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**ACCOUNTABILITY IN MIXED-GENERATION TEAMS**

**A Research Project**

**Presented to the Faculty of**

**The George L. Graziadio**

**School of Business and Management**

**Pepperdine University**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
in  
Organization Development**

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**by**

**Angela D. Martin**

**August 2016**

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This research project, completed by

ANGELA D. MARTIN

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE  
IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Date: August 2016

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## **Abstract**

In 2014, more than 1.6 million patients received services across the U.S. from hospice care agencies. The teams within these agencies are supporting each other to play a vital role in assisting a person's transition from this life to the next comfortably, as well as catering to the family. Hospice care companies are comprised of a variety of roles that are divided into teams. Staff members vary in age from 21 to 70 years, indicating the presence of mixed-generation teams. Generational diversity can create challenges in understanding different points of view, learning styles, and communication. Generational differences are one of the most fundamental reasons organizations experience difficulty with recruitment, development, and retention. In seeking to develop high performing teams, the concept and practice of accountability may be helpful in keeping employees engaged and committed to their team and the organization. Given differences in perception across multiple generations and the importance of accountability, this study explores the multi-generational concepts of accountability and the role of tight knit teams in the various roles at Hospice Care of California. The results indicated that age difference does not play a significant role in accountability. However, tight knit teams are important to providing accountability within a team. The findings of this study can be used to help management and team members become more aware of generational beliefs and drivers behind accountability. This will enhance trust, commitment, clear communication, as well as create effective and productive teams in the healthcare industry.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

“To hold someone accountable is to care enough to risk having them blame you for pointing out their deficiencies” (Lencioni, 2012, p. 28). Accountability plays an active role in organizations, however it seems it is often misrepresented and not used as effectively to result in a positive outcome. A recent nationwide poll by Zogby International (the largest representative study of its kind in the United States) documented the extent to which corporate management uses accountability incorrectly. Results indicate 25% of employed Americans describe their workplace as a dictatorship, only 52% said bosses treat subordinates well, and barely half (51%) said their coworkers often feel motivated or are mostly motivated at work. After 25 years of experience working with thousands of companies, Connors and Smith (2015) from Partners in Leadership wrote in a *Training Magazine* article in regards to the nationwide poll,

We have found these problems stem almost entirely from lack of know-how, not a lack of motivation or a lack of willingness to take accountability. We've found that when people learn about positive accountability-holding themselves and others accountable in a way that motivates everyone to get the results expected of them-results begin to improve immediately. (p. 2)

Based on numerous research there are ten major factors that enable accountability within organizations that are listed below:

1. Tightly knit teams: These are teams or work units that work in close proximity on a daily basis, have to rely on one another to complete their work and trust each other.
2. Clearly defined team roles: These are the norms and expectations within a team or work unit that shape the team members behaviors. These roles are acquired mostly through verbal and daily interactions with the team, sanctions by the team and role modeling.
3. Clear job duties: These are the formal job duties set forth in job descriptions and refined by the team's actual needs.

4. Clear goals: These are the goals of the team that are consistent with the overall goals of the organization. People need to feel that their work is meaningful and relevant.
5. Performance measures: Performance measures must be clearly understood by each team member, who may help in creating them with weekly check-in's to ensure positive progress is made.
6. Meaningful rewards: These can be financial or non-financial rewards, acknowledgments, promotions, perks, benefits or other results for teams and individual team members. To be meaningful, they have to be relevant to the various demographics of employees at all levels.
7. Process orientation: Managers should discuss the thought processes of employees, as well as their implementation processes when discussing accountability for results.
8. Learning focus: The main objective of an accountability discussion should be learning, without blame. This, along with a process orientation, minimizes the personal attack nature of accountability and makes people more willing to discuss results.
9. Supporting mechanisms: There are two types of accountability mechanisms- formal and informal. While formal mechanisms may be clearly articulated and discussed, the informal mechanisms are the most influential in shaping behavior.
10. Leadership: The accountability behavior of leaders influences their employees' behavior toward accountability, such as leaders who accept accountability and appropriately model how to conduct or participate in an accountability discussion to increase their subordinates' receptivity to accountability.

Within each of these factors there are behaviors, attitudes, policies, and procedures that make each factor viable or not to contribute to accountability within teams in an organization. These ten factors are the premise of the thesis because these factors can be influenced by different perceptions of Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials. According to Tulgan (2000), leaders are faced with expanding diversity in the work force, and one of the most overlooked challenges concerns the widening age range of their employees who, despite their vast experiential and attitudinal differences, must come together to form a coherent and viable workforce. Zemke, Raines, and

Filipczak (2000) stressed that generational differences pose a greater management challenge than the obvious differences of race and sex. They defined managing today's diverse workforce as diversity management at its most challenging. After much collaboration with Alan Landers and the team at First Step OD and Training, this thesis will dive deeper into the topic of accountability in organizations, while specifically exploring two factors contributed to accountability within team environments: generational differences and degree of “tightness” of the team. This thesis is a research project, which relied on previous research on accountability, notes during and following First Step OD and Training meetings, surveys, focus groups, and emails and phone conversations throughout the project.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research was to assess the attitudes and beliefs about accountability within organizations and find the drivers for Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers to be accountable to their teams. Extensive research has been done in regards to accountability in organizations, however less research has been done on accountability in teams and individually. This thesis examined the following research questions:

1. Does the meaning of “accountability” differ across Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennial team members?
2. Does a difference in meaning detrimentally affect accountability in teams?
3. Do tight knit teams result in higher accountability?

This research study explores accountability within a team, specifically looking at generational differences and the closeness between team members. The research will help managers to identify accountability mechanisms in the organization, leadership and team

that are facilitating accountability or working against it. Managers can then decide what actions to take to increase accountability by leveraging strengths and correcting those things working against it. As well, the purpose of the research is to show how accountability is perceived in organizations and in mixed generational teams. This research will help achieve effective teamwork between the multi-generational work force increasing collaboration, engagement and innovation.

### **Importance and Significance of Research**

Accountability plays a tremendous role in commitment to a team and loyalty to an organization to assist in retention and productivity. Accountability is usually aligned with values in an organization and creating a positive outlook on accountability is a process that needs to be embedded to achieve organizational goals. Multiple generations may see the ten factors of accountability differently. This would then give leaders and managers extra leverage to make teams accountable.

### **Definition of Terms**

Listed below are the common terms used throughout this study and the definition provides a clear context of use:

1. **Accountability.** Combining ownership and answerability. Required to explain actions or decisions to someone. Required to be responsible for something.
2. **Teams.** A small number of people with complementary skills, who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993).
3. **Generation.** A group of people who share birth years and experiences as they move through time together, influencing and being influenced by a variety of critical factors.
4. **Baby Boomers.** A group of people born between 1947 to 1968. It is important to acknowledge that the researcher from previous research selected these birth

years. Chapter 2 contains further discussion regarding variances in generational definitions.

5. Generation X. Also cited as Gen X throughout the thesis. A group born between 1965 and 1980.
6. Millennial. Millennial or Generation Y are a group who were born between 1980 and 2000.

### **Research Setting and Methodology**

The study consisted of a mixed qualitative and quantitative methodology, which involved a survey, as well as two focus groups. The 43 participants who completed the survey and the thirteen who participated in the focus groups were employees at Hospice Care of California. All participants were selected at random from the organization. Participant's gender, age range, position and work location were captured as basic demographics.

The survey gathers data from 43 employees regarding accountability in their teams and in general at the organization. Questions for the focus group further assessed and gave context to employees' accountability on an individual, team, and organizational level, as well as overall influencers to being accountable.

### **Thesis Outline**

Chapter 1 introduced the topic of accountability, provided background and major drivers to influence accountability within an organization. It highlighted the research questions, as well as described the survey and focus groups that will be done to collect data to further understand and answer the hypothesis proposed. The rest of the thesis is organized by Chapter 2 evaluating existing literature that defines theories and culture of accountability within the organization, tight knit teams and in mixed generations. Chapter 3 introduces the research methodology. It documents the research design and describes

the measurements used. Chapter 4 delivers the findings of the study and discusses the data analysis process. Chapter 5 discusses what the research findings may mean in a broader context for different generations on teams, as well as how it adds to research on accountability in organizations and specific motivators with varied ages in teams to increase success rate on projects. Also, this chapter will mention the limitations and further research that can be done to explore this topic in other areas that drive accountability within a team.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Chapter 2 will cover concepts of accountability in organizations, teams versus individual accountability and generational definitions and differences.

