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**THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON INDIVIDUALS'
DECISIONS TO JOIN, STAY, OR LEAVE AN ORGANIZATION**

**A Research Project
Presented to the Faculty of
The George L. Graziadio
School of Business and Management
Pepperdine University**

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

**by
Maryam Marzara
August 2016**

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This research project, completed by

MARYAM MARZARA

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

Organizational culture has been a topic of interest throughout all industries and has become a phrase studied in business and academic literature. With the Millennial generation now in the workforce, organizations employ workers of various age groups and generations. With increased scrutiny on organizational culture, the widely varying age ranges of employees, and a competitive workforce, it is not surprising that organizations are considering the role their organizational cultures play in both recruitment and retention. This case study examined the impact of organizational culture on workers' decisions to join, stay, or leave an organization. This study included an examination of literature on gender and generational needs, differences, and similarities. Additionally, this case study examined the extent to which organizational culture plays a role in workers' decision-making processes. The qualitative data used to support this case study was collected from interviews with a gender-balanced sample of 12 individuals (four Baby Boomers, four Generation X participants, and four Generation Y participants). Although the interview questions were consistent across participants, questions were open-ended to allow for emergent dialogue. After the interviews were completed, the data were analyzed to identify themes. This case study finished with summarizing the key themes found in the qualitative data that supported or refuted the literature review. Study limitations, conclusions, and recommendations also were identified.

Acknowledgements

I would like to first thank my family—specifically my mother, father, and grandmother—for their support and love throughout my entire life and, especially, the last two years. Your love and encouragement has been immeasurably helpful.

Thanks also to my friends, who stayed patient and understanding with me when I couldn't always be present because of the time and commitment I made the last 2 years towards myself and school.

Thank you to the faculty of Pepperdine University for their guidance and leadership throughout my research—specifically, my advisor, Dr. Alexandra Anna, and Dr. Julie Chesley. Both of you helped me stay focused and helped me take this research piece by piece. Thank you to my second reader, Dr. Gary Mangiofico, for your contribution. Thank you to my learning group consultant, Jeff McCollum, for always sharing his wisdom, leadership, guidance, and support throughout the last 2 years. Additionally, I want to say thank you to my cohort, Rho Prime, for giving me motivation to push through my thesis. Also, I want to thank Sara Mailloux for spending almost every Tuesday evening for our “Thesis Tuesday” dates to ensure we held each other accountable, cheered each other along throughout the research process, and provided some comic relief after what felt like spending hours looking into a computer screen after a full day of work. Thank you to Lisa Voight for always reminding me that I can do this! Thank you to my learning group, INSPIRO, for sending reminders to each other to stay on track with our thesis.

Thank you to my colleagues at work who have constantly heard me talk about my thesis and have provided me grace if my brain froze during the better half of a morning meeting after spending the entire previous evening working on my thesis.

Thank you to the 12 participants that shared their stories with me. The most fun, engaging, and meaningful part of this entire process was hearing your personal stories.

And, last, but definitely not least, thank you to God for providing me with such an incredible 2-year journey and introducing me to the wonderful MSOD Community that I am lucky to learn from and be a part of for the rest of my life. I am humbled and grateful to be part of the extended MSOD family, also known as *the long grey line. Non nobis solum.*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In a perfect-world scenario, organizations have sustained high employee satisfaction and low turnover. Every company wants to be successful while reducing costs like excessive turnover. High employee satisfaction can contribute to an organization's profitability. If high employee satisfaction and low turnover are the desired outcomes, the question is what contributes to these outcomes? What do executives and chief executive officers of organization have within their control to produce high employee satisfaction and low turnover? David Cummings, chief executive officer of Kevy, asserted that culture is a controllable factor that drives company performance and leads to profitable results. Cummings (2013) explained:

Corporate culture is the only sustainable competitive advantage completely within the control of the entrepreneur. Government, economy, competitors, weather, etc. are outside your control. What is controllable is the quality of people you work with every day. Never forget that culture wins. (p. 1)

The power that culture plays in the role of organizational performance has been studied and closely scrutinized by many leaders and researchers, such as Edgar Schein (2012) in his book titled, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. If the power of culture and its effect on company-wide performance has been evaluated, then how important is culture on an individual level? How important is the role of organizational culture when individuals decide whether to join, stay, or leave an organization?

Some say measuring culture is challenging, while others say measuring culture is straightforward. Brown (2011) asserts that measuring culture has its challenges, but that it is not impossible to do so. Silverthorne (2011) adds just how possible and straightforward

defining and measuring culture is, further pointing out the relationship that culture has with results. Professor Emeritus James L. Heskett attempts just that:

“Organization culture is not a soft concept,” he says. “Its impact on profit can be measured and quantified.” Heskett finds that as much as half of the difference in operating profit between organizations can be attributed to effective cultures. Why? “We know, for example, that engaged managers and employees are much more likely to remain in an organization, leading directly to fewer hires from outside the organization. This, in turn, results in lower wage costs for talent; lower recruiting, hiring, and training costs; and higher productivity (fewer lost sales and higher sales per employee). Higher employee continuity leads to better customer relationships that contribute to greater customer loyalty, lower marketing costs, and enhanced sales.” (as cited in Smith, 2016, p. 1)

Individuals like Professor Heskett understand the direct affiliation between strong culture and employee satisfaction as well as what behaviors lead to profitable outcomes for the company and high satisfaction for employees.

