

DISSERTATION

THE EXPERIENCES OF THE YOUNGER SUPERVISOR: IMPLICATIONS FOR
ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

THE EXPERIENCES OF THE YOUNGER SUPERVISOR: IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

With four generations in today's workforce, roles are being redefined to include a growing number of younger supervisor/older subordinate relationships, referred to as the intergenerational dyad. What current and limited literature exists about the intergenerational dyad exclusively addresses the issues of generational workplace differences between the younger supervisor and the older subordinate from the perspective of the older subordinate rather than from the perspective of the younger supervisor. Through a qualitative study combining aspects of phenomenology and narrative inquiry, data were collected from 19 professionals in the field of student affairs in higher education who supervised at least one full-time, professional staff member who was ten or more years older than they. In April and May of 2012, one-hour telephone interviews were conducted with each participant. From transcriptions, narratives were developed to illustrate each participant's experiences.

Based on the findings of this research, the following conclusions can be made about the younger supervisor and the intergenerational dyad: Age is more apparent to younger supervisors when they are younger than their professional peers than when they are younger than their subordinates; Age is more apparent to younger supervisors when they have a magnified title than when they are younger than their subordinates; Younger supervisors find mentorship in their older subordinates; and Younger supervisors who are women noted having more negative experiences supervising subordinates who are older than they are than younger supervisors who

are men. Generational differences in the intergenerational dyad and the role of gender in the intergenerational dyad were also examined and analyzed.

The findings of this study suggest implications for leaders in the field of higher education as well as any organization where the intergenerational dyad exists: training for supervisors, creating a culture of support for younger supervisors, and creating a culture of inclusion for younger supervisors. Additional research is recommended to explore: gender differences in the intergenerational dyad, industry differences in the intergenerational dyad, and work/life balance issues that affect the intergenerational dyad.

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This dissertation would have been completed sooner had it not been for my daughter, Evelyn Leier, who was born the fall after I completed my coursework, two years ago. Evie, at three weeks old, was cared for by a babysitter for the first time while I defended my comprehensive exams. Although Evie's birth slowed my timeline, her presence has given me all the more drive to persist to graduation. Although she won't remember my time as a doctoral student, my hope is that the high value of education I learned from my own mother is one I pass along to Evelyn as my daughter.

I acknowledge my committee members, as well. Their healthy balance of support and intimidation was just right for me. Each time I met with them as a group, I entered the room with anxiety and left feeling supported and cared for. They are smart, helpful, and patient men and women.

Finally, I acknowledge my friends and family (whom this dissertation's research participants are named for) who have supported me through this process. They have all supported and cheered on my efforts and sacrificed time spent with me through these years, my husband, Kent, especially. Kent has known me 14 years, two of which I have not been enrolled in school. He has faithfully supported my goals and prioritized my needs throughout this journey.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my former staff on the Phone Counseling team in the Office of Admissions at Colorado State University. This staff of six women, all ten or more years older than I was during my time as their supervisor, not only introduced me to supervision, but also taught me enormous amounts about being a competent colleague, a dedicated professional, and a confident woman.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my former supervisor, Mindy (Nichols) Marshall. When I admitted my anxieties about taking on a new supervision role as a young professional who was younger than her subordinates, she stated, “Fake it ‘til you make it.”

I may or may not have “made it” but I am no longer faking it, and for that I am grateful, thankful, and relieved.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background and Context of the Problem

There are currently four generations in the workforce: Millennials, Generation X, Baby Boomers, and Veterans. Each of these four generations have unique characteristics that can make working together a challenge (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). It was projected by Williams and Nussbaum (2001) that by 2020, 39.1% of the workforce will be over the age of 55.

Generational entrance to and exit from the workforce have created somewhat of a surplus of older workers in the workforce and, therefore, businesses are hiring an increasing number of older workers to fill entry level jobs than in the past (Collins, Hair, & Rocco, 2009). As a result of these dynamics, roles in the workplace are being redefined and rules are being rewritten.

According to Zemke et al. (2000), the “pecking order, hierarchy, and shorter life span that de facto kept a given generational cohort isolated from others no longer exist... merit is overcoming time in grade, or any other variable, as the deciding factor in advancement” (p. 11).

Table 1
Generations in Today's Workforce

Generation	Other Terms Used in the Literature	Range of Birth Years	Age in 2012	Approximate Percent of Workforce in 2010^a
Millennial	Nexters, Generation Y, Generation Next	2001-1981	11-31	16
Generation X	Generation Me, Latchkey Kids	1980-1965	32-47	25
Baby Boomer		1964-1946	48-66	44
Veteran	Traditionals, The Silent Generation	1945-1922	67 +	15

^aMitchell (2000)

The oldest of the Gen Xers were born in 1965; now in their 30s and early 40s, these workers have almost 20 years of work experience and are more and more frequently taking on

roles of supervising their older colleagues (Wendover, 2009). Generation X and the Millennial generation are known for having high expectations and big goals and being generally optimistic; they also have a “casual disregard for hierarchy and tradition” (Kersten, 2009, p. 70) and shun the idea that one has to “pay ones dues” in order to move ahead in the workforce. The younger generations have the viewpoint that one is in charge of his/her own career and are in full realization that today’s companies do not promise to take care of their workers as they once did (Zemke et al., 2000).

Statement of the Problem

Little current research exists about the younger supervisor/older subordinate dyad. What current and limited literature exists exclusively addresses the issues of generational workplace differences between the younger supervisor and the older subordinate from the perspective of the older subordinate rather than from the perspective of the younger supervisor. To better understand leadership development and management strategies, the experiences of the younger supervisor must be more closely examined.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is that it creates a deeper understanding of the younger supervisor/older subordinate dyad in today’s multigenerational workplace and will create an understanding of this dyad from a different perspective. Until recently, managers were likely to be older and more experienced than most of the individuals they supervised. Now, sometimes due to reorganizations and mergers, more older workers are reporting to younger managers (Shore, Cleveland, & Goldberg, 2003). This interesting new pair was referred to as an “intergenerational dyad” by Smith and Harrington (1994) and the phenomenon poses a number of questions. According to Zemke et al. (2000), the old “pecking order, hierarchy, and shorter

life span that de facto kept a given generational cohort isolated from others no longer exist... merit is overcoming time in grade, or any other variable, as the deciding factor in advancement” (p. 11).

Purpose Statement

With this increase in older workers, one new phenomenon in the workplace is the intergenerational dyad of younger supervisors and older subordinates (Smith & Harrington, 1994). Intergenerational dyads are increasingly becoming the norm in many business settings (Cufaude & Riemersma, 1999; Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse, 1999; Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007).

The purpose of this study was to examine the phenomenon of the younger supervisor/older subordinate dyad in the field of student affairs in higher education and describe the experiences and share the voices of the younger supervisor from their own perspective. The author aimed to discover and describe the meaning younger professional supervisors ascribe to their experiences supervising older colleagues. An older colleague was defined as one who is ten or more years older than their younger supervisor. A professional was defined as a staff member who has earned at least a bachelor’s degree and works in an administrative/non-support position that has a positive educational requirement.

Research Questions

The purpose was to investigate the younger supervisor/older subordinate dyad from the perspective of the younger supervisor to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of younger supervisors in higher education settings in terms of supervising older subordinates?

- a. How do younger supervisors perceive their older subordinates' respect for their supervisory role?
 - b. How do younger supervisors perceive their older subordinates' acceptance of being supervised by younger supervisors?
2. How do younger supervisors perceive themselves to be treated by older subordinates because of their age?
 3. How do younger supervisors perceive older subordinates' potential performance and does the older subordinates' actual performance prove or disprove those perceptions?
 4. How do younger supervisors perceive the older subordinates' work styles?
 5. How do younger supervisors perceive the older subordinates' work ethic?

Definitions of the Variables

Younger Supervisors: Supervisors who are ten or more years younger than their older subordinate(s).

Older Subordinates: Subordinates who are ten or more years older than their younger supervisor.

Treatment: Behavior and actions of the subordinate directed toward the supervisor.

Work Style: One's approach to leadership, supervision, and/or management.

Work Ethic: Characteristics that display an individual's commitment and loyalty to their job and organization.

Performance Ratings: Qualitative and/or quantitative ratings that are given by a supervisor to a subordinate or by a subordinate to a supervisor that assess the rater's impression of the ratee's performance at work.

Study Approach

The interpretive phenomenological approach (Willig, 2008) was used for this study. How one views the creation of reality represents his/her ontological beliefs (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The author believes how individuals interact in a given context influences interpretations of a phenomenon (Mertens, 2005; Van Manen, 1990); reality is co-constructed and explained in concert with others. There can be multiple socially constructed realities of individual and group experiences; however, there is likely some common experience among participants.

Interviews with participants were on a one-on-one basis and examined the perspectives of younger supervisors. Supervisors with at least one older subordinate were considered for the study and perspectives as related to experiences with the older subordinate or a collective of older subordinates were examined.

Assumptions

Assumptions inform and influence the broad scope of the study; they are limitations of which the researcher is aware and may affect the study, but the researcher will not attempt to control (Baron, 2010) because they are not believed to affect the outcome of the study. In approaching and planning for this study, the following was assumed:

1. Generational schema may have reflected the values of those interviewed at the time of data collection; with experience and age the values of any given generation may change.
2. Most supervisors had experience with supervisees from multiple generations.
3. Similar work environments may reflect values and perceptions of supervision.
4. Older subordinates were more likely to be women but if this was the case, gender was not likely to affect the participants' perceptions.

5. All participants would answer interview questions honestly and to the best of their abilities.

Delimitations

The focus of this study was limited to 19 younger supervisors in the field of student affairs in higher education at one or more medium sized (10,000 – 40,000 undergraduates) public universities. This number was manageable and in a phenomenological study considered to be adequate. In addition, the study was limited to younger supervisors who were members of professional associations of which the researcher had direct access, mainly through her membership, involvement, and leadership. In search and selection, intergenerational supervisory dyads were those where younger supervisors were ten or more years younger than their subordinate.

Potential Limitations

Some of the participants in this study were chosen through acquaintance relationships or recommended by a mutual friend or colleague. Themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews and transcripts iterated common themes among this population but were unique to the participants in this study. In a limited number of cases, the researcher and a participant had a previous acquaintance relationship related to their shared membership and/or involvement in the profession. A final limitation of the study was the fairly homogeneous population in terms of educational background. All members had at least a bachelor's degree and most had a master's degree or higher – most in Student Affairs, College Student Personnel, or a related discipline.

Although little sensitive or extremely personal information was expected to be shared and collected, confidentiality was considered. No threats of confidentiality were anticipated. The only people with access to the full interview transcripts were the participants themselves, the

researcher, and the researcher's dissertation committee—all who were committed to maintaining the confidentiality of the information collected.

Statement of the Researcher's Perspective

I am a member of Generation X and supervised nine full time staff members in an Office of Admissions at a medium sized public university for several years. Of the nine staff supervised, five were older than I and were members of the Baby Boomer generation, two were older than I am and were also members of Generation X, and two were younger and members of the Millennial Generation. I began work in the Office of Admissions as Assistant Director, a non-supervisory role, and was promoted after two years to an Associate Director with the noted supervisory responsibilities. In addition to being younger than most of my subordinates, office colleagues frequently commented that I appeared five or eight years younger than I actually was and parents of undergraduate applicants frequently mistook me for an undergraduate student.

In this supervisory journey, I have found that assertiveness is often interpreted as aggressiveness and attempts to directly communicate non-negotiable directives are often interpreted as being negotiable. It was not uncommon for people I supervised to want additional validation when it came to work directives from my supervisor, who is a member of the Baby Boomer Generation and was closer to their ages. These types of responses appeared to be different than what I witnessed in observing supervisory peers who were older than I was.

On a daily basis, I found my approaches to supervising subordinates who are older than I and those who were younger varying greatly. When working with subordinates who were older, I needed to more specifically plan my approach, prepare, and sometimes tailor the words I used in the conversation to be less direct and assertive, and generally approach situations in a softer and more circular manner. I believed my supervisory experiences were not unique.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the need for and intent of the research about managers who supervise people who are ten or more years older. In the pages that follow, the literature is summarized (chapter two) and the methodology and procedures used to collect participants' impressions of their own supervision experiences are illustrated (chapter three). Chapter four provides an overview the themes as they emerged from interviews and chapter five analyzes those themes and provides recommendations and implications for organizations.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of literature for this study is focused on the overarching question: What are the lived experiences of younger supervisors in higher education settings in terms of supervising older subordinates? Literature for this review was taken from the fields of business, psychology, sociology, human resources management and development, organizational development and theory, and education. Searches were run with the following combinations of terms: “age differences” and management; “generation x” and management; “generational differences” and management; “generational differences” and subordinates; “generational differences” and supervising; “millennial generation”; millennials; “supervisor subordinate relationship” and age; “supervisor subordinate relationship” and management; “young supervisor” or “older subordinate”; “young supervisors”; age and subordinates; work and age; work and supervisor; and work and power.

Today’s Workforce

In 2010, it was estimated that Veterans accounted for 15% of the workforce, Boomers for 44%, Generation X for 25%, and Millennials for 16% (Mitchell, 2000). The rising tide of young workers make age-diversity awareness more and more critical in the workplace; without that awareness, friction, mistrust, and communication breakdowns can occur, preventing effective teamwork and affecting productivity, job satisfaction, and retention (Your Next CEO May Have a Nose Ring, 2007).

While the younger generations, Generation X and the Millennials, are entering the workforce, their older counterparts, the Baby Boomers and the Veterans, are experiencing increased longevity as well as a financial needs to stay in the workforce (Collins et al., 2009). It

was projected by Williams and Nussbaum (2001) that by 2020, 39.1% of the workforce will be over the age of 55. Generational entrance to and exit from the workforce have created somewhat of a surplus of older workers in the workforce and, therefore, businesses are hiring more older workers to fill entry level jobs than in the past (Collins et al.). As a result of these dynamics, roles in the workplace are being redefined and rules are being rewritten. One new phenomenon is that of the younger supervisor—a supervisor who is younger than those who s/he supervises. This interesting new pair was referred to as “intergenerational dyad” by Smith and Harrington (1994) and the phenomenon poses a number of questions. This term will be used throughout this study.

Intergenerational dyads are increasingly common in many business settings (Cufaude & Riemersma, 1999; Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse, 1999; Sessa et al., 2007). This phenomenon is increasing in many industries including the field of higher education. One of the main questions managers are asking is how to work with generational differences between Boomers and Generation X colleagues who are more and more frequently climbing the administrative ranks to become their older counterparts’ supervisors (Chang & Chmielnicki, 2004).

There are many positive aspects of a workforce made up of all generations. It offers flexibility, a range of skill sets, multiple approaches to problem solving, and the ability to attract and retain high-performing people. When organizations have age diversity in their leadership, there is increased heterogeneity within the workplace. Organizational leaders are likely to bring different life experiences and are more likely to bring forward various and diverse perspectives that lead to creative and progressive decision making (Korac-Kakabadse, Korac-Kakabadse, & Myers, 1998). While conflicts can occur in heterogeneous teams, mainly due to communication

difficulties, the long term benefits for the organization and its stakeholders outweigh this complexity.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the number of workers ages 20-34 in the managerial category increased from 1994 to 2004 from 4.8 million to 5.2 million and “the ranks of young supervisors was expected to continue to swell as the 52.4 million people who compose Generation X assume managerial roles” (Pelletier, 2005, para. 2). Members of Generation X can illustrate this change best. The oldest of the Gen Xers were born in 1965; now in their late 30s and early 40s, these workers have almost 20 years of work experience and are more frequently taking on roles of supervising older colleagues (Wendover, 2009). However, the increase in the number of workers in the workforce is not the only factor leading to intergenerational dyads. Generation X and the Millennial generation are known for having high expectations, big goals and are generally optimistic (Bennis & Thomas, 2002); they also have a “casual disregard for hierarchy and tradition” (Kersten, 2009, p. 70) and shun the idea that one has to “pay one’s dues” to move ahead in the workforce. We cannot yet know if this tendency for loftier goals and ambitions is due to these workers’ young age or due to their generation membership; in other words, it could be argued that people generally change their perspective toward work over time and Baby Boomers and Veterans were just as ambitious in their younger years.

Organizational Demography

Organizational demography is the distribution of the members of an organization’s leadership along any demographic trait or set of traits (Pfeffer, 1983). These traits can include gender, tenure, ethnicity, and most important within the intergenerational dyad, age. According to Korac-Kakabadse et al. (1998), “the basic assumption underpinning demography theory is that demographic characteristics influence social dynamics, which in turn influence organizational

outcomes” (p. 354-355). Organizational demography has been connected empirically to a number of significant organizational outcomes such as the distribution of power and organizational performance (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 1998). When considering age within organizational demography, one must consider generational differences among the four working generations to better understand how decisions are made as a function of personal values, experiences, and beliefs.

Considerations of Organizational Structure

Changes in many organizations’ structures have contributed to the complexities of the intergenerational dyad. Additionally, societal changes and norms regarding leadership and how the typical worker perceives and defines leadership impacts emerging work relationships.

Organizations Tend to be “Flatter”

Today’s organizations tend to be less hierarchical with greater interaction among younger and older workers (Oshagbemi, 2004). “Flatter” structures and increased interactions reveal the practice of leadership is no longer an exclusive domain, role, or duty of older workers. This concept applies to organizations both on paper and in culture. In other words, although many organizations have a multilevel organizational chart, the culture in many workplaces seems to be less hierarchical and bureaucratic. Additionally, creative concepts such as flex time, shared jobs, and telecommuting are becoming increasingly common in organizations to alleviate negative feelings toward hierarchy and bureaucracy.

Flatter organizational structures allow for greater interaction among workers who are from different generations (Oshagbemi, 2004). This is because staff from a variety of levels of the organization have the ability to interact and communicate with each other. While leadership is not a practice exclusively reserved for older and more experienced workers, top management

teams increasingly represent all four generations. The “ability to understand, learn, and effectively leverage multigenerational diversity will be necessary for organizations now and in the future to build and maintain high performance systems” (Kabacoff & Stoffey, 2001, p. 2).

Age has a Powerful Influence on Shaping Leadership Attitudes and Behaviors

Although leadership and management styles relate to many factors and characteristics and vice versa, it is important to note that age alone has a very powerful effect on shaping attitudes, and therefore, behaviors; Sessa et al. (2007) indicated that generational differences are most apparent in how they affect people in developing their own leadership styles.

Korac-Kakabadse et al. (1998) performed a study of employees in a public service industry from which three leadership profiles emerged: the radicals, the bureaucrats, and the team players. The Radicals were the younger managers and were identified by age while the Bureaucrats and the Team Players were identified by age as well as their professional development; Team Players were the older workers with development and Bureaucrats were the older workers without development. Team Players, aged 46-55, had experienced professional development and Bureaucrats, aged 46-55, had not experienced professional development. Development was defined as including the opportunity to fill a challenging role, having been exposed to feedback, or attended professional development meetings and/or workshops (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 1998). Older workers were more mature, more likely to see challenges and tasks through to completion, and to have longer-term perspectives of ideas about managing people and systems. Younger employees, the Radicals, were more competitive, energetic, tended to focus on results, and adopted a more open style of management and supervising. These differences were more related to age than experience in the workforce as the three types of

leadership profiles were separated by age as well as by level of professional experience and development.

In this study, the Radicals emerged as being more “results driven and positively minded, but critical of their organization and impatient” (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 1998, p. 374). The authors attributed these traits partially to being fairly new to the workforce and not having been fully integrated into the organization and partially to age. The older and undeveloped managers, the Bureaucrats, seemed to consider themselves at a disadvantage and they appeared to others as being cynical and intolerant. Finally, the older but developed managers, the Team Players, emerged as embracing a positive attitude, were team players, and seen as supporters of their colleagues, bosses, and subordinates.

Heterogeneous Organizations

The presence of age diversity in organizations, among other characteristics, will benefit organizations in many ways. A heterogeneous group is more likely to be open to new information obtained from a variety of sources and to hold more diverse perspectives and views (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 1998). This benefits organizations because group heterogeneity has been shown to be associated with higher levels of creativity and innovation within organizations (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 1998). These benefits tend to lead to variety and comprehensiveness when creating strategies and finding solutions to problems. Groups that are homogeneous in any and all characteristics, including age, tend to exhibit conformity and a general lack of openness to new and different information (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 1998).

Higher Education Today

Higher education has often been overlooked by society as an influential societal corporation. This view has been addressed by many colleges and universities by the development of research on the structure of education as a social system (Osipov & Ivanov, 2005). Osipov and Ivanov defined a corporation as an organization that is formed on a higher level—one elevated above the individual business or labor organization. The authors further indicated this definition of the corporation applied to the university “in the sense that it represents an association of primary business organizations, of departments, study groups, and various auxiliary subunits” (p. 65). Universities not only develop unique areas of educational, scientific, and research activities, but they also, in these endeavors, go far beyond the boundaries of their cities and even of their regions as they develop their own network structure with its flexible linear connections (Osipov & Ivanov, 2005, p. 65). Osipov and Ivanov stated “one important feature of a corporation is that while it is identified as a whole in the competitive environment, it stands in opposition to the external competitive environment” (p. 65).

Just like any other corporation, higher education strives to build organizational structure that will contribute to a healthy workforce. Some of the most apparent concepts that contribute to developing a healthy and vibrant workforce include the constant need for technological integrations and upgrades, the successful management of supervisory power within a hierarchical and bureaucratic system, and the commitment to performance management as illustrated through performance ratings. Additionally, the observable benefit of leaders and leadership teams that are diverse and heterogeneous in organizational demography, including age, is a central concept that significantly benefits higher education’s ability to create a healthy workforce and work environment (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 1998).

A heterogeneous leadership team, including those that have age diversity, will be more likely to “gather information from a variety of sources and hold diverse interpretations and views” (Kakabade et al., 1998) and are more likely to model creative and innovative decision making. This creativity often leads to the organization being more likely to be flexible and open to change. Specific to age and tenure, Finklestein and Hambrick (1990) found leaders who were older and had a longer tenure with the organization had a more restricted knowledge base that impeded their openness to change. Related, the length of stay in a group has been found to determine a leader’s effectiveness of communication and groups that have been together longer were more likely to develop standardized means of communication and homogeneity of perspective (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 1998) resulting in increasing isolation from external sources of information.

Understanding Generations in the Workforce

Social scientists have differed over the years on how to name and segment generations. For this study, the researcher adopted the verbiage used by Zemke et al. (2000) to term the four currently working generations: Veterans, Baby Boomers, and Generation X. Zemke et al. referred to the youngest generation as the “Nexters” but the researcher refers to them as the “Millennial” generation—the term most widely used, especially in the field of higher education. Generations are sorted by year of birth and although not all researchers and others agree on the ranges, the ranges are reported to be very similar from scholar to scholar. Wyatt (1993) indicated the ranges are best determined by using six characteristics to determine the scope of a generation:

- a traumatic or formative event such as a war,
- a dramatic shift in demography that influences the distribution of resources in society,

- an interval that connects a generation to success or failure,
- the creation of a “sacred space” that sustains a collective memory,
- mentors or heroes who give impetus and voice by their work, and
- the work of people who know and support each other.

Table 2

Characteristics to Determine the Scope of a Generation Based on Arsenault, 2004; Wyatt, 1993; Zemke et al., 2000

Characteristics	Veterans	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Traumatic or Formative Event	World War II Pearl Harbor & Aftermath	MLK assassination JFK assassination Vietnam War	Rodney King beating & LA Riots AIDS	911/Terrorism Oklahoma City bombing Columbine Shooting
Shift in Demography	Fallout of the Great Depression	Civil Rights movement Women's movement	Watergate scandal	Immigration Enron Economic recession
Historical Interval	Cold War Army-McCarthy hearings	Roe v. Wade Walk on the moon	Fall of Berlin Wall	Technology
Sacred Space	Lindbergh flight The New Deal	Woodstock Rock & Roll	MTV	Facebook
Mentors & Heroes	Winston Churchill Dwight Eisenhower Harry Truman	John F. Kennedy Martin Luther King, Jr. Gandhi Malcolm X	Nelson Mandela Celebrities & athletes	Family members
People Who Know & Support Each Other	Franklin D. Roosevelt Eleanor Roosevelt	Lee Iacoca	Bill Gates	Steve Jobs

Generational Cohorts

Generations are social creations rather than biological necessities; different generations remember and attribute change to different events and times, usually events and times that occurred in their formative years and have left potent memories about authority, institutions, and family (Arsenault, 2004; Gentry, Griggs, Deal, Mondore, & Cox, 2011; Kotler & Keller, 2006; Mannheim, 1952; Sessa et al., 2007; Twenge Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010; Zemke et al., 2000). These shared experiences lead some to refer to generations as cohorts (Gentry et al., 2011; Joshi, Dencker, Franz, & Martocchio, 2010). Unlike other forms of generational identity, the concept of cohort-based identity leads to a common set of experiences and outcomes for individuals. Individuals entering a workforce or workplace during the same time undergo similar training and socialization experiences (Joshi et al., 2010). A cohort-based identity is based in a political and sociological theoretical background and is defined as being “based on membership in a group that has experiences organizational entry within the same time interval” (Joshi et al., 2010, p. 395). Further, the cohort identity, when examining the processes between and among generations, is based on employment outcome as well as experiences in organizational socialization such as those outlined in Table 2.

Discussions on generational differences can be traced to the early 1950s with origins in sociology. Perhaps the most notable academic was Karl Mannheim who discussed the “problems of generations” in his paper (1952) that introduced generations as a guide to understanding the structure of social and intellectual movements. Mannheim also defined generations as social locations rather than concrete groups.

Defining moments are events that have captured the attention of thousands (or millions) of people when they are in the formative years of their lives (Mannheim, 1952; Zemke et al.,

2000); examples are shown in Table 2. Jurkiewicz and Brown (1998) agree and defined a generational cohort as being shaped by historical and/or socially constructed life experiences and because these experiences are relatively stable throughout peoples' lives, they inform the separation and distinction of one generation to another. Varying viewpoints and perspectives naturally shape "beliefs, values, goals, work attitudes, world views, and attitudes toward leadership" (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998, p. 52) and, therefore, directly impact the workplace.

Korac-Kakabadse et al. (1998) discussed the idea of demography theory and indicated that demographic characteristics, including age, influence social dynamics, which in turn influence many aspects of society and how people operate within their communities. The authors' research focused primarily on organization processes and outcomes, group and individual dynamics, and 'top teams'. The authors indicated "Group demography reflects similarity and dissimilarity amongst individuals, making it a meaningful perspective for understanding the process affected by group dynamics" (p. 355) including within-group communication and outcomes of group dynamics. The concept of demography theory and similarities or dissimilarities between individuals and groups can "influence the processes that affect employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and level of communication as important predictors of human success" (p. 355). Group demographic composition involves distinguishing what determines individuals to personally connect with one another and sets the social context for relationships within an organization.

Knowledge about generations matters substantially in American culture because in today's workforce, four generations are working together and each generation's size "affects the age distribution of the population" (Mitchell, 2000, p. 1). Not all generations have a similar number of people working; the Baby Boomers and Millennials generations are each substantially

larger than the Veterans and Generation X (Mitchell, 2000). In 2012, the Millennial generation members ranged from age 11 to 31 years. Considering that this Generation consisted of approximately 26% of the total United States' population, second to the Baby Boomers who are just under 30% (Mitchell), it is evident that society is influenced in many aspects by the simple majority of these two generations.

According to Bower and Fidler (1994), "each [generation's] world view affects how much the group collects, processes, and acts upon information" (p. L-32). Such generational differences also manifest in the use of the preferred leadership styles and behaviors in the workplace illustrated in Table 2 (Zemke et al., 2000). Different world views not only impact leadership styles but also impact supervisory style, reactions to supervisors, performance, ratings of performance, and workers' general feeling of happiness in the workplace. Additionally, such differences give all leaders a duty to exhibit a leadership style that is broad and flexible (Arsenault, 2004).

Arsenault (2004) found distinct collective memories among generations. These common experiences within a social or historical context have been said to predispose individuals for certain characteristic modes of thought (Sessa et al., 2007; Twenge et al., 2010; Zemke et al., 2000). Examples are shown in Table 2. Because these characteristic modes of thought tend to be stable over time, generations tend to be fairly easy to distinguish from each other, thus social creations (Sessa et al., 2007).

Although many agree the differences among generations can be viewed as loose generalizations and stereotypes (Arsenault, 2004; Mitchell, 2000; Patterson, 2007; Zemke et al., 2000), failing to respect and understand differences or glossing over them can cause conflict (Arsenault, 2004; Zemke et al., 2000). For one, affiliation within a generational cohort is said to

influence numerous aspects of a person's work life including loyalty to their job and organization, commitment to their colleagues and supervisor, and most impactful, what motivates them at work (Joshi et al., 2010; Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998; Twenge et al., 2010; Zemke et al., 2000). Patterson (2007) indicated "although it is unwise to make broad generalizations about individuals in each generational cohort, people who are born in the same era have had common experiences that predisposed them to similar expectations" (p. 17). The shared events generations have experienced challenge the way people form their paradigms and views of the world. People of the same generation naturally come to have some common values and, therefore, may come to view the world in a similar way.