#### **Theory of Accountability in Organizations**

Accountability may be the most fundamental factor in organizing and organizations (Frink & Klimoski, 1998). Accountability can be viewed as a category of causal factors influencing behavior in social settings. Accountability is also a fundamental tenet of organizations: if individuals are not accountable to at least some degree, organizations would not function effectively (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). Specifically, accountability is important due to its link to key organizational variables such as motivation (Enzele & Anderson, 1993) and performance (Yarnold et al., 1988). However, the current state of accountability research is such that scholars understand certain aspects of accountability but lack a complete understanding of the accountability phenomenon overall (Frink & Klimoski, 1998). Many non-academic articles in practitioner magazines state that accountability is often seen as a negative meeting where someone who is “accountable” is blamed and punished for their failings by some authority (typically the person or persons who assigned the responsibility to the accountable person). Moreover, the lack of accountability systems has been positively associated with negative outcomes, such as increased illegal behavior (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 1998). Schlenker, Britt, Pennington, Murphy, and Doherty (1994) explained that when individuals are accountable, they are held answerable for their behavior. Thus, under conditions of accountability, individuals can be made to justify or explain their actions. For this reason, people develop rules and standards for

conduct, evaluate individual performance using those standards, and distribute rewards and punishments based on this evaluation.

Another theory of accountability that can help implement accountability in a positive outlook in the organization is called horizontal accountability. Horizontal accountability is defined as the degree to which people communicate, solve problems and build accountability across an organization (Ray & Elder, 2007). It builds trust among employees and management and facilitates goal achievement. Horizontal accountability means creating and building practices and routines that encourage and support constant micro-feedback that focuses on the interpersonal interactions between individuals and teams. The benefits of this model include less conflict, faster learning cycles, less time and energy wasted blaming others and quicker marketing and customer responsiveness. This model can help create dialogue around the steps taken to achieve the end result or obstacles that prevented the timeline to be met and therefore learning from the experience. As well as converse about the different perspectives of the individuals on the team during the project and know how to handle the situation differently the next time.

Organizational responses to the need for accountability from its members include the creation of such mechanisms as formal reporting relationships, performance evaluations, employment contracts, reward systems (including compensation), disciplinary procedures, etc. In addition to these formal mechanisms, organizations promote several informal sources of accountability. These include group norms, corporate cultural norms, loyalty to an individual's superior and colleagues, even an emphasis on and respect for the customers of one's outputs (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). What becomes-obvious is the potential complexity of the accountabilities in which an employee is embedded. To this myriad can be added the notion of self-accountability

(Schlenker & Weigold, 1989). Thus, a broad conceptualization of accountability includes both formal and informal systems, objective and subjective evaluations and rewards, and internal and external audiences (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). An important point to note here is that the presence of evaluation mechanisms is not necessarily what directly influences behaviors. Rather, it is the expectations surrounding potential evaluations, which are at the root of our responses. Put another way, rather than seeing accountability primarily as a state of affairs, we tend to view it as a state of mind, which is derived, in part, from a state of affairs.

Role theory and accountability both postulate a central role for interpersonal expectations; emphasize the importance of the consequence of compliance, and link tasks and activities to individuals. Workplace interdependencies generate the need for predictability and control. These give rise to organizational roles (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). The authors discuss the difference between accountability theory and role theory. Accountability theory describes the influences on behavior, while role theory describes how roles influence behavior. They both relate to predictability of behavior in relationships. At work, role theory and accountability theory are inseparable. People at work have assigned roles (job titles) and responsibilities (job duties). They also have relationships that mandate accountability, either formal or informal. In most work settings, norms develop around the appropriate division of labor and activities. They prescribe what is expected, who should do it and when. Such norms or expectations for functionally differentiated sets of behaviors among members of a work unit are usually referred to as roles (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Thus, role expectations are norms that specify not only what should be done, but who should do what, when and how (McGrath, 1984).

Roles add structure to interpersonal relations at work. A special feature of role expectations is that they develop or come about and are modified as a result of both a priori and ad hoc processes. The interactions and interdependencies that are actually occurring serve as the basis for mutual expectations. Moreover, although organizational expectations for key behaviors (e.g., honesty) may be well articulated, it will be the norms for behavior, as developed and enforced in routine work interactions, that are likely to have the greatest impact on behavior (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). As documented in several research articles, the norms for behavior, as developed and enforced in routine work interactions, are likely to have the greatest impact on behavior. Norms are frequently developed and maintained primarily because they make working together a lot easier and more enjoyable. Such things as the level of honesty or integrity to be demonstrated, the proper responses to rule violations, or the level of trustworthiness to exhibit are often among the first things to be clarified in work settings (Gabarro, 1987). Critical for this process are means of encouraging, maintaining, or enforcing compliance with the norms.

Two other sources of interpersonal expectations are part of this process. These include the personal traits or attributes of both the sender and target. Simply stated, expectations of other people are strongly influenced by knowledge, skills, abilities and personality. They are also affected by the history of our relationship with someone and with the organization (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). Accountability is at the root of viable social systems and more so in formal organizations. Social systems can be defined in terms of shared expectations. This implies that there are means to elicit conformity through observation, evaluation and sanction according to how people respond to those shared expectations.

**Meso-level theory of accountability in organizations.** Workplace accountability is multi-level as well as collaborative. Single-level conceptualizations of the phenomenon are incomplete and inherently misleading (Frink & Klimoski, 1998). Meso-level conceptualization of accountability extends our perspectives beyond individual, group, unit, or organizational perspectives toward a unitary whole. Accountability has been described as “the adhesive that binds social systems together” (p. 3). That is, if individuals are not answerable for their behaviors or decisions, there will be neither shared expectations nor a basis for social order. Accountability is a means of providing structure in organizations – there are formal structures and informal structures. Structural, social, and inter-entity contingencies are factors which embed the actors (people involved in an accountability relationship). The structural contingencies include those elements of the system that have been set in place to support accountability. These might include performance evaluation and feedback systems, reward systems, MBOs or goal setting systems, justice protocols and formal policies and procedures. Structural contingencies are important, but the means by which they are implemented may be more relevant. For example, the timing of communicating structural elements, stringency of enforcement and the rigidity of the rule following can affect how actors respond (Frink et. al., 2008). Social contingencies include the general social climate, regulatory mandates, organizational culture, social norms, informal networks, relationships and organizational politics. Inter-entity contingencies, at the interpersonal level, include the nature of specific supervisor-subordinate relationships, personal characteristics and dispositions of the actors, relative power, organizational interdependencies, work flow, physical proximity among groups or organizations, salience to a particular actor, relative

importance of the events, and implications for success or failure all intrinsically affect responses.

Organizations have rules of conduct, goals, objectives, norms, but more often the activating norms of behavior are socially understood through interactions with peers and accountability to them (Frink et. al., 2008). Perceptions of potential evaluation and answerability are embedded in virtually all theories of accountability. Symbolic interactionists have argued that individuals imagine themselves in roles, anticipate reactions from others and then choose responses intended to result in a more favorable impression. State of mind or how one subjectively represents the context of accountability drives accountability. People who are accountable for the processes they chose versus the results that occurred perform more favorably. People held accountable to higher status individuals offered more accurate ratings than those accountable to a lower status group. Undue stress and the need to show one's worth may in fact lead to dysfunctional actions and behaviors from continued increases in accountability. Holding someone accountable by increasing monitoring and tying reward structures to responsibility may initiate high-risk decisions- In fact, it is social contingencies, from those within dyads to those within cultures, which define the nuances of any accountability episode. Cultural characteristics affect organizations structures and systems, which in turn affect subunit and group actions, which affect interpersonal relationships, which affect individual cognitions and behaviors. It has been argued that individuals evaluate cues that affect decision-making processes at micro, meso and macro levels, these causes affect interpersonal accountability dynamics and coping. Tetlock's (1985) meso-theory maintains that the central theme of choice and judgment is to maintain an acceptable level of social identity in the eyes of key constituents. Employees

may be accountable to subordinates, peers, supervisors, customers, shareholders, society and the legal environment and such sources may impel simultaneously (Frink et. al., 2008).

