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Intergenerational ontology & leadership: uniting the multigenerational workforce

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INTERGENERATIONAL ONTOLOGY & LEADERSHIP:

UNITING THE MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother and sister in Jesus Christ, Mercedes. A woman whose love knows no boundaries and will forever be unparalleled. Oliver, Sadie, and Ducky – thank you for your unconditional love.

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ABSTRACT

The multigenerational workforce offers a wide landscape of knowledge and successful practices that can propel organizational success. Currently, however, only 20% of organizations have a formal, strategic program in place for fostering intergenerational interaction. By overlooking intergenerational strategies, organizations are not experiencing the tangible results derived from harnessing the strengths offered by each generation and across the generational spectrum. This dissertation focuses on building what can be termed the interactional bandwidth of cross-generational relationships through the use of ontological principles and leadership development resources: the Gallup organization's Clifton StrengthsFinder and the Myers & Briggs Foundation's Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Through addressing and understanding sources of motivation, values, communication preferences, and thought processes, individuals are able to form intricate connections with the potential to cultivate ontological security, transcendent self-actualization, meaningful work, ethics and accountability, emotional intelligence, and organizational prosperity. Facilitating intergenerational interaction offers organizations insight into better leveraging their workforce to deliver optimum results while benefiting the individuals that support them.

Keywords: intergenerational, ontology, leadership development, human capacity building

Chapter I: Introduction & Elements

Introduction

The intersection of ontology – the study of existence or the nature of being – and leadership is critical. Ontology influences and shapes how leadership occurs and develops within the individual and how leadership is communicated and contextualized throughout the organization. Individuals bring to leadership a variety of factors that are intrinsically formed by their unique character, their experiences, their particular worldview, and their values (Chandler, 2009). Additionally, "by its very nature, the leadership role positions leaders to interact with others through interpersonal discourse and activity, which impacts leaders' sociological and psychological state" (Chandler, 2009, p. 73). However, leadership practices are not reserved for the explicit, categorized and identified leadership team at the top of the organizational hierarchy; leadership and leadership development is to be practiced by every individual. Personal leadership, expressed in the professional arena, benefits both the individual and organization in an intricate way that enables and empowers individuals to actualize four core elements of leadership: "(a) integrity; (b) authenticity; (c) being committed to something bigger than oneself; and (d) being cause in the matter" (Erhard, Jensen, Zaffron, & Granger, 2015, p.5). These four elements serve as major contributors towards ontological security, which essentially means fulfilling the existential expectation and need to experience shared values (Curtin, Gallicano, & Matthews, 2010). As human beings:

> We expect a continuity in social relationships and the environment in which they take place. We are able to deal with the complexities of modern life […] precisely because we trust that our world is constant and knowable; it operates according to shared values. We take those shared values for granted, for 'the ordinary is normal, the normal is natural and

> what is natural does not need a reason' […] when our ontological security is threatened by difference, it 'puts our certainties to the test about what is normal and healthy' […] 'Thus, [what we find to be different] become[s] the "other" by which we define ourselves, which leads to the reduction of complex relations to simplified dichotomous binaries – Us versus Them – and the discourse of stereotyping.' (Curtin, et al., 2010, p. 243)

In the professional realm, this difference can appear within the multigenerational workforce as misunderstandings and conflicts based on generational misperceptions – hence the need for uniting the multigenerational workforce.

Statement of the Issue

Inhibited or limited intergenerational interaction can cause unnecessary ambiguity and conflict within an organization's culture, which in turn, directly affects productivity and success. By limiting or avoiding interaction with seemingly divided groups, organizations can undermine knowledge sharing and development, future innovation, maintaining company history among its people, and facilitating meaningful experiences and purpose-driven work. In a 2014 study conducted by the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD), over 30% of respondents cited that "they wasted five or more hours of work weekly (12 percent of the work week) because of chronic, unaddressed conflict among different generations" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 13).

The two generations who encounter the most challenges collaborating are Baby Boomers and Millennials (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). ASTD survey respondents asserted they "felt the other generation dismissed their past experience; lacked discipline and focus; lacked respect; and were resistant to change or unwilling to be innovative" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 13). However, it appears that each generation takes issue with one or multiple generations. The survey displayed:

> Baby Boomers see Millennials and Generation X as lacking discipline and focus. Generation X sees Baby Boomers as resistant to change, dogmatic in their thinking, sexist, defensive, and lacking in creativity. They also see Millennials as arrogant. Millennials see Generation X as having poor problem-solving skills and being slow to respond. They also see Baby Boomers as resistant to change, dogmatic in their thinking, sexist, defensive, and lacking in creativity. (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 13)

Despite the acknowledged dissonance, “only 20 percent of survey respondents said their organizations had created a program or strategy for intergenerational relationships” (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 13). Such an alarming deficiency in organizational responsiveness is likely to result in further disconnect among the multigenerational workforce. While these misperceptions exist, it has been measurably demonstrated that the work ethic between generations, primarily Millennials and Baby Boomers, does not differ (Baer, 2016; White, 2015). The way work ethic is expressed by each generation may vary, but the characteristic is shared.

Another dynamic present within the multigenerational workforce is the bias known as the *over-attribution effect* (Erhard, Jensen, & Granger, 2010). The over-attribution effect can be observed when individuals “explain the behavior of people from other groups in dispositional terms (‘that’s just the way they are’)” (p.6) and “[their] own behavior in much more complex ways, including a greater consideration of the circumstances” (Erhard, et al., 2010, p. 6). Group attributions also become “asymmetrical with respect to good versus bad behavior” (Erhard, et al., 2010, p. 6). For liked groups, including one’s own, “positive behaviors reflect inherent traits (‘we’re basically good people’) and negative behaviors are either blamed on circumstances (‘I was under a lot of pressure’) or discounted (‘mistakes were made’)” (p.6) while for disliked groups, “negative behaviors reflect inherent traits (‘they can’t be trusted’) and positive behaviors reflect exceptions (‘he’s different from the rest’)” (Erhard, et al., 2010, p. 6). In connection with the over-attribution effect is the tendency to believe that “individuals within another group are similar to each other (‘they’re all alike’), whereas your own group contains a spectrum of different individuals (including ‘a few bad apples’)” (Erhard, et al., 2010, p. 6). Such a stark bifurcation leads groups to accept perceptions that are fundamentally opposed resulting in perpetual conflict.

While there are concerns that generational studies can lead to and promote stereotyping, “many studies, however, have demonstrated that generational demographics often translate into demonstrable psychographic differences, particularly in regard to respect for authority and workplace expectations” (Curtin, et al., 2010, p. 230). As such, fostering more active and meaningful intergenerational interaction holds the realistic potential to cultivate an alignment of expectations and for organizations to thrive. An organization’s culture is founded upon its people’s sources of motivation, values, communication preferences, and thought processes and must be regularly communicated and expressed for individuals to better understand each other and engage in healthy relationships that perpetuate mutual well-being (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Further, regular communication and expression enables organizations to simultaneously support their people and provide the foundation for optimum results.

Open, authentic communication in the work environment is conducive to constructing meaningful relationships with the potential of not only inspiring meaningful work and purposeful initiatives, but also contributing to providing self-actualizing opportunities on both an individual and transcendent level. Through communication, individuals are able to share their knowledge, ideas, and experiences, promoting shared learning and growth and mutual well-being. Coupled with appreciative inquiry, a strategy that could assist in understanding and aligning generational values and expectations, individuals can collectively experience: discovery, dreaming, designing, and destiny in connection with the organization (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Through these four features, individuals are able to identify the organization's strengths, contemplate future possibilities, establish a common vision, and develop a plan of action (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Essentially, while the generational spectrum brings varying influences and expectations to the work environment, supporting intergenerational interaction allows for areas of common ground to emerge and workplace strategies to be actualized – "taking the time to understand where each generation is coming from and how their influences affect behavior, businesses can anticipate continued changes and evolve their workplaces in a way that enhances their competitive position" (Kirkpatrick, Martin, & Warneke, 2008, p. 1). An "integrated system of environment" (p. 1), equipped with the resources and policies designed to bolster interaction, "brings out the best in every generation" (Kirkpatrick, et al., 2008, p. 1).

Through actively addressing multigenerational challenges, Bursch and Kelly (2014) assert that organizations can expect the following results:

- Improved corporate culture. HR and talent management professionals who take the time to educate employees on generational issues will improve intergenerational understanding, multi-generational inclusiveness, respect, and productivity.
- Improved competitiveness. Education about the generations reduces age discrimination and alleviates potential organizational *brain drain* as older generations leave the workplace.
- More effective recruitment. Recruiting messages specifically tailored to each generation will attract talent across generations. Improved employee engagement and

morale. Managers who know how to motivate employees from different generations will improve employee engagement and morale.

- Better employee retention. Organizations that effectively manage generations will find happier, more engaged employees, and this will result in improved employee retention.
- Multigenerational teams are more flexible: (a) They can gain and maintain more market share because they reflect the multigenerational market; (b) They make better decisions because they have received broad-based input from multiple generational perspectives; (c) They demonstrate increased innovation and creativity (p. 12).

The higher the bandwidth of interaction, the greater the possibility for organizations to experience the best of their workforce.

In this dissertation, data collection and current statistics on the multigenerational workforce was accumulated primarily through organizational studies and scholarship centralized on the multigenerational work environment, case studies surrounding the details of organizations that have benefitted from implementing the Clifton StrengthsFinder or Myers-Briggs Type Indicator in their work communities, and research indicating optimum strategies for developing work teams and mentorship pairings based on generational variety. In analyzing current statistics it is essential to acknowledge that each generation has been shaped by impactful, historical events, “demographic trends, and cultural phenomena” (Ethics Resource Center, 2009, p. 1). Thereby, “each generation comes to work with a characteristic set of skills and challenges that impact employing companies and have the potential to help or hinder relationships with managers and coworkers” (Ethics Resource Center, 2009, p. 1). While support exists through numerous research that has identified generational classifications, in addition to data suggesting that research is consistent with the majority of individuals' experience in the work environment, there continues to remain a skepticism regarding the actual impact of generational differences, "a sense that employees of all ages are more alike than different" (Ethics Resource Center, 2009, p. 3). The main challenge to generational findings has been the postulation that trends tied to generations are more reflective on experience and life stages rather than the historical context associated with particular eras. However, longitudinal studies debunk such thought (Ethics Resource Center, 2009). Each generation possess "unique work ethics, different perspective on work, distinct and preferred ways of managing and being managed, idiosyncratic styles, and unique ways of viewing such work-world issues as quality, service and, well, just showing up for work" (Kirkpatrick, et al., 2008, p. 3). Furthermore, those in leadership positions have noted that there are "clear differences in the learning preferences of workers from different generations" (Fredeen & Kutansky-Brown, 2015, slide 17). What research has demonstrated as a shared sentiment among the generations is "a common desire for strong, effective leaders and an innate belief in the importance of respect and fairness in the workplace" (Ethics Resource Center, 2009, p. 3). With this commonality and the right approach, the conversation for cultivating intergenerational interaction exists and should be well received organization-wide should organizations prioritize to encourage the initiative.

Purpose of the Study

Through intergenerational interaction, generational differences can be addressed and managed in a healthy way that supports, rather than diminish, ontological security. Rather than perceive those belonging to other generations as *the other*, it is more appropriate to engage them as *cultural strangers* (Van Leeuwen, 2008). The term, cultural strangers, describes "those who are part of our environment yet in other ways are not part of our shared values" (Curtin, et al., 2010, p. 243). Curtin, et al., (2010) suggest that observing concurrent:

> […] similarities and differences […] can be anxiety-producing, in that it threatens our notions of normalcy and tradition, yet at the same time, it can bring into play a sense of fascination and fun, of discovering different perspectives and ways of seeing the world. (p. 243)

Acknowledgement and awareness facilitates communication and "appropriate vulnerability within meaningful relationships" (p. 78), providing "congruency in maintaining a healthy life balance and self-image" (Chandler, 2009, p. 78). Furthermore, "social support bolsters emotional reserves, perspective, and provides an outlet for those in organizational settings to be themselves" (Winnubst, 1993, pp. 151-162). The ability to experience and enjoy fellowship and personal confidantes becomes invaluable in order to realize ontological security (Burke, 2006). Without social support and collaboration individuals become "distanced from reality, isolated, and vulnerable to ethical leadership failure" (Chandler, 2009, p. 78).

This dissertation explored ontology and leadership development within the multigenerational workforce. Drawing upon human capacity-building resources, including the Clifton StrengthsFinder, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and leadership curriculum grounded in ontological-phenomenological models. The objective was to determine whether ontological principles and leadership development tools can serve as a means to cultivate intergenerational interaction for the benefit of organizations and their supporting individuals. In brief, as elaborated on in Chapters Four and Five, it was determined by both the interview participants and the researcher that framing leadership within an ontological-phenomenological model in conjunction with leadership assessments are indeed effective means for cultivating intergenerational interaction, benefiting organizations and their workforce.

Research Questions

To bolster the research and determine whether implementation of ontological principles and leadership development resources would be useful towards fostering intergenerational interaction, interviews transpired with a panel of experts to ascertain the following:

I. How can generational differences in the workforce be described and interpreted?

II. How can the impact of constructing intergenerational work teams and mentorships based on leadership assessment tools be described and interpreted?

III. How can the impact of framing leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective be described and interpreted?

After the interview process findings were summarized and addressed in light of the discussions, how they connected with the literature review, and the correlating future implications.

Importance of the Study

Promoting human capacity building can strengthen the bonds between multigenerational workforces and serve as a catalyst for organizational initiatives. Human capacity building consists of "a variety of experiences as well as targeted and general training […] necessary to create development for [individuals…], their families and their communities" (Humana People To People, 2013, p.1). In order to create a unified organizational culture it is suggested for organizations to "focus on identifying different learning styles, aptitudes, and strengths and build program elements to suit the needs of multiple groups" (Fredeen & Kutansky-Brown, 2015, slide 5). By identifying an individual's strengths and preferences, organizations can better leverage their unique talents by providing opportunities for growth that are aligned with an individual's particular capabilities and attributes. Additionally, individuals will have the opportunity to understand how they can utilize their strengths in their careers to derive meaningful work and in their personal lives to experience a richer and deeper sense of fulfillment. Through implementing ontological principles and leadership development resources organizations can develop and empower their workforce to seek the knowledge and strategies needed to accomplish a variety of objectives, supported by the broadened multigenerational spectrum of perspectives and ingenuity. It is of particular import to pursue this topic at this time as Traditionalists and Baby Boomers will soon exit the workforce leaving Millennials to be the dominant 75% by 2030 (Deeb, 2015); without intergenerational interaction, knowledge transference will not occur, drastically limiting organizational capacity for success (Fredeen & Kutansky-Brown, 2015, slide 17).

Definitions

The following terms are used regularly within the dissertation, as such, it is necessary to ensure clarity in their meaning and application.

Generation. A generation is considered to consist of a group of individuals who have experienced and “shared events through news, music, mood, education, parenting styles, and more, during a certain point in time” (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 3). Through these variety of events that engender deep connectivity to the era in which they occurred, a generation is formed and the group develops a “collective outlook” (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 3) which has been attributed to filtering group perspective to a certain extent.

Traditionalists, baby boomers, generation x, and millennials. The aforementioned generational groups have been identified and categorized as belonging to the following timeframes. It is important to observe the respective timelines in order to be aware of the pivotal historical events that shaped each generation:

- Traditionalists (1920-1942)
- Baby Boomers (1943-1960)
- Generation X (1961-1979)
- Millennials (1980-2000) (Kirkpatrick, et al., 2008)

Ontology. Ontology is the philosophical study that focuses on "the nature of being, becoming, existence, or reality, as well as the basic categories of being and their relations" ("Ontology," 2016, para. 1). Ontology primarily considers thoughts on "what entities exist or may be said to exist, and how such entities may be grouped, related within a hierarchy, and subdivided according to similarities and differences" ("Ontology," 2016, para. 1) in addition to impacts on "perception, emotions, creative imagination, thinking, planning, and most importantly on our actions" (Erhard, Jensen, & Zaffron, 2008-2015, p. 16). For the purposes of this dissertation, ontology is applied in relation to how it affects identity and interpersonal relationships as a means towards supporting intergenerational interaction.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology studies "the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity" ("Phenomenology," 2013, para. 8). The structure of these experiences is usually analyzed through intentionality: "the directedness of experience toward things in the world, the property of consciousness that it is a consciousness of or about something" ("Phenomenology," 2013, para. 8). The "intentional structure of consciousness" ("Phenomenology," 2013, para. 9) involves an expanded set of experiences, including:

> […] temporal awareness (within the stream of consciousness), spatial awareness (notably in perception), attention (distinguishing focal and marginal or 'horizonal' awareness), awareness of one's own experience (self-consciousness, in one sense), self-awareness (awareness-of-oneself), the self in different roles (as thinking, acting, etc.), embodied action (including kinesthetic awareness of one's movement), purpose or intention in action (more or less explicit), awareness of other persons (in empathy, intersubjectivity, collectivity), linguistic activity (involving meaning, communication, understanding others), social interaction (including collective action), and everyday activity in our surrounding life-world (in a particular culture). ("Phenomenology," 2013, para. 9)

When dealing with something as a phenomenon, something is being examined as an "actual instance or live example of it" (Erhard, et al., 2008-2015, p. 49). Essentially, when assessing something through a phenomenological lens, the question becomes: "If I see, or am impacted by this something, what is it that I will see or what is it that will impact me? What is it as lived?" (Erhard, et al., 2008-2015, p. 49).

Transcendent self-actualization. The term *transcendent self-actualization* is an adaptation of psychologist Abraham Maslow's concept of self-actualization from his Hierarchy of Needs pyramid framework. Essentially, the transcendent element consists of facilitating self-actualization in others – empowering individuals to seek meaning, awareness, and fulfillment (Maslow, 1962).

Meaningful work. Meaningful work can be understood as work that engages individuals to derive a sense of purpose and fulfillment in both undergoing processes and bringing projects to fruition. Meaningful work should enable self-actualization opportunities in which individuals are driven to strive for personal and professional development, in which the individual "reaches out to the environment in wonder and interest, and expressing whatever skills [they] have" (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012, p. 46).

Emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence, as defined by psychologist Daniel Goleman, is "the ability to understand and manage the emotional dimension of oneself and others particularly in interpersonal relationships" (Chandler, 2009, p.77). The elements of emotional intelligence include: "self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills" (Goleman, 1998, pp. 26-27).

Assumptions

The assumptions in this dissertation concerned interview participant responses and their respective organizational demography in terms of the following:

- Participants are interested in human capacity building opportunities.
- Participants respective work environments are comprised of all four generations and the generations are equally represented to a greater or lesser extent.
- Participant interview responses will be genuinely expressed to the best of their ability.
- Participant responses will comprehensively address the research questions.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study appear in terms of participant demographics and their particular organizational/industry culture. While interview participants represented the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials, Traditionalists were not among the collective – by no design of the researcher, rather illustrating how the majority of the Traditionalist generation has retired from the workforce limiting the recruitment pool. Additionally, nearly all participants were affiliated with universities which may reflect a type of perpetuated organizational/industry culture and practice, possibly limiting the generalization of the findings across organizations and industries. Participation was also limited to those individuals working within fields associated with the humanities spectrum: organizational leadership and development, ontology, sociology, psychology, and philosophy. As such, the collective may contain a certain bias in terms of understanding and managing human behavior.

Generation Z (born 2000 to present) was not considered regarding constructing intergenerational interaction. Being that the eldest of the generation are comprised of 17-year-olds, it would have been premature to account for their presence in the work environment. That being said, it should be expected for Generation Z to hold particular and unique perspectives and expectations upon entering organizations. For instance, a recent study reflects that “60 percent of 14-18 year olds said that having an impact on the world would be more important than their jobs, indicating that organizations may be placing an even higher premium on corporate social responsibility in the future” (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 10). Historically, Generation Z experienced the Great Recession and has familiarity with the impact of long-term unemployment (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). In addition, they have observed the exponential increase of student loan debt and as such, may feel less inclined to pursue higher education. A survey from 2010 highlighted that “71% of Millennial teen[agers]” (p. 10) included obtaining an “advanced degree” (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 10) among their life’s ambitions. However, in 2013, “only 64% of Generation Z” (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 10) were aligned with that objective. Furthermore, research demonstrates that Generation Z practices “the highest level of technological connectivity, with many spending virtually all of their waking hours connected to a computer, tablet, smart phone, or other electronic device” (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 10). Just as their Millennial predecessors, Generation Z’s relationship with technology will influence their communication preferences, work style, and methods of interaction. Generation Z’s particularities and contributions will be necessary to account for in the near future.

Summary

The practice of facilitating human capacity building through ontological principles and leadership development resources can be potentially mutually beneficial to organizations and those that support them. By encouraging individuals to identify and express their strengths and actively collaborate with their multigenerational colleagues, organizations can potentially experience appreciative loyalty and a highly engaged workforce motivated to deliver optimum results. Through regular interaction, shared values among the generations and the organization should be tangible, thereby cultivating ontological security. In learning about each other, generations should experience an understanding and unification of values and expectations, meaningful work and purpose, inspiration for innovation, and intrinsic accountability to perpetuate mutual well-being throughout the organization. As the work environment will encounter a major transition of its population with the majority of Traditionalists and Baby Boomers exiting within the next 13 years, it is essential for organizations to propel strategies focused on intergenerational interaction in order to capture knowledge transference for the remaining generations and those going forward. Demonstrably appreciating the differences and commonalities each generation brings has the potential to generate a wealth of organizational knowledge that, when nurtured, should forever drive and advance an organization’s legacy.

Chapter II: Historical Contexts, Frameworks, Theories, and Themes

Introduction

An analysis of generational theories, ontological principles, theoretical frameworks behind the Clifton StrengthsFinder and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and leadership theories that support cultivating team dynamics, each contributed to the rationale for this study.

Historical Context: Generational Influences & Workplace Dynamics

The following generational biographies consist of some of the historical events and contexts that have influenced each group and how these events have impacted preferred workplace dynamics. It should be noted that the generational biographies comprise generalizations and should not supplant the unique needs and preferences of an individual.

Traditionalists. Born between the timeframe of 1920-1942, Traditionalists have been dubbed the World War II Generation as "they identify the war as the single most important event in their childhood" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 4). Traditionalists "were raised in strong nuclear families where parenting was associated with discipline and strictness" (p. 4) and have been instilled with and display "strong commitment to family, their communities, and their country" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 4). They also experienced The Great Depression and associate the ability to work as a privilege – a mentality that lends itself to developing "a strong work ethic that translates into stability and experience" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 4). These observed characteristics of loyalty and ethics contribute to the marked workplace behaviors of: extensive industry knowledge, dedication, focus, and perseverance (Murphy, 2007). While Traditionalists currently comprise a small percentage of the workforce, organizations are often keen to maintain them due to their breadth of knowledge and experience in the hopes of Traditionalists sharing their wealth with colleagues and ensuring operational consistency (Murphy, 2007).

In terms of communications and management, Traditionalists appreciate managers who are: directive, specific, pragmatic, logical, respectful, clear regarding objectives and expectations, fair, and consistent (Murphy, 2007). In particular, Traditionalists prefer face-to-face interactions over technology mediated communication; however, due to their traditional values they are not comfortable challenging authority and are slow to disagree (Murphy, 2007). Traditionalists are not seeking to exit from the work environment entirely, but rather "desire flexibility […] in terms of the number of hours worked per week" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 4) as they move into cultivating a different life stage that is not primarily focused on work. In order to collaborate successfully with this generation, managers and colleagues are advised to nurture personal contact and demonstrate reverence for their knowledge and experience.

Baby boomers. Baby Boomers, born after 1943 through 1960, experienced an array of major events and historical periods, including: "the moon landing, the civil rights movement, President Kennedy's assassination, Vietnam, Woodstock, and the women's liberation movement" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 5). As they matured, they also experienced events and periods for the formative years of later generations. Similar to their predecessors, Baby Boomers have a strong work ethic (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). However, rather than this being attributed to viewing work as a privilege, their performance is motivated by "rank, wealth, and prestige" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 5). This mindset translates to employer loyalty, being highly goal oriented, and competitive (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). Because of their competitive drive, Baby Boomers have been noted to take more risks from a budgetary perspective – knowing to spend money to make money – and exhibit more comfort in collaborating with others for the advancement of the organization (Dowd-Higgins, 2013).

Baby Boomers prefer managers who strive for collective perspectives, consensus, and promote equitable treatment. They appreciate the democratic approach, "to work with the group to define the team's mission, and to show them warmth and caring" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 5). Baby Boomers also strive to experience "challenging and meaningful" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 5) learning and development opportunities. The eldest of the generation are retired – nearly 75 million by 2016 (Pew Research Center, 2005). For this reason it is suggested that organizations explore effective retention strategies, such as offering "flexible working arrangements and phased retirement programs that will encourage Baby Boomers to stay in the workforce a little longer" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 5). Knowledge transfer efforts, such as phased retirement, allow employees the opportunity to enjoy a flexible schedule while keeping themselves stimulated and feel appreciated by the organization (Bursch & Kelly, 2014).

Generation x. Born between 1961-1979, Generation X experienced: "the energy crisis, Watergate, Three Mile Island, the AIDS epidemic, Chernobyl, and the fall of the Berlin Wall" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 6), all by early adulthood. Generation X also became familiar with a new family dynamic in which mothers entered the workforce and pursued their own careers. Along with having the norm of a two-income family that their parents' generation was normalizing, "divorce rates reached an all-time high of 40 per 1,000 married women in the 1970s, compared to 15 per 1,000 women in the 1950s" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 6). As a result, many from this generation experienced independence at an earlier age and taught themselves how to thrive on change – becoming "independent, resilient, flexible, and adaptable" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 7). However, researchers suggest that changes in family structure explain why Generation X is "skeptical and leery of authority" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 7). The group has also been categorized as being "cynical and distrustful" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 7).

In the work environment, Generation X seeks managers who are "straightforward, genuine, and 'hands-off' in their management approach" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 7). As such, managers should promote autonomous work, flexibility, and clear, measureable objectives. Generation X also desires ongoing development opportunities, "even if those opportunities are lateral" (p. 7), as they value learning and "crave new skills and experience[s]" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 7). While this generation has been identified as highly independent and entrepreneurial, a 2013 Ernst & Young study revealed that "Baby Boomers and Millennials view Generation X as the best generation for generating revenue and building teams" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 7). Generation X is also viewed as the least challenging to work with and that they tend to be "more inclusive, flexible, and possess better communication skills and vision than Generation Y (Millennials)" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 7). In addition, while they are results oriented, they seek flexibility in how processes are articulated and in how work is accomplished (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). Work-life balance is a priority for this generation and they are willing to scale back on deliverables in order to achieve it (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). By offering clarity in communication and expectations and accommodating work arrangements that allow for work-life balance, Generation X should feel valued and supported to deliver their best performance.

Millennials. By 2020, Millennials will comprise 46% of the workforce (Becker, 2015; Kratz, 2013) and 75% by 2030 (Deeb, 2015). Born after 1980 through 2000, "this generation experienced the Oklahoma City bombing, the Columbine shootings, 9/11, Enron, and Hurricane Katrina" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 8). In spite of these momentous disasters, the development to have the most impact on Millennials was the ascendancy of the Internet (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). Millennials have been defined as "digital natives" (p. 8), the experience of which has "shaped how they search for information, solve problems, relate to others, and communicate" (Bursch &

Kelly, 2014, p. 8). However, technological fluency has also been identified as perhaps being the foundation to some of the workplace conflict regarding communication style and expectations between Millennials and Baby Boomers (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). For example, Baby Boomers are familiar with and thrive in hierarchical workplace environments that limit communication based on relevance and job function while Millennials "reject traditional top-down communication" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 8) and expect information to flow immediately and constantly. Millennials are also the "most diverse generation" (p. 8) and have "redefine[d] diversity in the workplace" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 8). Millennials are diverse in terms of both race/ethnicity and upbringing. The Pew Research Center cites Millennials being represented as follows: "59.8% white, 18.5% Hispanic, 14.2% black, 4.3% Asian, and 3.2% mixed/other" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 8). Their exposure to diversity seems to have allowed them to develop skills in seamlessly connecting with numerous races, religions, and sexual orientations (Ethics Resource Center, 2009). Millennials are of the mindset that "diversity is cause for celebration and sharing, not a source of tension and apprehension" (Ethics Resource Center, 2009, p. 9). Millennials experienced more "single-parent homes, blended families, and same-sex families" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, pp. 8-9) than any other generation and were raised under close parental supervision. Millennial parents "put their children first and are their strongest advocates" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 9), scheduling every minute detail of their childhood, which resulted in Millennials exhibiting more trust in authority than the previous Generation X. In addition, Millennials were treated differently regarding team dynamics during their formative years – "they played team sports where everyone got trophies regardless of where they finished in the competition" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 9) which taught them to value collective achievement and to seek volunteer and philanthropic activities (Deeb, 2015; Murphy, 2007).

