceived to be charismatic

when the group trusts and respects the leader, and the leader communicates with the group Seong

& Hong (2018).  A charismatic leader will stress the importance of a team member's feedback,

which will help the overall functioning and communication of the team (Schroth, 2019) (Seong

& Hong, 2018).  This type of leadership can help cultivate a culture of trust within the group,

which is often a missing factor in a dysfunctional multigenerational team (Douglas et al., 2015).

A culture of trust enhances feeling of value and competency within an age diverse team.

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

### *Do Not Play Favorites*

Because of varying personalities and levels of experience within the generations, some voices within the team will be louder than others. It is important to ensure that every voice is heard during meetings and team communications (Waldman, 2021) Often, the less experienced and less "heard" generations are already feeling insecure about their contributions and this misstep may exacerbate this feeling (Waldman, 2021). Also, leaders should beware of underlying biases that may be affecting their interactions within the team. It is important for the leader to beware of maintaining closer relationships with members that are of the same generation as them, because of a bias called the similar-to-me effect (Zahed & Farzad, 2017) (Waldman, 2021). The similar-to-me effect is when leaders favor employees with demographic identities that are similar to their own (Zahed & Farzad, 2017). When left unchecked, the similar-to-me effect will increase groupthink and decrease functional conflict (Zahed & Farzad, 2017).

### Shared Member Expectations

One way to mitigate the differences in values and personalities among generational cohorts is to create a shared value system within the team (Blattner & Walter, 2015). This value system includes shared ethical, cultural, and behavioral expectations (Blattner & Walter, 2015). This is effective not only in multigenerational teams, but in the overall organizational environment (Blattner & Walter, 2015). This team agreement should be written and signed to stress the permanence of its parameters (Douglas, et al.,2015).

Considering many of the conflicts between generations stem from differing values and goal clarity, creating a shared value system to highlight common goals, rights, and expectations will aid in conflict prevention and resolution. For example, a team could create a basic bill of rights for each member that can be referenced in various situations (Blattner & Walter. 2015). In

addition, common goals of the team should be created and regularly referenced, as well as outlining metrics to measure goal completion. Each generational cohort should have equal input into the creation of this shared value system, and the value system should be incorporated into and measured against the daily activities of the team (Blattner & Walter, 2015). This system will increase team member engagement and establish accountability within the team, as well as reduce intragroup task and process conflict within the group. (Blattner & Walter, 2015) (Douglas, et al.,2015) (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019).

This shared value agreement will satisfy Gen Z's need for meaningfulness in work, Gen X's desire to strengthen individual relationships within the organization, Millennial's and Baby Boomers' goal orientation and need for role clarity, as well as Boomer's value of continued loyalty for example (Pichler et al.,2021) (Rodriguez et al,2021) (McIntosh-Elkins et al., 2007) (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016) (Hayes et al., 2018). In addition, this agreement will enhance team performance by increasing age diversity appreciation and individual decision making within the team (Seong & Hong, 2018) (Wegge et al.,2012).

**Enhancing Role Value**

Designing roles that are strengthened by an individual's skills and values is imperative to adding value to an employee's role within a team. Individual skills and preferences as well as the preferences and experiences of each generation must be considered to create value within a multigenerational team.

An important value held by Millennials and Gen Zs as a team member is to be able to see the bigger picture of their roles and to be able to tie their own values and goals to their work within the team (Dahl, 2019a) (Rodriguez, 2021). This intrinsic value can be highlighted by an organization showing these cohorts the end results of their work, achievement recognition, and

engaging in corporate social responsibility (Rodriguez, 2021). While highlighting value of team member role is not typically as essential for Baby Boomers or Gen Xers, highlighting the value of the role is likely to increase motivation for these generations also (Dahl, 2019b) (Dahl, 2019c).

Acknowledging the value of Generation X in a multigenerational team is important to maximize the effectiveness of a multigenerational team. Generation X, which is often referred to as the middle generation, can be positioned in a role that will help bridge the gap between Baby Boomers and the Millennials or Gen Z (Dahl, 2019b). Generation X's comfortability with or without technology, their desire for continued learning, as well as their being positioned close in age to both younger and older generations make them an excellent liaison between the generations (Dahl, 2019b). This generation's attributes in relation with the other generations needs to be considered to add value within multigenerational teams.

### *Peer Mentoring*

Mentoring is an efficient tool for both highlighting the value of each role, developing skills, and enhancing communication and relationships between the generations (Ferri-Reed, 2013). In a study by Bozionelos et al (2011) mentorship was also found to contribute to the career success of both mentors and mentees. Considering that mentoring is a part of an employee's social capital and method of knowledge exchange, it is imperative to harness this activity to capture each team member's human capital (Bozionelos et al.,2011). Mentorship can also help team members move beyond any negative stereotypes or perceptions about other generations by giving them authentic experiences interacting with other generations to draw from (Crommett, 2020).