Purpose

The intent of this research was to understand and better develop the causal relationship between strong organizational culture and the impact it has on the individual’s decision to join, stay, or leave an organization. What behaviors and strategies produce high employee engagement and satisfaction? What organizational attitudes and beliefs are embedded into organizational cultures that lead employees to remain at their current company? What challenges do companies with weak organizational cultures face with retention? And lastly, how are company policies formed to reflect the company’s culture and values to attract prospective candidates?

Significance

A significant amount of research has been done to understand the impact of strong organizational culture and its effects on employee engagement, satisfaction, and turnover. Chatman (2012) points out this topic has long been of interest for researchers, stating,

“Organizational culture has been the latest and greatest fad since the 1990s with many different views getting valuable air time. . . . Researchers have argued that strong culture that align employee behavior with organizational objectives should boost performance” (p. 1).

Understanding this causal relationship allows us to recognize the real issue at hand: How important is the role of organizational culture when individuals decide to join, stay, or leave an organization? Is there a generational difference between Millennials and other generations when measuring the importance of an organization with strong cultural values? Furthermore, what is the cost of high turnover and low employee satisfaction? Hall (2013), a venture capitalist, author, and contributor to *Forbes* shared staggering statistics:

Even in a climate of business uncertainty and an unemployment rate of 7.8 percent, more than 2 million Americans are voluntarily leaving their jobs every month. The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, calls the category “Quits.” While the percentage of overall turnover has remained relatively steady at approximately 1.69 percent per month over the past decade, the number of voluntary “quits” is continuing to grow and will not be decreasing any time soon, according to the bureau. . . . A study by Harris Interactive indicates a full 74 percent of people would today consider finding a new job. The most recent Mercer’s What’s Working study says 32 percent are actively looking. The reasons for their unhappiness: They don’t like their boss: 31%, a lack of empowerment: 31%, internal politics: 35%, lack of recognition: 43%. . . . The answer to employees saying, “I’m outta here!” is for management to thoughtfully and sincerely establish an employee-focused culture. (p. 1)

This case study adds value and greater understanding to the existing literature on the relationship between organizational culture and the individual decisions to join, stay, or leave an organization. Furthermore, this study could act as a resource for leaders who want to better understand why 2 million Americans are voluntarily leaving their jobs every month. Leaders can utilize this study to understand that culture—which can, at first glance, seem challenging to measure—is the most tangible item a chief executive officer

or leader can control to make major changes for the advancement of their employees and overall health of his or her organization.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this case study was to explore how important the role of organizational culture is in respect to an individual's decision to join, stay, or leave an organization. What leads to high retention, high employee engagement, and low turnover? Is it organizational culture? This chapter reviews several areas of existing literature and research that is integrated in the ongoing conversation regarding the impact organization culture plays on whether to join, stay or leave the company.

First, the chapter explores the relationship between organizational culture and generational gaps, values, and goals. Second, the chapter examines the relationship between organizational culture and gender. Finally, the chapter draws conclusions from the integration of these two areas in the context of existing literature and research.

Organization Culture Definition

To begin, it is important to understand what organization culture means. Although several opinions exist regarding what organizational culture is, this case study focuses on the definition shared by Robbie Katanga: "Culture is how organizations 'do things'" (as cited in Watkins, 2013, p. 2).

Culture differs from standard operating procedures in that it derives from normative behavior that results from time and history together as an organization. Understanding how organizations do things around their four walls sheds light on what really is the culture of the organization. For example, at Apple, the way their products are wrapped is perfect with no wrinkles, while other company's products have excess plastic wrapping (Krogue, 2013). Apple's choice to perfectly wrap their products with no

superfluous wrapping is an example of how they do things and gives the world a better understanding of their culture of excellence and user-friendly products.

Brief History Overview

It is almost impossible to pick up a business journal without an article that relates to organizational culture and the impact it plays in competitive strategy. The popularity of the topic of organizational culture has gained a lot of attention with business leaders, students, and researchers. Ouchi and Wilkins (1985) point out that organizational culture was being studied heavily in hundreds of schools around the United States even 30 years ago. They added, “At the moment, the study of organizational culture is dominated by behavioral scientists working in the 600 schools of management in the US” (p. 469).

With this focus on organizational culture, it is important to understand the history and the meaning of the topic that is at the forefront of conversation with executives, prospective candidates, and employees themselves.

The term *organizational culture* can be traced back about 76 years ago to 1939 when Lewin, Lippitt, and White first introduced the term organizational climate in their experimental research on patterns of aggressive behavior in social climates (as cited in Bellot, 2011). However, Pettigrew was the first person to introduce the exact words of *organizational culture* in 1979 (Bellot, 2011). Yet, some may argue that the increased scrutiny around the topic of organizational culture was when Western companies started to learn the immense operational success that Japanese organizations were experiencing in the late 1970s and 1980s (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985). The initial comparative research between Western companies and the Japanese companies showed little significant differences between the two. In fact, what researchers found was the commonality of formal structures between the two Japanese and Western establishments. With this new

information, researchers began to understand that maybe the differences in national cultures have played a role in the impact of organizational culture and that has lead those Japanese firms to success. As Ouchi and Wilkins (1985) shared:

As a consequence, scholars began to examine the possibility that the different national cultures might have penetrated modern corporate forms, thus creating differences in organizational culture between, say, Nissan and General Motors. Several early studies gave credence to this approach, which led next to the possibility that even within a single national culture there might be local differences in the culture of firms, e.g. between Hewlett-Packard and ITT. (p. 458)

Understanding the background and history of the origin of organizational culture, helps give clarity on how the topic of organizational culture began.