The Veterans

Members of the Veteran generation value "safety, security, and planning for the future" (Bower & Fidler, 1994, p. L-32). The major events that most of these individuals lived through, including World War II and the Great Depression, led to the Veterans' concerns about the availability of resources. Members of the Veteran generation tend to be more fiscally conservative than younger colleagues and believe strongly in paying one's dues to earn promotions, advancements, and respect in the workplace. Veterans tend to support the idea of people being promoted due to demonstrated strong work ethic (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Patterson, 2007) and tend to believe that once one is promoted, they have then earned the respect of others based on their new role.

As workers, they are seen as being patient, rule-followers, and having a great respect for authority (Arsenault, 2004, Bower & Fidler, 1994; Patterson, 2007; Zemke et al., 2000). They are often willing to delegate, but usually only when they have developed a strong sense of trust for others that has been earned through hard work. These men and women have a deep trust of

public institutions, perhaps due to the fact that so many of them have benefited from public works programs as children in and around the 1930s (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). This generation has also been dubbed “The Silent Generation” (Patterson, 2007) as Veterans tend to support the status quo rather than to protest or demand change and prefer consistency and conformity to change and progression (Zemke et al., 2000). Patterson (2007) relates this to the way these individuals were brought up to be, almost universally, polite and to respect their elders. The Veterans were raised to ‘do what they were told’ and felt gratification if the person telling them what to do was pleased with their work (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Zemke et al., 2000). ‘Command and control’ leadership style was modeled to these men and women from a young age and most of them still prefer it as a leadership style (Zemke et al., 2000).

This group has traditionally viewed pay as being central to their identity at work. Because of their tendency to be concerned about resources, they tend to have conservative spending styles (Zemke et al., 2000) and are more concerned than any of their younger colleagues about issues surrounding their pensions (Jurkiewicz & Brown 1998). This generation is unique because they entered adulthood looking for and valuing financial security above other factors; likely because they had come of age during the upheaval of the Great Depression (Bennis & Thomas, 2002).

Veterans tend to treat experience as a badge of honor and achievement and a sign of commitment. Work was central to this generation at the ages of 25-30 (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). Members of the Veteran generation value the idea of “hard work, dedication, ambition, and native ability/intelligence [to explain] who ‘got ahead’ and who didn’t” (Bennis & Thomas, 2002, p. 35). More specifically, the words “career,” “salary,” and “rank” were synonymous for this reason.

The Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers value individual freedom and, therefore, have a more difficult time than older colleagues delegating work and projects to others. They are passionately concerned about participation, teamwork, and spirit in the workplace (Zemke et al., 2000). Compared to the Veterans, they are largely outcome oriented, focused on personal satisfaction, and want faster results (Arsenault, 2004; Bower & Fidler, 1994; Zemke et al., 2000).

Boomers are optimistic and were raised to be independent and to believe they could control their own destinies (Arsenault, 2004; Sessa et al., 2007; Zemke et al., 2000), and to highly value communication and teamwork (Gentry et al., 2011; Sessa et al., Patterson, 2007), and are known for being good team players. This is an interesting combination as while this generation tends to be very firm about individuality, some of their core values revolve around participation and community inclusiveness (Gentry et al., 2011; Zemke et al., 2000). Some of the more momentous events Baby Boomers have lived through and recall as being significant are JFK's presidency and assassination, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement, and the women's movements (Arsenault, 2004; Zemke et al., 2000).

Boomers are similar to their older colleagues in their value of hard work and are often driven to overachieve, but they question traditional methods and are interested in "breaking the mold" to seek more efficient and effective ways of doing work (Bower & Fidler, 1994; Patterson, 2007). Boomers believe rules and institutions are meant to be challenged and changed (Patterson, 2007). This can be easily illustrated by taking a look at the significant movements and events Baby Boomers experienced including the sexual revolution, movements on racism and gender discrimination, Woodstock, Watergate, and others that illustrate the tendency to rebel against and question authority.

Many Baby Boomers abandoned their parents' cautious lifestyles and "tendency toward delayed gratification" (Patterson, 2007, p. 18). Today, Boomers tend to be concerned with retirement issues (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998) and while they value money, they place a much higher value on quality of life (Jurkiewicz & Brown). According to Zemke et al. (2000), this generation is concerned with "raising fortunes rather than consciousness" and are on the lookout for increasing prestige, control, and power (including money) (p. 72). However, despite this generation's striving for power, many yearn to retire early and would quit work altogether if they could afford to do so (Zemke et al.), although many lost retirement savings due to the failed economy in the early 2000s and others are finding they have not adequately saved for retirement (Zemke et al.).

In terms of job satisfaction, Boomers tend to be happier at work when they have friendly relationships with other colleagues (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). These relationships in the workplace are as much a reason as money that more Boomers are choosing not to retire when they qualify by age and/or organization's policies (Jurkiewicz & Brown; Laabs, 1996). As leaders, Boomers tend to be more collegial and consensual than other generations (Zemke et al., 2000); behaviors frequently observed through their value of and commitment to relationship building in the workplace.

Generation X

Generation X is generally seen as the generation most difficult to understand. For one, they strongly resist labels of all types including generational characteristics and would prefer to be considered individual and independent (Gentry et al., 2011; Zemke et al., 2000). They have some oxymoronic characteristics such as their deep need for feedback coupled with their distaste for close supervision (Gentry et al., 2011; Zemke et al., 2000). Arsenault (2004) compares their

collective personality to that of a chameleon. Where Baby Boomers and their elders have been shown to ascribe loyalty to employers and organizations, younger generations “tended to see loyalty as a transactional relationship based on whether a particular ... product, service, or initiative merits their loyalty and support” (Cufaude & Riemersma, 1999, p. F-4). These men and women have the viewpoint that one is in charge of one’s own career and realize that today, companies no longer promise to take care of their workers as they once did. The big difference from their older colleagues is that Generation X is comfortable with this concept (Zemke et al., 2000).

Members of Generation X are more likely than Boomers and Veterans to view working for themselves as not only satisfying, but a preferable option (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). This generation puts extremely high value on individualism (Sessa et al., 2007; Patterson, 2007; Zemke et al., 2000). They grew up in a time of rapid change with the lack of the solid traditions and home structures their elders had. Some of the defining moments for this Generation include the Challenger space shuttle, AIDS, and Rodney King (Arsenault, 2004; Zemke et al., 2000).

While Boomers and Veterans tend to value hard work and are loyal to their jobs and employers, members of Generation X focus more on their lives outside of work such as family and hobbies (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Gentry et al., 2011; Patterson, 2007; Zemke et al., 2000). While others may view this as a lack of loyalty to their employer, members of Generation X would be more likely to indicate they would rather invest time in and focus on their quality of life than invest their efforts into a career (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Patterson; Zemke et al., 2000). Perhaps because of these values, this generation is more likely to have what their older colleagues might refer to as “portable career” (Patterson, 2007). Not only are they are open to change and willing to change jobs more frequently than their parents and grandparents, they

actually prefer more frequent change and tend to seek a less stable life progression (Zemke et al., 2000).

Coming of age in the time of personal computers and video games, members of Generation X were the first generation noted for their technology skills (Arsenault, 2004; Zemke et al., 2000). Because technology was always around for most members of this generation, they often fail to see why their older colleagues do not keep up with them (Bower & Fidler, 1994). This immersion in a technological lifestyle from a young age may have trained these people to look at life as being more leisurely and to value leisure over work (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998; Zemke et al., 2000). They believe in working smarter, not harder or longer, and have largely rejected the methods of their elders in measuring performance based on effort (Bower & Fidler, 1994).

Members of Generation X have been referred to as “latchkey kids” (Zemke et al, 2000) and this was true for single parent and two parent families. The term latchkey kid describes the experience of being the first generation where young people learned to live independently and take care of themselves at an early age (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). This was true for those raised in single parent homes and in homes with two parents, as it was more common for both parents to work. This rooted independence played a large role in their growing up and has impacted these workers’ abilities to uniquely “find novel solutions to difficult problems” as adults (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998, p. 22).

While Veterans are concerned about pensions, members of Generation X are less likely to have jobs that offer pensions and most who do, opt to have more control over them and pursue options they can transfer as they change careers throughout life (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). While the oldest Baby Boomers are thinking about retirement, members of Generation X do not

seem to see aging and retirement as a light at the end of a tunnel; most plan to continue to work, even if for fun and to pass time (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). This generation is less concerned about money than their older colleagues and are willing to trade compensation for leisure time (Gentry et al., 2011; Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998; Robbins, 1998; Smith & Clurman, 1997).

The Millennials

The youngest members of today's workforce are the Millennials. Millennials have never experienced a world without electronics (Gentry et al., 2011; Patterson, 2007; Zemke et al., 2000). Three quarters of them have a profile on a social networking site (Pew Research Center, 2010). Excluding those who come from extremely low socioeconomic statuses, most have never been without Internet, television, cell phones, and even automatic teller machines; they are literally "connected" 24 hours a day or at least have the option to be (Mitchell, 2000; Sessa et al., 2007). For this reason, these men and women tend to be technologically sophisticated and these skills "allow them to consider the world a smaller, diverse, highly-networked environment in which they work and live" (Patterson, 2007, p. 20).

As Millennials have experienced fast and frequent technology, they expect fast and frequent feedback (Patterson, 2007; Zemke et al., 2000). This group tends to expect feedback from all people with whom they have a relationship including parents, friends, and their employer. Having strong connections with others is important to this group (Arsenault, 2004; Patterson, 2007; Zemke et al., 2000) and they enjoy and expect to have consistent mentorship and support in all areas of their lives. While their older colleagues might view these expectations as being dependent or lacking leadership or initiative, Millennials do tend to be hard workers and seem to take their jobs seriously (Patterson, 2007). Almost 70% of this generation grew up in a household where parents worked full time (Mitchell, 2000). This concept is likely to have led to

this generation's tendency to be hard workers; they were more likely than their elders to have taken on household responsibilities at an early age.

Millennials have been raised to be close to their parents and view their relationship as a partnership; Millennials' parents have been advocates for them. Most Millennials not only have had parents bending over backwards to escort them through life (Gentry et al., 2011; Patterson, 2007; Zemke et al., 2000). This background of being doted on does not make these young men and women lazy or incompetent. On the contrary, they are used to being scheduled (often times overscheduled) and have been pushed to achieve since they were toddlers (Zemke et al., 2000). In their recent entry to the workforce, Millennials have continued to be doted on by their parents and expected a similar level of consistent support and assistance from employers. However, they have proven to be resilient in learning new routines and with guidance and feedback have adapted quickly to being independent workers (Zemke et al., 2000).

Racial and ethnic diversity is the highest within this generation (Mitchell, 2000; Pew Research Center, 2010) and Millennials tend to value diversity and change positively (Patterson, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2010). According to the Pew Research Center, 61% of the Millennial generation is White while 70% of the population of adults 30 years old and older is White. The Millennials are more diverse in their own identities and they are more tolerant of differences than the three older generations (Pew Research Center, 2010). In fact, of the four working generations, they are the most open to differences and change in general. The Pew Research Center reported this generation is more tolerant of single women having children, gay couples raising children, couples living together without being married, people of different races getting married, and immigrants' immersion in American society. These men and women have learned about adult concepts much earlier than their older colleagues. By the time they turn 10

years old, many Millennials are aware of divorce, drugs, sex, AIDS, gangs, anorexia, and guns (Zemke et al., 2000).

Terrorism is the concept that is most apparent to this group; they have experienced events such as the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and 9/11 (Arsenault, 2004; Pew Research Center, 2010; Zemke et al., 2000). Despite this, members of this generation tend to be optimistic and hopeful (Mitchell, 2000; Patterson, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2010; Zemke et al., 2000) and are deeply committed to volunteerism and service (Howe, Strauss, & Matson, 2000; Zemke et al., 2000). Twenge et al. (2010), however, challenges this concept by posing the possibility that Millennials are only volunteering more because it is more frequently required for their schooling in high school and college when, in fact, the group is less interested in altruistic rewards than the older generations; the authors posit this is a result of their individualism and narcissism.

Despite failing to find jobs as readily as their older colleagues in an economic downturn, about 90% of Millennials of working age report to have “enough” money or that they will eventually meet their long-term financial goals (Pew Research Center, 2010). Despite their current troubles finding jobs, this generation is on track to be the most educated generation in history with almost 40% of 18-24 years olds being enrolled in college in 2008 (Pew Research Center, 2010). Although this generation has the potential to be America’s best educated generation (Zemke et al., 2000), Millennials are less worried about financial success than their predecessors. They tend to be more materialistic and externally focused; while they value money, they are rarely concerned about whether or not they’ll have it when they get older and there is more to life than a big salary (Twenge et al., 2010). Millennials’ main hope in looking for jobs tends to be similar to that of other idealistic and committed people. According to Zemke et al. (2000), they expect their first job to pay approximately \$38,000., although half do not

expect more than \$30,000 and generally speaking, they are perfectly comfortable with these salaries as long as they are doing something they enjoy.

How is Age Defined

In today's workplace, having authority at work is not primarily related to age but more about having the ability to get things done (Fisher, 1999). Age means different things to different people and it is unclear how society defines and perceives it. For example, chronological age is used frequently as a proxy for the meaning that any individual attributes or ascribes to age. With this in mind, it can be illustrated that individuals of the same chronological age vary in terms of the subjective meaning age has individually for them (Lawrence, 1988). An individual's year of birth may technically assign him or her to membership in one generation or another, but the generation the individual identifies with and the guiding and most apparent generational characteristics at work may be what really leads them to identify with one generation or another. This is most likely common with people who were born on the cusp of a generations' transition. For example, a person born in the early 1980s is either identified as member of Generation X or the Millennial generation. Similarly, due to a number of factors including personal values and life experiences, someone born in 1945 may identify more with the Baby Boomer generation and may certainly not feel or act like an "older" worker. Barak pointed out "if there is no single, dominant way in which old[er] age is deemed, at present, then there is something to be learned from the particular way in which an individual interprets the term" (1987, p. 251). Subjective, personal, or perceived age refers to how old or young individuals perceive themselves to be (Steitz & McClary, 1988).

Cleveland and Shore (1992), defined three alternatives to chronological age to measure age: subjective age, social age, and perceived relative age. Subjective age refers to how old

individuals perceive themselves to be: the question, “do you feel young, middle-aged, or old?” leads to a subjective age. Social age refers to an individual’s age as perceived by others. Perceived relative age assesses an individual’s age in comparison to a normative group such as a group of colleagues in similar work roles. One important thing to note in interpreting these definitions and perceptions is that no two people will interpret or use this information in the same way. Although people tend to interpret age, especially their own age, differently than one another, the literature analyzed in this review will be based on the generations based on a range of birth years.

Generational Differences and Similarities

Generational cohort theory suggests each generational cohort is distinct from the others because of shared birth years, similar life experiences, common values, and shared historical and social live events (Gentry et al., 2011; Kupperschmidt, 2000; Meriac, Woehr, & Banister, 2010; Parry & Urwin, 2011). When it comes to describing the four generations in today’s workforce there are several factors to consider including ideas about career timetables, lifestyles values, ideas about change, work ethic, perceptions of leadership, and other historical paradigms and perspectives. A snapshot of these factors is illustrated in Table 3. Several studies have shown differences in ideas can lead to intergenerational conflict that can have detrimental effects on relationships in the workplace (Deal, Peterson, Gailor-Loflin, 2001; Dittmann, 2005; Meriac, et al., 2010; Parry & Urwin, 2011; Sessa et al., 2007). As a result, many organizations have created interventions of one kind or another to address these clashes (Deal et al., 2001).

According to Cufaude and Riemersma (1999), as society progresses in the Knowledge Age, “emphasis on generational differences and values will continue to increase” (p. F-1). Workers of all ages tend to dislike being labeled with broad classifications and stereotypes and

prefer to assert their own individual distinctiveness, these generational differences can and do assist leaders and managers in becoming more proactive and inclusive in their organizations.

Some factors that are often positively correlated with age are number of years in the workforce or level of education. Mitchell (2000), in studying a large sample of the United States population, indicated while several factors account for generational differences in attitudes and behavior of workers, level of education and age were identified as significant and the most important determinants of differences in attitudes and behaviors. Mitchell stated “level of education influences people’s values, wants and needs and makes them think and behave differently while age tended to give a greater or lesser degree of individualism—younger people are more comfortable appearing to be individualistic” (p. 18).

Understanding the differences and similarities among the generations can help lessen clashes and encourage employees to be more productive (How to Bridge the Generation Gap at Work, 2002). With the trend of organizations and workplaces having a mix of generations within their top leadership ranks (Bower & Fidler, 1994), this mix of generations on top leadership teams will become the norm (Cufaude & Riemersma, 1999; Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse, 1999). It is important to understand the four generations in today’s workplace and their views on leadership and how they lead others; a brief introduction to these views is shown in Table 3. Specifically, an understanding of the experiences of young supervisors and how generational differences affect performance ratings, work ethic, and work styles is needed.

Table 3

Overview of Generational Differences in Career Topics

Generation	Preferred Leadership Style	Perceptions of Leadership	Work Ethic	Ideas About Change	Value of Work
Veterans	Simple, directive, and clear.	Longevity earns promotion. People have earned their way to the top and deserve respect once they are there.	Working hard is a moral obligation. A career is a long term commitment.	Gradual change with intention is preferred. It should be initiated from the top.	Work is the top priority.
Baby Boomers	Collegial, cooperative, and consensual.	Those who perform at the highest level ought to be the ones who are promoted.	Working hard is strongly valued and a career may be a long term commitment. Individual ownership at work is essential.	Change can be controlled and demanded.	Work is one of the top priorities.
Generation X	Straight forward, independent, and thriving on change.	The idea of being one's own boss is ideal.	Working hard is important. Careers are portable and short term.	Change is constant and expected.	Prioritizes family and leisure over work.
Millennials	Relationship oriented, leaders of collective action, and polite.	Moving up the career ladder quickly is expected.	Working hard is important. Consistent mentorship and feedback are needed in order to warrant hard work.	Change drives society and we need to keep up with it.	Prioritizes family and leisure over work.

Career Timetables

Lawrence (1988) proposed the notion of a career timetable indicating there are clear norms regarding professional roles, more specifically, where an individual should be positioned on an organizational chart related to age. Therefore, incongruence in the status between an older employee and a younger manager may produce different social interactions than an age difference between a younger employee and an older manager. The younger subordinate/older supervisor does not violate organizational age norms, and the younger supervisor/older subordinate dyad does. When a supervisor is younger than their subordinates, the employee's age and role can feel incongruent. Older subordinates may respond negatively to younger supervisors because they perceive incongruence in roles, which violates their ideas of a career timetable they associate with promotion and supervisory positions based primarily on age and number of years of experience in the workforce (Perry et al., 1999).

Valenti (2001) compared a number of models and theories related to career development. The models share four general stages: (a) gaining experience, (b) settling down and getting comfortable with a position/organization, (c) beginning to focus beyond the individual work environment, and (d) phasing out and/or retirement. However, Gen Xers tend not to accept these four noted stages like the older generations have done, which tends to irritate their older colleagues due to tendency to believe that people have to “pay their dues” to progress and advance at work.

To describe younger generations' changing perceptions about the idea of a career ladder, The Mass Career Customization (MCC), as reported in *Managing Talent Across Generations* (2010), identified the term “corporate lattice.” “A [corporate] lattice path is one that allows a combination of climbs, lateral moves, and even planned descents within a career—depending on

the employees' current life profiles" (p. B7). Workers today, especially younger ones, are taking more control of their career paths and managing ebbs and flows at a faster and more consistent rate than climbing the ladder with a "winner take all" mentality. In this paradigm, one could "dial-up" and "dial-down" areas of both their work pace and role to accommodate personal lifestyle and needs (Managing Talent Across Generations, 2010). Opportunities are especially important to younger generations who place a higher value on family and personal lifestyle aspects of their lives. Managing talent across generations indicates while the practice of "dialing-up" and "dialing-down" may come with a price, it continues to remain "a healthy and viable option for employees who are at pivotal stages of their careers and personal lives" (Managing Talent Across Generations, 2010, p. B7), and employers tend to gain more from the retention effects they see working with people who have these perceptions.

Preferred Leadership Style

When comparing older managers to younger managers in five leadership styles (Directive, Consultative, Participative, Delegative, and Overall Leadership Style) Oshagbemi (2004) found the two groups differed in three of the five styles (Consultative, Participative, and Overall Leadership Style), these three styles were consistent with the findings of Kabacoff and Stoffey (2001). First, older managers were found to consult with coworkers more widely in comparison to younger managers. Oshagbemi indicated this may be because older generations tend to be more collaborative than younger ones. Younger generations, who tend to be more comfortable taking risks and considering new and alternative approaches, may be more likely to feel they know what is best for their work team or unit. Second, older managers demonstrated more participative leadership than younger managers indicating "younger managers appeared to favor the style of individual, instead of group performance of their duties" (Oshagbemi, p. 23).

Third, younger and older managers differed the most in the area of consultative leadership with younger managers being less involved in consultative and participative management. This is likely due to younger generations tending to make decisions alone and preferring to work independently.

Arsenault (2004) performed a study that measured 10 characteristics (honesty, loyalty, competence, caring, determination, ambition, inspiration, forward-looking, self-confidence, and imagination) to determine whether or not generational differences are a legitimate diversity issue that influences workers' perceptions and preferences about leadership. Working with students from undergraduate business classes at a state university in the northeast, each participating student interviewed 12 fellow students to collect data. The final sample included almost 800 individuals with representation from all four generations. Eight of the ten characteristics (all but inspiration and self-confidence) were significantly different among generations. Each of the four generations showed a unique set of shared values and preferences of the 10 studied characteristics (Arsenault, 2004). In a similar study, significant differences were found in six of twelve rankings of leadership descriptors: credible, trusted, listens well, farsighted, encouraging, experienced, dependable, focused, dedicated, optimistic, candid and honest, and trusting (Sessa et al., 2007).

When making decisions, generations have been found to approach the process differently (Bennis & Thomas, 2002, Kabacoff & Stoffey, 2001). Older workers are more likely to rely on their experience and take situational variables and nuances into consideration, while younger workers have a more assertive style and approach their goals and decisions with more direct force (Kabacoff & Stoffey, 2011). More specifically, members of the Veteran generation tend to have a more "command-and-control" style of leadership and decision making while members of

Generation X take more of an inclusivity approach to leading others (Bennis & Thomas; Patterson, 2007; Zemke et al., 2000). Baby Boomers tend toward a more collegial and team-oriented approach to almost everything they do at work; unfortunately, their reduced willingness to deal directly with conflict often times shows through these styles (Zemke et al., 2000). In comparing differences through the lens of Sessa et al.'s (2007) overview of a generational cohort that is defined partially by a shared social and historical perspective, this preference for team work and collegial work styles aligns well with the older members of the Veteran generations' shared experience of World War II and Generation X's social influence of coming of age in flatter and more flexible work environments.

Perceptions of Leadership

Varying ideas about management and leadership are central when considering possible conflicts among generations within the workplace. Differences in values, work ethic, lifestyle, and beliefs influence the four different generations' perceptions of leadership as well as how they develop and practice their own leadership roles (Bower & Fidler, 1994; Patterson, 2007; Sessa et al., 2007; Zemke et al., 2000). One study generalizes that young leaders have been found to be generally more effective leaders (Kabacoff & Stoffey, 2001); Zemke would argue this is because younger generations are drawn toward leadership for more altruistic reasons than the generations before them.

Of the four generations, Mitchell (2000) reported the Baby Boomers as a whole to be least likely to have confidence in their leaders. Members of Generation X, despite their reputation for cynicism, are the most likely to have a great deal of confidence in their leaders (Mitchell, 2000). For intergenerational dyads in the workplace with a Baby Boomer subordinate and a Millennial or Generation X supervisor, this may cause conflict because the Baby Boomer

has two factors in place to have less confidence in leadership: their generational identity and a younger supervisor.

When it comes to working as a member of a team, older generations tend to do better although Millennials are known for being very team oriented. Veterans are known for their skills in and preference for teamwork and tend to be very civic minded (Zemke et al., 2000); members of the Baby Boomer generation share these characteristics. The younger generations, interested in community service and participation, prefer to work independently (Zemke et al., 2000)

According to Arsenault (2004), Veterans and Baby Boomers are “much more likely to believe that honesty is an absolute imperative in leadership” (p. 134). Veteran and Boomer workers are more likely to see their employees and subordinates as friends and fellow human beings while Millennials and members of Generation X tend more to view subordinates in their subordinate role primarily (Arsenault, 2004). Millennials and Generation X are more likely to value determination and ambition in their leaders than their older colleagues (Arsenault, 2004). These two younger generations want leaders who will challenge the system and create change. Differences in leadership preference were not isolated to separate the older two generations from the younger two. Arsenault reported that Baby Boomers and members of Generation X are the most likely of the four generations to want leaders who “have expertise in leadership abilities like challenge, inspire, enable, and model” (p. 135).

Some, however, show little difference among generations in their preferences for leadership practices: Gentry et al. (2011) studied approximately 7,000 Boomer, Generation X, and Millennial managers; they asked participants which eight of sixteen leadership practices (leading employees, balancing personal life and work, participating management, resourcefulness, change management, compassion and sensitivity, self-awareness, being a quick

study, confronting problem employees, doing whatever it takes, putting people at ease, building and mending relationships, straightforwardness and composure, differences matter, career management, and decisiveness) they considered to be most important for success at work. Findings showed differences among generations in the endorsement of 10 of 16 practices, but a further examination of effect size showed small practical significance. These authors actually noted managers from different generations are “more similar than they are different with regard to the leadership practices they think are important, and how skilled they are at those leadership practices” (p. 39).

Work Ethic

Oshagbemi (2004) performed a study of more than 400 leaders and managers in the United Kingdom from various organizations that tried to compare genders' view and values of work but actually found there was a greater difference among age groups than genders; “men and women in their 40s appeared to place more emphasis on enjoying their work or finding it interesting than younger managers did” (p. 19). This finding was similar to that of Kabacoff and Stoffey (2001). The Baby Boomer and Veteran generations, namely the Veterans, were seen as the generation with the strongest work ethic. These men and women are known for their loyalty, dependability, and gumption in the workplace; they value an “honest day's work for an honest day's pay” and tend to be grateful for their jobs rather than taking them for granted (Zemke et al., 2000). These findings are supported by Pogson, Cober, Doverspike, and Rogers (2003) who demonstrated work ethic increases as a function of one's career stage (and, presumably, their age).

Generation X typically maintains the reputation for having the poorest work ethic. But, members of Generation X indicate this makes perfect sense; they realize there is no longer a

guarantee of advancement and recognition in the workplace and any person can be thrown out without warning. Work ethic matters less to these workers than it did to the Veterans and the Baby Boomers; to Generation X, work is simply for self-fulfillment, while for older colleagues work success was equated with life success (Zemke et al., 2000).

Meriac et al. (2010) studied 1,860 members of the Millennial, Generation X, and Baby Boomer generations to examine dimensions of the work ethic construct using the multidimensional work ethic profile (MWEP). The MWEP is a 65-item, self-report, Likert-type scale that measures seven dimensions of work ethic: centrality of work, self-reliance, hard work, leisure, morality/ethics, delay of gratification, and wasted time. Overall, results showed the differences in level of work ethic across cohorts was most visible between the Baby Boomers and the two younger generations. The authors found respondents do differ in important work-related attitudes and behaviors most notably, leisure. One-way ANOVAs indicated a significant mean effect for generational cohort on each of the seven dimensions except leisure. Baby Boomers were significantly higher than both younger generations on all dimensions except leisure. The authors stated “some of these differences may be a result of respondents interpreting content in different ways” (p. 315) as respondents were, as a result of the simple nature of the study, of different ages. Related, the authors noted the findings to not be supportive of a linear trend in one's level of work ethic as a function of age.

Members of Generation X reported more negative feelings toward work than Baby Boomers (Manolis, Levin & Dahlstrom, 1997; Mitchell, 2000). They focused more on lifestyle than commitment to their work and do not view their current ‘job’ as being their ‘career’, the long term option for them. (Patterson, 2007). In other words, this generation does not tend to view work as a long term commitment as their elders do, but simply as what they are currently

doing to earn money. Also, older workers simply are more satisfied with their jobs than their younger colleagues (Mitchell). Mitchell found job satisfaction increased steadily with age and “older generations of Americans are more likely to identify with their work than younger generations” (p. 45). Some of this difference can be attributed to the tendency for younger generations to place a higher value and/or priority on family and leisure interests than on work. Mitchell indicates this may be tied to the sense that job security increases with age.

One general stereotype regarding differences between older and younger generations is that older workers are more likely to feel a sense of loyalty to their organization than younger colleagues. According to a 2008 Bureau of Labor Statistics summary, “the median number of years that wage and salary workers had been with their current employer was 4.1 years” (para. 1) with “older workers tend[ing] to have more years of tenure than their younger counterparts” (para. 4) having almost four times the tenure. “It is assumed that X’ers, as a *defining characteristic* [italics added], lack loyalty and commitment toward organizations” (Valenti, 2000, p. 5). While it is logical to believe that loyalty develops over time, it is important to note that the oldest members of Generation X were in their mid 40s at the time of this study; although they had been in the workforce for approximately 20 years, they were still often defined as lacking loyalty. Valenti further explained “Xers tend to change jobs every 2-4 years, thus adopting a “free agent” mentality that maintains a career of employability rather than upward mobility within an organization” (p. 5). Working as a free agent is not only less common among the Veterans and Baby Boomers, but literally unfathomable or unacceptable in many cases, perhaps due to their increasing reliance on health benefits in their older age.