Understanding accountability dynamics between a supervisor and a subordinate is only of modest utility without explaining the external pressures that affect the nature of dyadic relationships (Frink et. al., 2008). This states that accountability in organizations is both hierarchical as well as lateral/horizontal. The authors contend that it is not possible to embrace the complete nature of accountability and its embeddedness in organizations without considering an overarching meso-level conceptualization of accountability; that it transcends, crosses levels. While organizations need to have systems of accountability they need to be designed to support individuals rather than punish them.

**Accountability, impression management and goal setting in performance evaluation.** Theoretical perspectives from accountability, impression management, goal setting and performance evaluation suggest that accountability conditions may influence whether goals are used for impression management or performance-directed purposes (Frink & Ferris, 1998). Goal theory and research suggest that goals typically are performance-directed, resulting in elevated performance under certain conditions. Alternatively, impression management theory implies that goals may not always be performance-directed and the goal performance relationship may be decoupled in such cases. Accountability is proposed as influencing this relationship in addition to main effects on how people approach tasks. Participants approached tasks and set goals differently according to accountability conditions. The goal performance relationship differences reflect the use of goals for performance-directed purposes under low

accountability and for impression-management purposes under high accountability, with no goal performance relationship. This suggests that when accountability is a high priority, the employee may be concerned about how he/she is perceived, rather than the results, thus focusing more on impression management than the results.

**Teams versus individual accountability.** Teams differ fundamentally from working groups because they require both individual and mutual accountability (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Workers in teams are jointly accountable for performance even though there exist alternative organizational structures that align incentive compensation more closely with each worker's task (Corts, 2007). Individuals, as team members, are jointly accountable for the team's performance. They are also accountable for their individual performance. Most of the time, performance management systems do not account for contributions to the team's results and instead hold employees accountable individually. This author suggests that individual team members need to be evaluated as individuals and as team members. According to Lencioni (2005), "When it comes to teamwork, I define accountability as the willingness of team members to remind one another when they are not living up to the performance standards of the group" (pp. 61-62). Leaders who value and help create a culture of accountability will benefit greatly from a high performance team.

**Accountability on processes and performance among team members.**

Scholars have examined only a limited number of accountability outcomes. The accountability outcome that has garnered the most recent attention appears to be performance (Frink & Klimoski, 1998; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999), which often is examined as a function of the quality of some decision or action (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). However, few studies have examined task performance (Motowidlo & Van Scotter,

1994) as an outcome of accountability for actual employees within organizational contexts (Frink & Klimoski, 1998). Still fewer studies have examined contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993), or citizenship, as an accountability outcome (Frink & Klimoski, 1998). Monitoring teammates' task related behaviors will benefit overall team performance by enhancing team coordination and the provision of feedback. Team monitoring improves coordination and feedback processes and that these coordination and feedback processes in turn improve team performance (Marks & Panzer, 2004). This stresses the importance of monitoring teammates' task related behaviors. The key is having "safe" systems/processes for giving feedback.

Teams of strangers reaped a greater share of the joint profit than did teams of friends when teammates were accountable to a supervisor as opposed to negotiating strictly on their own behalf (Peterson & Thompson, 1997). Teams of strangers also reaped a marginally greater share of the joint profit than did teams of friends when teammates possessed unique, as opposed to common, information about their own team's preferences. Not surprisingly, teams of friends were more cohesive than were teams of strangers; however, teams of friends were also more concerned about maintaining their relationship than were teams of strangers. Teams of friends felt least cohesive when they were accountable to a supervisor, whereas teams of strangers felt most cohesive when they were accountable. Similarly, friends indicated greater relationship concerns when having to deal with distributed information, whereas information distribution had no effect on the relationship concerns of strangers. For teams of strangers, greater team cohesiveness was positively correlated with better performance. Concerns for maintaining relationships can cause various behaviors, such as groupthink, shaping responses to maintain good favor in the group, etc. They can also be a force for

increasing the likelihood that people will conform to the group's expectations. Again, showing that peer pressure or feelings of implied obligations within groups may work toward individual accountability.

**Accountability and interdependent behavior to enhance team performance.**

Teams, where accountability pressures were distributed across the members, resulted in each team member experiencing little responsibility for outcomes (O'Connor, 1997). As a consequence, teams did not respond to accountability pressures by behaving contentiously as solos did. Shared accountability lessens the stress associated with it. People need to be evaluated as individuals and teams need to be evaluated as a whole. Individuals held accountable for their behavior are more likely than unaccountable ones to be high performers, develop greater accuracy, and be more attentive to the needs of others (Tetlock, 1983, 1985; Tetlock & Kim, 1987).

In dyadic accountability relationships, accountable decision makers are more likely than unaccountable ones to use complex rules in choosing options (McAllister, Beach & Mitchell, 1979), to process messages more accurately (Chaiken 1980), to be more responsive to evaluating others (Tetlock, 1983) and to employ more accurate problem solving (Tetlock & Kim, 1987). Accountability to a group or constituents one represents may also precipitate higher performance (Tyson-Bernstein, 1988). Ben-Yoav and Pruitt (1984) found that, in comparison to low-accountability conditions, conditions of high accountability encouraged subjects to develop positive and cooperative relationships with one another more earnestly and to be more responsive to role obligations than to concerns about their personal welfare.

Positive and frequent communication, organized procedures and rules, resource sharing, intrinsic motivation, commitment, and interdependence as factors occur-more

frequently in high-performing teams than in low-performing teams (Fandt, 1991). In a different setting, Watson and Michelson demonstrated that top-performing groups reported more integration and collaborative behaviors than low-performing groups. The degree of interdependent behavior that team members exhibit entails the extent to which members depend on one another for the exchange of resources and information to accomplish their task (Slocum & Sims, 1980). The data shows that when accountability is increased, teams interdependence is increased, experience higher success and express more satisfaction with their peers than when teams are not charged with accountability for behavior (Fandt, 1991). High-accountability teams are more likely to experience high interdependent behavior and the consequences are higher success and greater satisfaction than on teams not experiencing accountability.

Encouraging and developing task interdependent behavior may even be an advantage in overcoming other potential limiting elements. This investigation implies that increasing individual accountability contributes to positive team outcomes (Fandt, 1991). Collaborative teamwork is a way of life in organizations. To enhance the team experience, it seems appropriate that we examine the way that teams are assembled rather than regarding this as an inconsequential process to encourage individual involvement and emphasize accountability. The behavioral components can be used for feedback to ongoing organizational teams, for team building and enhancement of team problem solving. This research indicates that the same care in selection of team members, as well as their participation in the selection process, would increase a team's effectiveness.

### **Generation Definition**

Generational cohorts include individuals born around the same time who share distinctive social or historical life events during critical developmental periods (Schaie,

1965). A generation is very broadly defined as, “an identifiable group that shares birth years, age, location and significant life events at critical developmental stages” (Kupperschmidt, 2000, p. 66). As a result of these shared experiences, cohorts develop similar personality, views, and values, thus creating generational characteristics. Furthermore, Duschsher and Cowin stated, “The historical, political, and social events experienced by generational cohorts help to define and shape their values, work ethics, attitudes toward authority, and professional aspirations” (as cited in Sherman, 2006, p. 3).

**Baby Boomers.** The Baby Boomers (Boomers) are those born between 1946 and 1964, which comprises about 45% of today's workforce (Martin, 2004). This group grew up in a flourishing post-war economy. Lancaster and Stillman (2002) pointed out the significant events that occurred during the Boomers' formative years, the single most important arrival during the birth years of the Boomer was television. In 1952, four million television sets could be found in American homes and by 1960, the number was 50 million. Gradually the generation gap between baby boomers and traditionalists widened as an entire generation of boomers could relate to the whole set of reference point (TV shows, characters, plots, advertisers, and products) that were unknown to their parents. Boomers' generational personality was shaped by this one technology.

The Boomer cohort witnessed the foibles of political, religious, and business leaders that resulted in a lack of respect for and loyalty to authority and institution (Kupperschmidt, 2000). According to Hill (2004), “Society encouraged baby boomers to think as individuals from a young age to express themselves creatively” (p. 34). Educated and able young idealist Boomers questioned the ideals of their parents' generation and protested the status quo, pushing for change in the areas of civil rights, women's rights,

reproductive rights, and even the rights of Mother Earth, giving birth to the ecology movement.