Generational Gaps, Values, and Attitudes

A generation is described as a group of people who share birth years and substantial life and historical experiences at developmental stages. These experiences affect one's values (Westerman & Yamamura, 2007). The largest portion of the workforce includes three different generations: Baby Boomers, Generation Xers (Gen X) and Generation Ys (Gen Y or Millennial), with Gen Y being the most recent group to join the workforce.

The Baby Boomer generation encompasses the largest group among the three and is approaching retirement. This retirement phase of Baby Boomers leaves Generation X's to compete for the managerial and leadership positions that were once held by the Baby Boomers. During the next 10 years, executives expect to face a variety of challenges due to this generational cycle change, one being creating a corporate culture that attracts the best employees (Schramm, 2013). In comparison to Generation Y and the Baby Boomer generation, Generation X is significantly smaller in size, which translates to enormous competition that executives and employers will have to engage in to attract the small pool

of Gen X candidate pool. Although the Millennial generation is larger in size than Gen X, some might argue that Gen Y employees are still new to the workforce and cannot be considered for a majority of supervisory positions. In addition to Gen X being a smaller generation in comparison to Baby Boomers and Millennials, higher technical skills and educational experience add to the test of attaining the most qualified candidates and retaining those employees that are still in the organization with the right skills (Schramm, 2013).

If by definition a generation is exposed to similar life and historical experiences, then it is safe to say that, at a macro-level, a generation has common values, ergo generational culture due to the experiences they have shared and been exposed to during their developmental years. As a result, it is understandable that people of a given generation will share similar values and attitudes. However, even though values in general are common to have among all groups of people, generations may weight the importance of each value differently in comparison to other generations (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007). Although values allow individuals to judge certain events and principles, attitudes reflect how the individual is feeling in the moment about a certain topic. Both attitudes and values are what individuals bring with themselves to the work place; however, each generation has a certain value and attitude stereotype.

Each generational group has formed its own identity due to the historical events that took place during their developmental years. For example, Baby Boomers (born in 1946-1964) experienced the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement. The individuals in the Baby Boomer era were exposed to a variety of societal events that their parents and previous generations did not encounter (i.e., high divorce rates, mothers in the work force and not staying at home with their children. Because of these certain events and historical

occurrences, Baby Boomers are known to be extremely competitive, value hard work, and do not appreciate lazy behaviors. During their time frame, technology had been evolving rapidly and had developed throughout their developmental years.

In comparison, the Gen X population (born in 1965-1979) were exposed to the Iranian hostage crisis and an economic dip. Also, it was more common for both the father and mother to be working full time. Family household numbers were decreasing in size because now the woman of the house also wanted to be part of the work force. Due to both parents being in the workforce, Gen X individuals are considered to be fairly independent across the board. They consider education to be vital, especially as members of this generation witnessed their mothers joining the workforce. Technology was prevalent during the time Gen X individuals were in their developmental years.

Finally, Gen Y, born 1980-1999, are individuals who come out of a time period where data is delivered instantaneously due to the sharpened technological advances. As a result, Millennials want instantaneous feedback. Parents of Millennials have given constant continuous compliments to their children which has resulted in the stereotype of Millennials to now be perceived as impatient and recognition seekers.

The research shared above about the values and attitudes of each generation provide insight to executives to understand what the demographic of their company and organization is comprised of and to understand the needs of their organization as a whole.

As Crumpacker and Crumpacker (2007) share:

Through succession planning, an organization identifies and develops strategies aimed at reducing or eliminating existing or anticipated human capital gaps. Succession plans may include strategies that address recruitment, training and development, performance management and retention. . . . In order to best structure a succession plan that addresses organizational needs, HR should have knowledge of the demographic profile of the existing internal talent pool from which successors may be developed. (p. 349)

If organizations could create a culture to reflect the attitudes and values of the multigenerational employees, does this culture then impact the individual's decision to join, leave and/or stay in the organization?

Generations across the Board

Close scrutiny to the commonalities across generations is crucial for companies to recruit and retain the best talent across all generations. Literature shows that a valued organizational culture trait and behavior that attracts and retains talent from all generations is the notion of flexibility. As Eversole, Venneberg, and Crowder (2012) shared, "changing organizational culture to be more flexible in response to employees' non-work needs has the potential to make an organization competitive in attracting and retaining talented workers across generations" (p. 610). Although each generation has different reasons as to why they value flexibility, overall the need and desire for flexibility is a common area of focus to be addressed.

Employees desire flexibility for various reasons. By 2016, the majority of Baby Boomers will be in their mid-60s and will be approaching or will have already reached retirement age. However, some Baby Boomers are staying in the workforce and delaying retirement. Many Baby Boomers have delayed their retirement due to the 2008 recession. More Baby Boomers may retire once the economy strengthens and is sustainable. Although Baby Boomers currently are extending their time in the workforce, many still desire flexibility and alternative working hours to ease work-life conflicts (Eversole et al., 2012).