Gen Xers are far less likely than their older colleagues to be willing to work overtime or on weekends, place a heavy value on diversity, and are generally wary of authority (Wendover,

2009). More specifically, younger generations view work as a means to an end or a way to pay for and support their social agendas rather than as an obligation or an exciting adventure (Hammill, 2005). This does not necessarily mean, however, that younger generations do not value work. Generation Xers and Millennials are generally happy to perform what they view as meaningless and mindless work as long as their supervisor does not try to pretend that it is not meaningless and mindless (Zemke et al., 2000).

Ideas About Change

The Baby Boomer and the Veteran generations tend to be more resistant to change. To some older workers, the Generation X and Millennial generation's refusal to be labeled and 'make their own rules' is interpreted as a lack of work ethic or selfish and aggressive behavior. Despite this, it is often the young bosses, not the older subordinates, who are forced to change their attitudes and approach (Poe & Courter, 2000).

Members of the Veteran generation tend to prefer gradual change initiated by a formal leader or boss while younger colleagues, including Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials are more likely to push the envelope and demand change, sometimes on their own terms (Patterson, 2007). The Veteran generation has been dubbed "The Silent Generation" by one (Patterson) due to their reluctance to demand change and push the envelope; members of this generation tend to support the status quo.

Value of Work

An employee's values of work is an important influence in the workplace and impacts job satisfaction, commitment to work, and other general attitudes toward the workplace. While Baby Boomers tend to be more concerned with what it takes to move ahead professionally (Bennis & Thomas, 2002), younger generations are more concerned with quality of life (Atkinson, 2003;

Patterson, 2007; Twenge et al., 2010). Atkinson indicated that when Boomers and Vets joined the workforce, they were looking for a long term relationship with an employer. Alternatively, members of Generation X and the Millennial generation are more often looking for the best fit right now. Members of Generation X are largely seen as impatient with bureaucracy (Friel, 2007; Patterson) and expect rapid career advancement. Gen Xers are focused on the practical and are skeptical of closed-door proceedings, and they value transparency.

Commitment to work tends to vary among the generations. Members of the older generations are often thought to be more willing to work hard to ‘get to the top’. According to Atkinson (2003), older generations bought into the structure that existed when they started working. This included working extra hours to get ahead. Younger generations tend to be far less loyal to their employer; on the contrary, they anticipate, crave, and expect several different careers (and therefore employers) by the time they reach middle age (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). This might be attributed to their growing up in a time where the opportunities are seemingly endless while their parents and grandparents grew up in times when choices were more limited. The fact that younger generations grew up when video games were commonplace is important. Bennis and Thomas offer a metaphor for this uncommitted yet very determined mindset:

[Younger generations] are engrossed in a life that more closely resembles an interactive computer game: more like the video game Sim Life than the board game of Life. In video games, players’ roles are less well defined and can change over time. Key features of the game are revealed only through experimentation, and it’s relatively easy to reboot if you don’t like the way things are going. (p. 62-3)

With this metaphor in mind, it is not surprising that younger generations are less excited to commit to one career for a lifetime or even a long portion of a lifetime. To these workers, the world is a constantly changing tableau.

Younger generations are likely to see themselves as free agents in the workforce— independent and always looking for the next best thing. Additionally, younger generations tend to have bigger goals and ambitions than older generations (Bennis & Thomas, 2002); they tend to have goals that revolve around ‘changing the world’ and ‘making history’ so they tend to focus on life with more than work itself.

Lifestyle Differences

In many cases, negative impressions come from a differences in work style and life values; Sessa et al. (2007) define generational cohort theory in the workplace under the context that each generation has experienced a “common location in the social and historical process and thereby limits [each individual worker] to a specific range of potential experience” (p. 49). The shared events tend to lead each generation to model characteristics within a specific mode of thought and interpret experiences similarly. These effects are stable over time, and life experiences tend to distinguish one cohort from another (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). Therefore, the “differences between these cohorts have an impact on leadership and leaders as individuals” (Sessa et al., p. 48; Arsenault, 2004; Zemke et al., 2000).

Age is often used to classify members of a social system into categories and to match them with roles and statuses. Such predetermined or assumed age categories tend to produce widely shared or typical ages of members holding particular social positions (Lawrence, 1988). Cultural socialization may play a part in this relationship. In United States culture, older people tend to assume roles that seem to suit their ages rather than experiences: parent, teacher, and mentor. Similarly, younger people tend to assume such roles as child, learner, and apprentice. Therefore, when roles are reversed (the supervisor is younger than their subordinate) it would be logical to believe the assigned roles in that case may be reversed too, but that has not been found

to be the case (Smith & Harrington, 1994) and the older subordinate still attempts to assume the role of leader.

Younger Supervisors' Experiences

Although supervising can be rewarding and is a responsibility many strive to attain at work, managers who supervise older subordinates are likely to have more negative experiences in their role than other supervisors (Tsui et al., 1995). For example, subordinates who are older than their supervisors are known to engage in more negatively motivated work behaviors and the greater the age difference, the more negative the behavior is likely to be (Perry et al., 1999; Tsui et al.). Older subordinates may interpret the younger supervisor does not have the capacity to (wisdom, training) to lead effectively. Problems typically associated with older workers may actually be a function of the increasingly common violation of the age norms within organizations (Lawrence, 1988). For example, “anecdotal evidence suggests that older workers feel uncomfortable taking instruction from younger bosses who are the same age as their children” (Shellenbarger & Hymowitz, 2004). Demographic attributes have social status implications in the workplace and incongruence can occur is an employee with lower organizational status has one more or more higher status features, such as age (Perry et al.). Inconsistencies between a person’s relative status ranking on different status dimensions—such as organizational position or age—can affect that individual’s attitudes and behaviors at work (Perry et al.).

Managers who are older than their subordinates have more positive experiences than managers who are younger than their subordinates (Shore et al., 2003). Other studies (Byrne, 1971; Ferris, Judge, Chachere, & Liden, 1991; Perry et al., 1999; Riordan & Shore, 1997) cited by Shore et al. illustrate the “greater the similarity between an individual and members of his or

her work unit, the more attracted the individual is to the members of the unit” (p. 529).

Conversely, when an individual is dissimilar from their supervisor or members of their work unit in any instance, they are likely to have more negative work experiences. This is especially important if the dissimilarity is age (Shore et al.; Tsui et al., 1995).

Smith and Harrington (1994) studied employees in higher education and indicated younger supervisor/older subordinate dyads may be problematic due to age beliefs. The younger the supervisors, the more likely they were to believe older subordinates would resist them as leaders (Smith & Harrington; Tsui et al., 1995). Smith and Harrington’s analysis of performance ratings indicated “individuals in their 20s reported a belief of significantly less cooperation and significantly more resistance on the part of older subordinates than subjects 40 yr. or older” (p. 803). Some may pose the question if the difference is the younger supervisor’s perception or assumption of their subordinates’ behavior or is it actual behavior of subordinates. Subordinates who are older than their supervisor have been found to more frequently engage in negatively motivated work change behaviors than workers who had an older and more experienced supervisor (Perry et al., 1999). The greater the age difference, the more likely the subordinate was to have a higher absenteeism rate (Perry et al.).

When employees are older than their supervisors, they may perceive their situation violates the career timetable associated with managerial positions, or more specifically job, age, and status norms, and older, more experienced supervisors should supervise younger and less experienced subordinates (Perry et al., 1999). Older subordinates are likely to perceive a lower level of support and consideration from younger managers (Tsui et al., 1995). Similarly, younger managers perceive to receive a lower level of loyalty and contribution from older employees, older subordinates may feel resentful of their younger supervisor, and there may be a general less

liking of one another (Tsui et al.). In some cases, the older subordinate may feel their younger supervisor does not have the knowledge or the experience to lead (Perry et al.; Tsui et al.). Finally, the younger the supervisor is more likely to believe their older subordinates would resist them as leaders (Smith & Harrington, 1994). This poses the question of whether resistance or insubordinate behavior is based on the younger supervisors' assumption and anticipation or the actual behavior is occurring.

How Age Influences Leadership and Management Style

One of the most important aspects of good leadership is the ability to motivate others to perform at high levels. Since the values and motivations regarding work differ among generations, effective leadership and the ability to assess what motivates each individual employee is essential to holding a leadership role in an organization. The ability to assess the culture of an organization in addition to getting to know employees as individuals serves to enhance both production and retention (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). Because four generations are represented in today's workforce, it is important for supervisors, regardless of their age, to have the ability to effectively lead workers of all ages. Korac-Kakabadse et al. (1998) found supervisors' age and tenure in an organization were much more influential to creating and molding the supervisor's leadership and management philosophies than other demographical factors, such as gender. Also, the more mature managers and leaders are, both in attitude and years, the better performers they become. Older managers tend to have a better grasp and understanding of industry trends and this influences how they consider strategic initiatives (Korac-Kakabadse et al.). Similarly, a manager's level of mental toughness has been found to positively influence an individual's ability to lead and influence others; Marchant, Polman, Clough, Jackson, Levy, and Nicholls (2009) found mental toughness to increase with age and

position at work. Marchant et al. noted the older a worker is and the higher up they become in their workplace, their mental toughness (ability to *control*, level of *commitment*, belief that life is a *challenge* rather than a threat, and level of self-*confidence*) increases.

Social cohesion directly and positively impacts the performance of the management team (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 1998). Social cohesion can include a multitude of identities including education, experience, age, gender, personal views, race, and nationality. It is important for organizations to have diversity (including age diversity) in their leadership. With heterogeneity, organizational leaders, who come with different life experiences, will be more likely to bring forward various and diverse perspectives that lead to more creative and progressive decision making (Korac-Kakabadse et al.). Although conflicts are more likely to occur in heterogeneous teams, mainly due to communication difficulties, long term benefits for an organization and its stakeholders will outweigh these clashes.

Young managers, according to Leger (2000), face the challenge of ‘managing up’ in addition to managing older subordinates. Managing up is used to describe an employee’s ability to earn respect from their own supervisor and to learn to work with the political system laid out by their supervisor. Others refer to this concept as reverse mentoring. Reverse mentoring has been occurring informally as long as there has been more than one generation in the workforce; but the formalization and structuring of such relationships are fairly new (Carter, 2004). Mentoring is “about sharing knowledge that has been built from within, tailor-made to the history, challenges, people and culture of the organization” (Willems & Smet, 2007, p. 108) and not about bringing in external theories from (expensive) consultants.

Reverse mentoring is when “newer, younger employees share the latest trends, tools, and techniques in their field with older workers” (Supervision: Reverse mentoring, 1997, p. 12).

Reverse mentoring is an innovative way to provide top and senior level workers with new ways to understand the needs and workings of their employees as well as the political and organizational nuances of different departments in their workplaces (Driscoll, 2012; Solomon, 2001). Essentially, it focuses on both practical pursuits (technology) and the broadening of perspectives.

Studies that examined workers of all working generations (Kacmar & Ferris, 1989; Kalleberg & Loscocco, 1983; Lee & Wilber, 1985; Zeitz, 1990) found positive relationships between age and job satisfaction from a worker's entry into the workforce until they were close to retirement age. In other words, as workers aged, they were found to be increasingly satisfied with their jobs. Additionally, differences in when job satisfaction is at its highest was found between those who were in supervisor roles and those who were not supervisors. For those in supervisory roles, satisfaction tends to increase when they become supervisors. Those not supervising others were more likely to experience a peak in job satisfaction when they were younger, in their first decade of work (Kalleberg & Loscocco). Kalleberg and Loscocco also noted job satisfaction declines during middle age and rises again when workers get closer to retiring.

Workforce Factors Affected by the Intergenerational Dyad

As a corporation, research and models of organizational development apply to higher education as they do to any other organization. To support and develop an effective and healthy work force, the intergenerational dyad must be considered because it directly affects some key factors to organizational success: the presence and effect of supervisory power, technological influences, and how performance is measured, specifically in terms of performance ratings.

Supervisory Power

Power has been defined in many ways, but Farmer and Aguinis (2005) offer a useful and applicable description stating power “is the ability or potential to influence others” (p. 1070). Power is based on resource dependency because it originates from the idea that one person has something another person wants or needs (Farmer & Aguinis). In a supervisory situation, this ability to influence others can be simply referred to as leadership. While power and leadership are most often viewed as different concepts, they are related; leadership includes power but power does not always include leadership. A subordinate may not view their supervisor as being a leader, but nonetheless the supervisor wields some level of power over the subordinate. When the supervisor is younger than the subordinate, this situation can be perceived differently by either or both parties. Farmer and Aguinis developed a model (Figure 1) that hypothesizes “subordinates perceive their supervisors to be powerful, subordinates must believe that they have to rely on the supervisor to satisfy important needs, desires, and goals” (p. 1070). As people differ in their needs, individual differences in perceived power are present and are meaningful to both the supervisor and the subordinate.

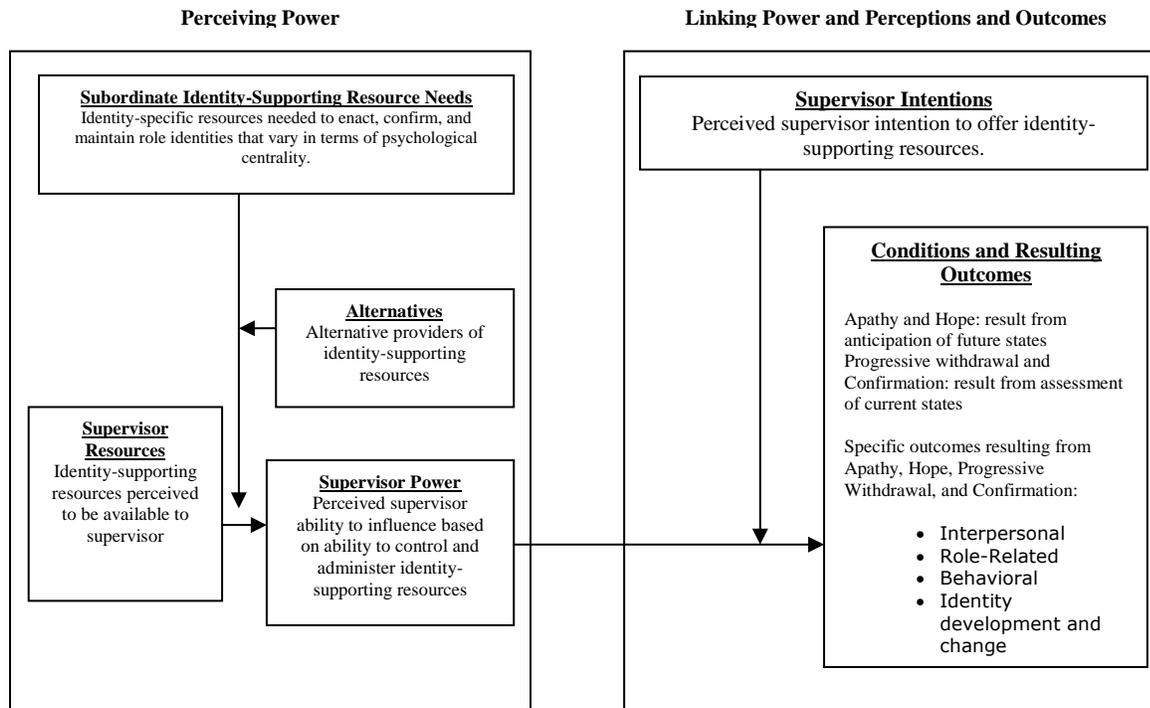


Figure 1. General model of formation of subordinate perceptions of supervisor power and resulting subordinate. (Farmer & Aguinis, 2005)

The relationship between supervisor and subordinate creates a situation where the subordinate feels dependent on their supervisor to some degree; supervisors, regardless of age, must be aware of this dependence. “The more central the subordinate’s identity to the sense of self, the stronger [their] needs, and thus, the greater the potential dependence on the supervisor” (Farmer & Aguinis, 2005, p. 1070). The resources controlled by the supervisor can include or lead to work duties, budgetary needs, staffing needs, personal support, advancement or demotion, or an increase or decrease in pay (Farmer & Aguinis). The supervisor’s ability or inability to properly manage this distribution of resources can either positively or negatively affect a subordinate’s commitment to their job, group and unit as well as their feelings of self-worth and motivations at work.

Technological Influences

Gordon (2000) argued technology has hugely altered the type of worker in the workforce today; because many mechanical tasks can now be turned over to computers and machines, workers have faced expectations of increased skill requirements and placed a greater value on information and knowledge. This has created a new category of “knowledge workers” (Gordon) who have more control over their own work. With this shift from manpower to computer power, leaders and supervisors are faced with the challenge of redesigning organizational structures to meet social and individual expectations. These knowledge workers have to be managed and supervised in new and different ways despite their age.

Although members of Generation X and the Millennial generations are typically credited with being the most technological employees in the workplace today, these knowledge workers are all ages but younger workers have been pegged as having more direct benefits due to their technological comfort. Some (Mitchell, 2000; Oshagbemi, 2004) credit technology for the rapid promotion of younger workers. Coming of age in the time of personal computers and video games, members of Generation X were the first generation noted for their technology skills (Arsenault, 2004; Zemke et al., 2000).

Performance Ratings

To develop an effective and healthy workforce, employers and supervisors must build and create positive relationships and work environments with workers of all ages. This is important for many reasons, employee retention being one of the important ones. Many employers today want to keep their Baby Boomer and Veteran employees from retiring (in some cases retiring early) and keeping their Generation X and Millennial workers from moving on to another job after too short a tenure (Dychtwald, Erickson, & Morison, 2006). One way

employers can build and create positive relationships with employees and increase employee commitment is through effective performance evaluation (Gilley, Boughton, & Maycunich, 1999). Performance evaluations not only give supervisors the opportunity to critique subordinates' performance but, more importantly for building rapport and creating positive relationships, also give supervisors a forum to create development and promote growth for each employee.

One of the most apparent and measurable ways younger supervisor/older subordinate relationship can be assessed is through performance ratings. The structure of feedback in the workplace is an important factor to all generations (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). Sessa et al.'s (2007) research indicated that managers from different generations differ as to which characteristics they value most in subordinates. Limited research in this area has produced mixed findings regarding the influence of age of the supervisor on performance ratings. However, some generalities were found; older generations, with a calm and flexible approach, generally tend to be more focused on weighing each situation as a new one while younger generations, specifically Generation X, are more focused on obtaining short terms results. Although chronological age has not been found to be a valid predictor of a worker's performance in a job (Rupp, Vodanovich & Crede, 2006), differences in workers' work styles and preferences in the workplace clearly lead to varying expectations and how performance of subordinates is assumed.

Several studies (Cleveland & Shore, 1992; Cleveland, Shore, & Murphy, 1997; Ferris et al., 1991) have shown that work attitudes and performance evaluations of both older and younger workers are affected by the ages of their colleagues, supervisors and/or subordinates. While older subordinates may be stereotyped by younger supervisors to be old-fashioned and resistant to change when evaluated as to performance (DeArmond, Tye, Chen, Krauss, Rogers, & Sintek,

2006), younger supervisors or managers may be perceived by their older subordinates to have lesser experience, training, and ability to lead effectively (Perry et al., 1999).

One area of literature is how the age of the supervisor and the age of the subordinate influences performance ratings at work. However, little literature could be found that identified this concept with intergenerational dyads. While the age of the subordinate and/or the supervisor does not directly affect the supervisor's attitudes and decisions, there is research (Dedrick & Dobbins, 1991; Ferris, Yates, Gilmore, & Rowland, 1985; Rupp et al., 2006) to suggest that supervisor and subordinates' ages are related to formal feedback and performance ratings.

Both older and younger workers get stereotyped and usually older workers get more and more negatively stereotyped. Older workers are often labeled as being old fashioned, ill tempered, and resistant to change. Although case studies continually show the stereotypes of older workers, they are typically more open to change than their younger counterparts (and supervisors) tend to initially believe they are (Cohen & Juergens, 1995). Young people are often stereotyped although the labels they tend to receive are more positive than the labels for their older colleagues. Young workers are often stereotyped as being liberal, open minded, and supportive (DeArmond et al., 2006). DeArmond et al. indicated young workers tend to view other young workers as having more development potential, greater overall job qualifications, and are better suited for physically demanding positions than similarly qualified older workers.

High performance is more often attributed by supervisors to stable factors such as ability and competency when the employee is young, and low performance will be attributed by supervisors more to stable factors when the employee is older (Dedrick & Dobbins, 1991; Shore & Bleicken, 1991). Young workers are more likely to be expected to perform well at work due to

stable traits (preparedness, work ethic) while older workers are expected to do poorly due to a different set of stable factors (decline in skill, apathy).

Older subordinates' ratings. Ferris et al. (1985) stated “differences between self-ratings of performance and supervisory ratings seemed to be a function of the subordinate's age” (p. 545). In a study administered to 81 staff nurses and their supervisors, Ferris et al. separated subordinates into three age groups: 21-30, 31-39, and 40-61 years old. The authors found older subordinates tended to rate their own performance higher than younger subordinates did. More specifically, Ferris et al. found supervisors rated older subordinates lower than they rated younger subordinates who were doing the same job. However, supervisors tended to rate older subordinates' performance lower than their younger subordinates (Ferris et al.).

Older and younger employees are also treated differently when it comes to recommendations for improving performance. Younger employees are more likely to receive referrals to employee assistance programs and additional trainings while older employees' poor performance is limited to lack of skill (Dedrick & Dobbins, 1991; Rupp et al., 2006). Dedrick and Dobbins reported findings similar to those of Farmer and Aguinis (2005): “Job simplification was rated as more appropriate for older subordinates than for younger subordinates” while “training was rated significantly more appropriate following poor performance of younger [employees]” (p. 373). Such findings suggest that subordinate's age affects subordinate performance ratings.

Studies have typically shown that although older workers tend to perform better than younger ones (Liden, Stilwell & Ferris, 1996; Rupp et al., 2006), they receive more severe recommendations for poor performance than younger colleagues and experience mistreatment (prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes, poor attitudes) due to age (Cleveland & Shore, 1992;

Dedrick & Dobbins, 1991; Ferris et al., 1985; Rupp et al.). Older workers are generally noted to be more stable, reliable, and less prone to turnover (Rupp et al.). However, most studies do not report or specify an age difference between the supervisor and the subordinate. More specifically, the studies are not necessarily specific to a supervisor/subordinate relationship where the supervisor is the younger of the two.

In jobs typically held by younger workers or perceived to be held by younger workers, older workers tend to be rated more negatively than younger workers (Cleveland et al., 1997; Ostroff & Atwater, 2003). Ferris et al. (1985) indicated when working with older subordinates, supervisors were more likely to attribute low performance to lack of ability while younger subordinates' high performance was more likely to be attributed to high ability. This relationship is argued as "older workers are typically perceived as less competent than younger individuals" (Dedrick & Dobbins, 1991, p. 368); as a result, poor performance ought to be safe to expect. Dedrick and Dobbins found older workers' poor performance was most often attributed to stable factors, such as ability. Such research shows that supervisors are most likely to attribute high performance to high ability in young employees and poor performance to poor ability in older employees.

It is possible that older employees simply do not want to work for supervisors who are younger than they are. Ostroff and Atwater (2003) indicated "older workers are not typically supervised by younger workers, violation of this stereotype may lead to negative perceptions about worth and value, and the assumption is likely to be that the older worker is less competent or less able to contribute" (pg. 729). However, some research indicates a tendency for older workers to receive lower performance ratings may be warranted; Tsui et al. (1995) showed that

workers older than their supervisors are likely to feel resentment, respond negatively, and perform more poorly than those who are not older than their supervisor.

Younger supervisors' ratings of subordinates. In a study of sales representatives, Liden et al. (1996) studied the influence of supervisor and subordinate ages on both subjective and objective performance ratings. Subjective performance ratings included supervisor's judgments of each subordinate's performance on a one (unacceptable) to five (excellent) scale while objective performance ratings included more quantitative information such as hours spent at work, number of items sold, and number of visits to retail locations. Liden et al. (1996) found a positive correlation between employee performance evaluations and age of the rater and found a negative correlation when age and supervisory ratings were compared. "Younger supervisors tend to rate subordinates more poorly than older supervisors, regardless of the age of the subordinate" (p. 331). Earlier, Griffeth and Bedeian (1989) found similar results in their study and indicated this may be because more experienced supervisors may have a greater awareness of the organization's culture, characteristics that influence job performance and available resources. With this knowledge, older supervisors may have better rounded viewpoints of which external resources are needed to get the job done and can do better coaching workers' internal characteristics to compliment external ones. Older supervisors may be more likely to "immediately assume that an internal attribution is appropriate for poor performance than supervisors who are relatively less aware of environmental factors and internal characteristics of employees that impact performance" (Liden et al., p. 332).

Supervisory Power with Leadership

Using Farmer's and Aguinis's (2005) definition of power (the ability or potential to influence others), in a supervisory situation this ability to influence others can be simply referred

to as leadership. When the supervisor is younger than the subordinate, this combination of leadership and power can be perceived differently by either or both parties. Farmer and Aguinis developed a model that hypothesizes that “subordinates perceive their supervisors to be powerful, subordinates must believe that they have to rely on the supervisor to satisfy important needs, desires, and goals” (p. 1070). As people differ in their needs, individual differences in perceived power are present and are meaningful to both the supervisor and the subordinate.

This relationship creates a situation where the subordinate feels dependent on their supervisor to some degree and supervisors, regardless of age, must be aware of this dependence. “The more central the subordinate’s identity to the sense of self, the stronger [their] needs, and thus, the greater the potential dependence on the supervisor” (Farmer & Aguinis, 2005, p. 1070). The resources controlled by the supervisor can include or lead to work duties, budgetary needs, staffing needs, personal support, advancement or demotion, or an increase or decrease in pay (Farmer & Aguinis). The supervisor’s ability or inability to properly manage this distribution of resources can either positively or negatively affect a subordinate’s commitment to their job, group and unit as well as their feelings of self-worth and motivations at work.

The Farmer and Aguinis (2005) theoretical model (see Table 4) explains how subordinates perceive their supervisors’ power and the causal mechanisms by which these perceptions translate into subordinate outcomes. Farmer and Aguinis portray a process specific enough to describe how subordinates form judgments of the supervisor’s power to affect them. Their model is designed to be flexible enough to explain how subordinates perceive supervisory power over others besides subordinates. Perceptions from both the point of view of the supervisor and the subordinate are what the model is based on at a root level; such perceptions, joined with the actual intentions of the supervisor (from their point of view) lead to a unique

effect which is described as “lead[ing] to four conditions ranging from highly functional to highly dysfunctional: confirmation, hope, apathy, and progressive withdrawal” (Farmer & Aquinis, p. 1069). Each of these four conditions, as perceived by the subordinate, is “associated with very specific outcomes such as the quality of the supervisor–subordinate relationship, turnover, and changes in the type and centrality of various subordinate identities” (p. 1069).

		Perceived Supervisor Power: SUPERVISOR CAN	
		<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
Perceived supervisor intention to offer identity-supporting resources: SUPERVISOR'S WILL	<i>Low</i>	<p style="text-align: center;">“Apathy”</p> <p>Perceived to lack the power to allocate resources, and is perceived to not being likely to give them even if that power existed.</p> <p>Supervisor-subordinate relationships are often strained.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">“Progressive Withdrawal”</p> <p>Perceived as having the ability to provide resources that are wanted or needed but consciously opts against doing so.</p> <p>Supervisor-subordinate relationship are usually strained.</p>
	<i>High</i>	<p style="text-align: center;">“Hope”</p> <p>Perceived to be willing to provide the resources wanted or needed if they had the ability to do so</p> <p>Supervisor-subordinate relationship tends to be positive as the subordinate often feels goodwill toward the supervisor.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">“Confirmation”</p> <p>Perceived to have the power and authority to provide resources and opts to willingly and generously do so.</p> <p>Supervisor-subordinate relationship is often at its best.</p>

Figure 2. Perceived Supervisor Power and Intention to Offer Identity-Supporting Resources (Farmer & Aquinis, 2005)

According to Farmer and Aquinis’s (2005) model, when perceived supervisor power is low and perceived supervisor will is high, the condition of hope is present. Under this condition,

the subordinate tends to feel goodwill toward the supervisor and to believe the supervisor would provide the resources wanted or needed if they had the ability to do so. On the other hand, when perceived supervisor power is high and perceived supervisor will is low, the condition of progressive withdrawal is present. With progressive withdrawal, the relationship between the supervisor and the subordinate can be damaged because the subordinate views the supervisor as having the ability to provide resources that are wanted or needed but consciously opts against doing so.

When both perceived supervisor will and power are high, the condition of confirmation exists. When the supervisor-subordinate relationship is at its best, the subordinate perceives their supervisor to have the power and authority to provide resources and opts to willingly and generously do so. When both perceived supervisor power and will are low, apathy is present. Within apathy, the supervisor is perceived to lack the power to allocate resources and not likely to give them even if that power existed. Supervisor-subordinate relationships under this condition are often strained. Regardless of the condition present, it is important the subordinate views their supervisor as having the same power over them as the supervisor does over others in the work team (Farmer & Aguinis, 2005).