One key word consistently used in the literature to describe Boomers was optimistic. The booming postwar economy gave the United States of the late 1940s to 1960s a sense that anything was possible. The boom in production of consumer goods and the promise of a good education for all allowed Boomers to grow up in a relatively affluent, opportunity-rich world (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Another trait that marks the Boomers is competitiveness. When you are born and raised with eighty million peers competing with you for everything from a place on the football team in an overcrowded high school, to a place in the college of your choice, to placement with your dream company and not be competitive, Boomers focus on what it takes to get ahead. Boomers are committed to work-life balance and loyalty to their family as an important priority. Boomers are known for their strong work ethics, and work has been a defining part of both their self-worth and their evaluation of others (Green, as cited in Sherman, 2006).

**Generation Xers.** Generation X are those who were born between 1965 and 1980, which comprises about 30% of today's workforce and possibly the most misunderstood generation in the workplace today. There are 44 million Generation X in the US population compared with the 77 million Boomers (Bova & Kroth, 2001). This small but influential population has worked to carve out its own identity from the Boomers and Veterans. Generation X grew up with financial, family, and societal insecurity, rapid change, great diversity, and a lack of solid parental guidance. Many Generation X children lived in two-career households, while others were raised in single-parent households (Sherman, 2006).

Lancaster and Stillman (2002) described what was happening in the world while Generation X were growing up: For years now Gen X have been able to say, “Show me the money,” and mean it in the business world, ticking off remarkable accomplishments as managers, inventors, and entrepreneurs such as Bill Gates, Bill Clinton, Madonna. Generation X grew up during the information age. “The information revolution was in full speed by the time Generation X learned to read. Boomers and older generations enter the information age gradually (if at all), as if merging with traffic” (Tulgan, 2000, p. 67). According to Weston (2006), due to frequent parental absence, at a young age Generation X learned to manage on their own, becoming adept, clever, and resourceful.

Most significantly, Generation X marked reduction in loyalty for one organization (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Generation X expects success from short-term employment with less permanent relationship (Weston, 2006). This generation has taken the message of organizational transitions to heart by accepting that employment is no longer guaranteed. On the other hand, Generation X believe in their own responsibility for their employability and have learned to manage their own benefits, continuing education, and career path. Generation X tend to be more self-reliant and skillful at managing their own work life. One common misconception of Generation X is that they are fiercely independent, making them disloyal non-team players. According to Tulgan (2000), this is because the concepts of loyalty, allegiance, and belonging to a team have different meanings to Gen X than they do to prior generations. Their experience of belonging with respect to any kind of institution has been shaped by rapid change, in the face, which we have always been expected to adapt quickly. Gen X experience belonging only to the extent that their specific contributions are noted and valued.

**Millennials.** Millennial or Generation Y are those who were born between 1980 and 2000. About 15% of today's workforce is from this generational group. The Millennial generation was raised by parents who nurtured and structured their lives; they are drawn to their families for safety and security (Sherman, 2006). Millennials were raised in a period of prosperity, pluralism, interactive media, federal spending on children, and societal focus on family values, and child safety devices (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

The Millennial generation is said to be the first to be born into a wired world; they are connected 24 hours a day and will expect more financial leverage, higher salaries, and flexible work arrangements (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Millennials are completely adaptable to live in the fast pace information age. Generation Y is fundamentally different in outlook and ambition from any group of kinds in the past 50 or 60 years. . . . It is clear from talking to them that they already know they don't want to live or work the way Baby Boomers do. (Zemke et al., 2000, pp. 146-147)

Millennials are a global generation and accept multiculturalism as a way of life. They are described as sociable, confident, socially aware, collaborative, open-minded, and achievement-oriented. However, they require employers to meet their needs, allow greater flexibility, and provide more options, and they want less hierarchical structure and more informal interactions to encourage peer relationships (Sherman, 2006). Millennial generations are welcomed into the workplace as nursing shortages increase exponentially to fill the gap created by Baby Boomer generations. Each generation generally sees the world in terms of outlook, work ethic, view of authority, leadership, and turnoffs.

**Millennials v. Generation Xers in the workplace.** By 2020, Millennials will comprise 46% of the U.S. workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013b).

Considerable research has been conducted on Millennials' expectations for work and how

they are distinct from previous generations (see Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Twenge, 2010, for comprehensive summaries). Millennials (born after 1980; Pew Research Center, 2014) are a generation in which every kid has been told, “You can be anything you want. You’re special” (Twenge, 2006, p. 25). Characterized as optimistic, rule-following achievers (Peck, 2010), Millennials have been labeled “trophy kids” (Alsop, 2008, p. 33). In addition, Millennials reported favoring work that allows them to make a difference and is fulfilling (Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Twenge, 2010).

In 2014, Gen Xers (born between 1965 and 1980) represented 27% of the adult population (Pew Research Center, 2014) and have been described as slackers, disinterested and disloyal to their employers, independent, and primarily motivated by money in the workplace (O’Bannon, 2001). Compared with Gen Xers, Millennials have reported lower work centrality (Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010; Twenge, 2010), work ethic (Twenge, 2010), and extrinsic work values (e.g., status, respect, salary). In addition, Millennials have reportedly higher job satisfaction (Deal et al., 2010; Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010), and desire job security (Kowske et al., 2010; Twenge, 2010) and work–life balance (Twenge, 2010) more than Gen Xers. A huge part of job satisfaction for the millennial could be the fact the Millennials are selective where they work and do their due diligence in research online before accepting an offer of employment. These two different perspectives can create conflict in teams when working together and having different motivators and beliefs of effectiveness and productivity. The ramification of these generational collisions at work include everything from reduced profitability to the loss of valuable employees, higher payroll costs, poor customer service, derailed career, wasted human potential, and even potentially serious health problems caused by stress (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002, p. 13).

**Summary**

This chapter provided a review of research relevant to this study. Accountability can be viewed as a factor influencing behavior and so, may be a fundamental factor affecting organizational performance. Research also shows that different generations interact and respond differently in the work setting. This study explored the state of accountability within a team, specifically looking at generational differences and the closeness between team members. Chapter 3 provides the research methods used in this study.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

This chapter describes the methodology used for the research project. It begins by restating the research purpose, followed by a description of the study method.

#### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to assess the attitudes and beliefs about accountability within an organization and to find the drivers for Millennial, Generation X and Baby Boomers to be accountable to their teams. Extensive research has been done previously in regards to accountability in organizations, however little research until this study has been done on accountability in teams and individually. Three research questions were examined:

1. Does the meaning of “accountability” differ across Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennial team members?
2. Does a difference in meaning detrimentally affect accountability in teams?
3. Do tight knit teams result in higher accountability?

#### **Research Design**

A mixed method design was used for this study. Quantitative and qualitative data collection were used to examine the topic of this study. Quantitative data, gathered via survey questions that were given to members employed at Hospice Care of California, allowed for numerical measurement and analysis of participants’ perceptions. The qualitative examination consisted of thirteen employees, in two different focus groups, facilitated by the researcher in the Fullerton, CA office. The focus groups allowed the researcher to explore participant’s feelings and perspectives related to the study topic.

The use of mixed methods in this study generated a more complete understanding of the perspectives of the participants.

### **Research Sample and Setting**

The participants in the study were employees from diverse backgrounds, variety of experiences and in different roles in the company. The survey was given to employees throughout the office in Fullerton, CA. All participants worked at Hospice Care of California and most reported to a team in the company. The employees were in various departments in Fullerton, California. The departments ranged from Nursing, Office Staff, Volunteer Coordinator, Chaplin, Executive Director, Administration, Dietician, Social Services, Marketing, and Sales. The employees ranged from Millennial (21-34), Gen X (35-50) and Baby Boomers (51-70). The survey had eleven Millennial, eight Generation X and twenty-four Baby Boomers, totaling 43 participants who completed the survey. Forty-three employees were surveyed conveniently in three ways. The bulk of surveys were done in person by the researcher after a multi-functional department meeting. The survey was also sent through an email blast that asked employees who had not completed the survey yet, to fill in the answers honestly and email back to the researcher. The survey was also available to the employees at the Fullerton office and upon completion, placed in a folder given to the researcher at the end of the following month. Two focus groups, consisting of thirteen employees from different departments of Hospice Care of California, were asked to participate and answer questions related to the research topic. Both focus groups were made up of mixed generations.

### **Data Collection**

A printed survey, representing FirstStep OD & Training, containing thirty-three questions was used to collect data. The survey instrument is presented in Appendix A.