In the workplace, Millennial behaviors and expectations take the shape of valuing social and corporate responsibility (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). According to a study performed by Bentley University in 2014, a growing number of Millennials, currently 85%, expressed it was important to them to work with "a socially responsible or ethical company" (Fredeen & Kutansky-Brown, 2015, slide 8). In addition, "95% of millennials say that a company's reputation matters to them" (slide 8) and "91% say that a company's social impact efforts are important when they are considering which companies to work for" (Fredeen & Kutansky-Brown, 2015, slide 8). Millennial passion for responsibility and philanthropic efforts also directly effects their finances with "more than 85% of millennials correlat[ing] their purchasing decisions and their willingness to recommend a brand to the social good efforts a company is making" (Becker, 2015, para. 13). While they are "good team players, optimistic, and tech savvy" (p. 9), the routinized parental supervision they experienced in conjunction with the "instant gratification enabled through technology […] has made them crave constant feedback and praise" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 9). This desire translates to wanting managers to coach them and serve as "positive, motivational, collaborative, achievement oriented, and […] structure[d]" (Curtin, et al., 2010, p. 243; Murphy, 2007; O'Donnell, 2015) mentors. Millennials are also the "most educated generation" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 9) and value managers who engage them from an educational perspective and make the effort to understand both their professional and personal goals. Generally, Millennials invest in many of the same values as their predecessors: corporate and social responsibility, meaningful work, vision, transparency, flexibility, work-life balance, and the need to feel appreciated (Abbot, 2013; Bursch & Kelly, 2014; Curtin, et al., 2010; Dowd-Higgins, 2013). The critical difference is that Millennials are more vocal in expressing what they value in their employers and will change jobs if their needs are not being met (Bursch & Kelly, 2014; Freeman, 2015). While previous generations have invested in and wanted to live what has been dubbed the American Dream, Millennials seek to live their personal, individual dream (Urban, 2013). The phrase *follow your passion* has been gaining momentum for the last 20 years according to Google's Ngram viewer, a tool that illustrates how any given phrase increasingly or decreasingly appears in English print over a variety of timeframes (Urban, 2013). Ngram Viewer also demonstrates how the phrase *a secure career* is no longer popular while the phrase *a fulfilling career* has found an escalating trajectory (see Appendix A), indicating the shift from the previous generations' need for an economically secure career to the Millennial ideal of pursuing a career that is existentially fulfilling (Urban, 2013). Should the organization share similar values and enable Millennials to pursue these values in their work, Millennials have demonstrated exceptional loyalty, high engagement, and exceeding performance (Curtin, et al., 2010; Freeman, 2015).

Leadership Assessments and Theoretical Frameworks: Clifton StrengthsFinder and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Clifton strengthsfinder. The Gallup Organization focuses on human capacity building and "delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems" (p. 1) within the scope of "customer engagement, employee engagement, organizational culture and identity, leadership development, talent-based assessments, entrepreneurship and well-being" (Gallup, 2015a, p. 1). The organization has a global presence and its experts make up more than 80 years of experience. Gallup created the Microeconomic Path for leaders and organizations to "maximize human nature to accelerate organizational performance" (Gallup, 2015a, p. 1). Their particular approach has fostered the development of "unique tools and techniques for achieving the highest levels of organizational performance and organic growth” (Gallup, 2015a, p. 1), one being the Clifton StrengthsFinder.

The Clifton StrengthsFinder is a “web-based assessment of normal personality from the perspective of positive psychology” (para. 18) – the “framework, or paradigm, that encompasses an approach to psychology from the perspective of healthy, successful life functioning” (Clifton StrengthsFinder, 2008, para. 18). According to Gallup, “A strength is the ability to consistently provide near-perfect performance in a specific activity. The key to building a strength is to identify your dominant talents, then complement them by acquiring knowledge and skills pertinent to the activity” (Lopez, Harter, Piotr, & Carr, 2007, p. 3). There are 180 items compared in the assessment, “capturing personal motivation (striving), interpersonal skills (relating), self-presentation (impacting), and learning style (thinking)” (Beaumont, 2003, p. 4). Each item is assessed on a “four-point Likert scale (a) almost always or always; (b) often; (c) sometimes; and (d) almost never or never” (Gallup, 2015a, p. 6). Following the assessment, “respondents receive a report displaying their top five [Signature] Themes” (Clifton StrengthsFinder, 2008, para. 17) along with brief descriptions (see Appendix B).

The Clifton StrengthsFinder was created “as a starting point for self-discovery” (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2007, p. 11) within the organizational context. Post-assessment, a set of “developmental suggestions” (p. 11) unique to the individual’s Signature Themes are offered as a means to integrate their talents into a “more informed view of self” (p. 11), encouraging individuals to: “build strengths by acquiring skills […] and knowledge […] that can complement their greatest talents in application to specific tasks” (Asplund, et al., 2007, pp. 11-12). From an organizational perspective, The Clifton StrengthsFinder’s purpose is to facilitate personal development and growth and to “springboard […] discussion with managers, friends, colleagues and advisers […] as a tool for self-awareness” (Asplund, et al., 2007, p. 12). Such discussions should ideally provide feedback on how individuals can "capitalize on their greatest talents and apply them to new challenges" (Asplund, et al., 2007, p. 12).

While organizations and individuals tend to see the value of the Clifton StrengthsFinder and have benefited from the assessment, there is some skepticism regarding leadership development that emphasizes an individual's strengths. Chamorro-Premuzic (2016) cites five reasons as to why strengths-based leadership assessments can be problematic:

1. There is no scientific evidence that it works
2. It can give people a false sense of competence
3. It leads to resources being wasted on C and D players
4. Overused strengths become toxic; and
5. It does not address the real problem workplaces face. (para. 4; 7; 10; 12; 14)

While there may not be scientific evidence on the biological response level regarding the Clifton StrengthsFinder, it has proved to be an effective organizational tool (to be addressed further in the case studies with Cardinal Health and the Triad Group). The main concern regarding evidence seems to be the sense that by solely focusing on strengths an individual is not as well-rounded as they should be; perhaps, individuals are too focused on the skills that come naturally to them rather than attempting to develop those that are more challenging or that present a struggle (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016). However, Donald O. Clifton, the creator of the Clifton StrengthsFinder asserts that the concern is baseless; rather, "by focusing on your top five themes you will actually become stronger, more robust, more open to new discoveries and, importantly, more appreciative of people who possess themes very different from your own" (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 144). Furthermore, Clifton argues that to live a life in which one's strengths and passions are not pursued is inauthentic (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

Pertaining to imbuing false confidence, the argument is that because the assessment does not utilize a normative group or population benchmark and since the individual is not considered in a broader context, or within the organization, the individual cannot truly compare themselves to others. Without comparison their strengths lose credibility (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016). However, to only consider the individual in certain contexts, such as the organization, rather than measure the individual against oneself would provide an inaccurate evaluation and limit best practices going forward. The strengths that may appear within a particular, designed context, such as an organization, may not be revealed in the larger persona of the individual.

The argument regarding wasted resources may reflect a mindset in which only certain types of strengths should be valued rather than utilizing and maximizing a full range of natural strengths. By perpetuating this perspective, the organization will stifle its operational output and success. Focusing on developing a mere percentage of the employee population drastically reduces the potential return on investment that the organization may be able to achieve by offering collective development opportunities and valuing a range of skills.

The fear of overused strengths becoming toxic is deemed as the *too much of a good thing* effect (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016). Referenced examples include:

> Conscientiousness and attention to detail turn into counterproductive perfectionism and obsessiveness. Confidence becomes overconfidence and arrogance. Ambition turns into greed. And imagination into odd eccentricity […] (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016, para. 12)

Yet, these examples do not consider an organizational context in which individuals are engaged in environments that foster ontological security, transcendent self-actualization, meaningful work, ethics and accountability, and emotional intelligence. A work environment that provides such resources greatly lessens the likelihood of strengths transforming into hyper-detriments.

Similar to the first concern, the final criticism is that while strengths-based practices may lead to self-actualization and well-being, “if the focus is on making people more competent, productive, or effective, managers and decision makers should work instead on mitigating people’s weaknesses” (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016, para. 15). As previously addressed, by honing an individual’s strengths the individual is able to heighten their performance and contribution to the organization overall (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). Focusing on developing natural abilities broadens the spectrum in which they are expressed. Furthermore, by becoming aware of one’s strengths, one recognizes those of others and how they can work together to complement and enhance each other’s working style and deliverables (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). In such an environment, individuals can recognize areas of growth and can determine to what extent they need to be addressed dependent upon context. Essentially, identifying and nurturing strengths enables individuals to effectively pursue their passions and organically build upon the intrinsic motivation necessary for both the professional and personal arena (O’Donnell, 2015).

Case study: Cardinal health. Cardinal Health is a Fortune 22 medical supply company worth $91 billion, with 34,000 employees (Fernandez & Houle, 2015). They deliver supplies to hospitals, physicians, labs and pharmacies on four continents. Lisa George, Vice President of Global Talent Management, and Barbara Hess, Director of Organizational Development at Cardinal Health, spearheaded implementing an effective strengths-based program in 2004 that they now consider to be “an essential part of Cardinal Health’s talent strategy to compete” (Fernandez & Houle, 2015, para. 5) in the evolving global landscape. The talent management at Cardinal Health functions in alignment with arguments by Fernandez and Houle (2015) that “people who use their strengths every day are six times more likely to be engaged in their jobs and more than three times more likely to report having an excellent quality of life than those who don't, as Gallup research shows" (para. 6). Fernandez and Houle (2015) also argue that individuals "who know their strengths are also 8% more productive – and teams that focus on strengths every day have 12.5% higher productivity" (para. 6).

A typical strengths development training program can be summarized as follows: individuals take the assessment and discover their Signature Themes and are then coached how to use their strengths in their particular role; managers are then advised how to align their team's talents and increase efficiency and leaders how to harness employee strengths to directly influence "productivity and profitability" (Fernandez & Houle, 2015, para. 11) – this process is designed to result in collective organizational success. When beginning their strengths development program, Vice President of Global Talent Management, Lisa George recalls:

> We designated processes that the business and the business leaders valued […] When you deliver what people want and need, you don't have to push. The practical gets pulled. We built collaboratively, we told stories about the StrengthsFinder journey and we showed value. That was enough to get people interested and to make them want to come along on the journey. (Fernandez & Houle, 2015, para. 17)

George recounted that teams began to demonstrate and report results quickly: "[Strengths] helps team dynamics and collaboration […] [strengths] helps people and teams work more effectively […] teams have better understanding and communication tactics to help leaders understand how to create better productivity […] and teams are more committed" (Fernandez & Houle, 2015, para. 18). Leaders from Cardinal Health were reported to be unanimous in acknowledging and appreciating the value of the Clifton StrengthsFinder, asserting:

> StrengthsFinder gave us the opportunity to understand our strengths as individuals and as teams. We learned to appreciate and harness our individual talents and tendencies, identify

> where we have gaps in team strengths and understand how that impacts team dynamics […] All of our leadership, business and management strategies include at least an element of strengths, and it's having a cumulative impact on our capabilities […] [Strengths] builds connections on a lot of levels […] It's expanding our awareness of the relationships between people and their managers – and between managers and more senior leadership – and between Cardinal Health and our customers. Strengths shows people where they're most successful and creates connections between that and our mission. Now that we have that line of sight, it would be hard to go back to a time without it. (Fernandez & Houle, 2015, para. 19; 21; 25)

Cardinal Health's commitment to Clifton StrengthsFinder is perhaps unusually strong, but other organizations have resulted similar results, including the Triad Group.

Case study: Triad group. The Triad Group operates injection molding facilities and constructs automotive machinery, agricultural, and housing products (Gallup, 2015b). The organization is family-owned, with 300 employees and has been in business for over 50 years (Gallup, 2015b). A few years prior to initiating a strengths development program employee turnover had dramatically increased to 85% per month due to "leadership changes […] inadequate communication and a lack of overall direction [which] took a toll on production teams" (Gallup, 2015b, p. 1) and revenue as well. Company owners Russ and Nancy Merrick established a strengths-based approach in an effort to cultivate a positive and productive environment (Gallup, 2015b). The Merricks developed a six-week strengths class to explain the importance and value of a strengths-based foundation in the workplace and assisted in helping employees understand and utilize their strengths (Gallup, 2015b). The Merricks were confident that through discovering and using their strengths, barriers among teams would decrease and ultimately cease to exist (Gallup, 2015b). Gallup (2015b) reported the following results:

> The business outcomes that Triad has achieved in a short period confirm the success of its leaders' strengths-based, engagement-focused approach. Monthly turnover […] fell from 85% to just 8% over a two-year period. Also in that time, the scrap rate – or amount of defective parts produced – dropped from 35% to about 1% because workers running the machines began collaborating proactively to fix problems before defects proliferated. Further, profitability increased by 233% and productivity jumped by 200%, even without increasing the workforce. (p. 2)

Due to these improvements, which can reasonably be called startling, Gallup (2015b) reports that Triad Group managers remain quick to review strengths assessments whenever interpersonal conflict arises to help those involved understand the different dynamics at play. Furthermore:

> When new projects arise, managers assemble teams based on their strengths to collaborate on how to best set up the process and roll it out to production. Knowing that their peers designed the process increases buy-in for team members who work on the new project and makes the rollout run more smoothly from the start. (Gallup, 2015b, p.2)

As highlighted in the aforementioned case studies, the Clifton StrengthsFinder is proven to be an effective talent management and employee development tool regardless of the organization size or type.

Myers-briggs type indicator. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assesses eight personality preferences that describe four activities (Hirsh & Kummerow, 1998):

- Energizing: how a person is energized, either Extroversion (E) or Introversion (I)
- Perceiving: what a person pays attention to, either Sensing (S) or Intuition (N)
- Deciding: how a person decides, either Thinking (T) or Feeling (F)

- Living: the lifestyle a person adopts, either Judging (J) or Perceiving (P) (p. 1).

Four preferences, one selected from each activity, are arranged into sixteen unique types to better understand one's personality (Hirsh & Kummerow, 1998). Founded on Carl Jung's personality type theory, psychiatrist and psychotherapist who developed analytical psychology (Fordham, 2015), the Myers-Briggs instrument is "the world's most widely used personality assessment" (Psychometrics, 2015, p.3). Jung's type theory suggests that individuals have "an innate fundamental personality type that, while not controlling behavior, shapes and influences the way we understand the world, process information, and socialize" (Psychometrics, 2015, p.3). By determining which of the sixteen types is associated with one's personality one can discover information directly related to the work environment such as: "work habits, interpersonal relationships, and other elements affecting workplace cohesion" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 3).

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator has often been understood to identify an unchanging personality type; however, the assessment has proved to be ineffective for this objective which has made it a subject of reservation. What it does measure are the particular characteristics of an individual during a specific timeframe of their life, which explains why type tends to change (usually in one of the four preferences – E/I, S/N, T/F, J/P) over the course of time – indicating certain outdated or newly adopted mindsets and behaviors (Capraro & Capraro, 2002; Myers & Briggs Foundation, n.d.). Further, because the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a more fluid measurement of personality that can be influenced by an individual's changing landscape of experiences, it may not always reflect an individual's authentic self. That said, it certainly does reflect an individual's preferred, projected self (Emre, 2015). Through revealing the preferred persona an individual can gain self-awareness as to the misalignment in identity and then determine how to address the disconnect, thereby benefiting from the principles of self-awareness and analysis that is at the foundation of the instrument.

Case study: Hallmark cards, inc. Hallmark Cards, Inc. identifies itself as helping "give voice to caring thoughts and emotions with tangible reminders of appreciation, celebration, belonging and love" (Hallmark, 2016, para. 6). It has been in business for over 100 years and is worth $3.7 billion (Hallmark, 2016). Globally, Hallmark offers products in 100 countries and in more than 30 languages (Hallmark, 2016). While Hallmark's mission and vision have not changed, leadership has recognized that their competition has greatly shifted (Psychometrics, 2015). For example, "the Internet, mobile technologies, and other innovations have completely remade the communication landscape, connecting people in ways never thought possible" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 2). As such, Hallmark's top objective has been to adapt their organizational culture to contemporary expectations (Psychometrics, 2015). Particularly, "it wants to develop leaders that view situations from multiple perspectives and an agile management culture of accountability in which people work toward each others' success and build their agendas to support the company's goals" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 2). In 2007, Mary Beth Ebmeyer, Human Resources Manager of Corporate Development, and Michelle Hibbs, Senior Human Resources Specialist, championed guiding the organization to accomplish this objective via a program called Steppingstones (Psychometrics, 2015). Steppingstones is designed to "open the organization's lines of communication by giving mid- and upper-level managers greater self-understanding and insight into how their actions and communication efforts are perceived by others" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 2). Being that self-awareness is the key element of the program, Steppingstones relies heavily on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality assessment (Psychometrics, 2015).

The program explores “personal perspective and how it relates to the ability of individuals to affect change within the company” (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 3). Once employees have taken the assessment, participants engage in a series of activities structured for them to obtain awareness and understanding of how to interact and operate with others, both individually and in a team (Psychometrics, 2015). An instrumental concept focused on during the initial phase is the notion of “mental files” (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 3). Ebmeyer states, “We tend to place people into ‘files’ according to our perceptions of them, which are often skewed […] We use the Myers-Briggs instrument to dig deeper into conversations and determine the real intent of the persons engaged” (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 3). For example, when analyzing intent, employees participate in a videotaped session of themselves interacting in a group setting and then assess their personal behaviors (Psychometrics, 2015). Through utilizing their respective Myers-Briggs results, individuals are able to assess how they “may be perceived by others, giving participants an understanding of how personality type affects communication style, and how that style may come across to others” (p. 3), thereby providing the knowledge base to improve interactions, “both in expressing their own intentions and discerning the true intentions of others with more clarity” (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 3).

The focus on intent is highly relevant as participants move forward to understand the subsequent theme of emotional intelligence (Psychometrics, 2015). The concept known as the *emotional hijack* (Psychometrics, 2015) is addressed – the response in which “the more primitive, emotional portion of the brain takes over its more complex, rational functions” (p. 4), typically occurring in “fight-or-flight” (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 4) situations. Ebmeyer affirms that “purely emotional responses [in a business context] are almost never appropriate” (p. 4), thereby making the Myers-Briggs assessment an asset in managing emotional hijack scenarios "as responses are often the result of misconstrued intentions between people with different preferences" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 4). A potential scenario is described as such:

> For example, someone might be sent 'through the roof' by an e-mail he or she perceives as rude or confrontational from another type. The reality, however, may be that the person who sent the e-mail meant no offense whatsoever but was simply expressing a legitimate and well-intended concern in a fashion typical of their own personality type. (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 4)

Understanding of Myers-Briggs personality types allows individuals to "check their perception against reality, often helping them avoid taking offense where none is intended" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 4).

Another objective of Steppingstones is to facilitate an environment where people feel comfortable and safe vocalizing contrary opinions and create a culture that promotes candid conversations (Psychometrics, 2015). Employing the awareness learned from the Myers-Briggs instrument enables more effective approaches to communication. Through comprehending personality differences and improving the ability to identify specific behaviors and characteristics, the opportunity for open communication is increased and helps individuals express themselves in a healthy, thoughtful manner that is conducive to receiving positive responses (Psychometrics, 2015). Ebmeyer notes, "We want people to step outside of their comfort zone and say what they need to say [… and] continue to interact in a respectful way – we don't want to lose the things that we like about our culture" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 4). Hibbs adds, "This process helps managers understand that just because it's not 'their way' doesn't mean it's wrong […] as departments integrate these principles into their thinking, it opens people's minds to a myriad of ideas" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 5). Awareness of personality type directly effects the ability to present one’s ideas (Psychometrics, 2015). According to Ebmeyer, this awareness actively appears in meetings:

> Often during a crossfunctional meeting, managers begin by asking attendees their type. This helps the overall flow of communication and is attributable to our widespread use of the Myers-Briggs instrument […] people learn how to ‘flex their preference,’ understanding that their instinctual way of doing things might not be most effective in all situations. This comes into play in situations where managers communicate in such a way that encourages staff members of different personality types to express themselves. It also gives managers the awareness to recognize when they are getting only one perspective from those around them and to seek the perspective of someone with a different personality type who may provide an invaluable point of view. (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 5)

Knowledge gained through the Myers-Briggs assessment has also provided deeper insight regarding the complexities and culture of the organization. One noteworthy observation is the tendency for Hallmark leadership to have a Feeling preference while mid/upper-level managers share a Thinking preference (Psychometrics, 2015). This dynamic creates a situation in which the Thinking managers are more focused toward “bottom-line oriented decision making” (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 6) while organizational policies are aligned with the Feelings side of the spectrum. Knowledge of personality type aids cultural alignment as individuals learn to value varying perspectives: “it also provides top management with the tools it needs to effectively communicate the reasons for its ‘Feeling’ policies to its ‘Thinking’ management staff” (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 6). Hallmark has also seen improvements in their change strategy, stating:

> Our company is composed predominantly of STJs, who tend to resist change unless they truly understand why it is called for […] For this personality type, it is very important to help them see the logical progression that has led us to the place where we currently are, and why these changes are necessary. This understanding has shaped our approach from the beginning. (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 7)

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator element of Steppingstones tremendously contributed to Hallmark's overall efficiency – "decisions are being reached faster, and thoughts are delivered with increased clarity" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 7). In addition, Hibbs and Ebmeyer have observed a significant increase in "diversity of thought, as people with different personality types become more comfortable speaking their mind and learn how to communicate in ways that appeal to people of other types" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 7). As the organization continues to understand and experience how type affects relationships, individuals have been able to establish meaningful connections, "positively affecting cohesion, motivation, and other items related to interpersonal communication" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 7). All of the aforementioned improvements have unified Hallmark's mission and vision organization-wide. Ebmeyer purports, "Though we have traditionally been a manufacturing company, we're moving toward becoming a company that understands that it's really all about helping people stay connected and meeting the needs of the human spirit" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 7). As intended by the Myers & Briggs Foundation and as experienced by Hallmark, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator has a breadth of potential benefits that can be implemented in an organization and yield positive results across multiple spectrums, promoting both critical understanding and comprehensive organizational strategies.

Intergenerational teams & mentorships. Generational experts Claire Raines, Ron Zemke and Bob Filipczak note in their book, *Generations At Work: Managing the Clash of Boomers, Gen Xers and Gen Yers in the Workplace*, that there is an increasing realization that the gap of misunderstanding and conflict in the multigenerational workforce is growing and problematic (Kirkpatrick, et al., 2008). Coupled with this statement, Gensler, "a global architecture, interior design, planning, and strategic consulting firm" (Kirkpatrick, et al., 2008, p. 12), produced a focus group in 2005 including individuals ranging from age 20 to 60 and revealed a range of positive and negative attitudes regarding generational issues, indicating that the challenge is real and tangible across generations. Further, Randstad USA, "a global provider of human resource services and the third largest staffing organization in the United States" (Randstad, n.d., para. 2), issued the *Randstad USA World of Work* survey which evidenced three major findings that are cause for concern in terms of productivity in the work environment:

- Retiring workers are not likely to transfer knowledge to newer workers;
- Co-worker perceptions are based on generational stereotypes, particularly about Gen Y [Millennials]; and
- Each generation thinks it brings self-contained strengths to the workplace that do not enhance the strengths of other generations. (MetLife, 2009, p. 7)

Eric Bunting, Randstad USA's Managing Director of Marketing and Operations, states:

> The key is that organizations find a way, structurally, for generations to interact, but it cannot be a rah-rah coffee or lunch. It has to be bringing them together in meaningful ways so they are engaged in projects together, and that has to be managed in the course of time. (Metlife, 2009, p. 7)

Understanding the different generations, particularly their values and expectations, should be essential towards developing organizational strategies designed to "attract, develop, and retain individuals in ways that are more relevant and appealing to each cohort" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 10) and create opportunities for individual and team-focused growth based on their unique characteristics. That being said, experts caution the danger of over-generalizing the features of a generation as no two individuals are the same, and while members of the same generation have many overlapping experiences they also have their unique, personal life experiences that have enabled certain attitudes, preferences, and behaviors to manifest (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). Leaders must be cognizant of the "fine line between appreciating unique characteristics of different generations and perpetuating stereotypes" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 11). Additionally, there are studies which demonstrate more similarities than perceived across generations. Essentially, managing and cultivating the multigenerational workforce requires appreciating differences while nurturing commonalities in order to foster intergenerational interaction that benefits both the individuals and the organization (Bursch & Kelly, 2014).

It is suggested that multigenerational dynamics should be likened to diversity and inclusion practices in the workplace to engender respect for differences (Bursch & Kelly, 2014; MetLife, 2009). Diverse in reference to building teams of varying ages, gender, and culture (Bursch & Kelly, 2014) and inclusionary in the sense of creating a strong, cohesive environment bolstered by intergenerational shared values and expectations, "leveraging the skills of each generation for organizational success" (MetLife, 2009, p. 5). By "recognizing and addressing each generation […] as a separate entity requiring different strategies" (MetLife, 2009, p. 5) according to their attributes, while emphasizing how their particular strengths complement those belonging to other generations, organizations will be able to better align their workforce with their mission and vision and increase the quality of their people's contributions. Organizations that lack an effective intergenerational strategy may find themselves at a competitive disadvantage (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). It is critically important to recognize:

> The only long-term competitive advantage a company has is its people. Advantages in capital markets or technological advances are short-lived and can be duplicated. To be successful, companies must create a culture that engages its employees and must invest in programs that attract, motivate, and retain talent. (MetLife, 2009, p. 7)

When individuals are able to share their ideas, skills, knowledge, stories, and know that their input is important, they feel valued by their colleagues and the greater organization (MetLife, 2009). In the initial stages of building intergenerational teams it is best to present work groups with a specific issue in order for them to produce well-rounded, diversified results that they will be able to acknowledge in the duration of the process and appreciate as the team dynamic evolves (MetLife, 2009). Furthermore, groups should be composed of a minimum of one individual from each generation (MetLife, 2009). Constructing this type of work situation requires teams to focus on one another’s strengths rather than their differences and has been shown to reduce tensions, common stereotypes, and misconceptions generations may have about each other (MetLife, 2009). By capitalizing on what each employee offers through teamwork focused on a company goal, the collaboration quickly combines the business knowledge of all generations and promotes innovation to propel the organization’s legacy (MetLife, 2009).

When developing an intergenerational program and policy, it is important to consider the following factors outlined by MetLife (2009) in their development principles for employee development programs:

- How will the proposed policy/decision affect each generation?
- How will the proposed policy/decision be perceived by each generation?

- Does the policy/decision ignore or exacerbate existing generational differences or tensions?
- Based on the above responses, what revisions are needed in the policy/decision in order for it to be more age-inclusive? (p. 24)

For example, when designing communication policy, Baby Boomers and Traditionalists are accustomed to a more top-down, siloed style while Generation X and Millennials expect information to be transparent and shared freely (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). Policy development directly affects how intergenerational teams will perceive the issue assigned them and may even influence the outcome due to organizational support. The issue should have impact on the company in order for teams to view their collaboration and project completion as valuable (MetLife, 2009). Regular debriefing sessions should be set up throughout the course of the project to gauge the effectiveness of the collaboration and the trajectory towards successfully accomplishing deliverables (MetLife, 2009). Regardless of the length of the project, whether it be one week or one year, debriefing sessions should take place around “one-third and two-thirds of the way” (MetLife, 2009, p. 30) through the expected timeframe. Pertinent questions that should be addressed include:

- Is the team on target to meet all deadlines as originally stated in the project timeline?
- What improvements can be made to achieve the project’s goals?
- What additional supports or resources do you need to complete your project? (MetLife, 2009, p. 30)

An example of how a successful outcome from a project should look would be articulated in a fashion similar to the following:

- Leaders could use a project intended for managing employee workloads (MetLife, 2009).

- After designing a team in which each generation is included, ensure the team has collective understanding of the project and have them verbally outline, and subsequently document, each member's strengths around the deliverables needed to complete the project (MetLife, 2009).
- Teams should be encouraged to assign tasks by taking into account respective, self-identified strengths in order to maximize contributions (MetLife, 2009). By considering strengths, employees will have opportunities to demonstrate their unique skillset and enjoy moments of fulfillment as the project develops (MetLife, 2009).
- The underlying goal, aside from finding a solution to the task at hand, is to derive an increased understanding, respect, and appreciation "for one another's talents and expertise" (MetLife, 2009, p. 31). Such an outcome can be leveraged for developing strategies going forward and building integral intergenerational relationships across the organization.

Within these relationships is the additional opportunity to foster mentorships. Mentoring is an effective knowledge transfer method and as noted earlier, "knowledge transfer is critical to performance, sustainability, and innovation" (Piktialis & Greenes, 2008, p.13). In addition, the practice "benefits the company by reducing turnover, increasing organizational commitment [… and loyalty, and functions as an] earlier identification of key talent" (MetLife, 2009, p. 28). Gartner, a prominent information technology research and advisory firm, conducted a study in 2006 demonstrating that both "mentors and mentees have higher promotion and retention rates than those not involved in mentoring" (Insala, 2007, para. 5):

- 25% of employees who enrolled in a mentoring program had a salary-grade change, while only 5% of workers who did not participate in a mentoring program had a change.

- Mentors were promoted 6 times more often than those not in a mentoring program.
- Mentees were promoted 5 times more often than those not in a mentoring program.
- Retention rates also were higher for both mentees (72%) and mentors (69%) than for employees who did not participate in a mentoring program. (Insala, 2007, para. 5)

Employees should be paired based on skills and experience rather than age (Piktialis & Greenes, 2008). Effectively capturing and facilitating knowledge transfer necessitates understanding generational and particular learning and communication preferences of both individuals (MetLife, 2009). Mentoring can also be tailored depending upon the organization's needs, resources, and workplace dynamics (MetLife, 2009). Successful types of mentoring programs include:

> Long-term relationships focused on mutual development and growth; mentoring aimed at knowledge transfer; time-limited mentoring focused on specific goals; appointing a mentor for specific jobs; regular mentoring in time-limited meetings that focus on specific projects or networking; virtual mentoring through e-mail or instant messaging. (MetLife, 2009, p. 28)

According to the Randstad USA study, generational differences ultimately consist of varying perspectives on how objectives should be accomplished (Randstad, 2008). Intergenerational work environments "can break down barriers of age, perception, and experience, and subtly persuade the generations to understand what each has to offer. Intergenerational workforces have the potential to create a fusion of knowledge, perspective, and experience" (Metlife, 2009, p. 32). Through all generations gaining a more comprehensive understanding of each other organizations should experience a renewed commitment to core values and ambitions, propelling organizational prosperity (MetLife, 2009).