Conclusion

Chapter two included a literature review that integrates a number of areas in to provide insight into the research. The topics discussed were: four generations in the workplace, today's changing workforce, generational differences and similarities, experiences of younger managers, how age influences leadership and management styles, and how performance ratings are influenced by the age of the supervisor and/or or the subordinate.

Insights, as to how the four currently working generations compare and contrast, especially in terms of roles in the workplace were provided. An overview about relevant factors that are changing norms in the workforce today when considering generational interactions, and more specifically, the intergenerational dyad, were included. Most importantly, a foundation of the current state of the younger supervisor's experience in today's workforce was described; this foundation will be a starting point for further research to more deeply understand this experience.

A description of several studies compared and contrasted the four working generations, especially in terms of their behaviors at work. Examples where these similarities and differences are illustrated in the workplace are through performance ratings and an overview of how performance ratings are affected by age was discussed. Additionally, these generational differences and similarities were applied to the limited information that is currently available about the intergenerational dyad.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Methodology is best described as a strategy that steers the research plan and provides a map or route for the procedures of the research design (Jones, Torres, & Armino, 2006). The proposed research was an exploratory study of the experiences of managers who supervised people who were older than they were. As a purpose of inquiry, exploratory studies examine what occurs in situations or phenomena not widely understood (Robson, 2002). As explained in chapter one, the phenomenon of intergenerational dyads had not been widely examined.

When developing research, four questions were asked:

1. What *methods* are proposed to be used?
2. What *methodology* governs that choice and use of methods?
3. What *theoretical perspective* lies behind the methodology in question?
4. What *epistemology* informs this theoretical question? (Crotty, 1998, p. 2)

These four elements were considered from the most broad to the most specific: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods (Crotty). Jones et al. (2006) concur and indicated the foundational elements of a research design are the same four elements: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods.

Research Approach and Rationale

A paradigm is “a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field” (Willis, 2007, p. 8). Willis discussed the concept of a paradigm and how each individual views the nature of truth. This nature of truth is called ontology. How one views the world represents his/her own paradigm and ontological beliefs. The researcher believes reality is constructed and explained based on direct interactions with others and how

individuals interact in a given context influences interpretations of a phenomenon. While people are engaged in a shared experience, individual interpretations may vary (Robson, 2002; Van Manen, 1990; Willis, 2007) and there can be multiple socially constructed realities of individual and group experiences. Despite these differences, the researcher believed there would be some common experiences among younger supervisor participants.

Knowledge is gained through a methodology aligned with ontological and epistemological beliefs (Willis, 2007). Participants' voices were captured in a way that most effectively and authentically told their stories. Because the goal of the study was to explain the experience of younger supervisors, approaches that allowed deep exploration into the topic were considered. The desire to approach inquiry in a meaningful and appropriate way to increase understanding of younger supervisors' experiences influenced the author's choice of a qualitative methodology (Mertens, 2005; Robson, 2002; Willig, 2008). The experiences of younger supervisors of older workers were explained and interpreted.

Disciplinary and Epistemology Grounding

Epistemological assumptions examine the "relationship between the researcher and that being researched" (Creswell, 2007b, p. 17). Epistemological beliefs emphasize how knowledge is created during the research process, what we know about reality, and how we can know it (Willis, 2007). Knowledge is co-created between the researcher and participant as they make sense of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). The researcher solicited information to understand the experiences of managers who supervise people who are older than they. Information was collected through interviews focused on understanding these experiences. Because epistemological assumptions attempt to limit the distance between the researcher and the research (Creswell, 2007b), the researcher collaborated and spent time with participants in order

to co-create this knowledge. Because the epistemological position of the author was an empirical one, the use of an interpretive phenomenology approach was used.

Qualitative studies explain the meaning of participants' experience with some phenomenon in a given context and are most interested in how people make sense of the world and how they experience events (Creswell, 2009; Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002; Willig, 2008; Willis, 2007). Qualitative researchers are interested in "exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). Rather than testing a theory, a qualitative approach to research typically involves emerging questions and gathering of data in the participant's setting (Creswell). Willig described qualitative researchers as being "concerned with the quality and texture of experience, rather than with the identification of cause-effect relationships" (p. 8). In this study, the researcher's main goal was to deeply understand the participants' experiences and those experiences' meanings. As Willig described, the quality and texture of the younger supervisors' experiences was examined rather than trying to understand a supposed cause and effect relationship.

Creswell (2007b) explains analysis in qualitative research as an iterative process that consists of five steps: collect data in a systematic process, prepare data for analysis through transcription of field notes and interviews, read through the data, code the data, and code the text for description in the research report. Gathering and analyzing data occurred simultaneously as interviews were conducted, transcribed, and transcriptions were revisited to allow for analysis (Creswell). Such tactics are phenomenological analytic practices (Willis, 2007).

Within qualitative studies, there are numerous additional factors to be considered to narrow, define, and determine the design and approach; reflexivity is one of these factors. Willig (2008) identified two types of reflexivity: personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity.

Personal reflexivity “involves reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life, and social identities have shaped the research” (p. 10). In this study, personal reflexivity occurred mainly during researcher journaling. Epistemological reflexivity “encourages us to reflect upon the assumptions (about the world, about knowledge) that we have made in the course of the research, and it helps us to think about the implications of such assumptions for the research and its findings” (p. 10). Qualitative researchers differ on which of these two types is emphasized in research. This study considered both personal and epistemological reflexivity; the author created her own journal throughout the research and data collection process to grow personally in addition to creating useful knowledge for others.

Theoretical Grounding and Approach

Qualitative inquiry requires many considerations. When embarking on a qualitative study, one must consider the specific qualitative methodology they will use. Such a selection depends on how one may best answer their research questions (Creswell, 2007b; Mertens, 2005). Participants’ stories will be collected using a phenomenological approach.

Phenomenology

Phenomenological studies focus on the exploration of how people make sense of an experience (Creswell, 2007b; Habermas, 1968; Husserl, 1970; Jones et al., 2006; Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002; Van Manen, 1990; Willig, 2008). Phenomenological studies illuminate and capture the essence of experience and therefore requires great care and thoughtfulness (Jones et al.). Such studies are grounded in the belief “we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness” (Patton, p. 105-106). From a phenomenological perspective, “it is not at all surprising that different people can, and do,

perceive and experience (what appears to be) the ‘same’ environment in radically different ways” (Willig, p. 53). The context in which this study was conducted provided for a shared experience: managers who supervise people who are older than they.

How participants make sense of a phenomenon and interpret its influence is gathered mostly through reflection on the experience (Habermas, 1968; Husserl, 1970; Van Manen, 1990). Participants who are immersed in an environment in which the phenomenon occurs will likely examine and consider previous experiences in terms of current manifestations (Habermas; Husserl; Patton; Van Manen). This is important because this basis of thought creates a context that continually perpetuates and creates the context of the phenomenon being examined. Additionally, the researcher came to understand the intersubjectivity of the experience, which is the realization that across individual impressions a common view of the phenomenon exists (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2008).

According to Jones et al. (2006), an inherent pressure in phenomenological research is having to balance the big picture, or the whole, with the details or the smaller parts. In other words, maintaining focus on the fundamental nature of a phenomenon being studied, the *qualis*, while still maintaining the overarching orientation of structure that holds the constitutive elements (p. 52). For the researcher, maintaining this balance meant the constant measure of the study's overall design with the significance the smaller parts—the methods—play in the study (Jones et al.; Van Manen, 1990).

Interpretivism and Hermeneutics

Because most research in the education field represents hermeneutic phenomenology, the focus was on the study's approach (Jones et al., 2006). Willig (2008) identified two versions of phenomenological research: descriptive and interpretive. Using the interpretive method makes

sense for this study because it “does not separate description and interpretation; instead, it draws on insights from the hermeneutic tradition and argues that all description constitutes a form of interpretation” (p. 56). Using an interpretive approach means the researcher believes both concepts: first, the whole can only be understood when looking at all of the parts and second, each part can be best understood by looking at the whole (Crotty, 1998). The interpretive version of phenomenological research accepts the impossibility of gaining full and authentic access to each participant’s life and experience (Crotty; Willig). For this reason, these findings are, literally, an *interpretation*, of the participant’s selected experience that takes into account the lens and paradigm of the researcher. This version informs the methods of this study because no observation of the supervisor in their natural job setting was done.

The term hermeneutics is rooted from the Greek language and means ‘to interpret’ or ‘to understand’ (Crotty, 1998) and explores the notions of explaining and translating. To do hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher is committed to fully interpreting descriptions of a lifestyle, experience, and/or world (Jones et al., 2006; Van Manen, 2009). Using the hermeneutic way of understanding, the meanings of the texts created in this research were much more than their semantic meaning and significance; the researcher took into account the relationship between the researcher and the participant, the intentions and histories of the participants, and the relevance of the texts for readers (Crotty). Additionally, hermeneutics indicates the “determination of meaning is a matter of practical judgment and common sense, not just abstract theorizing” (Crotty, p. 91). Using hermeneutics and an interpretive approach meant the researcher was concerned with gaining an understanding of the texts that was deeper than even the participants’ own understanding of their statements (Crotty).

An interpretive approach using modern hermeneutics was appropriate for this research because the main goal of the interviews was to create transcripts that could later be analyzed and interpreted for deeper meaning in order to recognize and draw forth a shared experience among study participants. In this study, the researcher's goal was to uncover hidden meaning and/or intentions of the participants, in some cases assumptions and intentions that the participants themselves would not have been able to articulate in the same meaningful manner.

Research Design and Methodology

The researcher chose to perform a qualitative study framed with a phenomenological approach. Although there is no universal agreement on how to design a qualitative study (Creswell, 2007b), there are some widely agreed upon best practices. Creswell offered a short list of characteristics of a good qualitative study:

- The researcher employs rigorous data collection procedures;
 - The researcher frames the study within the assumptions and characteristics of the qualitative approach to research;
 - The researcher uses an approach to qualitative inquiry such as one of the five approaches;
 - The researcher begins with a single focus;
 - The study includes detailed methods, a rigorous approach to data collection, data analysis, and report writing;
 - The researcher analyzes data using multiple levels of abstraction;
 - The researcher writes persuasively so that the reader experiences "being there";
 - The study reflects the history, culture, and personal experiences of the researcher;
- and

- The qualitative research in a good study is ethical (p. 45-47).

Rigorous data collection was illustrated through interviews, the foundation for most phenomenological studies (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Van Manen, 1990). The selected primary research method was to perform interviews to develop text narratives from participants. Interview questions were modified as needed while participants' stories were listened to in order to best understand their experiences. All information obtained and reported was from interviews of participants and their own descriptions and interpretations. It is for this reason that interview questions were open ended and non-directive. The sole purpose of the questions was to "provide participants with the opportunity to share their personal experience of the phenomenon under investigation" (Willig, 2008, p. 57). Through interviews, the researcher increased understanding of participants' experiences and impressions (Creswell, 2007a; Mertens, 2005). While interviews took time, provide thick data to analyze, and were costly, the relationship built with participants resulted in rich and relevant data (Mertens; Willis, 2007).

Phenomenology is one of the five approaches to qualitative inquiry referred to above in Crewell's (2007b) short list of characteristics of a good qualitative study. Phenomenology is "the study of people's perception of the world (as opposed to trying to understand what "really is" in the world)" (Willis, 2007, p. 107) and is based on the assumption that participants are conscious of their experiences (Willis). During the phenomenological research process, researchers come to understand the "essence" of what it means to have a shared experience and the *phenomenon* that appear in peoples' consciousness as they engage in the world around them (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Husserl, 1970; Willig, 2008).

Constructs of the Study

The constructs in the research include generational differences, the field of higher education, and supervising and management. The relationship among these three constructs is illustrated in Figure 3.

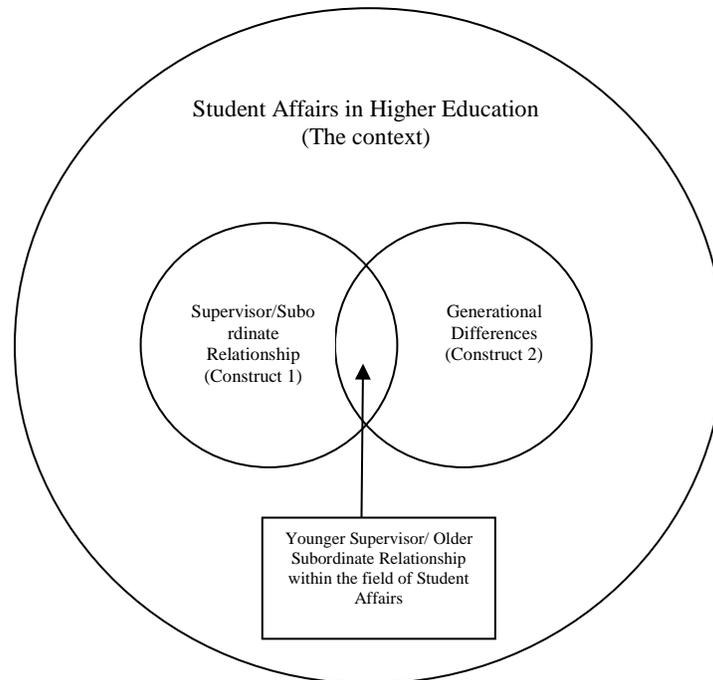


Figure 3: Constructs of the Study

The two constructs, supervisor/subordinate relationship and generational differences fall within the context of the field of student affairs in higher education. Where the two constructs overlap illustrates the aim of this study. While the review of the literature brought in both constructs in a general sense, it was the job of the researcher to identify where the constructs intersect and how they interact with one another. A phenomenological approach within a qualitative research paradigm allowed the researcher to best unpack these relationships so the central concept can be best understood.

A phenomenological approach was selected because a phenomenological study is meant to “describe the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007b); in this case, the phenomenon were the lived experiences of the younger supervisor. A phenomenologist focuses on describing the common experiences for a group of participants – a phenomenon always describes a human experience. The fundamental purpose of phenomenology is to “reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of a universal essence” (Creswell, p. 58).

Research Questions

Through a qualitative study, this research will address five questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of younger supervisors in higher education settings in terms of supervising older subordinates?
 - a. How do younger supervisors perceive their older subordinates’ respect for their supervisory role?
 - b. How do younger supervisors perceive their older subordinates’ acceptance of being supervised by younger supervisors?
2. How do younger supervisors perceive themselves to be treated by older subordinates because of their age?
3. How do younger supervisors perceive older subordinates' potential performance and does the older subordinates' actual performance prove or disprove those perceptions?
4. How do younger supervisors perceive the older subordinates' work styles?
5. How do younger supervisors perceive the older subordinates' work ethic?

Population and Sample

Simply viewing sampling as a procedural strategy to yield participants lacks complete planning and knowledge; the relationship between sampling and the other methodological elements of a study is significant (Jones et al., 2006). The study occurred in the spring and summer of 2012. Participants were selected from colleges and universities in the United States (through the solicitation of assistance of professional associations); those who are employed at four-year and/or two-year colleges/universities were included. The identification of this population was an example of purposeful sampling, which is often applied in qualitative research and allows a researcher to select individuals and contexts that permit for insight into the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007b; Patton, 2002).

Patton (2002) stated, "[t]here are no rules for ample size in qualitative inquiry" (p. 244). However, Patton's intention was not to "give blanket permission to qualitative researchers to feel good about a small sample" (Jones et al, 2006, p. 70). On the contrary, it is better form for the researcher to make sampling decisions based on each study's purpose and significance (Jones et al.).

The final sample consisted of 19 participants. The researcher gained access to this population through email solicitations to the membership of the following professional associations: ACPA: College Student Educators International (ACPA), NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA), the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors (AFA), and the Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association (CIVSA). AFA and CIVSA were selected due to the researcher's easier access to the membership. Email solicitations invited willing individuals who supervised at least one person who was ten or more years older

than they to complete the background questions (see Appendix A) and return them to the researcher.

Table 5
Overview of Associations From Which Participants Were Solicited

Association	Membership
ACPA - College Student Educators International	7,500
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education	12,000
AFA (Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors)	1,500
CIVSA (Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association)	400

Initial emails to these individuals included the cover letter (see Appendix B) which outlined the study and indicated there are no risks. A response to this request to participate indicated the participant's consent to the study and for interview(s) to be audio recorded.

The answers to the background questions were used to narrow the initial group of 45 potential participants to a more manageable size of 21 participants: a purposeful sample that reflected varying supervisors' ages, years in the workforce, years supervising older workers, and number of supervisees the supervisor had. Once identified, all finalists gave informed consent before continuing with the study or the interviews. Of the 21 selected participants, two participants' interviews incurred problems with recording and transcription, leaving 19 completed interviews. Involvement was voluntary and interested participants were directed to contact the researcher directly. All respondents to the initial email solicitation who supervised one or more professionals who was at least ten years older than they are were invited to complete an online query that asked the background questions (see Appendix A). A professional was defined as a staff member who had earned at least a bachelor's degree and worked in an administrative/non-support position that had a positive educational requirement.

Data Collection

One pre-arranged interview of each participant occurred in the spring and summer of 2012. All interviews were performed via telephone or Skype video conferencing to decrease costs. Text narratives were obtained as interpretive phenomenology is meant to work with texts generated from participants (Willig, 2008). The interviews were recorded, which allowed the researcher to listen and focus on journaling.

The interviews were based on questions seen in Appendix A and were semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews include open-ended questions that serve as a launch point to hear participants' thoughts on the topic (Creswell, 2007a) and tend to be flexible and exploratory (Willis, 2007). An interviewing protocol was developed while incorporating the opportunity for flexibility upon review of interview texts. This is in line with principles of phenomenology, which often rely on continual examination of texts to inform additional interviews (Van Manen, 1990; Willis).

The purpose of the interview was to review the responses to the background questions that were given via an online tool prior to the interview. Answers to all 11 primary questions shown in Appendix A were obtained in the interviews. Interviews were transcribed and those transcriptions were used to create textual documents, the basis for conducting phenomenological analysis.

Once the interview was transcribed and the participant had an opportunity to review their own interview transcript, a member check will occur to ensure trustworthiness (Robson, 2002). It is essential in hermeneutic phenomenology research to emphasize collaboration with participants. The researcher is charged with helping the participant reflect on his/her experiences to "determine the deeper meanings or themes" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 99). In the member check,

the researcher spent time revisiting the interview. This allowed participants to provide additional insights or make any adjustments to previous responses.

Managing Bias

Researchers must manage bias and subjectivity. Immersion into the research requires the researcher to take responsibility for the management of biases, subjectivity, and position in the research context (Mertens, 2005; Willis, 2007). The values of a researcher become infused as they create the process through which the inquiry will be conducted and the structure through which data will be analyzed (Creswell, 2007b; Mertens; Robson, 2002). However, the extent to which the researcher's values become connected to the interpretation of study results can be influenced through reflection on the research process (Flick, 1998). This may mitigate researcher subjectivity. Flick indicated "The subjectivities of the research and of those being studied are part of the research process. Researcher's reflections on their actions and observations in the field, their impressions, irritations, feelings...become data in their own right, forming part of the interpretation, and are documented in research diaries or context protocols" (p. 6). Journaling is a popular data collection process in phenomenological research (Creswell, 2007b). Creating a written narrative of the researchers thoughts and processes throughout this process helped clarify methods and information gathered from participants. Journaling gave the researcher a basis for reflection and an opportunity to integrate her experiences and interpretations.

A good researcher finds ways to acknowledge her involvement rather than to attempt to disguise it or pretend it does not exist (Creswell, 2009; Flick, 1998; Robson, 2002; Willis, 2007). The researcher's personal experience supervising people who are older created some level of bias in the study. This subjectivity is infused into and is acknowledged throughout the paper; however, its influence was lessened as much as possible during data collection, transcription,

analysis, and writing. Robson provides tactics to identify areas of potential bias. Biases were monitored using Robson's recommendations throughout the research. Journaling and reflecting were helpful to the researcher in identifying bias.

The researcher should be immersed in a way that captures the essence of the participants' experience. This means the researcher must separate herself from and her personal relationship with the phenomenon in question. In phenomenology this is done through "bracketing" (Husserl, 1970; Van Manen, 1990). Bracketing involves temporarily putting aside one's own experiences and beliefs so they do not get in the way of seeing or intuiting the elements and structure of the phenomenon (Husserl; Van Manen). When subjectivity is bracketed, the researcher's consciousness of participant experiences increases and she will be better able to capture the essence of the phenomenon as seen by the participants.

Husserl (1970) demanded researchers bracket their beliefs and existing impressions completely from the research process. Many argue that this is not truly possible to do (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2008; Van Manen, 1990). Van Manen recommends that the past experiences of a researcher first be made explicit and then purposefully set aside to conduct the research.

Pilot Interview

Before any participants were selected and interviewed, a pilot interview took place. Proposed interview questions were asked of two campus and office colleagues in order to further refine, add, and delete questions. The pilot interview provided further clarification on the selection of interview questions.

Data Analysis and Results

Qualitative research is usually in form of words rather than numbers and is a source of rich descriptions, explanations, and interpretations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These types of data can allow a researcher to better see chronological flow and are more likely to lead to coincidental findings and assist in moving beyond preconceived notions or assumptions of the researcher about the research and the data (Miles & Huberman). Qualitative data analysis is an in-depth process and needs to be carefully planned and executed.

Data Analysis Methods

The feature that distinguishes phenomenology from other methodologies is that participants' *subjective* experience is central to the study (Husserl, 1970; Mertens, 2005; Van Manen, 1990). Such experiences inform how a shared sense of being is understood within the phenomenon (Van Manen). Describing the context and participants' ability to create and understand their shared experiences becomes the research focus (Mertens; Van Manen). Interpretation is secondary to description and is based on participants' impressions of the phenomenon in the moment and in reflection of past experiences (Habermas, 1968, 1973; Husserl; Van Manen).

From the process of interacting with participants, bracketing previous experiences, and capturing the impressions of those immersed in the phenomenon, the researcher was able to reduce the experiences to their very essence(s) (Husserl, 1970; Van Manen, 1990). This is called phenomenological reduction (the individual's way of knowing) and is the process of stripping away excessive or extra information to get at the inner structure of the experience. Through reduction, the essence of what it means to be or do something can be captured (Husserl).

Each person's experience was explained through a reflexive process in which the researcher and participant interact and co-construct knowledge (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Mertens, 2005; Willis, 2007). Across participants, the researcher was able to interpret shared and different perceptions of managers who supervise people who are older than they. Therefore, the research process must allow for "in-depth" through interviews (Broido & Manning, 2002; Creswell 2009; Patton, 2002; Willis). The researcher's role was to collect and explain participants' stories and "understand the world as it unfolds, be true to complexities and multiple perspectives as they emerged, and be balanced in reporting both confirmatory and disconfirming evidence" (Patton, p. 51).

Through the data analysis process, phenomenologists can determine whether or not there are any underlying psychological structures present to understand this consciousness (Willis, 2007). The researcher used phenomenological reduction to discover themes that emphasized the phenomenon's meaning(s) for participants. A theme is an aspect of the structure of the lived experience (Van Manen, 1990) as indicated in the research questions.

The analysis of interview transcripts was done using a five step process as offered by Roberts (2004): Initial reading of the transcripts, Organization and coding of responses, Review of total transcripts and final coding, Completion of data analysis and report of findings, and Review of total transcript to ascertain validity of findings.

Interview transcriptions became texts or stories of the experiences of participants. Phenomenology requires interpreting meaning from these texts, paying close attention to language (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Mertens, 2005; Robson, 2002; Van Manen, 1990). Van Manen provides six suggestions for writing textual documents that explain the lived experience: (1) explain as you lived through it without providing causal explanations, generalizations, and

abstract interpretations; (2) explain the experience using phrases that explain the state of mind; (3) describe a particular example or incident that occurred within the experience; (4) focus on aspects of the experience that stand out during reflection; (5) consider how the person felt, their expressions, their comparison to the environment; and (6) avoid fancy and flowery phrases.

NVivo software was used to log transcriptions and analyze them. Codes were used to tag, label, and retrieve chunks of data in a way that assigns meaning or significance (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To categorize and organize the large chunks, NVivo was used so it was easier to pull out and cluster the segments as they relate to a particular research question or construct. This software enabled the researcher to notice themes among participants, organization and code data, and combine all forms of data including her own journals and interview transcripts and recordings. Descriptor codes were used frequently throughout data analysis as the researcher classified any particular phenomenon in text; pattern codes were useful to identify patterns within and among participants' stories. Because NVivo is structured to match terms and words, manual coding was also used to capture similar themes. For example, when two or more participants used terms that are synonymous to describe the same or similar feeling or experience, NVivo would not match or parallel the two while manual coding did.

Nodes were created based on the research question and interview materials were coded to those nodes in order to organize information. To fully understand and comprehend the materials, the information with these nodes was compared and queried with the information coded to the nodes based on the interview questions.

Codes were created based on the particular themes the researcher was looking for based on the research questions. Lofland's (1971) coding scheme provided a solid basis for creating codes. Lofland's scheme fits this study because it is a way of "creating a general accounting

scheme for codes that is not content specific, but points to the general domains in which codes can be developed inductively” (Miles & Huberman, p. 61). Lofland indicated codes in any study deal with the following phenomenon: acts, activities, meanings, participation, relationships, and settings. Data collected in this study included both macro and micro level themes. On a micro level, participants addressed activities (actions and encounters with their older subordinates) and acts (their subordinates’ actions regarding accepting them as younger supervisors). Participants also addressed themes at a macro level, such as meanings and relationships. These themes were less clear and needed more interpretation on the part of the researcher.

Through transcripts, researcher revisited her biases and compared them to the research findings. When the researcher combines interpretations of texts with previous experience, hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry emerges (Van Manen, 1990). Specific research activities guide hermeneutic phenomenology. Therefore, the researcher must (1) turn to a phenomenon of great interest; (2) investigate the experience as it is lived rather than conceptualized; (3) reflect on the themes that characterize the phenomenon; (4) describe the phenomenon through writing and rewriting; (5) maintain a stance toward the phenomenon that positions the researcher as strongly oriented toward the topic; and (6) consider the parts individually but give attention to the whole, total experience (Van Manen).

Answering the Research Questions

The research questions were answered as transcriptions and coding lead to the natural process of themes emerging from the collected data. As seen in Appendix A, interview questions were carefully worded so they related directly to one or more research questions. Additionally, because codes were created based on directly on the themes within the research questions, data emerged in a way that came together naturally.

Trustworthiness

According to Roberts (2004), “Qualitative researchers often use the term trustworthiness to refer to the concept of validity” (p. 145); this factor is what allows the reader to trust a researcher’s findings. Trustworthiness was emphasized from the time of study conceptualization through analysis and writing of results. This required infusing sound tactics into the development, conduct, and interpretation of the findings. Careful examination was put into each text to ensure well-explained stories came from the perceptions of participants.

Triangulation is an effective tactic in increasing trustworthiness (Robson, 2002; Willis, 2007). Specifically, the responses from the interviews and the researcher’s journaling from throughout the process were reviewed. These records were used before and after the interviews to validate or extend statements that were made from the interviews. Finally, drafts of each participant’s case was provided directly to the participant after each interview in to ensure concurrence.

A phenomenological approach best addressed the research questions because interview transcripts were expected to reveal (and did reveal) descriptions of what the participants lived experience was like as well as how they experienced it (Creswell, 2007b). The interview process outlined for this study proved to be the ideal way to address the research questions. Because phenomenology focuses on the need to understand how humans understand themselves (Willis, 2007), the opportunity for participants to explain their experiences by responding to interview questions was an ideal way for this self-description and understanding to occur.

Several steps were taken to ensure trustworthiness. First, there was no reason to believe that participants would be dishonest in their responses. Second, triangulation was used by incorporating multiple methods to provide corroborating evidence: the interview, member check,

and researcher journaling. Third, researcher bias was clarified and checked. To do so, the researcher “comment[ed] on [her] own experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study” (Creswell, p. 208). Finally, participants had the opportunity to check and confirm the researcher’s findings and interpretations of their interviews. This technique is considered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to be “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314).

Potential Limitations

Some of the participants in this study were chosen through acquaintance relationships or will be recommended by a mutual friend or colleague. Themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews and transcripts iterated common themes among this sample but were unique to the participants in this study. Before beginning participant selection, the researcher realized the possibility that the researcher and a participant may have a previous acquaintance relationship related to their shared membership and/or involvement in the profession. Another limitation of the study was the fairly homogeneous sample in terms of educational background. It was assumed that all members would have at least a bachelor’s degree and most will have a master’s degree or higher—most in Student Affairs, College Student Personnel, or a related discipline. A final limitation is that all participants did not complete the wrap-up questions, as they agreed to do. As a result, the researcher was unable to use the information gleaned from the responses from those who did complete them.

Although little sensitive or extremely personal information was expected to be shared and collected, confidentiality was considered. No threats of confidentiality were anticipated. The only people with access to the full interview transcripts were the participants themselves, the

researcher, and the researcher’s dissertation committee—all who were committed to maintaining the confidentiality of the information collected.

Summary

Crotty (1998, p. 5) offers a table to illustrate how the four elements of social research can be illustrated and broken down for solid study planning. Using Crotty’s table as a template, Table 6 illustrates the researcher’s plan for this study’s framework.