The first section of the survey gathered data about demographics with eleven questions, such as gender, age range, job level, type of employment, the department, location of their office, team type, how long an individual has been with their team, how much time is spent with the team, the number on the team and time an individual has been at the company. The second section of the survey had twenty-two questions relating to drivers of accountability and team dynamics. The two focus groups further assessed the environment and gave context to accountability individually, within a team and in the organization. Both the survey and focus group responses gave insight to test the hypotheses.

### **Administration**

An email request was sent by the researcher to various departments to complete the survey. As well, there was a meeting on site that captured the majority of the participants who were given fifteen minutes to complete a printed out survey. The request gave an overview of the survey relating to accountability in teams and in the organization. A total of 43 employees received the survey. Forty-four members were given the survey, yet one did not complete the survey and was therefore removed from the analysis for a final participant count of 43 or a 100% survey response rate.

Of the 43 employees who completed the survey, the researcher randomly selected thirteen employees, based on diversity of their gender, age group, role in the company, and how long they have been at the company. The 13 employees voluntarily agreed to participate in two focus groups.

### **Survey Questions and Focus Group**

The survey instrument (see Appendix A) is a diagnostic tool assessing the state of accountability within the organization, so that managers can identify accountability

mechanisms, leadership, organizational, and team factors that are facilitating accountability or working against it. First section includes eleven questions that are separated by demographics, power distance, and employment type, as well as team information. See below for further detail:

Questions 1, 2 are basic demographics, such as gender and age.

Questions 3, 5, and 6 are intended to identify how close respondents are to sources of power. For example, “where do you work?”

Question 4 will help determine if there are differences between employment types, which was shown with full time, part time and temporary.

Questions 7-11 provide information regarding the respondents team/work unit.

Second section includes 22 questions that are answered between strongly disagree to strongly agree. These statements are addressing accountability in the organization, supervision, recognition, team and commitment. See below for further detail:

Questions 1, 2 are focused on the organization, such as, “I feel comfortable in the organization and feel it is a good fit for me”.

Question 3,4, 5, 6, 7, 20 focuses on supervision, for example, “My direct supervisor is a good role model for accountability”.

Question 8-10 are geared towards goals and recognition in the organization, for instance, “I believe my performance goals are realistic and achievable”.

Question 11-19 questions are about the team, for example, “I believe I am respected by my coworkers for the work I do”.

Question 21, 22 are about commitment to the team and organization, such as “I feel a strong commitment and sense of obligation to not let down my team”.

These questions are intended to provide specific feedback regarding accountability mechanisms within the organization and in the team. Questions 1 through 22 are intended to provide qualitative feedback regarding accountability. The questions will note the answers to significant differences between demographic groups regarding each accountability mechanism or factor and if there are significant differences between team types and generational gaps.

Analysis of the survey data was performed, specifically frequency analyses for the demographics and mean and standard deviation statistics on the participants' accountability responses as measured by the survey. The qualitative nature of the focus group allowed for richer insight of the data collected in the survey phase. Appendix B presents the questions used in the focus groups. Content analysis was used to identify common themes or patterns in the qualitative data from the focus groups. The researcher organized the themes into coherent categories, and interpreted the data to attach meaning and significance. A second reader was used to review the data analysis for the two groups to determine reliability of the coding. The researcher compared the interview themes identified by the researcher and the second reader determining approximately 85% reliability.

### **Summary**

The chapter provided an overview of the research methodology consisting of the research design, purpose, sample and setting for the data collection. The chapter also discussed the administration and data analysis procedures used to answer the hypothesis. Chapter 4 provides the results of the analysis.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

This research project examined the attitudes and beliefs about accountability of employees of Hospice Care of California. Three research questions were examined:

1. Does the meaning of “accountability” differ across Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennial team members?
2. Does a difference in meaning detrimentally affect accountability in teams?
3. Do tight knit teams result in higher accountability?

This chapter presents the results of the study. The first section presents the quantitative data collected by a questionnaire done in person and online. The second section presents the qualitative data collected during two face-to-face focus groups.

#### **Survey Findings**

For the 43 employees who completed the survey, the participant demographics are shown in Table 1. Overall, there were 43 employees that answered the demographics, however some of questions were not answered by all 43 people, such as “frequency with the team” was only answered by forty people, and other questions were only answered by forty two members with questions left blank. The demographics did show that the majority of the employees worked with a team and the company between one to five years at a branch location. Most teams had between six to fifteen people on their team with a mixture between females and males, as well as a variety of age ranges. This survey had eleven Millennial, eight Generation X and twenty-four Baby Boomers, totaling 43 participants in the survey.

**Table 1*****Participant Demographics***

Variable Category	N	% of Sample
Gender		
Male (1)	11	25.6
Female (2)	32	74.4
Age		
Millennial 21-34 (1)	11	25.6
Generation X 35-50 (2)	8	18.6
Baby Boomers 52-70 (3)	24	55.8
Location		
HQ (1)	5	11.9
Brand/Field (2)	35	83.3
Home (3)	2	4.8
Team		
No (1)	3	6.9
Yes (2)	40	93
Time with Team		
Less than 1 yr (1)	10	23.3
1-5 yrs. (2)	14	32.6
6-10 yrs. (3)	7	16.3
11+ yrs. (4)	12	28
Frequency with Team		
Daily (1)	5	12.5
Weekly (2)	13	32.5
Monthly (3)	14	35
Other (4)	8	20
Number of People on Team		
2-5 (1)	8	21.6
6-10 (2)	13	35.1
11-15 (3)	13	35.1
16+(4)	3	8.1
Time with Company		
Less than 1 yr. (1)	6	15.4
1-5 yrs. (2)	14	35.9
6-10 yrs. (3)	7	17.9
11-15 yrs. (4)	5	12.8
16+ yrs. (5)	7	17.9

Next, Table 2 breaks down the three generations by the five categories depicted in the survey questions. Mean and SD are presented for each section and generation.

Detailed results for these categories are presented in the remainder of this section..

**Table 2**

***Drivers in Accountability***

Generation	N	Organization	Supervision	Goals and Recognition	Team	Commitment
Millenials	11	Mean: 4.02 SD:.81	Mean: 3.91 SD: .93	Mean:3.84 SD:.82	Mean:4.10 SD:.75	Mean: 4.70 SD:.46
Generation X	8	Mean: 4.01 SD: .88	Mean:3.99 SD: .94	Mean: 3.87 SD: .82	Mean: 4.14 SD: .73	Mean: 4.64 SD: .48
Baby Boomers	24	Mean: 4.05 SD: .82	Mean: 3.93 SD:.93	Mean:3.84 SD:.82	Mean: 4.12 SD: .74	Mean: 4.70 SD: .46

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

Some differences in mean scores appear to be evident; however, the small sample size prevented further statistical analysis of these results. The remainder of this section presents the quantitative results broken down by Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers.

A likert scale was used to determine the measurement from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1).

**Organization.** Table 3 presents the results for Organizational Accountability, an important ingredient for team accountability, because accountability is modeled from the top and trickles down to management and team members. The benchmark are numbers 4 (agreed) and 5 (strongly agreed), which represents 80% and above for good to high accountability on a team. Below number 3, which represents 75% and below are opportunities for improvement to achieve more accountability by the individuals in the team according to FirstStep OD & Training consulting firm's standards.

**Table 3**  
***Organizational Accountability***

Participant Number	1. I felt comfortable in the organization and feel it is a good "fit" for me	2. Management makes most decisions that employees follow
<b>Millennials</b>		
1	4	4
7	5	4
9	5	4
18	4	4
23	4	5
26	4	4
27	1	2
28	3	3
29	4	4
31	1	2
42	4	4
<b>Generation X</b>		
4	5	4
5	5	4
12	5	5
13	5	4
15	4	4
16	5	4
22	4	3
38	4	5
<b>Baby Boomers</b>		
2	4	4
3	4	4
6	4	4
8	5	5
10	4	4
11	4	4
14	4	3
17	4	4
19	4	4
20	5	5
22	4	4
24	4	4
25	4	4
30	4	4
32	5	5
33	3	4
34	4	5
35	4	4
36	4	5
37	2	4
39	4	5
40	4	4
41	4	4
43	5	5

***Q1. I feel comfortable in the organization and feel it is a good fit for me.*** Eighty-eight percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Eight of 11 Millennials (73%) gave a 4 or 5 and 100% of Gen X and 92% of Baby Boomers reported comfort and fit in the organization. It appears Gen X have the highest comfort level, however all three generations are above average, indicating that they have a level of trust and commitment in their team, because those are the people an individual would have the most interaction with throughout the day during work.