Leadership Theories

The leadership theories which influenced and contributed to the research presented in this dissertation are David Cooperrider's appreciative inquiry and Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's communities of practice. Both theories lend themselves to supporting the use of ontological principles and the aforementioned leadership development resources to accomplish effective intergenerational interaction.

Cooperrider: Appreciative inquiry. David Cooperrider is the creative thought leader of appreciative inquiry (David Cooperrider and Associates, 2012). His work has positively impacted the leadership of change and has globally helped numerous institutions "discover the power of the strength-based approaches to multi-stakeholder innovation and collaborative design" (David Cooperrider and Associates, 2012, para. 2). Cooperrider's work has been called revolutionary in "its ability to enable positive change, innovation, and sustainable design" (para. 2) in a variety of "large and complex" (David Cooperrider and Associates, 2012, para. 2) systems and organizations. Typically, organizations view the need for change from a negative perspective as if "something is broken" (p. 1) and needs to be fixed, "thus [they] engage in problem identification, root cause analysis, brainstorming possible solutions, action planning, implementation of changes, and hopefully, evaluation of the results" (Thomas, n.d., p. 1). While the process may be effective to a certain extent, approaching change from such a mindset truncates results and the expression of the process (Thomas, n.d.). People inherently resist change as it involves uncertainty and inevitably involves more work, at least during the implementation learning phase (Thomas, n.d.). Appreciative inquiry works to combat this negative mentality and response from a positive psychology philosophy. Positive psychology focuses on strengths with the assumption that "goodness and excellence are not illusions but are authentic states and modes of being that can be analyzed and achieved" (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003, p. 7). The three states and modes include: "(a) positive experiences, such as happiness, pleasure, joy, and fulfillment; (b) positive individual traits, such as character, talents, and interests; and (c) positive institutions, such as families, schools, business, communities, and societies" (Cameron, et al., 2003, p. 7). Appreciative inquiry upholds these three tenets as it endeavors towards "the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them" (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d., p. 3) and essentially has a metaphysical core (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Appreciative inquiry serves as a:

> […] systematic discovery of what gives 'life' to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms […it is] the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential […it seeks] to build a constructive union between a whole people and the massive entirety of what people talk about as past and present capacities: achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies, stories, expressions of wisdom, insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul – and visions of valued and possible futures […] it assumes that every living system has many untapped and rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. Link the energy of this core directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized. (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d., p. 3)

The process of appreciative inquiry is fourfold in nature, involving the phases of: discovery, dream, design, and destiny (Thomas, n.d.). Each phase facilitates change as conversations are to be discussed in an open forum (Thomas, n.d.). Discovery is the “search to understand the ‘best of what is’ and ‘what has been’” (Thomas, n.d., p. 4). Questions are collaboratively crafted to “generate stories, to enrich the images and inner dialogue within the organization, and to bring the positive core more fully into focus” (Thomas, n.d., p. 4). Dreaming is exploring “what might be” (p. 4) with the intent of “identify[ing] and spread[ing] generative, affirmative and hopeful images of the future” (Thomas, n.d., p. 4). Design prompts making choices regarding “what should be” (p. 4), consciously analyzing “systems, structures, strategies, processes and images [to] become more fully aligned with the organization’s positive past (Discovery) and highest potential (Dream)” (Thomas, n.d., p. 4). The last element, Destiny, “initiates a series of inspired actions that support ongoing learning and innovation – or ‘what will be’” (Thomas, n.d., p. 4). In addition, the five central principles of appreciative inquiry are:

- The Constructionist Principle: “human knowledge and organizational destiny are interwoven” (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d., p. 14). Organizations must be assessed “as living, human constructions” (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d., p. 14) with the knowledge that they are the epicenter of change.
- The Principle of Simultaneity: “inquiry and change are not truly separate moments, but are simultaneous” (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d., p. 15). Inquiry serves as intervention as “the questions we ask set the stage for what we ‘find,’ and what we ‘discover’ (the data) becomes the linguistic material, the stories, out of which the future is conceived, conversed about, and constructed” (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d., p. 15).
- The Poetic Principle: organizations are like an “open book” (p. 16) rather than a

"machine" (p. 16) as "an organization's story is constantly being coauthored […] moreover, pasts, presents, or futures are endless sources of learning, inspiration, or interpretation – precisely like […] the endless interpretive possibilities in a good piece of poetry" (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d., p.16).

- The Anticipatory Principle: "human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation […] that brings the future powerfully into the present as a mobilizing agent" (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d., p. 16). In order to mobilize desired results, it is suggested to frame inquiry from the perspective of self-fulfilling prophecy (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d.).
- The Positive Principle: "building and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding […] like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something meaningful together" (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d., p. 17). It has been demonstrated that the more positively-oriented questions asked, "the more long lasting and successful the change effort" (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d., p. 17).

With appreciative inquiry as the foundational mindset for pursuing organizational challenges, it becomes easier to develop an effective community of practice.

Lave and wenger: Communities of practice. The way people learn is traditionally measured on the assumption that it is strictly a singular experience while in fact, learning transpires in the relationships between people (Smith, 2009). Learning can be seen:

> In the conditions that bring people together and organize a point of contact that allows for particular pieces of information to take on a relevance; without the points of contact, without the system of relevancies, there is not learning, and there is little memory. Learning

> does not belong to individual persons, but to the various conversations of which they are a part. (Smith, 2009, para. 32)

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, cognitive anthropologists, developed the learning theory known as communities of practice (Smith, 2009). Organically, humans are “constantly engaged in the pursuit of enterprises of all kinds” (para. 7), from ensuring the base need of “physical survival to seeking the most” (Smith, 2009, para. 7) magnanimous of aspirations. As these enterprises become defined and the pursuit continues, “we interact with each other and with the world and we tune our relations with each other and with the world accordingly. In other words, we learn” (Smith, 2009, para. 7). This type of collective learning yields “practices that reflect the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations” (Smith, 2009, para. 8), creating a kind community. Lave and Wenger define a community of practice as “involving a collection of individuals sharing mutually-defined practices, beliefs, and understandings over an extended time frame in the pursuit of a shared enterprise” (Cox, n.d., p. 5; Jonassen & Land, 2012, p. 40). The four specific features articulated in their notion of a community of practice include:

1. An overlapping purpose or common enterprise, which unites, motivates, and, in part, validates the activities of the community as significant
2. A common cultural and historical heritage, including shared goals, negotiated meanings, and practices
3. An interdependent system, in that individuals are becoming part of something larger than themselves; and
4. A reproduction cycle, through which “newcomers” can become “old timers” (Brown & Duguid, 1991, p. 50; Jonassen & Land, 2012, pp. 41-42) and through which the community can maintain itself.

One benefit observed by some scholars from becoming a member of a community of practice is a striking sense of self and legitimacy within the context of Otherness (Jonassen & Land, 2012). The "individual and the community constitute nested interactive networks, with individuals transforming and maintaining the community as they appropriate its practices […] and the community transforms and maintains the individual by making available opportunities for appropriation and, eventually, enculturation" (Jonassen & Land, 2012, p. 44). At the base of this process is the ideology that education and learning comprise "taking part" (p. 44) and "being a part" (p. 44) which signals that learning is in fact a "process of *becoming* […] becoming a part of a greater whole" (Jonassen & Land, 2012, p. 44 [emphasis added]):

> Our activity, our participation, our 'cognition' is always bound up with, codependent with, the participation and the activity of Others, be they persons, tools, symbols, processes, or things. How we participate, what practices we come to engage in, is a function of the whole community ecology… As we participate, we change. Our identity-in-practice develops, for we are no longer autonomous Persons in this model, but Persons-in-Activity. (Lemke, 1997, p. 38)

Further, the community of practice itself operates within a broader societal role that imbues members with even deeper meaning and purpose (Jonassen & Land, 2012). By engaging in such a community, individuals are able to authentically interact with others and through collaborative efforts transform their understanding of self and human relations, realizing that one is connected to a great many shared values and goals and that it is this overarching, interwoven experience that makes the pursuit that much more fulfilling.

Research Themes

Ontological security. Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, is known most notably for his contributions to ontology, existentialism, and ethics (“Emmanuel Levinas,” 2011). In his concept of *the Same* and *the Other* (the Same being oneself), Levinas posits the condition of the Other and expounds upon the type of relationship human beings are responsible for nurturing and, to a greater extent, how an individual is unconditionally indebted to the Other (“Emmanuel Levinas,” 2011). Rather than characterize the Other as an outsider, the Other is more properly identified as an extension of oneself (“Emmanuel Levinas,” 2011). Levinas (2000) writes, “the relationship between the Same and the Other is deference of the Same to the Other, in which we can recognize the ethical relationship” (p. 127). He defines ethics as “a relationship with another […] with the neighbor” (Levinas, 2000, p. 138). For Levinas (2000), *the neighbor* emphasizes a relationship of priority – “a nearness that is a responsibility for the other […] a responsibility without measure, which does not resemble a debt that one could always discharge, for, with the other, one is never paid up” (p. 138). Furthermore, he insists that “to be oneself […] is always to have one more responsibility […to be] my brother’s keeper” (Levinas, 2000, p. 175). Without the Other, the Same “could not function or would lose its purpose in life. Responsibility for the other in me is an exigency that increases as one responds to it; it is an impossibility of acquitting the debt and thus an impossibility of adequation” (Levinas, 2000, p. 195).

With such prose Levinas has articulated a sense of responsibility for others, adopted in this dissertation, that lends itself to developing ontological security. Levinas’ reflection suggests that individuals be aware of their relationship of responsibility to the Other as it serves as an integral foundation when propelling human capacity building and can also be applied to the context of intergenerational dynamics. By taking on the responsibility of caring for the Other, one is not only enhancing the care of oneself, but is also actively practicing four core elements of leadership: “(a) integrity; (b) authenticity; (c) being committed to something bigger than oneself; and (d) being cause in the matter” (Erhard, et al., 2015, p.5) – all of which directly contribute towards ontological security.

In order to initiate a sense of ontological security, the existential expectation and need to experience shared values (Curtin, et al., 2010), individuals must identify and question what has remained status quo and has been taking for granted: their values, what is important to them, who they know themselves to be, and what they believe or assume to be true about themselves, others, and the world (Erhard & Jensen, 2008-2014). Such an “identify and question” (Erhard & Jensen, 2008-2014, p. 4) mental exercise is meant to be transformative in the sense that it takes the individual “beyond ‘the way you wound up being,’ and leaves you in a new world” (Erhard, et al., 2010, p. 11). After such a process of re-connecting with the self and others, it is imperative to minimize the possibility of defaulting back into an Us versus Them relationship. To prevent this from occurring, it is necessary to “remove the ontological perceptual and functional constraints imposed on […one’s] natural self-expression” (Jensen, n.d., p. 3).

Ontological perceptual constraints arise from “our network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, biases, social and cultural embeddedness, and taken-for-granted assumptions about the world, others, and ourselves” (Jensen, n.d., p. 3). These factors limit and shape how individuals perceive reality and what is understood from situations that occur in any given context (Jensen, n.d.). If these perceptual constraints are not addressed and managed, they will continue to distort an individual’s perspective and marginalize an individual’s potential contributions to others. “To assess genuine understanding of an idea one is inclined to resist” (Erhard, et al., 2008-2015, p. 23), it has been suggested that individuals perform a self-imposed Turing test. Developed by

Alan Turing, “British pioneering computer scientist, mathematician, logician, cryptanalyst, philosopher, and mathematical biologist” (Wallach & Allen, 2009, p. 206), Turing tests are tests that “specify a procedure for determining whether a machine’s performance is at the desired level without setting explicit standards” (Wallach & Allen, 2009, p. 206). Typically, Turing tests have been employed when concerning the successfulness of developing artificially intelligent beings. The hypothesized scenario is that an artificial being would successfully pass the Turing test if a human interrogator cannot identify that they are communicating with a machine (Allen, Varner, & Zinser, 2000). In terms of interpersonal dynamics, such as the multigenerational workforce and its variety of values and expectations, “before critiquing a culture or aspect thereof, you should be able to navigate seamlessly within that culture as judged by members of that group” (Erhard & Jensen, 2008-2014, pp. 6-7). Further, by ensuring such understanding, individuals can also attain deeper insight into their own value system by comparison and gain appreciation for shared values.

Ontological functional constraints consist of “automatic stimulus/response behavior” (Jensen, n.d., p. 3) where, “in the presence of a particular stimulus (trigger), the inevitable response is an automatic set way of being and acting” (Jensen, n.d., p. 3). In the neurological field, ontological functional constraints are termed *amygdala hijacks* as when enacted, they “fixate one’s way of being and acting” (Jensen, n.d., p. 3). This behavior is also referred to and more commonly known as a *kneejerk reaction* (Jensen, n.d.). In order to disarm this reaction, one must be cognizant of potential triggers and determine why they provoke such a reaction. By doing so, the individual becomes aware of both their response and methods of tailoring how they will react (Jensen, n.d.). Through addressing ontological constraints, the path towards nurturing ontological security and developing the self becomes accessible.

Epistemological mastery v. ontological transformation: Knowing v. being. Michael C. Jensen, Jesse Isidor Straus Professor of Business Administration for the Harvard Business School and Managing Director of Organizational Strategy Practice for The Monitor Group, occupies a primary focus on leadership and leadership development (Harvard Business School, n.d.). The distinguishing element behind Jensen's work is his ontological approach. Contemporary ontology concerns the nature and function of being and its impacts on "perception, emotions, creative imagination, thinking, planning, and most importantly on our actions" (Erhard, et al., 2008-2015, p. 16). With regards to leadership, the focus becomes "what is the nature of *being* when being a leader, and what is the impact (function) of *being* on one's actions in the exercise of leadership?" (Erhard, et al., 2008-2015, p. 16 [original emphasis]). Of course, there are numerous perspectives from which to consider leadership:

> […] a psychological perspective examines leader and leadership from the perspective of *mind*; historical […] examines leader and leadership from *historical examples of good, bad, incompetent, and the absence of*, leader and leadership […] evolutionary […] examines the development of leader and leadership from the perspective of *adaptation* and *natural selection*; and likewise, leader and leadership can be examined from the perspectives of sociology, neuroscience, political science, economics, business, and so on. (Erhard, et al., 2008-2015, p.17 [original emphasis])

The ontological perspective complements the findings and insights provided by the aforementioned. While the ontological is less familiar, it is "uniquely powerful in providing access to the *being* of being a leader and the *actions* of the effective exercise of leadership *as one's natural self-expression*" (Erhard, et al., 2008-2015, p.17 [original emphasis]). Being is often mistaken as something immutable; however, given the right resources and ontological awareness, one can exercise agency regarding one's way of being (Erhard, et al., 2008-2015). This should not be confused with the simple ability to "*pretend to be* this way or that way; rather we are speaking about the ability to *authentically, naturally be* that way of being required to be effective in a given situation" (Erhard, et al., 2008-2015, p. 18 [original emphasis]).

Essentially, through an ontological examination of leadership, one is able to put theory into practice and exercise personal leadership development. Other disciplines remain in the epistemological realm and while "epistemological mastery of a subject leaves you *knowing*. An ontological mastery of a subject leaves you *being*" (Erhard, et al., 2008-2015, p. 10 [original emphasis]). True, effective leadership is not a mere mechanical emulation of actions or the effort to "remember and follow the steps, tips or techniques from books" (Erhard, et al., 2008-2015, p. 10), or much less a right from being in a leadership position. When an individual has achieved the *being* of being a leader, then "the *knowledge* you may have learned about such things as patterns of analysis, planning, situational awareness, and the like, is readily available to you and has power as an authentic and natural expression of your *being* a leader" (Erhard, et al., 2008-2015, p. 10 [original emphasis]) – the uniqueness embodied by that particular individual. It is precisely in *being* in which we experience *becoming* and the trajectory towards self-actualization.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs: Self-actualization. Abraham Maslow, psychologist, developed the Hierarchy of Needs model in 1943 based on his theory of motivation (Hoffman, 1988). The hierarchy consists of five essential human needs: "physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization" (Maslow, 1943, pp. 372-383). Maslow observed, when the lower order needs are not be satisfied, individuals lack concern towards higher order needs (Maslow, 1943). Physiological refers to "the basic needs of air, water, food, clothing and shelter. In other words, […] the basic amenities of life" (Maslow, 1943, p. 373; NetMBA, 2002-2010). Safety includes physical, environmental and emotional safety and protection (Maslow, 1943; NetMBA, 2002-2010). The social aspect pertains to "the need for love, affection, care, belongingness, and friendship" (Maslow, 1943, p. 381; NetMBA, 2002-2010). Esteem is comprised of both internal and external esteem. Internal consists of "self-respect, confidence, competence, achievement and freedom" (Maslow, 1943, p. 382; NetMBA, 2002-2010) while external is comprised of "recognition, power, status, attention and admiration" (Maslow, 1943, p. 382; NetMBA, 2002-2010). Lastly, self-actualization is in reference to the urge to become what one is capable of becoming and the need for: "truth, justice, wisdom, and meaning" (Maslow, 1943, p. 383; NetMBA, 2002-2010).

Some of the self-actualizing characteristics identified by Maslow include: (a) having a keen sense of reality; (b) "democratic, fair and non-discriminating – embracing and enjoying all cultures, races and individual styles" (para. 13); (c) "socially compassionate" (para. 13) and possessing a high degree of humanity; (d) being "creative, inventive and original" (para. 13); and (e) "seeking peak experiences that leave a lasting impression" (Tenly, 2016, para. 13). The pursuit of self-actualization is never completely satisfied; "as an individual grows psychologically" (NetMBA, 2002-2010, para. 6), opportunities for growth continuously present themselves.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model was adapted by psychologists in the 1990s to elaborate further on the previously identified needs and include transcendence needs within the category of self-actualization (see Appendix C). This entails facilitating self-actualization in others. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory "remains valid today for understanding human motivation, management training, and personal development" (Chapman, 1995-2014, para. 1).

The first four essential needs – physiological, safety, social, and esteem – are what Maslow calls *deficit needs* or *D-needs* (Boeree, 2006). The issue he identifies with these type of needs is that when they are fulfilled, individuals fail to feel a deficit. That in turn means that what had once been a need is now no longer motivating (Boeree, 2006). However, Maslow uniquely characterizes the need of self-actualization. Maslow understood "the goal of learning to be self-actualization […] the full use of talents, capacities, potentialities, etc." (Knowles, et al., 2012, p. 14; Maslow, 1970, p. 150). He asserts that "growth toward this goal [...is] determined by the relationship of two sets of forces operating within the individual" (Knowles, et. al, 2012, p. 14; Maslow, 1972, pp. 44-45):

> One set clings to safety and defensiveness out of fear, tending to regress backward, hanging on to the past… The other set of forces impels him forward toward wholeness to Self and uniqueness of Self, toward full functioning of all his capacities… (Knowles, et. al, 2012, p. 14; Maslow, 1972, pp. 44-45)

Unlike the other four deficit needs, Maslow identifies self-actualization as a *being need* or *B-need* (Boeree, 2006; Maslow, 1973). This intrinsic value does not reach a level of balance or what Maslow deems "homeostasis" (Maslow, 1973, p. 44). Once engaged, after fulfilling the prior four needs, self-actualization continuously develops – it is "chronic" (Maslow, 1943, p. 376). Maslow asserts:

> Growth is, *in itself*, a rewarding and exciting process, e.g., […] the steady increase of understanding about people or about the universe, or about oneself; the development of creativeness in whatever field, or, most important, simply the ambition to be a good human being. (Maslow, 2013, p. 50 [original emphasis])

In order to better explain exactly what self-actualization entails, Maslow conducted a biographical analysis of those people he considered to be self-actualizers.

For his analysis, Maslow selected prominent historical figures as well as individuals he knew personally during the time of his study (Boeree, 2006). Some of the more notable figures included: Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Jane Adams, William James, Albert Schweitzer, Benedict Spinoza, and Aldous Huxley (Boeree, 2006). Maslow researched documents that conveyed their character such as biographies and personal writings in addition to their particular actions (Boeree, 2006). After analyzing the characteristics of those who demonstrated to be self-actualized, “whether famous or unknown, educated or not, rich or poor, self-actualizers tend to fit the following profile” (Coon & Mitterer, 2007, p. 479):

> (a) Efficient perceptions of reality: self-actualizers are able to judge situations correctly and honestly. They are very sensitive to the fake and dishonest, and are free to see reality ‘as it is;’ (b) Comfortable acceptance of self, others, nature: self-actualizers accept their own human nature with all its flaws. The shortcomings of others and the contradictions of the human condition are accepted with humor and tolerance; (c) Reliant on own experiences and judgment: independent, not reliant on culture and environment to form opinions and views; (d) Spontaneous and natural: true to oneself, rather than being how others want; (e) Task centering: most of Maslow’s subjects had a mission to fulfill in life or some task or problem ‘beyond’ themselves (instead of outside of themselves) to pursue; (f) Autonomy: self-actualizers are free from reliance on external authorities or other people. They tend to be resourceful and independent; (g) Continued freshness of appreciation: the self-actualizer seems to constantly renew appreciation of life’s basic goods. There is an ‘innocence of vision,’ like that of an artist or child; (h) Profound interpersonal

> relationships: the interpersonal relationships of self-actualizers are marked by deep loving bonds; (i) Comfort with solitude: despite their satisfying relationships with others, self-actualizing persons value solitude and are comfortable being alone; (j) Non-hostile sense of humor: this refers to the ability to laugh at oneself; (k) Peak experiences: temporary moments of self-actualization. These occasions were marked by feelings of ecstasy, harmony, and deep meaning. Self-actualizers reported feeling at one with the universe, stronger and calmer than ever before, filled with light, beautiful and good, and so forth; (l) Socially compassionate: possessing humanity; and (m) Few friends: few close intimate friends rather than many surface relationships. (Chapman, 1995-2014; Coon & Mitterer, 2007, p. 479; Maslow, 2013, p. 44)

Maslow highlights that the value system of self-actualizers has a “natural” (para. 40) sense to it and seems to “flow effortlessly from their personalities” (Boeree, 2006, para. 40). Moreover, self-actualizers “appear to transcend many of the dichotomies others accept as being undeniable, such as the differences between the spiritual and the physical, the selfish and the unselfish, and the masculine and the feminine” (Boeree, 2006, para. 40).

Maslow’s biographical analysis also revealed overlapping needs, or what he calls *metaneeds*, of self-actualizers (Boeree, 2006; Maslow, 1973). The term metaneed communicates something beyond a basic need. Rather, metaneeds encapsulate driving forces that self-actualizers pursue and yearn to experience in order to aid them in self-actualization. Such needs include:

> Truth, rather than dishonesty; Goodness, rather than evil; Beauty, not ugliness or vulgarity; Unity, wholeness, and transcendence of opposites, not arbitrariness or forced choices; Aliveness, not deadness or the mechanization of life; Uniqueness, not bland uniformity;

> Perfection and necessity, not sloppiness, inconsistency, or accident; Completion, rather than incompleteness; Justice and order, not injustice and lawlessness; Simplicity, not unnecessary complexity; Richness, not environmental impoverishment; Effortlessness, not strain; Playfulness, not grim, humorless, drudgery; Self-sufficiency, not dependency; and meaningfulness, rather than senselessness. (Boeree, 2006, para. 42)

The management implication for providing a safe environment in order for individuals to attain self-actualization comprises offering employees a working and learning environment that addresses and fulfills all five aspects of Maslow's hierarchy of needs: "physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization" (Maslow, 1943, pp. 372-383). Primarily, individuals need to experience acceptance, belonging, community, challenging and meaningful work which enables innovation, and appreciation (NetMBA, 2002-2010). Furthermore, individuals need to be inclined to take risks. Jean Barbazette, President of Practical Training Systems, clarifies this notion of risk-taking and offers 25 competencies with accompanying behaviors that learning facilitators can employ to develop such an environment and engage participants within their respective learning and development programs. Barbazette begins by stressing the importance of preparing for instruction. Preparation includes duties such as: creating and distributing appropriate pre-work assignments, partnering with supervisors to prepare learners for results, particularized training materials and lesson plans based on the needs of the group, and presenting course outcomes as benefits to participants (Barbazette, 2005). When priming the environment for optimal learning, utilizing the following engagement techniques has proved successful: conduct introductions that place the learners at ease, announce the schedule and establish ground rules, inquire as to what personal objectives and motivations participants hold for the course, and engage everyone in an activity that is low risk and related to the course content (Barbazette, 2005).

When structuring a program, it is necessary to adopt andragogical learning principles as "adults have different learning needs than do children" (Barbazette, 2005, p. 349). The facilitator should provide a practical and useful learning experience that acknowledges participants' prior knowledge and skills while incorporating various training methods to appeal to the array of learners and learning styles (Barbazette, 2005). In conjunction with the application of adult learning principles, the learning facilitator should be conscious to use lectures effectively and not slip into pedagogical methods. Lectures should begin by identifying the objective and give an overview of the content. Clear and accurate examples should be provided in a summarized fashion with supplemental materials and visuals. Learners should be involved in brief activities approximately every 15 minutes in order to maintain their focus. In addition, varied speaking rates, pitches, and volumes can help maintain attention. The facilitator should also have learners summarize and apply the ideas presented at the end of the lecture in order to ensure retention (Barbazette, 2005). Conducting discussions is a good method for retention. A combination of both general and direct questions should be used as well as clarifying questions. Moreover, challenging generalizations and irrelevant digressions can lead to deeper meaning in learning, which is a clearly identified metaneed that directly appeals to those seeking self-actualization (Barbazette, 2005). Facilitating group exercises where participants are assigned roles as appropriate to the activity derives high engagement and enables the opportunity for participants to practice skills and apply what they have learned throughout training (Barbazette, 2005). Assistance should be provided as needed in addition to a debriefing in which learners share and interpret their reactions and identify learning points from the exercise (Barbazette, 2005). For visual learners, especially, conducting demonstrations can be immensely useful. Demonstrating processes and procedures while explaining what learners see and hear promotes retention. Furthermore, retention can be evaluated with a follow-up assessment (Barbazette, 2005).

It is critical in any workforce development effort that learning facilitators provide feedback in order to correct misunderstandings and provide positive reinforcement. Facilitators need to be able to: describe specifically what the learner does and says that is incorrect, offer an appropriate model, avoid making judgments, avoid absolutist language, only focus on behavior that can be changed, and help learners gain insight and verbalize the rationale for changed behavior (Barbazette, 2005). When using audiovisuals, there should be a variety of media and the images should be customized to the group (Barbazette, 2005). Tests and skill evaluations can assist in measuring learner comprehension and retention. Evaluations should be administered fairly and corrected promptly while including feedback for learners to improve the facilitator's performance (Barbazette, 2005). By providing the opportunity for learners to contribute feedback, facilitators are in a position to implement course changes that can ultimately improve the learning experience for both the participant and the facilitator (Barbazette, 2005).

When planning meetings, leaders should solicit agenda items from participants that are also relevant to their particular business needs. In addition, the agenda should be circulated prior to the meeting in order to allow time for revisions and mental preparation (Barbazette, 2005). In order to setup a productive climate for discussions, facilitators should collaboratively set ground rules with participants and ask appropriate, generalized questions to initiate discussion. Also, they should take care to place new group members at ease through an appropriate introduction that acknowledges their expertise (Barbazette, 2005). Orienting meetings towards outcomes is effective for maintaining focus. Brainstorming and other idea development techniques help to keep groups thinking divergently (Barbazette, 2005). Group communication can be enabled by accurately organizing information and acknowledging all points of view. Diverse opinions and facts should be encouraged while keeping the conversation civil. Clarifying questions should be utilized in order to ensure flow of conversation (Barbazette, 2005). Creative problem solving should be encouraged by conducting brainstorming sessions in which facilitators help participants identify problems and participants are assisted, as needed, in reaching a decision (Barbazette, 2005). In order to encourage participation leaders should initiate, propose, and make suggestions that encourage diverse opinions and organize a sequence of speakers that can be divided into small groups (Barbazette, 2005). Specific tasks should be assigned to the groups that require creative problem-solving methods. Inventories and questionnaires can be used as a means of fostering self-discovery of alternatives and convergent techniques should be used to get participants to decide upon a solution (Barbazette, 2005). To foster decision making, facilitators should help summarize areas of agreement while using clarifying questions to highlight and mitigate points of difference with the objective of building a consensus among the group (Barbazette, 2005). Finally, selecting team leaders can also help establish ownership. Participants should have input when determining leadership criteria and facilitators should ask questions to assist the group in evaluating and selecting team leader candidates (Barbazette, 2005).

Maslow asserts that when a safe environment is present and perceived, there are 13 indicators that emerge in the consciousness of the individual. The individual: (a) “reaches out to the environment in wonder and interest, and expressing whatever skills [they] have” (p. 46); (b) feels safe enough to be daring and is not afraid; (c) encounters delightful experiences assisted by others; (d) feels safe and is self-accepting to take risks, rather than be frightened by them; (e) is able to feel safe enough to want to repeat these new experiences; (f) expresses interest in more complex experiences, is daring and emboldened; (g) through such experiences, gains a feeling of certainty – capability, mastery, self-trust, and self-esteem; (h) no longer has to choose between safety and growth as they already experience/perceive safety; (i) chooses between "delight and boredom" (p. 47) rather than delight and fear; (j) when uninhibited, will choose to progress forward rather than regress; (k) will choose what is "best" (p. 47) for them; (l) dares to choose even the unknown and sees the choice as "positively attractive and less dangerous" (p. 48); and (m) can move forward in simultaneously experience being and becoming, thereby directly fostering self-actualization (Knowles, et al., 2012).