Table 6

Study’s Framework

Epistemology	Theoretical Perspective	Methodology	Methods
Empirical	Interpretivism → Phenomenology → Hermeneutics	Phenomenological research	Interviews Narratives Researcher journaling

This framework lead to a research process that addressed the research questions and the research problem.

The study conducted was a phenomenological one. A phenomenological study captures the points of view of individuals as they experience something; in this case it will be the experience of supervising workers who are older than they. Through studying these individuals’ experiences, a shared idea of the event or process emerged. Phenomenology requires to first bracketing or setting aside the researcher’s idea of the phenomenon to alleviate bias in the research process and allow for the personal experiences of each individual to emerge. Once the research was complete, the idea of the phenomenon was reconnected as stories told through interpretation of the participants’ experiences.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter contains six sections: demographics of the participants, context of the problem, participants' experiences, analysis of the phenomenon, emergent themes, and answering the research questions. A brief description of each follows.

Section one offers a brief overview of the participants' demographics (see Table 7). The second section illustrates the context of the phenomenon from the perspective of the younger managers who supervise people who are ten or more years older than they are. Section three contains brief stories that illustrate the participants' experience supervising older subordinates from participants' point of view. Section four presents an analysis of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants. Section five presents and analyzes the five major themes that emerged from the participants' descriptions and narrations: seeing the older subordinate as a mentor, accepting the subordinate for where they are, age in relation to professional peers, generational differences in the intergenerational dyad, and the role of gender in the intergenerational dyad. Section six relates the participants' experiences to the research questions.

Demographics of the Participants

An demographical overview of the participants is provided in Table 7. The table includes an at-a-glance description of each participant and includes information that is later referenced and analyzed in the study such as the participant's gender, whether s/he were noted to have had an overall positive or negative experience, and if the participant had a title that is beyond their years of experience. Pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality. In Table 7, the participants are presented alphabetically by his or her pseudonym. The group of participants

included ten women and nine men. There were five members of the Millennial generation, 13 members of Generation X, and one member of the Baby Boomer generation.

Table 7

Participants' Demographic Overview

Name	Gender	Age in Years	Years Supervising Professionals	Number of Subordinates 10 or more Years Older	Years Supervising Subordinates 10 or More Years Older	Years Employed at Current College/ University	Negative or Positive Experience	Magnified Title
Amy	woman	32	9	3	3	5	negative	Yes
Angela	woman	34	8	5	8	2	negative	No
Carl	man	29	3	1	1	1	negative	Yes
Carolyn	woman	31	4	3	3	6	negative	Yes
Donald	man	31	3	1	3	6	neutral	No
Emily	woman	41	15	4	13	1	neutral	No
Evelyn	woman	28	1	6	1	1	neutral	Yes
Greg	man	42	15	6	15	8	neutral	No
Josh	man	33	4	1	3	5	negative	Yes
Kent	man	37	15	2	3	3	neutral	No
Laura	woman	42	8	1	3	5	neutral	No
Maggie	woman	39	15	2	4	5	negative	No
Mary	woman	32	1	4	1	3	neutral	No
Matt	man	43	8	4	5	7	neutral	No
Michael	man	50	17	2	16	17	positive	No
Nicole	woman	36	12	2	12	6	neutral	No
Oliver	man	33	5	2	4	10	positive	Yes
Sharon	woman	29	6	1	1	1	negative	No
Steve	man	34	11	4	11	3	positive	No

Context of the Phenomenon

This research examined the experiences of managers who supervise people who are ten or more years older than they are. Because methodological approaches of narrative inquiry and phenomenology were combined, the researcher analyzed interview transcripts individually as well as collectively while considering her own journaling during the interviews.

Participants' Experiences

This section provides a vignette of each participant's story and experience from the interviews. Each participant's current and recent supervising experiences, their work styles and work ethic, and the work styles and work ethic of those they supervise are described.

Amy

Amy is 32 years old and is the director in a campus activities and student involvement department. She has been supervising in various roles for nine years. She has been employed at her current institution for five years; she supervises three workers who are ten or more years older than she is. Amy has supervised these three workers for three years.

Amy's first experience supervising an older worker was in her first job after completing her graduate work; she was 23 years old at the time. She described this first experience as being very difficult; specifically, "a horrible experience." She described the experience as being full of conflict; the subordinate was patronizing and motherly toward Amy. In a subsequent role and position, Amy supervised a man who was almost 30 years her senior and had a similarly negative experience. She stated,

I don't know if he was contrarian, or if he just disagreed with everything that I said, but he questioned every idea that I had, and we kinda got into fighting matches, and a lot of it had to do with age and gender ... I think he just thought I was like this young woman, and how could I possibly be the director.

In her current role, she supervises one man who points out his advanced age regularly, "...he always says that he's been in the field for 28 years ... So, for him, it's more about how many years of experience he has, which obviously is connected to age." Amy does not know for sure whether it is age or a difference in personality that has made these relationship difficult, although she noted her "gut" tells her it is not only an age difference, but a personality difference as well.

Amy indicated her leadership style has changed over the past year as she has adapted to her current job. She stated, "90% of my job is HR and management, so I have come to realize, unfortunately, that I have to manage in a different way ... And I feel like, unfortunately, a lot of my leadership involves putting out fires." Despite this, Amy thinks she has a supportive supervising style:

I still really do value hearing people's voices, and trying to get folks on the same page, but I think because my department is much bigger, I realize that that's just not realistic, and so sometimes I ask people to just wave the flag sometimes. Like, sometimes we have a directive, and we just need to support the cause.

Amy indicated that in the past she spent more time and energy on gaining consensus; currently she feels as though she is more apt to give direction and pull the team along with her. However, she values one-on-one meetings with those she supervises and describes that time as being sacred and her first priority.

Amy describes herself as a "tasky" and detail-oriented worker. In terms of the work styles of her older subordinates, she finds it impossible to generalize and talked more about how the workers' styles seemed to have more to do with their role and personality than with their age. Similarly, she indicates her experiences of giving these workers feedback regarding their performance cannot be generalized, nor contrasted to the experience of providing performance feedback to workers who are her age or younger.

Amy indicates that her age is apparent to her in her role. She noted she has worried at times that those she supervises who are older may wonder how she got her job, or how she moved up the ladder so quickly while they have not had similar experiences with professional advancement.

Angela

Angela is 34 years old and works as an assistant dean of students. She has been supervising in various roles for eight years. She has been employed at her current institution for two years; she supervises five workers who are ten or more years older than she is. Angela has supervised older workers for five years. When she first became a supervisor, Angela oversaw four workers. Each was older than she was and the age difference ranged from three to twenty years. Currently, she supervises ten people, five are older than she is. Angela identified both rewards and challenges with supervising older workers. She indicated a reward is the institutional history with which older subordinates provide her. However, that reward leads directly to one of the greatest challenges Angela experiences: opposition to change. She stated “The challenges will always be the pushback. The challenges will always be the questions of really and truly is that what we want to do?” She indicates this is a difference from her subordinates who are her age or younger: “[older subordinates] see change as a critique of what they’ve always done ... a Millennial sees it as an opportunity.”

Angela mentioned generational differences several times. She stated that supervising staff who share her generational identity is easier than supervising people from a different generation. Angela described the Millennials and Baby Boomers as being very similar. She stated, “[Baby Boomers and Millennials] like the adoration. They like to feel that their work means something. So you’ve got to speak to them more in person.

Angela describes herself as being a multi-tasker; her work style and ability to get work done efficiently is largely based on her access to and use of technology; everything from working with more than one computer screen to using social media. Noting more similarities between Baby Boomers and Millennials, Angela stated,

[Baby Boomers and Millennials] like to work on their own, very autonomous, but they need to know if they're on track. They do not like to be confused. They get frustrated by anything that may provide confusion. They do not like long meetings.

Angela indicates she spends much time molding her style to these varying work styles. She stated she has become more sensitive as she ages and takes time to listen more. She stated, "So I spend a lot of time in my day answering their questions because I think I really -- I've created a culture where if you have a question, stop by. My door is open. I give feedback."

Angela says her age is most apparent to her in her role at work. It is most apparent in her savvy approach to technology and social media. Awareness of her age appears in how she perceives her subordinates treat her. She stated, "[My subordinates} make me very conscientious. I always believe that they feel, "That's nice, that's sweet, but she still doesn't know everything." Angela feels conscientious about the balance of professional title, degree earned, and age. For example, she has a Ph.D. so she believes some think of her as being over-educated or as having a Ph.D. for no good reason (because it is not a requirement for her current job).

Carl

Carl is 29 years old and holds a dual title of Assistant Dean of Students and Director of an advocacy office. He has been a supervisor for three years. He has worked at his current institution for one year and supervises one person who is ten or more years older than he is. New in his position, Carl describes his first year in his role as being one that has been filled with

change and “intense with staff changes.” Carl feels as though his younger age is apparent and has been from the start,

I think that there’s work that we’ve both had to do around getting over that fact, or working through that fact and sort of naming it and putting it out there that, “Yes, you’re older than I am, and I supervise you.”

Carl stated that his master’s degree was also a factor in his relationship with his older subordinate, who does not have one. He stated, “...by no means was I fresh out of my master’s [program]... but because I was a little younger, at the very least it was awkward.”

Carl indicated it has taken some time for his older subordinate, an Assistant Director, to get used to having an additional layer of authority, approval, or perspective, but after a year their relationship has progressed from awkward and uncomfortable to being more cordial. Carl’s perception of his own age varied from most other participants because he noted that he often struggled with straddling the two concepts of more deeply connecting with his student subordinates on some issues but his professional subordinates on others. He noted pop culture as the biggest example:

... the students that I supervise who are younger than me, I think there was more of a camaraderie or like a shared collegiality that was there because of our closeness in age. But at the same time, I would say that there were things that my colleague who is older than me connected on more readily than some of the younger students.

Carl was the only participant who spoke specifically about connecting and relating to students in this manner.

Carl and his older subordinate were both finalists for his current position, which he noted likely contributes to their awkward and difficult relationship. Multiple conversations that revolve around Carl helping this subordinate find more comfort in his hiring, rather than hers have occurred as a result.

... she did not get [the position], so I think that was sort of a crisis point in her life. That was probably significantly manifested and directed towards me, and then the age was probably just another sort of—something else, another issue [with which she had to deal].

Carl mentioned his age in relation to his professional peers, other Deans, was apparent to him,

I'm the youngest dean by probably at least ten years ... So, I think that makes me more cognizant of the amount of knowledge or authority that I have to bring, and sort of how much I have to prove myself to the deans that have been around for a while who are older than I am.

Carl describes his work style as “radically inclusive,” noting that his work in advocacy makes inclusivity central to his outlook on work. He noted he tries to create an office environment that is built on consensus and is not hierarchical. When asked to describe the work style of his older subordinate, Carl indicated he did not think she was as focused as he is, “I don't feel like [she is] as driven as I am about the tasks at hand. I think [she is] focused on replicating instead of creating. So, just doing the same things every year rather than creating new programs.” He further clarified that he perceives her behavior as being resistant to change.

Carolyn

Carolyn is 31 years old and has held the role of Director of Student Activities and Leadership Development for one year; she has been working at her current institution for six years. She supervises ten staff members, three of whom are ten or more years older than she. She noted that learning to supervise, in and of itself, was a difficult process for her:

I... feel like I was never really taught how to supervise people. So I feel like I've been making it up as I go along, and admittedly sometimes I would say it's probably not gone well, but really figuring out how to work with older – the older generations- in my office.

Carolyn indicated her younger age is apparent to her primarily when her older subordinates bring it up to her:

[One of my older subordinate's asked me] “How are you younger than me and in a director level role ...” it was like ... an elephant in the room ... But I knew this individual was struggling and that she was turning 42 and she was at the program

coordinator entry level position even though she's been in higher education for 10 or 15 years.

Carolyn believes her staff view her as having high expectations. "I have really high expectations of their ability to adapt quickly... I'm not good ... allowing things to go through the course of time. I've been moving pretty quickly in this position mainly because I feel like we needed it." She further described her older staff members as being more resistant to change than those she supervises who are younger, "We didn't really have any direction. We were behind the times on some things. So there had to be some pretty immediate changes. I would say for the older staff members that's been a little bit more difficult."

Carolyn noted her age is also apparent to her because she appears younger than she is; she further elaborates by positing that she feels she would be treated like she was more her age if she were male. "I think [the fact I look younger] does affect those relationships more, young female especially. If I were a young male ... part of me doesn't feel like that that would affect it as much." However, she thinks her peers are more aware of her younger age than her staff are, "I do think people look at me like, 'Oh, she's young. She may not know or she doesn't have a lot of experience or' so I think other people have more of an issue than my own staff."

Carolyn describes her work style primarily as being organized. She uses technology with ease but struggles in being a "cheerleader" in the workplace, "I've gotten feedback that I'm not "rah, rah" enough." This combined with the fact she's been in her role only one year has made her supervision experiences and relationships trying. She said,

I think the first year has been difficult [but] I feel like I've made the best of it. There were highs and there were definitely lows. I'm not gonna skirt around that, but I think at the end of the day everyone likes working for me.

Donald

Donald is 31 years old and is the chief housing officer at a small institution. He has worked at this institution for six years and been a supervisor for three. He supervises one person who is ten or more years older than he. Overall, he describes his relationship with this subordinate as “mostly positive” and said she respects him as a supervisor. When asked about assessing performance of this staff member, Donald indicated he gives a lot of feedback; he does this because it is his style, but also because this particular staff member needs constant feedback in order to perform at a high level. He stated his staff member is very sensitive to constructive criticism so he spends a lot of time reframing feedback with a positive spin. “if it’s done good enough I don’t ask her for improvements, I just leave it. I don’t want to do things that are going to create a lot more work for her... .”

Donald describes his own work style as decisive. He stated, “I am decisive but I try my hardest to not get dragged into managing people’s portfolios. I want people to manage their own areas.” His subordinate’s style is more logistical; “[She is] very focused on details—micro details—and very focused on tasks. She struggles with relationships. She thinks of people who report to her as tasks.” Although their styles are quite different, he indicated they work together well, “I think what she values most from me is that she knows I am in her corner,” he stated. This staff member is co-supervised by Donald, so he admits that a piece of his willingness to advocate for her is a competition for her allegiance. “I try to really maintain a relationship. I think it’s also important because of her matrix reporting structure. I mean, I want her to like me best.”

Donald’s younger age is not apparent to him in his supervisory role. He stated, “It’s not something I think about and it’s not something she brings up. she doesn’t say things like, wait

until you grow up, like other older people sometimes do, I am grateful for that.” Furthermore, he indicated that his most difficult supervisory relationship is actually with a staff member who is one year his senior.

Emily

Emily is 41 and has been a supervisor for 15 years, 13 of which have included supervising staff who are ten or more years older than she is. She currently has four subordinates who are ten or more years older than she is. She is a seasoned professional, an Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, and is new to her current institution having worked there less than one year. Emily had the benefit of being able to speak about current supervisory experiences as well as those in the past. Her first time supervising staff who were older than she was occurred when she was promoted from within and supervised people who used to be her professional peers. She described herself as “fumbling through” that experience. Emily reported her most difficult supervisory experience was when she was in this first role and supervised a male colleague; she said, “he really had a hard time early on, and I had to do a quick intervention with my supervisor.” Looking back, Emily indicated her experiences supervising older staff are different now. She said,

Quite frankly one of [the reasons supervising older staff is easier now than it used to be] is I’m older now, and I’ve come with—what I bring with me now is [the] years of experience ... And so there’s a perceived level of credibility just because I’ve done this for a while as opposed to you’re a year outta grad school and you’re what? So that alone. I’ve learned a lot of lessons along the way, not just supervising people who are older than me, but supervising in general.

Emily described her work style as being inquisitive. She said, “I tend to at the very beginning I ask a lot of questions.” She also said, “I tend to like direct connection with people” and indicated she is highly committed to one-on-one meetings with staff. She described herself as a communicator, a listener, and collaborator. She described herself as being a direct

communicator and sets goals with those she supervises. When asked if her age was apparent to her as a supervisor, Emily indicated that it used to be very apparent to her, but not so much anymore. She posited that she noticed the change when she earned her Ph.D. stating, “that shift when I got the Ph.D., that was a stark difference in how I was being treated not just by other faculty on campus, but students, staff within the department, staff within the division. It was weird.” Although Emily indicated her younger age isn’t apparent anymore in her supervisory relationships, she stated that it has come up (although usually under the guise of a joke) among her colleagues, other Assistant Vice Presidents in her division in which group she is the youngest. She said, “[They say things] jokingly ... some faculty here who are on committees with me and say, “Oh you’re still young.”

Evelyn

Evelyn is 28 and supervises six people who are ten or more years older than she is. She has been a supervisor for one year, the same amount of time she has worked at her current institution where she holds the role of Senior Associate Director in a campus activities department. She indicated she could tell as early as the interview that the team she inherited was “somewhat dysfunctional;” she stated, “there were a lot of issues that staff had with senior leadership and a lot of it came down to communication, transparency, leadership, decision making, some of the key aspects you’d probably be looking for in your senior leadership.” As a result, she felt challenged immediately, but not necessarily in a bad way. She tried to enter her position prepared. She said,

... one of the things that I kind of went back to pretty quickly was sort of what were some of the best leaders that I ever worked with? What did they do? What can I try and do within sort of my sphere of influence with my team and things like that? I knew coming in that I was actually going to be the youngest person joining the office and I would certainly be the youngest on my team supervising people that were anywhere between seven years older than me to 25 plus years older than me. I wanted to make sure I came

in, and I listened, and I established rapport with the people that were going to be on my team, and that I at the same time was also showing that I could be thoughtful, and I could make decisions, and I could be transparent, and be a good communicator because I knew those were some of the issues that people were feeling a little tentative about.

Evelyn described herself as an intentional supervisor and said she enjoyed her supervisory role. She said, “I learned when I started working with those teams was that I genuinely enjoyed developing staff and working with staff even more than just working with students.” In general, Evelyn displayed enthusiasm and a positive attitude. She addressed some challenges with staff but did not appear to let those challenges make her feel negatively or insecure about her younger age:

[I] to kind of have to remind myself that [frustrations I encounter in my supervisory role are] not about age, and it’s not about literally numbers of years, and kind of things like that. So, for me I think that’s a constant reminder to focus on kind of what we’re doing, and the relationships, and the leadership, and things like that, and not focus so much fully on age.

Evelyn noted she does feel insecure about her younger age when her age and years of experience are compared to her colleagues, more so than when it is compared to her subordinates,

I think it’s an insecurity, and I think it’s when I’m sitting around the table where there are people who have 10 plus years of experience or 14 or 15 plus years of experience in a particular area and I know that I’m walking in with less than 10. I worry about whether or not some of those individuals if they’ve never met me before will take me seriously in what I have to contribute in that meeting.

Overall, Evelyn said her older subordinates are respectful of her role as their supervisor,

...they respect me and they trust me to be a sounding board. I’ve been able to establish rapport with them and respect with them where they’re able to see that I can be thoughtful. I can be intentional. I know enough about our field and I’m someone who’s just a huge advocate.

Greg

Greg is 42 years old and has been supervising professional staff for 15 years. He currently an Associate Dean at an institution at which he has worked for eight years. He

currently supervises two staff who are ten or more years older than he and has supervised people who were older than him in every job he has held. His first experience supervising someone who was older than him was when he worked with a woman whom he referred to as “motherly.” Greg reported one supervisory relationship as “contentious” and said, “I guess I thought as to some degree the difference in our age, just because I think his perspective always was, “What would you know? You’re much younger than me.”

Greg is close in age to other associate deans with whom he works but much younger than senior university leadership, such as the provost, with whom he regularly meets. However, Greg noted that he thinks he looks significantly younger than he is and that may sometimes be to his detriment “... there are times I feel—in my career—where people have discounted me because of my youth.”

Greg exuded confidence and described himself as decisive; when asked if his younger age was apparent to him earlier in his career, he stated,

I think it was more apparent to me then as I moved to other jobs. “Oh, wow, I wish I had known this then, ’cause I would have made a different decision, or I would have tweaked that decision.” ... I think it’s been more about just that ability to have the experience, which presumably comes with age. So it’s always been that—and I just feel—but I’ve never really feel like—I’ve never questioned myself as a young supervisor.

In addition to being decisive, Greg described himself as always looking to build consensus within his team. He said, “I empower my teams, I think, a great deal. I’m very clear about that” and further indicated that fairness was a top priority and consideration for him as a supervisor.

Josh

Josh is 33 years old and an Assistant Dean of Students. He has four years of experience supervising others, three of which have included staff who are ten or more years older than he.

He has worked at his current institution for five years and been in his current role for three and a half of those. He currently supervises one woman who is ten or more years older than him. Some of the first words Josh used to illustrate his experiences supervising a subordinate who is ten or more years older than he is were “growing experience.” Immediately in his first experience supervising an older worker, he needed to deal with her having extensive health issues; a big challenge for him. Regardless of the health issues, the experience was difficult for him. One reason Josh believes it was difficult, in hindsight, was that his own supervisor did not set him up for success. Josh said,

I think in retrospect, he could have done more to help build my credibility to her so that it was really clear that even though I was relatively inexperienced that it was a lot of trust in my ability to handle the role that I was in and that would have maybe helped her not to have so many questions as she did at first.

Josh stated that his younger age was apparent to him mostly in the way that his older subordinate consistently wanted to include his supervisor in decisions. He said, “she felt like he was a more senior, seasoned leader that she needed to vet everything through him as opposed to trusting me to make decisions.” Josh also stated that giving formal performance feedback was difficult for him to do at first,

I didn’t kind of approach it as directly as I should have and I think if she had been younger than I was and clearly didn’t have the life experience that I did maybe I would have been more willing to say [she wasn’t meeting my expectations].

Josh believes that his subordinate viewed his boss as her peer but did not view him (Josh) as her peer.

Josh described his work style as “collaborative” and that he struggles with being very direct in his communication. He said, “I very rarely [give] directives ... and what I’m learning is that sometimes it works for some people ... but sometimes I know I need to be more direct.”

However, he stated one of his most important values is authenticity.

Josh stated his age has recently become more apparent to him. He said, “the more I kind of ascend into my career and get promoted and begin to have a seat at the table in other kinds of contexts, I’m very often the youngest or among the youngest people in the room.”

Kent

Kent is 37 years old and works as a Director of Student Involvement; he has worked at his current institution for three years. Kent has been supervising professional staff for 15 years and currently supervises three staff members who are ten or more years older. Kent had a unique experience as he walked into a director position with fewer years of directly related experience than all three of the staff who he supervises. He stated,

... they’ve been sitting directors of units that are the equivalent size of ours at different institutions, and they come in with a – much more – I’m in a functional area that I had no experience in when I came into the position.

Because of this limited experience, Kent had a strong sense of using his older staff members as an opportunity to receive mentorship and historical as well as content knowledge. He spoke in depth about being sensitive and intentional about communicating with these older staff from a position that values and recognizes their experience and expertise.

Kent describes himself as a hands-off leader, and one reason for that approach is his realization that his subordinates are very knowledgeable in their roles. He stated,

[I give] them permission [to] make decisions and not step on my feet. But I think that ... there was this dual thing in play. One, they were older than me, but I wasn’t necessarily thinking about it in those terms. I have often thought about that they have way more expertise than me, and how can I make sure that they know that it’s an environment where they are free to use that expertise to improve what we’re doing.

Kent’s leadership style is one that is nimble and developmentally focused. He said,

... what I’m trying to do is to get people into positions and roles where they are both gaining a lot of energy from what they’re doing, continuing to grow and be expanded in their skill set or interest area, getting them the resources they need, asking questions, and giving them enough rope where they can be creative and try new things.

He said he is rarely directive and prefers to supervise “high-functioning” staff who think of ideas and have the ability to implement them with little guidance.

Laura

Laura is 42 years old and has worked at her current institution as Director of New Student Orientation for five years. She has supervised professional staff for eight years; she currently supervises one subordinate who is ten or more years older than her and has done so for three years. Prior to supervising this staff member, Lara had only supervised staff who were her age or younger and she found the transition to supervising someone who was ten or more years older to be difficult. She said,

...it was really difficult because prior to coming here I had supervised professional staff, but mainly much younger professionals who were straight out of graduate programs. So going from supervising brand new professionals to supervising someone who had been working in higher education for more than 15 years ... led to some real challenges. Our work styles were very different.

In terms of their varying work styles, Laura stated,

I’m much more of a big picture, less day to day detail oriented. She’s very detail oriented, very much mired in the logistics and the numbers and that isn’t my strong area, and so those things sometimes fall through the cracks with me and she was always very sure to point out to me those kinds of mistakes.

Laura stated she “never really felt like the supervisor” and that her subordinate took on a motherly and sometimes patronizing approach with her. Despite these challenges, Laura stated she learned a lot from this subordinate, specifically in terms of navigating campus culture.

Laura indicated her age was very apparent to her. She said,

I often felt like I was a lot younger and my frame of reference on things was different. My educational background was a little bit different in terms of she didn’t have a masters in higher ed, and so my masters being in college student personnel was pretty different, and I think that made me feel a little bit younger because she had gone on for a much different discipline than I did.

Of all the participants in the study, Laura reported the most negative experience; she discussed her subordinate raising her voice to her and arguing, and said, “I think for her, she would say I was the worst supervisor she’d ever had.”

Maggie

Maggie is 39 years old and been a supervisor for 15 years. She has worked as a Director in Housing and Residence Life for five years and currently supervises two people who are ten or more years older than she is. She stated, “I never really considered it consciously before, but definitely the age difference is playing out significantly in that relationship and I’ve have to give it some attention and time.” She indicated her subordinate routinely brought up her younger age, and therefore it was very apparent to her all the time.

As a leader, Maggie described herself as being a motivator and a challenger and indicated she highly values staff development. She indicated one of her biggest challenges in supervising older subordinates was their reluctance to be creative, innovative, take risks, and make mistakes. Maggie indicated those characteristics are largely how she defines a strong work ethic, while her older subordinates seem to define a strong work ethic by the hours one puts in combined with a high level of focus on the task.

Maggie identified team work as a generational difference she sees at work; younger staff enjoy it and expect it and older staff struggle with it. She said, “a lot of us [younger people], even in high school and... everything was done as a team” but described her older staff members as such:

I find with ... a lot of the [older] people that I work with now that that’s kind of ... “No. I was—I am responsible for this fail. I’m responsible. If it goes badly, I’m responsible and I don’t necessarily feel the need to share it. I don’t work in a team. My – our success and our failure is based on how hard I work.” ... That’s been a challenge for me, first to recognize it, and then to start to try to find ways to work with it.

Further, Maggie discussed the challenges of developing her staff into exemplifying the values of commitment to student development while also doing their day to jobs—which, on paper, do not necessarily list this value. She said, “A lot of the student development that I bring as theory to them are things that they kinda believe anyway—sorta anyway—that they’ve been doing for years in different ways, but they’ve never put words to it.”

Mary

Mary is 32 years old and has been supervising staff for just under one year. She currently supervises four staff members who are ten or more years older than her and has been doing so for one year. Mary holds a director-level title in a student services department. Mary describes herself as being an open communicator with high expectations; she tries to be fair, respectful, and challenging. When reflecting on her entire staff (additional staff members include one younger than her and one a few years older), Mary said, “I don’t find [supervising workers who are older than me] extremely challenging, but I just find that I have to approach them in a different way because I’ve noticed that they are more sensitive and that they really want to please.”

Mary was one of the few participants who talked about having to navigate through her older staff displaying a fear of becoming obsolete. She told a story about one of her staff members, a designer, who feared she would be let go because she was not up on all the new design technology. Mary said, “she gets very sensitive about it in the sense that maybe she won’t be needed anymore or her skills aren’t good enough, things like that.”

Mary indicated her older subordinates seem to work more slowly than those who are her age or younger, although it is not a negative trait. She said, “[the older staff] work a little more

slowly, little more methodical, but they're accurate whereas the younger person does it a lot faster and you have to double check everything she does.”

Despite being younger than almost everyone she supervises, Mary indicated her younger age was almost never apparent to her in her supervisory role. She said when she does think of it, it is more along the lines of style and generational differences versus the difference between two people's chronological age. However, she said she does often get mistaken for a college student and believes she looks much younger than she is. She said,

People always think I'm younger. Like, at [college campus] they actually think I'm a student, and I actually used to do recruiting before this. And at times people would —like at the high school—would ask me for my hall pass. I'm like, come on, I don't look like a high school student.

She stated she believes her older staff like and respect her and display enormous commitment and loyalty to their jobs, to the team, and to Mary as a supervisor. She said, “if there's any problems that arise or even positive things, [my older subordinates] will share those as well. But they're always looking to make [things] better.”

Matt

Matt is 43 years old and been a supervisor for eight years. He currently works as an Assistant Vice President/Dean of Students and supervises four people who are ten or more years older than he is; he has supervised older subordinates for five years and has never had any real problems with the relationships. He said, “I come to the supervisory role as a very relationship-oriented supervisor and I think that, again with some exceptions, but for the most part the people who I supervise appreciate that and work well with that.”

Matt said he had one subordinate with whom working was very frustrating for him but posited that might be more of a work style than a generational style. He says he is a very “relationship-oriented” supervisor and sets goals to build strong relationships with all his

subordinates; he indicates supervising is his top priority and he'll do almost anything to make time for a staff member when needed.