Although Gen Xers also desire flexibility at work, their reason is not because they are delaying retirement like the Baby Boomers. Gen X employees value flexibility so that

they can be with family members and stay connected with their personal lives (Eversole et al., 2012).

Millennials, the most recent generation in the work force, tend to be highly educated and comfortable with technology. Their upbringing characterized by parental nurturing has led this group to demand individual treatment and flexibility from their employers. Moreover, their knowledge of technology, means that they often can complete their work virtually and from any location. This heightens their desires and demands for flexibility.

This knowledge of generational values, attitudes, and themes illustrate a need for organizations to cultivate a culture that breeds flexibility. As Schramm (2013) stated, “The tactics most often identified by HR professionals to meet the next decade’s human capital challenges are: Providing flexible work arrangements, promoting a culture of trust, open communication and fairness” (p. 72).

When organizations create cultures that address all the generational needs within their respective company, the benefits return monetarily and emotionally for both executives and nonexecutives of an organization. The literature discussed in this chapter shows that when organizations create cultures that adopt a flexible working environment across generational needs, it generally leads to low turnover and high employee engagement.

Gender and Organizational Culture

Increasingly, parents of young children are staying in the workforce, compared to earlier generations, when mothers often opted to stay home (Catanzaro, Moore, & Marshall, 2010). Because both leaders of the household are joining the workforce, it is imperative that organizations pay careful attention to their values, particularly if the

organizational leaders want their companies to attract a diverse talent pool. Organizations that align their culture to the needs of men and women with children tend to attract and retain more candidates.

Studies show that gender plays a significant role within the individual's decision to join, stay, or leave an organization (Bellou, 2010). Females and males have been found to have different viewpoints about certain cultural features, such as teamwork, communication, and competition. When women joined the workforce in the late 1970s and 1980s, men ran American organizations and the organizational cultures were predominantly competitive. Research has shown that women prefer a culture that encompasses collaboration and equality, not competition. Catanzaro et al. (2010) found that women prefer an organizational culture that "places significant emphasis on relationships, friendliness, acceptance, and less authoritative relationships" (p. 2). It may be important for executives and business owners to understand how cultural preferences vary by gender and contemplate the implications for attracting and retaining the most qualified candidates and employees.

Gender with Recruitment and Separation

Talent acquisition professionals leverage organizational culture as a selling point to potential candidates. Those organizations that celebrate diversity can attract a wider variety of candidates. As a result, the hiring manager can choose from a larger candidate pool. Catanzaro et al. (2010) state:

The attraction process involves a job seeker's estimate of how well their personal needs and values fit the organization's culture. Gaining an understanding of the factors that can impact the attraction phase of this cycle is critical for organizations who wish to attract the most qualified applicant pool possible. (p. 2)

Understanding the personal needs and values of both male and female candidates is crucial to weave throughout the organization's culture to effectively attract the most qualified men and women.

Research further shows that turnover decisions also vary by gender (Carmeli, 2005). Women often consider themselves as having the primary responsibility for childcare and upbringing in the family. Executives who want to sustain workforce diversity and reduce turnover should carefully consider how their organizational culture supports work-family balance (Catanzaro et al., 2010).

Although research suggests that women appreciate workplaces that value connections and relationships (Catanzaro et al., 2010), men also often value relationships. Furthermore, although women leaders do not necessarily crave or have a strong preference for a competitive organizational environment compared to men, studies show that both women and men prefer a culture that shares supportive organizational values.

It is additionally possible that both men's and women's job satisfaction would be increased by having a workplace environment that is supportive of personal family culture. Higher job satisfaction has been shown to lead to higher retention (Terera & Ngirande, 2014). However, even though both genders would benefit from a workplace environment that supports personal family culture, research shows that organizations that are sensitive to a work-family balanced relationship is more important for women. As Mauno, Kinnunen, and Feldt (2012) share, "work-family issues are more salient for women, because they have been socialized to nurturing roles (motherhood) . . . family supportive organizational perceptions directly predicted higher job satisfaction" (pp. 107, 109).

Gender needs play a substantial role in producing effective organizational cultures to attract and preserve diverse talent. Understanding the necessary features that promote high employee satisfaction and low turnover among both men and women are believed to yield a significant return on investment for organizations.

Conclusions

Organizations are comprised of people of different backgrounds. Diversity among generation and gender propose that different people value a variety of different key beliefs. This diverse and multi-generational workforce presents a challenge to executives and organizations around the world (Shah, 2011). Research on organizational culture and its impact on employees' decisions to join, stay, and leave organizations indicate that employees of different generations and genders have different views. Nevertheless, flexibility remains a key tool for acquiring and retaining valuable talent. More broadly, Eversole et al. (2012) conclude based on their research that organizational culture is an important factor in attracting and retaining talent. What is crucial to the importance of a strong organizational culture is the degree to which the culture represents generational and gender needs. Awareness among the different generational and gender needs allow organizations to design their cultures to expand their ability to attract individuals to their organization and keep their talent within their company.

Chapter 3

Research Methods

This chapter describes the approach used for this case study. It begins with a restatement of the case study purpose, followed by a description of the study method.

Case Study Purpose

The purpose of this case study is to investigate how important the role of organizational culture is in relation to an individual's decision to join, stay or leave an organization. There has been extensive research on the impact of organizational culture and the themes have shared that generational and gender needs play a role in the individual's decision to join, stay or leave an organization.