In essence, pursuing self-actualization is key to unlocking potentiality and acquiring an alignment of values and expectations among a collective. Self-actualizing opportunities create a sense of openness and wonder within individuals to take the risk to participate in various activities and posit new trains of thought. However, in order to access the benefits of self-actualization, it is necessary for organizations to construct conducive environments. Only then can individuals approach the possibility of partaking in what Maslow calls the exhilarating, simultaneous experience of being and becoming (Knowles, et al., 2012; Maslow, 1972).

Meaningful work. Meaningful work contributes to both self-actualization and the third core element of leadership: "being committed to something bigger than oneself" (Jensen, n.d., p. 2). When individuals are able to pursue projects that are aligned with their strengths and passions and that are focused to accomplish the organization's mission and vision, they are empowered and derive deep meaning and fulfillment in their work.

Michael Steger, Director of the Laboratory for the Study of Meaning and Quality of Life at Colorado State University, corroborates this notion via his Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) assessment. The WAMI identifies three components of meaningful work:

1. The degree to which people find their work to have significance and purpose.
2. The contribution work makes to finding broader meaning in life.
3. The desire and means for one's work to make a positive contribution to the greater good. (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012, pp. 3-4)

Steger notes that meaningful work can come intrinsically from the individual or the organization: "some people bring a sense of meaning and mission with them to the workplace, and some organizations excel at creating meaningful workplaces where every employee becomes part of creating success, cohesiveness, and culture at work" (Steger, n.d., para. 3). When organizations have successfully created a collectively meaningful environment, "the experienced meaningfulness of the work" (p. 262) is characterized "as [t]he degree to which the employee experiences the job as one which is generally meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile'' (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 262). Being engaged in meaningful work implies that "work matters for its own sake and makes an important, generative contribution to one's quality of life" (Steger, et al., 2012, p. 5). Those who experience meaning and "serving a greater good" (p. 2) have affirmed "better psychological adjustment" (p. 2) and "greater well-being" (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007, p. 2). Individuals view their contributions as more impactful and important (Harpaz & Fu, 2002), "place higher value on work" (Steger, et al., 2012, p. 2) "both in terms of their specific organization and their chosen profession" (Steger, et al., 2012, p. 5), enjoy greater job satisfaction (Kamdron, 2005), report "work unit cohesion" (Steger, et al., 2012, p. 2), engage in "organizational citizenship behavior" (Steger, et al., 2012, p. 5), and report lower rates of "withdrawal intentions" (Steger, et al., 2012, p. 5) and absences. Through meaningful work, individuals flourish and their contributions to the organization become increasingly tangible. By maintaining a meaningful work environment, organizations can expect longevity in employee dedication and performance.

Ethics & accountability. Leadership scholars identify the terms *ethics* and *morality* as synonymous (Boatright, 2007; Ciulla, 2005). Ethics and morality are "translations of the same word in Greek and Latin respectively" (Chandler, 2009, p.70). Ethics stems from the Greek word *ethikos* which is founded "from the root 'ethos,' referring to character" (Rhode, 2006, pp. 4-5). Morality originates from the Latin *moralitas*, coming from "'mores,' referring to character, custom, or habit" (Rhode, 2006, pp. 4-5). Both words express the same reference "to the character or disposition of":

> […] beliefs, values, and behaviors that shape perceptions of what is right and wrong based upon one's personal, social, cultural, and religious values and the standards by which behavior is deemed acceptable or unacceptable regarding responsibilities, rules, codes of conduct, and/or laws. (Johnson, 2005, p. 6; Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996, p. 33)

Therefore, ethical leadership behavior is defined as "the organizational process of leaders acting in a manner consistent with agreed upon standards of character, decency, and integrity, which upholds clear, measurable, and legal standards, fostering the common good over personal self-interest" (Chandler, 2009, p. 70).

When individuals perceive that the organization they work with is ethically inclined and that upholding ethical standards across the organization is a moral imperative, they derive a deeper sense of meaning and are better able to align themselves with the organization's objectives (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Establishing ethical standards satisfies the "many needs, desires, goals, and objectives" (Thiroux & Krasemann, 2009, p. 27) humans have in common. These needs include, but are not limited to, "friendship, love, happiness, freedom, peace, creativity, and stability in their lives, not only for themselves but for others, too" (Thiroux &

Krasemann, 2009, p. 27). By encouraging policies and programs that reflect and bolster an organization's ethics, organizations are inherently recognizing and valuing "the importance of living together in a cooperative and significant way" (Thiroux & Krasemann, 2009, p. 27) which directly influences how individuals within the company will relate to and interact with one another to promote not only personal wellness, but mutual prosperity.

Individuals with ethical awareness exhibit "the capacity to perceive and be sensitive to relevant moral issues that deserve consideration in making choices that have a significant impact on others" (Petrick & Quinn, 1997, p. 89). Those lacking a sense of awareness have been observed to use their power and authority to advance their personal agenda to the detriment of an organization (Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Whicker, 1996) and occupy an unhealthy, objectifying mindset (Magee, Gruenfeld, Keltner, & Galinsky, 2005). Organizational integrity is of the utmost importance as it creates *workability* (Erhard, Jensen, & Zaffron, 2010-2016). Workability is:

> the state or condition that constitutes the available opportunity for something or somebody or a group or an organization to function, operate or behave to produce an intended outcome, i.e., to be effective; or the state or condition that determines the opportunity set from which someone or a group or an organization can choose outcomes, or design or construct for outcomes. (Erhard, et al., 2010-2016, p. 10)

Without integrity, "the workability of any object, system, person, group or organization declines; and as workability declines" (Erhard, et al., 2010-2016, p. 3) the opportunity for growth and optimal performance diminishes. Jensen asks individuals to "consider the experience of dealing with an object that lacks integrity, such as a car" (Christensen, 2014, p. 18), to grasp the importance:

> When one or more of its components is missing or malfunctioning, it becomes unreliable and unpredictable, and it creates those same characteristics in our lives: the car fails in traffic; we inadvertently create a traffic jam; we are late for our appointment; and we disappoint our colleagues. In effect, the out-of-integrity car has created a lack of integrity in our life, with all sorts of fallout and repercussions that reduce workability. The same thing is true of our associations with persons, groups or organizations that are out-of-integrity. These effects generally go unrecognized, but they are significant. (Christensen, 2014, p. 18)

Individuals without ethical awareness or integrity have also demonstrated a lack of interpersonal social skills which has been posited to be a major contributing factor to unethical leadership behavior (Chandler, 2009). As “interpersonal skills contribute to social identity processes” (Chandler, 2009, p. 77), leaders are in the position to exert great influence upon the organization in terms of how they “communicate, express vision, motivate people to support a shared vision, and empower others” (Chandler, 2009, p. 77).

While it is crucial for those in leadership positions to adhere to ethical standards for a variety of reasons, the primary focus on maintaining standards within an organization is to establish and sustain accountability. Being that interpersonal relationship skills create the foundation for honing ethical awareness, it becomes pivotal for individuals both in explicit leadership roles and throughout the organization, “to relate effectively to others with tact, etiquette, self-monitoring, social acumen, and conflict resolution” (Chandler, 2009, p. 77). Such skills can be established and harnessed through the practice of emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence. Generally, it has been observed that “people high in emotional intelligence likewise evidence strong interpersonal skills” (Chandler, 2009, p. 77). Manfred Kets de Vries, Professor of Leadership Development and Organizational Change at INSEAD and Founding-Director of INSEAD's Global Leadership Center, has focused his research to include: "leadership, career dynamics, executive stress, entrepreneurship, family business, succession planning, cross-cultural management, team building, coaching, and the dynamics of corporate transformation and change" (Kets de Vries, 2007-2014, para. 1). Based on his knowledge and expertise, when interviewed on how to identify healthy and successful individuals, Kets de Vries cited emotional intelligence as the primary characteristic (Coutu, 2004). The elements of emotional intelligence include: "self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills" (Goleman, 1998, pp. 26-27):

- Self-awareness: Knowing what we are feeling in the moment, and using those preferences to guide our decision making; having a realistic assessment of our own abilities and a well-grounded sense of self-confidence.
- Self-regulation: Handling our emotions so that they facilitate rather than interfere with the task at hand; being conscientious and delaying gratification to pursue goals; recovering well from emotional distress.
- Motivation: Using our deepest preferences to move and guide us toward our goals, to help us take initiative and strive to improve, and to persevere in the face of setbacks and frustrations.
- Empathy: Sensing what people are feeling, being able to take their perspective, and cultivating rapport and attunement with a broad diversity of people.
- Social Skills: Handling emotions in relationships well and accurately reading social situations and networks; interacting smoothly; using these skills to persuade and lead, negotiate and settle disputes, for cooperation and teamwork. (Goleman, 1998)

Daniel Goleman, psychologist and emotional intelligence expert, asserts that “emotional intelligence skills are synergistic with cognitive ones; top performers have both. The more complex the job, the more emotional intelligence matters […] a deficiency […] can hinder the use of whatever technical expertise or intellect a person may have” (Goleman, 1998, p. 22).

The practice of emotional intelligence can be directly implemented for facilitating intergenerational interaction that mitigates generational-based tensions and misconceptions. Claude Steel, social psychologist, has focused on “the psychological experience of the individual and, particularly, on the experience of threats to the self and the consequences of those threats” (para. 4) through considering “the self-image threat, self-affirmation and its role in self-regulation, the academic under-achievement of minority students, the role of alcohol and drug use in self-regulation processes and social behavior […and] the theory of stereotype threat” (Stanford University, n.d., para. 4). The theory of stereotype threat has been utilized “to understand group differences in performance ranging from the intellectual to the athletic” (Stanford University, n.d., para. 4). Steele has suggested the following guidelines for leveraging diversity and combatting stereotypes, which, for the purposes of this dissertation, can be applied to the multigenerational workforce:

- Optimistic Leaders: Mentors or supervisors affirm the ability of people who might otherwise suffer the stigma of threatening stereotypes.
- Genuine Challenges: Challenging work conveys respect for the person’s potential and demonstrates he or she is not seen through the lens of a debilitating stereotype. These challenges are calibrated to the person’s skill and offer a manageable *stretch*, not an overly daunting demand that is a setup for failure nor a too easy assignment

that reinforces the worst fears of the stereotyped: that they are seen as unable to do the work.

- Emphasis on learning: Emphasis is placed on the idea that expertise and ability grow through on-the-job learning and that competence increases incrementally. This challenges the cruelest stereotype, that a person's inherent capacity is limited by virtue of their belonging to a certain group.
- Affirming the sense of belonging: Negative stereotypes create a sense of *I don't really belong here* casting doubt on one's suitability for a job. The affirmation of belonging, though, must be based on a person's true capabilities for the job.
- Valuing multiple perspectives: A variety of contributions are explicitly valued in the organizational culture. This tells those threatened by stereotypes that this is an organization where such stereotypes are not allowed.
- Role models: People from the person's own group who have been successful in this kind of job carry the implicit message that the threatening stereotype is not a barrier here.
- Building self-confidence through Socratic feedback: Instead of judgmental responses to performance, an ongoing dialogue helps direct the person, with minimal attention to whether they did well or poorly. This strengthens the mentor relationship while minimizing the emotional cost of early failures, a strategy that allows self-efficacy to build gradually along with successes large or small. (Goleman, 1998)

As a final note on emotional intelligence, it is important to recognize how emotional intelligence works with one's notion of one's ability. There exist two articulations of ability: "a fixed ability that needs to be proven, and a changeable [growth] ability that can be developed through learning" (Erhard, et al., 2010, p. 14). The fixed mindset creates a sense of urgency to continually prove oneself (Erhard, et al., 2010). The growth mindset is founded on the belief that one's qualities can be cultivated through effort (Erhard, et al., 2010). Each mindset caters to its own paradigm:

> When you enter a mindset, you enter a new world. In one world – the world of fixed traits – success is about proving you're smart or talented. Validating yourself. In the other – the world of changing qualities – it's about stretching yourself to learn something new. Developing yourself […] The point is if you have created a fixed mindset, the mindset itself constrains and shapes the way you see the world, others and yourself and consequently your actions, and it does so automatically without you consciously being aware of having that mindset. In effect, that mindset uses you. (Erhard, et al., 2010, p. 15)

In summation, practicing emotional intelligence enables healthy, effective interactions with others that can foster shared values and expectations. It offers multi-faceted opportunities for growth and contributes to the extent of which an individual's ability can flourish, directly affecting individual contributions in interpersonal relationships and to organizations.

Summary

Essential to managing and cultivating the multigenerational workforce is appreciating differences while nurturing commonalities (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). Through developing and utilizing both particularized and generalized strategies that can be applied to respective generations as well as intergenerationally according to attributes, preferences, and strengths, organizations can increase mission and vision alignment and enhance contributions while offering meaningful work and purpose (MetLife, 2009). An organization's workforce is the only long-term competitive advantage and in order to support their people, organizations "must invest in programs that attract, motivate, and retain talent" (MetLife, 2009, p. 7). When people are able to share their ideas, skills, knowledge, stories, and know that their input is important, they feel valued by their colleagues, the organization, and experience ontological security (MetLife, 2009). Organizations can create an environment that "break[s] down barriers of age, perception, and experience, and subtly persuade the generations to understand what each has to offer" (Metlife, 2009, p. 32), thereby allowing individuals and the organization to experience well-being and prosperity.

As observed, this chapter contains many strands of thought which interweave to accomplish the objective of this dissertation. For ease of comprehension, Figure 1 and Table 1 succinctly explain the practical applications of the research themes discussed and how they connect.

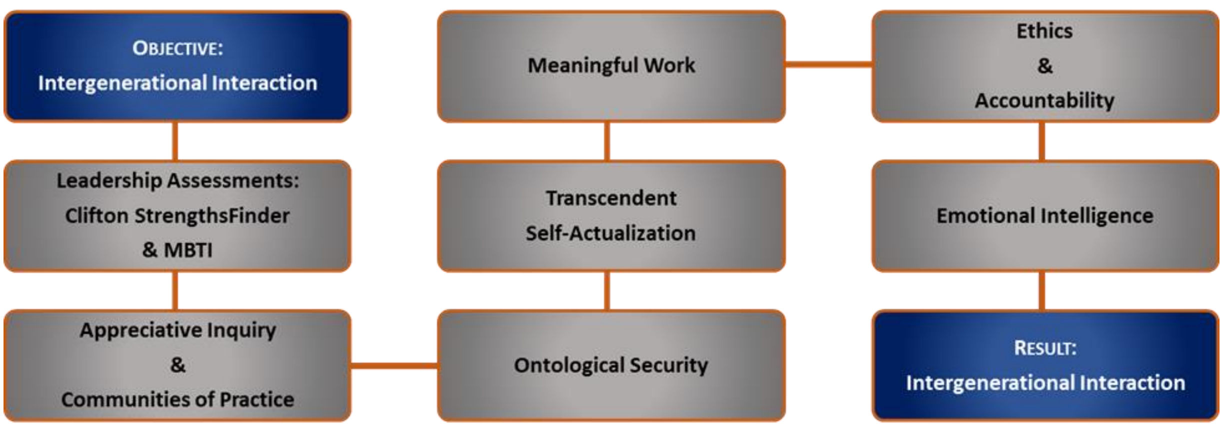

Figure 1. Research themes and practical applications.

Table 1.

Research Themes and Practical Applications.

OBJECTIVE: Intergenerational interaction promoting organizational prosperity	
Research Theme	**Practical Application**
Leadership Development: Clifton StrengthsFinder & MBTI	Individuals are administered the Clifton StrengthsFinder and MBTI accompanied by an information session discussing assessment results and meanings.
Appreciative Inquiry & Communities of Practice	Initial intergenerational interaction is promoted by grouping individuals in work groups based on respective assessment results that are complimentary and including a variety of generational membership. Groups are then tasked with finding solutions to current organizational challenges by practicing appreciative inquiry. By encouraging this format of engagement, groups are simultaneously arranged into communities of practice.
Ontological Security	Through working together, individuals learn about and appreciate each other's values and strengths, allowing them to experience ontological security.
Transcendent Self-Actualization	By solving organizational issues as a group through harnessing each other's strengths, individuals experience transcendent self-actualization.
Meaningful Work	Transcendent self-actualization coupled with successful solutions coming to fruition allows individuals to experience and share in meaningful work.
Ethics & Accountability	The enjoyment of meaningful work deepens individuals' sense of and commitment to ethics and accountability amongst themselves and the greater organization.
Emotional Intelligence	Commitment to ethics and accountability leads to understanding and valuing the practice of emotional intelligence and realizing how it impacts individuals on a personal and professional level.
RESULT: this process should ensure sustained and regular intergenerational interaction that mutually benefits the organization and those that support it	

Chapter III: Methodology & Research Design

Introduction

This dissertation sought to determine whether effective intergenerational interaction could be achieved through the implementation and combination of ontological principles and leadership development resources. By cultivating intergenerational interaction, it was anticipated that the three major concerns organizations have expressed regarding the multigenerational workforce would be satisfied: (a) effective knowledge transfer; (b) mitigation of negative co-worker perceptions based on generational stereotypes; and (c) increased awareness of the unique and shared strengths of each generation, not only to propel organizational objectives, but also to enrich team dynamics and generate meaningful work experiences (Randstad, 2008). Further, through supporting intergenerational interaction via an ontological approach, it is the researcher's expectation that individuals will experience the aforementioned four core elements of personal leadership development: "(a) integrity, (b) authenticity, (c) being committed to something bigger than oneself, and (d) being cause in the matter" (Erhard, et al., 2015, p. 5).

To determine whether framing leadership from an ontological perspective in conjunction with utilizing leadership assessment tools can serve in facilitating effective intergenerational interaction, participants of various fields engaged in the humanities were interviewed. Participants were asked a series of 10 questions in order to obtain their perception and opinion of the following: generational differences in the workforce, the effectiveness of leadership assessment tools – primarily the Clifton StrengthsFinder and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and the effectiveness of framing leadership as ontological-phenomenological.

Research Questions: Restated

This study addressed the following research questions:

I. How can generational differences in the workforce be described and interpreted?

II. How can the impact of constructing intergenerational work teams and mentorships based on leadership assessment tools be described and interpreted?

III. How can the impact of framing leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective be described and interpreted?

The Research Questions have been partly addressed and supported through the literature review and synthesis (see Table 2):

Table 2.

Research Questions and Support Type.

Research Question	Support Type
How can generational differences in the workforce be described and interpreted?	▪ Generational influences, differences, and preferred work place dynamics discussed according to each generation (pp. 16-22)
How can the impact of constructing intergenerational work teams and mentorships based on leadership assessment tools be described and interpreted?	▪ Case studies cited in which the impact of utilizing Clifton StrengthsFinder and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator has been measured: - Clifton StrengthsFinder and Cardinal Health (pp. 26-28); Clifton StrengthsFinder and Triad Group (pp. 28-29) - Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Hallmark Cards, Inc. (pp. 31-35)
How can the impact of framing leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective be described and interpreted?	▪ Connection, import, and impact of ontology and phenomenology on leadership briefly described on pages 1-2 and then later expanded upon on pages 48-52 when discussing ontological security and knowing versus being

Note. The following interview questions were developed to respond comprehensively to the research questions (see Table 3).

Table 3.

Research Questions and Interview Questions.

Research Question	Interview Question
How can generational differences in the workforce be described and interpreted?	1. What is your perception of the multigenerational workforce? 2. To what extent do you perceive conflicts arise due to misconceptions attributed to generational differences in the work environment? 3. In what forms do conflicts attributed to generational differences typically present themselves in your particular work environment? 4. What efforts are made to mitigate conflict and provide resolution? 5. Is there an organizational framework in place to cultivate intergenerational interaction? If so, how does it function? If not, what are your thoughts on implementing such a framework – from both the personal and organizational level?
How can the impact of constructing intergenerational work teams and mentorships based on leadership assessment tools be described and interpreted?	6. If you were to develop a framework founded upon the principles of nurturing intergenerational interaction and leadership development, how would you go about doing it and how would you ensure universal application of said framework – applicable to diverse audiences and across organizations/industries? 7. What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of leadership assessment tools, such as the Clifton StrengthsFinder and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, in terms of organizational and leadership development? 8. What are your thoughts on utilizing the aforementioned leadership tools in tandem with a framework for fostering intergenerational interaction?
How can the impact of framing leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective be described and interpreted?	9. To what extent do you think it would be useful to frame leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective in terms of personal leadership development and cultivating intergenerational interaction? 10. To what extent do you think it would be useful for an organization to promote curriculum in which leadership development is contextualized within an ontological and phenomenological model?

Research Methodology: Action Research Approach

The study was conducted utilizing an action research approach. Reason and Bradbury (2008) describe action research as: “an approach which is used in designing studies which seek both to inform and influence practice” (pp. 8-9). Key features of action research include:

- A set of practices that respond to people's desire to act creatively in the face of practical and often pressing issues in their lives in organizations and communities;
- An engagement with people in collaborative relationships, opening new "communicative spaces" (p. 9) in which dialogue and development can flourish;
- Draw [ing] on many ways of knowing, both in the evidence that is generated in inquiry and its expression in diverse forms of presentation as we share our learning with wider audiences;
- [Being] value oriented, seeking to address issues of significance concerning the flourishing of human persons, their communities, and the wider ecology in which we participate; [and]
- [Consisting of] a living, emergent process that cannot be pre-determined but changes and develops as those engaged deepen their understanding of the issues to be addressed and develop their capacity as co-inquirers both individually and collectively (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

In line with this approach, theory-building interview questions were developed for collecting data (see Appendix E) in order to better understand how participant responses would correlate to the research questions and literature review.

Data Gathering Instrument: The Delphi Method

The continuous nature of theory-building research "requires the ongoing study, adaptation, development, and improvement of the theory in action and ensures that the relevance and rigor of the theory are continuously attended to and improved on" (Lynham, 2002, p. 234). The Delphi method has proved to be useful in harnessing theory completeness among a panel of experts in the effort to reach a general consensus.

The Delphi method essentially consists of a series of rounds, “interspersed by controlled feedback that seek to gain the most reliable consensus of opinion of a group of experts” (Powell, 2003, p. 376). The application of this technique can be useful in “situations where individual judgements must be tapped and combined in order to address a lack of agreement or incomplete state of knowledge” (p. 376) and is “valued for its ability to structure and organize group communication” (Powell, 2003, p. 376). The name of the method refers to “the ancient Greek oracle at Delphi who offered visions of the future to those who sought advice” (p. 4) and was “first used in technology forecasting studies initiated by the RAND (Research and Development) Corporation for the American military in 1944” (Hanafin, 2004, p. 4). Following its initial use, the method has gained popularity as a means of “engaging opinion from people with expertise” (Hanafin, 2004, p. 4) and has been modified by researchers based on respective objectives in execution.

For the purposes of this study, the panel of experts each underwent a first round in which they answered a series of 10 questions while they were being audio recorded. The recordings were then transcribed and shared confidentially with all members of the group via email. Participants were able to ascertain their particular transcribed responses, but could not identify those belonging to the others. Participants were responsible for reviewing the material and indicating if they were inclined to modify their initial feedback in light of collective responses from the first round. This process encompassed part of the second round. Ideally, the second round was meant to engender more of an alignment of opinions that may have been absent from the first round of interviews. It was the researcher’s expectation that utilizing the Delphi method would increase the probability of shared insight and greater assist in executing the objective of determining whether implementing ontological principles combined with select leadership development resources could serve as means towards cultivating effective intergenerational interaction. That said, as indicated from the first round, a strong alignment had already emerged from participant responses. The researcher attributes this result as to the reason why all seven participants decided to maintain the integrity of their initial feedback. After confirming each participant's decision, round two was complete in conjunction with the participation element of the study.

Validity & Reliability of Data Collection Method

The Delphi method is "clearly dependent on the experiential knowledge of its expert panel" (p. 380) and builds upon the "notion of the function of human experience and agreement as the basis for truth" (Powell, 2003, pp. 379-380). It is suggested that the scientific merit of the Delphi method "should not be open to the same validation criteria as hard science" (Powell, 2003, p. 380). Rather, it should be deemed successful and valid if the method aids in providing "more accurate assessments or judgements than those obtained either by individuals or by interacting groups" (Powell, 2003, p. 377). To clarify, typical informal methods of gaining consensus, "such as committees, are recognized to be prone to domination by powerful individuals, the biasing effects of personality traits, seniority and the fact that only one person can speak at a time" (Powell, 2003, p. 377), thus potentially "inhibit[ing] creativity and the possibility of resolving ambiguous and conflicting issues" (Powell, 2003, p. 377). This situation is described as *process loss* (Powell, 2003). In contrast, the Delphi method offers a "democratic, structured approach and participant anonymity" (p. 377) leading to *process gain* (Powell, 2003). The "systematic control" (p. 377) of conducting rounds "lend[s] an air of objectivity to the outcome and provide[s] a sharing of responsibility that is both reassuring and releases the participants from group inhibition" (Powell, 2003, p. 377).

Further, it is suggested that “heterogeneous groups, characterized by panel members with widely varying personalities and substantially different perspectives on a problem, produce a higher proportion of high quality, highly acceptable solutions than homogeneous groups” (Powell, 2003, p. 379). In other words, selecting a diverse, expert panel “leads to better performance as this may allow for the consideration of different perspectives and a wider range of alternatives” (Powell, 2003, p. 379). However, it should be noted that it has been argued “that the move towards consensus that occurs in a Delphi study reflects a normative rather than informational influence” (Powell, 2003, p. 377). Participants “may be persuaded to conform rather than express true agreement” (Powell, 2003, p. 377). Yet, this limitation is mitigated as best as possible through the use of maintaining the identities of participants and their responses confidential. By maintaining confidentiality, it is expected that the Delphi method does indeed facilitate the foundation towards an authentic consensus.

Data Analysis: Constant Comparative Method

Data was analyzed utilizing the constant comparative method often associated with qualitative studies. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe the four stages present in the constant comparative method: “(a) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (b) integrating categories and their properties, (c) delimit[ing] the theory, and (d) writing the theory” (para. 29; 30; 31; 33). As such, upon transcribing the audio recorded interviews, data was organized by collective responses per interview question (seven answers per question as there were seven participants) and then as groupings of interview questions as they pertained to the overarching, directly correlated research questions. For instance, interview questions one through five connected to research question one, interview questions six through eight related to research question two, and the remaining interview questions nine and ten aligned with research question three (see Table 3 on page 74). The data was first analyzed per interview question, observing emergent characteristics that were coded to determine subsequent overlap among participants, relation to the literature, and potential future implications. After examining the 10 interview questions individually, the coded data was then considered in groupings by research question. Upon identifying a plethora of characteristics, further coding was administered in order to reveal a variety of themes. A characteristic was deemed a theme if it appeared two or more times per interview question. Final analysis was consolidated into a narrative accompanied by visual aids, as seen in Chapter Four, in order to discuss the findings.

Research Design

Researcher bias. The researcher is cognizant of how their personal academic and professional background has shaped the development of the dissertation and the research. In order to mitigate bias, participants were strategically selected to give broad opinions and promote objective feedback.

Participant selection. A panel of experts was recruited from the fields of: organizational leadership and development, ontology, sociology, psychology, and philosophy. The panel included a total of seven individuals. In accordance with the Delphi method, participants were deemed as experts due to the contributions to their respective fields and distinction achieved both in terms of broad applications and specializations.

Human subjects consideration. Approval from Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was secured prior to data collection (see Appendix D). The researcher submitted the electronic IRB application explaining the nature of the dissertation and participant involvement. The researcher supplemented the application with copies of the following documents: (a) Dissertation (Chapters 1-3); (b) Human Subjects Training Certification; (c)

Recruitment Letter; (d) Informed Consent Form; and (e) Interview Questions (see Appendices E through H for items b-e).

Interview candidates were contacted via email and approached with the Recruitment Letter in order to gain their participation. Potential participants were informed regarding the nature of the dissertation and the nature of their involvement. They were encouraged to contact the researcher in order to ensure understanding and provide an opportunity for answering questions. Upon gaining interest, participants were supplied with the Informed Consent Form prior to conducting interviews and were responsible for signing the document and submitting the form back to the researcher. When performing interviews, the researcher utilized the IRB approved Interview Questions crafted by the researcher. In addition, individuals were emailed the Interview Questions before scheduled interviews outlining what was to be asked of them. In the Informed Consent Form, individuals were notified that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could opt-out at any point in time and that any information collected up to that point in time would not be used in the study should they prefer it not to be reported. However, should they choose to maintain their participation, the transcribed collection of responses would be available for their review upon completion.

The researcher will keep transcripts and notes from the interviews on file for five years until May 2022. Only the researcher will have access to this data. Upon the fulfillment of the deadline, records will be deleted/shredded to ensure the privacy and security of the participants. Confidentiality and professionalism was stressed to participants and routine practices supporting confidentiality were enforced, such as: de-identifying data through the use of pseudonyms in place of proper names, protecting physical records in locked cabinets, and protecting computer files in password protected folders. In addition, research assistants were not used in this study, so all gathered data was viewed only by the researcher. Anonymity was not claimed as the researcher had direct contact with all the participants in recruitment, gaining consent, and conducting interviews. However, participants and their respective responses remained confidential to collective participants and will continue to be confidential.

This study had minimal risks to participants. The only foreseen risk was perceived as being potentially social as participants being selected to participate in the study could have affected their perceived or actual status within their respective work setting, amongst their work colleagues, and potentially affect their personal relationships with them. Anticipated benefits were expected to be intellectual, psychological, or emotional. For example, some individuals experienced a sense of meaning and purpose in being a part of the study and contributing to the research. Due to the nature of the research, no deception techniques were employed. Further, this study did not entail any such conflict of interest with participants. Remuneration took the form of personal cards expressing the researcher's appreciation of participant involvement.

Interview protocol. All interviews took place either in person or via phone. The duration of the interviews was approximately one hour per individual and data was collected via audio recording. The researcher utilized the Delphi method for collecting data. As such, participants underwent two rounds of interviews.