Matt discussed how it feels different to supervise workers who are older than him from those who are younger than him. As a result, he spends a lot of time trying to make sure the experience is similar for both groups, and indicates he is aware his subordinates sense that intention. He describes his work style as collaborative and tries to lead others in his division to do the same. Conversely, he describes the work styles of his older subordinates as being true to what generational research indicates:

... they tend to want a little more permission from me as a supervisor to change things, or initiate programs, or if there's a significant issue that's arisen, how they deal with that, and it's not my preferred style, but I get it and I appreciate it.

In hindsight, Matt discussed how his supervising staff who are older than he is has changed how he views himself as a supervisor, "I would say for me professionally, [supervising older subordinates] has provided a new way for me to look at supervision, my own supervisory style."

When asked if his age was apparent to him in his role of a supervisor, he said it used to be more than it is currently. He said, "If anything I recognize my age when I realize I'm the same age or older than the parents of many of my students [laughter], that's a little bit hard to deal with."

Michael

Michael is 50 years old and been a supervisor for 17 years, 16 of which have included supervising staff who are ten or more years older than he is. He currently works as an Assistant Dean of Students and supervises two staff who are ten or more years older. He was promoted from within his role and said,

... the situation was a little weird because I had been here for a few years prior to that and built up a good working relationship. So when I became their supervisor it wasn't a

problem for them. You know they were accepting of the fact because I had proven that I had the skills necessary for [the job].

Michael indicated that the older subordinate's mentoring him acclimated him to the job, to the institution at which he works, and even to the town/community to which he moved to take the job.

Michael described his leadership and supervisory style as "collaborative," and that he establishes personalized relationships with his staff. He said,

I'm there as a leader I'm pushing people. I ask for suggestions, I get all the information I can get you know when there's a decision to be made ultimately it's my responsibility to make the decision but you know I see that information.

Michael referred to his staff by name the entire time he spoke about them, which was different from the other participants. He indicated they have very independent work styles and seldom ask for help or advice. Along these lines, Michael indicated that giving feedback to his older staff is different in that he does not feel it needs to be given as consistently because they know and are comfortable in their jobs.

Michael stated his younger age is not apparent to him in his supervisory role. He said, once he turned 45 he felt like a seasoned professional. However, he stated, "When I was 25 or 30 my answer would have been different." He said,

I honestly think it would have been different because if I was 25 and I was supervising someone who was 50, I think I would have been conscious of my age. And I think you know in some cases people would have been more conscious of the fact that I was 25 years younger than them. My opinion on age and the way I work with other people in general is completely different than when I was a new professional.

Nicole

Nicole is 36 years old and works as an Associate Director in a campus activities and leadership environment. She has 12 years' experience as a supervisor, during which she has always supervised workers who were ten or more years older than she. She has worked at her

current institution for six years. First and foremost, Nicole describes herself as being direct and transparent. She stated,

My leadership style and my supervision style is to be very transparent and very direct and that doesn't work for everybody, but it—authenticity—is my style. I think the team that I work with if you ask them would say, “You always know where you stand with Nicole. I don't know whether you like that or not. It's [laughter] different.”

Nicole describes the work styles of the two workers she supervises who are ten or more years older than her as being quite different from one another, one is very relational—interested in the process—and one is more task-oriented and interested in the end result.

Nicole shared two overarching and reoccurring concepts: her older staff are more adverse to change than those who are her age or younger, and her single and child-free status seems to make her workers with spouses and children believe she cannot relate to their lives, which Nicole believes to be untrue. Nicole shared an example of her older staff resisting change and illustrating a “grass is greener” attitude towards her leadership. Although she can't posit why, she believes communication is a bit slower working with older workers, and she often needs to provide additional information and/or instruction for them to fully comprehend her directives.

Regarding her single, child-free status, Nicole said,

I had one of the staff members say to me, “You just don't understand 'cause you're not married and you don't have kids.” And I didn't say this, but I wanted to say, “You know nothing about my life, about whether it's complicated or not 'cause I don't talk about my life at work.

Nicole stated her age is never apparent to her in her supervisory role, “it's not apparent to me. I'm very unaware of my age, gender – I'm very unaware of it because I'm just Nicole and that's how I choose to live my life too.” However, she noted she becomes aware of it when meeting with senior staff, such as the vice president. She said, “I can become very quickly aware of my age when our VP will say, “Well, young lady,” or, “For the youngster in the room, 'cause

he will do that.” Nicole notes that being in the middle (not in her 20s and not in her 50s) is sometimes difficult. She has a Ph.D. and indicates that is apparent to older colleagues who do not have a terminal degree,

I am definitely intimidating to people who are older who do not have their Ph.D... I can't control that. I've had it since I was 30; those were my choices. But, I definitely have felt that very directed about it – I think economic credentials is interesting and I also think areas of expertise and wanting to respect that everybody has those.

Nicole values how people carry themselves whether it is in how they dress, how they act, or how they approach their roles in the office. In an effort to balance out assumptions about her age, Nicole wears a suit to work almost every day; she believes that image and perception is important.

Oliver

Oliver is 33 years old and an Associate Dean of Students . He has been supervising professional staff for five years, four of which include supervising staff who are ten or more years older than he is. He has worked at his current institution for 10 years. Oliver was a unique participant in that he graduated from the institution at which he now works and has been employed there since he was an undergraduate. He said he thought this dynamic made his situation unique,

... I'm 33 I've been working here since I graduated. I'm a graduate of [this institution] so I know the political aspects of this campus and, like, who to talk to for what and how to really get things done and cut through some of the red tape and all that which, as you're well aware, at the college setting there's a whole lot of.

Oliver indicated his age was not very apparent to him in his supervisory role but he speculated a few reasons why that might be: he has siblings who are much older than he is (15 years), he's an “old soul,” and he has never left the institution so everyone knows him. He said, “being at the college here for 12 years kinda puts me a leg up in having that experience that I'm

kind of like the go-to person for [most things].” The times Oliver’s younger age is most apparent, according to him, is when he interacts with students’ parents in his professional role and when his colleagues ask him to speak on behalf of students because he is closer to a traditionally-aged college student’s age than anyone else.

When reflecting on his experiences assessing older subordinates’ performance, Oliver said,

The biggest difference I’ve seen when it comes to informal assessment is for older folks the more you are just straight forward and say here’s what needs—here’s what the issue is how can we resolve it. Go with it rather than worrying about how they’re gonna take it.

He further indicated that his older staff members’ work styles are more logistical than his; they are more engaged in “problem solving, critical thinking, and more of dealing with the issue and putting the emotions on the side.” He described his own work style as being hands-off and thinks his older staff members appreciate it. He said, “[my style] probably suits older professionals better in that they know I’m not gonna be over their shoulder wondering this that or the other thing. [But] I’m empowering them to do [their own work].” These styles complement one another well when it comes time for Oliver to offer formal assessment. He said,

for older staff it’s much more [about] working with them not so much about the stuff, the experiences, and whatever issues are coming up but when it comes time to formally assess them, [I am] upfront and straight about [their performance].

Sharon

Sharon is 29 years old and has supervised one staff member who is ten or more years older than her for one year. She has been a supervisor for six years. Sharon is an Assistant Director within a housing and residence life department. Sharon has had an overall negative experience supervising the older subordinate with whom she works and indicated it was a challenge from the start. She said,

it was expressed to me when I came on that I guess she could have been described as a difficult staff member, you know ... She was resistant to a lot of things and had – was very vocal about her resistance. And so, you know, all of which kind of was told to me at the start of my supervision with her.

One of the reasons this supervisory relationship was so tumultuous for Sharon was because while the staff member illustrated resistance to working with Sharon, she also held a large amount of the information that Sharon needed in order to transition smoothly into her role.

Sharon shared that it took her a while to realize that it would benefit her to connect personally with this subordinate. She said she thought to herself, “I have to at least try because I think that if she knows me as a person, she might be a little bit more understanding of the decisions I make and so forth. And so we started [getting to know each other].” After Sharon initiated a more personal relationship, the relationship has improved but has yet to be easy.

Sharon indicated her supervision style is normally very direct, but has found this staff member responds more positively if she talks around issues and tells stories to get her point across. Sharon has since adapted to supervise more in this manner. A piece of this supervision style shift, according to Sharon, is learning to accept her older subordinate for where she is in life. Sharon said, “I pick and choose my battles ... Because, quite honestly, I would say she’s probably at a point where what I say right now isn’t really going to change how she functions in that way anyway.” Sharon indicated a specific turning point during a confrontation at an event:

I really kind of took an approach of where I wasn’t going to be baited into that type of argument. And when things had cooled down I just kind of had a follow-up conversation with her... Once we hit that point, everything kind of shifted a little bit.

Sharon says her younger age is apparent to her, but not necessarily because her older subordinate points it out to her. She stated,

[My age is apparent to me] at times. You know, there are times where—I mean if it is it’s more so apparent to me on the inside, not necessarily that she points it out to me, but rather she might say something and walk away and I’ll [second guess myself].

Her younger age is apparent to her when she is surrounded by her peer Assistant Directors, however. She said,

Yes. There I'd say [my younger age] is [apparent]. When I'm at the table for those—you know, we have certain meetings where they involve certain levels. And when I'm at the table when my level is involved, it's apparent to me that I'm definitely the youngest one at the table.

As a result, Sharon often hesitates to contribute, stating,

I was very hesitant to talk. I kind of got up—got my wits about me and started to kind of contribute a little bit more to those meetings and there were certainly times when people turned to me and said, “Well no, that's just not going to work.” ... [I] felt shot down and like I couldn't still contribute...

Steve

Steve is 34 years old and a Dean of Students. He has been a supervisor for 11 years, during which he has supervised staff who are ten or more years older than he is. He currently supervises four people who are ten or more years older. Steve indicated that for the most part, his experiences supervising older staff has been positive and he intentionally focuses on allowing older subordinates to be mentors to him. He said,

I always approach my experience with folks when I come new to an organization is really, um, not focusing much on age but focus on their experiences they've had at the institution, their history, their knowledge, and really share with them about how much I value that.

One thing Steve noted that no other participants did was that he actually struggles more with the staff he supervises who are his age or younger. He said,

... actually probably people that are my age ... quite honestly, there are many people a few years younger or my age who are relatively [young] who I think question, you know “Why am I not in that role?” “What has he done to be given that role?” those kinds of things, I think, um, issues around just kind of jealousy and those sorts of things.

Steve described his leadership approach as acting as a coach would, which he defines as providing staff the resources they need and being supportive to them at all times. For example,

he spends time chatting with staff members and will help answer phones at the front desk if he has time. He described his older subordinates as being indirect in their communication, especially when it came to giving feedback. He noted his staff have a deep commitment to their professional values, namely a student-centered work environment.

Analysis of the Phenomenon as Experienced by the Participants

After reading and reflecting on the interview transcripts and my own written notes from the interviews—the initial phase of the analysis—interview transcripts were imported into a project using version 10 of QSR NVivo software. Figure 4 illustrates the analysis process. First, each interview was analyzed in great depth and phrases and statements were coded into nodes based on the 11 interview questions. A node is a term used by NVivo software that allows the researcher to gather related information into one place to look for emerging patterns and ideas. Next, the researcher performed a word frequency query on each node and those queries were reviewed to identify any emergent themes and commonalities among participants.

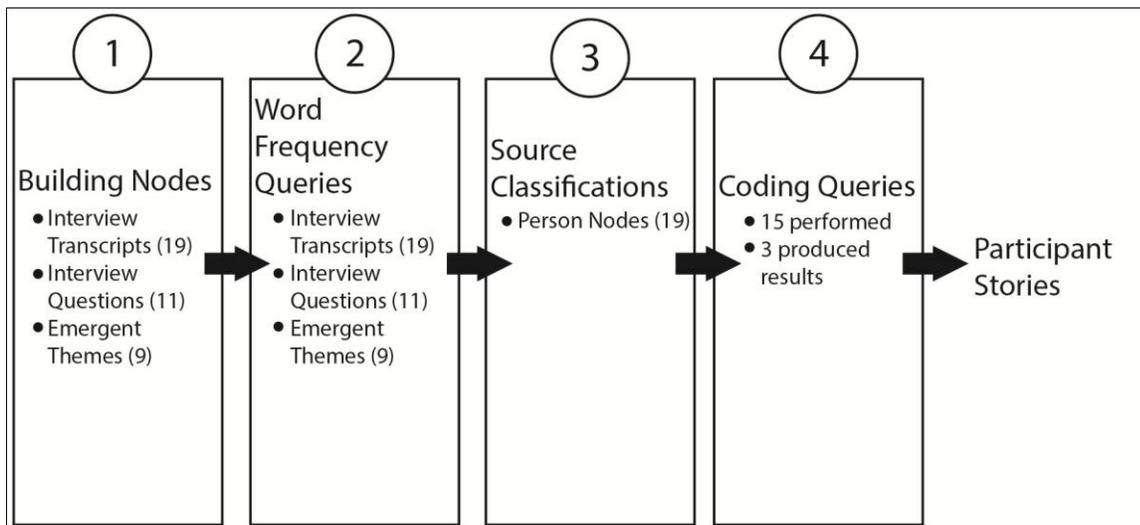


Figure 4: Map of Interview Analysis

Nodes on Emerging Themes

A number of themes emerged in the transcripts: accepting older subordinates, age relative to peers, attitudes about change, economy, gender, generational differences, hindsight, magnified titles, and subordinates as mentors. Once themes were identified, nodes were created based on these themes and each interview was further reviewed and analyzed. Participants' phrases and statements were coded. Nodes were created based on all nine noted emerging themes.

Accepting older subordinates for where they are. This includes accepting older subordinates for where they are both developmentally and professionally. Statements and concepts in this node related to the supervisors' realization that they are not able to retrain or change older subordinates in the same way they may be able to do so with subordinates who are their age or younger. For example, Josh stated, "I started to embrace the sort of—and I hate to kind of think about it this way, but not thinking that you're going to retrain someone or change their personality." Kent stated:

I'm thinking, "How do I talk to somebody who's been doing this for 25 or 30 years, about changing things that they've done for that long at this point in their career?" And how do I effectively have that conversation?

Eight statements from five participants were coded to this node.

Age in relation to peers. This node captured statements regarding younger supervisors' accounts of their younger age in relation to their colleagues rather than those they supervise. If they were a director, they shared their experience(s) being younger than other directors. Maggie stated "most of the people who have my role tend to be older than me" and Josh stated:

But, the more that I kind of ascend into my career and get promoted and begin to have a seat at the table in other kind of context, I'm very often the youngest or among the youngest people in the room."

Carl said, “I’m the youngest dean by probably at least ten years.” Thirty statements from 11 participants were coded to this node.

Attitudes about change. Items coded to this node specifically included the older subordinates’ attitudes about change as described by the younger supervisor. Although “attitudes about change” is noted as a generational difference in the review of the literature, it was not necessarily an overarching and commonly referred to concept in interviewing younger supervisors. Eight participants referred to their older subordinates’ attitudes about change 19 times; these responses were overwhelmingly about subordinates’ *negative* attitudes about change. Nicole stated:

I think from the start it was very present that the changes that had happened at the institution and our department were not perceived as positive and so as a whippersnapper coming in [and] she was not impressed by me to be doing any more change.

Carolyn stated, “there had to be some pretty immediate changes. I would say for the older staff members that’s been a little bit more difficult.” Greg said, “I think she, to some degree, is trapped in how things used to be versus how they are.” Sharon said, “She was resistant to a lot of things and had—was very vocal about her resistance.”

Economy. Due to the current poor economy, the researcher anticipated this concept coming up at one point or another but did not have a premise as to how the concept would arise. The current (poor) state of the United States economy was referenced 14 times by five participants and almost exclusively in terms of an older subordinate’s fear of being fired or laid off. Nicole stated:

I think right now in today’s economic times and job market there is a higher desire to go with the flow, go along to get along, so that your employment isn’t in question, than there is for younger team member’s ... I think it’s more about fear of being unemployed because I think if you’re 55 plus it is very difficult to be hired if you haven’t

progressively been moving up over time. I mean, she's been in this position for over 20 years.

Maggie stated, "I think right now it sort of has to do with the economy and people really holding their jobs in a different way, and feeling that their job is a lifeline in a way that I've never experienced before." Oliver said:

[there seems to be a] recent shift in this profession because particularly the past ... five years [a lot of] positions have been cut across the country for student affairs and things like that. Budgets are tight and ... there's so few positions actually available for folks.

Gender. Any time a participant referred to gender (man, woman) or sex (male, female) as a component to the intergenerational dyad, it was coded to this node. Nine participants referenced gender 23 times.

Some thoughts women had about gender included: Amy stated, "I think he just thought I was like this young woman, and how could I possibly be the director?" Emily stated:

I remember very vividly being self-conscious about it early on. You know why aren't you taking me seriously? Is it—I mean is it because (a) I'm young, (b) I'm female? I mean just default to those two identities very quickly. Over time that started to go away.

Carolyn stated:

... but people who don't know me or people who I interact with on a less frequent basis I think it would affect—I think it does affect those relationships more, young female especially. If I were a young male I—part of me doesn't feel like that that would affect it as much.

Kent offered his thoughts about gender:

I also think there's gender dynamics that work into [the intergenerational dyad] that I haven't experienced with these two gentleman (subordinates) because we're both—we're all male, but I think if you have gender issues either way, that can really further complicate things. So, if you have a younger male telling a younger female, or an older female that that could come off in—that could either be—either real or perceived, that could come off in different ways....A younger woman could struggle in ways that I haven't struggled with the two older gentlemen because of issues of gender.

Oliver stated,

[Gender is] something I'm really cognizant of is my director of res-life is the first, no I take that back is the second male of probably 13, 14 people over my career that I have supervised. And the rest have all been women so I'm really cognizant of [my gender] and I'm sure that does totally play a role.

Generational differences. Statements were coded in this node if the participants referred to a generational difference as outlined in Table 3 such as preferred leadership style, perceptions of leadership, work ethic, and value of work. Ideas about change were not coded in this node as they were coded in a separate node unless they specifically referenced generation differences. Sixteen participants referenced generation differences 66 times.

Some examples of statements coded to this node as they relate to Table 3 include, "I think that the older team members have a different life and family circumstance than our younger team members" (Nicole), "When it comes to being able to turn something around quickly, older team members [are] not able to do that in any capacity, but their commitment to their work and their value that they find in their work, I think is very high" (Nicole), and "I've had to have staff teach me, 'What does the concept of pay your dues mean? What does that mean? What does that mean to you?'" (Maggie).

Some examples of statements coded to this node because they reference generational differences directly include, "I think [his work style] had to do a little bit with the generation, and how he was raised, and his culture" (Amy), "So I feel like I've been making [my supervisory approach] up as I go along ... but really figuring out how to work with older—the older generations in my office" (Carolyn), and "Baby Boomers, they like to be—they like the adoration. They like to feel that their work means something. So you've got to speak to them more in person" (Angela).

Hindsight. While most participants were in their 30s or younger, the researcher noticed that those participants who were old enough to offer hindsight were an interesting caveat, and therefore created a specific node. Statements about hindsight had to do with recalling previous experiences supervising older subordinates rather than describing current experience. Five participants referred to this concepts 23 times. Of the five participants who were able to discuss these recollections, all noted some positive changes in their experiences as they had aged. Matt stated:

I say possibly at the beginning of my tenure here that was more of an issue. I would recognize that my age was—if I'm 10 to 20 years younger than someone I'm supervising—that I recognize that, that that is not necessarily a negative issue, but it's an issue none the less ... I don't think that happens anymore.

Michael said:

When I was 25 or 30 my answer [of whether or not my age is apparent to me in my role as supervisor] would have been different ... it would have been different because if I was 25 and I was supervising someone who was 50, I think I would have been conscious of my age. And I think you know in some cases people would have been more conscious of the fact that I was 25 years younger than them. My opinion on age and the way I work with other people in general is completely different than when I was a new professional.

Regarding age difference, Michael added a new perspective that only hindsight can fully offer:

“Yeah, I mean, 15 years when you're 20 and 35 is a big difference. Fifteen years when you are 50 and 65 doesn't seem to be the same difference although mathematically it's the same difference.”

Emily stated, “I'd say it used to be, but not as much anymore. I remember very vividly being self-conscious about it early on ... Over time that started to go away.” Greg stated:

I can see things differently now that I sit here at 42. At 27, I didn't feel like when I was in my second fulltime job, I didn't feel like, “Oh, I can't—that I'm too young to make these decisions,” or, “I'm so young and I don't know these things,” or whatever. I think it was more apparent to me then as I moved to other jobs. “Oh, wow, I wish I had known this then, 'cause I would have made a different decision, or I would have tweaked that decision.

Magnified title. Seven participants referred 13 times to the concept of older subordinates' perception that their title/role was beyond their level of years of experience. Josh stated, "It's not like she ever said that like, "I think you're too young to have your job or don't you think you're not experienced enough to be making these decisions," but I think the subtext was kind of there." Evelyn stated, "[my subordinates] think I'm a lot older because of the position I have." Oliver said,

I'm very aware that I'm young to be an associate dean period. So I think for me that's probably the biggest thing ... Almost all of them are a good at least 20 years older than me. So I'm really conscious that I'm younger person for the position which plays a big role.

Seeing subordinate as mentor. Twelve participants discussed the concept of viewing their older subordinate as a mentor in some sense. Most commented on placing value on the older subordinate's years of experience in the field and/or working at the institution and using that knowledge and experience as a reason to see their subordinate as a mentor. Josh stated, "I really believed that she had expertise that I didn't have and I wanted to learn from her too." Evelyn said,

I would say in general it is fantastic to be able to work with people that have so much experience and are so seasoned ... There's a different level of sort of, I think, confidence and sort of initiation that I get from staff members that is different from some of my previous supervisory experiences prior to this position, which I really enjoy. And I think one of the things that I appreciate so much about some of the older staff that I supervise is the wealth of experiences that they've had in their various experiences ... [and] to hear their experiences, listen to the lessons that they've learned, and kind of figure out ways or how it might apply to some of the situations that we're dealing with right now.

Kent said, "I have often thought about that they have way more expertise than me, and how can I make sure that they know that it's an environment where they are free to use that expertise to improve what we're doing." Steve stated, "I see [their] knowledge and I really respect that and I am so thankful they can share that with us."

Node Analysis

Once the interviews were properly and completely coded, source classification and coding queries were performed to more deeply analyze data. Source classifications were used to store bibliographical information about participants to be later used for comparison to interview nodes (listed above). In addition to word frequency queries, the researcher performed coding queries to find content coded at selected nodes, a combination of nodes, or a combination of nodes and attributes.

Source Classification

For this step, each interview transcript was converted into a person node. A person node is a customized classification that represents each individual participant in node form, making it easier to compare individual's demographics to the other created nodes. Once person nodes were created, each of those nodes was sorted and assigned to person classifications including: gender, age, whether the participant had an overall negative or positive experience, whether the participant had a magnified title, years of experience supervising, and years at current institution. For this step, age, years of experience, and years at institution were coded in groups. Age groups included 25 or younger, 26-28, 29-31, 32-34, 35-37, 38-40, and 41 or older. Years of experience were grouped into fewer than two, two to five, five to eight, eight to ten, and more than ten years. Years at current institution groups included less than one, one to three, three to five, five to eight, eight to ten, and more than ten years.

Coding Queries

Once all nodes were created, transcript material was coded within them, and source classification was completed. Fifteen coding queries were performed to find commonalities between and among nodes. A simple coding query allowed the researcher to see content coded at

a node limited by a specific scope; coding queries allowed the researcher to gather content coded at two specific nodes in order to illustrate commonalities and relationships between nodes.

Coding queries that produced results among many participants included:

- generational differences AND negative experience,
- Interview question 11 (Is your age apparent to you in your role as a supervisor?) AND Age in relation to peers, and
- Interview question 11 AND Magnified title.

Participant Stories

In coding and analyzing the interview transcripts, participants were put into one of three groups: positive experience, negative experience, or neutral experience. Participants were identified as having had a positive experience if they described a positive experience and/or relationship with their older subordinate AND they did not describe a negative experience and/or relationship with their older subordinate. Participants were identified as having had a negative experience if they described a negative experience and/or relationship with their older subordinate AND did not describe any positive experiences and/or relationships. All participants who did not fall into one of these two groups were labeled as having a neutral experience. It is important to note that both criteria needed to be present for the participant to be classified as having had a positive or negative experience; participants could, however, have noted a positive or negative experience without being classified as such. Three participants were classified as having had an overall positive experience, although six told stories about a positive experience. Seven participants were classified as having a negative experience, while 12 told stories about a negative experience.

Stories from participants with positive experiences. Positive experiences generally fell into two categories: mutual levels of respect and having a personal connection. In regard to the positivity coming from the high levels of mutual respect, Evelyn stated, “I would say in general it is fantastic to be able to work with people that have so much experience and are so seasoned. There’s definitely something different about supervising so many individuals that are older.” Greg said, “I feel like she respected me well, and I think that was because we had a mutual respect for each other.” Donald stated, “The experience is mostly positive. She respects me as a supervisor ... We respect each other, [our relationship] is very good.”

Regarding positivity from a strong personal connection, Greg said, “I also had another older staff member who, very similar to what my experience was at the job previously, that was completely fine, understood, was comfortable with our relationship, and we had a good relationship.” Emily stated,

And you know when there were times in meetings that she might get overly frustrated when she was trying to make her point. We’d even gotten to the point where I’d say, “You know this is an area of growth I see for you. Do you want me to give you a signal somehow nonverbal when I see that happening in a meeting so that you can do a quick check?” And that’s what we agreed to do. And so for about six months it kind of helped her identify those moments. It was a really good almost collegial supervisory relationship where she was very open to the feedback. She would ask questions, real positive.

Michael recalled scenarios where his older subordinates already knew him and enjoyed working with him:

I was able to work with those folks who are 10 or more years older than I am on a very good basis so it made it easy for the transition. [Two of the staff members already] knew me, they felt comfortable working with me we had worked on projects together previously where they had to lead in some and I had to lead in others. But the relationship was there and strong so that helped out..

Josh described the communication and conversational style as something that worked well: “I mean, we got along really well, I think, as a team and had good conversations. It was really more things that were on the subtext, not really in the heart of our conversations.”

Stories from participants with negative experiences. Negative experiences generally fell into three categories: conflicting work styles, the subordinate’s reluctance to accept supervision, and the subordinate’s resistance to change. In regard to conflicting work styles, Matt said, “I can tell you that there’s one person who I’ve supervised that’s about 20 years older than I am who I find it very frustrating to work with, but that’s more of a work style than a supervisory issue.” Laura stated,

... not only was she older, but also was an interim who wasn’t hired to become the director. So that led to some real challenges. Our work styles were very different ... I don’t think she agreed with some of the direction in which I wanted to take our department and I’m not sure about the level of respect that she had for me as a person or as a supervisor, but just in general, also as a person. That sounds awful. I think for her, she would say I was the worst supervisor she’d ever had ... I felt very judged a lot of the time.

The subordinate’s reluctance to accept supervision came up in a few different ways. Matt discussed his experiences of having one older subordinate showing reluctance in receiving his feedback about performance: “[she] takes feedback very personal where she has trouble separating the performance feedback from what she thinks she thinks I’m saying about her personally. So, that can be trying, that can be difficult and we work through that.”

Josh described an older subordinate who routinely went above his head to seek his supervisor’s approval:

One of the issues that we dealt with, I guess, just to be frank, was her wanting to get approval from my supervisor, the vice president, on issues that I think really didn’t need his attention or approval, but she felt like he was a more senior, seasoned leader [and] that she needed to vet everything through him as opposed to trusting me to make decisions.

Amy described a supervisory relationship where she interpreted the older subordinate to refuse to accept supervision purely as a result of Amy's age:

The first time I supervised someone older than me was my first position right out of grad school, and it was horrible ... I had found out after the fact that she had actually applied for my job ... So she automatically kinda hated me. And I was 24 years old; new to supervising period, let alone having this person who could have been my mom. She happened to be kind of patronizing, so that did not help either, and felt that she was fit for the job, so that made it incredibly challenging. She also took on a mother role in the department, so a lot of students went to her for maternal advice, and I did not, especially because she was a subordinate, but that also made the dynamic a little bit more challenging because what a mother would advise is not necessarily what a supervisor would advise. So, I felt like unfortunately we were in conflict a lot...

Emily shared a unique experience of being promoted to supervising staff who used to be her peers in the office:

I think initially everybody thought it was a great idea because "Hey, it's my buddy. I've seen her do great work as a hall director. This is gonna be great." And then when I started to act like a supervisor, that wasn't what they expected.

Sharon shared an experience in which the older subordinate displayed resistance to change as well as a conflicting work style:

She was resistant to a lot of things and had—was very vocal about her resistance. And so, you know, all of which kind of was told to me at the start of my supervision with her. And so I started in April, and I kind of—if I'm being honest—I kind of took a passive-aggressive approach to the start. I was a little intimidated ... right around crunch time, which for me is actually August, for my job, she became very vocal with me about how she was—realistically what she said was that she thought that the program we were working on was going to fail, and that everything was going to go wrong and that she didn't want to be a part of that. And she was very, very flustered. And this was the first time where I'd had kind of any type of experience where I was kind of taken aback ... she raised her voice to me.