***Q2. Management makes most decisions and employees follow.*** Eighty-six percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this statement, meaning a 4 or 5 in their answers with 73% of Millennials, 88% of Gen X, and 96% of Baby Boomers feel management makes most decisions. This indicates the organization has a high power distance. As research shows, three aspects of culture influence accountability in organizations: 1. Individualism–collectivism, 2. Cultural tightness–looseness, and 3. Hierarchy–egalitarianism or known as power distance (Gelfand, Lim, & Raver, 2004). Another way of looking at power distance is the influence/power/control exerted by the hierarchical structure. High power distance means employees to feel less empowered to express their individualism and creativity. Other research suggests when hierarchical power may not be as strong throughout the organization, teams become more powerful in controlling behavior, meaning Hospice Care of California teams do not have as much control over accountability in their team because of the high power distance in the organization.

**Supervision.** Table 4 presents the results for Accountability within Management. This was assessed using survey questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 20.

Table 4

*Accountability within Management*

Participant Number	3. My direct supervisor is a good role model for accountability	4. My direct supervisor regularly checks on my work and tells me how I am doing	5. My direct supervisor takes time to develop my skills and knowledge	6. I have a positive work relationship with my direct supervisor	7. My direct supervisor and I work together to set my performance goals	20. I look forward to receiving feedback when I finish an assignment
<b>Millennials</b>						
1	3	4	3	3	2	4
7	4	3	3	4	3	5
9	5	5	5	5	4	5
18	5	5	5	5	4	5
23	4	4	4	4	4	4
26	4	4	4	4	4	4
27	1	5	3	4	4	4
28	3	2	2	4	3	4
29	5	4	4	5	4	4
31	2	2	2	2	2	2
42	5	3	3	5	3	3
<b>Generation X</b>						
4	5	5	5	5	5	5
5	5	4	4	5	5	4
12	5	5	5	5	5	5
13	4	4	4	4	4	4
15	4	4	4	4	4	3
16	5	5	4	5	3	5
22	5	5	5	5	5	4
38	5	5	5	5	5	4
<b>Baby Boomers</b>						
2	3	4	4	4	3	4
3	3	4	2	4	3	4
6	4	4	4	4	4	3
8	5	5	5	5	5	5
10	4	2	2	4	3	2
11	4	4	4	4	4	4
14	4	4	4	4	4	4
17	4	3	3	4	2	4
19	4	4	4	4	4	3
20	5	5	5	5	5	5
22	5	5	5	5	5	4
24	3	3	2	4	3	2
25	4	3	4	4	4	3
30	4	4	3	4	4	3
32	5	5	4	5	4	3
33	5	3	4	4	4	3
34	4	5	4	4	4	4
35	3	3	3	3	3	4
36	4	4	3	4	4	3

Participant Number	3. My direct supervisor is a good role model for accountability	4. My direct supervisor regularly checks on my work and tells me how I am doing	5. My direct supervisor takes time to develop my skills and knowledge	6. I have a positive work relationship with my direct supervisor	7. My direct supervisor and I work together to set my performance goals	20. I look forward to receiving feedback when I finish an assignment
37	2	2	3	3	2	4
39	4	3	3	4	1	3
40	4	3	4	4	3	3
41	5	4	4	4	4	4
43	5	4	3	5	4	4

**Q3. My direct supervisor is a good role model for accountability.** Sixty-four percent of Millennials, 100% of Gen X and 79% of Baby Boomers gave a 4 or 5 to thinking that their manager at Hospice Care of California models accountability. When supervisors are liked and trusted by their team members, the team member is more willing to go the “extra mile” to impress their supervisor by getting the work done they committed to achieving. Lencioni (2005) stated, “For accountability to become a part of a team's culture, it has to be modeled by the leader, [and] the leader's actions are so important when it comes to setting a tone” (pp. 62-63).

**Q4. My direct supervisor regularly checks on my work and tells me how I am doing.** Sixty-four percent of Millennials, 100% of Gen X, and 71% of Baby Boomers gave a 4 or 5 to believing their direct supervisor regularly checks on their work and gives feedback. Employees appear to prefer that their managers check in on their progress in order to give support, when the employee needs it. Accountability can increase when managers show genuine interest and frequently have conversations around the work being done. In the focus group, a team member quoted “it shows they care”.

**Q5. My direct supervisor takes time to develop my skills and knowledge.** Forty-five percent of Millennials, 100% of Gen X and 58% of Baby Boomers gave a 4 or 5 to

the question that direct supervisors take time to develop skills and knowledge. Nearly half of the overall respondents (48.7%) have been with the company for six or more years. It is highly likely that they know their jobs well and do not need much help from their supervisors, given their experience levels. On the other hand, 51.3%, slightly more than half have been with the company for less than 5 years and of those 15.4% have been with the company for less than a year. It is likely that these newer employees can benefit from help from their supervisors to build their knowledge and skillset. However, employees who have been with the company for a while, could certainly benefit from re-learning or getting refreshed in certain areas in the company to continuing advancing their skills and knowledge to further develop, as well as not get bored. Millennials responded the lowest in their supervisor taking time to develop their skills and knowledge. Research implies that Millennials are achievement oriented and this response reiterates Millennials want to further develop skills, in order to achieve more. As well, research suggests that if accountability is to be maintained for an employee's performance, employees need to have a solid understanding of what is expected of them from their very first day of employment. At a minimum, organizations must provide written policies for workforce and career development, specific job requirements, organizational regulations governing promotion and advancement, as well as clear expectations for employee performance and behavior.

***Q6. I have a positive work relationship with my direct supervisor.*** Eighty-two percent of Millennials, 100% of Gen X and 92% of Baby Boomers answered with a 4 or 5 to having a positive relationship with their direct manager. When a team member thinks positively of their supervisor, research shows there is respect and a level of trust, as well as the need to want to be accountable to look good for higher superiors.

***Q7. My direct supervisor and I work together to set my performance goals.***

Fifty-five percent of Millennials, 88% of Gen X, and 63% of Baby Boomers responded with a 4 or 5 to working together with their supervisor to set performance goals. Once again, Millennial's score the lowest, which might imply that Millennials are seeking partnership in goal setting. In order to be accountable for results, have alignment and track accordingly, it is important for managers and team members to collaborate in order to have a clear understanding of what is expected in their performance.

***Q.20 I look forward to receiving feedback when I finish an assignment.*** Nine of 11 Millennials (82%) 88% of Gen X, 54% of Baby Boomers responded that they receive feedback upon completing an assignment, indicating room for improvement for team members to learn from their mistakes to be better moving forward.

**Goals and recognition.** Table 5 presents the results for Goals and Recognition in Accountability. This category was assessed using survey questions 8, 9, and 10.

***Q8. I believe my performance goals are realistic and achievable.*** The majority of participants (91% Millennials, 100% Gen X, 75% Baby Boomers) agreed or strongly agreed they were aware of their goals and found them attainable, showing that the organization and team member are working together to make realistic goals. When rewards and recognition are consistent with effort and results, there are effective motivators to increase accountability.

***Q9. The ratings I receive on my performance appraisal accurately reflect my work and results.*** The majority of participants (82% Millennials, 88% Gen X, 75% Baby Boomers) agreed or strongly agreed they receive performance appraisals that accurately reflect their work and results. Fairness is a driver in accountability and suggests team members are treated equally.

Table 5

*Goals and Recognition in Accountability*

Participant Number	8. I believe my performance goals are realistic and achievable	9. The ratings I receive on my performance appraisal accurately reflect my work and results	10. The rewards and recognition offered by the organization motivate me to do well
<b>Millennials</b>			
1	3	3	4
7	4	3	4
9	4	5	5
18	4	5	4
23	4	4	4
26	5	4	4
27	4	4	1
28	4	4	2
29	4	4	3
31	4	4	2
42	4	5	5
<b>Generation X</b>			
4	4	5	5
5	5	4	5
12	5	5	5
13	4	4	4
15	4	4	4
16	4	3	4
22	5	4	4
38	5	4	4
<b>Baby Boomers</b>			
2	4	4	3
3	4	4	2
6	4	4	3
8	5	3	4
10	3	3	3
11	4	4	4
14	4	4	4
17	3	4	3
19	4	4	3
20	5	5	5
22	4	4	4
24	2	4	2
25	4	4	2
30	4	4	3
32	3	4	5
33	4	3	3
34	2	4	4
35	4	4	4
36	4	4	4
37	2	3	3
39	4	3	2
40	4	4	3
41	5	4	3
43	4	3	4

***Q10. The rewards and recognition offered by the organization motivate me to do well.*** Overall, 64% of Millennials, 88% of Gen Xers, and 42% of Baby Boomers agreed that the rewards and recognitions offered by the organization are motivational to help the individual do well. It appears that Millennials and Baby Boomers are not as satisfied as Gen X with the way the organization rewards and recognizes their employees. The research indicates that when rewards and recognition are salient to individuals, they are likely to strive to attain them and be more accountable.