Study Method

Qualitative research was selected to conduct this case study for a couple reasons: Qualitative research allows for the researcher to understand the meaning of the participants' points of view of the topic versus the understanding the researcher has from the literature and research that has already been conducted (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, the root of qualitative research is emergent and allows for the researcher to plan, but also be flexible with the flow of the interview as data is collected. Because there has been significant research done on the role of organizational culture, a qualitative approach in this case allowed for the interviewees to share their points of view. Furthermore, the questions of the interview were constructed to gain a better understanding of these views. Moreover, the emergent process of this qualitative research allowed for emergence in dialogue.

Interviews for this case study were conducted in February 2016. The following sections describe the script used for the interviews, the research setting, and administration procedures.

Interview Script

The researcher created interview questions to support the case study purpose and objectives. The researcher used the literature review findings to provide the basic structure of the interview questions, taking care to tailor the questions so they examine and analyze the impact of organizational culture on the individual's decision to join, stay, or leave an organization and how these may vary based on gender and generational cohort. The researcher read out loud the definition of organizational culture by Robbie Katanga: "Culture is how organizations 'do things'" (as cited in Watkins, 2013, p. 2).

The interview was designed to be semi-structured to allow the researcher to ask some initial questions, listen to the participant's response, and ask follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's response. The interview questions were piloted with a colleague of the researcher to confirm they were understandable to interviewees. The interview questions were as follows:

1. How long have you been in your current organization?
2. What was the reason you left your previous organization?
3. What was the reason you joined your current organization?
4. Why have you stayed with your current company?
5. What aspects of your current employer's organizational culture meet your needs?
6. What aspects of your current employer's organizational culture do not meet your needs?
7. Would you join an organization solely for the culture of the organization? Why or why not?

Participants

The research was conducted by interviewing 12 people: six males, six females, and four from each generational cohort (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics and Current Employer Characteristics

Participant	Group	Gender	Sector	Company size (Headcount)	Was previous employer in same industry?
1	BB	Female	Private	200	No
2	X	Female	Private	Less than 1,700	Yes
3	Y	Female	Private	7,500	No
4	X	Male	Private	7,500	No
5	X	Male	Private	350	No
6	Y	Male	Public	100,000	No
7	BB	Female	Public	More than 200	Yes
8	BB	Male	Public	140,000	Yes
9	Y	Female	Private	50	No
10	BB	Male	Public	150,000	No
11	Y	Male	Private	50	No
12	X	Female	Private	7,000	No

Note. BB = Baby Boomer, X = Generation X, Y = Generation Y. All participants' current companies were located in California

Administration

Initial contact with participants was made by telephone in February 2016. The researcher stated the purpose of the case study. The researcher shared that their names would be given aliases and kept confidential. Additionally, the researcher shared that involvement is voluntary and that they would need to sign an informed consent form before participating in the study. Participants also were informed that the interviews would be recorded and transcribed.

To assure that the desired distribution of participants was recruited, the researcher provided a verbal list of generations and what years each of those generations included. Each participant then selected which generation they are in based on the information

provided by the researcher. The researcher set up short telephone introductions to establish a relationship and answered any questions they had about the study. The researcher restated the purpose of the case study and also asked demographic questions of their current company and if the previous employer was in the same industry as their current employer.

Each of the 12 interviews lasted 25-45 minutes and were conducted in person or by telephone. Regardless of the setting, measures were taken to assure the participant's comfort and convenience and privacy of the conversation. The researcher only recorded the audio during the interviews and refrained from taking notes so that she could give her full attention to what the participant was sharing (Creswell, 2003). All participants were reminded that the data from the interview would be confidential and that the tapes would be stored in a secure location and destroyed after 3 years.

The transcribed interviews were coded and each participant was given an alias to protect their confidentiality. Each transcription was read by the researcher and coded to assist with the identification of potential themes. Only the researcher read the interviews. The interview data were analyzed to see if generational and gender needs affect the impact of organizational culture in an individual's decision to join, stay, or leave an organization.

Summary

This chapter presented the methods that were used by the researcher in this case study. It restated the research purpose, how participants were chosen, how data were analyzed, and how many interviews were conducted. Chapter 4 presents the results of the interview case study.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this case study was to explore the impact of organizational culture on the individual's decision to join, stay, or leave an organization. The following research questions were asked to see if the research based on the literature review in Chapter 2 accurately depicts what individuals pay attention to when deciding to join, stay, or leave an organization. This chapter reports the results gained from asking 12 male and female participants across three generations the following interview questions:

1. How long have you been in your current organization?
2. What was the reason you left your previous organization?
3. What was the reason you joined your current organization?
4. Why have you stayed with your current company?
5. What aspects of your current employer's organizational culture meet your needs?
6. What aspects of your current employer's organizational culture do not meet your needs?
7. Would you join an organization solely for the culture of the organization? Why or why not?

Before asking these questions, participants were provided with the following definition: organization "culture is how organizations 'do things'" (Katanga, as cited in Watkins, 2013, p. 2).

Decisions Based on Generational Cohort

The researcher asked each individual what their reasons were for joining, staying, or leaving their organization. While there were some differences among the answers from each generation, there were also similarities. Figure 1 depicts the themes that were shared from each generation and the commonalities between each of them.