Greg shared an experience he described as being contentious:

One [former older subordinate] absolutely was not hearing anything I had to say. We had a very contentious relationship, and I don't ever think he really felt like I [knew what I was doing] ... he was pretty comfortable in challenging me. Or he just would basically—I also felt like he was kind of passive-aggressive or he just ... he would kind of nod when I would talk to him about something and then just wouldn't do it.

The third way a negative experience supervising older subordinates arose was when describing the older subordinate's resistance to change, or longing for things to be the way they once were. Nicole shared,

... she very much remembers a times when... life was better. So, we spend a lot of time unpacking the fact that that's not the institution culture anymore. For example, the very first day that I met with her when I was here in 2006 and I was like, "Tell me a little bit about yourself." Just trying to get to know her, she was like, "I've been in this department since we had one typewriter and shared it and life was better than it is now." So, I think from the start it was very present that the changes that had happened at the institution and our department was not perceived as positive and ... she was not impressed by me to be doing anymore change. Of course, things are going to change, that's what happens as you hire new team members, and new staff, and that kind of thing. Again, I don't know for how much really is about age as it is about wanting things to be a certain way and wanting them not to change. And I think we all desire some consistency in our lives, but I'm having a hard time of kind of couching that for you. But, it is in every interaction that I have with her. I mean, it comes up in every meeting.

Maggie told of her experience in changing the culture of a custodial team:

Right now I have some custodians ... and some maintenance men who work with me who are significantly older than me, and when we do staff development and team development, I always have to do—I have to sell it to them first. "Why are we doing this? Why aren't we just going and doing our jobs?" I have to do a lot of selling and a lot of—I would say culture shifting. Like, "This is why [and] this is how we're gonna work as a team. This is why you are not only responsible for cleaning the bathroom, but you're also responsible for letting us know how things are going in the [residence] halls. We're all responsible for student success, and teaching people the idea of what it means to have a student centered model.

Stories from participants with neutral experiences. Those who fell into the category of having a neutral experience did so because they either identified their supervising experience as being neutral or they simply refrained from noting it was either positive or negative.

Some participants stated or clearly implied their experience as being neutral; not positive and not negative. For instance, Mary stated, "it's interesting because I find it – like I don't find it extremely challenging, but I just find that I have to approach them in a different way." Similarly, Donald stated, "The experience is mostly positive... but we don't really have much in common."

Other participants didn't indicate their supervising experience was positive or negative in any specific manner and were, therefore, coded to have a neutral experience. For instance, Emily referred to a large number of supervisory experiences, some being difficult, others being positive, and did not identify a common take on the experience in a positive or negative way.

Grouping participants into groups of positive, negative, and neutral experiences was helpful for later comparing the emergent themes and participants' individual answers to research questions to whether they had a positive, negative, or neutral experience. This was especially helpful when coding queries were performed, which are described later in the chapter.

Emergent Themes

Although some nodes were created based on emergent themes, some of these themes did not come to fruition in terms of being commonly discussed among participants. Of all the nodes created based on emergent themes, three brought out commonalities among participants: seeing the older subordinate as a mentor, accepting the older subordinate for where they are, and age in relation to professional peers.

Seeing the Older Subordinate as a Mentor

There were no interview questions that asked participants to reflect on if they learn from their older subordinates, what they learn from their older subordinates, who mentored them at work, and so forth. Nonetheless, 12 participants addressed and suggested this concept 31 times. Most participants commented on their older subordinates' years of experience and history at the institution—and/or in the field in general—as an excellent resource and opportunity for them to benefit. Some participants noted this opportunity to learn from older subordinates was conscious and intentional, while others talked about it in hindsight. Matt talked about intentionally capitalizing on these years of experience:

I do know if I take a step back and look at [my younger age] as much as an external view as I can I will try as much as I can to show a level of respect and deference for people who are older than I am, who have been in this field longer than I have, [and] who have on the campus longer than I have.

Josh stated,

I initiated [opportunities to learn from my older subordinate] because I think it helped her to feel less like I was always her boss and I had things to learn from her too ... I really believed that she had expertise that I didn't have and I wanted to learn from her, too.

Evelyn addressed her willingness to be mentored by her older subordinates as intentional; furthermore, she discussed her experience of supervising older staff as being refreshing, noting their increased experience actually seemed to make her older subordinates more confident.

I would say in general it is fantastic to be able to work with people that have so much experience and are so seasoned. There's definitely something different about supervising so many individuals that are older. There's a different level of sort of, I think, confidence and sort of initiation that I get from staff members that is different from some of my previous supervisory experiences prior to this position, which I really enjoy.

Kent said, "I have often thought about that they have way more expertise than me, and how can I make sure that they know that it's an environment where they are free to use that expertise to improve what we're doing."

Some participants noted this opportunity to receive mentorship was something they were aware of in hindsight; something they became aware of as they looked back on the supervisory relationship in reflection. Oliver said, "[their increased experience is] important to me because they are gonna have different angles and different opinions that I might not necessarily have simply because I haven't been there or I'm looking at it differently." Sharon said, "So I actually had to rely on her a lot and she was able to give me a lot of information." Angela said,

... day-to-day the reward is always going to be that history. And I'm a history person. [My older subordinates offer] the historical perspective. You're always going to get some of that information that is really important for you as a supervisor to know. Like, "We've been here, we've done that, we've tried it and this is what happened when we did it."

Laura discussed the mentorship she received from an older subordinate when she was attempting to make changes on campus for which she was not well-prepared politically; in that situation, she was able to learn from her older subordinate. She said,

I think I wanted to make lots of changes in a way that wasn't politically very smart, and I changed for the sake of making change. And so I learned a lot from her about why that might not be a good idea, and so I think from that perspective our relationship was very good, and I think based on her age and my age she felt comfortable giving me feedback.

Accepting the Subordinate for Where They Are

Five participants talked about accepting their older subordinate for where they are; “where they are” is defined as the stage in which the older subordinate is in terms of their professional development. In most instances, this was discussed in terms of the younger supervisor coming to the realization that the mentorship they provide their older subordinate is either different from the mentorship they provide their staff who are their age or younger, or there is not a mentorship relationship between the younger supervisor and the older subordinate in terms of the supervisor acting as mentor. Josh spoke about the concept of accepting his older subordinate for where she was and using that as a starting point:

I think eventually I started to embrace the sort of—and I hate to kind of think about it this way—but not thinking that you're going to retrain someone or change their personality. [For example] sometimes you talk about with a new professional ... you're in a state where you can sort of mold them to a degree and I don't know if that's as much possible when you have someone who has significant life and work experience and bringing that with them to what they do. And your ability to sort of push them to change is not as much there. I think eventually I sort of took what I thought to be her strengths and tried to put her in a position to exercise those and not try to think I was going to somehow get her to be better at resource management on a small campus and understanding what kind of budgetary requests was reasonable. I still had to do that to some degree, but not the way I would kind of sit down and coach a new person because I kind of just said that's not going to be possible probably because she's set in her ways, but there's some things I can sacrifice on.

Kent talked about thinking about how he could provide development to an older, experienced subordinate intentionally, “I'm thinking, ‘How do I talk to somebody who's been doing this for

25 or 30 years, about changing things that they've done for that long at this point in their career?
How do I effectively have that conversation?"

Michael stated, quite simply, he just stays out of their way: "... most of the time I feel like I stay out of their way more than I supervise them ...". Sharon indicated that while she does not necessarily opt out of providing supervision, she does find herself with a similar complacent attitude. She stated, "quite honestly I would say she's probably at a point where what I say right now isn't really going to change how she functions in that way anyway."

Age in Relation to Professional Peers

Six participants reflected on having a title/role that was beyond their level of years of experience; 13 identified as having a role/title that was equivalent with their years of experience and the organizational norm. These six (Amy, Carl, Carolyn, Evelyn, Josh, and Oliver) participants were deemed to have a title/role that was beyond their level of years of experience because they self-identified as such. Some examples of this self-identification included: "Even this morning I was in a meeting I was called a young professional by a [fellow] dean" (Nicole); "I'm very often the youngest or among the youngest people in the room. It's not very common for someone to be where I am as young as I am..." (Josh); "[When I introduce myself to colleagues] I may not go into as much detail about how many years I've actually been in this field because it's so drastically different than some of the people around the table" (Evelyn); "...most of the people who have my role tend to be older than me" (Maggie); "...on our leadership teams of the other deans in our division, I'm the youngest dean by probably at least ten years" (Carl); and

... when I have to go to a Dean's Council and the academic deans are all in their 50s and 60s, my dress may be a little bit different or a little more conservative and even sometimes how I wear my hair... [it] is very much coming over to the side not, not spiky. (Steve)

These experiences were noteworthy because it became apparent that when these younger supervisors felt insecure and/or aware of their younger age it was more likely because they were younger than their peers rather than because they were younger than the men and women they supervised. These experiences were coded in the node titled Age in Relation to Peers. Oliver said,

I'm very aware that I'm young to be an associate dean. Period ... Part of it is a lot of folks who have been here for quite some time still call me Ollie even though I haven't gone by Ollie probably like in 15 years, but they knew me as a student [so they still call me that].

Carolyn stated,

... when we have division wide director's meetings, I am the youngest person in the room by about ten years. So I feel like I—my ability, my contributions, do have to make up for that because I do think people look at me like, "Oh, she's young. She may not know or she doesn't have a lot of experience or" so I think other people have more of an issue than my own staff.

Sharon said, "[my younger age is] much more apparent at those tables" when she spoke about staff meetings with her fellow directors.

Generational Differences in the Intergenerational Dyad

Table 3 reflected several career-related topics where generations differ in approach and preference including preferred leadership styles, perceptions of leadership, work ethic, ideas about change, and value of work. Interviews in this study illustrated how these generational differences are illustrated in participants' day to day work.

Preferred leadership style. Table 3 indicates Veterans prefer a simple, directive, and clear leadership style while Baby Boomers prefer a leadership style that is collegial, cooperative, and consensual. Nicole described her older subordinates, one Veteran and one Baby Boomer, in the following way:

... one is very relational, meaning very interested in the relationships, not interested in end product. And then the other one is very interested in having a checklist and me being very descriptive as a supervisor about, “I need you to do this, and this, and this, and then this, and then this.” So, one kind of needs high structure and then the other needs high relationship.

Donald stated in reference to his Baby Boomer staff member, “she likes ... feedback; she responds well to improvement feedback—like, can you do it this way or this is unacceptable.” He further stated his subordinate values his leadership most because he supports her; “I think what she values most from me is that she knows I am in her corner ... not that I don’t assign her tasks and deadlines, but I try to really maintain a relationship.” Evelyn also said her Baby Boomer subordinates valued her most when she was collegial and cooperative: “... they respect me and they trust me to be a sounding board. I’ve been able to establish rapport with them and respect with them where they’re able to see that I can be thoughtful.”

Greg said he perceived his Baby Boomer subordinates liked working with him because he was collegial, as well. He said,

I think they see me as somebody they can trust, that they’re for the most part willing to grow in a certain area or take a recommendation and try to run with it and test it out and process why it does or does not work for them. I think they think I’m fair.

Josh indicated his older subordinate seemed to want more directive supervision and has had to adjust to his style of giving more freedom in decisions making. He said,

I think she felt like for whatever reason that it always had to be vetted by your supervisor or also again the person above you before you could really do anything and to some degree I think things are changing in the workplace where lots of professionals are being given a lot more latitude within their scope of responsibility to do the things that they want to...

Perceptions of leadership. Table 3 indicates Veterans’ believe leadership is earned through longevity. They believe longevity earns promotion; people have earned their way to the top and deserve respect once they are there. Baby Boomers also perceive leadership to be earned;

those who perform at the highest level ought to be the ones who are promoted. Only Maggie specifically discussed this concept of leadership being earned.

Seniority is a big thing that my staff has sort of talked to me about. “Well, that person doesn’t have seniority, so why did they get that privilege?” ... I’ve had to have staff teach me, “What does the concept of pay your dues mean? What does that mean? What does that mean to you?” “How do you know that someone has paid their dues?”

When it came to how the younger supervisors perceived their older subordinate to accept their supervision, however, it appeared that those who reported their older subordinates most readily accepted their leadership were those who described themselves as having a relationship-based, collaborative, and communicative work style of one form or another.

Kent said, “[my older subordinate] views me very positively. He has verbalized that a lot of times. Like where ... enough where it’s almost odd how much he appreciates me as a supervisor.” When he described his own work style, Kent said,

... what I’m trying to do is to get people into positions and roles where they are both gaining a lot of energy from what they’re doing, continuing to grow and be expanded in their skill set or interest area, getting them the resources they need, asking questions, and giving them enough rope where they can be creative and try new things.

Michael stated his older subordinates accept his supervision readily: “the older folks that I supervise, they seem to take it pretty good and again part of that might be the relationship that we’ve built up over the years of working with each other.” He also stated his work style is “very collaborative.” He stated, “I think it’s important to be collaborative ... I’m a strong believer in a very collaborative staff. We communicate with each other. We talk with each other when there’s big projects going on.”

Laura had a particularly poor experience supervising an older worker; she reported lots of tension. She stated, “I felt very judged a lot of the time.” She provided several examples of being

called out by her older subordinate in a negative way. When describing her own work style, Laura stated, “I don’t have tolerance for back talk.”

Nicole was another supervisor who told stories that indicated her staff may not enjoy working with or for her. In terms of her staff accepting her supervision, she stated,

... some people who just don’t know how to receive constructive feedback... They would like for me to be all excited that they came to work today, they would really like for me to praise every single thing that they do and never find fault in anything that they do.

When asked to describe her own work style, Nicole stated,

... my leadership style and my supervision style is to be very transparent and very direct and that doesn’t work for everybody, but it is—authenticity is my style. I think the team that I work with if you ask them would say, “You always know where you stand with [Nicole].”

Work ethic. Table 3 indicates Veterans believe working hard is a moral obligation and career is a long term commitment. It also indicates Baby Boomers view working hard as strongly valued and a career *may* be a long term commitment. Individual ownership at work is essential for Baby Boomers. Participants’ stories largely support these themes; in general, these younger supervisors described their older subordinates to be value driven and committed when asked to describe their subordinates’ work ethic. Nicole stated,

[My older subordinates] are more committed to their work than anybody else [on the staff] ... I think the older team members are work value driven ... [they] from a work ethic standpoint will work on the things for which they believe are the most important first and our younger team members will work on the things that have the soonest deadline.

Donald said, “She is a hard worker, I think most people would describe her as work horse. I have heard people describe her that way before. She is pretty go go go throughout the day.” Evelyn stated, “[my older subordinates] have great work ethic. I would say their work ethic is equal to, just the same as those that are younger on my staff. They’re dedicated. They’re passionate. They

care a lot about the people.” Amy sated, “I would say from a work ethic standpoint individually, they’ve all had decent work ethics.” Emily said,

those folks who are older than me and who have worked at the institution I would say for more than five years their work ethics is to be really high. You know they are there. They show up for things. They are on time. They do their work.

Laura indicated the lack of days off taken was a way her older subordinate showed commitment to the job: “that was very important to her—being in her office on time, every day, really never taking sick days or wellness days, being very regimented about taking any vacation days.” Angela compared the work ethic of her older subordinates to those she supervised who are her age or younger:

[Their] work ethic is really commendable and I think—I don’t even think someone from my own generation—and I can say that again for myself—that we’re there yet. I don’t think so. These folks are committed ... there’s a work ethic that I’m getting out of all of this with them that I haven’t gotten out of other people, not even my own generation.

Another commonality participants shared when asked to describe the work ethic of their older subordinate(s) was the subordinates’ increased likelihood to not put in more hours than was necessary to get the job done. Some described this as the older subordinates having a better work/life balance. Steve stated this concept very directly: “[My older subordinates have] better work life balance. Less likely to work more than 40 hours.” Josh said, “I think that the [work] ethic was good, but there was definitely ... like, I leave at 5:00 kind of mentality ... at the stroke of 5:00 she was always gone.” Amy stated, “Some of my older staff are more likely to leave when work [when] the work day is done, but ... there’s no written or unwritten expectation that they stay longer than that.” Emily said, “they show up and they do the basic function of their job and they go home ... the one commonality is they show up, they do their job, and they leave.”

Ideas about change. Table 3 indicates the Veterans prefer gradual change with intention and believe it should be initiated from the top while Baby Boomers believe change can be

controlled and demanded. The literature does not indicate that members of the Baby Boomer or Veteran generation are more adverse to change than those who are members of Generation X or the Millennial generation; nonetheless, many participants indicated their older subordinates were resistant to change in their workplace. Nicole stated,

I think from the jump it was very present that the changes that had happened at the institution and our department were not perceived as positive and so as a young whippersnapper coming in she was not impressed by me to be doing anymore change.

Carl stated, “I think they were just sort of stuck in this rut of, ‘This is what we’re gonna do and this is how it’s gonna look.’ But it didn’t have to be that way.” Carolyn said change has been more difficult for her older staff than for her younger staff, “We were behind the times on some things. So there had to be some pretty immediate changes. I would say for the older staff members that’s been a little bit more difficult.” Laura discussed having to do more coaxing in order to get an appropriate amount of buy-in,

I think she felt like if it isn’t broke why are we fixing it. So [she’d ask] “The program has been working well, why do we—why would we—to what benefit is there to making these changes?” And so she really needed to be convinced of the benefit.

Sharon shared how her older subordinate’s resistance to change caused conflict between them, “She was resistant to a lot of things and had—was very vocal about her resistance.” Angela also noted conflict arising as a result of the older subordinate’s resistance to change, “The challenges will always be the pushback. The challenges will always be the questions of ‘really and truly is that what we want to do?’” Greg did not note conflict specifically, but indicated that his older subordinate’s resistance was troublesome to him as the supervisor, “I think she, to some degree, is trapped in how things used to be versus how they are.”

Value of work. Table 3 indicates that work is the top priority for members of the Veteran generation and it is one of the top priorities for Baby Boomers, while the Millennials and

members of Generation X tend to be the workers who prioritize family and leisure over work. When the concept of value of work arose, participants actually more often noted their older workers were the ones who illustrated a better work/life balance than their staff who were members of the Millennial generation or Generation X.

Several participants discussed their older subordinates having clear boundaries when it came to making time for work and making time for life outside of work—for the most part, life outside of work meant time with family (children, spouses, partners). Donald stated,

[My older subordinate] has a family, she is not a person who stays late. One of her two kids has developmental disabilities. She does come in earlier than other people, but she leaves a little earlier. During peak times she comes in extra to put in extra time. Week to week, day to day, she doesn't typically put in more than 8 hours. But she will during busy times of the year.

Steve said, “[My older subordinates have a] Better work life balance. [They are] Less likely to work more than 40 hours.” Amy said, “my older staff are more likely to leave when work—the work day is done...”

Not all discussed life outside of work as being defined by familial responsibilities. Some older staff do not have spouses, partners or children; Carolyn addressed this specifically:

... sometimes I feel like the older staff that don't have a partner or children, they feel like they have to stay here longer or they feel like they need ... an excuse to leave, which I talk to them about often. [I tell them,] “Just because you don't have a dependent child doesn't mean that you should be here consistently until 7:00 or 8:00 at night.” So I feel like their presence is big, big thing for them. Being around often is how they show their commitment. I don't necessarily agree with that's the best way to show their commitment, but I feel like that's just this old school nature of the old student affairs, people spending all—18 hours a day here.

While many participants described older subordinates as not putting in the same large number of hours their staff who are their age or younger put in, there was consensus that older staff valued the work they did and were highly committed to their job, department, institution, and so forth. Nicole stated,

I think that the team members that I work with that are older than me probably are more committed to their work than anybody else ... [they work] from a work ethic standpoint will work on the things for which they believe are the most important first.

Evelyn said,

They're dedicated. They're passionate. They care a lot about the people ... In our office they really are sort of some of the first people to step in and be like, "Let me help you with that project. Let me take that workshop over for you. Don't worry about it, you just go take care of what you need to take care, and we will all be in the office to help you with that." They're some of the first to step in to do that.

Emily said, "... they are there. They show up for things. They are on time. They do their work."

Mary stated,

[My older subordinates illustrate both] commitment and loyalty. And like I said earlier ... they notice every little thing because they want it to be a really welcoming comfortable place for students. So not only in their classroom environment but if there's any problems that arise or even positive things, they'll share those as well. But they're always looking to make it better. And they're all like that.

Angela said,

... these folks are committed. You know, you don't stay in an area and an arena that is this fast-paced that demands this much of your time beyond the fact of fear, yeah, but the other piece in terms of commitment, there's a work ethic that I'm getting out of all of this with them that I haven't gotten out of other people, not even my own generation.

The Role of Gender in the Intergenerational Dyad

Participants included nine men and ten women. Of the ten women, five (Amy, Angela, Carolyn, Maggie, and Sharon) described having a negative experience supervising older subordinates and five (Emily, Evelyn, Nicole, Mary, and Laura) described having a neutral experience; indicating no overarching negative or positive interactions. None described having a positive experience supervising older subordinates. Of the nine men, two (Carl and Josh) described a negative experience, four (Donald, Greg, Kent, and Matt) described a neutral experience, and three (Michael, Oliver, and Steve) reported a positive experience. Among those who reported having negative experiences, there were no noted commonalities regarding the

gender of the older the older subordinate or whether the gender of the subordinate was the same or different from the gender of the younger supervisor.

Answering the Research Questions

In this section, the five research questions initially posed in chapter one were answered:

1. What are the lived experiences of younger supervisors in higher education settings in terms of supervising older subordinates?
 - a. How do younger supervisors perceive their older subordinates' respect for their supervisory role?
 - b. How do younger supervisors perceive their older subordinates' acceptance of being supervised by younger supervisors?
2. How do younger supervisors perceive themselves to be treated by older subordinates because of their age?
3. How do younger supervisors perceive older subordinates' potential performance and does the older subordinates' actual performance prove or disprove those perceptions?
4. How do younger supervisors perceive the older subordinates' work styles?
5. How do younger supervisors perceive the older subordinates' work ethic?

While all questions were answered in each interview, each question was not specifically asked of each participant, as is not the intent of research questions. For example, the researcher may have asked, “Tell me about your experiences supervising older subordinates” (Interview Question 1) In their response, the participant addressed how they believe their older subordinates accept supervision from them (Interview Question 9); the researcher later asked Question 9 again if the information provided was sufficient.

What are the Lived Experiences of Younger Supervisors in Higher Education Settings in Terms of Supervising Older Subordinates?

As illustrated in Appendix A: Interview Questions, the answer to this research question was informed by participants' responses to almost every interview question, but specifically questions 1 – 3 and 8 - 11. This question was answered by viewing the collective answers to all other questions and emergent themes along with the essence of the intergenerational dyad, indicated below. Additionally, the answer to this question can be interpreted by reviewing the emergent themes, especially the three written about in most depth: seeing the older subordinate as a mentor, accepting the older subordinate for where they are, and age in relation to professional peers.

In regard to seeing the older subordinate as a mentor, the commonalities among participants included ideas that the older subordinate had something to offer the younger supervisor in terms of mentorship and guidance, professionally. For example, Josh stated, “I think it helped her to feel less like I was always her boss and I had things to learn from her too.”

In regard to accepting the older subordinate for where they are, the general themes among participants' responses referred to – not necessarily in a negative way – their perception that they may not be able to mold their older subordinates in the same way they may be able to mold and develop their subordinates who are their age or younger. For example, Josh stated, “I think eventually I started to embrace the sort of – and I hate to kind of think about it this way, but not thinking that you're going to retrain someone or change their personality.”

The theme of the younger supervisor's age in relation to their professional peers is, overall, the essence of the phenomenon: the fact that the younger supervisor is younger than their professional peers is actually a more apparent age difference than the fact they are younger than

those they supervisor. Nicole stated, “I can become very quickly aware of my age when our VP will say, “Well, young lady,” or, “For the youngster in the room...”

How do Younger Supervisors Perceive Their Older Subordinates’ Respect for Their Supervisory Role?

The answer to this research question was informed by participants’ responses to interview questions 3 and 8 - 9. Few participants indicated they perceived a direct level of disrespect from their older subordinates. Each Laura, Maggie, and Sharon shared an experience when an older subordinate made a direct statement to them, as the younger supervisor, that indicated, “you’re not a good a supervisor” and/or “I do not like working with you.” Laura stated, “...she sent me a pretty pointed email about how inappropriate [I] was.” Maggie said, “...[during] one of our first staff meetings they said, “You don't hold people accountable.” Sharon said, “...she kind of came down really hard on me right before like a big project of ours was about to take off, a big training... she raised her voice to me.”

These examples of disrespect were exceptions and it is difficult to know if they were ; overall, participants reported their older subordinates as being respectful to them in their supervisory role. While many participants noted they sometimes perceived their older subordinates to doubt their authority as supervisor because of their younger age, only a few participants noted a subordinate blatantly disrespecting them and none of the three examples had anything directly to do with the participant being younger than the subordinate.

For example, Emily stated that when she was younger and a newer supervisor, she perceived her older subordinates to treat her less like a boss.

... the feelings I got from him and even some of the comments, and we processed it out quite a bit over that year is that he kind of looked at me as this kid who had no experience, and he had all this experience behind him. And so there was a certain amount

of – what’s the word I’m looking for? He was hesitant, let’s say, to really seeing me as a supervisor and early on would jump over me to my boss.

Carolyn reported a similar experience with her older subordinate giving her less trust and authority as a result of her younger age.

[My younger age comes up] a lot with other employees who may be 40 or 42 and in a program coordinator level position. [They’ll say things like], “How are you younger than me and in a director level role,” and “That doesn’t make sense...”

How do Younger Supervisors Perceive Their Older Subordinates’ Acceptance of Being Supervised by Younger Supervisors?

The answer to this research question was informed by participants’ responses to interview questions 3 and 8 - 9. When it came to how the younger supervisors perceived their older subordinate to accept their supervision, it appeared that those who reported their older subordinates to most readily accept their leadership were those who described themselves as having a relationship-based, collaborative, and communicative work style of one form or another.

Kent said, “[my older subordinate] views me very positively. He has verbalized that a lot of times. Like where—enough where it’s almost odd how much he appreciates me as a supervisor.” When he described his own work style, Kent said,

... what I’m trying to do is to get people into positions and roles where they are both gaining a lot of energy from what they’re doing, continuing to grow and be expanded in their skill set or interest area, getting them the resources they need, asking questions, and giving them enough rope where they can be creative and try new things.

Kent also indicated he is more thoughtful about giving supervision and feedback to his older subordinates than those who are his age or younger and he perceives his older subordinates to accept his supervision readily.

... it's not so much telling him, but having a conversation with him that my role is more passive, but not trying to be condescending in any way. I think there's a sense of, "How do I avoid being condescending to people who have a lot of experience and perspective?" And I don't think I actively think about that nearly as much with younger professionals.

Michael stated his older subordinates accept his supervision readily: "the older folks that I supervise they seem to take it pretty good and again part of that might be the relationship that we've built up over the years of working with each other." He also stated his work style is "very collaborative." He stated, "I think it's important to be collaborative ... I'm a strong believer in a very collaborative staff. We communicate with each other. We talk with each other when there's big projects going on."

When asked about his experiences assessing performance of older subordinates, Donald stated,

I try to give feedback a lot. I am definitely a high feedback manager and there is considerable turmoil in [one of my older subordinate's] portfolio and she sometimes needs me to give her positive feedback regularly. Part of the basis of our relationship is the encouragement I have provided. She has difficulty standing up for herself and I provide her with encouragement. I think she likes that feedback she responds well to improvement feedback...

When asked to describe his work style, Donald described himself as first and foremost decisive. Then he stated, "I develop relationships individually but also as a team."

Laura was a participant who had a particularly poor experience supervising an older worker; she reported lots of tension. She stated, "I felt very judged a lot of the time." And provided several examples of being called out by her older subordinate in a negative way. She went as far to plainly indicate that her older subordinate did not like working with her, "I think for her, she would say I was the worst supervisor [she'd] ever had." When describing her own work style, Laura stated, "I don't have tolerance for back talk." Nicole was another supervisor

who told stories that indicated her staff may not enjoy working with or for her. In terms of her staff accepting her supervision, she stated,

...some people who just don't know how to receive constructive feedback... They would like for me to be all excited that they came to work today, they would really like for me to praise every single thing that they do and never find fault in anything that they do.

When asked to describe her own work style, Nicole stated,

... my leadership style and my supervision style is to be very transparent and very direct and that doesn't work for everybody, but it is— authenticity is my style. I think the team that I work with if you ask them would say, "You always know where you stand with [Nicole]."

In response to question three regarding her experiences assessing the performance of her older subordinates, Nicole stated, "the [older] team member is like, 'Who does she think she is? Why would she not understand this is just how I do things and I shouldn't have to adjust my style to meet your style?'"

How do Younger Supervisors Perceive Themselves to be Treated by Older Subordinates Because of Their Age?

The answer to this research question was informed by participants' responses to interview questions 1 -3, 5, and 7 - 11. No participants indicated they believed they were treated better or were more respected because of their younger age; universally, participants either indicated their younger age felt like a non-issue or it was apparent in a negative way and they were treated negatively because of it.