**Teams.** Table 6 presents the results for Accountability in Teams. This was assessed using survey questions 11-19.

***Q11. I have two or more close friends within my team.*** Fifty-five percent of Millennials, 75% of Gen X, and 57% of Baby Boomers gave a 4 or 5 agreeing that they having two or more close friends on their work team. This is an area to be addressed, as research strongly suggests that a primary factor in establishing and maintaining accountability are close relationships within teams.

***Q12. My coworkers monitor my performance and provide feedback to help me improve.*** Sixty-four percent of Millennials, 75% of Gen X, and 46% of Baby Boomers agree or strongly agreed that this as an area of improvement, to create check-ins on work performance to develop individuals to be more effective in their team.

***Q13. I have a strong commitment and sense of obligation to not let down my coworkers.*** All Millennials and Gen Xers and 96% of Baby Boomers agreed with having a strong commitment and sense of obligation to not let down coworkers. This indicated how important it is for team members to follow through with their promises and not let

down people close to them, which might jeopardize their reputation within the team and therefore accountability becomes higher to not lose face with teammates.

**Table 6**  
*Accountability in Teams*

Participant Number	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.
<b>Millennials</b>									
1	4	2	5	3	2	4	3	4	4
7	3	3	5	4	4	3	5	5	5
9	4	3	5	3	3	3	3	4	4
18	3	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4
23	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	5
26	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5
27	1	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	4
28	5	4	5	3	4	4	2	5	4
29	2	3	5	2	5	4	4	5	5
31	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
42	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	5	4
<b>Generation X</b>									
4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
5	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	4
12	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
13	4	4	4	3	4	5	4	4	4
15	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
16	2	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5
22	3	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	4
38	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>Baby Boomers</b>									
2	5	3	5	4	4	3	5	5	5
3	5	2	5	4	4	3	5	5	5
6	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
8	3	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	5
10	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
11	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
14	3	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	4
17		3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
19	4	3	5	3	4	4	4	4	4
20	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
22	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
24	3	2	4	4	3	3	4	4	4
25	3	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
30	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4
32	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5
33	2	3	4	4	5	4	5	5	4
34	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	4	4
35	3	3	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
36	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
37	5	2	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
39	3	3	5	5	4	4	4	4	4
40	3	3	2	3	5	4	4	4	3
41	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
43	4	4	5	5	4	3	5	5	4

***Q14. There is a high level of trust among members of my team.*** Sixty-four percent of Millennials, 88% of Gen X, and 79% of Baby Boomers gave a 4 or 5 to agree in having trust within their team. Trust is the basic foundation in order to have healthy conflict, commitment, accountability, and results according to Lecioni's (2005) model.

***Q15. I am clear about my role on the team.*** It appears that almost everyone at Hospice Care of California has a clear understanding of his or her role. 91% of respondents answered this statement favorably, 82% of Millennial, 100% of Gen X, and 92% of Baby Boomers gave a 4 or 5 answer. Role clarity allows expectations to be met and delegation of tasks for a balance in the team.

***Q16. I am comfortable being confronted by my team members if I am not meeting expectations.*** Seventy-three percent of Millennials, 100% of Gen X, and 83% of Baby Boomers gave a 4 or 5, meaning that relationships for Millennials could be further developed in order to feel comfortable with a team member in order to be able to communicate openly about a team member's mistake.

***Q17. All team members are expected to do their job well.*** Seventy-three percent of Millennials and all Gen Xers and Baby Boomers felt ownership and answerability to their role and to ensuring their contribution to the team.

***Q18. I believe it is very important for employees to meet or exceed their goals.*** Research shows that participants approach tasks and set goals differently according to accountability conditions. The survey indicates that 100% of Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers answered strongly agree (5) or agree (4), acknowledging that every team member knows the importance of their teammates achieving or exceeding their set goals.

***Q19. I believe I am respected by my coworkers for the work I do.*** All Millennials, 100% of Gen X, and 96% of Baby Boomers gave a 4 or 5 to agree that they are respected

by coworkers for the work that is done by them, which shows a level of trust and appreciation within the team.

**Commitment.** Table 7 presents the findings for Team Commitment. This was assessed using survey questions 21 and 22.

***Q21. I feel a personal obligation to do my job at a very high level.*** All participants found value in performing their job to their greatest potential. Thus the three generations are able to delegate the proper work load among team members and create shared responsibility in the accountability of success, individually and within a team.

***Q22. I feel a strong commitment and sense of obligation to not let down my team.*** All Millennials, Gen Xers, and Baby Boomers responded with 4 or 5, showing they agree with having a sense of commitment to their team. Research shows that people have a strong desire to be viewed favorably by others, which suggests a driver to the obligation to not let team members down, which creates team members to be accountable to each other.

**Table 7**  
***Team Commitment***

Participant Number	21. I feel a personal obligation to do my job at a very high level	22. I feel a strong commitment and sense of obligation to not let down my team
<b>Millennial</b>		
1	5	5
7	5	5
9	5	5
18	5	5
23	5	5
26	5	5
27	5	5
28	5	5
29	5	5
31	5	5
42	5	5
<b>Generation X</b>		
4	5	5
5	5	5
12	5	5
13	4	4
15	4	4
16	5	5
22	4	5
38	5	5
<b>Baby Boomer</b>		
2	5	5
3	5	5
6	4	4
8	5	5
10	4	4
11	4	4
14	4	5
17	5	4
19	4	5
20	5	5
22	4	4
24	4	5
25	4	4
30	4	4
32	5	5
33	5	5
34	4	4
35	5	5
36	4	4
37	5	5
39	5	5
40	5	5
41	5	5
43	5	5

**Accountability within teams.** In order to explore the research question on accountability in different generations (Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers), the accountability drivers, such as the organization, supervision, team dynamics and commitment as discussed in various ways throughout research were put into questions to ask the different generations their response in regards to themselves and in the team.

To test the research questions if employees of Hospice Care of California demonstrate greater accountability within tight knit teams, the researcher used questions on the survey to address the longevity in the team, frequency of the team meeting, levels of trust within the team and having two or more close friends within the team. The responses showed that more than half, 50-75% of employees have two or more friends on their team and that there is a level of trust within the team. Generational breakdown of time with teams and frequency of meetings are Millennials had 4 out of 11 under one year with their team, 5 out of 11 with one to five years with their team and 2 out of 11 for 6-10 years with their team.

Millennials mostly met monthly with 4 out of 11, 3 out of 11 met weekly and 3 out of 11 met some other amount of time. The lowest scoring Millennial has been with the company under a year and mentioned the team meets some other amount of time than specified. Gen X has 6 out of 8 that have been with their team for one to five years and 3 out of 8 that have been with the team under one year. 3 out of 8 Gen X meet daily for team meetings, 2 out of 8 meet weekly, 1 out of 8 meets monthly and 1 out of 8 meets some other amount of time not specified.

In regards to Baby Boomers, there are twenty-four employees that surveyed, which means a larger sampler size, however only twenty-two Baby Boomers answered these demographics on longevity in their team. Baby Boomers are more diverse with 2

out of 22 with their team for under one year, 4 out of 22 with their team for one to five years, 5 out of 22 for six to ten years and majority have been on their team for over eleven plus years with 11 out of 22. Baby Boomers had 21 out of 24 respondents for frequency of team meetings. 8 out of 21 Baby Boomers meet with their team weekly, 9 out of 21 meet with their team monthly, 2 out of 21 meet daily or other. The data represents that Baby Boomers had the most time on their team and met monthly. However, as answers showed their accountability to their team or individually seemed to be lower than Gen X. Gen X mostly met weekly with their teams

### **Focus Group Findings**

A diverse group of thirteen employees were chosen by the researcher to participate in the two focus groups. The demographics of the employees interviewed ranged in age, gender, and position. The majority of participants agreed that accountability is important in the organization, believed their team had accountability, age didn't matter for accountability and felt connected with their team members.