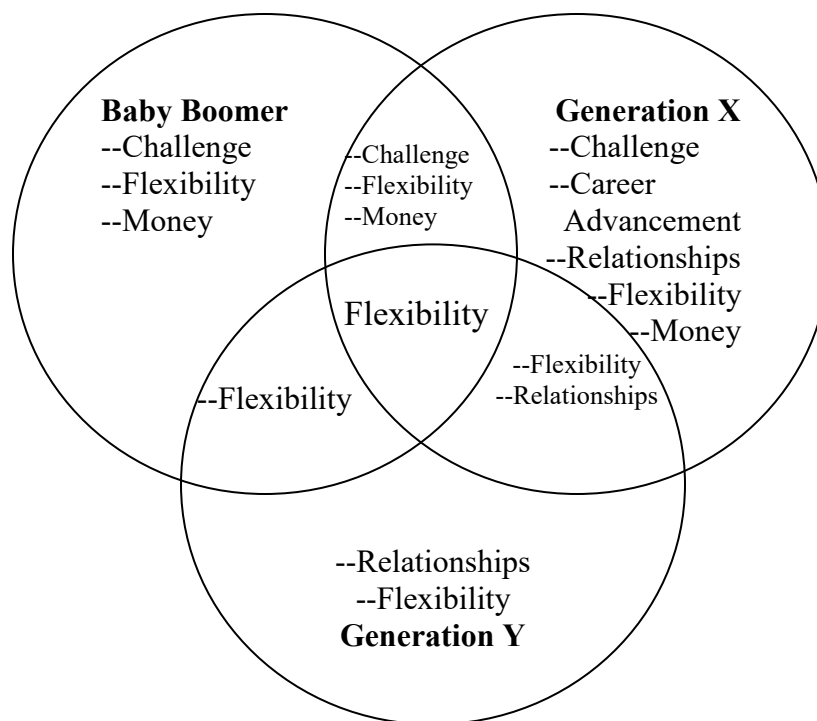


Figure 1

Unique and Shared Generational Decisions

Baby Boomer. When deciding to join their current organizations and deciding to leave their previous organizations, half of the Baby Boomer participants joined and left for fiscal reasons. When the Baby Boomer participants shared why they have stayed at their current organization, half the participants shared they have stayed because they felt challenged in their current role. One respondent shared, “very challenging, mentally challenging . . . able to work on some very tough projects.” Another Baby Boomer respondent said she has made the decision to stay at her current job for a variety of reasons and one of them is the flexibility, proximity to home, and being able to go home for breaks.

Generation X. Half the Generation X participants shared that they joined their current organization because of the opportunity for career advancement, while another

person reported joining because of a shorter commute from home and the dissatisfaction of his relationship with his former supervisor. The majority of Generation X participants shared that flexibility in hours and flexibility in commute to and from home was a significant factor of why they joined, stayed, or left their previous organization. A Generation X respondent shared she joined her current company purely because of flexibility. She negotiated to work minimal hours to spend more time at home with her children. She shared, "So about three months later, they came back to me and they said we want you part time, so it worked out."

One of the reasons half of the Generation X participants shared why they have stayed in their current organization was because they feel challenged in their current roles and their areas of responsibility. One specific respondent shared that is the number one reason she has stayed in her current role: "It's very much the challenge of the job itself." One of the four Generation X participants interviewed shared that he stayed at his current job because of monetary reasons. However, no Generation X participants reported leaving their previous job due to income. Instead, reasons included poor relationship with supervisor, had a baby, undesirable commute, and career advancement opportunity in new job.

Generation Y. When sharing the reasons why they joined and stayed at their current organization and why they left their previous organization, all Generation Y participants shared a variety of reasons, none of which were monetary. One theme identified by several Generation Y participants was flexibility. Furthermore, all four of the Generation Y participants shared that one of the reasons that led to their decision to stay at their organization was the relationship with someone else at work. Whether it was coworkers in general or their direct supervisor, all four participants shared they have

stayed because they like the people they work with or that the supervisor was nice. One respondent shared, “I’m much happier in my [current] job, I’m the sales manager for Northern Los Angeles, so the stress levels are night and day. Boss is super nice. . . . I’m always out and about, always seeing new people.”

Summary of generational decisions. Although each generation shared a variety of answers as to why they have joined, stayed, or left their previous organization, the common theme among all generations were the reasons of flexibility followed by career advancement, feeling challenged at work, and relationships with coworkers and supervisors within a minimum of two generations.

Decisions Based on Gender

Figure 2 represents both the differences and similarities between gender themes in deciding whether to join, stay, or leave an organization.