When recruiting interview participants, the researcher established contact via email utilizing the IRB approved Recruitment Letter. Once selected participants expressed initial interest, they were sent the Informed Consent Form to be signed and submitted back to the researcher before partaking in the study. When performing interviews, the researcher utilized the IRB approved Interview Questions. In addition, individuals were emailed the Interview Questions before scheduled interviews in order to give them time to reflect on their responses and demonstrate respect for their involvement in the research.

After the first round of interviews and upon consolidating and transcribing the data, the researcher contacted participants via email to share the de-identified, confidential group responses, including their own. As part of the process required for the second round, participants were responsible for reviewing the collective feedback and determining if they cared to modify any or all of their responses. Upon confirmation, the second round was completed and participation involvement fulfilled.

Interview questions. In response to the research questions and literature, the following questions were designed to elicit genuine, thoughtful reflections and insight from participants:

RQ1: How can generational differences in the workforce be described and interpreted?

1. What is your perception of the multigenerational workforce?
2. To what extent do you perceive conflicts arise due to misconceptions attributed to generational differences in the work environment?
3. In what forms do conflicts attributed to generational differences typically present themselves in your particular work environment?
4. What efforts are made to mitigate conflict and provide resolution?
5. Is there an organizational framework in place to cultivate intergenerational interaction? If so, how does it function? If not, what are your thoughts on implementing such a framework – from both the personal and organizational level?

RQ2: How can the impact of constructing intergenerational work teams and mentorships based on leadership assessment tools be described and interpreted?

6. If you were to develop a framework founded upon the principles of nurturing intergenerational interaction and leadership development, how would you go about

doing it and how would you ensure universal application of said framework – applicable to diverse audiences and across organizations/industries?

7. What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of leadership assessment tools, such as the Clifton StrengthsFinder and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, in terms of organizational and leadership development?
8. What are your thoughts on utilizing the aforementioned leadership tools in tandem with a framework for fostering intergenerational interaction?

RQ3: How can the impact of framing leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective be described and interpreted?

9. To what extent do you think it would be useful to frame leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective in terms of personal leadership development and cultivating intergenerational interaction?
10. To what extent do you think it would be useful for an organization to promote curriculum in which leadership development is contextualized within an ontological and phenomenological model?

The following figure (Figure 2) illustrates how each interview question aligns with the respective research themes addressed in the literature review in Chapter Two.

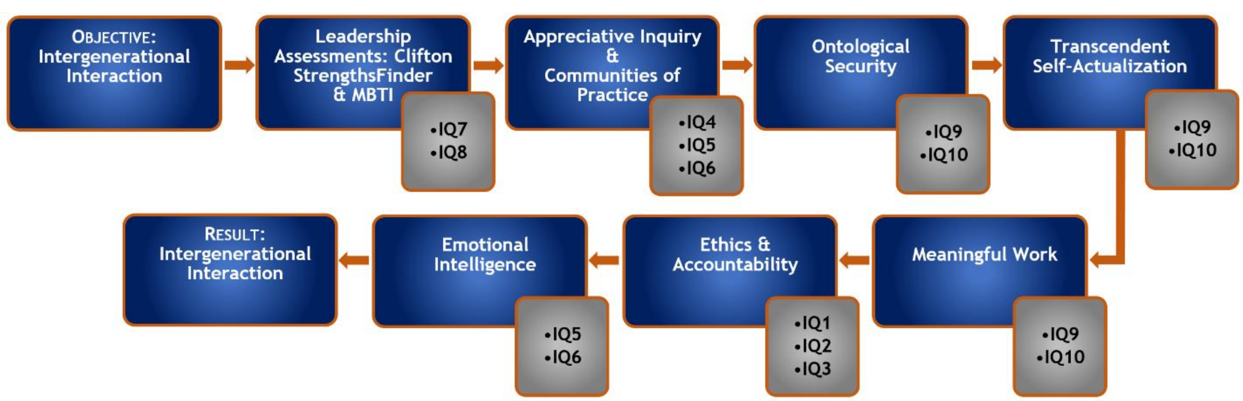

Figure 2. Interview questions and research themes.

Summary

By exploring leadership from an ontological perspective and implementing the use of leadership development tools, a high bandwidth of intergenerational interaction can be expected to be achieved, uniting the multigenerational workforce. The Delphi method was used for strategic data collection with the intent of assisting the panel of experts to arrive at a greater consensus of opinions and strengthen the theories rooted in this dissertation. It was the researcher’s expectation that the collected expert feedback would refine the use of ontological principles and leadership development resources for fostering effective intergenerational interaction in which the multigenerational workforce can enjoy transcendent well-being and connectedness and organizations can experience positive, long-term results.

Chapter IV: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine whether ontological principles and leadership development tools can serve as a means to cultivate intergenerational interaction for the benefit of organizations and their supporting individuals. The need for this objective was observed in response to a variety of reasons, of which were elaborated upon in Chapters One and Two, primarily centralized on: inhibited or limited intergenerational interaction due to generational misunderstandings and stereotypes leading to unnecessary ambiguity and conflict within organizations, compromising productivity and success both professionally and personally, individually and as a collective.

Participants

Seven participants were interviewed for this study. All individuals hold positions within the larger landscape of the humanities, particularly within the fields of: organizational leadership and development, ontology, sociology, psychology, and philosophy. In alignment with the Delphi method, participants were deemed as experts due to their contributions and distinction achieved both in terms of broad applications and specializations in their respective fields. Originally, the intent of the researcher was to secure one representative from each arena – a total of five participants. However, based on recommendations from certain participants, the researcher was referred to other individuals who, as suggested, provided additionally valuable insight to the study. As such, the makeup of the population occurred as follows:

- Organizational Leadership and Development: Three participants
- Ontology: One participant
- Sociology: One participant

- Psychology: One participant
- Philosophy: One participant

The greatest percentage of participation came from those in the field of organizational leadership and development, totaling 43%, while the other fields contributed 14% respectively. Four participants (57%) came from private institutions and three participants (43%) came from public institutions. The majority of participants came from higher education institutions (86%) with one participant explicitly from the corporate arena (14%). That being said, four participants had working experience in both industries (57%). Christian universities represented three participants (43%) and four participants (57%) came from non-religious universities or organizations. Of the seven participants, five (71%) were female and two (29%) male. From a generational perspective, three participants were Baby Boomers (43%), two belonged to Generation X (29%), and two participants were Millennials (29%). Following with Figures 3-6 are graphical representations of participant demographics.

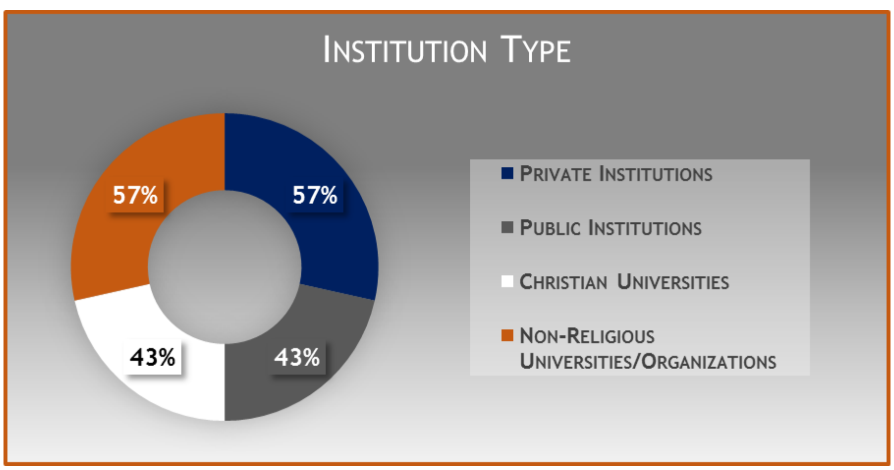

Figure 3. Institution type.

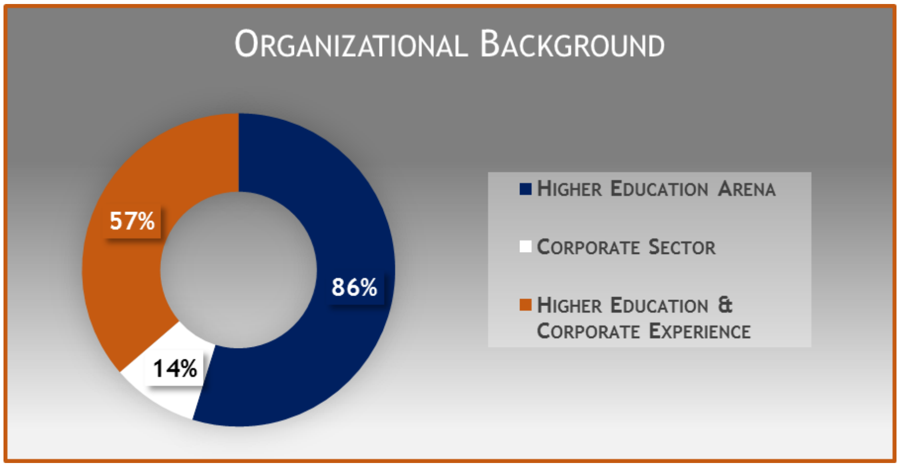

Figure 4. Organizational background.

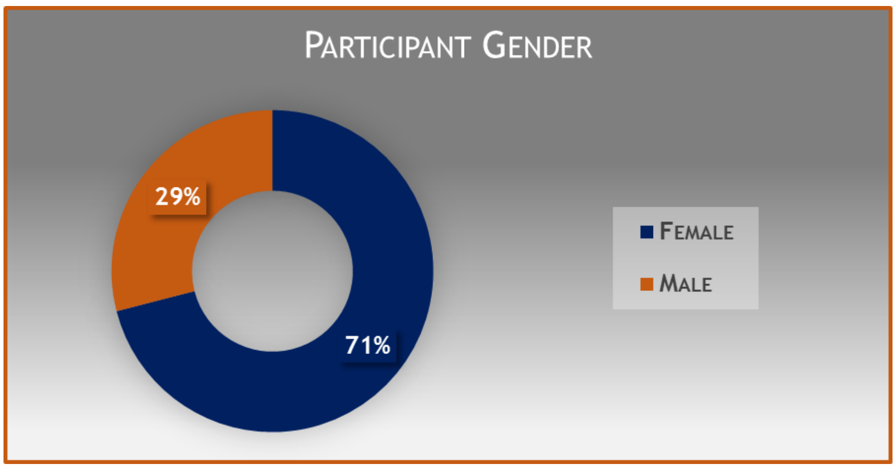

Figure 5. Participant gender.

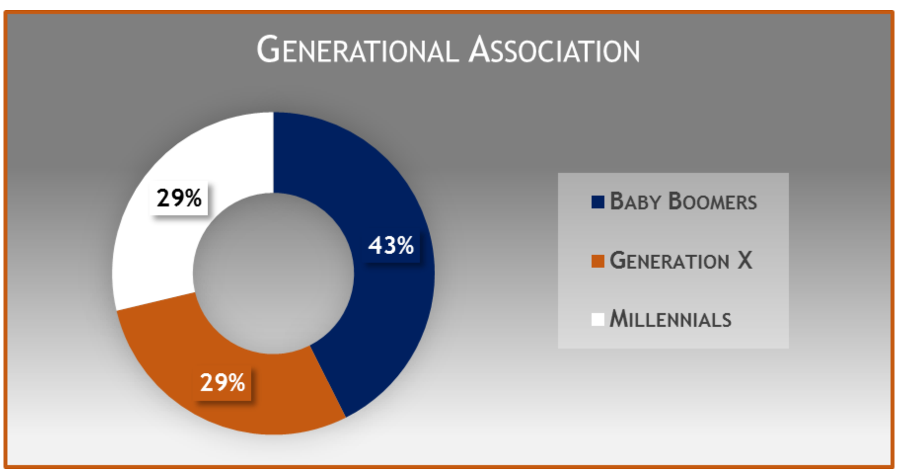

Figure 6. Generational association.

Data Collection

Participants were interviewed utilizing the Delphi method, discussed in Chapter Three, which consisted of two rounds of participation. In the first round, participants answered a series of 10 questions while audio recorded over the course of approximately one hour per individual. Due to the complexity of the interview questions, it was necessary to offer clarifying and explanatory dialogue to certain concepts in order to move forward in the process. Particularly in reference to the context of the multigenerational workforce (how many generations were included in the study) and the questions pertaining to ontology. The majority of participants were unfamiliar with the philosophically-bent language. As such definitions were provided in addition to relevant examples as to how ontology affects individuals at a foundational level (individually and with others) and in daily, interpersonal interactions. All participants knew of and had experience with the suggested leadership assessments. This was attributed to the fact that administering the Clifton StrengthsFinder and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a common Human Resources technique in addition to that the majority of participants hold positions in the humanities spectrum within the higher education arena. The recordings from round one were transcribed and shared confidentially with the group via email. Participants were able to identify their particular transcribed responses, while not of others, maintaining the confidentiality of the collective. Participants were responsible for reviewing the material and determining if they wished to modify their initial feedback in light of group responses. This process comprised part of the second round. All participants opted for maintaining their original responses. Once confirming their decision, the second round was considered complete and participation involvement fulfilled.

Data Analysis

The four stages of the constant comparative method were implemented when analyzing the data: “(a) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (b) integrating categories and their properties, (c) delimit[ing] the theory, and (d) writing the theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, para. 29; 30; 31; 33). Upon interview transcription, data was organized by collective responses per interview question and then as groupings of interview questions as they correlated to the research questions (see Table 3 on page 74). Emergent characteristics were coded per interview question to determine overlap among participants, relation to the literature, and potential future implications. Data was then coded in groupings by research question. After identifying numerous characteristics, further coding was assigned in order to yield a variety of themes. Characteristics were dubbed themes if they appeared two or more times per interview question. Final analysis resulted in a narrative in conjunction with visual representation in order to convey the findings.

Data Display

Data was organized per interview question and then grouped by correlating research questions. In order to maintain confidentiality, participants were labeled according to their interview order (Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.). Patterns and themes were identified according to the language used by participants in response to respective interview questions. When explicit language was not particularly indicative of a theme, the researcher inferred what was being conveyed overall in the individual’s response in order to deduce whether or not a coded theme was applicable to the context of the excerpt. The remaining sections of this chapter will illustrate how the 10 interview questions addressed the three research questions.

Research Question One

The first research question was an inquiry in reference to: How can generational differences in the workforce be described and interpreted? Five interview questions were connected:

1. What is your perception of the multigenerational workforce?
2. To what extent do you perceive conflicts arise due to misconceptions attributed to generational differences in the work environment?
3. In what forms do conflicts attributed to generational differences typically present themselves in your particular work environment?
4. What efforts are made to mitigate conflict and provide resolution?
5. Is there an organizational framework in place to cultivate intergenerational interaction? If so, how does it function? If not, what are your thoughts on implementing such a framework – from both the personal and organizational level?

Specific themes were revealed from each question that contributed to answering research question one.

Interview question 1: What is your perception of the multigenerational workforce? Upon reviewing the data, 12 characteristics appeared which led to three emergent themes: (a) Variety leads to better understanding, personally/professionally enriching experiences, and organizational success; (b) Differences in values and expectations leads to challenges/conflict about what work looks like; and (c) Generational categories lead to dismissive stereotypes and conflict (see Figure 7).

Theme 1a: Variety leads to better understanding, personally/professionally enriching experiences, and organizational success. This theme was revealed as the most shared common perception of the multigenerational workforce with it being mentioned in four instances (57%). Participant 5 affirmed: "In general the multigenerational workforce is composed of people with different trainings, perspectives, historical events that they've gone through, which makes for fantastic diversity for people to communicate with one another and greater innovation" (Participant 5, personal communication, March 13, 2017). Additionally, Participant 2 commented that a workforce composed of various generations serves as the most "enriching" (Participant 2, personal communication, March 1, 2017) type of environment in terms of both personal and professional development.

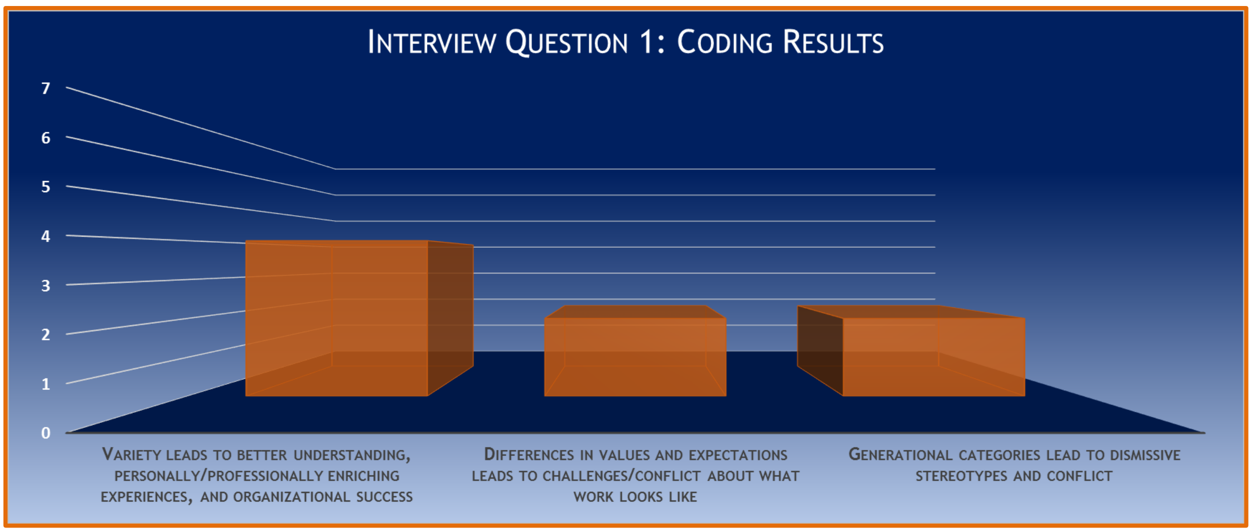

Figure 7. Themes and frequencies of responses associated with interview question one.

Theme 1b: Differences in values and expectations leads to challenges/conflict about what work looks like. This secondary theme occurred in two instances (29%). Participant 5 noted that having a multigenerational workforce "creates some challenges and conflicts with different value systems and different expectations of what work looks like" (Participant 5, personal communication, March 13, 2017). Participant 7 echoed this sentiment in saying, "I definitely perceive that there are differences in how the workforce does its work from a generational standpoint" (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017). Participant 7 attributed these differences to generational values and preferences based on personality and historical experiences.

Theme 1c: Generational categories lead to dismissive stereotypes and conflict. This theme also appeared in two instances (29%). Participant 7 asserted:

> […] as humans we like to compartmentalize and we focus on this terminology, which I think in a way is good because it gives a common language for discussion – which is important – but sometimes, we take this common language too far and it ends up putting people in boxes […] I think that oftentimes we can focus so much on the terminology and putting people in boxes and forget to take a look at the individual experiences and how nuanced some of the comments that we're seeing are. (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017)

Participant 6 recounted from their personal experience in becoming acquainted with generational terminology:

> The first time I heard anybody talking about the variety of generations was with Gen X. I'm Generation X and I remember we were perceived as being this grand enigma. My first impression of these generational markers was annoyance in the sense that a whole generation of people was being pigeon-holed into some sort of stereotype that would allow us to be dismissed with one little phrase. Being a part of a university, the university is constantly trying to figure out what's going on with our student population so they're constantly using generational descriptors to talk about them and determine expectations. My intuition on this type of predetermination is that it's problematic as it leads to an over-generalized idea that pits the generations against one another. I think that if we can come together and share in wisdom and expertise the healthier we are as a workforce. (Participant

6, personal communication, March 14, 2017)

Interview question 2: To what extent do you perceive conflicts arise due to misconceptions attributed to generational differences in the work environment? After evaluating interview question two, 12 characteristics were revealed which pointed to five themes of equal value: (a) Generational differences in motivation for working; (b) Difference in work ethic between Baby Boomers and Millennials; (c) Millennials perceived as spoiled/entitled; (d) Millennials working towards meaningful work; and (e) Generational categories lead to dismissive stereotypes and conflict (see Figure 8).

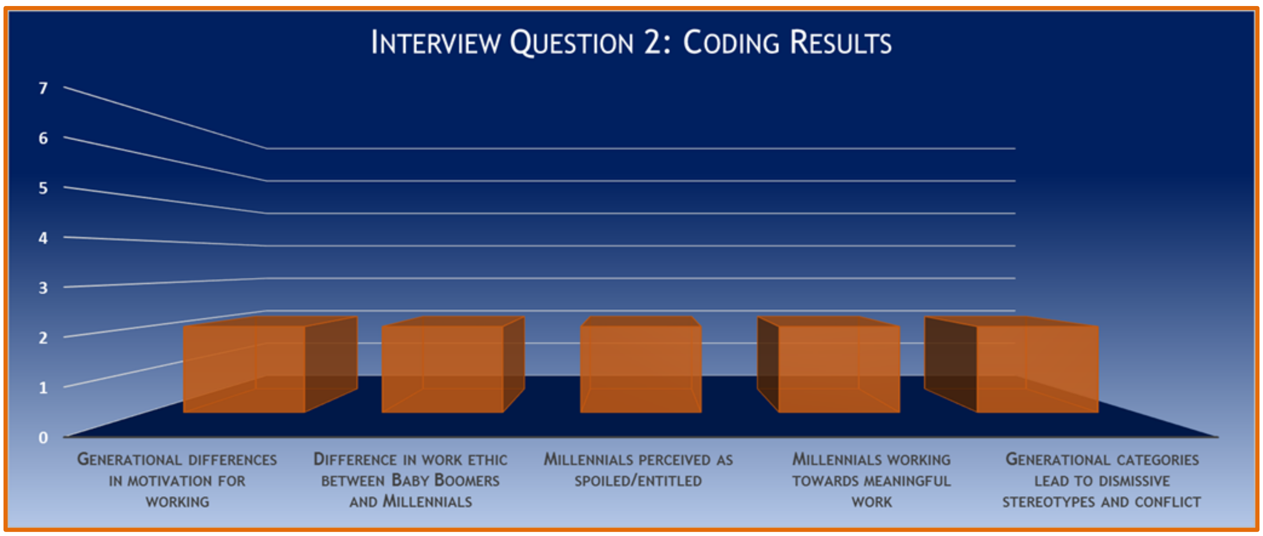

Figure 8. Themes and frequencies of responses associated with interview question two.

Theme 2a: Generational differences in motivation for working. This theme emerged in two instances (29%). Participant 1 referenced the differences between Baby Boomers and Millennials, insisting, "[…] there are two different levels of motivation, one is survival [Baby Boomers] and one is more altruistic [Millennials]. They create problems that need different approaches. That dichotomy creates some of the conflict we see in the workplace" (Participant 1, personal communication, February 28, 2017).

Theme 2b: Difference in work ethic between baby boomers and millennials. Two instances occurred for this theme (29%). Participant 4 stated, "The older generations believe in working hard while younger generations believe in working smart" (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017). Participant 4 also perceived that Millennials tend to not want to work as diligently as their generational predecessors.

Theme 2c: Millennials perceived as spoiled/entitled. This theme was presented twice (29%). Participant 4 commented on what they observe to be the dominant perception of Millennials: "The perception from the Baby Boomers and even Gen X, as it pertains to Millennials, is that they're spoiled and don't want to work. They're fresh out of college and now want to be the President of the company" (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017). Participant 5 spoke from the Millennial perspective, "I think there's an assumption that in my generation, Millennials, everyone is out for a trophy and needs to be rewarded. That stereotype leads to some resentment among previous generations" (Participant 5, personal communication, March 13, 2017).

Theme 2d: Millennials working towards meaningful work. This theme was mentioned in two instances (29%). Participant 1 explained how Millennials, in contrast to previous generations, aspire to engage in meaningful work: "[…] for the Baby Boomers, it was the corporate goals. You worked to provide for yourself, your family, economic reasons and what have you. For the Millennials, it's the 'why.' Why are we doing this, what's the mission, what good are we doing?" (Participant 1, personal communication, February 28, 2017). Participant 4 described a similar observation: "Millennials want to enjoy their jobs and have a motive or purpose in their work. They want to find meaning and an arena where they can be heard […and their] ideas discussed" (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017).

Theme 2e: Generational categories lead to dismissive stereotypes and conflict. This theme was discussed in two instances (29%). Participant 5 stated, "I perceive conflict in the work environment as attributed to stereotyping and assumption" (Participant 5, personal communication, March 13, 2017). Participant 6 elaborated by saying:

> Generational misunderstandings and stereotypes tend to become a way for people to generalize and then disregard generations other than their own and not have relationships with them. People don't take into account the multiplicity and difference among human beings and how this can be a big asset. By not taking these things into account, misunderstandings and stereotypes then lead to conflict. (Participant 6, personal communication, March 14, 2017)

Interview question 3: In what forms do conflicts attributed to generational differences typically present themselves in your particular work environment? Interview question three yielded 12 characteristics with two emergent themes: (a) Differences in values and expectations leads to challenges/conflict about what work looks like and (b) Millennials perceived as spoiled/entitled (see Figure 9).

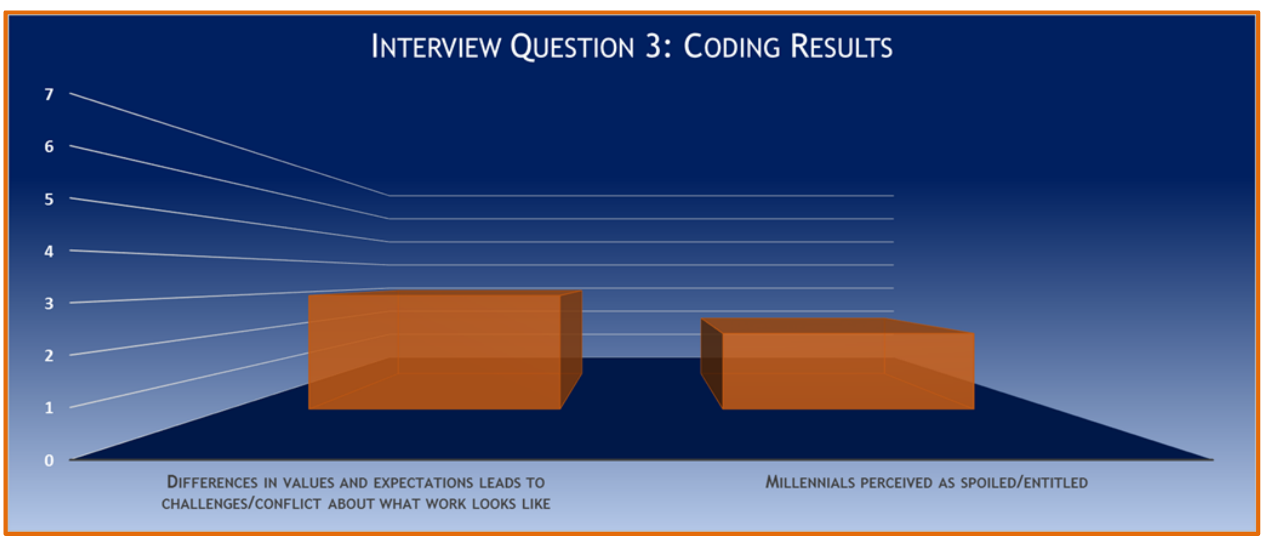

Figure 9. Themes and frequencies of responses associated with interview question three.

Theme 3a: Differences in values and expectations leads to challenges/conflict about what work looks like. This theme occurred in three instances (43%). Participant 4 highlighted how Millennials tend to perceive the differences and ensuing conflicts in work expectations as being attributed to the idea that the previous generations are simply "'old-school' in the way they think and do things" (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017). Participant 5 commented from the Millennial perspective:

> […] some people might think differently of and be more flexible with time. I've been lucky to have had supervisors and colleagues who are focused on so long as you get the work done what that time looks like doesn't necessarily matter because you are achieving the goals. There are other colleagues, however, who think you should be at your desk during the regular nine-to-five when doing the work in order to get it done. The common assumption is that if you're not at your desk you're not doing the work. The misunderstandings about what work looks like and how it's valued are the biggest conflicts. (Participant 5, personal communication, March 13, 2017)

Participant 7 illustrated contrasting work expectations and preferences between Baby Boomers and Millennials:

> I work with a staff of fifty people in Student Activities which enables a great learning opportunity, but is also challenging. I find that some people like true, direct communication and having someone like a Director make a decision, whereas other staff members want to be more collaborative. My Millennial staff seeks transparency and openness and will want to share some of their thoughts, perspectives, or issues that they might be having while the Baby Boomer staff has this mantra that 'loose lips sink ships.' It's a very dichotomous perspective in comparison to what the Millennial staff is seeking. Since Millennials grew

up surrounded by technology, they feel as though the more they know the better they can be at making decisions while Baby Boomers aren't wanting to be as transparent. (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017)

Theme 3b: Millennials perceived as spoiled/entitled. This theme was described twice (29%). Participant 1 cited that in their particular environment, there exists:

> A perception of entitlement versus earning. The Baby Boomers always had the perception of working hard, putting in the hours, it wasn't as 'me' oriented. The Millennials seem to have the reputation of 'what about me, what's in it for me?' (Participant 1, personal communication, February 28, 2017)

Participant 4 characterized a typical Millennial occurrence as such:

> A Millennial will go to their manager and, because of their upbringing, expect to get whatever they want. I wouldn't say every single one of them is this way, but of the ones I have spoken with they expect to be accommodated. (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017)

Interview question 4: What efforts are made to mitigate conflict and provide resolution? When analyzing the data, nine characteristics were presented along with two themes: (a) Good communication and (b) Conflict resolution through collaboration (see Figure 10).