The focus groups varied with one focus group consisting of people from a variety of teams and the other group consisting of an entire team. The focus groups were intended to further examine the research questions concerning the difference in accountability across mixed generations and if tightly knit teams increased accountability.

**Mixed generation accountability.** Subjects participating in the focus groups identified four main concepts in order to have accountability within their team and in the organization: support, respect, communication, and education. Both focus groups reported that support is needed from peers, management and the leadership in the organization to achieve accountability within projects. One of the participants noted, “we

are professionals, a team and a family, we support each other”. Respect is crucial and shows that the individual is valued, therefore creating a willingness to work harder to accomplish team and organizational goals. For instance, a manager, who is Generation Y/Millennials reacted about her age difference in the team, and then a Baby Boomer responded to the comment, “we respect the fact that you respect us, we are here to help you grow and help the company. “ To have accountability to successfully complete a project/assignment, communication must relay the message in a positive way to be heard positively and to set realistic expectations as to attitude. A participant noted, “attitude makes a big difference, the generational gap does not matter”. Lastly, education in the organization creates alignment within the team to have a common purpose and be aware of what needs to be done to achieve the right results.

**Tight-knit teams.** Subjects participating in both focus groups responded that there was little time outside of work to have social gatherings, because of exhaustion due to overwork. A few participants did mention they have 2-3 friends they would “hang out with” outside of work hours or during lunch breaks when time allowed. However, during work hours in their team and within the department, there is a “clan” culture, meaning the employees in the organization feel like family. Furthermore, the teams mentioned they respected each other and were grateful of one another and the support provided. For example, one participant commented, “everybody has a piece of the pie to take care of, if we can’t handle it, we ask for help”. The role and responsibility in the team is clear. If someone on the team makes a mistake, the team member said, “ we will be forgiven and we move forward”. Overall, both focus groups continually reiterated that the people in the organization were the ones who make the difference at the team or department level, not upper management or leadership at the headquarters in Tennessee.

## **Summary**

The findings provided insight as to the influencers for Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers to be accountable to their teams and the organization. Some differences in mean scores appear to be evident, however, the small sample size prevented further statistical analysis of these results. Also, certain questions were left blank for the accountability survey, shown on the table, which could have skewed data. Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions and implications of this research. It also describes the study's limitations and offers recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

This chapter provides a summary of the findings from this study and how they can be used. It discusses the study limitations and future research opportunities. As well, Chapter 5 addresses how the findings from this study will add to the current literature related to this topic, concluding with an overall summary of the research.

### **Summary of Findings**

In general, the findings of this study did not show a large difference generationally in the meaning of accountability in team environments. However, there are minor differences, because as stated in Chapter 1, the generations have different characteristics when it comes to attitudes and outlook, such as goal setting, as well as learning and development. Since there were no major generational differences in the meaning of accountability, then research question number two, regarding the affect of differences is moot. Tight knit teams did make a difference in accountability levels in the team dynamics because of a sense of obligation to not let the team member down as shown in Tables 6 and 7. The findings of this study can be used by Hospice Care of California in numerous ways. As Table 3, Question 2 displays in Chapter 4, the organization can start to empower the employees more by allowing them to have responsibility to make more decisions to increase accountability within teams. The literature indicates strong correlation with autonomy to make decisions to increase higher levels of accountability within teams. Research suggests when hierarchical power may not be as strong throughout the organization, teams become more powerful in controlling behavior, meaning Hospice Care of California teams do not have as much control over accountability in their team because of the high power distance in the organization. As

well, according to the two focus group, there needs to be more communication and education around what is expected in order to meet the requirements of deadlines and be held accountable for the work that needs to be done. For instance, in Table 4, Question 5 the low results by Millennials and Baby Boomers suggest that Hospice Care of California has an opportunity to further develop employee skills and knowledge within their role. An employee can only be held accountable and measured for their performance when the employee has a clear understanding of the job descriptions, supervisor expectations, and performance reviews.

### **Study Limitations**

The study was limited by a variety of factors. The survey was collected in a folder, which upper management then gave to the researcher. There was a possibility of skewed data because of the low level of confidentiality for the respondents. As well, certain questions were left blank in the demographics and survey questions, creating different numbers in data collection for each question. The external validity was limited because of the narrow geographic region, the selection of subjects from one office of Hospice Care of California and from a single employer. As the daughter of one of the employees at the organization, potential research bias could be an additional limiting factor. However, confidentiality was reiterated numerous times with no names addressed on the survey or in the focus groups, allowing a level of ambiguity in who answered questions. The focus groups were limited to thirty minutes by the main contact at Hospice Care of California. This caused the dialogue to be limited for each question and did not allow time at the end to review and clarify accuracy and interpretation by the researcher. Another limitation was the number of participants in the survey and the focus group, only allowing a small percentage of feedback from teams throughout the organization.

**Further Research**

The study on accountability can also be viewed with gender types to see if males versus females have a difference in accountability in their team or in the organization. A replication of this study can be done in other industries, besides healthcare, and with a larger sample size and in different regions in order to generalize results and see if any generational differences might emerge. A study on accountability examining the type of culture the organization has would be an interesting study to explore further. This researcher only touched on power distance and tight knit teams, which can influence the culture on accountability.

**Summary**

The results of this study were relatively consistent with current literature on accountability and individual and team performance. Additionally, this study expanded accountability research by looking at the impact of different generations in team make-up. Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research were identified.

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## Appendix A: Participant Survey

### Demographics

1. Gender: a. Male b. Female
  
2. Age: a.15-20 b. 21-34 c.35-50 d. 51-69 e.70+
  
3. Position a. Executive Officer b. Manager c. Supervisor/ Team Lead d. Employee/ Team Member
  
4. Type of Employment a.Full-time b. Part-time c.Temporary
  
5. In what department do you work?
  
6. Where do you work? a.Headquarters b. Field/Branch Office c.Home
  
7. Is your work group or department called a team? a.Yes b. No
  
8. How long have you been on your team? a.< 1 year b. 1-5 years c.6-10 years d. 11+ years
  
9. How often does your team meet? a.Daily b. Weekly c. Monthly d. Other\_\_\_\_\_
  
10. How many people are on your team? a. 2-5 b. 6-10 c. 11-15 d. 16+
  
11. How long have you been at your present company? a. <1 year b. 1-5 years c. 6-10 years d. 11-15 years e. 16+ years

### Statements

1. I feel comfortable in the organization and feel it is a good “fit” for me  

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	----------	---------------------------	-------	----------------
  
2. Management makes most decisions that employees follow  

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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3. My direct supervisor is a good role model for accountability  

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	----------	---------------------------	-------	----------------

4. My direct supervisor regularly checks on my work and tells me how I am doing  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
5. My direct supervisor takes time to develop my skills and knowledge  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
6. I have a positive work relationship with my direct supervisor  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
7. My direct supervisor and I work together to set my performance goals  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
8. I believe my performance goals are realistic and achievable  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
9. The ratings I receive on my performance appraisal accurately reflect my work and results  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
10. The rewards and recognition offered by the organization motivate me to do well  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
11. I have two or more close friends within in my team  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
12. My coworkers monitor my performance and provide feedback to help me improve  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
13. I have a strong commitment and sense of obligation to not let down my coworkers  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
14. There is a high level of trust among members of my team  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

15. I am clear about what my role is on this team  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
16. I am comfortable being confronted by my team members if I am not meeting expectations  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
17. All team members are expected to do their jobs well  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
18. I believe it is very important for employees to meet or exceed their goals  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
19. I believe I am respected by my coworkers for the work I do  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
20. I look forward to receiving feedback when I finish an assignment  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
21. I feel a personal obligation to do my job at a very high level  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree
22. I feel a strong commitment and sense of obligation to not let down my team  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

## Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

### Introduction

1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word “accountability”?
2. How many of you feel it is important to be accountable at work?
3. At the organization, how have you experienced accountability in your team?
4. What is your definition of a team?

### Transition

5. What do you like most about the organization?
6. What does a positive work relationship look like?
7. How often are you and your manager checking in on your goals?

### Key

8. What makes you stay with the organization?
9. Do you trust and feel safe in your team?
10. How many people in your team do you have a personal relationship outside of work? Or even in at work that you know you can count on?
11. Think back on a time when you were on team that had high accountability, what did that look like?
12. How would you make people accountable in a team?

### Close

13. Have we missed anything that would like to be added?