For example, Baby Boomers can transfer knowledge, experience, and culture from their often-vast levels of experience to the younger generations (Dahl, 2019c). In return, Baby Boomers can be mentored by the younger generation on using new advances in technology and social media (Ferri-Reed, 2013). This mutual sharing of knowledge and expertise can help combat any perceptions of inferiority or superiority, as well as increase appreciation of other generational cohorts' knowledge. Designating a specific time for mentoring and cross-generation knowledge sharing is a great way to enhance job satisfaction, relationships, professional skills, intergenerational communication skills, and understanding of differences and similarities among the generations (Ferri-Reed, 2013) (Dahl, 2019c) (Mokoka, 2015).

*Technology*

Effectively designating technology-based roles within a team is an excellent way to highlight the value of a team member's role. The Millennial's close relationship with technology and Gen Z's inability to be comfortable without technology are reasons to design roles working with technology for age diverse team members (Camfield et al, 2020) (Dahl, 2019a).

For example, having Gen Z and Millennials implement a technology-based communication system would help increase engagement and team commitment for their generations as well as increase familiarity of technological processes for the Baby Boomers and possibly Generation X. Considering many conflicts between the generations ensue from when to use electronic communications, a general guideline for appropriate occasions of use for this digital communication should be outlined in the written shared value system (Schroth, 2019) (Hayes et al, 2018). Also, the ability to use avatars and emojis in these electronic communications will especially allow Gen Z to express their identity more authentically (Pichler, 2021).

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

**Team Meetings**

Although virtual meetings are now a prominent form of communication and collaboration

within teams, the complication of some situations calls for physical meetings with each team

member's presence.  The various characteristics, values, and stereotypes of each generation can

often cause conflict in team meetings.  Although Gen Z may be resistant to face to face

interaction and Gen Xers and Millennials can be impatient with lengthy meetings, there are ways

to remedy these and other factors to make the meetings productive (Ferri-Reed, 2013).

First, the meeting needs to start with a brief revisiting of the main points of the agreed upon

shared value system of the team.  This will help renew the shared focus of the team as well as set

some ground rules for the meeting (Blattner & Walter, 2015) (Douglas, et al.,2015).

Second, the meeting needs to include a structured, precise agenda (Ferri-Reed, 2013).  This

structure will decrease anxiety for Gen Z, satisfy the Boomer's value of structure, and combat

the Gen X's and Millennial's perceived impatience. Also, ensuring the meeting is interactive will

also increase engagement for Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z who are not as accepting of the

traditional hierarchy as Baby Boomers (Ferri-Reed, 2013) (Rodriguez, 2021).

Third, allowing Gen Z to incorporate technology into the meeting will increase engagement of

this generation, and will help them to feel more comfortable with the face-to-face interaction

(Pichler, 2021).

For example, the meeting could include some form of interactive technology run by Gen

Z that would be manipulated by the differing viewpoints about meeting topics of the attendees.

The content of this technology would also change to adapt to each item on the agenda.  This

technology's presentation would begin by showing the main points of the shared value system,

and then move on to the next item on the agenda.  Also, allowing Gen Z to manage an electronic

communication system to interact with geographically dispersed team members will be beneficial for both Gen Z and the overall team functioning (Pichler, 2021). These techniques should be adapted to fit virtual meetings as well.

**Training**

Training is important for employees in any organization to ensure continued competency in a dynamic environment (Lowell & Morris, 2019). Considering the variances in preferences, values, and attributes of each individual within generations, a training program that is inclusive of every style needs to be developed for the multigenerational team. Unfortunately, many organizations either do not understand or do not take into consideration these differences and continue to train by employees by using a one-size fits all approach (Turner, 2015). Productivity, customer relations, and employee morale are areas that often suffer when generational differences are not considered in the design of employee training programs (Longenecker, 2007) (Turner, 2015)

*Baby Boomers*

Baby Boomers had teacher centered lecture type classroom experiences with little technology during their formative years (Cuban, 1993). This, in addition to their values and characteristics has made Baby Boomers prefer learning that is structured, but with flexibility incorporated in case of challenges with technology (Lowell & Morris, 2019). Baby boomers enjoy question and answer sessions and team learning (Boysen et al., 2016) (Cekada, 2012). Also, when software or technology updates or changes, Baby Boomers often require more face to face and formal training than other generations (Dahl, 2019c).

*Generation X*

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

Although Generation X mostly had lecture type environments during their formative years as well, there was more of a move towards student-centered experiences and student interests for this generation (Cuban, 1993). Considering this and Generation X's common attributes, they prefer to learn with active engagement, and with the flexibility for learners to direct their own learning (Lowell & Morris, 2019). Simulations and games are an example of a preferred learning method for this generation (Turner, 2015) (Axonify, 2013).