Theme 4a: Good communication. This theme was described in four instances (57%). Participant 7 explained:

> I tend to have an open door policy for the staff that I work with and I ask on multiple occasions for people to come in and share their perspectives with me. I talk to them and make them aware that I can't read their minds so if they have concerns they need to share

them or I won’t know. (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017)

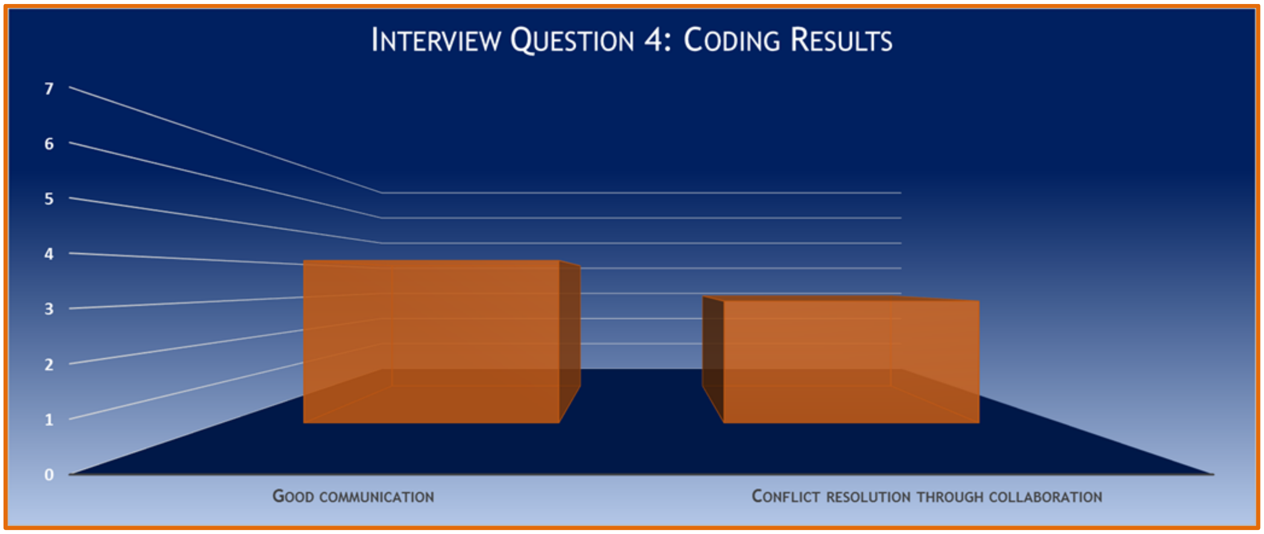

Figure 10. Themes and frequencies of responses associated with interview question four.

Theme 4b: Conflict resolution through collaboration. This theme emerged three times (43%). Participant 7 noted that they have facilitated numerous “professional development training on how to work with ‘blank’ generation” (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017) in order to promote collaboration. Participant 5 described an active and ongoing effort supported by their university:

> One of the best things that we have on our campus is the Council for Equity and Community. We constantly provide people with the opportunities to dialogue across differences. They can unpack whether the differences are based on something intergenerational or intersectional due to people’s identities such as gender, race, religious backgrounds – which sometimes cause misunderstandings in the workplace even though we’re not supposed to talk about those things in the work environment. Having those spaces for dialogue have been really helpful. (Participant 5, personal communication, March 13, 2017)

Interview question 5: Is there an organizational framework in place to cultivate intergenerational interaction? If so, how does it function? If not, what are your thoughts on implementing such a framework – from both the personal and organizational level? Of the seven characteristics present in interview question five, four themes emerged: (a) No formal framework in place; (b) Faculty/staff events; (c) Framework implementation perceived as beneficial; and (d) Framework in place (see Figure 11).

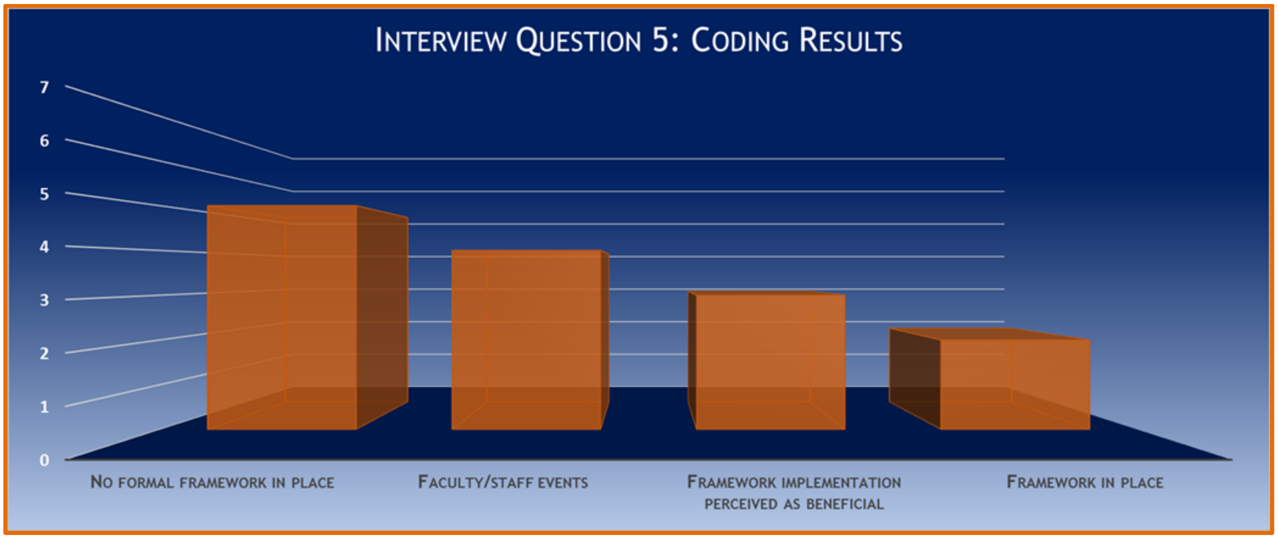

Figure 11. Themes and frequencies of responses associated with interview question five.

Theme 5a: No formal framework in place. This theme was discussed in five instances (71%). Participant 4 expressed, “There isn’t a framework. I haven’t seen any framework in place at any organization I’ve worked with” (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017). Participant 7 observed, “We don’t have anything formalized or truly intentional in terms of cultivating intergenerational interaction” (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017). Most participants shared this sentiment, reporting that when intergenerational interaction has occurred it was scarce and unintentionally intergenerational.

Theme 5b: Faculty/staff events. This theme appeared in four instances (57%). Participant 3 depicted the types of gatherings and events promoted within higher education:

> We have certain things in place, for instance, our President has weekly meet-and-greets so we can meet faculty from other departments. We also have a weekly lunch for faculty and staff that our Provost hosts where we can talk openly about whatever's on our minds amongst ourselves. It's kind of like an intergenerational thing since the people who attend not only come from all kinds of departments, but are also coming from different age ranges, different generations. Our university doesn't formally call them 'intergenerational,' but it does function that way. (Participant 3, personal communication, March 8, 2017)

Participant 4 described how similar events function in the corporate arena:

> We have events that involve the team, which is multigenerational, but the events are viewed as just an escape – a break from the rat race. Even then, you'll see people of the same generation group together rather than truly interact and get to know one another. (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017)

Theme 5c: Framework implementation perceived as beneficial. This theme was accounted for in three instances (43%). Participant 1 stated:

> […] you can't afford to lose good people. There is no such thing as a good organization. There are organizations that have a good collection of people that makes the organization, but an organization is a fictitious entity, it has nothing. You are the people who work for you […] (Participant 1, personal communication, February 28, 2017)

Participant 4 agreed in saying, "If somebody could come up with a program or method to engage and integrate the generations in a way that is satisfying to the human being and cost effective to the company it would be beneficial for everybody" (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017). Participant 7 shared a similar thought: "I think constructing a framework for intergenerational interaction would be an interesting component, a different way for understanding people's perspectives and preferences" (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017).

Theme 5d: Framework in place. Two instances of this theme occurred (29%). Participant 6 cited a subgroup within their university's faculty as being purposefully intergenerational in nature:

> The clearest place that happens is in the women's faculty group that is organized by the Center for Women's Studies. Part of its purpose and intent is to have more experienced faculty and staff provide a safe space for incoming and new female members. It gives them a space to ask questions and have that solidarity in realizing they're not on their own. It's intentionally intergenerational in providing wisdom and experience. (Participant 6, personal communication, March 14, 2017)

Participant 5 described a framework applied across their university:

> Visions is one of the frameworks that we use for effective dialogue. It's one of the newer initiatives that we've implemented in the past three or four years to help people be cognizant of how they interact with each other. As the Director of the Center for Community Engagement, we're tasked with capacity building. Whether it's within our university or reaching beyond our borders, making sure that people have the best tools available to communicate well to do more asset-based work in the community can be stressful, so being aware of the democratic engagement that's present along with using consistent language in our Visions framework and across initiatives keeps people coming back to the same values: meaningful engagement, reciprocity, ethics, and empowerment. (Participant 5, personal communication, March 13, 2017)

Summary of research question one. Research question one inquired: How can generational differences in the workforce be described and interpreted? Five interview questions corresponded:

1. What is your perception of the multigenerational workforce?

    Themes: (a) Variety leads to better understanding, personally/professionally enriching experiences, and organizational success; (b) Differences in values and expectations leads to challenges/conflict about what work looks like; (c) Generational categories lead to dismissive stereotypes and conflict.

    Characteristics: (a) Development opportunities tied to cost-effectiveness rather than well-being; (b) Differences in values and expectations leads to challenges/conflict about what work looks like; (c) Disjointed workforce/no true collaboration or comradery among generations; (d) Gap between Millennials and Baby Boomers; (e) Generational categories lead to a common language; (f) Generational categories lead to dismissive stereotypes and conflict; (g) Limited and/or inhibited communication; (h) Multigenerational workforce has always been an issue; (i) Old school v. new school mentality; (j) Overworked and overwhelmed workforce leads to no training or personal development opportunities; (k) Postponed retirement; (l) Variety leads to better understanding, personally/professionally enriching experiences, and organizational success.

2. To what extent do you perceive conflicts arise due to misconceptions attributed to generational differences in the work environment?

    Themes: (a) Generational differences in motivation for working; (b) Difference in work ethic between Baby Boomers and Millennials; (c) Millennials perceived as spoiled/entitled; (d) Millennials working towards meaningful work; (e) Generational categories lead to dismissive stereotypes and conflict.

Characteristics: (a) Baby Boomers working towards external goals; (b) Capitalism leads to conflict; (c) Conflicts among individuals due to personal/professional insecurities; (d) Difference in work ethic between Baby Boomers and Millennials; (e) Differences and conflicts due to personality preferences rather than generational attributes; (f) Differences in values and expectations leads to challenges/conflict about what work looks like; (g) Differences in world outlook lead to challenges; (h) Generational categories lead to dismissive stereotypes and conflict; (i) Generational differences in motivation for working; (j) Millennials perceived as spoiled/entitled; (k) Millennials working towards meaningful work; (l) Working hard v. working smart.

3. In what forms do conflicts attributed to generational differences typically present themselves in your particular work environment?

Themes: (a) Differences in values and expectations leads to challenges/conflict about what work looks like; (b) Millennials perceived as spoiled/entitled.

Characteristics: (a) Baby Boomers wanting to "teach" Millennials; (b) Baby Boomers working towards external goals; (c) Differences in values and expectations leads to challenges/conflict about what work looks like; (d) Difference in work ethic between Baby Boomers and Millennials; (e) Gap between Millennials and Baby Boomers; (f) Generational differences in motivation for working; (g) Limited and/or inhibited communication; (h) Millennials catered to by management; (i) Millennials perceived as spoiled/entitled; (j) No issues to report; (k) Old school v. new school mentality; (l) Territorial tendencies from senior employees in regards to maintaining current position/employment.

4. What efforts are made to mitigate conflict and provide resolution?

   Themes: (a) Good communication; (b) Conflict resolution through collaboration.

   Characteristics: (a) Case-to-case basis; (b) Conflicts resolution through collaboration; (c) Good communication; (d) Millennials catered to by management; (e) No formal strategy for conflict resolution; (f) No issues to report; (g) Personality assessments; (h) Professional development trainings; (i) Tolerance v. acceptance.

5. Is there an organizational framework in place to cultivate intergenerational interaction? If so, how does it function? If not, what are your thoughts on implementing such a framework – from both the personal and organizational level?

   Themes: (a) No formal framework in place; (b) Faculty/staff events; (c) Framework implementation perceived as beneficial; (d) Framework in place.

   Characteristics: (a) Faculty/staff events; (b) Framework implementation perceived as beneficial; (c) Framework in place; (d) Mentorships; (e) No formal framework in place; (f) Onboarding events; (g) Visions framework.

A total of 16 themes emerged from the 52 characteristics revealed in the collective questions.

Research Question Two

Research question two sought to determine: How can the impact of constructing intergenerational work teams and mentorships based on leadership assessment tools be described and interpreted? Three interview questions were posed:

6. If you were to develop a framework founded upon the principles of nurturing intergenerational interaction and leadership development, how would you go about

doing it and how would you ensure universal application of said framework – applicable to diverse audiences and across organizations/industries?

7. What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of leadership assessment tools, such as the Clifton StrengthsFinder and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, in terms of organizational and leadership development?
8. What are your thoughts on utilizing the aforementioned leadership tools in tandem with a framework for fostering intergenerational interaction?

Unique themes emerged from each question to comprise a comprehensive response to research question two.

Interview question 6: If you were to develop a framework founded upon the principles of nurturing intergenerational interaction and leadership development, how would you go about doing it and how would you ensure universal application of said framework – applicable to diverse audiences and across organizations/industries? Upon analyzing the data, 12 characteristics were revealed which gave rise to three themes: (a) Self-based/Self-identity development; (b) Formal intergenerational meetings; and (c) Intergenerational mentorships (see Figure 12).

Theme 6a: Self-based/Self-identity development. This theme was suggested in three instances (43%). In relation to the dynamic between Baby Boomers and Millennials, Participant 1 stated:

> It has to be based around the self. It can't be tools or methods, it really requires a fundamental, transformational change in the relationship between the two groups. So there is not 'you and I and we,' that would be conventionally looking at it, but there would be an 'us.' There would be a way for every person to be authentic to self and fulfilled and still

coexist. (Participant 1, personal communication, February 28, 2017)

Participant 7 also noted the need for a framework focused on cultivating the self:

I think the foundation in any sort of framework, especially if we're talking about how to work better with people, should be a focus on how to better understand yourself. Questions pertaining to self-identity development and consciousness of self are what should come first. Because if you don't understand yourself first, I'm not sure how you can effectively work with an organization, impact change, or construct a mission and vision. (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017)

Theme 6b: Formal intergenerational meetings. Two occurrences of this theme were present (29%). Participant 6 suggested hosting symposiums per quarter or semester to discuss a variety of topics, "making sure that at least one member of that panel is an emeriti faculty member. Or being intentional that all members of the panel represent the different generations" (Participant 6, personal communication, March 14, 2017).

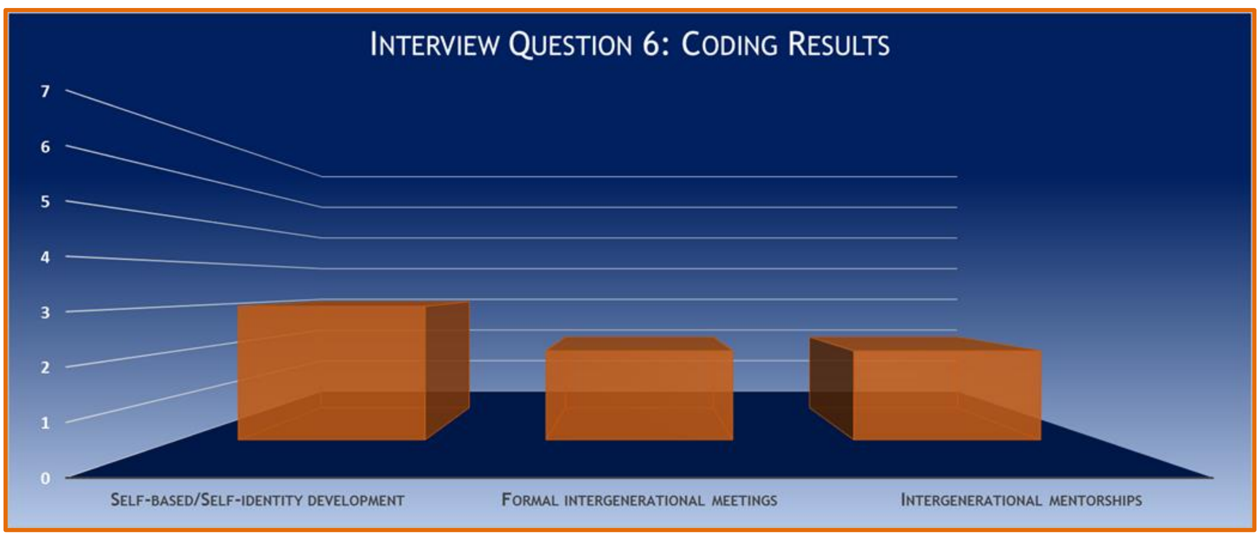

Figure 12. Themes and frequencies of responses associated with interview question six.

Theme 6c: Intergenerational mentorships. This theme appeared in two instances (29%). Participant 3 referred to a mentorship practice that is common within higher education regarding onboarding faculty:

> At our university, when we have new faculty members come on board we assign them mentors, other faculty members that have been here for a while. You can see intergenerational interaction in that context. I think mentorships are a purposeful way to promote interaction. However, the way they should be structured should depend on what the context is, what's needed. Whether it be based on people being new hires and learning from senior faculty as a way of onboarding or if an individual is paired with someone to learn a skill from them. (Participant 3, personal communication, March 8, 2017)

Participant 4 also sought to establish intergenerational mentorships:

> There needs to be a way to match people up by interests in order for them to identify with one another and bond and want to make the effort to work together better. There has to be a mentor-mentee kind of mentality in which the mentee is totally open and ready to listen to what the mentor has to say and likewise with the mentor – it works both ways. It has to work both ways in order to be meaningful. There has to be more in common than just the job at hand. Interests should not only comprise the professional level, but the personal as well. To discover what brought them to the organization – a common purpose and vision. (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017)

Interview question 7: What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of leadership assessment tools, such as the Clifton StrengthsFinder and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, in terms of organizational and leadership development? After reviewing the data for interview question seven, five characteristics appeared which lead to three themes: (a) Effective for self-based assessment and development; (b) Effective organizational/leadership development tools; and (c) Effective for conflict resolution (see Figure 13).

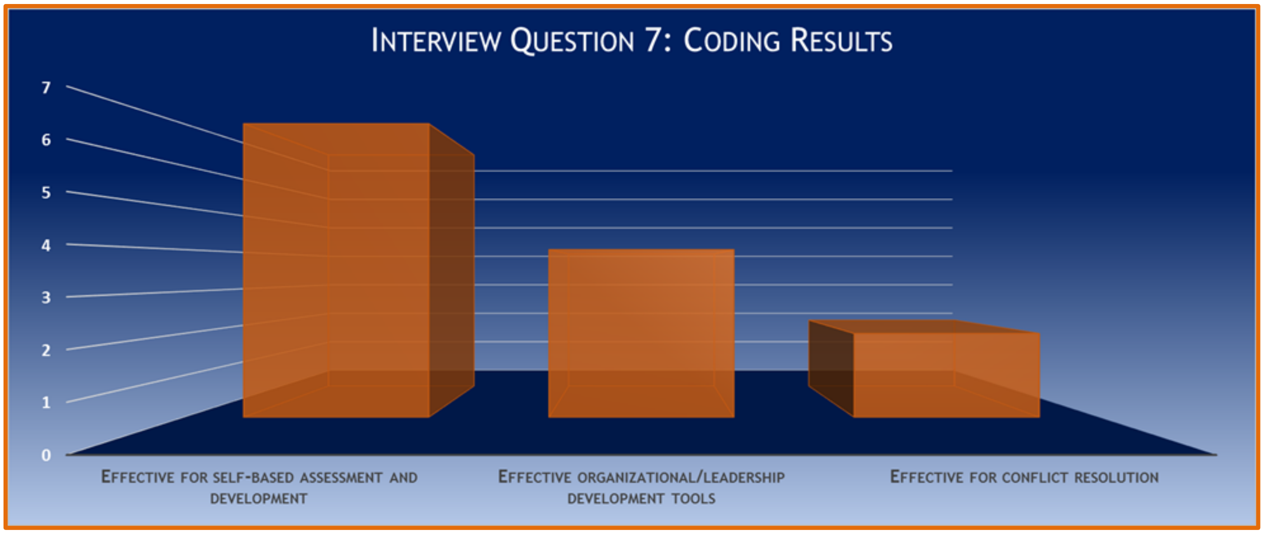

Figure 13. Themes and frequencies of responses associated with interview question seven.

Theme 7a: Effective for self-based assessment and development. This theme emerged unanimously in seven instances (100%). Participant 5 stated, “I love self-exploration tools. I feel like when you go through those you’re able to critically think about yourself and how you relate to other people, how you can better yourself or better connect with others – it’s a rare opportunity” (Participant 5, personal communication, March 13, 2017). Participant 1 expressed:

> So if you buy into the notion that any change in the relationship needs to be self-based, then the assessment and the methodologies that you use have to be an assessment and methodology of self. Myers-Briggs, DiSC, StrengthsFinder, get to the nature of the self. They are tools that Baby Boomers are familiar with and that Millennials respond to and if you’re going to have any kind of measurement, those seem to be natural. (Participant 1, personal communication, February 28, 2017)

Similar sentiments in relation to the effective self-analysis properties of the suggested leadership assessments were shared among the seven participants.

Theme 7b: Effective organizational/leadership development tools. This theme was discussed four times (57%). Participant 7 underscored the development opportunities afforded by the leadership assessments:

> I believe that they are fundamentally critical to helping people better understand themselves in order to work better with other people. I try to do that with all of my staff, where we utilize some of these tools, because it provides a common language […] Assessments like the MBTI give permission to talk about some potentially challenging topics. I think feedback is very hard for people to give and receive and things like MBTI and StrengthsFinder are tools that give people opportunities to use that common language to give feedback, which is a phenomenal opportunity. (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017)

Theme 7c: Effective for conflict resolution. This theme was identified twice (29%). Participant 5, similar to Participant 7 in the aforementioned theme, expressed how the leadership assessments foster a common language through revealing strengths and preferences: "I think these types of assessment tools can be really strong and supportive to not only understand other people better, but to mitigate conflicts and help people be more confident in their unique perspective and skillset" (Participant 5, personal communication, March 13, 2017).

Interview question 8: What are your thoughts on utilizing the aforementioned leadership tools in tandem with a framework for fostering intergenerational interaction? Two characteristics emerged within interview question eight, leading to one unanimous theme: (a) Effective/beneficial for intergenerational interaction (see Figure 14).

Theme 8a: Effective/beneficial for intergenerational interaction. This theme resulted in seven instances of agreement (100%). Participant 5 noted the distinction of providing a framework:

I like the idea that you're talking about a framework. A lot of times when people embark upon issuing an assessment they feel like a one-off – there's no translation into why they're doing it, how it fits in. I would love to have a framework that illustrates the purpose behind them and how it applies to individuals and groups in their environment. (Participant 5, personal communication, March 13, 2017)

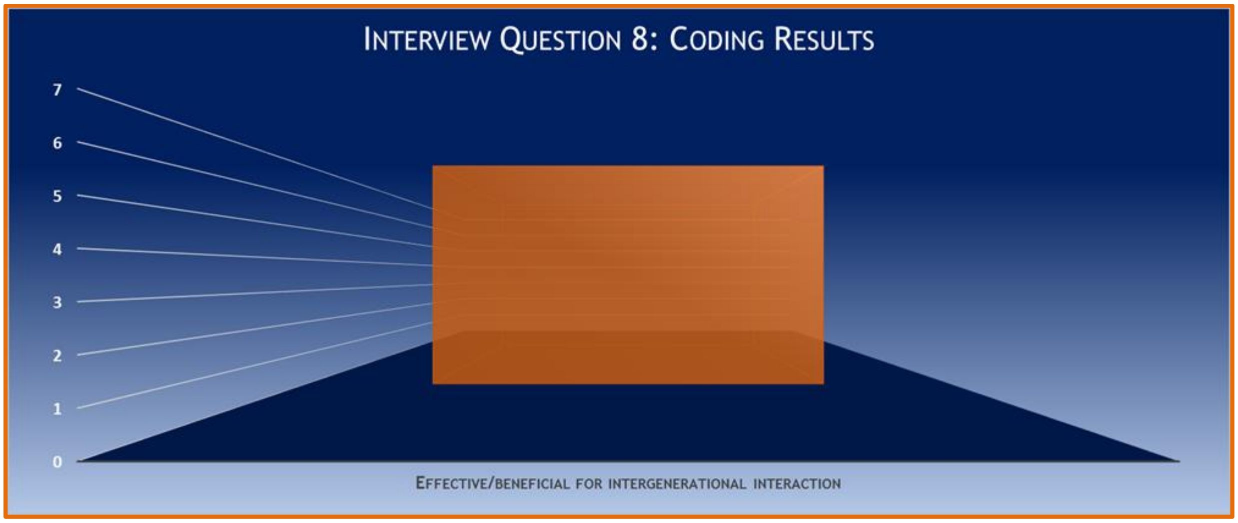

Figure 14. Themes and frequencies of responses associated with interview question eight.

Participant 7 expressed how "MBTI or StrengthsFinder could provide that common language for people to understand the generational piece" (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017). Participant 4 described how coupling the assessments with a framework could allow for meaningful work, shared purpose, and organizational prosperity:

I think it would be a great, effective dynamic if it could really happen, if the culture of the company would adhere to it. If leadership bought into it, it would be extremely successful […] This combination of the tools with a framework is a great formula to teach and allow people to truly enjoy what they do. If they could have that interaction, they wouldn't necessarily have to be each other's best friend, but they would discover how to enjoy working together and then actually experience it. This would also allow for more innovation, making the company more successful, bringing revenue, and advancing the organization's legacy. (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017)

Summary of research question two. Research question two pertained to: How can the impact of constructing intergenerational work teams and mentorships based on leadership assessment tools be described and interpreted? Three interview questions correlated:

6. If you were to develop a framework founded upon the principles of nurturing intergenerational interaction and leadership development, how would you go about doing it and how would you ensure universal application of said framework – applicable to diverse audiences and across organizations/industries?

   Themes: (a) Self-based/self-identity development; (b) Formal intergenerational meetings; (c) Intergenerational mentorships.

   Characteristics: (a) Authenticity; (b) Formal intergenerational meetings; (c) Globalized leadership theories and frameworks; (d) Historical context; (e) Intergenerational mentorships; (f) Leadership assessments; (g) Mission/vision alignment; (h) Peer evaluations; (i) Performance reviews; (j) Personal and professional development opportunities; (k) Respect and appreciation for otherness; (l) Self-based/self-identity development.

7. What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of leadership assessment tools, such as the Clifton StrengthsFinder and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, in terms of organizational and leadership development?

   Themes: (a) Effective for self-based assessment and development; (b) Effective organizational/leadership development tools; (c) Effective for conflict resolution.

   Characteristics: (a) Easily manipulated results; (b) Effective for conflict resolution; (c) Effective for establishing common language; (d) Effective for self-based assessment and development; (e) Effective organizational/leadership development tools.

8. What are your thoughts on utilizing the aforementioned leadership tools in tandem with a framework for fostering intergenerational interaction?

    Themes: (a) Effective/beneficial for intergenerational interaction.

    Characteristics: (a) Effective for innovation; (b) Effective/beneficial for intergenerational interaction.

A total of seven themes emerged from the 19 characteristics identified in the question set.

Research Question Three

The third and final research question explored: How can the impact of framing leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective be described and interpreted? Two interview questions aligned:

9. To what extent do you think it would be useful to frame leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective in terms of personal leadership development and cultivating intergenerational interaction?
10. To what extent do you think it would be useful for an organization to promote curriculum in which leadership development is contextualized within an ontological and phenomenological model?

Specific themes emerged from each question to deliver a response to research question three.

Interview question 9: To what extent do you think it would be useful to frame leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective in terms of personal leadership development and cultivating intergenerational interaction? Through data analysis, four characteristics were identified along with three themes: (a) Effective for personal leadership development and intergenerational interaction; (b) Effective for self-examination and growth; and (c) Effective depending upon context (see Figure 15).

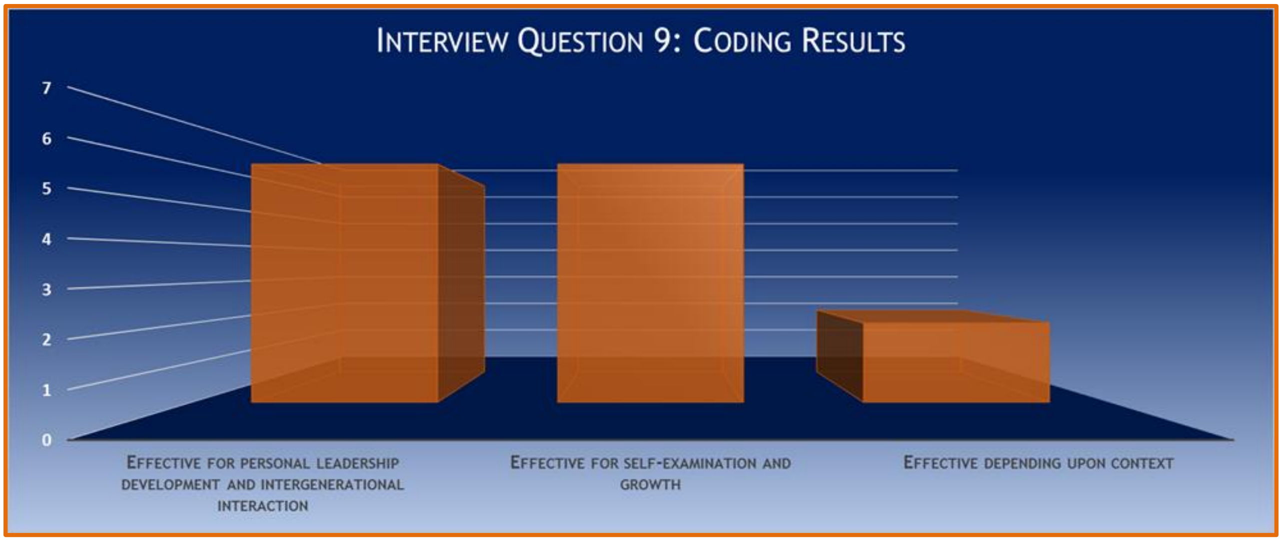

Figure 15. Themes and frequencies of responses associated with interview question nine.