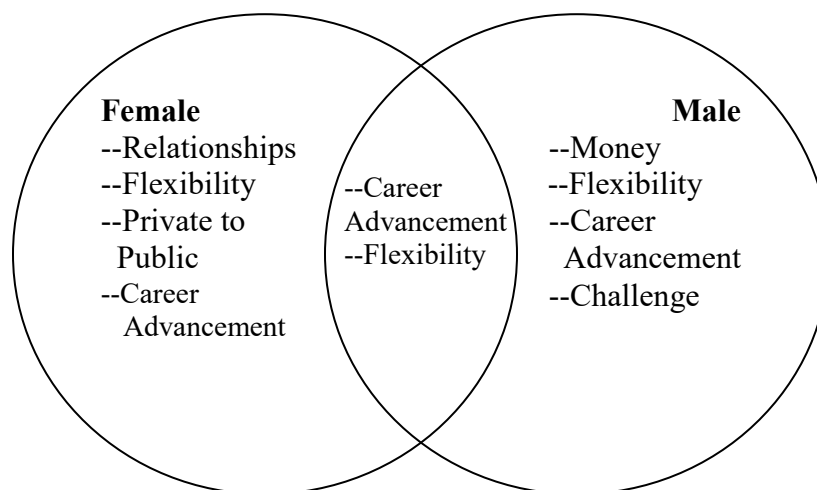


Figure 2

Unique and Shared Gender Decisions

Male. Half of the participants were male. Only two reported joining their organization for financial reasons, while others joined their organization and left their

previous organization for career advancement reasons. Two male participants added that they stayed at their current organization for a few different reasons, one of them being the subject of flexibility of their schedule and distance to and from home. The major theme of why male participants have stayed in their current organization was because they found their position to keep them challenged. The second reason male participants stayed with their current organization was for fiscal reasons.

Female. Six participants were female. While there were a variety of reasons why they joined, stayed, or left their previous organization, no one cited monetary compensation as a reason. Instead, females joined or left their previous organizations for career advancement, flexible hours, proximity to home, interaction with others outside of the office, desiring a change from the private to public sector, and because of her relationships with her supervisor and other coworkers. One respondent reported leaving her previous employer because of the poor relationship with her supervisor:

I didn't like my actual roles and my relationship with my boss. . . . I felt like she didn't kind of respect me. . . . I just think a boss needed to be more patient and give more direction.

Another respondent shared that the reason she joined her current organization was because she had the flexibility to be out on the road and not at a desk for work, "I knew that I wanted to go in a firm that wasn't an office anymore. So I kind of started looking around for that type of position."

Summary of gender decisions. While both female and male participants joined, stayed, or left their previous organization for similar reasons like career advancement, male participants shared that the financial compensation played a role in their decision, while females did not have that as a factor in their decisions at all. In contrast, female

participants voiced more reasons associated with relationships with supervisors and others.

Organizational Culture Preferences Based on Generational Cohort

Baby Boomer. Three out of four participants shared that their need for feeling challenged is currently being met. Another example for needs that were met within the Baby Boomer participants was autonomy and being able to be decision-makers. A variety of unmet needs were shared among the Baby Boomer participants, including the lack of flexibility, having to be at the desk from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and the lack of transparency with the leadership team.

Generation X. A main ingredient for needs met with the group of participants from Generation X was the need of flexibility. When asked what aspects of his current employer's organizational culture meets his need, one respondent shared: "Flexibility in time and exercising the decision-making process." Half of Generation X participants thought their current employer was meeting all their needs, while the other half of participants said their need for having the freedom to implement creative ideas and professional growth was missing at their current organization.

Generation Y. The four main themes of needs met with the group of Generation Y participants were flexibility, transparent communication, no micro-managing, and trust and support from leaders. One respondent shared a variety of his needs being met by his current employer of nearly 13 years, one example in his response was, "I feel like I'm in an environment where I have really strong managers who support me . . . encouraging place to work." This specific respondent continued to share that the only unmet need from his employer is the lack of employee diversity throughout the organization.

Organizational Culture Preferences Based on Gender

Male. The top needs that are currently being met by employers of the male participants in this case study are having both a challenging and flexible job. The unmet needs were limitations with creative strategies and lack of transparency.

Female. A variety of needs were shared that are being met and unmet by the employers of the female participants. In regard to met needs, responses ranged from benefits, development opportunities, proximity to home, work/life balance, and focus on relationships. The unmet needs responses ranged from not enough resources, lack of autonomy, and having to work at the office all day and not being able to work partially from home.

Joining an Organization Solely for the Culture

As stated above, one of the research questions asked was if the individual would join an organization solely for the culture of the organization. Of the 12 participants, 7 reported they would join an organization solely for its organizational culture and 4 reported that organizational culture would be one factor, but not the only factor for joining. Only one participant reported she would not base a job decision solely on the organization's culture.

Table 2 presents these results based on generational cohort. Generation Y participants unanimously shared they would join an organization solely for the culture of the organization. Half the Generation X participants believed that the organization's culture would be a factor in their decision, but not the only decision, whereas one reported she would join solely for culture and the remaining participant reported she would not make the joining decision solely on culture. Two Baby Boomers said they

would join an organization solely for the culture, while the remaining two said it would be a factor, but not the only factor.

Table 2

Generational Attitudes toward Accepting a Position Based on Organizational Culture

	Baby Boomer <i>N</i> = 4	Generation X <i>N</i> = 4	Generation Y <i>N</i> = 4	Total
Would join organization solely for organizational culture	2	1	4	7
Would join organization not based solely on organizational culture	0	1	0	1
Organizational culture would be one factor among others	2	2	0	4

Table 3 presents these same results by gender. Three men and four women reported they would join an organization solely for its culture.

Table 3

Gender Attitudes toward Accepting a Position Based on Organizational Culture

	Male <i>N</i> = 6	Female <i>N</i> = 6
Would join organization solely for organizational culture	3	4
Would join organization not based solely on organizational culture	0	1
Organizational culture would be one factor among others	3	1

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the qualitative analysis used to offer answers to the case study questions for the topic of the impact of organizational culture and the role it plays when individuals join, stay, or leave a company. The case study questions sought to explore if the research showed in chapter 2 accurately depicted what

the role of organizational culture is when individuals decide to join, stay, and leave an organization and if these decisions vary by generational cohort and gender.