Of those who indicated they perceived themselves to be treated negatively because of their younger age, most indicated the treatment was implied rather than direct. In other words, most participants reported they felt negative tones or passive-aggressive attitudes that were directed at their younger age. Josh indicated while his older subordinate didn't blatantly treat him poorly because he was younger than she, it was implied.

It's not like she ever said that like, "I think you're too young to have your job or don't you think you're not experienced enough to be making these decisions," but I think the subtext was kind of there. These were not like big, big, high level decisions that we're talking about where everything seemed like it needed to be run through my supervisor when I think had we been the same age that might not have happened.

Maggie indicated one of her older staff members treated her negatively as a result, from what she could tell, of her younger age.

I noticed that it was playing out when she kept bringing up my age, that she was old enough to be my mother, or that it was hard for her to have somebody who was younger than her son to be giving her evaluate – a less than satisfactory performance evaluation. Then I started to recognize that that dynamic was significant for her, even though it wasn't one that I had been conscious of in the past.

Emily stated that when she was younger and a newer supervisor, she perceived her older subordinates to treat her less like a boss.

... the feelings I got from him and even some of the comments, and we processed it out quite a bit over that year is that he kind of looked at me as this kid who had no experience, and he had all this experience behind him. And so there was a certain amount of – what's the word I'm looking for? He was hesitant, let's say, to really seeing me as a supervisor and early on would jump over me to my boss.

Carolyn reported a similar experience with her older subordinate giving her less trust and authority as a result of her younger age.

[My younger age comes up] a lot with other employees who may be 40 or 42 and in a program coordinator level position. [They'll say things like], "How are you younger than me and in a director level role," and "That doesn't make sense..."

Sharon, Greg, and Angela noted similar situations: "I think that in the beginning [my older subordinate] really kind of looked at me like, "You're young and don't know what you're doing" (Sharon); "I think his perspective always was, "What would you know? You're much younger than me" (Greg); "I always believe that they feel that, "That's nice, that's sweet, but she still doesn't know everything" (Angela).

Matt indicated he perceived himself to be treated differently because of his younger age earlier in his career, but that treatment has since subsided.

... possibly at the beginning of my tenure here [my younger age] was more of an issue. I would recognize that my age was—if I'm 10 to 20 years younger than someone I'm supervising that I recognize that, that that is not necessarily a negative issue, but it's an issue none the less. I think since I've been on this campus now for seven years and the vast majority of the people who I supervise have been here equally as long, if not longer, I don't think that happens anymore.

Donald stated he does not perceive his older subordinate to treat him differently because he is younger than she is.

Day to day I would say no. [My younger age is] not something I think about and it's not something she brings up. she doesn't say things like, wait until you grow up, like other older people sometimes do, I am grateful for that.

How do Younger Supervisors Perceive Older Subordinates' Potential Performance and Does the Older Subordinates' Actual Performance Prove or Disprove Those Perceptions?

The answer to this research question was informed by participants' responses to Interview Question 3. Overall, participants reported expecting their older subordinates to perform well, or as well as any other staff member. No participant indicated they expected an older subordinate to perform worse, better, or differently, than other staff as a result of their older age. Some participants did note some differences in the performance of their older subordinates, although it was never mentioned as something they anticipated or expected to happen.

One reoccurring theme, however, was the older subordinates working slower, thinking more slowly, or producing results at a slower pace than was expected. For example:

- “[One of my two older subordinates] accomplishes things at a much slower pace than I would imagine, than I would expect someone who's at this point in his career” (Kent).

- “I think she is working hard. Sometimes I think she is not working as smart as she could be...” (Donald).
- “the [older] team members that I work with that are older than me probably are more committed to their work than anybody else, but yet they are the lowest producers” (Nicole).

How do Younger Supervisors Perceive the Older Subordinates’ Work Styles?

The answer to this research question was informed by participants’ responses to Interview Question 5. Overall, few commonalities were found among participants’ responses regarding their impressions of their older subordinates’ work styles. Some indicated their older subordinates demonstrated a high attention to detail, others described a low commitment to attention to detail. Some described their older subordinates as being organized, others reported their older subordinates as working with a more chaotic style. Some described their older subordinates as being strong multi-taskers, others indicated they perceived their older subordinates as being able to only focus on one task at a time.

Because of these varied responses, the researcher cannot report that managers who supervise staff ten or more years older than them perceive their older subordinates as having work styles similar to one another. On the contrary, participants reported vast differences in their work styles. It seems as though work styles vary individual to individual and there were no overall commonalities among Veteran and Baby Boomer workers.

How do Younger Supervisors Perceive the Older Subordinates’ Work Ethic?

The answer to this research question was informed by participants’ responses to Interview Question 7. Overall, participants indicated they perceive their older subordinates’ work ethics as being strong:

- “For the most part, [their work ethics are] pretty good... I can think of one situation where someone has said, “I just don’t want to do that and I’m not going to do it.” Other than that everyone is pretty good.” (Matt)
- “I think that the team members that I work with that are older than me probably are more committed to their work than anybody else... their commitment to their work and their value that they find in their work, I think is very high.” (Nicole)
- “She is a hard worker, I think most people would describe her as work horse. I have heard people describe her that way before. She is pretty go go go throughout the day.” (Donald)
- “They have great work ethic ... They’re dedicated. They’re passionate. They care a lot about the people.” (Evelyn)
- “I would say from a work ethic standpoint individually, they’ve all had decent work ethics.” (Amy)
- “But if they ... have worked at the institution—I would say—for more than five years, their work ethics is to be really high. You know, they are there. They show up for things. They are on time. They do their work” (Emily)
- “These folks are committed ... but the other piece in terms of commitment, there’s a work ethic that I’m getting out of all of this with them that I haven’t gotten out of other people.” (Angela)

Only Carl indicated his older subordinates had a low or poor work ethic. He described this subordinate as being “jaded;” it appeared that the worker was an underperformer rather than not having a strong work ethic. He said, “[she seems] pretty burnt out, and I think part of it is

because this person has been here for almost five years, that they have not gotten positive feedback about their growth in the organization.”

Several participants did criticize their older subordinates’ lack of innovation or creativity, more so than not being a hard worker or not being committed to the job or the institution.

Maggie stated,

... the idea of being innovative and creative is a concept that particularly [I] had to push a little bit ... [I’ve had staff say,] “that’s not really in my job description so why are we doing it? I was hired for this person, and I’m not interested in wearing multiple hats. Did you hire me to be a custodian, or did you hire me to be a cheerleader?” [and I respond,] “Well, I hired you to be both. That’s part of working in housing.”

The Essence of The Intergenerational Dyad

The themes that emerged from the analysis of the participants’ stories and voices provide an essence of the experience of managers in the field of student affairs in higher education who supervise staff who are ten or more years older than they. This essence can be summed up in the following statement:

In my professional and supervisory role, I am most aware of and insecure about my younger age when I am among my professional peers than when I am acting as a supervisor to my older subordinates.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter contains three sections. The first, Conclusions, summarizes the study's findings. The second section, Implications, suggests what the study's finding might mean for today's organizations. The third section, Recommendations for Research, gives suggestions and recommendations for further research.

Conclusions

The stories and voices of 19 professionals in the field of student affairs in higher education provided insights to the phenomenon of the intergenerational dyad. A careful and extensive search of the existing literature did not reveal any prior research on this dyad. Therefore, the researcher was not able to compare findings to prior research.

Based on the findings of this research, the following conclusions were made about the younger supervisor and the intergenerational dyad: Age was more apparent to younger supervisors when they were younger than their professional peers than when they were younger than their subordinates; Age was more apparent to younger supervisors when they had a magnified title than when they were younger than their subordinates; Younger supervisors found mentorship in their older subordinates; and Younger supervisors who were women noted having more negative experiences supervising subordinates who were older than they were than younger supervisors who were men.

Age was More Apparent to Younger Supervisors When They were Younger Than Their Professional Peers Than When They were Younger Than Their Subordinates.

Although many participants indicated their younger age was apparent to them in their supervisory role, it was more common for them to indicate it was even more apparent to them

when they were younger than, or the youngest of, their organizational peers, such as the youngest dean, or the youngest director at division meetings.

It is possible that younger workers' tendency to be more open to change and new ideas in comparison to their older colleagues may contribute to this concept. Lorence and Mortimer (1985) stated, "there is a highly formative stage in young adulthood, after which time the person becomes more resistant to environmental pressures to change." Some participants in this study indicated their older colleagues and subordinates were more resistant to change than they were themselves. Members of the Veteran generation tend to prefer gradual change initiated by a formal leader or boss while younger colleagues, including Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials are more likely to push the envelope and demand change, sometimes on their own terms (Patterson, 2007). If it is true that a worker becomes more resistant to change as they age, it makes sense that workers who are younger than, or the youngest among, their professional colleagues would find their age to be apparent.

While the literature does not indicate that members of the Baby Boomer or Veteran generation are more adverse to change than those who are members of Generation X or the Millennial generation; nonetheless, many participants indicated their older subordinates were resistant to change in their workplace. Nicole stated,

I think from the jump it was very present that the changes that had happened at the institution and our department were not perceived as positive and so as a young whippersnapper coming in she was not impressed by me to be doing anymore change.

Sharon shared how her older subordinate's resistance to change caused conflict between them, "She was resistant to a lot of things and had—was very vocal about her resistance."

Angela also noted conflict arising as a result of the older subordinate's resistance to change,

“The challenges will always be the pushback. The challenges will always be the questions of ‘really and truly is that what we want to do?’”

Among those they supervise who are older, younger supervisors may not find the same level of resistance due to the fact they hold some level of power in that supervisory relationship. However, among their professional peers, that same type of power relationship doesn’t exist, and perhaps shifts toward the older colleague, therefore putting the younger supervisor in a more submissive role, due to their younger age. A subordinate may not view their supervisor as being a leader, but nonetheless the supervisor wields some level of power over the subordinate (Farmer, and Aquinis, 2005). However when the younger supervisor is the youngest among his or her professional peers, that ownership of power often shifts onto those in the room with seniority in terms of age and years’ experience.

Age was More Apparent to Younger Supervisors When They Had a Magnified Title Than When They were Younger Than their Subordinates.

Those who identified as having a title/role that was beyond their level of years of experience more commonly noted their younger age was apparent to them. This closely relates to the first conclusion noted above. It is common for a worker who is younger among their professional peers to have a magnified title; in fact, that magnified title is often times what makes them the youngest among the team or group.

Using Farmer’s and Aguinis’s (2005) definition of power (the ability or potential to influence others), power is based on resource dependency because it originates from the idea that one person has something another person wants or needs (Farmer & Aguinis). In the case of a worker having a magnified title, as being the youngest or one of the youngest on a leadership team as a result of that magnified title, it is often assumed the older colleagues hold the power as

they are often the ones with greater number years of experiences and possibly are better able to access resources and information in the workplace.

Some younger supervisors are younger than their subordinates mainly due to the fact they have a magnified title, or at least that is the perception of the older subordinates and/or their older professional peers. This can come with second guessing of one's own skills, abilities, and thoughts regarding whether or not they are qualified for their role, in other words, their younger age is apparent, and more apparent in the cases of magnified title. For example, Evelyn stated,

there's absolutely times where it's intimidating, and I think about how many people I sort of have on my teams and the fact that I am so much younger than a lot of them is a little intimidating and it's hard to sometimes wrap my head around how could they have possibly given me this position? How could I possibly be doing what it is I'm doing right now? And to kind of have to remind myself that it's not about age, and it's not about literally numbers of years, and kind of things like that.

Younger Supervisors Found Mentorship in Their Older Subordinates.

Most participants commented on placing value on the older subordinate's years of experience in the field and/or working at the institution and being appreciative of their own opportunity to use that knowledge and experience as a reason to look up to their subordinate and see them as a mentor in some way. Most participants commented on placing value on the older subordinate's years of experience in the field and/or working at the institution and using that knowledge and experience as a reason to see their subordinate as a mentor. Josh stated, "I really believed that she had expertise that I didn't have and I wanted to learn from her too." Steve stated, "I see [their] knowledge and I really respect that and I am so thankful they can share that with us."

This is congruent with what research indicates about the concept of mentoring in the workplace. Mentoring is "about sharing knowledge that has been built from within, tailor-made to the history, challenges, people and culture of the organization" (Willems & Smet, 2007, p.

108) and it's nothing new to indicate that older workers provide mentorship to their younger colleagues. It may be a unique, however, to indicate that this relationship occurs even when that younger colleague is the worker's supervisory rather than their professional peer or their own subordinate.

Younger Supervisors Who Were Women Noted Having More Negative Experiences Supervising Subordinates Who Were Older Than They Were Than Younger Supervisors Who Were Men.

Not enough information was collected to speculate the reason for this phenomenon but it was an evident conclusion among the participants of this study. Additionally, among the women who reported having more negative experiences in their roles supervising subordinates who were ten or more years older than they were, there were not commonalities regarding the genders of the older subordinate.

The concept of women being more likely to have negative experiences in supervision than their men counterparts is not new information in the literature; indicating that women, as younger supervisors, noted having more negative experiences than men is consistent with what the literature about supervision tells us. Women in supervisory positions are more likely to experience workplace sexual harassment than those in rank-and-file positions, according to McLaughlin, Uggena, and Blackstone (2012).

Implications

Although the findings of this study are limited to how the group of 19 men and women who participated in the study, the participants' stories and voices provide insight and value for organizations that employ a multigenerational workforce.

Implications for Organizations

All college and university leadership, especially those working in divisions of student affairs, need to be aware of their responsibilities to support younger supervisors. The “ability to understand, learn, and effectively leverage multigenerational diversity will be necessary for organizations now and in the future to build and maintain high performance systems” (Kabacoff & Stoffey, 2001, p. 2). It is of paramount concern that college and university administrators take the time to understand the benefits and synergy that can result from well-trained supervisors of all ages, especially those who are new to supervision and/or are young professionals such as Carl, Evelyn, and Sharon were. Leadership is not a practice exclusively reserved for the older and the most experienced workers; top management teams increasingly represent all four generations. As a result, the intergenerational dyad is more common.

Training for supervisors. Leadership development is something that should be a high priority for senior administrators and leaders in divisions of student affairs. All supervisors, especially those who are young professionals and/or new to supervision should receive supervision training from their employer/organization. Many of the participants in this study earned master’s degrees in student affairs administration, higher education administration, college personnel administration, or a similar discipline. For reasons unknown to the author, it is common for these types of programs not to include courses on the topics of supervision and management. While these programs are created to prepare professionals to enter the field rather than prepare them for a mid- to senior-level position in the field, the researcher, nonetheless, believed this is a missed opportunity. For one, not all students in these types of masters level graduate programs are traditionally aged young professionals; although uncommon, some may already have some, and sometimes significant, work experience in the field of student affairs in

higher education before they begin pursuing a graduate degree. A second reason the researcher believes this lack of management training is a missed opportunity is because even when the program graduate is a new professional entering the field for the first time, it is not uncommon for that individual to have supervisory responsibilities in their first role out of graduate school. While many student affairs professionals' first supervisory experiences are with undergraduate and graduate students, it is not uncommon for a first supervising experience to include professional staff or support staff. A number of participants in this study discussed and reflected on supervisory relationships that occurred within their first professional role out of graduate school, in fact.

Some participants noted this lack of training specifically. Josh mentioned this lack of training specifically,

I know in my graduate program don't ever talk about that model may work in the context of a younger professional, but does that really matter and is it the right way to frame your relationship with someone who's older than you are and has experienced a lot more.

Amy talked about her first time supervising an older subordinate as a young professional (24 years old), "[I was] new to supervising period, let alone having this person who could have been my mom." The task of training leaders and managers is not something that should be taken lightly. Michael indicated how fortunate he felt to have had a good mentor when he was a new supervisor; had he not had that mentor, he would have had more trouble adjusting to the supervisory role. He stated,

I got lucky [in that] my supervisor was a mentor. She was great. But I knew people that didn't always have good professional supervisors, you know, for their first supervisor. ...my attitude would have been completely different [had she not been supportive].

Sharon discussed being intimidated when she was a new supervisor and more so because she supervised someone who was much older than her, "I was a little intimidated. Not only was it my

first time supervising professionals and also a position in which really I'm looked to for developing and creating a lot of things ...”

Training on generational differences for staff, whether a supervisor or a subordinate, or both, is a positive addition to any department or division or student affairs, or any industry, for that matter. Generations, as social creations, naturally form cohort-based identities (Joshi et al., 2010). Because of these shared identities, people of the same age in the workplace tend to stick together and, therefore, run the risk of forming homogeneous teams. Training about generational differences informs staff of concepts that are firmly rooted in theory and research. Armed with this knowledge, staff members are better prepared to approach differently aged colleagues in a new, knowledgeable, and inclusive manner that will likely make working together more seamless and will allow workers to celebrate age diversity rather than be threatened, inconvenienced, or annoyed by their differently aged colleagues.

Divisions of student affairs at today's higher education institutions value development; professionals who work in the field regularly spend time studying and applying models and theories of student and personal development. This commitment to individual growth should be practiced with the development of staff, specifically in terms of management and supervision development, in addition to the development of students.

Creating a culture of support. It is each organization's responsibility to create a culture that is supportive of the intergenerational dyad, and that supports supervisors who are younger than their subordinates. Support from others plays a critical and powerful role for professional, leadership, and supervisory development. Student affairs professionals often have shared values around the concepts of mentoring, coaching, and supporting growth and development. Josh mentioned these shared values specifically. He stated,

I wonder too about our field of student affair professionals and our values—there are some shared values in our field. I do think one of them is that a job is more than a job and we expect there to be mentoring and coaching and almost a developmental approach to supervision going on.

Although leadership and management styles are based on a variety of conditions and criteria, it is important to note that age alone has a very powerful effect on shaping attitudes, and therefore, behaviors; Sessa et al. (2007) indicated that generational differences are most apparent in how they affect people in developing their own leadership styles. College and university leadership have the opportunity to mold the leadership and supervision styles of their staff who supervise. Creating a culture that is supportive of younger supervisors can allow the institution to mold supervisory styles in a way that match with and fit into the institutional culture; in a way that embraces and capitalizes on generational differences.

The intentional creation of intergeneration teams is one way this could be done in the workplace; intentionally created mentoring partnerships is another. Teams and partnerships that include more than one generation are beneficial to both/all participants; they give workers of all ages an opportunity to learn from others who are older, younger, and have different perspectives on life and work. In reverse mentoring, older workers have an opportunity to learn new ways to understand the needs and workings of younger colleagues (Driscoll, 2012; Solomon, 2001); it focuses on both practical pursuits (technology) and the broadening of perspectives. Interactions, even when formally structured and created, allow workers to be exposed to teams that are heterogeneous in terms of age, and, therefore, offer all participants new and different ways to think about leadership style, perceptions of leadership, work ethic, ideas about change, and value of work, as illustrated in detail in Table 3.

Creating a culture of inclusion. It is any organization's responsibility, especially institutions of higher education, to support an inclusive culture and to remember that age,

including young or younger age, is one component of a diverse staff or team. One observable benefit of diverse and heterogeneous leaders and leadership teams is a significantly improved ability to create a healthy workforce and work environment (Korac-Kakabadse, Korac-Kakabadse, & Myers, 1998). The presence of age diversity in organizations, among other characteristics, will benefit organizations in many ways. A heterogeneous group is more likely to be open to new information obtained from a variety of sources and to hold more diverse perspectives and views (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 1998) therefore increasing levels of creativity and innovation. These benefits tend to lead to variety and comprehensiveness when creating strategies and finding solutions to problems. Groups that are homogeneous in any and all characteristics, including age, tend to exhibit conformity and a general lack of openness to new and different information (Korac-Kakabadse et al.).

Implications for Individuals

Because the phenomenon of the intergenerational dyad is becoming more and more common in today's workforce (Shore, Cleveland, & Goldberg, 2003), the larger the impact and implications of this dyad relationship may be on the individual supervisor including each individual supervisor's responsibility to learn about generational differences as well as supervision, management, and communication styles and techniques.

Recommendations for Research

This study yielded insights into the experiences of 19 student affairs professionals who supervise staff who are ten or more years older than they are. The findings chapter allowed a glance into their experiences managing and supervising older subordinates. However, unanswered questions remain and there are further issues to be explored to even better

understand the phenomenon of the intergenerational dyad. The researcher makes the following recommendations.

Gender Differences in the Intergenerational Dyad

As indicated in the findings, more women than men reported having a negative experience supervising older subordinates; no women reported having a positive experience. This coupled with the fact that 9 of the 19 participants discussed gender and how or if it was related to their experience unprompted by the researcher, suggests that more research should be conducted in this area, including asking questions specific to gender or examining how or if experiences differ when the supervisor and the subordinate identify as different genders, for example.

Industry Differences in the Intergenerational Dyad

The scope of this study was limited to divisions of student affairs at colleges and universities; the intergenerational dyad could be better understood if further research was done within additional fields and industries. Additional industries could include additional divisions within colleges and universities, such as professionals who work in teaching or research, as well as fields and industries outside of higher education altogether. such as non-profit organizations, large corporations, or association management.

The research by Shore, Cleveland, and Goldberg (2003) was conducted with employees of a “large, multinational firm in the southeastern United States” (p. 531). This study was the only study found by the researcher that specifically addressed manager age and supervisor age in the same manner (intergenerational dyad) as the researcher has done in this study. Additional research needs to be done in industries outside of higher education and this vague, multinational firm.

Work/Life Balance Issues that Affect the Intergenerational Dyad

Several participants indicated work/life balance as a factor in their relationships with their older subordinates. This often arose as a posited statement; participants wondered aloud if the fact that they had a partner/children and their older subordinate did not—or vice versa, did—have anything to do with how they interacted with each other on a daily basis. Carolyn stated,

So while I'm not saying they don't have families and family responsibilities, they are single and they don't have children. So I think they show their commitment differently than perhaps the other staff member who has a partner and those sorts of things, and I'm cognizant of those things specifically because I'm also a doctoral student and doing my research on work life balance and roles. So how do people manage their different roles?

Josh said, “[It’s weird to be] at a different place in life; my kids are 2 and 4 years old and [her] kids are in college . . . and it’s just kind of different.” Nicole wondered aloud, “I think that the older team members have a different life and family circumstance than our younger team members and so there’s a little push pull on some of that I think.”

Donald discussed how his lack of a spouse and kids made him wonder if his older subordinate—who was married with children—had trouble relating to him, “She wants to talk about her and her family and I do that for her. [However,] I think that if there were other older folks in the department, I think she would feel more comfortable.”

Considerable research has been conducted on how professionals balance the responsibilities of work, family, and recreation. There is evidence by gender in the desire to maintain a balance between work and family life in this study as well as in the current literature. However, research that focuses on how this concept affects the intergenerational dyad would allow a deeper understanding of this relationship. Additionally, there is plethora of research available that tells us the desire to maintain a balance between work and family lives are more

likely a burden born by women (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Dailey, 1998); however, it is clear in this study that both men and women are concerned about this concept.

The Concept of Young Age Versus Younger Age

It is possible that these younger supervisors experiences are influenced by their young age versus their younger age. In other words, additional research in this area could answer the question of whether or not younger supervisors' experiences are influenced more when they are also young professionals and their experiences as a younger supervisor are different once they are a seasoned professional in their place of work.

The participants were able to talk about hindsight gave clues to this concept (Matt, Josh, Michael, Emily, and Greg) as they, in general, indicated that their younger age in relation to their older subordinates stopped being apparent, or was much less apparent, once they were no longer a younger supervisor. For example, Greg said,

I can see things differently now that I sit here at 42. At 27, I didn't feel like when I was in my second fulltime job, I didn't feel like, "Oh, I can't – that I'm too young to make these decisions," or, "I'm so young and I don't know these things," or whatever.

Similarly, Emily stated,

I think you also as you I don't wanna say age, but again as you gain experience in the field you become more comfortable in supervising, in setting up those relationships, and holding people accountable and having the difficult conversations and in appropriately recognizing people. So you're not fumbling over yourself trying to figure out what to do next. It's you know I've got this toolbox now that's pretty well honed.

Finally, Matt's statement sums up this concepts and illustrates the need for additional research on the topic:

I say possibly at the beginning of my tenure here that was more of an issue. I would recognize that my age was – if I'm 10 to 20 years younger than someone I'm supervising that I recognize that, that that is not necessarily a negative issue, but it's an issue none the less. I think since I've been on this campus now for seven years and the vast majority of the people who I supervise have been here equally as long, if not longer, I don't think that happens anymore.

Summary

After a review of the literature, it was determined that the experience of the younger supervisor who supervises subordinates who are older than they are, referred to as the intergenerational dyad, is a missing piece in literature about supervision, management, and generations in the workplace. Using aspects of narrative inquiry and phenomenology to develop a research methodology, the researcher collected perceptions and stories from 19 younger supervisors who work in the field of student affairs in higher education through interviews. Participants' responses to interview questions were reviewed and analyzed in order to develop a deep understand the phenomenon of the intergenerational dyad.

As Baby Boomers and Veterans continue to delay retirement, a workplace with four generations will continue to be commonplace in most industries. The understanding and the ability to meet the needs of the younger supervisor within an intergenerational dyad is increasingly important for organizations that wish to maintain and support a multigenerational workforce. This study offers an initial exploration of the multidimensional issues to be researched.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of younger supervisors in higher education settings in terms of supervising older subordinates?
 - a. How do younger supervisors perceive their older subordinates' respect for their supervisory role?
 - b. How do younger supervisors perceive their older subordinates' acceptance of being supervised by younger supervisors?
2. How do younger supervisors perceive themselves to be treated by older subordinates because of their age?
3. How do younger supervisors perceive older subordinates' potential performance and does the older subordinates' actual performance prove or disprove those perceptions?
4. How do younger supervisors perceive the older subordinates' work styles?
5. How do younger supervisors perceive the older subordinates' work ethic?

Interview Questions	Related Research Question
Background Questions: These will be completed in writing by the participant before the Interview. Participants will be instructed to answer these questions keeping in mind their current supervision load or any supervision responsibilities that are recent - in the past two years.	
1. How long have you been a supervisor?	
2. How many people do you supervise?	
3. How many people do you supervise who are 10 or more years older than you?	
4. How long have you supervised people who are 10 or more years older than you?	
5. How long have you been working at the college/university at which you currently work?	
6. If selected for an interview, do you consent to that interview being audio recorded?	
Primary Questions: These will be answered in an audio recorded personal interview.	
1. Tell me about your experiences supervising older subordinates.	1, 2
2. Tell me about your experiences supervising subordinates who are your age or younger.	1, 2
3. Tell me about your experiences in assessing the performance of your older subordinates.	1, 1a, 1b, 2, 3
4. Tell me about your work style (Work style is defined as an individual's approach to leadership, supervision, and/or management.)	
5. Tell me about the work styles of your older subordinates.	4, 2
6. Tell me about your work ethic (Work Ethic is defined as characteristics that display an individual's commitment and loyalty to their job and organization.)	
7. Tell me about the work ethic of your older subordinates.	5, 2
8. How do you think your older subordinates perceive you as their supervisor?	1, 1a, 1b, 2
9. How do you think your older subordinates accept supervision from you?	1, 1a, 1b, 2
10. Did you have any sort of relationship with your older subordinate(s) before you were their supervisor?	1, 2
11. Is your age apparent to you in your role as a supervisor?	1, 2
Wrap Up Questions: Completed in writing by the participant at the conclusion of all of the Interviews.	
1. What aspects of supervising others do you enjoy?	
2. What are the strengths in your supervision skills and abilities?	
3. What are the weaknesses in your supervision skills and abilities?	

APPENDIX B: CONTACT AND CONSENT LETTER

Date

Dear Participant,

My name is Lea Hanson and I am a doctoral student and researcher from Colorado State University in the School of Education. We are conducting a research study on the experiences of professionals in Student Affairs who supervise people who are older than they are. The purpose of the study is to examine the phenomenon of the younger supervisor/older subordinate relationship in the field of student affairs in higher education and describe the experiences and share the voices of the younger supervisor from their own perspective. The title of our project is *The Experiences of the Younger Supervisor: Implications for Organizations*. The Principal Investigator for this study is Donald Venneberg, Ph.D. of the School of Education.

If you supervise an employee who is at least ten years older than you, we would like you to respond to the attached set of background questions. You may also be asked to participate in an interview over the telephone or via Skype at a mutually agreed upon date and time. If you decide to participate in this study, please respond to these background questions and return them to me via email at learhanson@gmail.com. Your response to these questions will also constitute your consent to participate in the interview.

This interview will be scheduled at a mutually agreeable time and will last one hour. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions about your experiences supervising people who are ten or more years older than you are. You may also be asked follow up questions to allow you to explain your experiences more fully and/or completely. In order to capture what you share accurately and completely, we would like to audio tape your interview.

If you choose to participate, all identifying information about you will be kept confidential. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. I will not provide any information on your participation or response to interview questions to your employer.

Your total time investment for participation in this study should not exceed three hours (including the time to respond to the pre-interview questions and for the interview itself). Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty.

While there are no direct benefits to you, my hope is that you will share your valuable experience to help us discover and describe the meaning younger professional supervisors ascribe to their experiences supervising older colleagues.

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

If you have any questions, please contact me at learhanson@gmail.com or 970-420-9984. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator, at 970-491-1655.

Sincerely,

Donald Venneberg, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
School of Education
970-491-2965

Lea Hanson
Graduate Student
School of Education
970-420-9984