Theme 9a: Effective for personal leadership development and intergenerational interaction. This theme was nearly unanimous in occurring six times (86%) among the seven participants. Participant 6 expressed an appreciation for the potential relational fulfillment that could be experienced via an ontological-phenomenological leadership model:

> I think it’s awesome. I like the way that you’ve put it, too – using those particular terms. It does seem to me like an existential concern. Part of what you’re dealing with is people’s careers, which very often makes a huge impact on what their lives mean. The dream job would have meaning, fulfillment, and tap into their strengths versus concerned with needing to pay rent and have healthcare. Regardless, it’s still where you go every day, spend your time, and pour yourself into. Part of what makes your environment all the more rich and fulfilling is the relational aspect. If you have relationships with your colleagues, co-workers, bosses, or clients, that in-itself is noble. To be engaged in relationships with

other human beings is something worthwhile of pursuit in my view. Even if you're not contributing to the grand movement of the progress of history, the virtue and value of a profound conversation with another person in which you are relating to them and they are being listened to, heard, and cared for at that humane level builds bonds. Part of what can benefit us relationally is being in relationships with folk who are not just extensions of ourselves. That's where the diversity comes in. The multigenerational piece is huge as well. To have the benefit of being connected to someone who is very different from you has the potential to deepen the existence of both partners in the relationship. Without the diversity component, there's no growth, pushback, or struggle, no room to build. (Participant 6, personal communication, March 14, 2017)

Participant 1 explained how personal leadership development begins with self-analysis and leads towards an appreciation of differences and enriching experiences:

It's hard to love others if you don't love yourself, we know that from self-esteem. It's hard to lead others if you don't lead yourself – we know that in observing presidents, corporate executives, and what have you. So if the notion is to bring groups together to be able to coexist you need to start at the self. You've got to start at the notion of how do I lead myself, who am I, how did I get to be this way, where do I want to go, how do I want to get there and how can I intermingle that with other people? I think the notion of personal leadership will serve that quite well because it starts with an examination of self and then differences. Most of the time we look at leadership as: how can I get others to do things? Starting at the self and inductively building it up would be quite helpful in this arena and it allows you to personally transform, it allows you to get to where you are at your best and when people show up in that space they can contribute to excellence and growth. That

> arena is far more rich for opportunity, results, and expectations than the notion of me versus you. The ontological allows you to show up in a space of possibility that you can invite others to where everyone's pretentions and acts go away and vulnerability shows up and that's the place where you can have the richest communication. (Participant 1, personal communication, February 18, 2017)

Theme 9b: Effective for self-examination and growth. This theme was also close to being unanimous, occurring in six instances (86%). Participant 7 suggested: "That type of thinking would lead to mindfulness, authentic leadership, and empathetic leadership because then you would be really situationally aware, recognizing biases, and being reflective in your conversations with people" (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017). Participant 4 affirmed the self-actualization properties inherent in framing leadership from an ontological-phenomenological perspective:

> I think that question is a bit humble since it would not simply be useful, but rather absolutely necessary if we want to transcend to a better way of working, interacting, and being effective humans – it's something that humanity is screaming for. Framing leadership this way is necessary to do self-analysis, self-realization, to meditate on who we are as individuals, how we are growing and in what direction – if we are growing at all, distinguish between what is effective and what is not, what is good and what is not, between what is useful and what we should discard… It's absolutely necessary for the growth of the individual. If you grow as an individual, then you will grow as a culture. Age and other factors become secondary. Not only work would be great, but life would be great. (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017)

Theme 9c: Effective depending upon context. Two instances of this theme were present (29%). Participant 5 noted that there may be some limitations for broad generational applications:

> It's difficult to gauge because sometimes there seems to be a resistance to that type of thinking. I have a Traditionalist colleague who doesn't particularly like these types of things and thinks they're navel-gazing and outwardly rejects them. I feel like Millennials and Gen X-ers are more open to or even seeking that sense of purpose in their careers. The way previous generations entered the workforce may not even allow them to think about leadership that way. I think you would be able to sell it to the younger generations, but not so much the others. (Participant 5, personal communication, March 13, 2017)

Interview question 10: To what extent do you think it would be useful for an organization to promote curriculum in which leadership development is contextualized within an ontological and phenomenological model? Upon review of the final interview question, eight characteristics emerged accompanied by three themes: (a) Effective for personal leadership development; (b) Engenders meaningful collaboration; and (c) Engenders self-actualization (see Figure 16).

Theme 10a: Effective for personal leadership development. This theme was unanimous, occurring in seven instances (100%). Participant 5 commented:

> I think a lot about that actually. I think the opportunity to have that can be incredibly beneficial and especially beneficial to people who wouldn't normally get these types of opportunities. People who are on the leadership track, there's an assumption that they're going to take advantage of these things. I've seen people who aren't directly associated with a leadership position who have really benefited from things like StrengthsFinder,

> MBTI, or emotional intelligence assessments because they always have had that gut feeling that even though they may not have a certain degree they still have a skillset. Some of these tools can reinforce that they have a worthwhile skillset. To be able to talk about that in mixed groups would be valuable. (Participant 5, personal communication, March 13, 2017)

Participant 1 discussed the distinction between learning about leadership and being a leader and how an ontological-phenomenological leadership model is conducive for promoting authentic interaction:

> The notion of learning leadership versus being a leader is very different. Most of the training and development is based on best practices and then the person goes straight into doing. The advantage of getting the ontological domain is that people are just leading and the context becomes far more powerful than the tools. When it comes to generational issues, any tools you develop from one mindset loses power in the other mindset and the only tool that we all have that doesn't need a mindset is authenticity – that's the only model that you don't need to do steps or anything else, you just show up vulnerable. (Participant 1, personal communication, February 28, 2017)

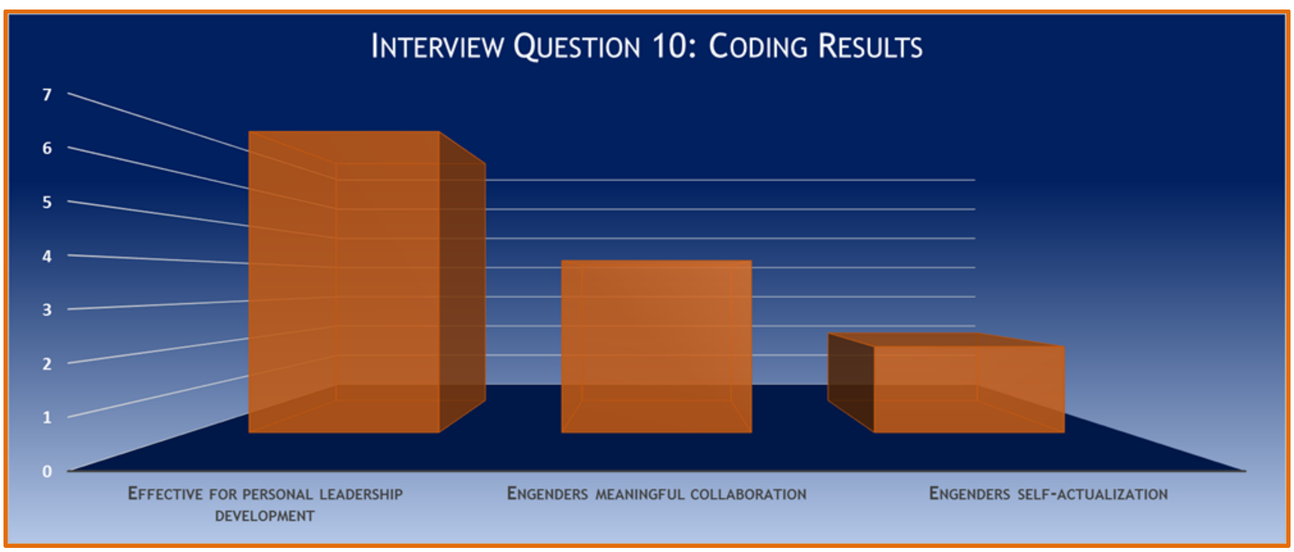

Figure 16. Themes and frequencies of responses associated with interview question ten.

Theme 10b: Engenders meaningful collaboration. This theme was present in four instances (57%). Participant 4 noted the benefits of adopting an ontological-phenomenological perspective: “When it comes to challenges, people would have a different approach to managing and resolving them. There would be a communion of human beings, of souls, coming together for a common goal” (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017). Participant 3 reflected:

> I think about leadership the way I think about Christianity – Christianity is easier caught than taught. In other words, it’s observing others and being mentored by others, people who you admire and respect that makes an impact […] In Christianity an example would be discipleship. The best way to teach people leadership is by walking with them […] it’s life and living life with someone. I think you have to frame leadership from the existential and with a focus on deep self-exploration – who they are, what they think humanity is, what are they living for – in order for practices to subsequently take effect. (Participant 3, personal communication, March 8, 2017)

Theme 10c: Engenders self-actualization. Two occurrences of this theme were identified (29%). Participant 4 insisted transformational experiences would take place:

> It would be dynamic, life-changing. If you could get one company to do that and then become part of the top three in the Fortune 500, everybody would follow. If a company would implement this and then their shares were to go through the roof, everyone would want to do what that company did. They may do it for the wrong reasons, strictly for profit, but they would do it and in doing so, the effect would be transformative. People couldn’t help changing if you were to implement a curriculum like that. While they may have started with money in mind, they would discover that they’ve changed. Their home life would

change, their personal life, their beliefs, everything about them would change. Everything would take on meaning, purpose, and have a different sense of enjoyment […] It would be like a spiritual awakening of the self […] These methods would awaken the individual to the soul and touch the individual to the core. While the bottom line would be increased, it would become secondary to the evolution of the human being through nurturing the soul. (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017)

Summary of research question three. Research question three delved into: How can the impact of framing leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective be described and interpreted? Two interview questions aligned:

9. To what extent do you think it would be useful to frame leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective in terms of personal leadership development and cultivating intergenerational interaction?

   Themes: (a) Effective for personal leadership development and intergenerational interaction; (b) Effective for self-examination and growth; (c) Effective depending upon context.

   Characteristics: (a) Effective depending upon context; (b) Effective depending upon generational openness; (c) Effective for personal leadership development and intergenerational interaction; (d) Effective for self-examination and growth.

10. To what extent do you think it would be useful for an organization to promote curriculum in which leadership development is contextualized within an ontological and phenomenological model?

   Themes: (a) Effective for personal leadership development; (b) Engenders meaningful collaboration; (c) Engenders self-actualization.

Characteristics: (a) Couple curriculum with mentorship; (b) Effective for personal leadership development; (c) Encourages authentic leadership; (d) Encourages good communication; (e) Engenders meaningful collaboration; (f) Engenders self-actualization; (g) Engenders transformational experiences; (h) Spiritual awakening.

A total of six themes were identified from the 12 characteristics revealed within the questions.

Summary

The objective of this study was to determine whether implementing ontological principles and leadership development resources can serve as a means to nurture intergenerational interaction to benefit organizations and their supporting individuals. Seven participants were interviewed a series of 10 questions in connection with the three research questions:

I. How can generational differences in the workforce be described and interpreted?

II. How can the impact of constructing intergenerational work teams and mentorships based on leadership assessment tools be described and interpreted?

III. How can the impact of framing leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective be described and interpreted?

The findings yielded a total of 29 themes from 83 characteristics across the interview questions. Themes corresponding to each research question emerged as follows. Please note that there may appear to be fewer themes than identified as the researcher removed duplicate themes that occurred per research question grouping (see Table 4):

Table 4.

Research Questions and Themes.

Research Question	Themes
How can generational differences in the workforce be described and interpreted?	▪ Variety leads to better understanding, personally/professionally enriching experiences, and organizational success ▪ Differences in values and expectations leads to challenges/conflict about what work looks like ▪ Generational categories lead to dismissive stereotypes and conflict ▪ Generational differences in motivation for working ▪ Difference in work ethic between Baby Boomers and Millennials ▪ Millennials perceived as spoiled/entitled ▪ Millennials working towards meaningful work ▪ Good communication ▪ Conflict resolution through collaboration ▪ No formal framework in place ▪ Faculty/staff events ▪ Framework implementation perceived as beneficial ▪ Framework in place
How can the impact of constructing intergenerational work teams and mentorships based on leadership assessment tools be described and interpreted?	▪ Self-based/Self-identity development ▪ Formal intergenerational meetings ▪ Intergenerational mentorships ▪ Effective for self-based assessment and development ▪ Effective organizational/leadership development tools ▪ Effective for conflict resolution ▪ Effective/beneficial for intergenerational interaction
How can the impact of framing leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective be described and interpreted?	▪ Effective for personal leadership development and intergenerational interaction ▪ Effective for self-examination and growth ▪ Effective depending upon context ▪ Effective for personal leadership development ▪ Engenders meaningful collaboration ▪ Engenders self-actualization

Research question 1: How can generational differences in the workforce be described and interpreted? The majority of participants expressed that generational variety in the workforce leads to better understanding of others, personally and professionally enriching experiences, and organizational success. When discussing their personal experiences within the multigenerational workforce, what emerged as a significant contributor to generational misunderstandings and conflict was a theme of differences in values and expectations about what work looks like. Several fundamental differences were identified and characterized as: a generation's motivation for working, a sense of entitlement versus earning, and a difference in work ethic. Furthermore, some participants held the notion that generational categories lead to dismissive stereotypes and that differences are more nuanced rather than solely connected to generational values and expectations. Regarding existing organizational frameworks developed to foster intergenerational interaction, the majority of participants recognized that their organization did not provide any formal framework or strategy. However, all participants affirmed that such a framework would be beneficial for both the organization and individuals.

Research question 2: How can the impact of constructing intergenerational work teams and mentorships based on leadership assessment tools be described and interpreted? All participants identified the need for self-analysis to be the foundation for cultivating authentic and effective intergenerational interaction. It was unanimously agreed upon that the suggested leadership assessments – the Clifton StrengthsFinder and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator – are conducive for self-based assessment and development and, as such, would be effective organizational tools. Participants expressed that implementing the aforementioned leadership resources would successfully facilitate intergenerational collaboration, ease tensions, and assist in conflict resolution.

Research question 3: How can the impact of framing leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective be described and interpreted? Participants affirmed that framing leadership within an ontological-phenomenological model would be effective for personal leadership development and intergenerational interaction. It was asserted that such a perspective would successfully engender self-examination and growth, personal leadership development, and meaningful collaboration. However, it was also cautioned that some challenges may be presented when securing organizational buy-in, primarily in reference to: terminology, context, data-driven results, and time management.

Chapter V: Conclusions & Recommendations

Introduction

This dissertation explored ontology and leadership development within the multigenerational workforce. Drawing upon human capacity-building resources – including the Clifton StrengthsFinder, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and leadership curriculum grounded in ontological-phenomenological models – the objective was to determine whether contextualizing leadership within an ontological approach in conjunction with leadership development tools can serve as a means to cultivate intergenerational interaction for the benefit of organizations and their supporting individuals. As evidenced in the study, it was determined by both the interview participants and the researcher that framing leadership within an ontological-phenomenological perspective in conjunction with leadership assessments are indeed effective means for cultivating intergenerational interaction, benefiting organizations and their workforce.

To support the research and accomplish the objective, interviews transpired with a panel of experts working within the fields of: organizational leadership and development, ontology, sociology, psychology, and philosophy. The three, overarching, research questions comprised:

I. How can generational differences in the workforce be described and interpreted?

II. How can the impact of constructing intergenerational work teams and mentorships based on leadership assessment tools be described and interpreted?

III. How can the impact of framing leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective be described and interpreted?

After the interview process, findings were summarized and addressed in light of the discussions, how they connected with the literature review, and future implications. This chapter presents an analysis of the findings, implications of the study, recommendations for future research, and concludes with a reflection of final thoughts in connection with the study.

Discussion of Findings

The collective findings of this study are reviewed as they correspond with certain key themes addressed in Chapter Four in addition to an analysis of characteristics and insight that were not previously discussed, but should be considered in order to fully address the parameters of the research questions. Furthermore, responses will be discussed in terms of how the findings correlated with research collected in the literature review provided in Chapter Two.

Research question one: Discussion. Research question one was an inquiry in reference to: How can generational differences in the workforce be described and interpreted? Following are some of the overall impressions acquired from participants.

While most participants perceived that generational variety in the workforce leads to better understanding of others, personally and professionally enriching experiences, and organizational success, they also spoke to their personal experiences in engaging with those of different generations, identifying that the key contributor to misunderstandings and conflict in the multigenerational workforce can be attributed to differences in values and expectations about what work looks like. Specifically, some of these differences were mentioned in terms of: a generation's motivation for working, a sense of entitlement versus earning, and a difference in work ethic – particularly noted between Baby Boomers and Millennials. Participant 1 noted the motivational contrast between Baby Boomers and Millennials as being extrinsic versus intrinsic:

> The Baby Boomers would get to different milestones in life more quickly than Millennials. For the Baby Boomers, the first milestone would be to move out. For Millennials, moving out is not one of their priorities. Another example is home ownership, there were certain standards and things that Baby Boomers believed in that the Millennials have a different

> perspective on and it shows up in the workplace. You would work really hard as a Baby Boomer so you could buy the largest house you could afford payments on and then that guided you in what you did and didn't do at work. The Millennials are more comfortable to be fulfilled than to meet tangible goals. (Participant 1, personal communication, February 28, 2017)

Other participants believed that generational categories lead to dismissive stereotypes and that differences can be described as more nuanced rather than strictly due to generational values and expectations. Participant 7 asserted:

> Some of the differences and conflicts we see that are perceived as generational are not necessarily tied to generational attributes. While they are perceived as such, they are more due to personality preferences. I can see how that becomes the common language of understanding these differences, but it's not always correct […] people forget that issues go beyond generational difference […] some of the ways of mitigating are not necessarily focused on the generational component. For example, they'll offer to do MBTI or StrengthsFinder together, or some sort of personality assessment. That to me does mitigate some of the conflict and could provide resolution. It's a way for people to come together and have conversations, digging into their own strengths or preferences and being able to connect with others […] while there are generational differences, I think there should be an account of personality identities, preferences, and styles. (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017)

In reference to current organizational frameworks in place designed to nurture intergenerational interaction, the majority of participants commented that their institution did not offer such a framework. Participant 1 stated:

> I don't know if there is any structural or strategic attention given to this – it's registering on radars now so, at least to some extent, people are aware of it. But I haven't seen any research or anything practical. What I have observed is tolerance, but not in a way that's celebrated, more so in a way that is put up with. (Participant 1, personal communication, February 28, 2017)

The findings from research question one correlated with concepts discussed in the literature review. Ultimately, in line with the Randstad USA study, the main generational differences experienced in the workforce are comprised of varying perspectives on what work looks like and how objectives should be accomplished (Randstad, 2008).

In reference to work ethic and motivation, which Participant 1 commented on, Bursch and Kelley (2014) also make mention that Baby Boomers have a strong work ethic; however, their work performance is motivated by "rank, wealth, and prestige" (p. 5). While previous generations have been motivated by what has been termed the American Dream, Millennials seek a personal, individualized dream (Urban, 2013). There is a shift from the desire for an economically secure career to a career that is existentially meaningful (Urban, 2013).

Participant 7 observed the contrast in communication preferences among generations in relation to how Baby Boomers are more comfortable with informational hierarchies and how Millennials seek transparency. Generational research also points to Baby Boomers and Traditionalists being accustomed to a more top-down, siloed style that limits communications based on relevance and job function, while Generation X and Millennials "reject traditional top-down communication" (Bursch & Kelly, 2014, p. 8) and expect information to flow immediately and constantly. Participant 7 also commented how the Millennial need for openness and transparency may stem from their unique upbringing in being surrounded by technology.

According to Bursch and Kelly (2014), it is this technological distinction that has “shaped how they search for information, solve problems, relate to others, and communicate” (p. 8). Bursch and Kelly (2014) identify this technological fluency as perhaps being the foundation to some of the workplace conflict regarding values and expectations between Millennials and Baby Boomers.

Further, as Participant 7 cautioned, Bursch and Kelly (2014) speak to the danger of over-generalizing generational preferences as every individual is unique with particular life experiences which led to the development of their person. Individuals must be aware of varying generational values and expectations while taking care not to perpetuate stereotypes (Bursch & Kelly, 2014).

Research question two: Discussion. Research question two sought to determine: How can the impact of constructing intergenerational work teams and mentorships based on leadership assessment tools be described and interpreted? An overall theme of self-identity development via the suggested leadership assessments – the Clifton StrengthsFinder and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator – emerged from this question. All participants agreed that the aforementioned leadership tools were effective for self-based assessment and development and that any framework designed for promoting healthy, group interaction would need to be centralized on self-analysis at the foundation. Participants recognized that utilizing these tools would also serve as a means for facilitating intergenerational collaboration, insightful conversations leading to better understanding of others, ease tensions, and assist in mitigating conflicts and providing resolutions.

As intended by the Gallup Foundation, the Clifton StrengthsFinder was created “as a starting point for self-discovery” (p. 11), purposed towards personal development and growth with the additional intent of leveraging results as a catalyst for "discussion with managers, friends, colleagues and advisers" (Asplund, et al., 2007, p. 12). As was evidenced in the case study from Cardinal Health, individuals learned to appreciate and hone their "talents and tendencies, identify […] gaps in team strengths and understand how that impacts team dynamics" (Fernandez & Houle, 2015, para. 19). Implementing the Clifton StrengthsFinder also expanded their "awareness of the relationships between people and their managers – and between managers and more senior leadership – and between Cardinal Health and our customers" (Fernandez & Houle, 2015, para. 25). Similarly with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, post-assessment results allowed individuals from Hallmark Cards, Inc. to facilitate deep conversations which improved interactions. Individuals were able to assess how they "may be perceived by others, giving participants an understanding of how personality type affects communication style, and how that style may come across to others […] both in expressing their own intentions and discerning the true intentions of others with more clarity" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 3). Through the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Hallmark Cards, Inc. was also able to facilitate an environment where people felt comfortable and safe discussing contrary opinions and establish a culture of meaningful connections, "positively affecting cohesion, motivation, and other items related to interpersonal communication" (Psychometrics, 2015, p. 4; p. 7).

In terms of practically applying results from leadership assessments, Participant 4 acknowledged the intended benefits, but cautioned how results can be effected by the means in which they are facilitated:

> Those type of assessments are great ideas in themselves, but for instance, when my department took the Myers-Briggs the results were not totally honest or reflective of the individual. The results were skewed since people tailored their responses to what they

> thought their manager or department would want. The expectations of what was desirable had been made clear prior to testing, so people knew if they were outside of that expectation they would be scrutinized. In my case, my natural result is that of an INTJ which doesn't necessarily make me the most likely candidate to be a traditional team player, which is sought after in HR. Knowing that, my results were skewed as well so I would not incur some sort of reproach for lacking that quality or be shunned outright. However, I am a team player. But I knew if it wasn't reflected on paper to the degree they were expecting I would be perceived as not being a team player. While these tools can be incredible in learning how to better interact with people and accept individuals for who they truly are, I haven't observed them being implemented in this way. (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017)

When asked how they would go about developing a framework for nurturing personal leadership development and intergenerational interaction, participants mostly mentioned constructing formal intergenerational meetings and intergenerational mentorships. As suggested by the research contained within the literature review, developing groups with a "minimum of one individual from each generation […] requires teams to focus on one another's strengths […] and has been shown to reduce tensions, common stereotypes, and misconceptions generations may have about each other" (MetLife, 2009, p. 30). Furthermore, mentorships have been demonstrated as an effective method for knowledge transfer, "critical to performance, sustainability, and innovation" (Piktialis & Greenes, 2008, p. 13) and effective in relation to "reducing turnover, increasing organizational commitment [… and loyalty, and functions as an] earlier identification of key talent" (MetLife, 2009, p. 28). Piktialis and Greenes (2008) suggest successful mentoring would take skills and experiences into consideration rather than create partnerships strictly based upon age, as echoed in the response from Participant 3.

One factor identified by Participant 6 that may present a challenge to the authenticity of cultivating intergenerational interaction within higher education came in the form of the academic tenure system:

> Part of what's detrimental about this question in terms of a university is that there is an ethos of careerism in a university since the greatest dream of every academic person is to get tenure. There's that sense that while you're waiting to get that you're in a holding pattern which also creates that sense that you only have job security once you cross that tenure threshold. So it cultivates that sense of fearfulness. It's supposed to be accountability, but it tends to go into that Big Brother feel. I think something about the structure of tenure is a big problem in terms of bringing younger faculty voices into the fore. Something about that messes with people, especially at a conservative institution like ours where you might edit your speech. Academic freedom becomes theoretical and only happens if you're granted tenure. Unless you make it very intentional with radical reassurance that academic freedom is the lay of the land, you're going to experience a squelching of the younger voices. (Participant 6, personal communication, March 14, 2017).

Participant 7 also mentioned that for an intergenerational framework to be successful, it will need to have a global perspective: "[…] what's missing from our existing leadership frameworks is that they're presented from a very Westernized scope. So we miss some of the global competency pieces, particularly in relation to race and culture" (Participant 7, March 16, 2017).

Research question three: Discussion. Research question three explored: How can the impact of framing leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective be described and interpreted? Nearly all participants agreed that framing leadership within an ontological-phenomenological model would be effective for personal leadership development and intergenerational interaction as it would successfully engender self-examination and growth and meaningful collaboration.

Participant 3 reflected on their particular view of leadership and how it aligns with an ontological-phenomenological perspective:

> When I think about being a successful leader, it doesn't necessarily equate to being at the top of an organization or making more money. For me, it is more about the phenomenological perspective, where I want to be a good leader because I believe it's what Jesus Christ called me to do. I believe Jesus Christ was a leader and it was more of a state of being for Him. Christ lived His life with integrity, love, mercy, grace, and by example. That to me is what leadership is and that's what I would like to see fostered more in people. Rather than focusing on strategies and interventions, it should be more focused on a way of being. I know it will come out behaviorally and in practice, but I think asking questions like: what do you value, what do you believe about people, what do you believe about yourself, what do you value about the world, the afterlife, and the here and now, all those existential type questions should be considered when it comes to leadership. (Participant 3, personal communication, March 8, 2017)

Supported by Erhard, Jensen, and Zaffron, (2008-2015), true leadership does not consist of rote memorization and mechanical emulation of "tips or techniques" (p. 10). Individuals must identify and question their existing notions and assumptions in reference to their values, what is important to them, who they know themselves to be, and what they believe or assume to be true about themselves, others, and the world in order to allow for transformative experiences towards self-actualization (Erhard, et al., 2008-2014).

Participant 2 discussed how such a leadership framework would enable meaningful work and allow individuals to derive a sense of purpose:

> […] I think the success of the organization would depend greatly on that, on framing leadership from that perspective […] I would want the people working in the organization to see their work not only as a means to an end, but as an end in itself. That their work exhibits the best of who they are as a person. If you can engender that across the organization, then the organization will be very successful. (Participant 2, personal communication, March 1, 2017)

Participant 7 acknowledged that while an ontological-phenomenological model would be beneficial, it may also present some challenges pertaining to terminology, context, data-driven results, and time management:

> I think it's amazing, but also that most people wouldn't understand this type of language – ontological and phenomenological. This goes back to that idea of common language. I actually do see many of our leadership tools, frameworks, and theories as ontological and phenomenological, but people don't realize that they are or understand them as such. Like from a business, corporate model, leadership isn't talked about in this way. So, to the extent that it would be useful, I think it would depend on the context that you're in. Also, we are a data-driven society and want to know how we can use data to answer questions. When it comes to leadership development, it's really hard to do that. It's fascinating because I never thought about using leadership tools, theories, and frameworks from the ontological and phenomenological perspective, but I think they do that, that they point to that […] I do think there are a lot of universities that are starting to move in the direction of creating and

> promoting curriculum focused on identity, but I think the struggle comes in with finding the time. People get caught up in the minutiae of day-to-day things and we forget to be mindful and think about these things for ourselves. It's a life-long process, so there's always going to be work to do. I think it would be beneficial, it would just need to be understood as a continuing development tool. (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017)

Implications of the Study

At the culmination of the study, in connection with the emergent themes present within the data set, five integral practical applications for organizations were identified:

1. Gain clarity on work values and expectations in relation to individuals, teams, and how these align with the mission/vision of the organization.
2. Promote self-analysis through leadership assessments in order to establish a common language among individuals and throughout the organization.
3. Encourage formal intergenerational forums for organizational/task-based discussions with the intent of providing resolution.
4. Encourage intergenerational mentorships based on skills and experience.
5. Implement leadership curriculum developed from an ontological-phenomenological perspective to enable critical and foundational self-analysis, sustain meaningful collaboration, and offer transcendent self-actualization.