The following and final chapter discusses implications and conclusions of the results. Chapter 5 will also discuss recommendations and address limitations in the case study data collection.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this case study was to explore the impact of organizational culture on the individual's decision to join, stay, or leave an organization. The results of this case study do not provide absolute answers; however, they offer valuable insights, leading to deeper understanding of the relationship of organizational culture and the individual's decision to join, stay, or leave an organization.

This chapter evaluates the implications and conclusions based on the participants' data that were shared in chapter 4. Additionally, this chapter addresses limitations and provides recommendations for future research. This chapter concludes with a summary of key themes learned as a result of this case study.

Conclusions and Implications

The researcher made several inferences and conclusions from listening to the interviews and analyzing the data. This research indicates that while there are differences when individuals make decisions to join, stay, or leave an organization based on their generational and gender needs, there are some similarities.

One conclusion is that all generations do value the notion of flexibility in the workplace. The literature reviewed in chapter 2 said that the single most valued trait in organization culture that attracts and retains talent from across all generations is the notion of flexibility. These results confirm past research.

The second conclusion is that Generation X employees do not want flexibility simply for the reason of having flexibility. Instead, they want it so that they can be close to home and family. The data in the participants would conclude and confirm that a majority of Generation X participants shared that they joined, stayed, or left their

previous organization because they are able to have a shorter commute to and from home and have the flexibility of hours to stay connected at home.

The third conclusion is that organizational culture plays a significant role for the majority of individuals who decide to join an organization. Seven participants said they would join an organization solely for the culture of the organization, whereas one person said she would not, and four said that organization culture plays a factor in their decision. Furthermore, the data and research conclude to show that generation Y candidates are the only candidates that unanimously say they would definitely join an organization solely for the culture of the organization and that more than half of the female population would consider joining an organization solely for the culture of the organization. This supports the research that was found in Chapter 2 regarding the relationship and importance of organizational culture with Generation Y and female employees.

The fourth conclusion is that females do not necessarily weigh compensation highly as a factor of why they join, stay, or leave an organization. From the data gathered in the case study, not a single female respondent shared anything related to compensation playing a role in their personal decisions of employment. However, the data would confirm that what plays a significant role in their decision has more to do with relationships, specifically the relationships with coworkers and supervisors. Furthermore, while more females noted supportive relationships being a factor in their decisions, a fraction of male participants also touched on the importance of strong relationships with their coworkers and supervisors. This finding also supports the review of the literature shared in chapter 2 that female employees value a workplace that has a strong cultural emphasis on connections and relationships.

In summary, these conclusions support the discussion on flexibility across different individual preferences. Furthermore, the data confirms the literature found in Chapter 2 that states the strong role organizational culture has in generating high retention and acquisition. Importantly, it would be strongly advantageous that the decision-makers and executives in organizations scrutinize their organizational culture and invest into better understanding how much of their culture celebrates the notion of flexibility.

Limitations and Recommendations

As a result of the conclusions of this study, the researcher identifies limitations to the study and makes three recommendations for the future.

1. While the researcher made every attempt to have all interviews in person, due to scheduling conflicts, some interviews were done over the phone. A future researcher and an organization wanting to learn more about the impact of organizational culture would benefit from hearing the stories of participants in person to allow for more fluid dialogue.
2. Additionally, a sample size of more than 12 participants would be beneficial to identify more patterns and themes of data. A limitation in this study is the sample size of participants. In an effort to have equal number of representation from each generation and each gender, it is recommended that a future researcher keep the equality in number even among the generations and genders interviewed.
3. It would be beneficial to gather data from the incoming generation (Generation Z) that will enter the workforce in the near future. To understand the generation, it is recommended to examine what years Generation Z falls between and what global events took place during their development years.
4. Only the researcher alone coded samples of the interviews, which is subjective to her interpretations and point of view. It is recommended that another person codes the data separately as well to avoid only one-sided explanations.
5. A recommendation, and a valuable starting point, is to collect data from all employees in the organization in the form of an employee engagement survey. In this data collection, executives and key decision-makers can analyze their state of their current organizational culture. If the data shows that the culture does not celebrate the theme of flexibility, then it would be recommended to course-correct. In contrast, if the data indicates the culture of the organization

celebrates flexibility, then the recommendation would be to expand and sustain that for long-term success.

Summary

Although this was a small case study with a limited sample, the results appear to support the literature on the role of organizational culture in an individual's decision to join, stay, or leave an organization. Although each generation and gender has its own major preferences in regard to how organizations do things, common themes appear across each group. The common threads are flexibility with hours; commute to and from home; and supportive relationships among the team, particularly between both supervisors and direct reports. Furthermore, although compensation plays a role in the decision, it is not the only factor. Similarly, while organization culture plays a significant and heavy role for the majority of potential candidates and employees in the overall decision to join, stay, or leave an organization, it may not play a role for every single person.

To conclude, it would be beneficial for organizations and their executives to understand what generations their employees are part of, what percentage of each gender is within their teams, and how they are establishing and confirming a culture that celebrates strong and supportive relationships and appreciates a culture of flexibility.

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