### Millennials

Growing up in an environment that morphed into unlimited information and choice has shaped Millennials' learning preferences (Hopkins et al, 2018). This generation is accustomed to learning with game-presentations and interactive group activities (Hopkins et al, 2018). E-learning, simulations, and games are examples of learning methods Millennials enjoy (Hopkins et al, 2018). Millennials appreciate regular feedback as well as technology while learning (Lowell & Morris, 2019). Strictly lecturing is not an advisable teaching method for this generation (Lowell & Morris, 2019).

### Gen Z

The first truly digital natives have only known a world saturated with technological influence (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2018). Considering social anxiety accompanies this technological saturation, hybrid interaction and social integration learning programs are helpful in training this generation to become more proficient at interacting face to face (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2018). Regularly switching between videos, lecture, and discussion is a good tactic to increase this generation's learning as a result of their commonly short attention span (Shellenbarger, 2018).

### Multigenerational Learning

Every generation in the workforce today is motivated by understanding how training will apply to their current job and how skills will help them, so real life application is important when designing training for every generation (Notarianni et al, 2009) (Cekeda, 2012) (Rodriguez, 2021). Also, allowing each generation to use their strengths to aid in the training is advisable (Lowell & Morris, 2019). For example, Baby Boomers and Gen X can share their extensive experience and provide feedback to enhance learning while Millennials and Gen Z can use their global mindset and technological orientation to contribute new perspectives (Cekada, 2012) (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2015) (Pichler, 2021).  In addition, providing multiple choices for learning methods and allowing each generation to self-select their method mitigates conflict, and allows generations to be in control of their own learning (Delcampo et al., 2011).   If individualized training is not feasible, different formats team of training should be used on a rotational basis to ensure inclusivity of generations.

Conducting a communication skills workshop will enhance team cohesion by including both generational self-discovery and tactics on how to effectively communicate with members of other generations (Douglas et al, 2015).  Table 6 is a summary of the recommendations given to enhance the effectiveness of multigenerational teams.

**Table 6**

*Summary of Recommendations to Enhance the Effectiveness of Multigenerational Teams*

| Inclusive Environment Factor | Recommendation |
| --- | --- |
| Leadership | Leaders acting with inclusivity |
| | Coaching individually |
| | Employing charismatic leadership |
| | Showing equal favor to each generation |

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

| | |
|---|---|
| Shared Value System | Shared value system created, written, and agreed upon by each team member Includes ethical, behavioral, and cultural expectations within the team. |
| Team Member Role Value | Use mentoring and technology integration to highlight team member role value |
| Training | Make provisions for individual generations, provide multiple formats for training, highlight practicality of training encourage each generation to use skills provide communication skills workshop |

*Note:* The content in table 6 is a compilation of information from all the sources reviewed, presented in a condensed format.

## Future Research

This review highlights what we know about the impact of the multigenerational workforce on team experiences and outcomes, and points out what we do not yet know. In particular, this review suggests that there are a few important research areas that need further development in order to increase our understanding of the impact of the multigenerational workforce.

The first area of contribution would be examining what combination of generations is most effective in multigenerational teams. For example, would pairing 1 Baby Boomer with 3 Millennials and 1 Gen Z be more effective than 2 Gen Xers with 3 Millennials? What are the differences when different combinations are made? What are the strengths of having more of one generation? Are there combinations to consistently be avoided?

Second, there needs to be further research into multiple levels of diversity at once. For example, comparing the outcomes of teams with ethnic and generational diversity with the outcomes of teams that are purely ethnically diverse is an area that needs to be explored further. Controlling for other additional diversity factors while studying a specific type of diversity is important to deepen the understanding of specific types of diversity on outcomes.

Lastly, further research needs to be conducted on Generation Z's functioning within a team. Some research has found Generation Z to not be as comfortable as other generations within a team setting. However, because of this generation's relative novice in the workforce there is scarce research on the long-term outcomes of Generation Z functioning within teams. The increased number of Generation Z progressing in the workforce in the coming years should present ample experiences to increase opportunities for further examination in this area.

## Conclusion

Diversity makes teams smarter. That is why it is so important for members to feel that they can be themselves and contribute their diverse ideas and strengths to the progress of the team. Understanding, appreciating, and making provision for differences is a step towards authentic inclusivity in an organization. When members of differing generations can bring their authentic self to a team, they are better able to function closer to their full capacity. When team members perceive that they are appreciated, supported, and valued within a team they are not inclined to hide the strengths that make them unique.

Although the differences between generations within multigenerational teams often result in miscommunication and negative conflict, these differences can also produce optimal team outcomes when there is preparation and understanding integrated into the multigenerational team.

MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

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