Gain clarity on work values and expectations in relation to individuals, teams, and how these align with the mission/vision of the organization. In order to work towards this type of clarity, the practice of Cooperrider's appreciative inquiry becomes fundamental. Appreciative inquiry actively works against negative mindsets, such as dismissive generational stereotypes, by engaging individuals from a philosophy of positive psychology. Positive psychology focuses on collective strengths and asserts that “goodness and excellence are not illusions but are authentic states and modes of being that can be analyzed and achieved” (Cameron, et al., 2003, p. 7). The practice of asking questions that seek to deepen understanding and “build a constructive union between a whole people” (p. 3) considering past and present capacities such as: “achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies, stories, expressions of wisdom […] and visions of valued and possible futures” (p. 3) allows for obtaining “insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul” (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d., p. 3).Through individuals gaining a broader and in depth understanding of each other’s values and expectations and tangibly connecting what all the generations contribute to the organization’s mission and vision, a better alignment can be achieved with a renewed commitment to organizational core values. Such a result can be perpetuated by nurturing continued conversations coupled with an investigation of the self.

Promote self-analysis through leadership assessments in order to establish a common language among individuals and throughout the organization. The nascent stages of self-analysis can be elicited through the use of leadership assessments such as the Clifton StrengthsFinder and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. As Participant 7 noted, these tools provide a “common language” (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017) for people to authentically engage in conversation with one another and cultivate self-examination and growth, discover an appreciation for difference, and better communicate contrasting thoughts and opinions. However, as Participant 4 mentioned, it is of the utmost importance for facilitators to take care to not indicate certain attributes as preferable over others (Participant 4, personal communication, March 11, 2017). Further, individuals must have an understanding of the purposes behind the assessments, their components, and the meaning behind their results as identified by Participant 7 (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017). Participant 7 also insisted on the importance of proper assessment facilitation:

> What's also critical is facilitation. For many people, I think the assessments are not facilitated well. You can't just give somebody the MBTI assessment or StrengthsFinder, show them their results, and then not follow-up. Doing that is more harmful than good because it reinforces putting people in boxes and since there's no conversation individuals end up frustrated. There's no knowledge retained as to the meaning behind their results. In particular, with the MBTI, facilitators are not supposed to give the assessment until the individual has had time to self-assess and understands what each component of the personality assessment means. (Participant 7, personal communication, March 16, 2017)

Encourage formal intergenerational forums for organizational/task-based discussions with the intent of providing resolution. In response to what was observed by Participant 6 in reference to inhibited or edited speech as it relates to academic freedom, it is suggested that such intergenerational meetings should be facilitated among peers rather than by managers or individuals in explicit leadership roles in order to mitigate a sense of intimidation or fear of reproach. Additionally, facilitators should be rotated frequently in order to promote equal representation and not generate a pseudo-hierarchy of sorts. Furthermore, as suggested by Participant 6 and in correlation with organizational development literature, intergenerational groups should equally represent each generation as much as possible (MetLife, 2009; Participant 6, personal communication, March 14, 2017). This type of format requires teams to focus on one another's strengths and has been demonstrated to ease tensions, common stereotypes, and generational misconceptions (MetLife, 2009). By assigning deliverables to be completed according to individual strengths, the collective quickly combines the knowledge and best practices of all generations, promoting innovation (MetLife, 2009) and opportunities for individuals to utilize and exhibit their unique skillset – enjoying moments of fulfillment as the endeavor progresses (MetLife, 2009). This dynamic supports the relational goal of gaining increased understanding, respect, and appreciation “for one another’s talents and expertise” (MetLife, 2009, p. 31). Further, by emulating Lave and Wenger’s leadership theory of communities of practice, individuals obtain a deeper sense of self, meaning, purpose, and credibility among the group and the greater organization (Jonassen & Land, 2012). Individuals become able to experience transformation. Lemke (1997) states, “As we participate, we change. Our identity-in-practice develops, for we are no longer autonomous Persons in this model, but Persons-in-Activity” (p. 38). Cooperrider’s appreciative inquiry can also help propel team efforts through its four phases of: discovery, dream, design, and destiny (Thomas, n.d.); considering the “best of what is and what has been” (discovery), “what might be” (dream), “what should be” (design), and “what will be” (destiny) (Thomas, n.d., p. 4).

Encourage intergenerational mentorships based on skills and experience. In conjunction with intergenerational task-based groupings, the opportunity for intergenerational mentorships can effectively facilitate mutual professional and personal growth and knowledge transfer (MetLife, 2009). While mentoring can be tailored to specific organizational needs, resources, and workplace dynamics, successful mentorships have been characterized in the following forms:

> Long-term relationships focused on mutual development and growth; mentoring aimed at knowledge transfer; time-limited mentoring focused on specific goals; appointing a mentor

> for specific jobs; regular mentoring in time-limited meetings that focus on specific projects or networking; virtual mentoring through e-mail or instant messaging. (MetLife, 2009, p. 28)

It is important to note that mentorship pairings should be based on individual skills and experience rather than age. This conventional arrangement has been demonstrated to lack the growth and productivity accomplished through mentorships formulated according to skills and experience.

Implement leadership curriculum developed from an ontological-phenomenological perspective to enable critical and foundational self-analysis, sustain meaningful collaboration, and offer transcendent self-actualization. In order to maintain the meaningful, intergenerational collaborations promoted from the aforementioned themes it is necessary to implement an ontological-phenomenological leadership curriculum. Such a framework directly confronts the tendency to regress into what once was by providing a heightened awareness of ontological constraints – perceptual and functional – and how they impact relationships. This type of learning environment also provides the necessary safe space for transcendent self-actualization to transpire. Individuals are able to experience acceptance, belonging, and community, enabling self-actualization as it applies to both individuals and collectively, propelling purpose, meaningful work, and organizational success (NetMBA, 2002-2010).

Study Conclusion

The intersection of ontology and leadership is foundational for unifying the multigenerational workforce. The implementation of ontological principles can have grounding and transformational effects in both the personal and professional arena, empowering individuals and organizations to enjoy four core elements of leadership: "(a) integrity; (b) authenticity; (c) being committed to something bigger than oneself; and (d) being cause in the matter" (Erhard, et al., 2015, p. 5). These four elements contribute towards ontological security – the existential expectation and need to experience shared values (Curtin, et al., 2010) – propelling transcendent self-actualization, meaningful work, ethics and accountability, emotional intelligence, and organizational prosperity.

Cultivating consistent, meaningful, intergenerational interaction holds the potential to create an alignment of values and expectations, allowing for organizations to thrive. As identified by Robbins and Judge (2013), an organization's culture is rooted upon its people's sources of motivation, values, communication preferences, and thought processes and must be regularly communicated and expressed for individuals to better understand each other and engage in healthy relationships that perpetuate mutual well-being. Currently, only approximately 20% of organizations possess a strategic program for fostering intergenerational interaction (Bursch & Kelly, 2014). Without social support and collaboration, individuals become "distanced from reality, isolated, and vulnerable to ethical leadership failure" (Chandler, 2009, p. 78).

As evidenced through the study, five thematic practical initiatives are suggested for organizations to execute in order to unite the multigenerational workforce:

1. Gain clarity on work values and expectations in relation to individuals, teams, and how these align with the mission/vision of the organization.
2. Promote self-analysis through leadership assessments in order to establish a common language among individuals and throughout the organization.
3. Encourage formal intergenerational forums for organizational/task-based discussions with the intent of providing resolution.

4. Encourage intergenerational mentorships based on skills and experience.
5. Implement leadership curriculum developed from an ontological-phenomenological perspective to enable critical and foundational self-analysis, sustain meaningful collaboration, and offer transcendent self-actualization.

Through intergenerational interaction, bolstered by ontological principles, it is anticipated that the three major concerns organizations have expressed regarding the multigenerational workforce will be satisfied: (a) effective knowledge transfer; (b) mitigation of negative co-worker perceptions based on generational stereotypes; and (c) increased awareness of the unique and shared strengths of each generation (Randstad, 2008).

Recommendations for Future Research

This study has been immensely valuable and rewarding for the researcher. Upon reflection and in the hopes of further contributing to leadership literature, the researcher has identified and would recommend the following strategies to add to the complexity of the study:

- Expand the population to include international participants to account for the presence of multigenerational challenges across cultures.
- Expand the population to include participants beyond the fields of organizational leadership and development, ontology, sociology, psychology, and philosophy to offer a more comprehensive perception of the multigenerational workforce outside of the humanities spectrum.
- Amend the interview questions to include a determination of participants' effort towards self-analysis and self-actualization as participants cited this as a critical component for meaningful and sustained collaboration.
- Amend the interview questions to include a determination of how participants have

integrated their results of self-analysis and self-actualization into their professional relationships and how this effected the dynamics of said relationships.

Final Thoughts

As this study comes to a close, the researcher is reflective on the concepts of servant leadership and noninstrumental relationships in terms of how they align with the ontological crux of this dissertation.

Robert K. Greenleaf, founder of the servant leadership movement and the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, characterized servant leadership as:

> It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions…The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (Greenleaf, 2016, para. 2-3)

Greenleaf further expounds on the ten characteristics of a servant leader: (a) Listening, (b) Empathy; (c) Healing; (d) Awareness; (e) Persuasion; (f) Conceptualization; (g) Foresight; (h) Stewardship; (i) Commitment to the growth of people; and (j) Building community (Northouse, 2013).

The tenets of servant leadership are applicable to both individuals and organizations. In his text, *The Institution as Servant*, Greenleaf (2016) writes:

> This is my thesis: caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built. Whereas, until recently, caring was largely person to person, now most of it is mediated through institutions – often large, complex, powerful, impersonal; not always competent; sometimes corrupt. If a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant of existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them. (para. 6)

Several studies have displayed a "positive relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviors" (p. 231) which consist of "subordinate behaviors that go beyond the basic requirements of their duties and help the overall functioning of the organization" (Northouse, 2013, p. 231). Servant leadership strategies have also demonstrated to improve "team effectiveness by increasing the members' shared confidence that they could be effective as a work group" (p. 231), "enhancing group process and clarity" (Northouse, 2013, p. 231). It is suggested by the researcher for organizations to invest in and practice methods towards servant leadership in the form of opportunities for individuals, via leadership development and meaningful collaborations, and collectively as a corporate body. Servant leadership principles facilitate both ontological security and transcendent self-actualization and can be increasingly powerful when paired with the concept of noninstrumental relationships.

Noninstrumental relationships can be understood as relationships in which the virtues of "humility, reverence for others, and self-giving with the risk of self-loss" (Gascoigne, 2009, p.

76) are exemplified. In contrast, instrumental relationships “use other persons in order to achieve the self’s goals, refusing any sharing or mediating of those goals with the goals of others” (Gascoigne, 2009, p. 77). Robert Gascoigne, Professor and Head of the School of Theology at Australian Catholic University, discusses these types of relationships at length and how they manifest throughout humanity in his text, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society*. Gascoigne explores these conflicting ideologies in connection with Christian doctrine, considering how Christians are called to articulate their life in alignment with Jesus Christ and how this lifestyle functions within Christian community and the broader secular society. He asserts that secular society provides various examples of noninstrumental relationships, the commonality among them being “that they do not consist of relations reliant on domination or consumption, and that the motivation behind the relationship is the relationship itself rather than whatever goals or results will come from it” (Ellerbrock, 2013, p. 76; Gascoigne, 2009, p. 81). Such an instance can be observed in human rights movements that cultivate:

> relationships of mutual recognition – the recognition that every member of humanity makes a moral claim on all humans, which in turn limits the self and its search for domination and rather guides individuals to a larger and wider spectrum of concern. (Ellerbrock, 2013, p. 76; Gascoigne, 2009, pp. 81-82)

with the objective of humanity being able to live in a global community of “freedom, justice, and peace” (Ellerbrock, 2013, p. 76; Gascoigne, 2009, pp. 81-82).

From an organizational leadership and development perspective, noninstrumental relationships lend themselves to the business arena as they yield “behaviors and practices such as cooperation, solidarity, and friendship” (Ellerbrock, 2013, p. 76; Gascoigne, 2009, p. 82). Organizations can greatly benefit from encouraging noninstrumental relationships as they are driven by their “common commitment” (Gascoigne, 2009, p. 82) and dedication to a project. Professional relationships can develop a “noninstrumental character through the experience of collaboration and shared intellectual engagement” (Gascoigne, 2009, p. 82). Further, noninstrumental relationships exhibit ontological properties as individuals are able to engage in meaningful, collaborative efforts, allowing for self-actualizing opportunities. In line with the need for cultivating effective, intergenerational interaction, organizations should value and extol noninstrumental relationships in order to experience holistic well-being and prosperity. Through relying on a team of individuals for success “individuals are able to appreciate the contributions that each member brings to the table and thereby able to appreciate every member even more as a human being and respect the established community within the work environment” (Ellerbrock, 2013, pp. 77-78).

As a final note, it is this researcher’s belief that humans were created to love one another as they pursue alignment with God’s will for humanity and that a foundational, God-given character of humanity’s nature is to be social, “according to their common origin, their rational desires, and feelings of affection – the familiarity of the company of good people and good things” (Breyfogle, 2009, p. 505). An aspect of humanity’s sociability comes in the form of endeavoring towards common goods. In this pursuit, it becomes evident that individuals are not self-sufficient and that “in order to achieve the common good individuals seek, they must be united to that end as a community” (Ellerbrock, 2013, p. 50). Such is this researcher’s desire for unifying the multigenerational workforce.

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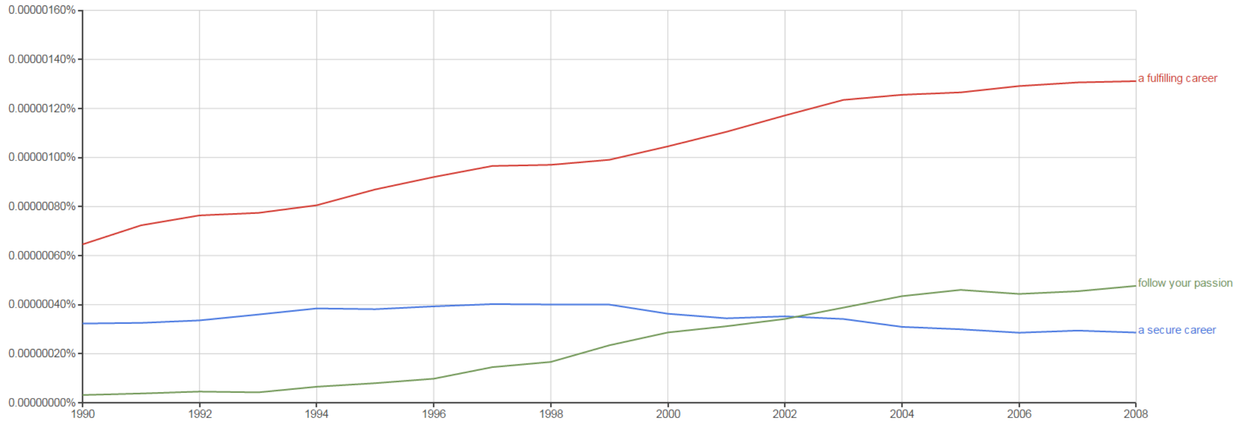
APPENDIX A

Google Ngram Viewer



APPENDIX B

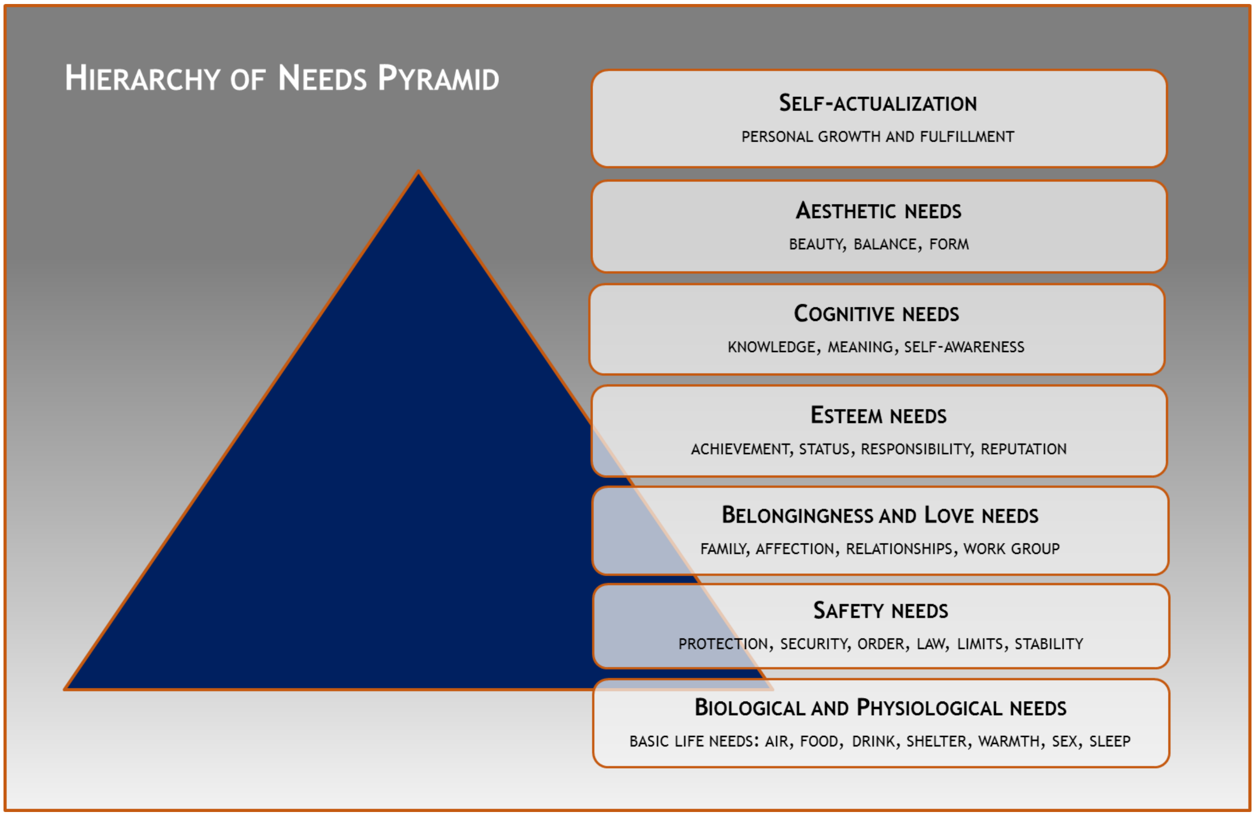
Clifton StrengthsFinder Theme Descriptions

Strength	Description
Achiever	People strong in the Achiever theme have a great deal of stamina and work hard. They take great satisfaction from being busy and productive.
Activator	People strong in the Activator theme can make things happen by turning thoughts into action. They are often impatient.
Adaptability	People strong in the Adaptability theme prefer to "go with the flow." They tend to be "now" people who take things as they come and discover the future one day at a time.
Analytical	People strong in the Analytical theme search for reasons and causes. They have the ability to think about all the factors that might affect a situation.
Arranger	People strong in the Arranger theme can organize, but they also have a flexibility that complements this ability. They like to figure out how all of the pieces and resources can be arranged for maximum productivity.
Belief	People strong in the Belief theme have certain core values that are unchanging. Out of these values emerges a defined purpose for their life.
Command	People strong in the Command theme have presence. They can take control of a situation and make decisions.
Communication	People strong in the Communication theme generally find it easy to put their thoughts into words. They are good conversationalists and presenters.
Competition	People strong in the Competition theme measure their progress against the performance of others. They strive to win first place and revel in contests.
Connectedness	People strong in the Connectedness theme have faith in the links between all things. They believe there are few coincidences and that almost every event has a reason.
Consistency/ Fairness	People strong in the Consistency theme are keenly aware of the need to treat people the same. They try to treat everyone in the world fairly by setting up clear rules and adhering to them.
Context	People strong in the Context theme enjoy thinking about the past. They understand the present by researching its history.
Deliberative	People strong in the Deliberative theme are best described by the serious care they take in making decisions or choices. They anticipate the obstacles.
Developer	People strong in the Developer theme recognize and cultivate the potential in others. They spot the signs of each small improvement and derive satisfaction from these improvements.
Discipline	People strong in the Discipline theme enjoy routine and structure. Their world is best described by the order they create.
Empathy	People strong in the Empathy theme can sense the feelings of other people by imagining themselves in others' lives or others' situations.

Focus	People strong in the Focus theme can take a direction, follow through, and make corrections necessary to stay on track. They prioritize, then act.
Futuristic	People strong in the Futuristic theme are inspired by the future and what could be. They inspire others with their visions of the future.
Harmony	People strong in the Harmony theme look for consensus. They don't enjoy conflict; rather, they seek areas of agreement.
Ideation	People strong in the Ideation theme are fascinated by ideas. They are able to find connections between seemingly disparate phenomena.
Inclusiveness / Includer	People strong in the Inclusiveness theme are accepting of others. They show awareness of those who feel left out, and make an effort to include them.
Individualization	People strong in the Individualization theme are intrigued with the unique qualities of each person. They have a gift for figuring out how people who are different can work together productively.
Input	People strong in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information.
Intellection	People strong in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.
Learner	People strong in the Learner theme have a great desire to learn and want to continuously improve. In particular, the process of learning, rather than the outcome, excites them.
Maximizer	People strong in the Maximizer theme focus on strengths as a way to stimulate personal and group excellence. They seek to transform something strong into something superb.
Positivity	People strong in the Positivity theme have an enthusiasm that is contagious. They are upbeat and can get others excited about what they are going to do.
Relator	People who are strong in the Relator theme enjoy close relationships with others. They find deep satisfaction in working hard with friends to achieve a goal.
Responsibility	People strong in the Responsibility theme take psychological ownership of what they say they will do. They are committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty.
Restorative	People strong in the Restorative theme are adept at dealing with problems. They are good at figuring out what is wrong and resolving it.
Self-Assurance	People strong in the Self-assurance theme feel confident in their ability to manage their own lives. They possess an inner compass that gives them confidence that their decisions are right.
Significance	People strong in the Significance theme want to be very important in the eyes of others. They are independent and want to be recognized.
Strategic	People strong in the Strategic theme create alternative ways to proceed. Faced with any given scenario, they can quickly spot the relevant patterns and issues.
Woo	People strong in the Woo theme love the challenge of meeting new people and winning them over. They derive satisfaction from breaking the ice and making a connection with another person.

APPENDIX C

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid



APPENDIX D

Pepperdine University IRB Approval

PEPPERDINE

Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: February 16, 2017

Protocol Investigator Name: Gabrielle Ellerbrock

Protocol #: 17-01-484

Project Title: Intergenerational Ontology & Leadership: Uniting the Multigenerational Workforce

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Gabrielle Ellerbrock:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

PEPPERDINE

Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives

Mr. Brett Leach, Regulatory Affairs Specialist

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions

1. What is your perception of the multigenerational workforce?

2. To what extent do you perceive conflicts arise due to misconceptions attributed to generational differences in the work environment?

3. In what forms do conflicts attributed to generational differences typically present themselves in your particular work environment?

4. What efforts are made to mitigate conflict and provide resolution?

5. Is there an organizational framework in place to cultivate intergenerational interaction? If so, how does it function? If not, what are your thoughts on implementing such a framework – from both the personal and organizational level?

6. If you were to develop a framework founded upon the principles of nurturing intergenerational interaction and leadership development, how would you go about doing it and how would you ensure universal application of said framework – applicable to diverse audiences and across organizations/industries?

7. What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of leadership assessment tools, such as the Clifton StrengthsFinder and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, in terms of organizational and leadership development?

8. What are your thoughts on utilizing the aforementioned leadership tools in tandem with a framework for fostering intergenerational interaction?

9. To what extent do you think it would be useful to frame leadership from an ontological and phenomenological perspective in terms of personal leadership development and cultivating intergenerational interaction?

10. To what extent do you think it would be useful for an organization to promote curriculum in which leadership development is contextualized within an ontological and phenomenological model?

APPENDIX F

CITI Program Certification: GSEP Education Division – Social-Behavioral-Educational (SBE)

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2
COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS*

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Gabrielle Ellerbrock [redacted]
- **Email:** [redacted]
- **Institution Affiliation:** Pepperdine University (ID: 1729)
- **Institution Unit:** GSEP

- **Curriculum Group:** GSEP Education Division
- **Course Learner Group:** GSEP Education Division - Social-Behavioral-Educational (SBE)
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course

- **Report ID:** 21051417
- **Completion Date:** 06-Nov-2016
- **Expiration Date:** 05-Nov-2021
- **Minimum Passing:** 80
- **Reported Score*:** 94

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction (ID: 1127)	06-Nov-2016	3/3 (100%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)	06-Nov-2016	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)	06-Nov-2016	4/5 (80%)
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	06-Nov-2016	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	06-Nov-2016	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	06-Nov-2016	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	06-Nov-2016	4/5 (80%)

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)

COMPLETION REPORT - PART 2 OF 2
COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT**

** NOTE: Scores on this Transcript Report reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate Requirements Report for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

- **Name:** Gabrielle Ellerbrock [redacted]
- **Email:** [redacted]
- **Institution Affiliation:** Pepperdine University (ID: 1729)
- **Institution Unit:** GSEP

- **Curriculum Group:** GSEP Education Division
- **Course Learner Group:** GSEP Education Division - Social-Behavioral-Educational (SBE)
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course

- **Report ID:** 21051417
- **Report Date:** 06-Nov-2016
- **Current Score**:** 94

REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES	MOST RECENT	SCORE
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)	06-Nov-2016	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)	06-Nov-2016	4/5 (80%)
Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction (ID: 1127)	06-Nov-2016	3/3 (100%)
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	06-Nov-2016	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	06-Nov-2016	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	06-Nov-2016	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	06-Nov-2016	4/5 (80%)

APPENDIX G

Recruitment Letter

Dear Potential Research Participant,

My name is Gabrielle Ellerbrock, and I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education & Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am entering into the research phase of my doctoral program in Organizational Leadership. My research is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my dissertation, entitled *Intergenerational Ontology & Leadership: Uniting the Multigenerational Workforce*.

My research explores ontology and leadership development within multigenerational workforces. It draws on human capacity-building resources, including the Clifton StrengthsFinder, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and leadership curriculum grounded in ontological-phenomenological models. My objective is to determine whether ontological principles and leadership development tools can serve as a means to cultivate intergenerational interaction for the benefit of organizations and their supporting individuals.

You are invited to participate in the study. If you agree, your participation would take the form of two, one-hour interviews. The interviews will be audio-recorded and may take place in person or via technological means. Alternatively, interview questions distributed via email is also an option dependent upon availability. Participation is voluntary and your identity as a participant will remain confidential during and after the study. All identifying information such as proper names or anything associated with your person will be de-identified through the use of pseudonyms.

If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me directly at my email address: [redacted] or via mobile: [redacted]. I appreciate your consideration.

Best Regards,

Gabrielle Ellerbrock
Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education & Psychology
Doctoral Student

APPENDIX H

Informed Consent Form

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

INTERGENERATIONAL ONTOLOGY & LEADERSHIP: UNITING THE MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Gabrielle Ellerbrock, under the direction of Dr. Eric Hamilton, at Pepperdine University, because you are over the age of 18 and work among the fields of organizational leadership and development, ontology, sociology, psychology, and philosophy. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will also be given a copy of this form for you records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study explores ontology and leadership development within multigenerational workforces. It draws on human capacity-building resources, including the Clifton StrengthsFinder, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and leadership curriculum grounded in ontological-phenomenological models. The objective is to determine whether ontological principles and leadership development tools can serve as a means to cultivate intergenerational interaction for the benefit of organizations and their supporting individuals.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two, one-hour interviews that will be audio-recorded. In the event the participant refrains from providing consent to be audio-recorded during interviews, the participant may still elect to participate. As an alternative, the researcher will take notes during the interview. Interviews will take place via face-to-face, virtually, and/or through the distribution of emailed questions depending upon participant availability. Face-to-face and virtual interviews will last no longer than one hour per individual and no less than 30 minutes. Data will be collected via tape recorder as well as written/typed word.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study do not exceed risks associated with day-to-day activities. The only foreseen risk at this time would be social as being selected to participate in the study may affect participant's perceived or actual status within their respective work setting amongst their work colleagues and potentially affect their personal relationships with them.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Anticipated participant benefits will mostly be intellectual, psychological, or emotional. For example, individuals may experience a sense of meaning and purpose in being a part of and contributing to the research. Benefits of the study include organizations obtaining a better and broader understanding of how to leverage their workforce to deliver optimum results while benefiting the individuals that support it.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I will keep your records for this study confidential, as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

The data will be stored on a password protected computer in the principal investigators place of residence for a maximum of five years. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Audio recordings from the interview will be immediately transcribed and all recordings and transcripts will be deleted after the aforementioned timeframe. Your responses will be de-identified with a pseudonym. Any reference made to you, or your respective institution, will be redacted from the transcripts. The transcribed data will be stored on a password protected computer in the principal investigators place of residency. The transcribed file will not be named, to ensure additional confidentiality. All hard copy records will be stored in a secure, locked file cabinet in the principal researcher's home. The data will be stored for a maximum of five years, after which the data will be destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or completing only the items with which you feel comfortable.

INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Dr. Eric Hamilton at Eric.Hamilton@pepperdine.edu if I have any other questions or concerns about this research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500, Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or gpsirb@pepperdine.edu.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

AUDIO/VIDEO/PHOTOGRAPHS

□ *I agree to be audio-recorded*

□ *I do not want to be audio-recorded*

____
Name of Participant

____ ____________________
Signature of Participant Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I have explained the research to the participants and answered all of his/her questions. In my judgment the participants are knowingly, willingly and intelligently agreeing to participate in this study. They have the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study and all of the various components. They also have been informed participation is voluntarily and that they may discontinue their participation in the study at any time, for any reason.

____
Name of Person Obtaining Consent

____ ____________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date